

MK 2 FORD CONSUL , ZEPHYR & ZODIAC BUYERS GUIDE

WHAT TO LOOK FOR , WHAT TO AVOID AND WHAT TO PAY

INTRODUCTION

The MK2 range was produced between 1956 and 1962 .The latest cars will be 48 years old and the first to roll off the line will be the grand old age of 54 . Saloon's , convertible's and estate model's were all produced .It doesn't take a genius to assume that bodywork integrity must be a major issue when thinking of buying one these cars especially when it comes to the convertible model .Estate models were produced by E.J. Abbott of Farnham. All the version's of the MK2 range have suffered similar problem's with corrosion over the years , but extra vigilance must be given to convertible's due to the importance of the floor , sill's and complete chassis assembly . Strength & and solidity in the bodywork of an open top MK2 is vital to it's existence as a viable motor car. Although the steel used by Ford was deemed to be good quality , unlike some of the MK2's contemporaries.

The treatment's , coatings etc especially in vulnerable places left a lot to be desired . Most MK2's on the road today will have suffered at some point with rust and the places it occurs are very similar across the whole range. With regard to the engine & transmission , this has stood the test of time in most cases . Not exactly bullet proof but with regular maintenance , lubrication and general TLC the motor and running gear can be reliable and reasonably trouble free . Electrical systems on the car's appear to reliable and in the event of trouble appearing , the fault's are easily traceable and rectified . That's not to say it's perfect but with a lot of the electrical gear being made by Lucas/Smiths ,it comes with a good pedigree. The braking system is uncomplicated but not without it's problem's . Seized wheel cylinder's , difficulties with bleeding are very common . Brake system parts are available but some items are tricky to find.

The rest of the car has a varied history of longevity . The interior trim and seating can be found on cars for sale in a wide range of states . PVC/ leatherette which was used on the lower spec. cars is very prone to rot . Leather on the other hand if it has been "fed" regularly can last a long time . If regular " feeding" has not been carried out then the hide will dry up and crack. Also on both types of seating material the stitching was a crude type of cotton and this was prone to rot and deteriorated badly with age . The headlining , due to the popularity of smoking in the 50's and 60's can be very discoloured and the PVC on the upper part of the dashboard was prone to drying out and cracking .

Moving to the exterior trim , part of the charm of the MK2 Consul , Zephyr and Zodiac range was the American styling of the bodywork and especially the chrome fitting's . Automotive chrome by it's very nature isn't prone to rust . But moisture can have a bad effect on the actual item that has been chromed especially if it is ferrous (mild steel or malleable iron) . Plus small castings of mazac (a low quality alloy metal widely used for light fittings , badges , bonnet ornaments , side trims etc) was very good at corroding and therefore ruining the highly polished chrome patina .

For a long time now , item's for chroming are copper plated first then chromed to aid corrosion resistance but this is only a recent development .

All the points mentioned must be taken into account when viewing a prospective car for purchase as any problems with any of the listed & non-listed items will incur costs to rectify . Sometimes the costs can be astronomical which must be weighed up if you are on a budget .A major restoration can be highly satisfying but costly as well . There is some weight behind buying a car that has been restored , although initially an expensive outlay , if the car is a sound model then the odds are , any further expense will be minimal.

BODYWORK

The major component in any vehicle is the bodywork . The main part of the MK2 range is an all welded steel construction . The front wings were bolted on and doors , bonnet and boot were detachable on hinges . Water and moisture traps were abundant on the MK2 . Starting from the chassis . History has shown that the chassis rails , sills , outriggers ,of which there are 4 and jacking point's , were major water traps and although there are many drain holes present . A few coats of underseal and a few years of road dirt and mud could easily seal up these holes and trap the moisture in the channels . These channels were mostly untreated with any sort of protection and rust was inevitable . Most car metal is approx. 1.5 – 1.8mm thick and given the age of the cars it wouldn't be long before holes appear . Sills & outriggers are readily available from various sources if replacement is needed but replacement can be costly depending on the amount of remedial work needed . Similarly repair pieces for the chassis are available but only for certain places so if the rust is widespread then a skilled fabricator /welder is needed . Inner wings and rear wheel tubs have shown to harbour rust and corrosion . The inside of the front wings are especially problematic . A lot of cars show signs of corrosion around the headlights due to mud and road dirt collecting on the inside of the headlight bowl . This was thrown up from the front wheel and constant moisture ate through the headlight bowl and the metal above the headlight bezel. Wet road dirt also caused problems on the front suspension turrets and coil spring cups . At the rear of the front wing was a steel plate that was supposed to keep road dirt away from the door hinges and back edge of the front wing . Over time these steel plates would get rust holes and moist road dirt would collect at the trailing edge of the front wing and the lower lip would rot along with the upper surface just under the windscreen.

Nowadays very few cars have been lucky enough to survive these rust traps , but it's quite common to find a MK2 today that has had the headlight area's repaired .The bottom edge of the front wing ,the suspension turrets and inner wings are all common repairs . The bonnet's on all cars are usually prone to rust in the very front area where there is a water trap ,again repair panels are available .

All the doors by their very construction are very good at collecting water and therefore rust is almost inevitable . Water gets in via the window channels . The seams on the bottom's of the doors are only lightly treated with a very thin layer of primer/paint and water wells up here . There are drain holes in the bottom of the doors but historically they don't work very well .

Another common place repair is a half or full door skin replacement . The sills of the MK2 range are long horizontal sheets of mild steel and comprised of 3 sections .

The outer sill which is visible and finished in the cars colour usually show signs of corrosion on the lower edge . If rust is present here then it's quite right to say that the

centre sill , which is approx. 6” high and has eight 3” holes punched in it (to add strength) may have been affected by rust . The centre sill isn’t visible except by opening the door’s , removing the kick-plate trim and removing the tape over the access holes . A torch will be needed for a full inspection . Similarly the inner sill which is the section that is constantly under attack from moisture , salt and dirt is very prone to rust . It has a flat lower surface and if the drain are blocked then water will collect and attack the lightly treated inner surface of the sill . The inner sill is only visible by crawling underneath the car and shining a light along the full length of the metalwork . Replacing sills is a major task and not for the faint-hearted . Repair sections are available but total cost of the job can be in the hundreds of pounds. Between the inner sills and the chassis rails are the four outriggers. Two at the leading edge and two at the rear .These are square box sections and are very prone to rust . Rear wheel arches are another popular area for rust collection . The shaped edge that forms the wheel arch usually gets attacked from the inside and out . The inside of the wheel arch is shaped so that mud can collect easily and form a water trap , thus causing rust to form . The other place the rear wheel arch is attacked from is from inside the boot . Looking into the boot , the rear wheel tubs are visible. The gap between the inside surface of the rear wing and wheel tub is very narrow and not easily accessible for cleaning . So if the boot lid is leaking then water will make it’s way to this narrow gap and cause all sorts of corrosion .

The other main area of rust is the car floor . Most floor corrosion occurs from issues with the jacking points , sills and chassis rails . Where as the underneath of the car is easily visible by getting down on all fours and shining a torch .The floor is another matter . Carpets will have to be lifted and certain trim panels removed .If the seller isn’t happy for you to do this , then be very wary and suspicious . Good strong metal is necessary around the jacking points and outriggers as these are needed to support vehicle in the event of a tyre change or similar lifting operation . The car floor is shaped in such a way that the rear foot-well’s provide 2 bowl type features and there are 2 similar water traps below the front seat ,which are not easy to access as the front seat doesn’t move back & forth very far . . All these wells can collect water very easily and rot doesn’t take long to set in . The front seat mounting’s are also rust points and if the seats aren’t secured to a sturdy fixing then this is a safety issue which could be very dangerous .

The boot area on MK2 can be very tricky to examine closely . Firstly looking from the open boot-lid , there is a rubber mat which is sometimes stuck to the boot-floor and close examination for rust can be difficult . Secondly if the boot-floor is viewed from underneath the car . The petrol tank obscures most of the boot-floor area and again a full examination can be very difficult. Pay close attention to the sides as well . There are 2 wells here which readily hold water & rust and although easily visible from underneath , these water traps can be missed and could be a future repair than wasn’t expected . When looking for all signs of rust ,don’t be afraid to tap the area’s with your hand or if you can get away with it , a door key or similar metal item .

There are many other rust points such as around the roof gutter and the area around the windscreen that have shown up over the years . Another corrosion point is around badges , side trim and bonnet and boot-lid lettering .

As with all cars , it goes without saying that even if the corrosion hasn’t taken a hold then it’s not inconceivable that collision damage has been suffered so along with looking

closely for rust and rust holes ,be vigilant for crash damage , cracked or mismatched paint , dodgy filler and bad repairs to dents .Also be extra vigilant for welding seams where they shouldn't be . Cut and shut isn't a modern thing , it's been going on for a long time even in the classic car arena . Scrutinise panel's gaps ,this may show up badly fitting wing's or doors and a previous shunt or side swipe . As mentioned before if a convertible is being viewed then the utmost care when looking at the under body of the car is a necessity . Estate cars don't have the parts and panel availability of saloon's so again great care must be taken . One last thing never view a car in the rain , you wont be able to see the true nature of the paint and the bodywork and secondly ,you'll get dirty lying on the wet floor looking at the underneath of the car ...not a good idea .

ENGINE

The 4 cylinder that was fitted to the Consul and the 6 cylinder that is in the Zephyr and Zodiac has proven to be a good workhorse over the 50 odd years it's been in service . The engine's are cast iron block and head and very robust . Although they don't knock out Formula 1 speed and torque , these engine's will happily propel car at a steady speed easily keeping up with modern traffic and it's demands . A lot of car's today have been modified to take unleaded petrol and judging by the website forum's and hearsay ,this has been a worthwhile task and problem free . The engine's are pushrod operated with rocker arm's on the top of the engine . Tappet adjustment is easy and can make a lot of difference to the engine tone and performance . Petrol for the engine to run is provided by a side mounted pump via a glass filter bowl . The pump is driven off the engine camshaft and provides not only petrol but also vacuum assistance for the wipers and brakes .If this pump experiences problem's , servicing kits are available . Carburettor types are simple design except for the rare Raymond Mays modification's which were a triple set up . Inlet manifold's on the cars were usually a cast alloy tube with a carb mounted on the top . The inlet manifold had either 2 ports or 3 depending on which engine it was fitted to . The exhaust manifold was a " hockey stick" type . This meant it was a long tube covering the ports of the cylinder head and curved through 180 degrees at the radiator . This then joined up with the exhaust and gases were then taken to the rear of the car via a single silencer box situated below the passenger footwell. Some of today's car's have had a 4 or 6 branch manifold fitted and stainless steel exhaust system's fitted to aid performance and cosmetic appearance. Due to robust construction , MK2 engine's can give high mileage as long as regular servicing has been carried out . A sign of bad maintenance is big end knock , piston ring wear denoted by blue smoke from the exhaust . White smoke in the exhaust can mean cooling water is getting into the cylinder .Possibly via a crack in the casting or a split in the cylinder head gasket .

Crack's can render an engine useless , where as if a new cylinder head gasket is needed , a replacement can be carried out without any major cost . One very easy test for determining engine condition is simply dip the oil and look at what's on the dip stick . If the oil is black , that could be a good sign if the engine run's ok . If the oil is streaky with white then this is another sign of water getting into the oil system . The oil has become emulsified and a lot of work maybe needed to rectify . Also (if you can get away with it) smell the oil to check for petrol . This may indicate that there is fuel getting into the oil via

a pinhole in a piston or an over-rich mixture . Some car's are run over-rich to disguise the fact that they are underpowered and worn . Be very suspicious if the oil is new and clean . The seller may have just changed the oil to disguise the fact that problem's are there and he/she doesn't want you to find them . Engine cooling on the 4 & 6 cylinder car's could be very problematic especially when stuck in modern day hold up's on Britain's congested road's . The cooling fan's are mostly 2 bladed and is woefully incapable of keeping the block cool when stationary . A quick modern day fix is to add an electric fan to aid cooling . Some kits are available for as little as £50 and quite easy to fit for the DIY'er.

TRANSMISSION

MK2's came with manual and auto boxes and in some cases an overdrive was fitted to the manual gearboxes to add extra speed and aid fuel economy . Listening to owner's and looking through forum's & reading material associated with MK2's ,these item's , if treated correctly can go on for a long time . There is a vast support network and repairer's are all over the country . When test driving a prospective purchase , listen for any whining , loud clicking or grinding coming from the gearbox. Make sure all gear's are readily available and the gearlever doesn't jump out when throttling up . This will denote gear mesh wear and if a gear isn't selectable this could be synchromesh issues on 2nd & 3rd gear or clutch wear problem's . The first gear on all MK2's didn't have synchromesh so getting down into first gear from second involves double de-clutching .A black art which requires the driver to press the clutch repeatedly to get the gear-train and flywheel revving at the same speed to enable gear selection ... not an easy task but practise makes perfect . The clutch assembly is a operated by hydraulic pressure from the master cylinder on the brake pedal which gives pressure to a slave cylinder and then to the operating arm which depresses the release bearing and takes the clutch friction plate off the flywheel . This is a simple system and spares are available should the need arise . Servo assisted cars are a very wise buy with efficient braking giving extra confidence . With regard to the overdrive unit . These are reasonably trouble free but make sure the unit works on the test drive . One problem with OD units is if the driver has reversed with the unit engaged , it can lock the unit and subsequently cause permanent damage & repairs can be costly .

Automatic gearboxes are not easily fixed by the DIY'er , they are a specialist repair item and if you are test driving a car with an auto unit is very advisable to take along a person in know about auto boxes . On test driving , the gear changes should be smooth . A quick test to check the condition of an auto box is to dip the transmission fluid when the car is parked and the engine is off . This is usually red in colour , if there is a tinge of black or a burnt smell is detected then this will show the brake bands are worn or damaged and the gearbox is failing . Be mindful that repairs are to be carried out by a specialist and the cost maybe high .

The rest of the transmission is pretty straight forward . Propshaft's should be well lubricated with grease , wheels and wheel bearings similarly treated . The front suspension is a Macpherson strut assembly and can prove to be problematic depending on the treatment it has had over the years . The front suspension rigging needs regular greasing to keep it from seizing , look for used grease nipples and check rigging for wear and listen for squeaks . Be aware of a wallowy ride on the test drive , this may indicate

worn springs , front and back or insufficient oil in the struts . When the car is on stop , push the front wing down and watch for bouncing . Too much bouncing will be a sure sign the front strut assembly is worn . Possible leaking seals on the strut assembly , look for damp springs or wet stains on the struts . The rear suspension is a leaf spring design . These do sag over the years and can be retempered . Worn leaf springs are made evident by the car sitting low at the back . If the leaf springs are in good nick then a light coating of spray oil is required at every service to keep the rust at bay and help the leaves to slip when they compress and depress during driving . Repairs and replacement parts for the engine , transmission , suspension etc are available but not everything is out there . Some items are costly and could make a simple task a nightmare . Check rear axle's for oil leaks especially around the differential area . On the test drive listen for a whining diff. An old remedy for a whining diff. is to add certain items to the EP90 oil that is in the diff. these substances range from sawdust to ripped up pieces of ladies tights . These , mixed with oil will quieten a whining rear diff. and disguise any wear. An obvious but important item to check when viewing a prospective car is the braking quality . On a test drive apply the brakes frequently and keep ears pricked for squealing or judders. Juddering brakes could be a sign of warped brake discs , if fitted or badly scored drums. Look for leaks around brake pipes , servo's and callipers or drums. All could cause problems in the future . The steering on the MK2 range was via a very impressive steering wheel which was right out of a Ford Thunderbird of the Hollywood glamour era. Approx. 14" in diameter with an eye catching chrome horn ring and a bold centre badge . Steering is provided by a worm & peg steering box , through a link system then to the front road wheel's . Again good lubrication is the key to longevity. A slack steering box is an MOT failure , this can be remedied by removing shims in the box and decreasing the lock of the wheel. Attached to the steering column is the indicator arm and the gearlever . Check for correct operation when test driving or if the car is static check the pieces are still intact as certain items are seldom available. The gear lever is mounted on the left hand side for manual gearboxes and across the top for auto boxes . The manual lever has 4 positions , front & down for 1st , backwards & up for 2nd and straight down for 3rd . Reverse is front & up . The auto gear change lever is across the top with lights illuminating every selection when driving in the dark .

INTERIOR

The Consul was catalogued by Ford as the entry level model . The smaller engine coupled with a lower amount of refinements gave the Consul a good homely quality without the inflated price tag. The Zephyr & Zodiac had a higher level of trim and features depending on the model and the increased money spent at the showroom . Consul's mostly had cloth or Leatherette type seats . Zephyr's & Zodiac's had a leather option due to their specification. Optional features in each model ranged from heaters , radio's , sun visor's and clock's . When viewing a prospective car for purchase , take into account all

these items . If you want the car to be admired then ripped seats or torn headlining can be very unsightly and more importantly uncomfortable when driving around .Seat recovering a costly job especially if leather is needed , approx. £500 for PVC and £900 for leather . Interior trim features can be tricky to source with some items extremely rare . Carpets are easily sourced at around £175 for a good quality set . On test driving the car make sure all the important features work especially things like speedometers , temperature gauges and if fitted , the oil pressure gauge . These may be after market items but can be very good at indicating engine integrity .Try all the windows to make sure they go up and down as window winder repairs can be a frustrating job and very fiddly. Door cards on the MK2 range were usually a PVC type material and reasonably hardy . There are a few firms on the market that will make a new set of door cards complete with kick panel cards for approx. £250 and colour coded to suit any model . Take a look around the glass that is fitted to the car , is it scratched or cracked . Mk2 replacement glass isn't in abundance so be aware that a cracked window isn't always an easy fix. Check all window rubbers , look to see if it has perished , this may indicate a leak and therefore water has got in, causing rust in hidden away places . Window rubbers are available but replacement is a tricky job . Check the keys that come with the car fit the door locks not only the ignition . It can be pretty inconvenient if you cant open the doors and boot without the keys . Make sure to ask for spares and don't forget the locking petrol cap if one is fitted . Check all the electrics work such as lights , indicators etc. If there is a radio try that , there's nothing like a crackly AM radio to set the nostalgic feeling of a MK2 alight . The high beam on Mk2's is on the floor by the clutch pedal try this to see if it works , a small blue indication should appear on the dash board .Look closely at all the knobs and switches . Try the wipers and washers where fitted , no electric pump on these cars , only a simple push button is fitted to get the screen wash up to the windscreen . Does the clock work , are all the window winder's there and do the door opening handles work . Are all the arm rests there . How are the carpets , door cards and general interior panels , are there any missing .

EXTERIOR

As previously mentioned part of the appeal of any MK2 is the sleek lines and the chrome . Closely observe the quality of the chrome . Check for corrosion , pitting and scratches . Look for dents in the bumpers , this could indicate a possible collision . Rechroming bumpers is approx. £250 each and over-riders come in about £60 each . Lots of bright work associated with Consul's , Zephyr's & Zodiac's is available but with headlight bezels costing £165 a pair and smaller items of bright work costing approx. £40 to £70 , it is most important you take this into account if the chrome isn't great and you will seek to make it

so .Rechroming or buying refinished item's will, in most cases need deep pockets. The body colour of the car should be checked for orange peel , cracks , filler and underlying corrosion . Look for straight panels and good gaps . Does the paint on adjacent panels match . View the car in good light to get the best chance of spotting dodgy resprays .

LEGAL STUFF

If a road legal car is being viewed then great care must taken when looking at documentation . A valid MOT should be produced and all the numbers should match . Check the log book or if it has a valid V5 ,read that fully as well. The chassis plate is situated on the front scuttle surrounding the radiator on the left hand side . Check all the numbers match such as chassis number , paint codes and model specification . There are a number of publications available with paint code , chassis codes etc so do your homework first. With regard to the MOT , getting 12 months is a definite . If possible contact the MOT station . They probably don't get many classic cars in so it's odds on they'll remember the car and hopefully will give an unbiased appraisal . Road tax is free for MK2's but double check to make sure it is the correct one . Ask the owner is there any other paperwork with the car , any history of work done or registration changes . Are there any photos of the vehicle being maintained , restored or service history . Is the mileage verified and true .

When buying any vehicle , taking another person with you is invaluable . A mechanic to give you an experts opinion is worth it's weight in gold. Looking for a classic car can sway the prospective new owner's judgement and mistakes can be made . By having a second opinion to hand , it can keep your feet on the ground and hopefully avoid an outlay of cash for something that may well prove to be a pile of old scrap.

Directly opposite to buying a roadworthy vehicle is the purchase of a car ready for restoration . You maybe confronted with something that looks ready for the crusher or is a complete car with some parts missing .It has become worn down by the advancing years and needs a bit of TLC . Either way , a car for restoration , whether a basket case or minor overhaul ,must always be considered with a few things in mind . The time and money you are prepared to getting the vehicle on the road , have you got the where with all to complete the job, ie: a suitable storage area , the tools and knowledge to carry out the work . If mechanical knowledge isn't your thing then be prepared to out source the work ,which will then bring the financial aspect of restoring a classic car into the equation . If a challenge is what your looking for then all power to you , go ahead and get stuck in . But be aware that classic car restoration can cost a lot of money for little financial gain . But I'm assured there's no better feeling than driving a Mk2 down the road that you have sweated blood over for several years .

WHAT TO PAY

There isn't a subject that get's more debate in than what's a MK2 worth or indeed any classic car . If you look at the price guide's in any classic car magazine , it will tell you that a fully restored or condition 1 Mk2 Zodiac is circa. £4500 . Condition 3 or a car that needs a lot of work with no MOT circa. £1000. This I'm afraid doesn't reflect the Mk2's that are available on the market . A condition 1 Zodiac can easily reach upwards of £7000 perhaps even more , with the top notch Consul 375 attaining £4000 - £5000 easily . Restoration examples are regularly touching the £1500 mark , some even crossing the £2000 threshold

. When viewing classic cars for purchase keep the thought in your head , what are you prepared to pay . Setting yourself a budget is an excellent idea and by doing that you can make an informed decision . Viewing several cars and comparing them along with their prices will give a valuable lesson in getting some knowledge as to what the cars are worth.

Take lots of photos and keep notes , jot down initial thoughts when your driving off down the road towards home . Then you can refer back to them to jog your memory . When writing this article I tried a few times to formalise a correct and true price guide but in the end I decided to leave the valuation table out of the text . Market value's for MK2's are fluid and what may be correct now may not be true in a years time . When deciding what to pay for a MK2 , carry out a lot of research , consult the many books that are available and if possible speak to an owner for much valued guidance .View several different cars and work out what they are worth from studying the array of Mk2's out there and decide what your prepared to pay from these comparisons

When you then come to handing over the cash you will be 100% sure that you are paying the correct amount and you are a happy in the knowledge , the money you have worked hard for has been used for a worthwhile cause and hasn't been wasted . This feeling will come all to easily when you are driving down the road and all the admiring glances start coming your way . There will also be the many impromptu conversations with complete strangers who will tell you ,they used to own a Mk2 or their dad had one just like it.

On the other side of the coin , maybe you've toiling away late into the night and you have just completed rebuilding your engine and it runs like a Swiss watch at the first turn of the key .Or you have been laying on your back for 3 days , the inner sill you have been welding has finally been completed and you get that all important MOT pass . It is then the monetary value of your MK2 will come to mind and you'll stand back and say ...*she was worth every penny.*