



Doug Bond with the MGBGT V8 Conversion at a track day at Goodwood

Easysteer Electric Power Assisted Steering

Hi my name is Stewart Howson, I'm a member of the Tyne/Tees centre. My car is an MGB GT V8 conversion, people will know it as Doug Bond's old car.

Recently, as quite a few 70 year olds do, I've been having some problems with my neck and shoulders and on a recent trip to Angouleme, I realised that at slow speeds and parking I was struggling with the steering. I mentioned my problem to one of our travelling companions, who happened to live in the North West, and he suggested I spoke about electric power-assisted steering to Rick at Easysteer in Chorley, of whom he'd heard good things. I had heard about Rick before from people I knew in the Historic Rally scene in the North so I thought I'd give it a shot as electric power steering was probably cheaper in the long run than physiotherapy . . . and less painful!

I did a bit of internet research which seemed to show satisfied customers and gave Rick a ring. He was pleasant, direct and gave a clear impression of knowing what he was doing and I warmed to him pretty soon into the conversation when, hearing that my car was a V8 conversion, he told me that he would not sell me a kit of parts for myself or a garage to fit but would insist on doing the work himself due to possible complications. (He was proved to be right). He was however willing to take on the job having first asked me to send him photos of the car's steering and up behind the dash. He quoted me a price which I thought was reasonable given the cost of some of the other systems on the market. He had a busy schedule but had the possibility of a window immediately after New Year, the offer of which I took up. The local panto I should have been appearing in up here in Northumberland having been cancelled when Storm Arwen blew the roof off the Arts Centre . . . oh yes it did!

Rick can do a fitting on a standard car in a day if all goes well but he did warn me that mine might take a bit longer. I set off with Gillian from Northumberland on Sunday January 2nd January and, lulled into a false sense of security by beautiful weather at home and good forecasts on the telly, decided to travel across the A69 down the Tyne Valley to the M6 and down the motorway to Chorley. Alas by the time we went over the top of Shap the weather turned atrocious with high winds, driving rain and standing water. Me n 'Er won't go that way again!

Because we had to let Rick start early doors on Monday we arranged with him to drop off the car at his place on the Sunday afternoon and went to stay at a local place called the Hind's Head Hotel, which wasn't the nearest hostelry but had recently been renovated and seemed to have the best reviews for being "warm & welcoming" and "fine rustic dining" which proved to be very accurate and we had as good a night's food, drink and very pro service as at some "Country House Hotels" at which we've stayed. (Although they don't do breakfast). We could have stayed there longer than the one night but had seized the chance of a late New Year visit to friends near Clitheroe who picked us up in the morning and took us back to their place where we would stay the night.

Rick rang me after a few hours to tell me that, as he had thought might be likely, he'd hit a snag. During the conversion of the car thirty years ago the bracket holding the steering column had been welded-in rather than bolted and it was going to take a few hours to cut that out. Again he was straightforward about that putting a couple of hours extra on the bill which I was OK with given it meant a great deal of fiddly work trying to get up the back of the dash with cutting tools instead of undoing a set of bolts. I hadn't noticed that was the case and ought really to have known about it and told him in advance.

The car would be ready late Tuesday but at that stage I made arrangements with Rick to leave it till first thing Wednesday morning to pick it up, as that meant we could run back home in the daylight. It also happened that our friends would have had difficulty taking us back over to Chorley in the afternoon so it suited us better to leave it.

On Wednesday we turned up to pick up the finished car, Rick showed me the evidence of the welded in bracket and the bits into which it had had to be chopped. He also showed me the installation including the extra bracket to the inner front wing needed to support the steering column with the extra umph from the electric motor. We then took the car for a drive with me at the wheel under Rick's supervision, and stopped at a big empty pub carpark where Rick instructed me to do a U-turn which was so light and easy. He then turned off the power and I did it again which very much showed me the effort I'd needed before. There's no wonder my shoulders ached! It is a transformation.

We paid up and set off home with the system turned down slightly from full EPAS. This time over the A59, Clitheroe, Skipton, Harrogate, Ripon and up to the A1. That's a fine run over the moors back into God's Own with plenty of bends and swooping hills. The car felt fine as it did up the A1M back to Newcastle and beyond. After washing the salt off I put the car away in the garage which is a tight squeeze and involves a fair bit of manoeuvring which had become an effort before and now was a doddle.

So, I've done a hundred and fifty miles with the car and my impressions are very favourable indeed. The EPAS conversion is very neat, you'd have to go looking for it.

It's snowing now and so the car is staying inside but I'm dying to get the B out and have a run over Northumbrian fells and up the coast. If you all weren't so far away from civilization I'd say pop round and have a dekko for yourselves.

Regards
Stewart Howson