

CASE HISTORIES

The C&S team puts two cars, currently for sale, through a buyer's test



Make: Sunbeam
Model: Alpine GT
First registered: February 1968
Recorded mileage: 30,927
Asking price: £2950
C&S Price Guide: £1161
For sale at: Straight 6, Gemini House, High Street, Edgware, Middx (tel: 01-951 0188)

The records show that this Alpine GT Series V is one of the last of all to be made. If that, together with the car's warranted low mileage and cherished, two-owner-from-new status is enough to make it a little out of the ordinary, its £3000 price tag surely puts it on a very exclusive footing.

Alpines, even very good ones, seldom make this kind of money — as a check of our Price Guide proves conclusively. Sad to say, these Rootes sports cars just aren't held in the same esteem as comparable MGs, TRs and Healeys which in a way is a little curious considering the average Alpine was better constructed, equipped and finished.

Straight 6 tell us this particular Alpine has had two lady owners from new. Currently it has just short of 31,000 miles on the clock and stands as one of the most original cars we have seen for a long time. It's full of authentic '68 touches inside and out, including the fully-lined detachable hardtop that takes two to remove.

Structurally, there's nothing to worry about. The sturdy Rootes girders underneath are solid and there are no signs of any welding repair work or suspicious layers of underseal. The Alpine's body panels — sills, doors, boot, bonnet and so on — are fine, and the wings seem in good shape too, with strong wheel arches all-round. In fact, the notion that this car has been carefully looked after throughout its life is reinforced by the appearance in the boot and elsewhere of a number of pieces of original soft trim that in most other cases would have been thrown away ages ago.

Finished in royal blue, the Alpine has good paint that at first glance looks original. But, looking more closely, it's clear that the car had a respray some while back. The rear wings in

particular show signs of some well-executed repair work and a few, localised paint chips are also visible. The chrome work is excellent.

The interior is remarkably well-preserved, with period radio and seat belts, wood-rimmed wheel and nostalgic Rootes-style dials and knobs, all of which appear to work. The shiny wood dash looks splendid and the Alpine's black seat and door trim, along with the carpeting, is exemplary. Moving outside, the engine bay is reasonably clean and, aside from a slight steering box weep, is free of danger signs; but we did notice what seemed to be a gearbox oil leak underneath the car. Though the four Goodyear G-800s have plenty of life left, the India Super spare seems a little ill-matched.

As tested, the 1725cc Alpine has a very rorty exhaust note which Straight 6 say will be put to rights prior to sale. To drive, it performs quite eagerly with a slick four-speed gearchange, revvy engine and (for its day) acceptable handling and ride. But the big steering wheel makes for an awkward driving position and the steering itself is a little vague. The servo disc/drum brakes work well enough, pulling the car up without snatching.

Overall, this is a sound, exceptionally original car. There are no details of its service history available but a year's mechanical warranty and new MoT will be included in the purchase price, together with a new tonneau cover if requested. We tested the car prior to it being prepared for sale (Straight 6, who normally deal in far more expensive cars than this, were very defensive about its condition during our visit, pointing out that they have done nothing to it since its acquisition) but even so, it's apparent the car is far better than average. Whether Straight 6 will be able to sell it at the present price, which is far and away above the typical Alpine value for that year, remains to be seen.

Verdict: You'd be hard-pressed to find a better Alpine, but can it be worth £3000?