

# TURNER PRIZE

Patience, dedication and a father and son team transformed this Turner 950S from rusted relic to work of art.

WORDS BY MARTYN MORGAN-JONES PHOTOGRAPHY BY GERARD HUGHES



**TIME**  
15 years.  
**COST**  
Undisclosed.

**P**ost-WW2, the UK's automotive industry, which out of necessity had slowed production to a trickle during the hostilities, tried its best to move forward. However, there was precious little raw material and supplies were linked to how many cars a company could export (essential to rebuilding our economy). In 1947 the government tightened the proverbial screws and raised the export quota from 50 percent to a whopping 75 percent. As a result, there was a scarcity of new cars, especially sports cars. They were expensive, too, thanks to the crippling purchase tax.

### Turner beginnings

Yet, it was not all doom and gloom as there were a number of pioneering and enterprising individuals who spotted a niche in the market. Component (kit) cars, constructed using parts reclaimed from a donor car or supplied by the company, weren't subject to purchase tax. As a result, Britain would soon witness a proliferation of specialist companies offering affordable sports cars in DIY kit form (and fully built for those who could afford it). One of the first to make the leap of faith into this emergent market was Abergavenny-born John (Jack) Turner, who



### RESTORATION TIMELINE



1) BEFORE: 1995



# READER RESTO Turner 950S



The Turner's red paint is from the SEAT palette and suits the car to a tee.

## Buying a Turner

It's not a complex car and the tubular chassis doesn't suffer unduly from rust, but you can expect to have to replace the outriggers and undertake minor repairs. Inspect the inner tub for signs of corrosion. The GRP bodyshell is quite robust, although it will suffer from the inevitable ageing and crazing. Turners, with a few exceptions, are typically BMC or Ford-based, and occasionally feature a few Triumph parts, so are easy to maintain mechanically, cheap to run, and easy to uprate.

would make a huge contribution to Britain's specialist car industry, an industry that would blossom in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Turner started producing 'specials' in 1949 and the company would continue to build a range of sports cars until its closure in 1966. However, the Turner Sports Car story proper began in 1954 with the arrival of the Turner A30 2-seater sports car. Based on Austin A30 mechanicals, and underpinned by a sublimely-effective tubular chassis, the Turner A30 (later renamed the 803) sold well. Its successor, the 950S, a 1957 arrival, and equipped with the new 948cc A-series, was an even bigger seller.

**RESTO TOP TIP**  
To access the inner tub you have to detach the GRP bodyshell by drilling out numerous rivets.

"Plus, I met Jack Turner and he became a regular at the Register's annual gatherings. Sadly Jack died last year, but he was an inspiration. Dad's been a huge inspiration too. With his help and wealth of knowledge, my passion for the marque has grown. As has our car collection. Between us we own four Turners."

Russell's 950S was purchased in 2000, although Terry, his father, had known of its existence for some time. "The car belonged to Bob Keen", says Russell. "Dad went to look at it in the early 1980s. But, it wasn't until 1995, when I started actively looking for a Turner, that we went to see if he still had it. It was in Chipping Sodbury but dad couldn't remember exactly where. Anyhow, we spent some time looking over garden walls and eventually found it."

What they rediscovered, was a Turner that was being steadily reclaimed by nature. The tattered tyres had sunk into the soft ground, grass and weeds were sprouting through what remained of the inner



The Turner name was synonymous with kit cars in post-war Britain.



Interior is snug and reminiscent of factory-BMC models of the period.



**2) 2000**  
Inner tub revealed just how much work was required.



**3) 2000**  
Chassis and Bodyshell separated and ready for restoration.



**4) 2001**  
Chassis was shot-blasted, repaired and repainted.



Delicate rear fins give the Turner a distinctive profile.



**Quick Q&A**

**What's the appeal of the Turner 950S?**

Although we have a Mk1, I was keen to own an earlier model as they are not only rare, they have a real period charm. We've known about this car for so long. It gets lots of attention and I'm always being asked what it is. Apart from its striking looks, the best bit about owning the 950S is the way it drives. Turners were successful in motor sports, and still are, and are renowned for their handling. The best moment of the restoration was driving the rolling chassis along a private road. Everything worked and the 'open-air' feeling was wonderful.

“Numerous birds had patinated the bodyshell during their impromptu target practice”



Impressive handling is a big part of the Turner's appeal.

tub, and numerous birds had patinated the bodyshell during their impromptu target practice. To put it mildly, it was 'ripe' for restoration. Even so, Russell and Terry were not to be dissuaded. "We knocked at Bob's door", recalls Russell. "He remembered dad but went on to say that the Turner was his Millennium project and wasn't for sale. However, we bided our time and towards the end of 2000 we popped over to see how the Turner had progressed."

It hadn't. "Bob realised that he wasn't going to find the time to restore the Turner," says Russell. "So we managed to persuade him to part with it."

**Stripped bare**

During the first twelve months, 1118 RE was stripped to its bare components and much of the structural work was undertaken, as Russell reveals, "By the end of 2001 the chassis had been repaired, fitted with new out-riggers, shot-



**5) 2003**

Rotten MG Midget donated 1098cc engine which was rebuilt and installed.



**6) 2005**

New alloy/steel inner tub, handbuilt by a fellow Turner enthusiast.

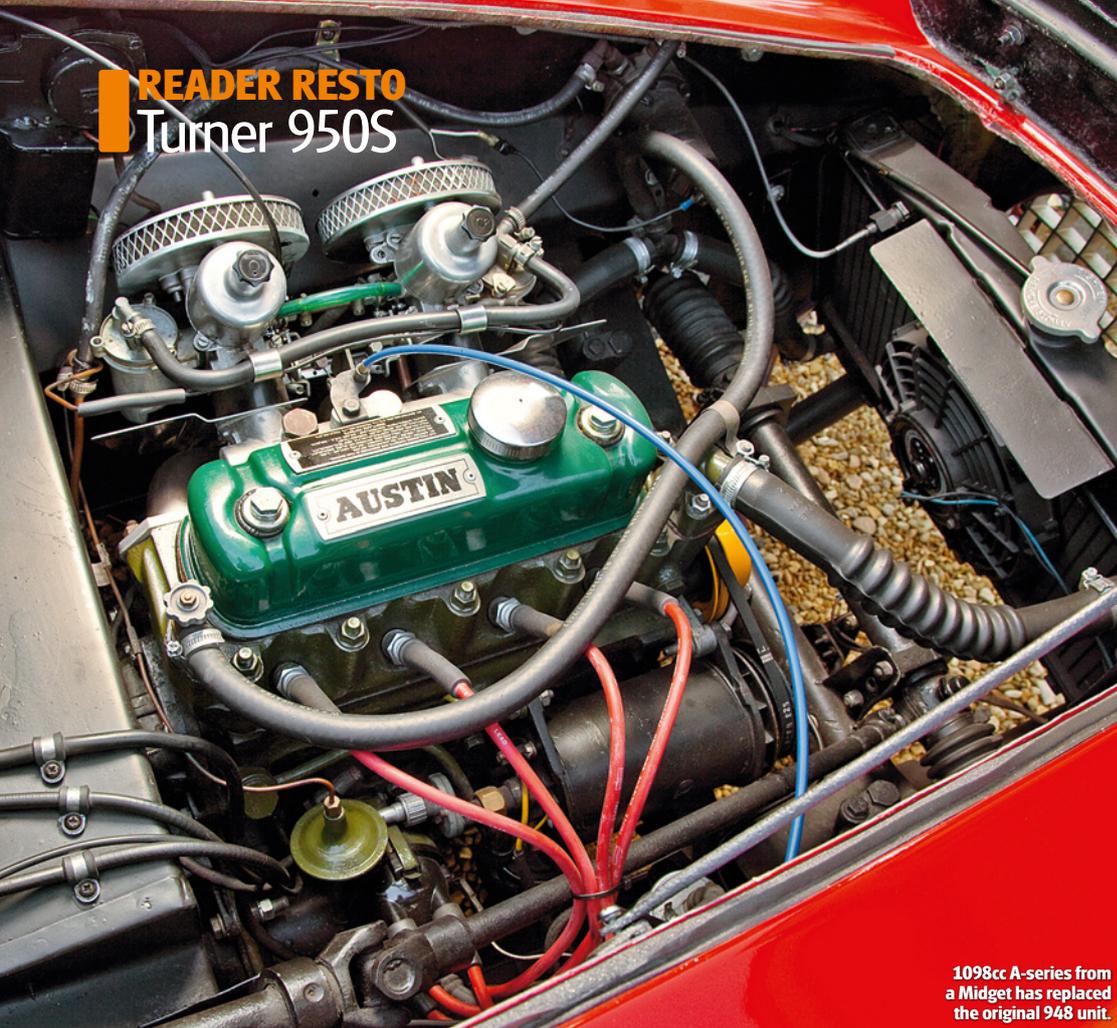


**7) 2005**

The inner tub was repainted and ready for trial fit of the interior items.



## READER RESTO Turner 950S



1098cc A-series from a Midget has replaced the original 948 unit.



### TECH SPEC

#### Turner 950S

- **ENGINE** 1098cc A-series
- **BODY & CHASSIS**  
Tubular steel chassis, GRP bodyshell
- **FRONT SUSPENSION**  
Independent coil spring
- **REAR SUSPENSION**  
Beam axle, Panhard rod, coil-over dampers
- **BRAKES** Front 8 1/2in disc, rear 7in drum
- **WHEELS & TYRES** 5 x 15in wire wheels / 155-82-15 radials
- **TOP SPEED** 94 mph
- **ECONOMY** 30 mpg

### Updated and updated

- 1098cc A-series engine.
- LCB free-flow stainless steel exhaust manifold.
- Stainless steel exhaust system.
- Later baulk-ring gearbox.
- AVO rear coil-over dampers.
- Midget front discs and calipers.
- Electric fan.
- Repositioned steering rack.
- Radial tyres.

“We drive our cars a lot so we felt it best to fit an engine that could keep up with traffic”

blasted, etch-primed, and painted chassis black.”

Progress was good, and towards the end of 2003 the rolling chassis was virtually complete thanks to a rebuilt steering rack, new trackrods, suspension arms, dampers, bearings, bushes, brake pipes, and re-chromed wheels etc. It was around this time that Russell decided to upgrade the car slightly, beginning with the engine. “The 948 is fine, but we drive our cars a lot so we felt it best to fit an engine that could keep up with traffic”, reasons Russell. “I found an early Midget in a local scrapyards. It was in

a dreadful state and beyond viable restoration so I bought it for parts, particularly its engine. This has since been rebuilt and fitted to the Turner. Because of the improved performance, I converted from front drums to discs. I had the Midget’s calipers reconditioned and fitted new discs and pads.”

### Donor Midget

The mouldy Midget donated a number of parts to the cause, although they had to be refurbished of course. This took time, as did sourcing the other parts required. However, by planning ahead, and

buying well in advance, Russell managed to keep the project on track and spread the cost. Crucially, he kept a photographic record of every aspect of the strip-down. This image library proved to be invaluable during the re-assembly process, especially when installing the new steel and alloy tub. The tub, which forms a major part of the Turner’s construction, was hand-built by Turner enthusiast Nigel Taylor. It’s a metal masterpiece.

With the tub installed, repainted, and most of the interior trim trial-fitted, the time had arrived for Russell to repair the GRP body and



8) 2006  
Russell and his Dad build up this wooden support, to protect the GRP body.



9) 2010  
The Turner was MoT'd and took part in the 2010 at Prescott Hillclimb.



10) 2010  
Fresh from S & B's spraybooth, resplendent in its new colour of 'Emocion Red'.



Turner is wonderfully detailed.



Based in Wolverhampton, Turner built cars and kits until 1966.

## Russell's specialists

- Charles Ware Morris Minor Centre [www.morrisminor.org.uk](http://www.morrisminor.org.uk)
- Moss (Bristol) [www.moss-europe.co.uk](http://www.moss-europe.co.uk)
- AH Spares [www.ahspares.co.uk](http://www.ahspares.co.uk)
- Woolies [www.woolies-trim.co.uk](http://www.woolies-trim.co.uk)

fit it to the tub and chassis. "This took a lot of patience, and occupied most of my spare time during 2005 and 2006", said Russell pensively. "To prevent the body from distorting, dad and I secured it to a wooden frame we built. However, in repairing the bodyshell, some of the reference and mounting points were lost. The photo records came in very handy, although it was still definitely a case of measure twice, and drill or cut once. Dad's been a massive help at times like this."

Between 2006 and 2009 Russell managed to complete the repairs, finish re-trimming the interior, re-wire the electrical system, and mount the doors. "There were undrilled door jambs on the new inner tub", Russell elaborates.

"Aligning and fitting the suicide doors was nerve-wracking. To check that everything fitted, I did a full 'dummy' build. I actually MOT'd

## RESTO TOP TIP

On BMC-based cars, the lower arms are from the Midget. Grind the inner edge away, or they foul the chassis tubes.

the car like this and it was on the road in December 2009, which was during its 50th birthday year... just. I used it unpainted for the 2010 'Classics on the Hill' at Prescott, and Castle Combe Circuit's 60th anniversary event. I couldn't wait to get the car painted."

## Emotive paint

Before 1118 RE was transported to S & B Automotive Academy in Bristol for painting, Russell removed all of the interior and exterior trim and sent the brightwork away to be re-chromed. S & B is of course the Automotive Academy responsible for the sublime paintwork that adorns editor Gary's Peerless. Both cars were at S & B around the same time... and the Turner was painted Seat 'Emocion Red', once Russell had seen the Peerless. "Seeing the car as it rolled out of the paint booth was wonderful", enthuses Russell. "I can't thank S & B enough. They did a wonderful job. The paintwork is superb and with the rechromed parts, provided the perfect finishing touch."



## CM SAYS...

Tuners were always well ahead of their time, as the feature car demonstrates so effectively. Sympathetically and sensitively restored, with a first-rate standard of work, mostly undertaken in the owner's lock-up with his dad's help, 1108 RE is a joy to drive, look at, and own. This small sports car harks back to a halcyon period, a period when the British kit car or 'specials' movement was in full swing. It's one of the best of a truly British breed. Terrific. **CM**