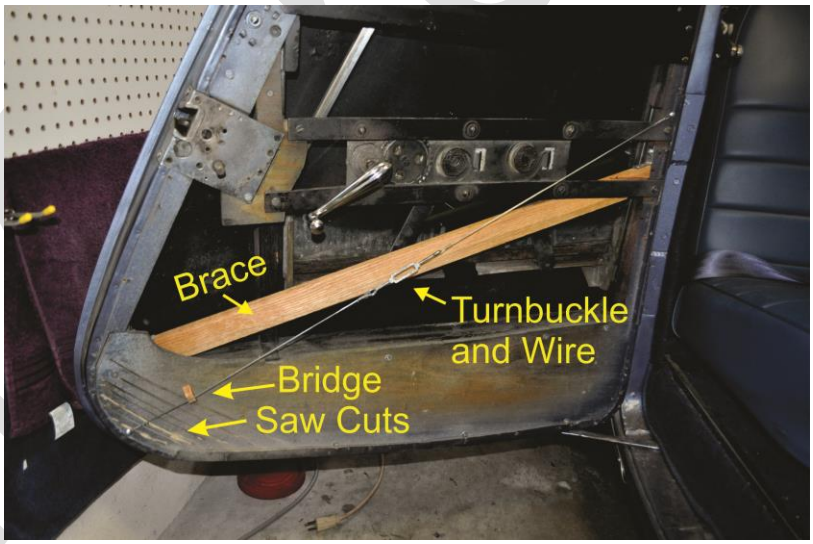
Door fit and door latches on the Roadster 7-14-2014 Jim Garey

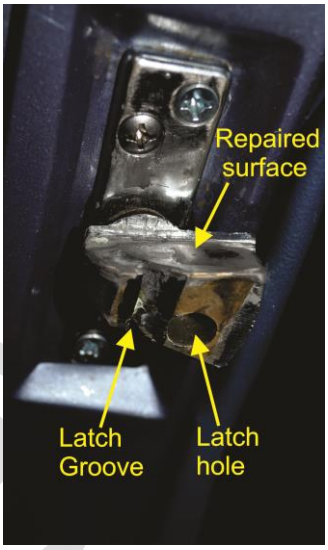
The doors on my roadster have had problems dating to before I owned the car. The forward lower corner of both front doors toed outwards, acting as air scoops, and brought outside air, rain and road noise directly in the car. The gap between the door and the body was approximately 1 – 1.5 cm. The other problem was that the door latches have never worked well, allowing incessant rattling, and causing me to worry that a door might fly open if I were to go over a hard bump in the road. I have corrected these problems using advice from Club members using a variety of older articles and some solutions I have not seen before, so I thought I would put it all together in this article.

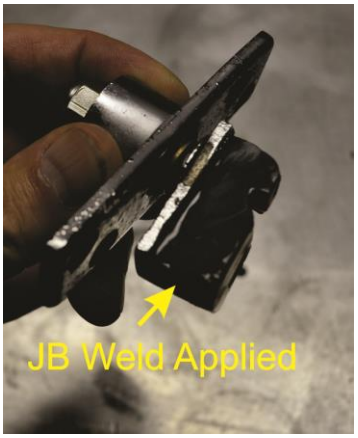
The first thing I did was to bend the forward corners of the doors inward so that they lie flush with the body of the car. Ron Cromar had sent me a Review article (June 1987) by John Shaw, "Correcting Door Toe Out" which I followed closely. It involved placing a hardwood strut diagonally in the door, along with a turnbuckle and wire system that passes over a wedge much like a guitar bridge. Some saw cuts in the wood near the toed in area were made to help the door flex. It took several hours to set up the system on each door. Tightening the turnbuckle gradually over a few weeks bends the front lower corner of the door inward. This system must be left in the door to maintain the shape of the door. Within a few weeks, I had the doors perfectly flush. Then I re-installed the inside door panels, and immediately the doors toed out again. I think the original cause of the toe out was the interior trim. There was thick padding under the entire panel. The bottom 10 cm of the door rests against the sill, which is itself carpeted. The door with its wood frame and aluminum skin is simply not rigid enough to compress that much padding, and thus the toe-out occurs. So, I marked the panels where they meet the sill, removed them and peeled back the vinyl trim along the bottom of the door. Then I used a razor to remove the bottom 10 cm of padding and glued the vinyl trim back in place. When I replaced the door panels, the doors were again flush with the body of the car. Ron Cromar tells me that replacing the thick carpet along the vertical face of the sill with trim that matches that of the doors will provide a bit more room and help minimize toe-out.



If your doors toe outward, it might be simplest to first temporarily remove the interior door panel and see if that reduces the toe-out. If so, the next step would be to remove padding from the lower portion of the door panel, and possibly remove the carpet from the sill. If the door toes out even with the panel removed, one solution would be to install the strut and turnbuckle system described in John Shaw's article.

My door latches also required several different solutions to get them back in order. First I'll describe the latch. On the "A" post there is a large chrome plated brass wedge that pivots on a bolt that is fastened through a rectangular plate that is screwed into the A post with 4 wood screws. The bolt has a bush composed of an inner and outer metal tube with vulcanized rubber between them. The narrow point of the wedge points outward from the center of the car. It is received by a fitting with a wedge-shaped opening mounted on the door. When the door is closed the wedge locates into its receiver on the door to align the hardware of the door with the hardware mounted on the A post. The wedge has to be able to swivel just a little so it can adjust to its receiver. If it is too loose, it will swivel downward and the latch will not work. The amount the wedge swivels can be adjusted by loosening or tightening the nut on the bolt that holds the wedge in place. The wedge has a groove parallel to the base located closer to the point of the wedge than to the base. This groove goes all the way across the face of the wedge. The wedge also has a hole located about one cm from the groove, closer to the base of the wedge. The door has a spring-loaded pin that is normally out, but turning the door handle retracts the pin. The pin is somewhat chisel shaped. If the door is closed very slowly, a click can be heard as the pin catches in the groove of the wedge but at that point the door is still 8-10 mm from fully closed. As the door is closed further, a second click can be heard as the pin locates into the hole of the wedge and at this point the door should be fully closed. Normally the door closes fully in one motion, so one does not notice that it is a two stage process. I am fairly certain that the first position where the pin locates into the groove of the wedge is a fail-safe position in case the door is not fully latched or in case the pin is dislodged from its normal position in the hole further along the wedge.





Ron Cromar sent me an unpublished article that explains how to repair one of the things that can cause a latch to rattle. The bush that allows the wedge to swivel around the bolt described above can fail if the vulcanized rubber fails. The article describes how to disassemble the bush and replace the rubber with a bit of Tygon-type tubing. I made that repair on both doors but the rattle continued.

In my car, the upper surface of the wedge of both doors was badly worn. I think that the wedge could not align to the pin properly so it would catch in the groove that is present across the entire wedge for the first click but could not "find" the hole in the wedge for the second click. This explained the very loose fit of the passenger side door. On the driver side door, the pin was finding the hole but the wedge was worn enough that the door was not as tightly drawn in as it should and so would rattle.

In both cases, it appeared that the wear on the upper surface of the wedge was the problem. To test this hypothesis, I filled the worn upper facing of the wedge with JB weld, filed a bit of the excess off, and remounted the wedge. At first the pin could not quite get to the hole in the wedge so I did a bit more judicious filing, and now the door latches very nicely. The excess wear I saw on the wedge makes it clear that greasing the catch mechanism on a regular basis is very important. So as the wedge wears, the door catch becomes looser and the rattling ensues because there is not a close fit of the pin with the hole in the wedge. Now my doors fit very tightly and there is no rattle. I do not expect the JB Weld material to hold up forever, and I'll eventually take the wedges to a welding shop and have the wedge built up with brazed brass instead of JB Weld, then file it until the door latches properly again. This is certainly a simple fix for a persistent problem that other Triumph owners surely must encounter.

Note: since writing this article, I have found that the door wedge mechanisms (door strikers) are available new from SNG Barratt, a supplier for vintage Jaguar. Apparently the left and right door strikers are reversed (maybe because the Roadster has suicide doors). They are a little pricey.

PART NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	QTY	TOTAL	
2310/1	LH Door dovetail striker	122.13	1	122.13	(fits RH door of Roadster)
2311/1	RH Door Dovetail Striker	122.13	1	122.13	(Fits LH door of Roadster)