



**1957 MG
Magnette ZB**

ENGINE 1489cc/4-cyl/OHV

POWER 60bhp@4600rpm

TORQUE 78lb ft@3000rpm

GEARBOX 5-spd manual
(Type-9 conversion)

0-60MPH 22.6sec

TOP SPEED 80mph

FUEL ECONOMY 24mpg

The slow burner 1946 MG Magnette ZB

This MG Magnette had lived in chicken sheds and barns for more than 30 years. Then, one day, John Beesley decided 'now was the time' to restore it.

The 1946 four-door saloon had just two owners from new, a bank manager and John's wife Donna. The ZB has been in the Beesley family since 1974, when it replaced an MG TA that John had bought for £180 in the early 1960s with his wedding funds. 'It's OK - my wife approved,' he says with a smile.

Right from the start, ZB ownership involved heavy-duty maintenance. 'I had to weld it for its first MoT,' John says. 'In 1974 the MG Car Club's Magnette register offered sills, but you had to drive to Sussex to get them.' John did the trip from Hertfordshire, fitted the metal and the child seats and the couple were

Magnette drivers until 1978, when a slipping clutch and corrosion sent the ZB skulking off to a barn near their home. And for the next 30 years the ZB remained in storage. Every now and again it would move as friends' barns and chicken runs became available. 'I just couldn't bring myself to scrap it,' says John.

'The Magnette spent 30 years in storage. I just couldn't bring myself to scrap it'



JOHN'S RESTO TIP
To remove the column from the ZB steering rack, turn the rack to the end of its travel – there's a small tooth to help you.

In 2009, he made the decision to put his ZB back on the road. 'I wanted to do the restoration in my garden workshop, where I make railway lamps, but that would mean taking down the fence that divides our house from our neighbours' to get the car in. Luckily, they agreed, and we liberated the ZB from its farm and brought it home.'

John made a list of all the panels and bits he was going to need and contacted Magnette specialist Shoretons. Lou



The B-series engine was rebuilt and married to a Type-9 gearbox. The interior needed a jolly good clean.



Shoreton answered the phone. 'I hadn't contacted her since 1975, when we had chatted about what it would take to get the ZB into really good nick. When I told her my name she remembered the conversation we'd had and the panels I'd need – 30 years on!'

Attention to detail

Remarkable recall was followed by remarkable attention to detail as John ripped the Magnette apart, and then sent the shell to SPL to get the bodyshell chemically dipped and stripped.

'I wanted to see the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,' he says. And that's what he got. Once faced with the naked ZB, he braced the shell, mounted it on a car turner and set to with a MIG welder.

Over the next two-and-a-half years, John went through the bodywork methodically. He even taught himself lead loading in the process. 'I do a lot of soldering when I make my lamps, lead loading is just like a big version of it. I enjoyed it,' he says.

It wasn't all plain sailing, though. The biggest headache came with the fitting of the doors. It took three weeks' solid work and the best door skin was the worst to fit. It just didn't line up. 'Sometimes I think new old-stock panels are only out there because they have been discarded in the past for not being right,' says John.

The shell was then taken back to SPL for phosphate coating followed by a respray in Birch Grey two-pack by SWB of Bovingdon. Peter Gamble rebuilt the B-series engine and married it to a Ford Type-9 five-speed gearbox. John is a big fan of this upgrade. 'It makes a massive difference – 75mph at 3000rpm. I've done an electronic ignition conversion and fitted a digital mechanism from a modern clock in the roof timepiece.'



The Owners John and Donna Beesley, Hertfordshire

The Beesleys live in Berkhamsted, Herts. John (pictured above with his post SPL ZB) makes reproduction light fittings for the heritage railway industry. Next time you see a steam train, it will probably be fitted with one of John's lamps.

Celebrations

John put everything back together in his garden shed. 'We managed to make it to the Gerald Palmer 100 at Gaydon in 2011 to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the Magnette's creator,' he says. 'In fact, the first time I drove it was around Gaydon's perimeter road. Minus wings and bonnet.'

The MoT was passed first time and now John uses his ZB as much as possible – the most recent outing was to the Magnette 60th event in Coventry on August 10-11.