



Car stolen in Birmingham was traced with a tracker to Southampton docks and recovered from inside a shipping container.

### Time to get a tracker?

Thefts of vehicles have been growing in recent years with thieves, particularly organised crime gangs, using sophisticated techniques enabling them to remove cars rapidly which make tracing and recovering them very difficult. **Without prompt information that a theft has occurred together with the vehicle's whereabouts, the chances of tracing and recovering a stolen vehicle are often low.** Recent reports indicate that with steadily rising classic car values, some thieves have become active in stealing classics like Jaguars, Triumphs, MGs and Land Rovers. Sadly they are often attracted by breaking the cars for the valuable parts and the relative ease with which those parts can be sold in the secondhand parts market. The reality is many UK police forces have seen a tightening of resources because of ongoing budget cutbacks so are often losing the battle against car theft. So **private firms could have an increasing role in finding stolen cars including classic cars.** For many classic car enthusiasts aware of these risks their concern will be "what are the realistic anti-theft options, what are the costs and where can I learn more to be able to make a decision on what to do?"

### What are the security options for a classic car owner?

There are essentially two types of security measures: first various measures to deter the theft of the car and second live monitoring of the car for disturbance alerts and its location so if it is stolen there are measures available to trace and recover the car promptly. Without prompt information on the car's whereabouts and your being able to make that available to the police or to a commercial monitoring and recovery service, the chances of recovery are much lower.

The measures to deter the theft of a classic car include a battery isolator with a removable key, a secret ignition cut-off switch, a secret switch to cut the feed to the fuel pump, removing the rotor arm, a steering wheel lock and a wheel clamp. Of course parking in a safe place is also a wise measure too! Another security check is

to make sure your car cannot be seen on Google Street View – if it is there then ask them to remove it. Also be vigilant at shows and events as thieves on the lookout for cars they target for theft may possibly place a portable tracking unit on your car as it leaves the venue so they can track where it is kept for a future theft.

**Live monitoring of the vehicle is best provided by a concealed tracker** which provides both an alert when the car experiences disturbance and also, very importantly, live information on the whereabouts of the car if it is stolen to locate the car and help achieve its prompt recovery.

Here Victor Smith reviews what tracker options are available for classic car enthusiasts, what protection they provide, what information is available from a tracker, the monitoring services provided by the tracker and any associated commercial specialist service, the recovery rates and the concerns over thieves jamming tracker devices.

### What tracker options are available and what do they provide?

In mid-2015 I fitted a [budget GPS tracker](#) as a hard wired installation in my MGBGTV8. With a link by a mobile network, it was able to provide disturbance alerts and also, in response to a phone call from my prior approved mobile number, the tracker would send me an automated message with details of the vehicle's location. It was a basic, low cost device providing a reassuring level of tracking information. Almost four years on it's clear that trackers have become much more sophisticated.

The range of **professional tracker systems** is now:

**Type A1 trackers** with GPS (Global Positioning System), GSM (Global System for Mobile communications) and RF (Radio Frequency device) with an indoor and outdoor location capability and a 24/7 monitoring and stolen vehicle recovery service. If GPS signals are jammed it will still have location and recovery capabilities. With a professional fulltime monitoring service, then emergency Level 1 police support is available. It has good GSM mobile communication connectivity with a dedicated SIM card that is GPRS and SMS enabled, (usually with international roaming). A GPS defined geo-fence area can be created around the vehicle and then monitored by the tracker.

**Type A2 trackers** with GSM and RF location for indoor and outdoor recovery without GPS but it will always need an RF local signal finder using VHF or UHF radio direction signal finding equipment to help locate and recover items hidden from satellite view.



Mike Howlett relies on a steering wheel locking device he bought from Halfords some years ago which is an ideal size for the MGB.

**Type A3 trackers** with only GPS location which may not be available if either GPS jamming equipment is in use or if the tracker is hidden from a GPS satellite view – for example where a car is located in an underground car park or metal container.

**DIY tracking systems** which are more basic GPS trackers usually supplied with a PAYGO Voice SIM designed to report GPS positions for short periods. Usually these devices do not have professional support services like monitoring and stolen vehicle recovery. The tracker cannot be tracked and the vehicle recovered without GPS so will not function if a GPS jammer is in use by the thieves or the vehicle is hidden from GPS satellite view.

#### What are the commercial monitoring and vehicle recovery services?

These services monitor your tracker continuously on a 24/7 basis and respond to any unauthorised movement when their physical tracing and recovery services are provided. Their success rate in locating and recovering vehicles and equipment is very good and they have close coordination with local police forces.

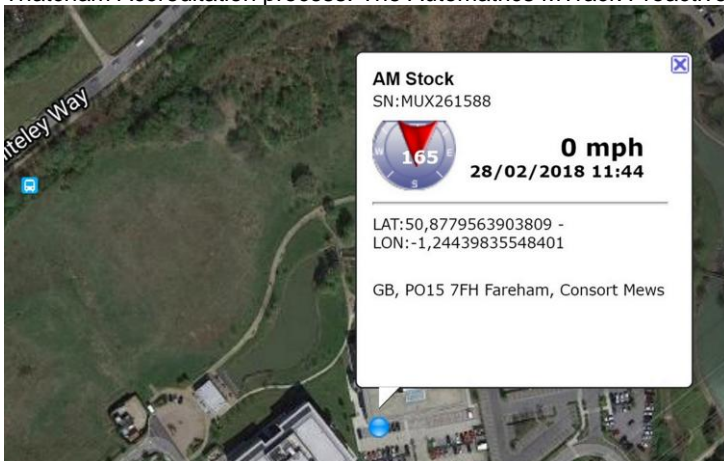
#### Automatics' car trackers can help recover stolen cars

Automatics is a private company based in Fareham in Hampshire which is specialist provider of trackers and the essential monitoring and theft recovery services. On their website they have a regular series of video reports of those services in action where vehicles and valuable machinery have been tracked and successfully recovered. [Video recovery example](#)

Automatics is a leading security tracking system and services provider for a unique line of Thatcham approved tracking devices. These "Insurance Approved" trackers are installed all over the World. Their long-life battery powered tracking devices can be discreetly hidden by owners in their vehicles and armed by remote control to detect any unauthorised movement, enabling the proactive alarming, live tracking and recovery.

Automatics' GPS, GSM and a UHF radio location technology can position to an accuracy of less than one metre. This unique technology enables their equipment to work where competitors fail, tracking assets located indoors or hidden from satellites inside shipping containers for example. They can also be used when a GPS jammer is in use by thieves. Systems are professionally monitored 24/7 by Automatics staff. The innovative product development by Automatics ensures their products remain ahead of competitors and keep criminals guessing.

Automatics were first to take a self-powered tracker through the Thatcham Accreditation process. The Automatics MTrack Proactive



Map available via the tracker showing its location to enable it to be found and the car recovered

model remains the only rechargeable approved device. They have host devices on a secure server with over 100,000 trackers attached and offer 24/7 alarm monitoring directly to customers to ensure they receive best in class service.

Many valuable cars can be an easy target for organised crime with thousands stolen every year. Covert self-powered car tracking devices are particularly suitable as they cannot be scanned and have a strong and robust casing, up to 4 years battery life and motion detection. It's these features that make the **Automatics MTrack theft recovery car tracker** the perfect system for classic car security.

Automatics trackers have an **impressive 98% recovery record since 2008**. Using preventative measures such as using CCTV and parking in perceived safe areas make sense but nothing will stop a determined thief. The ultimate security protection can only be achieved through fitting an Automatics MTrack car tracking device, providing the best chance to recover high theft risk cars such as Land Rovers, Range Rovers, Audis, Porsches, BMWs and more recently classic vehicles.

#### Automatics MTrack Proactive

The [MTrack Proactive](#) is a self powered tracker with a 30 month battery life (when it will need a 12 hour recharge) and is the only CPI Secured by Design Police Preferred Specification and insurance accepted tracker. It comes with the first year of Automatics 24/7 monitoring service and has a 3 year warranty. It is easy to fit. The cost is £347 including VAT and free shipping. Fellow V8 Register member Gavin Brown in Australia has used this device and says "the units are excellent and they do have a very high success rate in getting stolen vehicles and farm equipment back. Basic trackers won't work unless they have a clear view of the sky whereas the MTrack can. Like anything, you get what you pay for: it just depends upon the value of the item you want to protect and track. The feature I like is that it is battery powered and not hardwired, so it required no electrical installation and you could simply remove it when you changed cars. The Automatics service has been brilliant and I have to give credit where credit is due. I can't account for their competitors but at no point have I been disappointed - they are right on the money."

#### MPNAutomatics Active SS

This is their smallest wired tracking unit 45mm x 45mm x 20mm. It has the same high quality Automatics customer services but with a super small GPS, GSM and UHF radio location wired device. Rechargeable backup battery and embedded antennas. For buyers who do not need a tracker with Thatcham certification right now, this unit is currently ahead of all insurance standards. Users have the same functionality on this Automatics tracking unit. The tracker comes with the first year of the Automatics monitoring service and costs £274 including VAT and free shipping. Automatics – [www.trackersecurity.co.uk](http://www.trackersecurity.co.uk) and **01329 663812**.

There may be a reluctance to spend on security measures by owners of mid price range classic cars, like Condition 1 MG V8s, but the reality is classic car theft is on the increase and whilst an enthusiast may not use their car a great deal, on a few occasions their car can be left in a potentially vulnerable location. For example outside a Premier Inn over the MGLive! weekend or whilst on a touring event. It only needs one successful theft for the car to be lost. Our cars are not just financial assets but are also cherished and the loss would be more than just money. So I feel the case for more sophisticated security measures for even mid range classics is increasing.