I recently checked the date of manufacture, I had noticed some cracks had developed in the sidewalls, particularly on the inside walls, hidden from normal view. It is a relatively simple exercise to calculate which modern tire size most closely resembles the 185SR-15 Michelin-X Redlines that were known as 70 or 80 series profile tires, which is to say that the sidewalls were roughly 80% of the width of the tire (actually 78-82%). The aspect ratio was not recorded on the sidewalls of pre-1990 tires. The dimensions of the original tires were 185mm in width or 7.28 inches (section width) and a sidewall height of 5.68 inches (7.28 x 0.78). With a rim diameter of 15 inches this resulted in an overall wheel diameter of 26.36 inches (2 x 5.68 + 15), a circumference of 82.82 inches (π x 26.36) and a total of 765 wheel revolutions per mile (63,360 / 82.82). There have been some minor variations in dimensions between different manufacturers for the same size of tire.

There are three tire sizes in the 15 inch diameter range that are almost perfect as replacements for the original TR6 tires. These are 195/75R-15, 205/70R-15 and 205/75R-15. All have an overall diameter that is very close to the original which will ensure that the speedometer/odometer remains reasonably accurate (within +/−%). A 205 will provide a greater amount of rubber footprint on the road over a 195 with its narrower profile. The 205/70R-15 has a sidewall height of 5.65 inches, a total diameter of 26.30 inches (+0.24%), a circumference of 82.62 inches and 767 revolutions per mile (+0.24%) while the 195/75R-15 has a sidewall height of 5.76 inches, a total diameter of 26.52 inches (+0.58%), a circumference of 83.30 inches and 761 revolutions per mile (-0.58%). The 205/75R-15 has the highest sidewall height of the trio, at 6.05 inches, a total diameter of 27.11 inches (+2.82%), a circumference of 84.89 inches and 751 revolutions per mile (+2.82%).

If you are after high performance tires, one option is to consider changing to a larger diameter wheel rim, to 16 inches for example, and fitting lower profile tires in order to maintain the same overall wheel diameter. However, changing rim size leads to other considerations such as rim width, wheel offset and issues such as suspension and wheel-well clearances, but does open up the possibility of using higher performance tires such as a 205/60-16, although this particular combination will lower the ground clearance and slightly change the overall gear ratio.

Some enthusiasts have recreated a good approximation to the original Michelin X Redline look using modern Michelin Symmetry White stripes (not available in Canada) and hand painting/spraying the white stripe with red vinyl paint.

Finally, some aesthetics need to be considered. Assuming the car is equipped with standard suspension, the 205/75R-15 with its higher sidewall will fill up the entire tire well and will look, as some have observed, somewhat like a dumb bunny. On my particular car this translated into a clearance between the fender edge and the tread of the tire (freeboard) of between 0.5 to 0.7 inches (13mm) at the front and 0.8 to 0.85 inches (21mm) at the rear. The 195/75R-15 will look more authentic, closely matching the look of the original G800/Redlines. Some people are happy with a 205/60R-15 tire and like the aesthetic appearance, but with a diameter almost one inch less than the original, the ground clearance will suffer.
As far as driveability is concerned, using a 205/70R-15, the overall gear ratio changes only very slightly. To figure out new overall gear ratios and speedometer readings after changing tires, the following formula can be used: - highway speed at a given RPM (say 3,000 rpm) = overall tire circumference (inches) times engine rpm times 60 (#minutes in an hour) divided by an excellent match in terms of total diameter, but it is pushing beyond the limit with an excellent footprint and minimal wear, giving a little more freeboard gap for money.

RAGTOP

1 Tread Tires, Glen Donaldson, Ragtop | Winter 2010
2 Tire & Wheel Plus Sizing, Kelvin Davidson, Miss Motors - British Motoring, Winter 2005
3 Modern Michelle Redline, Andrew Grace, Ragtop | Fall 2009
4 www.buckeyetriumphs.org/technical/Calculator/road_speed_vs_engine_speed_calculator.htm
5 www.tripumphowers.com

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