

# The Driving Member

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V8

The Edward Turner V8 40th Anniversary



# The Daimler V8s



1964 'C' spec SP250.

## The Cars

Confident that most Daimler enthusiasts and especially V8 owners will have read these books, there is little point in recounting the success story of the engine in minute detail. However, engines do not design themselves, and all too often those who carry out this most essential of all tasks remain unsung heroes and completely unknown to those thousands of drivers who have, and still do, derive so much pleasure from their efforts.

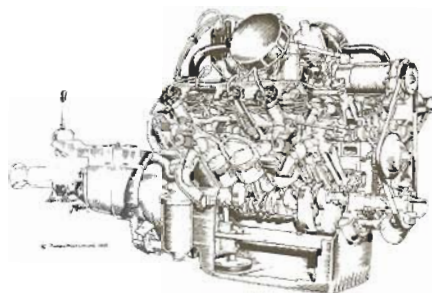
This month's rally is to celebrate the life and achievements of Edward Turner - the inspiration behind the V8, whose very brief association with the Daimler Company left such a lasting impression. Indeed, it may not be going too far to speculate that had Turner not pushed through the V8 project, there is every possibility that after the Jaguar takeover, the name "Daimler" may have disappeared completely. As it was, in 1960 Daimler took to their new masters, two very fine engines which served the company well for almost another ten years.

It is commonly thought that the 2.5 litre V8 engine was specifically designed for the "Dart" sports car - few realise that the original intention was to slot the engine into a new saloon car aimed at lifting Daimler's fortunes at a time when their staid and dated image was

THIS YEAR SEES THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LAUNCH OF ARGUABLY DAIMLER'S FINEST EVER ENGINE. JUDGED IN TERMS OF PRODUCTION NUMBERS IT WAS CERTAINLY THE MOST SUCCESSFUL ALTHOUGH IT'S ARRIVAL IN 1959 CAME TOO LATE TO SAVE THE COMPANY FROM BEING TAKEN OVER BY JAGUAR IN 1960.

THE REST IS HISTORY NOW, AND IT THIS HISTORIC ENGINE WHICH WE ARE CELEBRATING THIS MONTH WITH THE EDWARD TURNER MEMORIAL RALLY AT THE JAGUAR-DAIMLER HERITAGE TRUST CENTRE IN COVENTRY.

THE ENTIRE HISTORY OF THE ENGINE AND ITS APPLICATION HAS BEEN COVERED EXTENSIVELY, BOTH IN THE DRIVING MEMBER, THE CLASSIC CAR PRESS AND ALSO THE EXCELLENT BOOKS ON THE MARQUE WRITTEN BY BRIAN SMITH ("DAIMLER TRADITION" AND "DAIMLER DAYS") AND BRIAN LONG ("DAIMLER CENTENARY" AND "THE SP250").



Cut-away SP Engine

desperately in need of a facelift of major proportions. The prime objective seems to have been the saloon, but even from the time of conception, a sports models was very much in mind as a stablemate to a new saloon. As things turned out, the SP hit the market first where the saloon was handicapped by the lack of a suitable body shell. It had to happen eventually as indeed it did in 1962 and went on to become the most successful Daimler ever. As it was, Turner experimented with the engine, first in a Century body shell (sparkling performance of course) and then a Vauxhall Cresta body, even contemplating using some of the Vauxhall body panels around which to construct a new luxury saloon. Fortunately this project was scrapped, but in order to get the engine onto the market as quickly as possible, Turner pressed ahead with the idea of using it in a low-budget sports car aimed at the American market. BSA group stablemate "Carbodies" were commissioned to build a prototype, the intention being to use a glass-fibre body to keep costs down and also to "steal" a tried and tested Triumph TR chassis design for ease of construction.

The saloon version was code-named the "DN250" and experiments were carried out using Vauxhall Cresta bodyshells (see illustrations). A slightly later alternative was toyed with using a

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lengthened SP chassis and entirely new body styling. This version was to be called the "Dynamic". The illustration shows what the car was intended to look like - again, perhaps it is as well that it never made it onto a production line! Jack Wickes' annotation on the reverse of his original photograph reads;

*This project is based on the "Dart" chassis, which is identical in every respect except that it is 12" longer. The body styling would be a complete break-away from Daimler and conform to the modern selling formula which, with variations, is current throughout the world. It has been arrived at by the following considerations:- 6 seat, Maximum boot room, Best view for driver and passengers, Lower costs - and because it has a fashion basis of function and cost is likely to survive for many years.*

Prophetic words indeed as it never left the drawing board! One wonders what would have been the outcome had Turner chosen the Jaguar 2.4/3.4 (Mk I) shell at the beginning.

Despite optimistic market research and assessment, the SP250 failed to achieve popular acceptance or sales on either side of the Atlantic, but the engine was a winner; even if car buyers found it difficult accepting the SP's rather quirky looks. Rather than drop the SP when they took over, Jaguar persevered and steadily improved the car over the next four years, but falling sales and with the "E-type" also in the stable and a direct competitor to boot, the SP's future was sealed and production ended in 1964. Jaguar toyed with an SP252 to replace the 250 but costings brought it too close to the E-type so all but one of the prototypes were broken up. The sole surviving SP252 still exists and is undergoing restoration by current owner and club member Brian Peacock (1). A strange irony was that the SP appealed to the Police as a pursuit car. The MI had recently opened and motorcyclists in particular were keen to try their performance on such a straight and level surface. The main culprits were said to be Triumph Thunderbird riders. Strange that the Police needed one Edward Turner engine to catch another! Despite being considered ugly in its day, fashions have changed to the extent that the SP250 is now a very desirable car and enjoys a loyal following the world over. In all some 2600 SP250s were built. As an interesting footnote, Daimler exhibited a "close-coupled" coupe at the 1959 Motor Show with an enclosed body by Hooper. To many eyes this was a far more attractive looking car than the production SP, but it never made production and none survived.

William Lyons was not slow to appreciate that marque loyalty was strong for the "Daimler" brand name, and as luck would have it, the V8 engine slipped nicely into the Mk II bodyshell. Here was an opportunity too good to miss. In 1962 he announced a "new" Daimler

# The Daimler V8s continued...



1: DN250 artist's impression

2: DN250 mock-up

3: The "Dynamic"

Photos: The Jack Wickes personal collection

4: Edward Turner handing over the first Police SP accompanied by a fleet of Triumph Police Motorcycles

5: Edward Turner at the wheel of the first pre-production SP

Photo: Jack Wickes



(1) Brian Peacock's onward restoration of SP252 was featured in the April 1998 of The Driving Member. □







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**6: DP250 Hooper mock-up**

**7: A pre-production prototype SP250**

**8: Pre-production artist's impression**

Photos: The Jack Wickes personal collection

**9: Jack Wickes holidaying in a pre-production SP250**

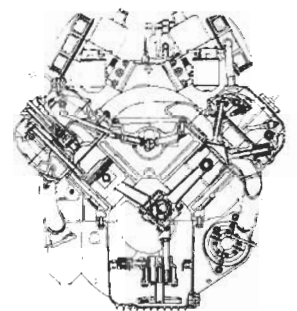
Photo: Jack Wickes

**10: SP252**

Photo: Duncan Saunders



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aimed at the executive classes such as Solicitors, bank managers and doctors. The new 2.5/V8 saloon was an instant success and went on to sell nearly 18,000 units until its final demise in 1969. As with the SP, it was the engine which won most of the accolades; silky smooth and powerful it mated well with the Borg Warner 35 auto-box and initially was offered in this form only. Not until early 1967 was a manual version offered. Strangely, the vast majority of the saloons were right hand drive, selling well in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia where they still drove on the left. Few (only 627) left hand drives were built and are now rari-

ties. Sadly, along with its Jaguar Mk II siblings, the V8 suffered at the hands of British Leyland's cost-cutting of 1967 with the loss of leather as a standard interior trim, the loss of the burr walnut top-rail and the fitting of slimmer bumpers. Unlike the Jaguars however, the new V8/250 retained its foglamps and a manual gearbox was still offered as an option although fewer than 800 were built. Not content with just the 2.5 litre engine, Turner pressed on with what many consider to be an even better variant - the 4.5 litre. Whilst similar in design to the smaller version, this was not just a bored-out 2.5. Daimler's last

chance saloon, the Majestic received glowing press reviews but its engine was by now old fashioned and unappealing to buyers. Experiments with the 4.5 engine in the Majestic resulted in the launch in 1960 of the Majestic Major although the straight-six Majestic did struggle on for a while with minimal sales. The new Majestic Major was a gem. Perhaps the styling was still a little dated but press reviews of the new car were even more enthusiastic as despite weighing in at around two tons, the car demonstrated sports car performance with limousine comfort. Indeed, the DR limousine version could power to almost 120 mph with eight up. Despite



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# The Daimler V8s continued...



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being in production for eight years, only 2000 MMs were built - 1150 saloons and 850 limousines.

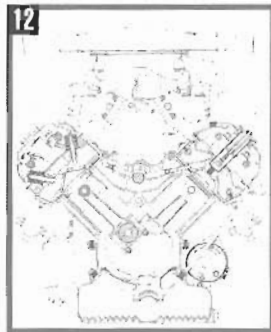
The Majestic Major was the last true Daimler - owing nothing to Jaguar, either bodily or mechanically. Its final demise came in 1968 when it was replaced by both the XJ series saloons, and the DS420 limousines. Some chassis were supplied without bodies for the funeral trade with specialist body-builders constructing what were, and probably still are, the fastest hearses ever made.

The 2.5 engine was for a time, also offered in a marine version, providing exhilarating speed boat performance. This really was a truly versatile power plant.

Brian Long's excellent book on the SP250 covers in some detail the many other achievements of the 2.5 engine, not only for road going use, but also for racing and competitions, as a base for "special" builders, for marine applications and for drag-racing. This publication, along with those by Brian Smith referred to above are commended to anyone wishing to explore in greater depth the applications to which these fine engines were put. Not only does this engine look extremely good - it sounds right too. Despite being one of the smallest capacity V8s ever built - it surely ranks as one of the very best.

## The People

So little has ever been published about Edward Turner that he has become one of the shadowy "backroom" boys of the motor industry's history. Whilst this



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may be true for car enthusiasts, it is certainly the reverse for motor cycle fans. ET was essentially a motor cycle man having spent the greater part of his working life involved in the design of arguably some of the greatest bikes ever built. Indeed, Turner spent only four short years with cars - not even a decent apprenticeship - but his impact is still felt today. Initially, when Turner decided on a V8 for the anticipated new Daimler engine, he was probably influenced by the fact that at the time, he was driving a Cadillac and had a high regard for its V8 engine. Basing the bottom end on traditional Cadillac design, he had decided that the best configuration was the 90 degree formation, and then adding his extensive motor cycle design experience, he chose the Triumph top-end layout with hemi-spherical heads, but opted for a single camshaft with pushrods to keep the engine compact and light. Turner's assistant for many years was Jack Wickes, and it was he

*"Turner's assistant for many years was Jack Wickes, and it was he who turned ET's ideas into reality with detailed working drawings and refinements of his own. In many ways, the V8 engine owes almost as much to Jack Wickes who worked tirelessly to ensure that everything about the engine was as it should be. Wickes' contribution to Turner's success is inestimable".*



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were a truly great partnership although neither received any official recognition during their lifetimes. In honouring the genius of Edward Turner, we also acknowledge the contribution made by Jack Wickes - whether Turner's ideas and visions would have succeeded as well without Wickes' long term support



and assistance can only be surmised. Without doubt, Wickes played a significant role in the success both of Triumph and the Daimler V8s and in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the "ET Engine", we must also pay tribute to ET's "pencil". This issue of the "Driving Member" pays tribute to both of these talented men, their skill and foresight and their brilliance. In addition, the lives and careers of both Turner and Wickes are described in our three major features, one of which has been written especially for this 40th anniversary



**11: Edward Turner**

**12: 4.5 V8 profile**

**13: 1967 Daimler Majestic Major - the last 'true' Daimler**

**14: Majestic Major Hearse**  
Photo: Neill Bruce

**15: Majestic Major Limousine**  
Photo c/o: Robert Hughes

**16: One of the last V8250s**

**17: One of the last 2.5/V8s**  
Photo: Barry Pladdys



issue. Accompanying this short introduction are just a few of the not-so-often seen photographs of the cars, engines and people associated with the Daimler V8. I am very grateful to Keith Humphreys of the SP250 Club of New Zealand for supplying some of the photos and for putting me in touch with

so many sources of information. Motorcycle journalist Jeff Clew has very kindly written a potted biography of Edward Turner as a precursor to his full biography which should be finished and published soon. I am personally very grateful to Jeff for shelving other (more lucrative) work in order to write the

article in time for the July rally.

Jack Wickes' daughter Vida also merits a sincere expression of my appreciation. Vida very kindly unearthed her father's papers and has made many original and previously unpublished photographs and other material available to me. I am extremely grateful for her generous

help. My thanks also to Mike Nicks, former editor of "Classic Bike" magazine who has kindly consented to the reprinting of two articles on Messrs Turner and Wickes. □



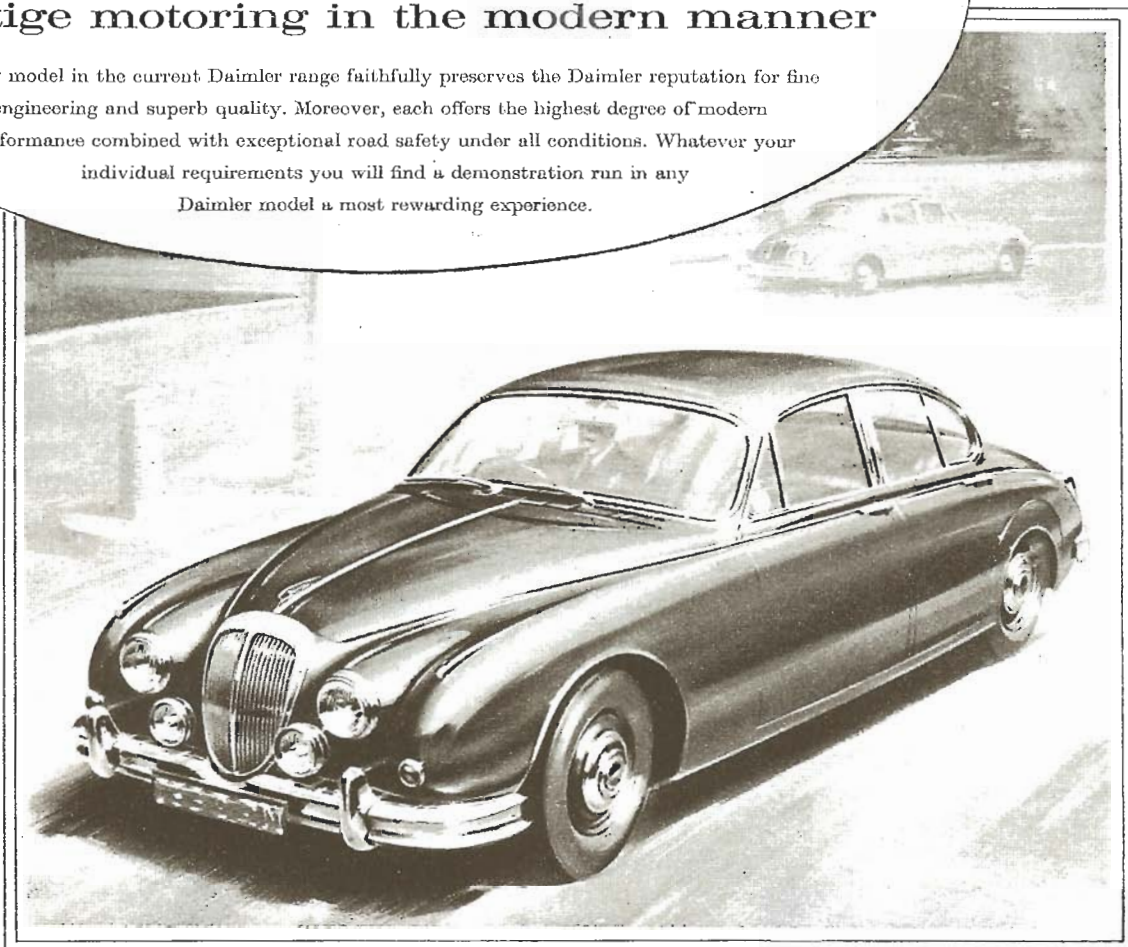


# Daimler

present

## Prestige motoring in the modern manner

Every model in the current Daimler range faithfully preserves the Daimler reputation for fine engineering and superb quality. Moreover, each offers the highest degree of modern performance combined with exceptional road safety under all conditions. Whatever your individual requirements you will find a demonstration run in any Daimler model a most rewarding experience.



### THE 2 1/2 LITRE V-8 SALOON

2 1/2 litre V-8 engine  
Automatic transmission  
Disc brakes on all four wheels



### THE MAJESTIC MAJOR 4 1/2 LITRE SALOON

4 1/2 litre V-8 engine. Automatic transmission. Disc brakes on all four wheels. 20 cubic ft. capacity luggage boot



### THE SP250 V-8 SPORTS

2 1/2 litre V-8 engine  
Aerodynamic body  
Disc brakes on all four wheels

### THE EIGHT SEATER LIMOUSINE

4 1/2 litre V-8 engine  
Automatic transmission  
Disc brakes on all four wheels  
Power assisted steering



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The Daimler V8 Models: Technical Specification

	SP250	V8 Saloon	Majestic Major
Engine	90 degree V8	90 degree V8	90 degree V8
Cubic capacity	2548cc	2548cc	4561cc
Compression Ratio	8.2:1	8.2:1	8:1
Power Output	140bhp@5800rpm	140bhp@5800rpm	220bhp@5500rpm
Maximum Torque	155lb/ft@3600rpm	155lb/ft@3600rpm	283lb/ft@3200rpm
Transmission	4 speed man or 3 speed auto	3 speed auto or 4 speed man (from 1967)	3 speed auto only
Front Suspension	Inde coil	Inde coil	Inde coil
Rear Suspension	elliptic	cantilever leaf with Panhard rod	elliptics
Steering	cam	Burman recirculating ball (power option)	power
Brakes	4 wheel discs	4 wheel discs	4 wheel discs
Turning Circle	33'6"	33"	42'
Length	13'5"	15' 0 3/4"	16'10"
Width	5' 01/4"	5' 3/4"	6' 1 1/2"
Wheelbase	7'8"	8' 11 3/4"	9'6"
Fuel Capacity	12 galls	12 galls	16 galls
Fuel system	SU electric pump	SU electric pump	twin SU electric pumps
Carburettors	twin SU HD6	twin SU HD6	twin SU HD8
Price new when launched	£1355	£1785	£3083

"Daisy"..."Daisy"  
 Recently acquired by new member Phil Warner from Arkansas, is this fine (and rare) 1965 DR450. Being white, no doubt George will be getting quite envious! Sadly, Phil cannot join us at the ET rally - he can't afford the petrol!



Top: "Daisy" as first seen  
 Above: "Daisy" comes home



Daimler 2.5 V8 Photo c/o Robert Hughes



# John Box (SP250 test driver) remembers...

An important feature that is generally overlooked is that it was the first ever Daimler engine built with mainly bought-in components. This came about because the Company foundry was closed in 1957 and cylinder blocks, heads, sumps, etc could not be made on site. It was also the first post-war engine to be finished in black enamel rather than grey. As most of the parts were coming from outside I recall that it took quite a long time to collect up all the parts necessary to complete the first engines. First impressions were that it was ridiculously easy to assemble apart from the spark plug tubes which did not fit very well and had to be sealed, as did everything else, with "Wellseal", a brown goeey substance made by the Wellworthy Piston Co. Another break from tradition was the switch from Castrol to BP Visco-Static oil for the test programme. This was pink in colour and known as raspberry juice. Apart from scuffing of the cam followers and oil leakage from the rear main, there were no major difficulties with the engine.

As we had no chassis available we fitted a B.W. Auto box to an engine and wriggled it into a Century "WHA 606" which previously had been lent to Ken Wharton. The Birmingham area

registration number was a happy coincidence. This was a brilliant combination, the testers from Browns Lane could not understand why this perpendicular saloon from Radford could stay glued to their tails on the A45. The engine testing was in the hands of George Fabel and his team so following the assembly of the first engines and chassis, I switched to the road test team.

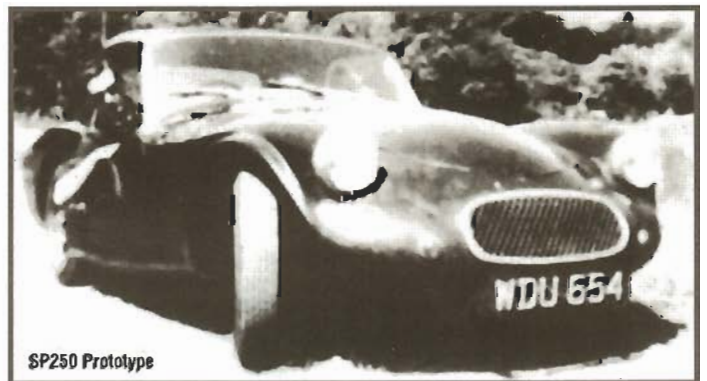
I was used to the impeccable manners of Daimler products from the LD10 to the DE36 and although I had owned a very hairy collection of Austin 7 specials, I wasn't prepared for the skittish behaviour of the Black SP Prototype. This car was to be kept secret at all costs even down to the name on the tax disc being obliterated by sticky tape which was only to be removed if requested by a policeman!

Here we had a car which was virtually a TR3 (not renowned for their road holding) with a 40% power increase. On weeks about we used to motor down to Lynmouth and back at night or do a circular route into Wales by day. On dry runs everything was fine but wet roads transformed the car into a lethal device. I was not used to dealing with cars that went straight on when you turned the wheel one way or the other. A group of cyclists in their yellow oil skins escaped annihilation

by a hair's breadth in the depths of Gloucestershire one evening. Having snatched 2nd gear to jump a truck on the A5 one day the tail broke away and slid under the platform of the truck between its wheels but managed to miss contact. My view was that the Dunlop Road speed tyres were seriously inadequate. Unfortunately a member of the other team was a shop steward and although they too had moments (I noticed grass underneath when swapping shifts), his view was that if I made a fuss all the lovely overtime payments would cease. Shortly afterwards, we managed to fell a section of high wall around the Close of Wells Cathedral one wet night. Fortunately

it fell under the car rather than over it and we were able to reverse out. That piece of the Cathedral boundary is now a fence!

I was shortly to do my National Service and, with the confidence of youth, offered Cyril Simpson my views on two sides of foolscap. In precis - "don't sell it in this form or you will kill all your customers". Subsequently the tyre spec. was changed and the rest is history as they say. But what if it had proper rear suspension, a universally jointed steering column, a chassis frame with scuttle and B post hoops and (dream on) a Hobbs gear box with no auto setting, just manual selection. No prisoners at the traffic lights.



SP250 Prototype

## Back to the drawing board...

### Twin Tinas

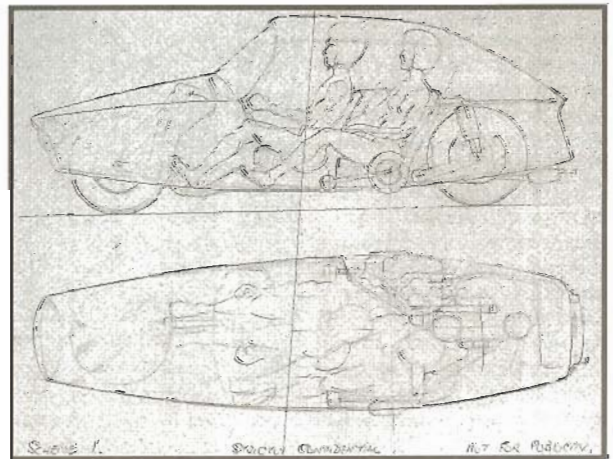
The dawn of the swinging sixties brought motor scooters to popularity. Triumph's "Tina" eventually made it onto the market in 1965 but as an exercise, the Turner/Wickes team came up with this novel idea of siamesing two Tinas to produce a four wheel (and presumably four-seat) scooter. As with the two-wheeled car, the practical disadvantages are obvious. Jack Wickes himself is seen here at the helm of the only prototype built which was quickly scrapped as neither he nor Turner liked it at all. Cornering was the big problem - the unit had an alarming tendency to turn over on left hand bends - not too surprising perhaps.

Photo from Jack Wickes' personal collection, courtesy of Vida Wickes.



### The Two-Wheeled Car

Doomed to failure from the start was this Turner/Wickes collaboration for an enclosed two-wheeled hybrid. It is hard to believe that this was even a half-serious design as even to the novice, the drawbacks are obvious. Not only would the occupants be deafened by the engine noise, presumably it would be necessary to have holes in the floor to cope with traffic lights! Just imagine being overtaken on a motorway by a coach! This Wickes sketch is undated but it shows his skill at turning even a crazy idea into something approaching reality. Needless to say, it was never built. The diagonal line is as a result of a crease in the original tracing.



### The "Rational GT" 3 litre Saloon

Another Jack Wickes sketch shows a 1964 design for a 3 litre saloon. From the days of "Edward Turner Engineering Developments", this design also stayed on the drawing board. Interestingly enough, in the same year Wickes was working on a 4.5 litre V8 diesel engine. It is unclear as to whether this was destined for commercial or private car applications, but the drawings are impressive. Unfortunately, space prevents reproduction here, but having seen the original drawings, this idea was well advanced but for some reason was never completed.

