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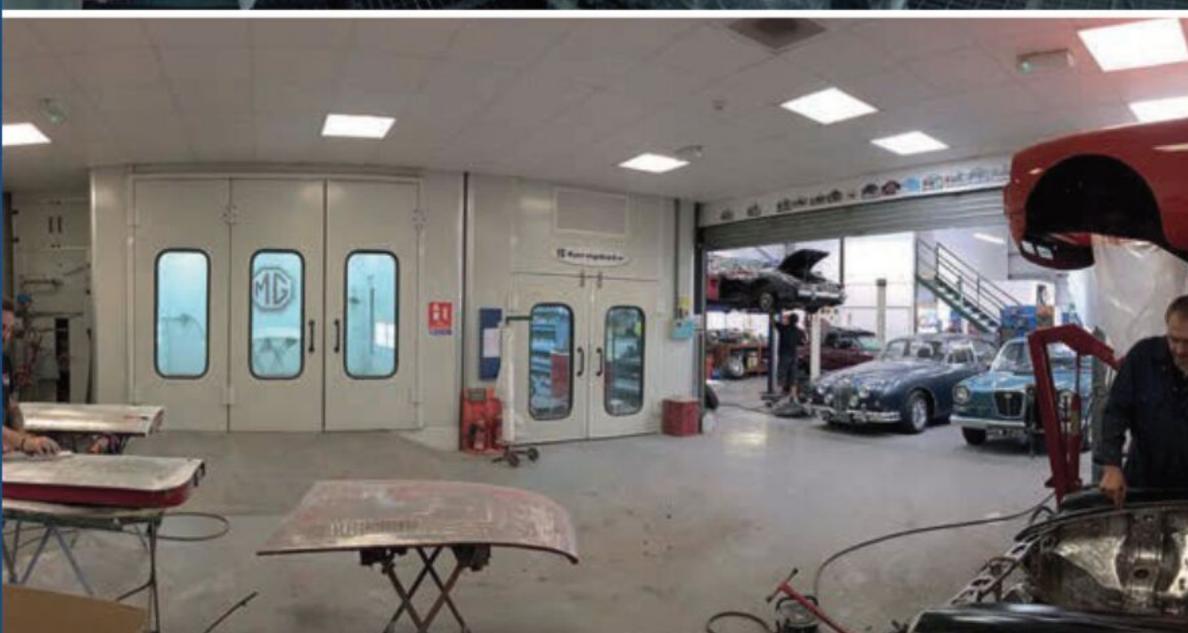
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HUMBLE BEGINNINGS



o you remember being at school and the English teacher saying all good stories must have a beginning, a middle and an end? We covered the end (kind of) in issue three with 'MG in the 90s' and now it's the turn of the beginning. Issue seven is going back to the start. Back to where the first MGs were created and follow to that time line through to the post-war T-Type cars.

The MG Car Company was growing at pace during the 1920s largely down to its founder, Cecil Kimber. At first the company produced a range of saloons and tourers that captured the buying public's imagination, firmly pitched in the mid-range and sporting sectors. These were based on highly successful contemporary Morris models, of course.

In 1928 Kimber set his sights on producing a small MG sports car, with Morris' Minor providing the components he needed for its design and so the M-Type 'Midget' was born, ready for London's Olympia salon that year.

The public were quick to embrace the new MG and began competing in Midgets. The larger P-Type Midget was introduced in 1934 with an 847cc OHC engine linked to a four-speed gearbox. Such was demand for MG's baby sports cars that a PB version was launched, powered by a 939cc OHC engine which produced 43bhp at 5500rpm.

This was MG's answer to the growing threat from Singer. Observers suggest that the engine size hike transformed the car, making it into one of the best small sports cars of the period and laying the foundation for the next generation, the iconic T-Types.

Today, these early cars represent an insight into 1920s and 30s motoring, offering back-to-basic driving, that never fails to bring a smile to the faces of their driver's as well as onlookers alike.

Enjoy the issue everyone, and keep safe.

Paul Sander Editor, MG Memories

MG MEMORIES: HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

A look at the cars that started the MG story



















MG MEMORIES

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PRINTING

Pensord

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The MG 14/40

The MG 14/40, sometimes labelled the MG MkIV Sports, was the first model of MG to be sold as a make in its own right. Chris Keevill of the Early MG Society guides us through this landmark model and how it differed from its predecessors.







he MG 14/40 was introduced in August 1927. For many MG folk, the 14/40 is the first 'real' MG because prior to that date, all previous MG models - the Bullnose MG 14/28 Super Sports and the Flatnose MG 14/28 Super Sports - were of necessity registered as Morris cars, because MG was not yet a make recognised by the licensing authorities. Perversely, even though the 14/40s had MG car numbers stamped on their guarantee plates, they still carried the Morris factory car number as well. However, the cars' identity numbers and guarantee plates were for the first time issued by The Morris Garages, rather than by Morris Motors.

The model got its numerical designation because of the RAC horsepower rating of the engine (which at 13.9hp was known as a 14), and

the power output of the MG's engine which was 40bhp, hence 14/40. The model's predecessors, the Bullnose and Flatnose MG 14/28s, also produced around 40bhp, but MG never officially promoted that fact. These days, with improved fuel and ignition systems and with a slightly raised compression ratio, owners can easily achieve 45-50bhp without any loss of reliability.

Of these early models, the Bullnose MG Super Sports is easy to identify because it has the distinctive Morris Oxford bullnose radiator, but the 14/40 and its immediate predecessor the Flatnose MG 14/28 look very similar. So what exactly are the differences? Look closely at the two cars in the main image on this page. The car on the left is a Flatnose MG 14/28, and the car on the right is an MG 14/40. We can use them to illustrate the differences.

RADIATORS

Look at the bottom of the radiators and you'll see that the 14/28 on the left (and pictured below) has an extra nickel panel beneath the matrix forming part of the radiator shell, whereas the 14/40 has a square bottom to the shell. The car on the left also has its starting handle visibly protruding through the nose-piece on the sump, whereas the 14/40 has a fabricated valance panel beneath the radiator which neatly covers the chassis dumb-irons and tidies up the frontal aspect compared with its predecessor. Look really closely and you might also be able to see that the shape of the front axle beam is rather different too – the 14/28 has a bowed axle beam (right), whereas the 14/40 has a more angular form.

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SCUTTLE VENTILATORS

Staying at the front of the cars, another tell-tale feature is the shape of the scuttle ventilators, those periscope-like projections just forward of the windscreen. The triangular windscreen and scuttlemounted cowl ventilators were distinctive features on all Morris Garages MGs, starting with the 1923 Bullnose 2-seaters with Raworth coachwork and continuing right through to the final 14/40 models in 1929. The Bullnose models and the 14/28s were fitted with circular mouthed ventilators made by The Cruiser Company, but the early MG 14/40 models had octagonal mouthed ventilators, still made by Cruiser initially, but later from Wilmot of Birmingham. It is an obvious assumption to think that these octagonal ventilators were made exclusively for MG, but in fact they were available generally and feature, for example, on certain models of Swallow and Vauxhall cars.



DASHBOARDS, FITTINGS AND FIXTURES

On the 14/28 MG, the dashboard instruments and their layout were pure Morris Oxford. The 14/40 MG was quite different however, in that the instruments were masked within octagonal frames and the cubby-holes were virtually octagonal. A cast aluminium firewall and foot-board replaced the timber versions that were used on the 14/28s. In fact, the 14/40 MG differed in a great many details from its Morris cousins, as the illustration above shows. This is an extract from The Morris Garages Salesman's Handbook issued in January 1928, and it goes to great lengths to highlight all the special features on the MG 14/40 chassis – and to explain to potential customers why it cost more to buy than a Morris Oxford.

There are also other less obvious differences between the 14/28 and 14/40 models. Outwardly the louvres on the body panels differed, while beneath the skin changes were made to the braking system, hub caps and steering, to name but a few. Also, the speedometer was driven by a cable from the nearside front wheel hub, but on the 14/40 this cable divided via a splitter box and one branch went up to drive the neat mechanical wiper made by Smiths. You would have to be a real aficionado to appreciate all of the subtle differences between the two models.

ENGINE AND TRANSMISSION

The engine and power transmission systems were the same in both models. Morris Garages bought rolling Morris Oxford chassis from the Morris works, took them to their depot in Oxford and transformed them into MGs. The most important processes were the improvements carried out to the 1802cc, 4-cylinder Morris type C.E. sidevalve engines. On arrival at the MG works, the engines were removed from the chassis and work was carried out to the inlet tracts, combustion chambers and exhaust in order to improve gas flow. Stronger valve springs were fitted, as was a more powerful magneto, together with a big racing-type Solex carburettor. All this tuning endowed the engine with just over 20% more power than the standard Morris Oxford version.

The engines were then reassembled and run in for three days on a test bed, and then decarbonised before being installed back into the chassis. Due to this removal and reinstallation process, a chassis didn't necessarily finish up with its original engine. To overcome this problem, the space for the engine number on the guarantee plates were only engraved after completion, so that the numbers were correct.

After having been 'tweaked' at the MG depot, the rolling chassis were driven to Carbodies Ltd's coachwork factory in Coventry to have the body of choice fitted. The aluminium side and rear panels on the open cars had an engine-turned finish, coated with clear lacquer. Above these panels the cars were painted in a choice of colours, with the wings to match.



PRODUCTION NUMBERS

MG 14/28s were only built for a short period from October 1926 until June 1927 and only 290 examples were made, of which 10 are known to survive. The production of 14/40s began in August 1927 and finished in April 1929, during which time 486 examples were produced. There are 21 MG 14/40s known to survive.

The MG 14/40 and its predecessors the Bullnose and Flatnose 14/28 MGs are excellent prospects for collectors and enthusiasts today. They offer reliability, good looks and relatively sporty performance from a genuine vintage car that is eligible for entry into all Vintage Sports Car Club events, in that they are all pre-1931. Spare parts for these models are neither difficult nor expensive to

acquire due to their close links with standard Morris components and these virtues, combined with the MG cachet, means that they rarely come onto the open market, but are usually sold by word of mouth. Anyone who is interested in acquiring one of these MGs, or who would like further information about them, should visit www.earlymgsociety.co.uk



PRICES

A two-seater MG 14/40 cost £335 in 1927, and a 4-seater £340. A Sports Salonette or a fabricbodied Sports Saloon such as 'The Old Speckled Hen' – cost a huge extra sum of £100, at £445. For those sums, the sporting motorist got a car that was reported to be capable of over 70mph, would cruise all day at 50-55mph and returned 28mpg - and all with the reliability of a Morris.

The South African MG 14/40

A case study in buying a 14/40 MG

his MG 14/40 gained its soubriquet not because it was built in South Africa, but because it was repatriated from that country in 2009 after residing there for over 70 years. The 1928 car had been taken to South Africa when its original owner emigrated there in 1936. It remained in daily used until it changed hands in 1963, then was used only sparingly.

In 2009 the car was included in the auction of the deceased owner's estate in Durban. Alan Salem, who is the chairman of The Early MG Society, already owned an almost identical 14/40 and decided to bid on the car unseen and at arm's length by telephone. After a certain amount of confusion because of a delay on the telephone line, the bidding suddenly stopped and the auctioneer's assistant said: 'Congratulations Mr Salem, it's yours!'

The auction took place in March 2009, and the car finally arrived back in England in July that year. To Alan's relief the MG was all present and correct, and the strip-down revealed that the 80-year old MG was in pretty good order, mechanically at least. The coachwork had not fared quite so well and showed signs of some bodged repairs to accident damage over the years. The interior trim had also suffered the ravages of time and was good only for use as patterns by the upholsterers.

The engine, gearbox, front and rear axles were all stripped, and rebuilt with new bearings and bushes where required. Once the repairs to the body tub and wings had been completed, the jobs of re-painting and upholstering were out-sourced to specialists. After the MG had arrived back in England, it was almost









two years before the restoration was complete and the car was back on the road.

One problem that took considerable time and effort to resolve was that of having the MG's original registration number reissued. The DVLA were reluctant to comply, but after much correspondence and representations from Mike Worthington-Williams, the original registration number, UV 4285 was finally back on the MG. Talking of numbers, whilst this car was supplied to the first owner by Dorking Motors, they were merely MG dealers, rather than distributors. Dorking Motors

had acquired the MG for their client from University Motors, who were one of MG's London main distributors. University Motors acquired batches of registration numbers from the London County Council licensing authority, which began with the letters UV – to match the initials of the firm hence many vintage MGs carrying UV registration numbers. University Motors subsequently acquired registrations beginning with the letters MG from the Middlesex C.C. licensing authority, which they used extensively but not exclusively – for MG cars that they supplied.

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MG 14/40 vs MORRIS COWLEY



Illiam Morris began in business by making bicycles in the late 1800s. He was a passionate cyclist himself in his early years and won around 100 championships. Sadly, the business failed. However, his reputation prevailed and with a loan he began again. In 1908 he sold the rights to the cycle operation, turning instead to hiring and repairing cars and acting as an agent for motor manufacturers including Singer and Standard, working from an old stable block on Longwall Street, Oxford. Later he had the premises rebuilt and in 1911

illiam Morris began in he opened The Morris Garage. The business by making bicycles building was enlarged to become The in the late 1800s. He was Morris Garages two years later.

Despite having no car to exhibit at the London show of 1912, agents Stewart & Arden were sufficiently impressed with the designs Morris had to show them that they placed a deposit for 400 cars. Morris made a virtue of the fact that his cars would be assembled from tried and tested bought-in components. It was a reputation which endured.

To fulfil the order, Morris rented an ex-military college in Cowley where, under the name of W R M Motors, assembly began, the first car being delivered to Stewart & Arden in London in March 1913. The company then changed its name to Morris Motors in 1919, the garage and manufacturing functions complementing each other ideally.

The early post war years were to prove a testing time for Morris, but a shortage of suitable engines was solved by using American-designed Continental units, built for Morris in the UK under contract by Hotchkiss. Two models were introduced – the basic Cowley and more upmarket Oxford. Careful marketing, a



comprehensive range of equipment included as standard together with savage price cuts kept sales afloat and Morris vehicles grew to represent 41% of the UK market, a formidable milestone. Later GM reputedly offered Morris £11 million for his business; Morris refused to sell.

Meanwhile, in 1921 Cecil Kimber was appointed as sales manager for Morris Garages, becoming General Manager the following year. It was then that he began drawing up designs for new coachwork to be mounted on Morris chassis frames. Kimber ordered six chassis from

Morris Motors and arranged for sports-type bodies to be fitted, finished in various pastel shades with numerous modifications. The first sports car to emerge from Morris Garages (though not Old Number One – this name was given to Kimber's specially built Bullnose car powered by an ohv engine in which he gained a Gold Award on the London to Land's End Trial in 1925) was the 1923/24 model. This was based on an 11.9hp Cowley chassis with bodywork by Raworth and finished in buttercup yellow with black wings. It was a fetching

looking vehicle. In April 1924 it was featured in advertisements in the magazine Morris Owner as the M.G. Super Sports Morris, the name MG being encompassed within octagonal beading to form a logo that would become world-renowned.

Significantly, MG models would for some years continue to be referred to as special bodied Morris models, but the MGs were gaining a commendable reputation for transforming the Morris into a rewarding motor car. It has been claimed that Kimber's wife Irene (known as Rene) contributed to

MG 14/40 vs MORRIS COWLEY

the design themes of these early MGs. Certainly she had artistic talent, but there is no documentary evidence to back up her involvement. However, we do know she acted as a model promoting the marque - a photograph taken in 1924 shows her posing demurely in an advertisement for the Bullnose MG, reproduced in the first issue of the Morris Owner published in March that year. MG versions were displayed for sale in the elegant Morris showrooms in Queen Street, Oxford alongside their less ostentatious Morris counterparts.

Observers suggest that, in view of the confined space, it is truly remarkable that any cars were built at all in the Alfred Lane premises, partially-built vehicles having to be pushed outside before the day's work could begin. In 1925 this grave situation was solved when MG moved operations to the Morris radiator factory at Bainton Road. Despite being priced at a third more than their Morris counterparts, demand for Kimber's MGs continued to grow so in 1927 a new factory was built

to manufacture the cars in Oxford. Early the following year the M.G. Car Company was founded, though the name would not be registered until July 1930, Kimber continuing to manage Morris Garages and MG simultaneously. It was a demanding life, with MG soon offering the choice of three different chassis allied to a variety of coachwork options – quite a remarkable achievement within such a short timescale.

In September 1929 MG moved again, this time to a new premises in Abingdon-on-Thames, causing Kimber to resign his post as Manager of Morris Garages and enabling him to concentrate on developing the fledgling business. With hindsight this was undoubtedly the right decision for the following year was to see the onset of a world-wide depression, which had far reaching impacts with many companies going into receivership. That MG survived was due in no small part to the successful introduction of the Midget sports car in 1929, a vehicle which offered huge enjoyment for the growing band of loyal MG enthusiasts, but at a price

which was affordable. The little car's notoriety was considerably elevated by its racing and record breaking achievements, which in turn resulted in considerable publicity for MG.

The Bullnose was superseded in October 1926 by the 14/28 Flatnose Super Sports, so named because of its flat, vertical radiator. This change was brought about by the introduction of a new Oxford chassis from Morris in September 1926 which was wider, shorter and much heavier than its predecessor and had a more angular radiator. To accommodate these alterations, MG changed the leaf springs fore and aft to flatter versions. The rear shock absorbers were replaced by Hartford-type ones while the steering box was replaced with a Marles-type unit using a revised mounting and a sprung steering wheel. The final drive ratio was also increased, and the braking system was completely revised. Other changes were the fitment of wire wheels to the five-stud hubs, relocating the battery, and mounting the wings and running boards to the chassis frame. Alterations to the







body included changes to the doors, while the fanciful two-toned MG paintwork which had been so popular in previous years was retained, although created by giving the aluminium body and bonnet sides an engine-turned effect finish with lacquer protection.

The 14/40 MkIV Flatnose MG was introduced in August 1927, and significantly became the first model of MG as a make in its own right. MG gave their cars greater power by stripping each engine down, polishing the combustion chambers and ports and fitting stronger valve springs. The cylinder head was stove enamelled in black lustre and secured with nickelplated dome nuts. However, perhaps due to the additional weight of the Morris chassis, when Motor Sport and Autocar tested a 14/40 in 1928, they found that acceleration was no better than the earlier 14/28 model, while maximum speed had actually been reduced. However, both magazines enthused over the

MG 14/40 vs MORRIS COWLEY



road holding, saying that it was exceptional and adding that the car looked 'a thoroughbred.'

Another move for MG operations saw the business take up space in an all-new factory on Edmund Road. By 1927 it was ready for occupation. With greater production space, rolling chassis delivered from Morris (they were actually driven on the road from the Morris factory in Cowley to the MG works) were completely dismantled. Again the engines were stripped and rebuilt by hand, then run in on coal gas. They were installed back into chassis at random, and the guarantee plates were then stamped accordingly with the appropriate engine number. Alterations to the chassis continued the established pattern of springs, brakes, steering and final drive units all being improved.

In the autumn of 1928 MG proclaimed: 'We make no apology for continuing to produce the M.G. 14/40 Sports Mk IV at its exciting specification and price,' going on to say that the Marles steering, real leather upholstery with pneumatic cushions, adjustable seats and controls, were but a few of the model's attractive fixtures and fittings.

Late 1928 saw MG having its own stand at the London Motor Show for the first time, the company exhibiting not only the existing 14/40 but also two new models – the 18/80 six cylinder with Alvis-beating performance and the tiny two-seater Midget, again the first of a long line of affordable yet fun open sports cars.

Turning now to the two cars in our photographs, a 1929 Morris Cowley and a 1928 MG 14/40, close examination reveals the major differences and similarities between them. Both share the same chassis frame, but the Flatnose Morris has a wheelbase of 8ft 9in while the 14/40 is a fraction longer at 8ft 10½in. Both have the same 4ft track. The half elliptic springs on the MG are adapted Morris springs, re-drilled as necessary and designed to be flat in normal use. The Morris saloon had Smith shock absorbers, but the MG was given Hatford patent friction-type dampers in an effort to produce sports car handling and ride at speed.

Both cars have 19in well-based wheels and 19 x 4.50 'balloon' tyres, the wheels on the Morris being artillery pressed steel types while the MG got Dunlop wires. (Beaded edge

wheels and tyres had been phased out in August 1924 on Morris cars and in 1926 on MGs.) On both cars the spare wheel is carried on the front wing. In their publicity MG made reference to the 'High Efficiency Brake' gear in an effort to give the driver confidence in controlling the car. In truth, the system is shared between both the Morris and the MG. The foot pedal is linked to all four wheels by a cross shaft, which in turn is connected to the front and rear brake shoes by lever arms. Significantly, the drums have rings embedded on their outer edges designed to increase rigidity under heavy braking. The difference between the two designs is the size of the brake drums - 12in on the MG and 10in fitted to the Morris.

On the MG, to enable the steering to be adjusted for individual requirements the Marles-type steering box is located on a bracket, which itself is fixed to the chassis frame and raked to provide a comfortable driving position. The steering wheel is an 18in four spoke-type. In common with the Morris, the manual ignition advance/retard and choke control levers are all mounted on the steering column.





MG 14/40 vs MORRIS COWLEY

The ignition system is similar on both models, relying on a Lucas type magneto driven off the front of the engine. On both cars the fuel tank is mounted on the bulkhead with a gravity feed to the carburettor. The MG's power unit is in fact the larger 1802cc Oxford engine, rated at 13.9hp. The four cylinder unit is cast as a single block with the inlet and exhaust valves located on the near side. Under the Morris bonnet there lies the smaller 1584cc Cowley engine rated at 11.9hp. Originally the MG would have been fitted with a Solex carburettor, but today both cars breathe through an SU.

The cars also share the same immersed-in-oil clutch and three speed gearbox. The back axle and torque tube (which carries the propeller shaft) are assembled as a single unit linked to the gearbox by a balljoint. But the flowing lines of the MG's body were shaped by Carbodies and contrast strongly with the more upright Cowley saloon coachwork produced by Morris's own craftsman. Both cars feature running boards linking the front and rear wings, 10in wide on the Morris with a wooden toolbox on the driver's side, but with a wicker picnic basket on the 9in wide passenger's side running board on the MG.

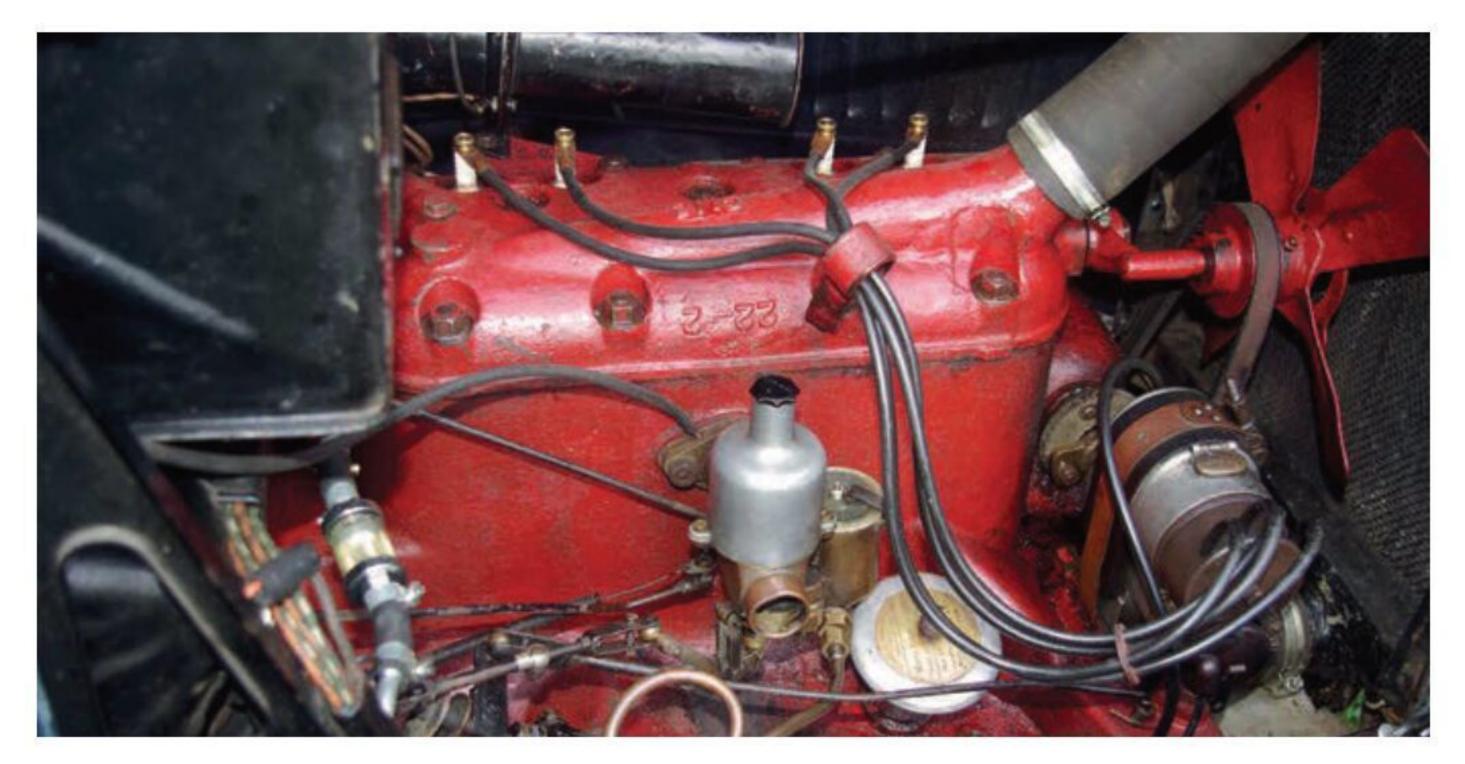
Inside, the Morris features standard saloon-type accommodation with two separate seats in the front and an extremely comfortable bench in the rear. In the MG, behind the individually shaped front seats is an occasional 'dickie' seat so popular on this type of car in the 1920s and 1930s.

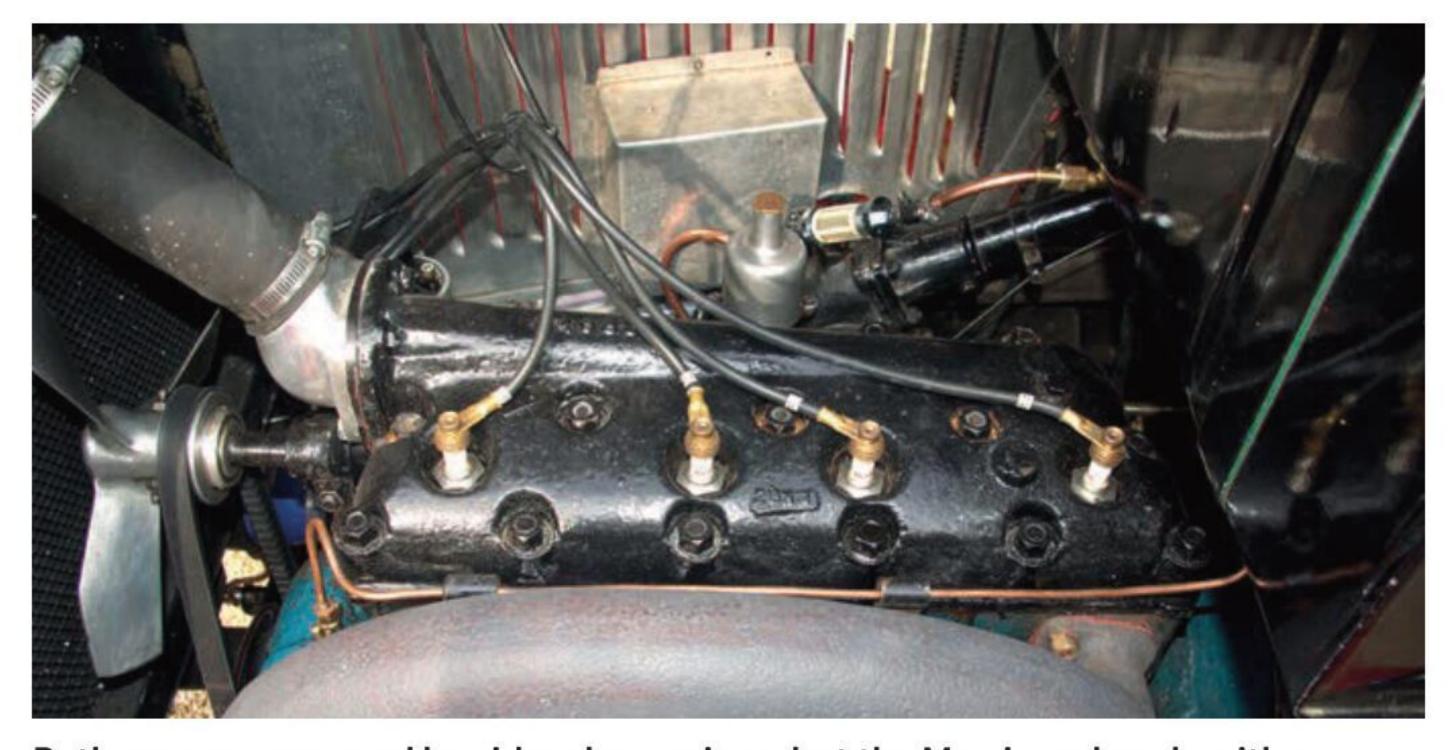
As befits its more sporting appeal, the MG is designed to reach and exceed 4000rpm providing around 70mph in top gear, 38mph in second and 20mph in first gear, not inconsiderable performance given the age of the car. In contrast, with its weighty and more angular body, the less powerful Cowley has a more sedate 50mph top speed.

So these two cars are similar in technology, yet so diverse in execution and practice. Bringing them together was a fascinating way to witness how MG's ingenuity transformed a practical workhorse into a stylish sports car.









Both cars are powered by sidevalve engines, but the Morris makes do with a 1548cc unit while the sportier MG has borrowed the bigger 1802cc motor from the Morris Oxford.

VITAL STATISTICS

14/40 MG Super Sports
Capacity: 1802cc
Power: 40bhp (13.9hp RAC rating)
Torque: 80lb.ft approx.
Top speed: 70mph
Cost: £345
Numbers built: 486

(inc. 72 two seaters)

Morris Cowley

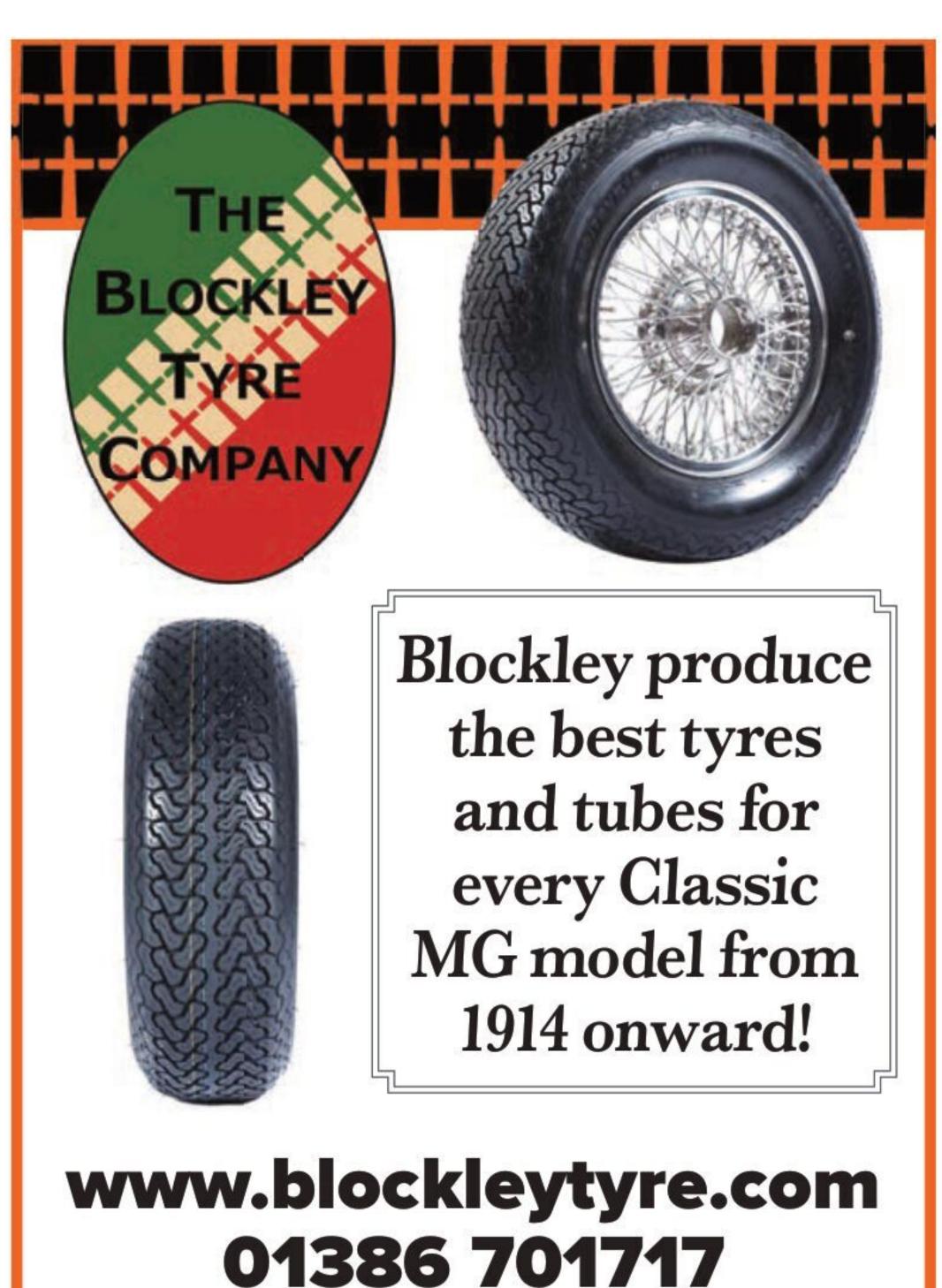
Capacity:1548cc sidevalvePower:26bhp (11.9hp RAC rating)Torque:57lb.ftTop speed:50mphCost:£195Numbers built:53,430 Cowley

units in 1928













A rare survivor

The 18/80 marked a new direction for MG as the fledgeling company targeted the most affluent motorists of the era with a car that offered superb quality, but also great value for money.

Words and pictures: Dave Bowers

urvivors of MG's 18/80 range are hardly two-a-penny, and the fine example that's featured here is doubly unusual in being the extremely rare MkI Speed Model Panelled version. This is immediately distinguishable by its sharply defined boat-tail, and also by bodywork that is narrower than on a standard 18/80.

MG produced 25 of these bodies for the high performance competition versions of the 18/80, the 18/100 MkIII that went by the name Tigress, although only five MkIIIs were actually built - two of which survive today, both residing in England. The Tigress was raced at Brooklands, although without much success, so MG stopped further development, and the remaining 20 surplus bodies were fitted to what became known as the Speed Model Panelled version, as distinct from the standard production 18/80 Mkl Sports Model.

Our feature car, chassis no. 6696 and registered as PL 8282 on 1 June 1931, was first owned by Major Neville Smith, who resided at a prestigious address in London on Upper Grosvenor Street. It was then sold in 1939 to a Mr Richards, who ran the Pegasus Garage in Boreham, Essex. Still complete with the original Tigress-derived body, the car's next owner was John Guild of Stowmarket, Suffolk, in 1953 who kept this MG for the following decade before selling it in 1963 to Rex Kettel. The car is now owned by Rex's son, Rodney Kettel, meaning that it is rapidly approaching a half century of continuous ownership in the same family. Rodney picks up the story of his family's involvement with the car, saying: 'Father had a long association with motorsport, competing in racing and rallying in the early

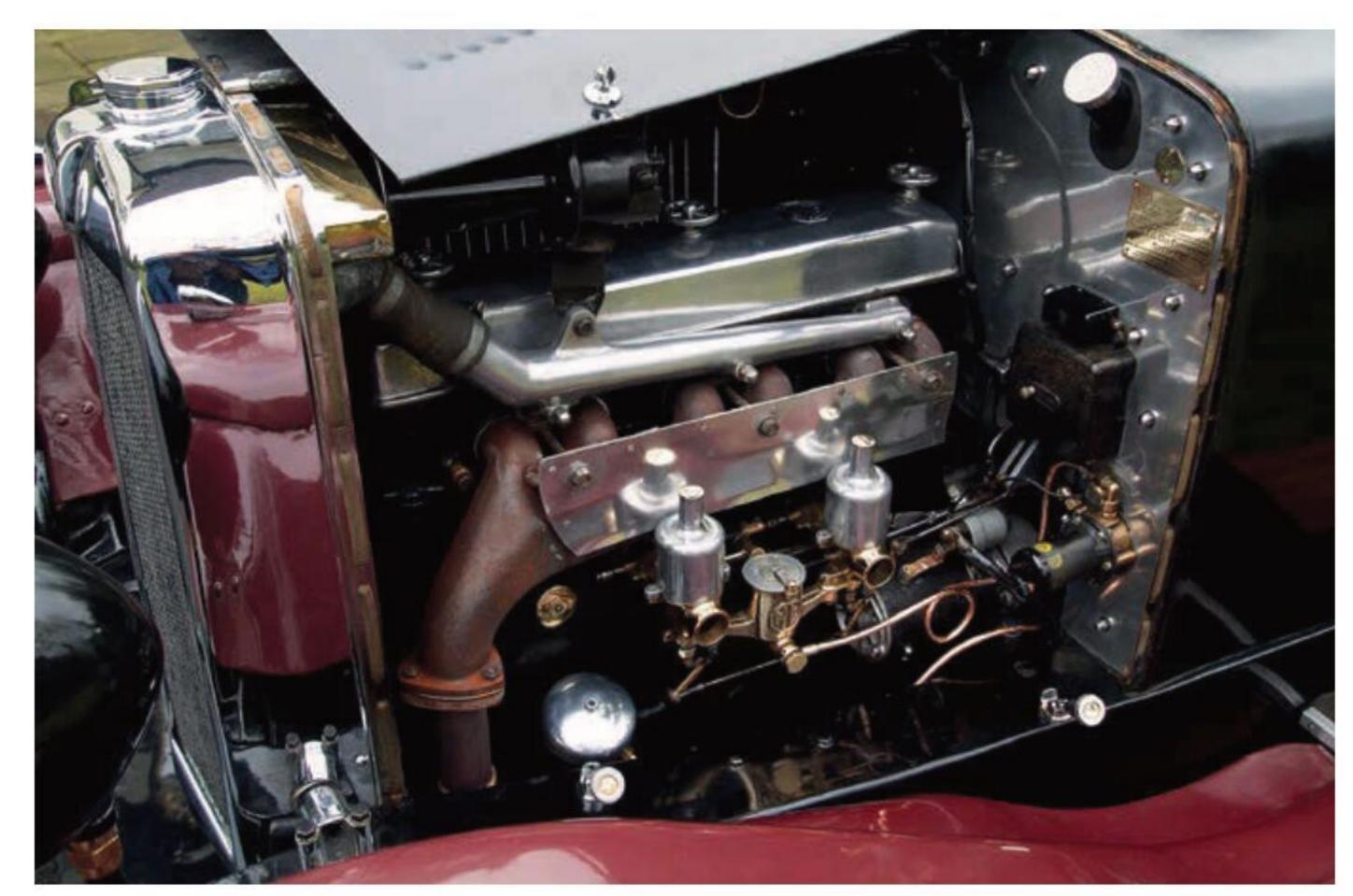
1950s, particularly co-driving and navigating in an HRG. Father was very successful in events such as the RAC Rally and the Daily Express Rally with the HRG. As a consequence, my brother Chris and I were both steeped in cars and motorsport!

'The family's connection with MGs dates to when father bought a ZB Varitone as a road car, whilst mother had an MG YB - family cars that Chris and I drove in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Father would teach us all the skills of rallying and racing at the nearby disused Fradley airfield, the extremities of which today form part of the Curborough sprint track. In those days it was possible to simply drive onto the old airfield without asking for permission. I think we were the fastest of the learner drivers there with the ZB! That was a lovely sporting car to drive and I passed my test in it.

'Father was very generous when Chris and I went with our parents to collect the 18/80, because he let us drive it home. This wasn't too difficult for me, as I had had previous experience of driving a friend's L-Type and a TC. As the 18/80 has a Dewandre vacuum servo mechanism, it has effective braking. However, you would soon find the braking impaired if the engine was not running. I remember one occasion when Chris inadvertently switched off the ignition, suddenly found a lack of adequate braking and drove into the back of a Morris Minor which suffered damage, although the sturdy chassis of the 18/80 was untouched. Neither my father nor the owner of the Morris were best pleased!'

Although the car was in good condition, the Kettel family decided in 1965 to carry out a full restoration.

MG 18/80



The Morris engine gained twin carburettors in the MG and was good for around 80mph, but only a modest 18mpg.

However, this took eight years to complete due to business and family commitments getting in the way. The completed work included Rex Kettel's fabrication of a new bulkhead and the replacement of the dashboard surround with one made out of a solid piece of mahogany. Other tasks included arranging for the dashboard instruments to be repaired, sourcing new shackle bolts and having the leaves of the suspension retempered.

Rodney added: 'Chris and I, when able, were very involved in the rebuild of the car, which was then hand painted in its original colour scheme of a black body with deep red mudguards and wheels before being professionally re-upholstered. Father found out the original colour scheme after talking to F Wilson McComb, who was very instrumental at MG's Abingdon factory at the time, when they met up at an MG Car Club event held at Beaulieu in about 1963.'

Fortunately, little was required on the mechanical side, and the Morris Isis-derived, six-cylinder, 2468cc engine held up for many a year before a rebuild was required. By that time Rodney was able to help out once more after raising a family and returning to his native West Midlands. The car was back on the road in 1973 to be used for various events, particularly those organised by the Vintage Sports Car Club.

Rodney said: 'Due to the family business of Newton Oils being a sponsor at Shelsley Walsh and Prescott, we would take the MG to the VSCC hillclimbs, where it would be used as the course car. I remember one occasion when Raymond Mays and Whitney Straight were passengers in the car, recalling their driving experiences at Brooklands. Also an occasional passenger was Rivers Fletcher, a good acquaintance of father, and much involved in MG racing and a great supporter of the firm. He recalled driving a Tigress at Brooklands before the war. Father was also a friend of CAN 'Austen' May, and they would recall their motoring and trialling experiences, including Austen's exploits with MGs and one of the Cream Cracker Team cars. Father drove the 18/80 well into his nineties, until he passed away in late 2008.'

In the last 35 years, the car has had minimal competitive involvement, although Rodney recalled one occasion at a VSCC Macclesfield driving test when a halfshaft snapped. 'Undaunted, we set about changing the halfshaft,' he said, 'completing the task within an hour. We then continued competing, and finished up winning an award!'

The current engine is not the original unit, which was possibly swapped from one taken from an 18/80 saloon



in the early 1950s, a time when spares would still have been fairly easy to procure. Although secondhand, that engine provided excellent service until the summer of 2008, when the periodic requirement for replacing the clutch became due again. This involves re-corking the clutch plate and as this work was being carried out by Fred Body - an expert on the 18/80 models – he found there was water ingress in one of the bores. Consequently, an engine rebuild was added to the list of jobs. 'The work included new pistons, having the crank reground and new shell bearings,' said Rodney. 'At the same time, I made arrangements for a replacement set of wheels. These were made by Steve Hopkins of The Wire Wheel Specialist - and an excellent job he did too! I also fitted a set of Firestones."





Rex Kettel made up a new dash panel out of solid mahogany as part of the rebuild that he started in 1965.

Other than regularly attending to no fewer than 26 grease nipples and ensuring that the cable brakes are correctly tensioned and balanced (which Rodney has found to be fairly easy by following the handbook to the letter), routine maintenance has proven to be straightforward over the years. Certainly reliability hasn't been an issue, and Rodney took the car on a long-haul trip down to the Loire on a road run arranged by The Early MG Society, which caters for the earlier MG 14/28 and 14/40 in addition to later 18/80 models.

Perhaps we should take a moment here to put the 18/80 into the context of its time and place in the MG model line-up? Aimed at the more affluent members of the car buying public, the 18/80 was introduced in 1928 as what became known as the

MG 18/80



PL 8282, partly dismantled in 1965 at the start of the overhaul.

Mkl version with a three-speed gearbox and MG's own design of chassis. It evolved into the MkII with a four-speed gearbox, sturdier chassis and improved brakes, which was produced until 1932. By this time, MG had realised that due to the general economic situation, the future lay with smaller cars such as the M-Type, which were far more affordable. Indeed, production of the MkI and MkII 18/80s overlapped, which perhaps hinted at the financial troubles of the time, because the MkI offered a slightly cheaper option in those hard pressed times of the early 1930s.

In addition to the boat-tailed design, the rare Sports Model Panelled is distinguishable from the stock Sports Model by the handbrake being situated outside the car's narrow body tub. Rodney commented: 'This car was more desirable than the others in my personal opinion. It has the same engine derived from the Morris Isis, so there is no performance advantage, but it benefited in having a lighter body over the saloon version.'

The passage of time has not seen a reduction in use for this venerable MG. Indeed, 2009 was a particularly busy year for PL 8282. Firstly, in April 2009, Rodney was invited to take

part in The Royal Windsor MG Heritage Festival, a trip that evoked memories of travelling to Royal Windsor Park and Ascot Race Course in 1977 for a show entitled The Historic Vehicle Silver Jubilee Tribute in recognition of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in that year. The purpose of the 2009 event was to raise funds for the Prince Phillip Trust, and Rodney commented on the success of this event: 'Of the MGs entered, which were some 220 cars embracing all models up to the present, we were privileged to drive into the grounds of Windsor Castle and present our cars to Prince Phillip before parking at Frogmore off the famous Windsor Long Walk. Interestingly, this occasion attracted a collection of some twenty-four 14/28, 14/40, 18/80 and 18/100 cars."

Rodney also participated with The Early MG Society in the VSCC's 75th Anniversary Celebration week at Malvern. He found this to be a most excellent occasion, embracing a wide variety of events and attracting an amazing array of vintage cars, which included a good representation of 18/80 models. Given the Kettel family record of longevity, no doubt Rodney will be enjoying driving this exceedingly rare 18/80 for a good many more years!





1933 MIDGET J2





Dear Sir...

Paul Moran's beautifully restored 1933 Midget J2 comes with some interesting documentation which illustrates just how the privileged new car owners of the 1930s dealt with the absence of a warranty.

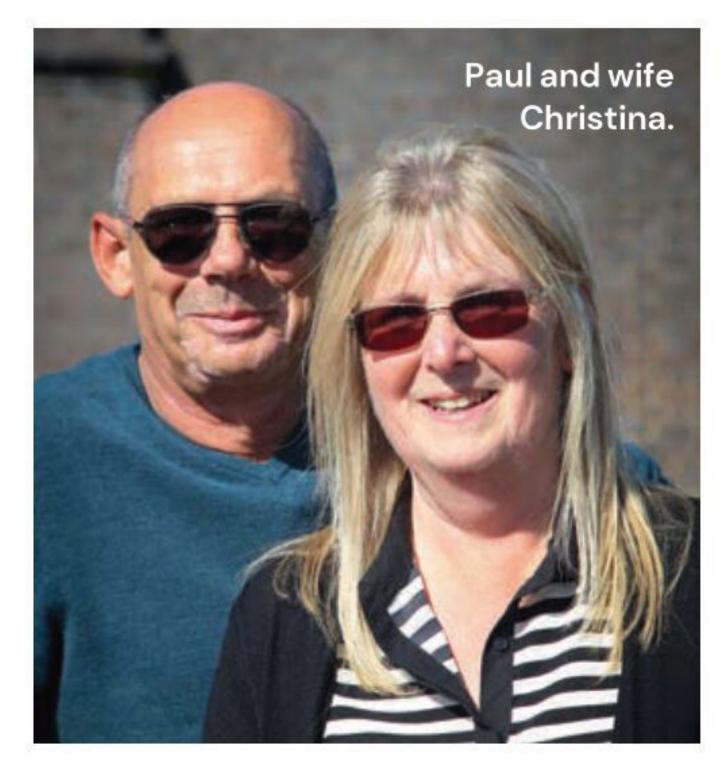
Words: Andy Starkey

e all know what it's like to buy a used car. Poring over the adverts looking for something special at the right price, in the right colour and, hopefully, with a good history. Looking at a car with a good history normally means its service history, when and where it was serviced and how often. It gives us a little peace of mind that the previous owner has looked after it. We don't normally concern ourselves too much with who those previous owners were, just that they were conscientious enough to have looked after our new purchase while in their keep. However, one little old MG came with a bit more history than the new owner bargained for and it has left him with a few unanswered questions.

winning Mini Cooper in his garage that receives plenty of attention to prove that point. That too has a well-researched history that Paul would be happy to share with you but we are here to explore his latest acquisition: this bright little MG Midget J2. Although Paul is a classic fanatic, Minis have been his thing and MGs of any sort are new to him. That didn't stop him falling for the looks and charm of the pre-war Midgets after coming face to face with one at a show. That encounter led him to the usual place to search for a desirable car, the internet. After a good old search, the car you see before you now came

Paul Moran loves a classic motor.

Once safely in his keep, and because all the major restoration



work had been undertaken by the previous owner back in 2007, Paul turned his attention to finding out where this sporting MG had been since it was built way back in 1933. This turned up the usual changes of ownerships and the migration of the car over the years. The V5 showed only four previous owners but it was the first who proved the most interesting: a Mr George E Rostron Jnr. Esq. The interest goes way beyond the enigmatic moniker, because this person was rather diligent about informing the Abingdon factory about things he wasn't, shall we say, entirely happy with. MG's responses have been kept with the car and make for seriously interesting reading and a rare insight into a very different time indeed.

First registered on April Fools' Day, 1933, and when MG was still an independent company rather than part of Morris Motors, it has the early 'cycle' wings which pre-dated the swept variety adopted a few months later. A copy of the original Factory Chassis Log identifies this car as one of 13 signed off on 20 March 1933 along with a copy of the Factory

1933 MIDGET J2



Production Data that confirms the original colour scheme was 'Black-Red'. Some of you may think then that the car you see before you now doesn't seem to meet that original spec., being red-bodied with black wings? However, there is a popular anecdote that MG at that time listed the darker colour first rather than the body colour.

The J2 was delivered to the renowned MG, Rolls Royce and Armstrong Siddeley dealers J Cockshoot and Co. Ltd., of Manchester, by 31 March 1933 to fulfil the order from Mr Rostron. This particular customer was to prove to be quite 'demanding'. Within just a few months of ownership he was complaining of dirt in the carburettors, a lack of air filters, a steering wheel that flexed too much and sticking valves. MG dutifully and politely responded, providing the advice and information that the optional 'Ashby' wheel could only be purchased at the additional cost of £0.17.06 at the time of original build. Despite the factory suggesting that Mr Rostron simply had the exhaust valve guides shortened, the sticky valve saga continued into 1934 when Mr Macfadyen, of the MG Factory Service Department, wrote to inform Mr Rostron that a 'specially prepared' cylinder head, complete with camshaft and rocker gear, was to be





1933 MIDGET J2

sent to Cockshoots for fitment. The original head was to be refurbished and put back into Abingdon stock. Problems solved. Mr Rostron remained happy, until September 1935 that is, when he put pen to paper about a leaking rear axle. These replies give us a rare opportunity to look back at how 'Customer Services' of that era operated and the language used. If only things were on such a personal basis today, perhaps we would be better off.

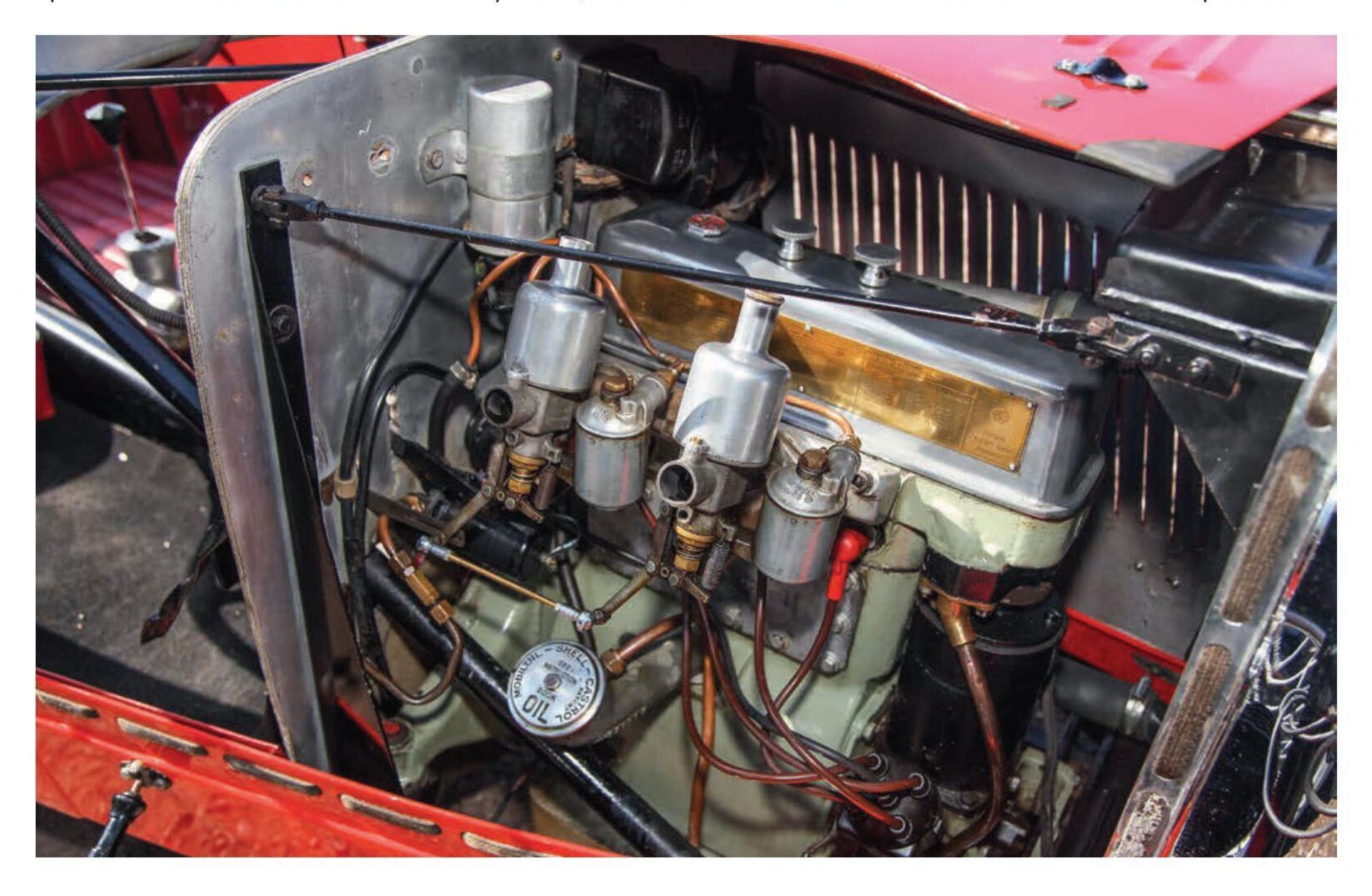
Enough of Mr Rostron for now and his seemingly lasting relationship with the factory. Let's have a look at the car itself in a little more detail. The J2's demure size could possibly make it a slightly nerve-wracking drive on our modern roads, although I bet you'd be let out of any side street once the other driver sees that cheeky little visage with all that chrome on the grille and headlamps. The 36bhp Wolseley-derived 847cc overhead camshaft engine tinkles away nicely with a little throaty induction noise from the pair of open SU carbs when the throttle is



pressed. Changing gear in the J2 can take a little bit of practice, not only ensuring the driver becomes proficient in double de-clutching because of the absence of any synchros, but also due to the fact

that the layout is 'flipped', having third and fourth furthest away from you. That'd certainly take me a while to get used to.

The brakes, which I am reliably informed are more than up to the





job of pulling the car up to a halt, are cable-operated between pedal and eight-inch drums. The 'fly-off' handbrake is directly attached to the brake pedal for engineering simplicity. Inside the cockpit, and

I say cockpit because of the early aircraft influences, the seats are plump and comfortable and the steering wheel feels unfamiliarly large and close. I am told that you drive these cars with your shoulders not



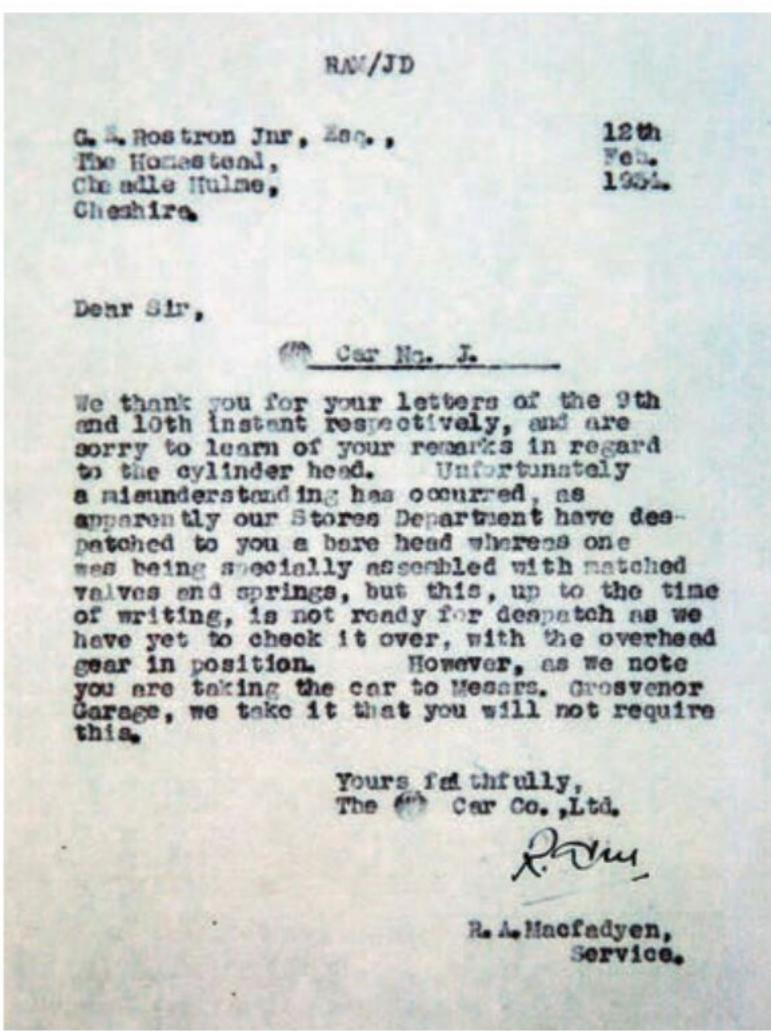
your wrists. The engine-turned dash is devoid of unnecessary dials. I'd say there were one or two necessary ones missing: no water temperature gauge and the clock was an option not selected by Mr Rostron. Mind you, who needs to know what time your engine overheated? Speedo and rev counter are far more important.

The suspension on the J2 was essentially the same as that used on most of the MGs throughout this period and was noted for its abilities and efficiency. Semielliptical leaf springs were used front and rear along with André Hartford friction dampers. Many of the components have stood the test of time and are still produced today by various companies ensuring the longevity and accuracy of any restoration. Talking of restoration, the previous owner did a sterling job, completing the task some 12 years ago; worthwhile work that still looks great today because of the careful, cosseted storage over the years. A major engine service was undertaken in 2013 by Ian McPherson and Sons,

1933 MIDGET J2







Dear Sir, Gar No. J. se thank you for your letters of the 2nd and 3rd instant respectively, relative to the above car, and regret to learn that you have been experiencing a certain amount of trouble in respect of sticking valves, and also that when replacements have been ordered, these have been found to be of unsuitable length. somewhat at a less to understand the latter complaint, but we feel that the former can be successfully overcome by supplying and fitting modified valve guides which are approximately /4" shorter in the stems. appreciate that it will be necessary to distantle the head, and we would suggest that either you remove the cylinder head complete, and forward this to us for examination, when if this is faulty in any may, we shall be pleased to replace it, or conversely perhaps you can make it convenient to return the car to our Service Department when we shall be pleased to conduct an examination. In conclusion, until we are in receipt of your further advice as to which course you will adopt, with your kind permission, we will place the matter Yours faithfully. the @ car co. Ltc. xam R. A. Macfedyen . Service.

RAW JD

Feb.

C. E. Rostron Jnr. Esq. .

the Honestead .

Chendle Hulme.

Cheshire.

Sticking valves? A factory response letter from February 1934.

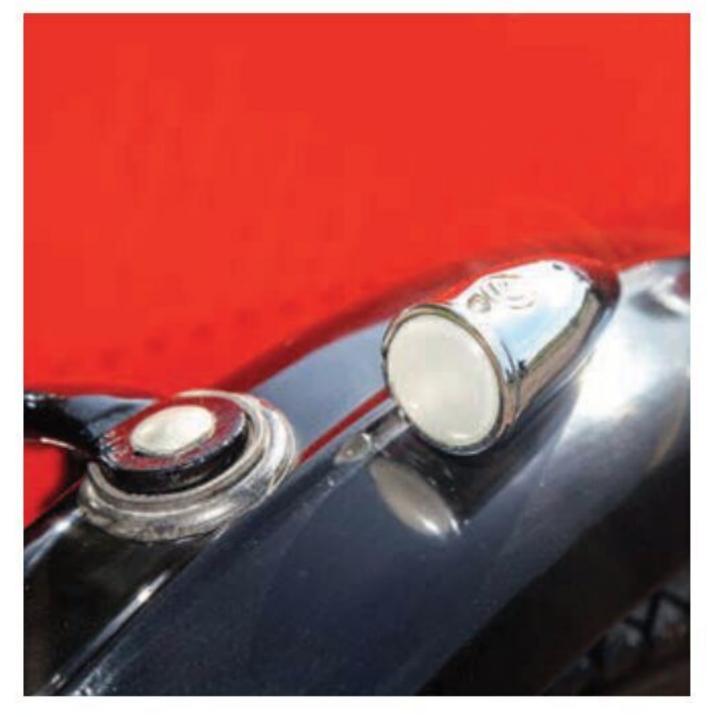
Clearing up the confusion, February 1934.

of Prestwich, with parts obtained from MG guru Barry Walker and including some close attention to a sticking oil pressure relief valve.

Paul has bought himself a very well restored and maintained piece of pre-war motoring history. It is more a living museum of a bygone era with all that correspondence still accompanying the car. Those unanswered questions I mentioned at the top of this article still remain for Paul. Who was Mr George E Rostron Jnr. Esq? He sounds a real character. "I'd love to find out a bit more about this chap," Paul tells me. "I know he was a local chap and lived on a large country estate in Cheadle and, interestingly, when you search for the name Rostron, the Captain of the RMS Carpathia from 1912 pops up: Arthur Rostron." (The Carpathia was famously involved in rescuing passengers from the Titanic tragedy). "It would be incredible if my Mr Rostron's relative was indeed involved in that rescue," Paul concludes.

It would be around about this point in any feature where I would ask the owner what their plans would be for the future of their beloved motor car. This would normally give them the opportunity to tell us about those little outstanding jobs that gnaw away at them. Maybe to cure a long standing problem or rectify some out of place component that needs to be replaced with the proper period item? Not for Paul Moran. Sure he said he wants to enjoy the car, and use it whenever the weather permits, but he has something else he wants to cure: his curiosity and desire to get to the bottom of who George Rostron was. Please contact MG Memories, via the usual channels, if you can help Paul to unravel some more about his J2's past.





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An interview with

Barry Walker

Since 1968, Barry Walker has done as much as anybody to maintain, improve and generally safeguard the world's fleet of pre-'55 MGs. We caught up with him at his premises near Stratford on Avon to find out how his love affair with these cars started, and how it developed over the years.

Words: Simon Goldsworthy

I hope you'll forgive me for pointing this out, Barry, but you've been synonymous with pre-1955 MGs for over four decades now. How did it all begin?

It started with a J2 that I bought in 1968. At the time I was working as a holiday tour guide in Europe during the summer months, and in a travel agency in Beckenham, Kent during the winter. Walking to the travel agency each morning in November 1967, I continually saw this dinky old sports car parked under a tree. It really

attracted me, so I stuck a note on the windscreen saying that if the owner ever wanted to sell it, could he drop into the travel agency and see me.

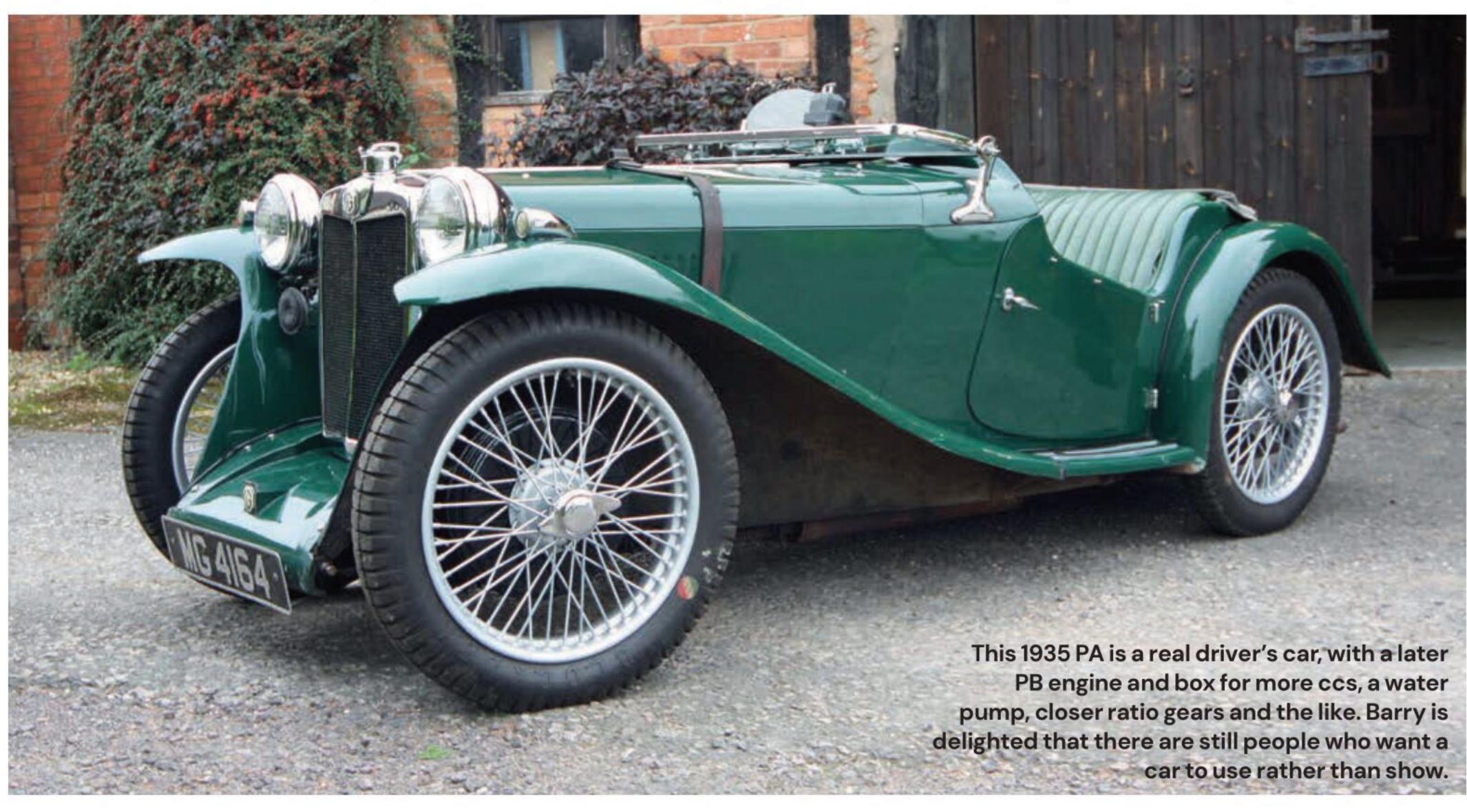
Well, that very afternoon he did drop by and said he was emigrating to South Africa in January, and that I could have the car then for £75. I knew that it was an MG from the badge I'd seen on the front, but I didn't know any more than that. It turned out to be a 1933 J2, and the owner apologised that it came fitted with a Ford engine instead of the original MG unit. That

didn't worry me one hoot, but £75 was a lot of money for me at a time when I was lucky to be making £1000 in a year. Still, I bought it. I actually had no idea whether or not I'd paid a lot for the J2, but since I'd paid around £60 for my first Morris 8 Series E tourer, I suppose it must have been good value.

The J2 subsequently failed its MoT on a worn steering box, which was when I first encountered Barry and Terry Bone, who were the only people I could find who were still offering parts for these cars. They became good chums and from them I got in touch with old Bill Thompson in Kingston, a lovely man and a master with these MGs who, along with Terry and Barry, helped me get the J2 through the MoT.

And when did you realise that MGs could be not just a hobby, but a business as well?

The more I got into my J2, the more I wanted to make it better. It was in the hope of improving my own car that I answered an ad in Exchange & Mart for a quantity of pre-war MG spares later that year. They cost a not inconsiderable £200, but I needed to borrow a lorry to shift the lot! I was living in a flat in Bromley at the time,





BARRY WALKER



and rented a number of lock-ups close by our house. Then instead of spending the winter working in the travel agency, I spent it trying to figure out what I'd bought.

My friends and I took out the bits that we needed for our cars, then I advertised the rest in Safety Fast! magazine. That was the beginning of my career in business. I never added up what the various bits were sold for so I have no idea what money I made, but what amazed me and gave me the confidence to go for more spares was the overwhelming response to what was, after all, really a very small ad.

And that's how it all began. With the money I made from those first parts, I answered another ad for a job lot of parts. I was very organised from the start, and bought bits from Terry Bone to fill gaps in my own inventory, segregating everything as I learnt the myriad of models and differences. Yet if I am honest, at this point I still did not view it as a proper business, more as an enjoyable way to make use of down time over the winter.

How quickly did you start to view it as a career choice rather than just a hobby?

I carried on buying and selling over the winter months until 1971, at which point the number of requests for parts had snowballed so much that I decided not to do any tour guide work that summer, but to stay at home and concentrate on the MG parts instead. I remember saying to my mother that this level of demand could not possibly continue for long, but that I could always go back into the travel business when it dried up. That was almost 40 years ago, and I've never looked back.

It wasn't just parts, either. I'd also bought a few more cars along the way for restoration and selling on, and to be honest, it is the love affair with Kimber's creation that has kept me so focused for 40+ years. J2s and the like were cheap back then. I remember getting one in Newark for £40. I also remember getting a J1 in bits that had been dismantled for a restoration. I thought it was in great original condition and didn't need restoring,

so I just reassembled the bits, got it running and sold it on as it was.

You should remember though that in the late 1960s and early 1970s, restored cars were not the same as they are today. It was very rare back then to find what we would now call a concours restoration. I can only remember one J2 (Alan Simpson's I believe?) that had been restored to a truly superb standard. I am certain today's standards are even higher, but back then this was the car that we all aspired to.

What makes and models of car were you buying and selling in those days?

Almost entirely MGs, occasionally a Riley, Wolseley or Morris, but all cars were cheap back then. I can't remember how cheap relative to me, but they must have been pretty cheap or I could never have afforded them. To give you an idea of the times, I remember buying an N-Type Magnette and then leaving it parked outside my lock-up over the weekend. Can you imagine doing that today? Mind you, it did get pinched! I

got it back virtually unscathed a week or two later though, when the guy who'd nicked it, rang me and asked if I wanted to buy an N-Type. So I organised a welcoming committee from the local police when he brought it along for me to have a look.

I made my share of mistakes to start with, for example in not realising the value difference between four and six cylinder cars. Others had picked up on this, and on the fact that racing cars had great potential. From a business sense I should have concentrated on the rarer models for both spares and cars to sell, but I was guided by the enquiries I was getting, and most customers had the smaller cars. I wrote them all personal information notes along with the spares I sent them, a habit that I still continue to this day.

And how about the parts side of the business; how did that develop from those early days?

At this time, cars were moving out of old banger territory and most were either owned by enthusiasts, or at least used as second cars. But there were very few new parts around, and the secondhand ones that were available were starting to become poor quality. When I found I couldn't satisfy the demand with existing parts, I started to have them remanufactured.

The very first items I had made were cycle wings for the J and F-Types. I went to H. H. Cook & Son in Nottingham and asked if they could reproduce the wings, and an old boy dusted off some bucks from a corner and said not only could they make them, but they could make them on the original bucks - they'd been a supplier to Cecil Kimber at MG! At that time – 1971 – they cost me £20 for a set of four.

Being able to supply new parts really caused demand to skyrocket. Until then, everybody had been forced to fit original parts because they were virtually all that was available. Through the 1970s and 1980s the trend switched to fitting as many new parts as they could afford, while in the 1990s it went back the other way and originality became king - not

for wearing parts, but things such as radiator shells, gauges and lamps are now more likely to be repaired and refurbished than replaced. I've always advocated this approach, and certain parts are not viable to have reproduced in any case. Regulators, ignition switches and other Lucas parts for example were very cleverly designed and manufactured; I always try to keep a flow of such refurbished parts, and am noted as having the widest range of early MG parts anywhere in the world.

Has it been easy to find people with the skills to remanufacture parts to the quality you demand?

It is getting much harder. For many years, the mainstay of this remanufacturing process were what I call Freds in Sheds – qualified engineers who had retired and were able to produce parts in small quantities to a high standard at a price that enthusiasts could afford. Their loss has been a huge blow one of my last Freds is 86 and he has just decided to call it a day.



BARRY WALKER

You have to move on though, and I have found replacements - always through personal recommendation to ensure that the quality is maintained. We have not turned to the far east for products as I am not convinced they would provide either the quality of finish or the proper fit that I demand. I'm not saying they couldn't achieve it as there is certainly an element of getting what you pay for, but players like the Chinese are only interested in large volumes. The quantities we need will always be too small to make this route affordable.

Another source of parts used to be the autojumbles. In the 1970s and 1980s I would struggle to cram all the bits I'd bought at the Beaulieu Autojumble into the van, but nowadays I always sell more than I buy. I view the autojumbles as like a big sieve, and now all the pre-war parts have been through the sieve and gone to their respective homes. And the internet has made sure that any parts which do occasionally turn up are priced at the top of their range and are rarely a bargain. I do get despondent, however, at the ill-informed descriptions of parts on eBay as being original MG, and how much more people pay for them over our catalogue prices.

What sort of parts do you choose to remanufacture rather than refurbish?

Over the years we have identified the weak links in MG's designs and sought to improve on them. Modern seal technology is a good example of this, and we have used it to improve on our water pumps which originally relied on a hemp rope seal to keep the coolant in, and also our petrol taps which originally had an unreliable cork seal. We've redesigned these to take modern O-rings, and our fuel taps in particular have made a huge difference to many P, N and T-Type owners who never even realised that their engine was not receiving enough fuel because so much air was being sucked in. This latest technology has also been incorporated in our newest product, the J, F and L petrol tank



This is Barry's own original factory J4. The previous owner had it for 40 years, then dumbfounded everyone who knew him by listing it on eBay!

taps. The difference these make is amazing, and easily justifies the cost of this precision product.

Another big project that we've recently signed off is to offer complete nose-mounted supercharger kits based on Lancia's Volumex blower, designed for easy installation by a non-engineer. There is no doubt that demand for supercharging has really taken off in the last decade or so; whether it is to keep up with modern traffic or because owners have simply run

out of other ways to lavish money on their MG, I'm not totally sure! Side-mounted four and six cylinder complete units will be next.

Moving back to the car sales side of the business, how has your typical MG customer changed over the years?

In the MG world, there is a hard core of enthusiasts who have always been into the brand – the MG bug is a very hard one to shake off once you've caught it. The marque has



Originally supplied by University Motors, this 1935 PA is an older restoration you can jump in and use.



also become attractive to investors as its cars are clearly affordable relative to some of the more exotic brands, spares and information are in abundance, and they are easy to maintain. But only recently have prices begun to move towards the true rebuild cost of an MG, and it's well overdue, though condition is imperative as we move towards the top end. For far too long rebuilds costing £35K were selling in the low 20s. It is very important that the market has made this correction.

You do still get people moving in and out of the brand despite the higher cost of entry, particularly with the current dismal interest rates on any money left lying in the banks. That has definitely seen an increase in people withdrawing savings and putting them into antique clocks, buy-to-let property and old cars and old MGs still have a long way to go if investment is your thing. And yes, you do get this conflict between investors and enthusiasts, but at

the end of the day the enthusiasts would certainly be disappointed if their cars were not worth their rebuild cost, wouldn't they? I certainly hope that the prices are maintained in the current economic climate because even if car values drop, the cost of parts and labour to restore them cannot, and that could allow some cars to fall into disrepair.

Finally, how do you see the future for these cars?

Old MGs are really very good cars to buy. They are sports cars, cleverly attractive, have an amazing spares back-up (probably due to the reasonably large numbers built) and are within the technical knowledge of most old car lovers, all of which entices new blood in. But I would say that 50% of my car customers are over 50 now looking to relive their childhood – a MMM their father had, a T-Type they had in the 1960s or something like that. The only young people we get in tend to be sons

who grew up in a VSCC family. In 20 years time I expect the focus will have moved on to cars from the 1960s and 1970s and I, as a pre-war specialist, am receiving ever more enquiries for the later T-Types and the MGA. That may mean that our cars will spend more time in the garage than they do at present, but there will always be club rallies and events to make sure they get enough exercise, and hopefully retain the supply of quality parts and expertise to keep them in top condition.

Remember, however, that original MG chassis are a finite commodity, that people want an interest after work and that the end result is highly enticing – a fairly convincing recipe for safeguarding our hobby (governments permitting!).

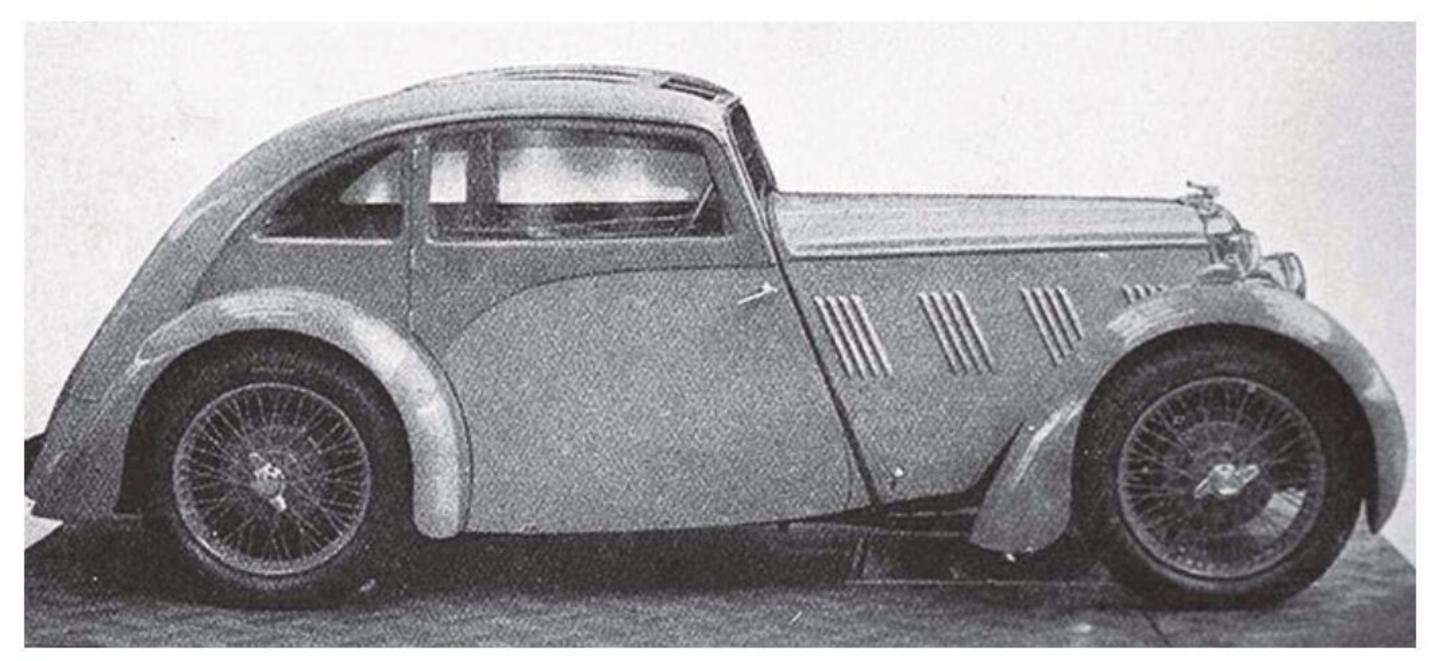
Barry Walker can be found at: Barley Leys Farm, Haselor Hill, Temple Grafton, near Stratford-upon-Avon, B49 6NH. Tel: 01789 400181, Website: www.barrywalker.com

Art deco delight

Few cars epitomised the Art Deco genre better than the MG Airline coupé and the very last of these, the only one on a TA chassis, is now in Australia.

Words: Craig Watson





The Hillman Aero Minx of 1932 shares design similarities with the Airline.

rt Deco was an all-embracing design concept from the 1920s and 1930s, which focused on the artistic merit of modern technology. In automotive design, it was exemplified by sweeping lines, bold colours and chrome fittings, rarely used to better effect than in the Airline coupés from MG.

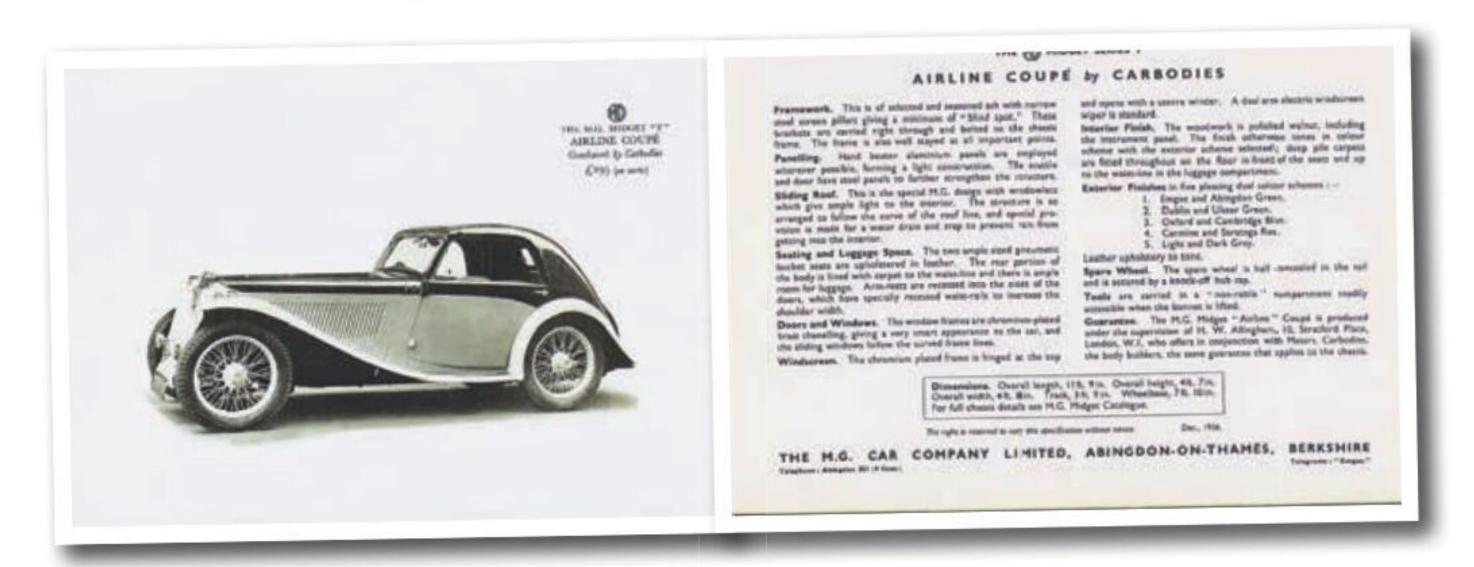
Henry William Allingham established his own firm in 1931 and began designing car bodies for numerous manufacturers. Although he had negotiated with many coachworks for a variety of car companies, he variously used three companies to build bodies of his own design. These were Whittingham and Mitchel (for Vauxhall Airline Coupé and Stratford Tourer, Rover Six Drophead and MG Allingham drophead coupé); Motor Bodies (for Vauxhall 27hp Coupé de Ville 'St James') and Carbodies for the MG Airline Coupés.

Since their beginning, special bodies had been available for MGs. In fact, it was as a specialist builder themselves, with the Morris Garages Chummy, that MG really began in 1923.

Allingham designed the Airline for the MG P-series Midget and N-series Magnette in 1934. Although, at first glance, it looked very similar to the Hillman Aero Minx from two years previously, there were significant differences. The curvature of the roof is quite different, the MG considered more stylish with its slightly turnedup trailing edge. The MG also had sweeping front guards that led down to running boards below the doors, while the Hillman had wrap-around cycle-type guards. Where the Hillman had 'suicide' doors, the MG had front-hinged doors. There were many other smaller styling differences that altogether made the MG a much more elegant-looking car.

Only 50, or 51, Airline MGs were built, with the vast majority in 1934-35. In that period 28 were built on PA chassis and only six on NA chassis. The following year 12 Airlines were built on PB chassis (of which apparently four were on unsold PA chassis converted by the factory to PB), with a single example built on an NB. There was also a lone example built on a TA chassis, chassis TAO355 to be exact, which is the car featured on these pages.

It is possible there was a second Airline built on a TA chassis, as



HENRY WILLIAM ALLINGHAM

Contrary to recent published information about HW Allingham, this is not the same Henry William Allingham who died in 2009 at the age of 113, the 14th-oldest man in recorded history. Nor was he a founding member of the Royal Air Force, as has been reported.

While there doesn't appear to be any link between the two men, it may be complete coincidence that they share the same name and were both involved in the motor industry.

The Henry William Allingham who was to design the Airline Coupé MGs was born in 1882, in Surrey, England, and married Nellie Lomax, from Lancashire, on 3 April 1909. In the 1911 Census he was listed as the Assistant Manager in a firm of mechanical engineers.

By 1921 he was Sales Manager at Chalmer & Hoyer Coachbuilders, established that year, which was the first British company licensed to build Weymann fabric-covered car bodies - noted for timber frames with light weight and good strength. Major customers were Bentley, Austin and, most importantly, Morris.

In 1925 Allingham became a partner in the company, which changed its name to Chalmer & Hoyal – made up from HOYer & Allingham. However, when William Morris established Pressed Steel, in 1926, with the Budd Corporation from the US, Chalmer & Hoyal lost this lucrative part of its business and started to concentrate on manufacturing coach bodies.

The firm was again reorganised in 1928, as the Hoyal Body Corporation, with Allingham as its chief body designer. The company was sold in 1931 and Allingham established a firm under his own name, at 10 Stratford Place in central London, to design car bodies for a wide variety of manufacturers including Vauxhall, Rover and MG.

In 1934 he opened another firm, Vehicle Developments. His Sandringham drop-head coupé bodies were made by a variety of coachbuilding companies and available on Morris, Austin, Ford, Vauxhall and Wolseley chassis.

Although a prolific designer in the 1930s, not much is known about the remainder of his career. He died in Brighton, at the end of 1960, aged 78.

MG TA AIRLINE

Anders Clausager lists two in his book Original MG T Series, and a photo of one appeared recently in Enjoying MG. According to Roy Miller, historian for the T-register of the MG Car Club in the UK, in a letter to the magazine, this second car was built in 1938 and therefore would probably have been built with a left-over body. "Little had been heard of this car until the late 1970s when it was reported that the derelict remains were sadly broken by a well known trader, now deceased, who sold on the chassis only," Miller reported.

Another unused body was sold to HRG, who fitted it to one of their chassis, but they did not progress with the planned model. That car still exists in the USA. Certainly, then, if our feature car was not the only TA version built, it is the only one still in existence.

The Airline body used on the TA was probably intended for the NB, but was left over due to the poor sales of the NB. This theory is supported by Dave Lawley, writing in The Sacred Octagon magazine, February 1978. He points out that the chassis of the N and T series had the same dimensions, apart from the N-type having two inches longer in the wheel base, and that the bonnet of the TA Airline is slightly longer than the regular T-series. The N and T series were also produced concurrently for several months.

All but one of the MG Airline Coupés were built by Carbodies in Coventry, with one only, on an NA chassis, being built by Whittingham and Mitchel. It may have been a test case to see which of the companies produced the better product and the Carbodies version was the far more elegant version.

It would appear that while sales of the Airline MGs had started well, they quickly faltered - perhaps due to changing fashions or simply due to the price premium. A PB Airline Coupé, for example, cost £290 against £220 for the two-seater: a 32% premium.

The Airline Coupé was dropped from MG's line-up in 1936 and a Tickford drop-head coupé was announced for the MG TA in 1938. At £269 10s (a premium of only 21%) and

with many luxurious appointments, it was considerably better value than the Airline. Some 260 TA and 60 TB Tickfords were sold by the outbreak of World War II.

Although many of the coachbuilt MGs may have been made to order, it would appear that the TA Airline, at least, was built without a final customer in mind. Chassis TAO355, with engine MPJG 622, was shipped from the Abingdon production line to Carbodies on 27 July 1936. With its new Airline body painted in two-tone green, it was then sold on to the MG dealership Wheatley & Knight in Cole Green, Hertford.

As the fitting of the Airline body only reputedly took four weeks, it would appear that the car may have been in stock at the dealership for close to four months. Of course, the fitting of the body may have taken longer than with the N-series, due to the slight difference in the wheelbase of the chassis.

1936 to Mrs S K Maitland, for £295 plus £3 14s 9d for delivery, number plates and licence, registered MG 4952. Apparently it was a gift from her father and it remained in the same ownership for 25 years before being bought in 1961 by Peter Lines of Salcombe, Devon. Peter was only 17 years old at the time, so the car was registered in his father's name, Edward Lines. It was renovated over the next two years and painted red monotone.

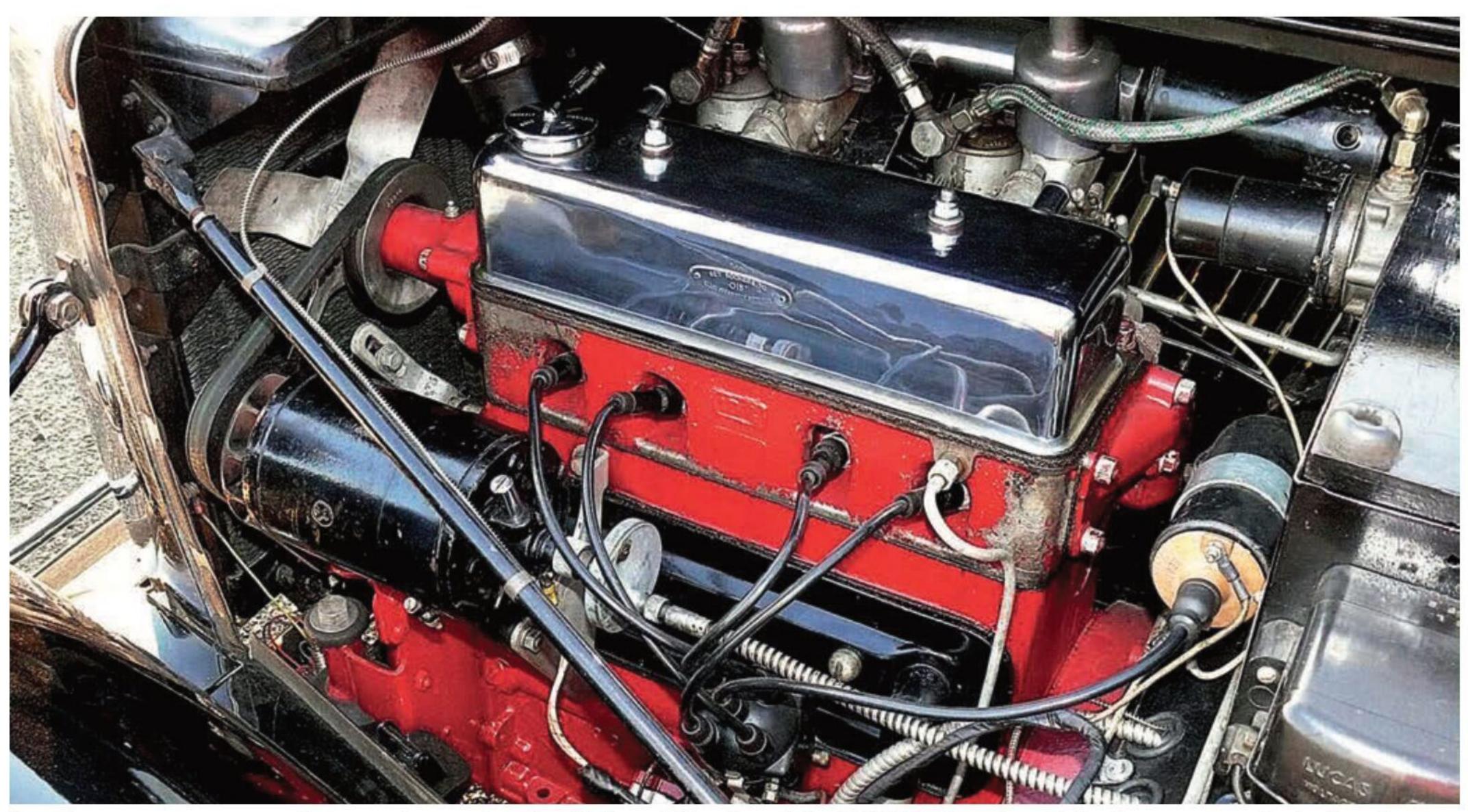
Used MG dealers Bone Brothers, who owned another MG Airline Coupé, bought it in October 1971. They sold the TA in February 1972 to Martin Shantz, a movie producer living in Pennsylvania, USA, who was making a film The Great Classic Cars - What A Way To Go, with commentary by Stirling Moss. He had the car repainted, this time silver over black, and the MG was sold at auction near the end of the film.

The buyer was Mark Gibbins, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, who gave the MG a complete restoration, painting it in its current black and





MG TA AIRLINE



Despite numerous owners in several countries, the Airline still has its original MPJG 622 engine. Right: Components, including the carbs, are beautifully presented.

yellow livery. At the New England MG 'T' Register's 'Gathering of the Faithful' in 1975, the Airline won top recognition in its class. In 1986 Gibbins sold the car to Kurt Baer and Wolfgang Fischer in Switzerland. Baer found the car too small for him to use and sold his half-share to Fischer in 1985.

In September 2011, Col Schiller in Queensland, Australia, was searching the internet and came across the TA Airline for sale. He sent an email to Fischer, simply out of interest, and after a few emails back and forth sent details of the car to his mate Tony Slattery, saying: "This is the one you want for your Super fund."

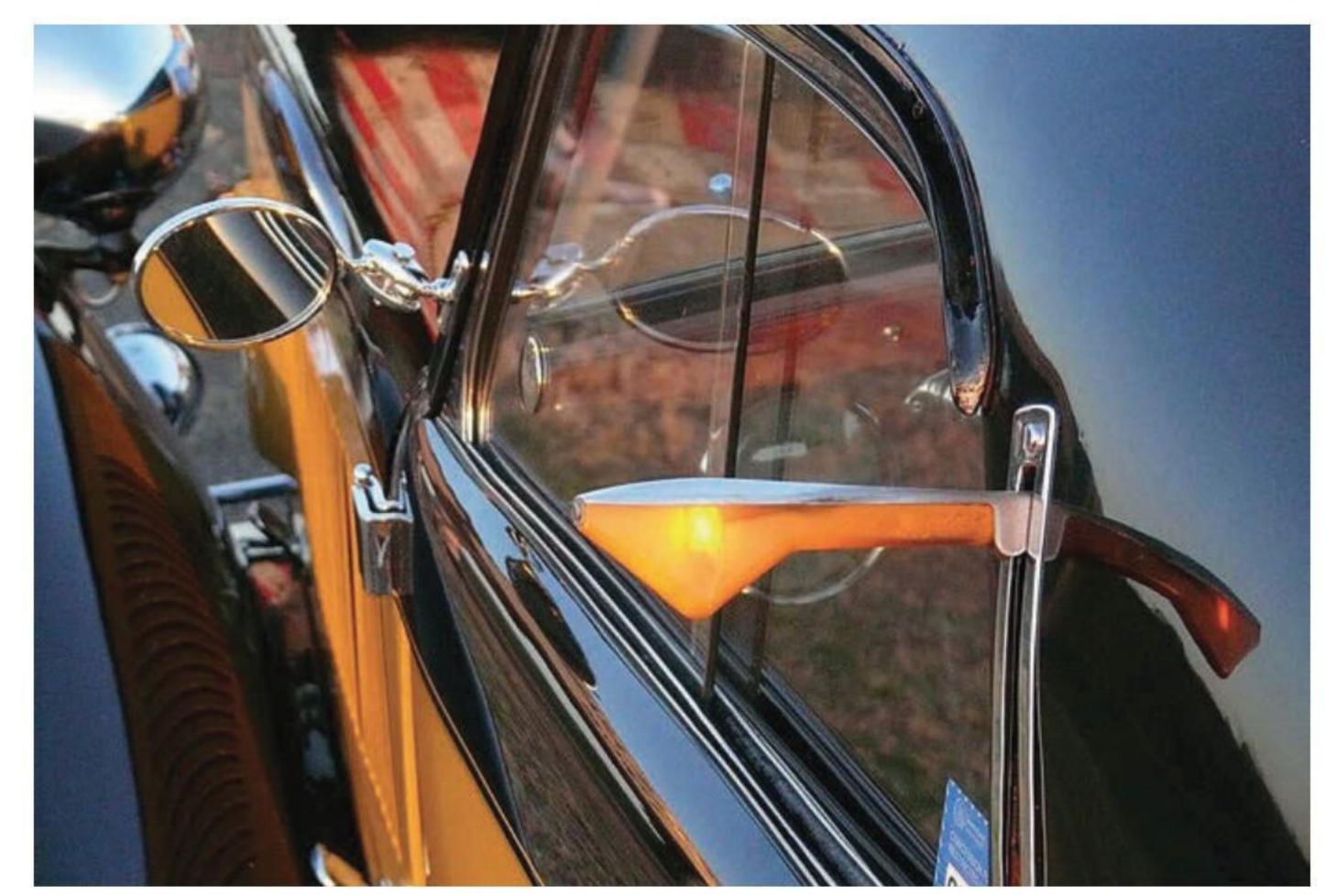
"Tony said we'd never get it," Col recalls, "then Wolfgang started ringing me. The first chat was probably five or 10 minutes and I think he was trying to test me out, see how serious we were. We hadn't even discussed money. Then the second phone call about a week later he was trying to get me to make an offer. I had spoken to Tony and we didn't commit to anything.

"Then another week or so and Wolfgang rang again. Tony and I had had another chat and pretty well decided on a figure, so I said to Wolfgang 'we probably can't get

anywhere near what you are looking for, because we know how valuable a car it is. But he kept on having a go at me and saying 'well, make an offer, make an offer. So we did and he said 'it's yours'. Then I rang Tony up and said 'hey we'd better find some money'."

Understandably, the pair are not about to disclose what they paid for it but both parties are happy. Getting

the car to Australia wasn't without its tense moments, as Tony reveals. "I was tracking the ship daily. One day it was sailing down the west coast of Spain and it suddenly did a 90-degree right-hand turn and went about 100km out into the Atlantic. Then it went round and round in circles for about four or five hours and then it turned around and went back and joined the shipping



Functional and elegant indicators. Also note the external door hinge.



Sunroof is a welcome feature for inhabitants sweltering in Australia's heat.

lanes. I reckon they went fishing! They were probably ahead of schedule, to get through the Strait of Gibraltar or something, and had to get out of the shipping lanes for a few hours. But I was having kittens.

"From the time it goes through the Suez Canal there's a blackout because of the Somali pirates so,

once it enters the Suez Canal, you're not allowed to know where it is. There's this big black hole for about eight days and I'm thinking, 'it's out there somewhere'. All up it was about 42 days on the water. The longest 42 days of my life."

Meanwhile, Tony had plans to take the car to Hobart for the MG

Nationals in April 2012. He arranged for the TA to be off-loaded in Melbourne (some 1,700km or so from their Brisbane base), where Tony and his wife Debbie picked it up, having flown down. They then drove it onto the Spirit of Tasmania ferry for the ride across to Tasmania. Arriving in Devonport, they drove the car to Hobart (280km), then toured the island before heading back to Melbourne, where the car was roadfreighted to Brisbane.

"That trip was when we found out all the things that weren't quite right with the car. For example, the front axle was only held on with one U-bolt. I had a lot of luck on that trip for nothing to actually go wrong. We are not daunted by the fact that it's not a perfect car. It was never going to be a perfect car. It looked fantastic from the photographs Fischer took, but the reality is that, with a coachbuilt car as old as that, it's got to have problems."

The paint is in remarkably good condition, considering it was last done over 40 years ago, but Tony and Col have found numerous mechanical issues. Although well looked after, having mostly sat for the past 27







The dashboard is the epitome of art deco elegance but it must have seemed rather modern and overwhelming in its time.

MG TA AIRLINE

years, it is inevitable there would be things that need tending to before it is driven regularly.

Both Tony and Col have collections of cars. Col has over 20 pre-War Morris and MGs, collectively known as the Cambooya Collection, while Tony has eight other MGs. All of Tony's cars have names: Pooh, Duncan, Rufus, Meg, Mortitia, Gem, Alvin and Ruby. It's not surprising then that he and Debbie christened the TA Airline, and it had to be something that went with the gracious elegance of the Art Deco style: Grace.

Remarkably, Grace still has her original engine, interior trim and instruments. The interior is luxuriously appointed, if a little cramped for a tall person, and the car exudes style. Wolfgang Fischer supplied Tony and Col with a large dossier of information about the history of Grace, including



the original bill of sale and photos from previous owners.

Tony sold his share of Grace to Col in 2014; "to build a big garage at our new home", he reported. Grace remains with the rest of Col's growing collection and is one of his favourite cars.

In the short time Grace has been in Australia she has become a bit

of a celebrity. As one of only two Airline Coupé-bodied MGs in the country – the other is a PA owned by Perth collector Peter Briggs, and is reputedly the first one built – she has already featured in a number of magazine articles and has won the deserved admiration of everyone who has seen her.



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Some like them small

Richard Lee has restored one MG from the company's early years, and virtually built a second from scratch. But what is it like to drive a car that makes even the classic Mini look overgrown?

Words: Mike Taylor



ichard Lee is the owner of two very pretty MGs, a 1929 M-Type coupé and a 1934 P-Type sports. I've always had a love of cars and shared a 2.5- litre Riley with my brother when I was young,' explains Richard. 'In 1965, I decided to buy an old MG. I was 19 at the time and eventually I found what I was looking for – a P-Type sports. The chap who was selling it had two, a runner priced at £100 and the one I bought, which he was using for spares and for which he wanted £25."

After driving the car for a short while, there then followed a prolonged period of storage until funds and time were available to undertake a restoration. But within a few months of taking the MG off the road, the place where he kept it was flooded so badly after a storm

that the water reached up to its windscreen. So Richard towed the car to his workshop, took it to bits and stored it in the roof. I began to think seriously about restoring it in the mid-1970s, although I'd had no previous experience of rebuilding cars,' says Richard nonchalantly. 'But I did have my own blacksmith workshop, so I had the experience of working with my hands - often to the

M AND P-TYPES

same tolerances as used on cars – and the tools to attempt the task.'

The first job was to straighten out a twist in the chassis before the axles and suspension could be added. With the exception of the bulkhead which is original, Richard then began building a new ash body frame using parts from the old shell as patterns. The timber was then covered with metal sheets, the whole car being professionally re-sprayed locally. Meanwhile, the engine was rebuilt although the gearbox and back axle were fit for further service. Overall, the whole job took about ten years to complete. 'I'd just leave it for a while and then go back and do a bit more," says Richard. 'When I eventually did drive the car, it really lived up to my expectations. Cars like these MGs are just tremendous fun, not terribly fast, but certainly worth all the work."

As for the M-Type, Richard acknowledges that, had he been able to afford it, his first choice would have been a six-cylinder version of the P-Type. 'But, they cost so much,' says Richard wistfully. 'So about



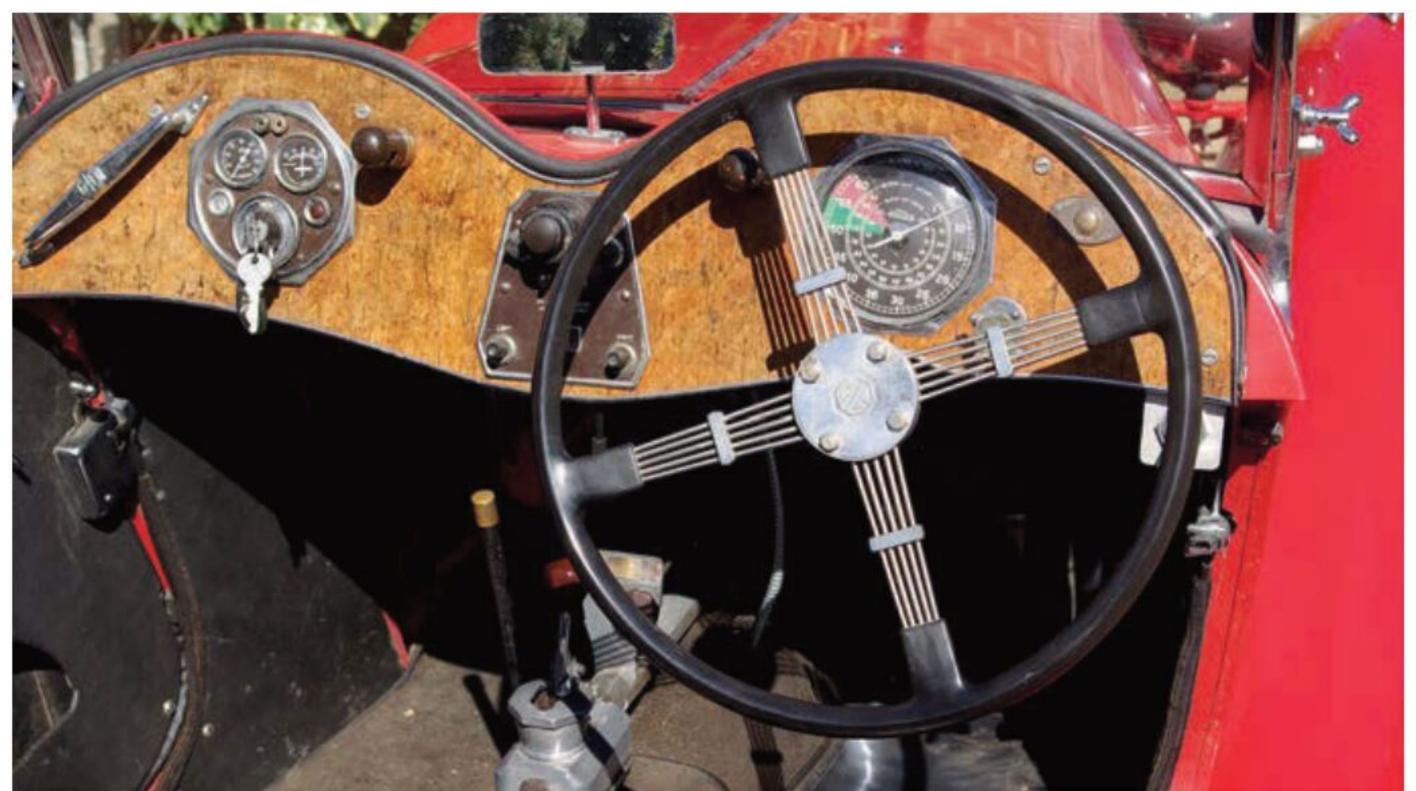
New crossflow motor for P-Type was still 847cc, but made 36bhp@5500rpm.

seven or eight years ago I thought I'd build an M-Type coupé instead. I advertised for a chassis, and managed to locate one in Antwerp. It was a bare chassis with axles, wheels, radiator and an engine.'

Incredibly, Richard's journey from these basic beginnings to a complete car began with a photograph, which he was able to use to scale off measurements for the whole project. Interestingly, while the illustration he used did not reveal the engineering that went into building the cars originally, having restored the P-Type he was familiar with the thinking employed by the engineers at MG, how they designed the cars and the bodies that were built for them by Carbodies of Coventry. 'After all,' he points out,







Double-hump dash was an MG sports car tradition that lasted to the MGA.

'the bodies were pretty basic, they were built for about £5 each."

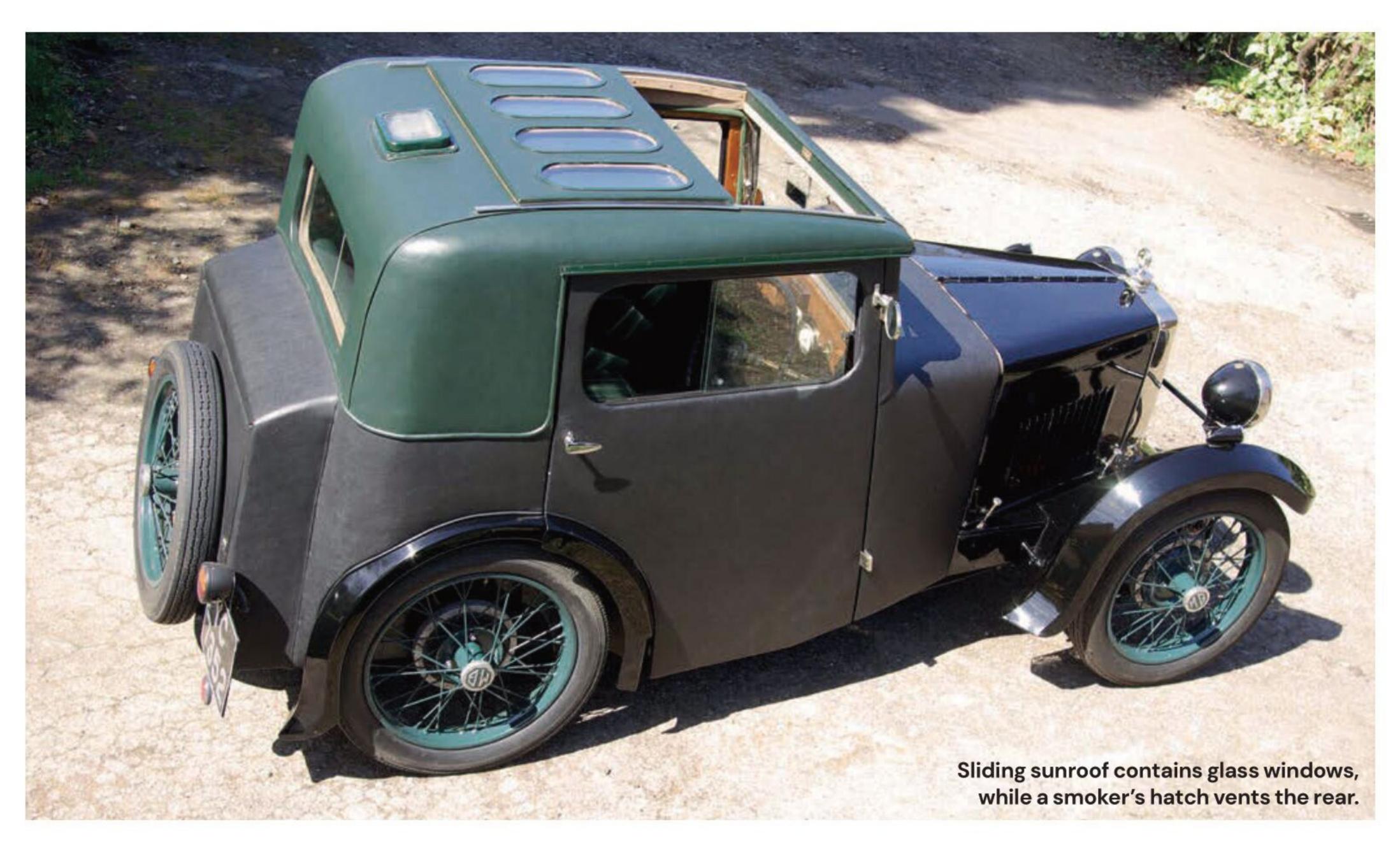
Although it had been rebuilt before, Richard stripped the engine just to make sure. As for the body, this was constructed using ash wood framing with a mixture of metal and fabric covering, the entire job taking three years. 'Working on the P-Type and then the M-Type, you can see

design progression,' Richard asserts. 'Both are overhead camshaft 847cc engines, although while the M-Type uses a two bearing crankshaft and a single sided inlet and exhaust cylinder head, the P-Type of the 1930s had progressed using a three bearing crank and a cross-flow head. Perhaps it's all part of their racing heritage."

Based on the open MG Midget of the late 1920s, on first acquaintance, the diminutive M-Type Sportsman's Coupé really is dainty, being just 10ft long and only 4ft 1in wide. Compare this to, say, BMC's 10ft 1in long Mini, which is some six inches wider than the Abingdonbuilt car. Another link with Issigonis's baby are the sliding side windows. At the rear the M-Type boasts a small boot, just large enough for a mediumsized suitcase, with a neat tool box compartment beneath. Significantly, MG spurned the more usual front opening doors of the day, preferring to fit the hinges to the leading edges. Atop the pretty fabric covered body is a sliding sunroof with glass panels, and a 'smoker's hatch' at the rear.

Climbing in takes familiarisation, twisting and sliding the left leg beneath the large steering wheel before dropping onto the seat, pulling the right leg in and then closing the door. The steering wheel position demands a classic arms-bent style, being just inches away from the driver's lap. Accommodation for two 6ft males is cosy - cramped even -

M AND P-TYPES



the leather seats being located within the dimension of the chassis frame rails. Behind is a tiny occasional child's bench seat, though with the front seats adjusted well rearward, legroom is limited. Yet Richard must be congratulated for his really excellent standard of workmanship – everywhere is beautifully finished and executed, complete with tailored trimming and carpets.

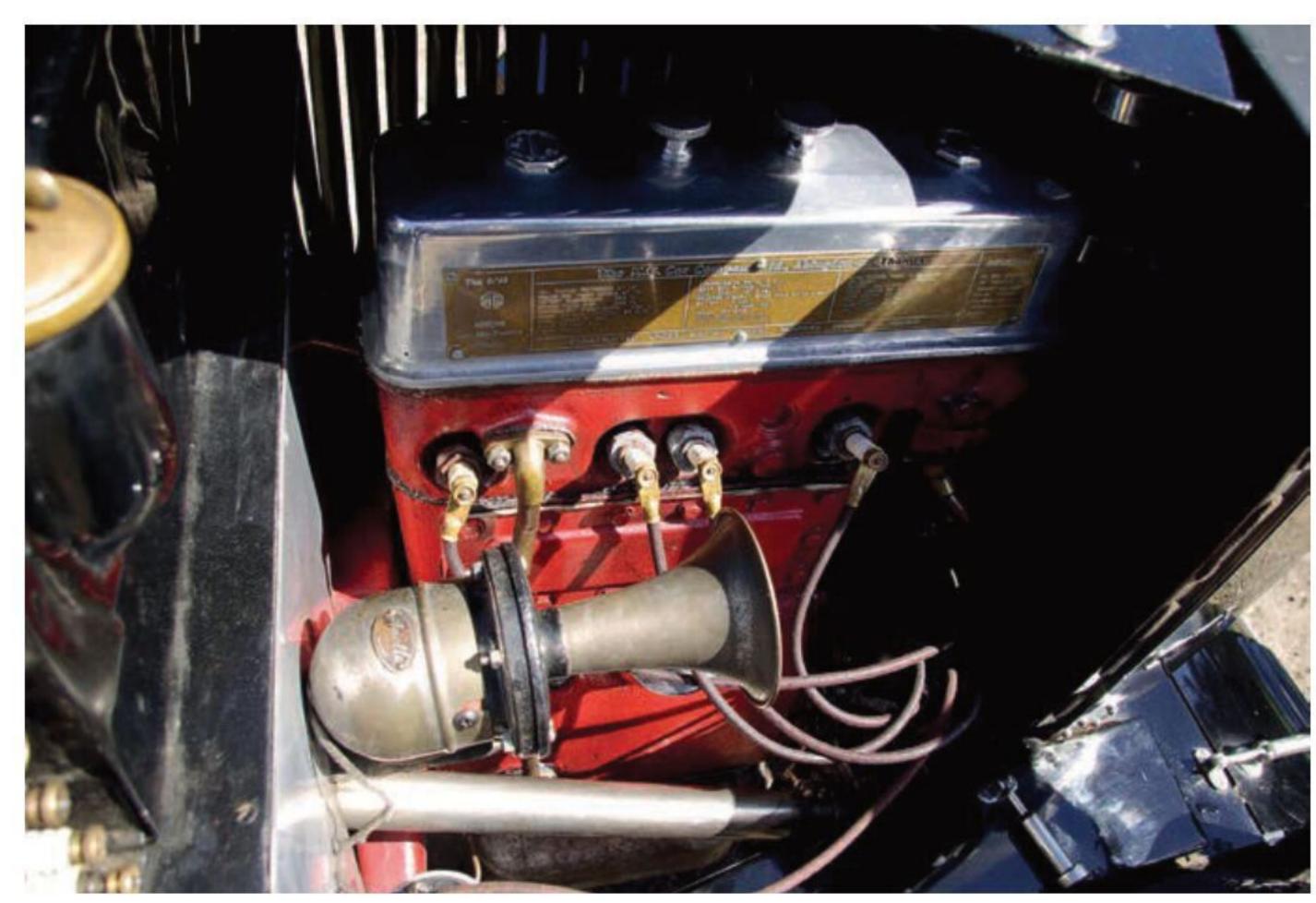
When this car was made, car controls had yet to conform to any kind of universal pattern; the throttle is located between the clutch and brake pedals, with little space between each for large feet. The long gearstick is directly connected to the gearbox, while to the left is the vertical conventional handbrake. On the column is the manual ignition advance and retard control. A large speedometer is located on a central brass console, which also carries the auxiliary gauges.

To start, the ignition control is moved to retard, the ignition turned on and the starter button pressed. The engine immediately bursts into life, the ignition control then being moved back to advance for normal running. It's a three speed gearbox

with no synchromesh. To select first you move the stick to the left and down. Balancing the throttle with the switch-like clutch requires familiarity if the take-off is to be achieved smoothly. To change up the trick is to dip the clutch, allowing the revs to drop while moving the stick up, then across the wide gate, before attempting to select second; get it

wrong and the gearbox reacts badtemperedly with a nasty graunching sound. Downward changes require double de-clutching.

Underway, the leaf springs – supplemented by lever arm friction damper – give little and the ride is very firm, though the seats are remarkably comfortable with soft squabs and bucket shaped backs.



Early M-Types squeezed just 20bhp@4000rpm from their 847cc OHV engine.



Gauges are gathered in a brass plate, positioned centrally on the dash.

The steering is another aspect that needs to be mastered. With its skinny 29in x 3.5in tyres and adamant steering box, directional stability is a little vague while even small potholes can have the car leaping off line easily. For the uninitiated the tendency is to over-compensate, sawing the wheel when the car changes direction. Soon you settle down, though, and allow the car a degree of steering leniency to find its own path, the driver tending to aim the car using the headlamps and radiator mascot in front of the bonnet.

Engine and transmission noises and a raucous exhaust note are ever present, acting almost as a mental speedometer, demanding you treat the car with respect and manage the pace accordingly. Braking is another element which must be mastered and while the cables are linked to all four wheels, the pedal requires a masterful shove and there is a disconcerting degree of travel in the pedal action.

Overall, driving this late 1920s car was a wonderful experience of being transported back to the early days of motoring. In stark

contrast, despite being only five years younger, the exquisite little P-Type epitomises the sports car styling of the mid-1930s, its flowing lines and sweet proportions giving lie to the notion that only Italian designers can produce elegant motor cars. It is not just a matter of style, either. MG achieved over 500 successes in motorsport during 1933. This helped considerably to enhance the company's products, the P-Type boasting more than 100 new and improved features over its predecessor, the J-Type, including cylinder head and camshaft design, and crankshaft and lubrication upgrades.

Despite the doors being hung in opposition to the M-Type, climbing in demands a similar technique. Yet here the similarity ends, for in the open car there is more foot room, the bench-type seat with individual squabs providing more shoulder space for driver and passenger.

In their publicity brochures MG spoke much about satisfying the 'sportsman's needs'. One example in particular is the tiny finger-tip remote control gearshift. Also the pedals, though small, now followed current convention with the throttle to the right. The driving position, however, retains the same wheel-inthe-lap style so common to 1930s sports cars. Behind the wheel is a



M AND P-TYPES

large mechanical rev counter in line with the driver's vision. Symmetrically positioned on the lefthand side of the dash are ignition and lighting controls, oil pressure and ammeter gauges.

An automatic distributor advance means no manual ignition changes on start up, just turn on and press the button and the engine springs into life. The non-synchromesh fourspeed gearbox is mirror opposite to today's 'boxes with first and second being next to the driver. Clutch action is noticeably smoother than the earlier car, though the lack of synchromesh assistance still demands the same clutch - shift to neutral - let the revs die - engage the gear style of the M-Type. Significantly, though, the higher ratios mean it's less fussy about engine revs when changing, with less gear graunching as a result.

Performance is surprisingly responsive, the gear ratios (with the exception of first, which was purposely chosen low for hillclimb events) being well suited to the engine's power



Richard Lee had no experience of car restoration before tackling his MGs, which makes the stunning results that he achieved all the more impressive.

output. Being an open car (in fact the windscreen can be lowered – racing style – for those who want it) under way a lot of the exhaust and transmission noise is lost. Moreover, the larger 19in x 4in tyres give better grip and help with making the suspension more compliant, resulting in a better ride quality.

Handling is also helped by the longer 7ft 3.5in wheelbase (against 6ft 6in of the M-Type – both cars share the same 3ft 6in track dimensions) and there is enjoyment to be had from exploring the little car's performance and handling capabilities. Road tests of the day spoke of a 75mph top speed and a 0 - 60mph dash of 23 seconds - not bad for a car 77 years young. Added to this are the larger 12in drum brakes against 8in of the M-Type, which give more confidence in the MG's ability to handle modern day traffic conditions. In fact, occasionally it's possible to detect a degree of flexing through the chassis; all part of the MG fun!

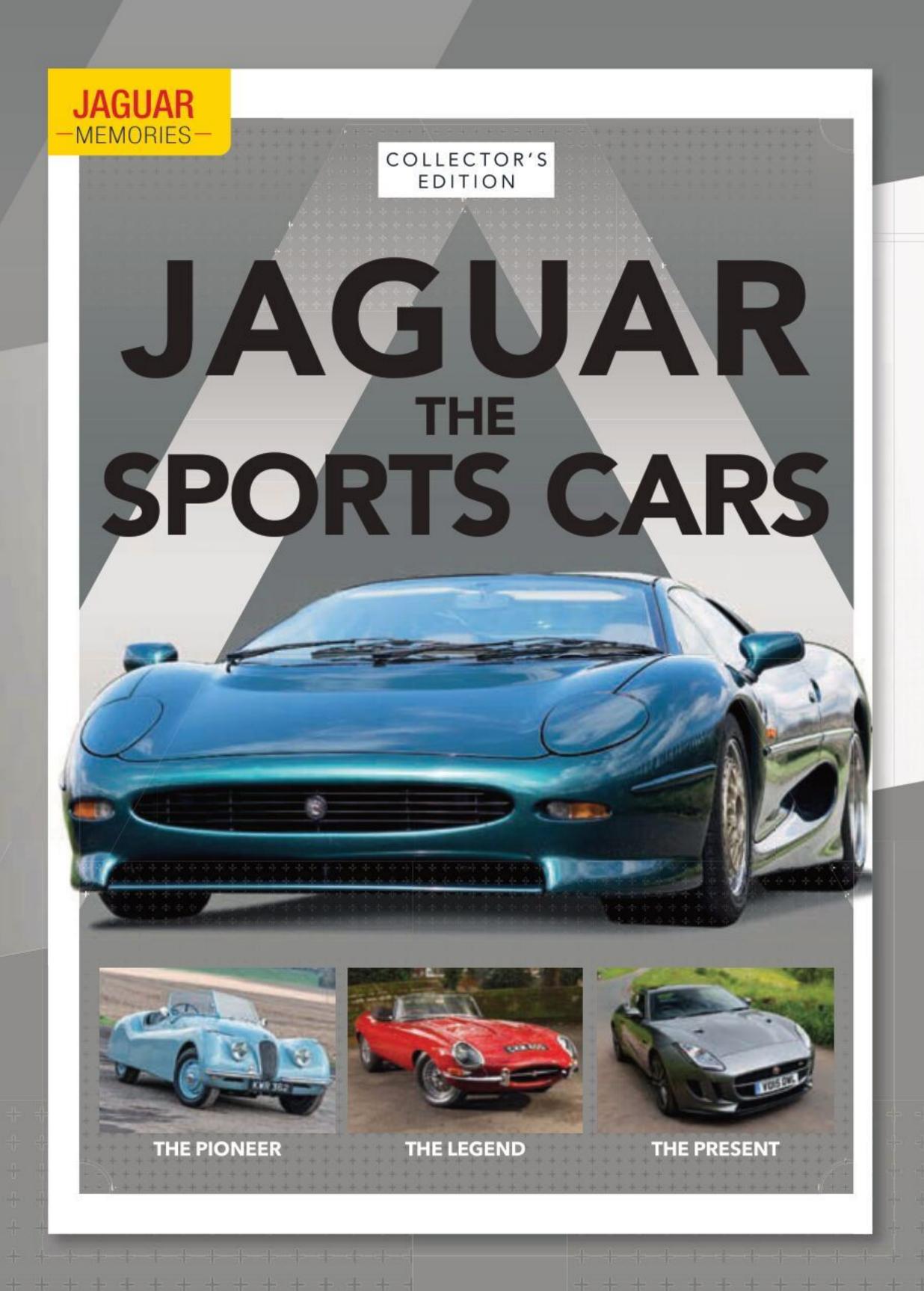
From our all too short tests, it is clear why Richard Lee chose these two contrasting examples of early MG engineering and it is a huge tribute to his skills and enthusiasm that he has restored them to such impressive standards, enjoying them both when weather and opportunity permits.



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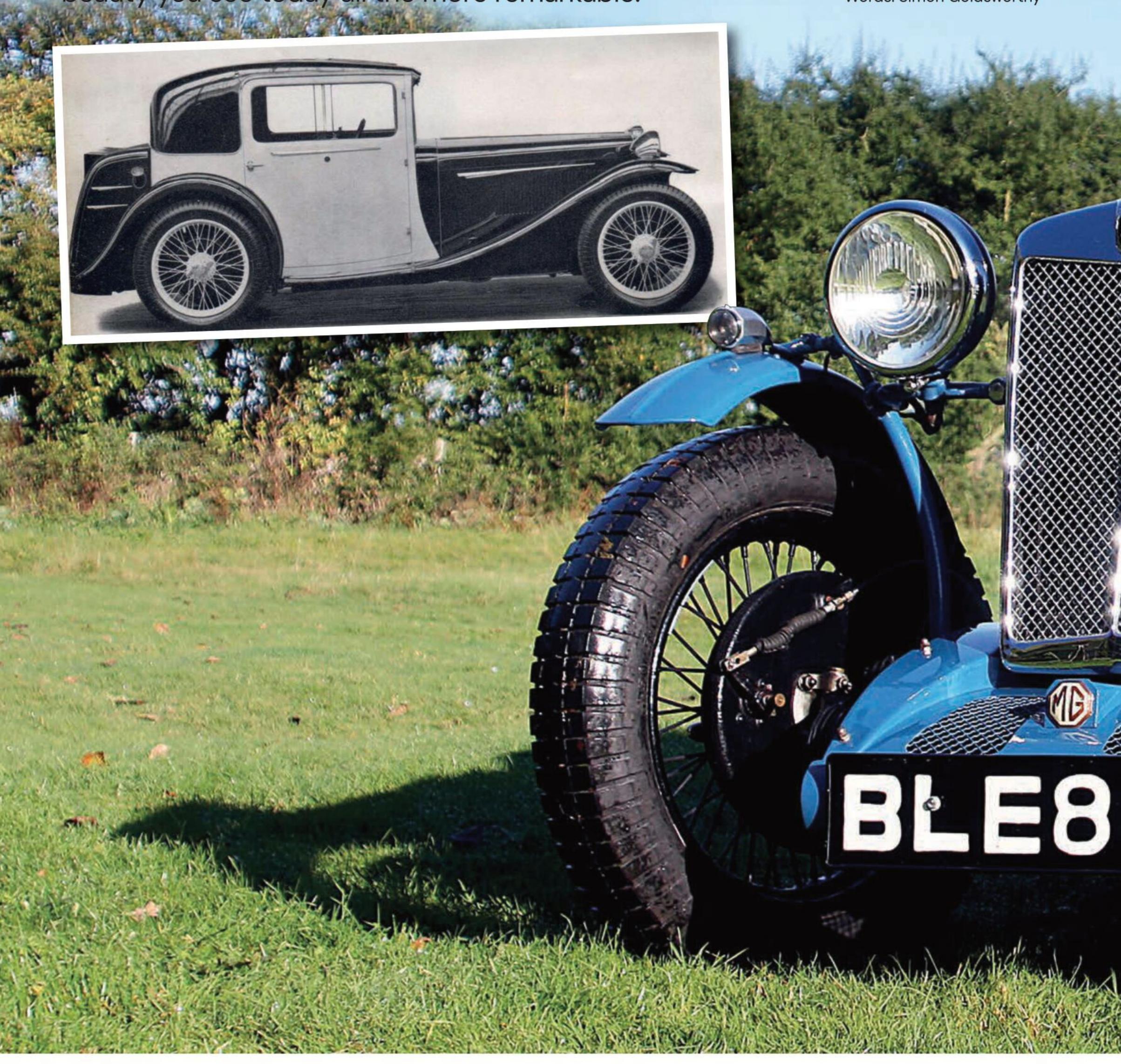
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The ugly duckling

Poorly designed, badly built and downright ugly – this car was accused of all those and more in 1934, which makes its transformation into the thing of beauty you see today all the more remarkable.

Words: Simon Goldsworthy



ack in 2012 this beautiful boat-tailed L-Type Special had a guide price of £55,000-£65,000 at Historics auction at Brooklands, well beyond the financial reach of most of us but, as we shall see shortly, in many ways a bit of a bargain. One thing is for certain though - when you combine the dreamers with those who can actually afford to make their dreams a reality, there will be no shortage of

MG enthusiasts who would love to see their name on the logbook.

It wasn't always like that for this car, which was built in January 1934 as an L-Type Magna with a Continental Coupé body. At the time, this was considered the ugly duckling of the L-Type range. Only 100 were built, but they still took two years to shift, and it is fair to say that when the owner of this car, BLE 801, took delivery in November 1934, he was

not particularly impressed with what he had bought. The history file on it that the MG Car Club have preserved in their archives is thick with letters between the factory and the owner, and the following extract written by the factory staff on 14 January 1935 gives a flavour of their content:

'We acknowledge, with thanks, your letter of the 12th instant, and to say the least your remarks have come as a complete surprise. We cannot



L-TYPE SPECIAL



understand why you should have reason to complain about various component parts of the car, as, of course, whilst the car was here quite a considerable amount of work was effected. However, at this stage, it is quite useless to argue the point as, obviously, you are dissatisfied, and it is our wish to eradicate this impression as speedily as possible.'

Can't you just hear the author gritting their teeth as they struggle to remain professional and polite? Somehow I suspect that Mr Middleton of Worthing was not on the MG Car Company's Christmas list that year...

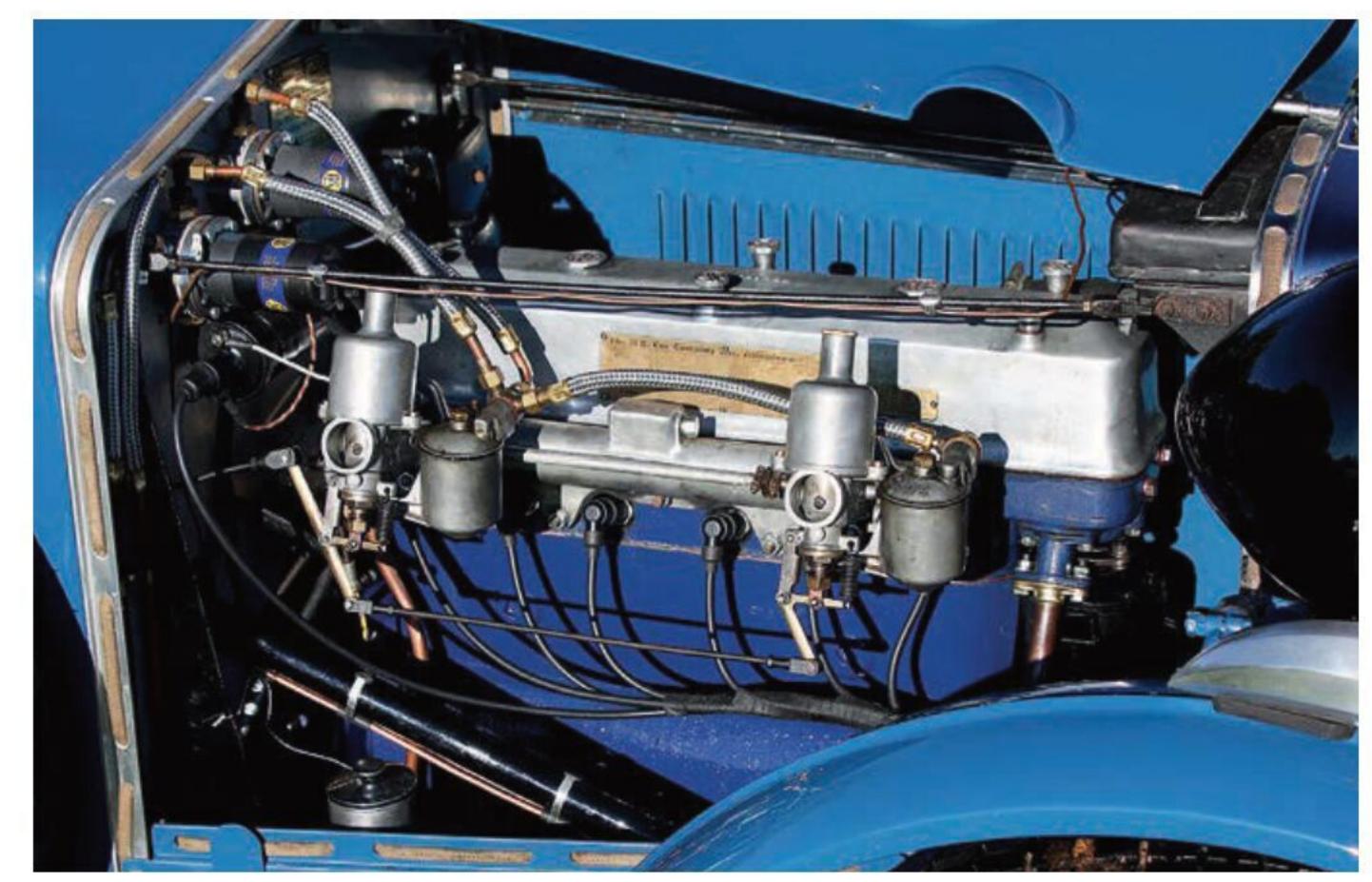
Despite such an unhappy beginning, this Continental Coupé lasted nearly 20 years before it was taken out of use. We don't know how well it had survived, but it is a fairly safe bet that the ash framed body would have been long past its best by the time it was laid up in 1953. Certainly when Dick Royce bought it in 1965, it was little more than a pile of mechanical bits with the body long since having fallen apart and disappeared.

'Dick was a friend of my father,' says the car's current owner, Tim Metcalfe, 'so I had always known about Dick and his L-Type project. In fact, Dick was given a fibreglass boat tail body for it that my father happened to have lying about the garden, but the car was not finished

until 2003. By that time Dick's health was suffering and the final work had to be rushed to get it on the road while he could still enjoy it. In the event he only managed to do around 200 miles before having to give up. It then spent many years laid up once more, until I finally bought it in 2010 with the intention of starting again and doing the job to my satisfaction.'

At this point, I should probably mention a little about Tim's family as this has a bearing on how the car turned out. His father is into Lagonda Rapiers, and young Tim grew up surrounded by vintage cars and the

Vintage Sports Car Club (VSCC). It was while competing in a Lagonda Rapier at a VSCC Prescott hillclimb in 1998 that he met Jane Allison, who was racing in the same class in her N-Type Magnette. And if the Allison name sounds familiar, it is probably because Jane's father is the renowned MG author Mike Allison. Tim and Jane married in 2000, and with them both coming from families so steeped in pre-war classics, it is little surprise that this motoring passion has increased through marriage rather than been watered down. The couple now have two sons, Peter 6 and



Engine is the original six cylinder 1087cc unit, but with a few period tweaks.



Nathan 9, the latter of whom already has a pile of MG M-Type bits that his parents and grandparents are helping him turn back into a car in time for his 17th birthday.

That is still some way off, however, and in the meantime the Metcalfes had a bit of a seating problem when going to MG events. 'I wanted to build a normally-aspirated fast MG that I could use on the road, so we could take this and Jane's N-Type to events and still have room for both boys,' explains Tim. 'And I just love this boat tail style of body. I knew it could be made to work for

us as there is more room in such a design that it appears, and anyway I wasn't looking at doing thousands of touring miles – 150 miles is probably the furthest we need to go in a day and that is quite manageable."

And so the project started. First of all the fibreglass body was ditched (that is still doing the rounds of the close-knit MG community and will be reappearing on another chassis soon!), and the remains dispatched to Oliver Richardson, a well-known and established MMM MG restorer. 'Oliver knows everything about these cars,' enthuses Tim. 'The Triple-M

Register hold an annual quiz in which various components from the cars are put in bags and contestants have to identify them just by touch. We are talking some pretty obscure parts here, but in ten years I've never seen Oliver get one wrong.

'He and I discussed the body I wanted for the car, which had to be lightweight and appropriate for the L-Type. We both agreed it should essentially incorporate the scuttle of the NE at the front with its distinctive peak and the shorter boat tail of the Q-Type at the back. This gave us the bonnet length we needed to cover the six cylinder engine with what to my mind is a better proportioned body overall."

With the design all in their heads, Tim and Oliver commissioned a body to be made by Brian Martin of the Vintage Panel Shop from aluminium sheet with wired edges and steel supports. And what of the mechanical underpinnings? Well, remarkably the 1087cc, six-cylinder engine is still the original one that MG supplied with the Continental Coupé nearly eight decades ago. And crucially, virtually everything on the mechanical side is standard for the era – chassis, brakes, gearbox and suspension have all been rebuilt, but not modernised or updated. I say this is crucial because it means that BLE 801 is eligible for VSCC



L-TYPE SPECIAL

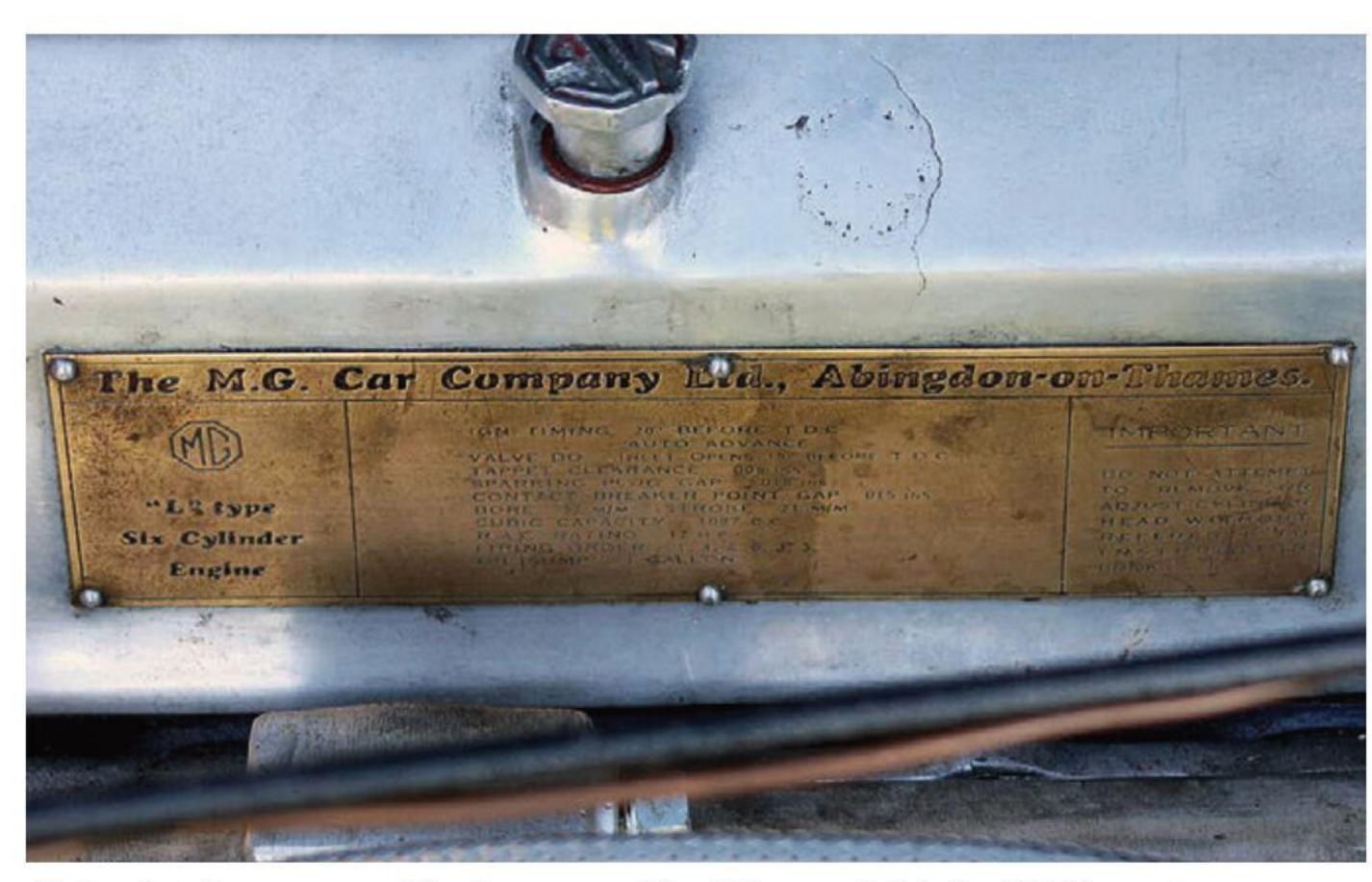
events and can turn its hand to circuit racing, hillclimbs or sprints at the drop of a flag.

'It is not true to say it is exactly to factory Continental Coupé specification, though,' adds Tim. 'We did fit a few period performance modifications such as an Alpine inlet manifold, Baynton Jones sports road camshaft and slightly larger SU carburettors, and we raised the compression ratio, for example. It also runs a Phoenix crankshaft and conrods, but everybody fits these nowadays to make the cars more reliable. After all, you may have a crank that has been going round for 70 years and was not a particularly robust design to start with. If you start to push it hard, then it is simply not going to last.'

And let's be honest, there's little point in having a car like this if you are not going to push it hard. The design might be old, but the lightweight construction means that it tips the scales at just 680kg with a tank of fuel, roughly on a par with the first of the Austin-Healey Sprites. But while the little Frogeye had to make do with a 948cc four-pot, this little beauty has six cylinders sweeping 1087ccs and eager to rev – the bark from the exhaust as Tim fires it up and blips the throttle is superb.

Climbing into the cockpit takes a bit of dexterity, but I am soon comfortable in the passenger seat with legs stretched out in front. Tim apologises in advance for the occasional grinding noise, explaining that most of his cars have pre-select gearboxes but that the L-Type has straight cut gears and they can take a little while to get used to. It also has first and second on the right with third and fourth on the left, something which would catch most people out. But Tim has been driving this era of car long enough to take that in his stride, and we roar down the road with slick gear changes that defy his warnings.

'The six cylinder engine is not really any faster than a similar size unit with only four,' he shouts, 'but it does sound better! The speed really comes down to the camshaft, but if you go



All the details are correct for the era, making this car eligible for VSCC events.

for top end competitive power, then the car can become a pig to drive at anything less than full throttle on the road. The cam on this car is a nice compromise that pulls cleanly from 2000rpm all the way to 6500."

As he demonstrates this point, the massive rev counter obligingly spins straight into the red – not a problem as it is a standard 1930s issue 6in dial and they all had the same markings, regardless of the engine! There is no speedo, and indeed none is required on this era of car. In fact, not much of anything is required if we are totally honest.

The two small aero screen struggle manfully to deflect the oncoming rush of autumn air, keeping it out of

my eyes but chilling the top of my head. The ride is firm and bouncy, but not bone-jarringly so. All of that is incidental, though. The wind, the noise, the 'communicative' ride and that glorious view along the bonnet combine with the rich smell of Castrol R to make every mile a total hoot. And no quarter is asked or given to modern traffic either on the A and B roads of today, they prove to be the more likely obstacle to swift progress. It may be a different story on motorways of course, but according to Tim the biggest problem there is people blocking you into the slow lane as they hover alongside and take pictures with their phone.





The devil is in the detail, and this car really does want for nothing.



So with the car looking so good and being so much fun to drive, why was it up for sale? 'We got the car back on the road in the summer of 2011," explains Tim, 'and we've done about 1000 miles in it. With the economy

still stuttering, a house move to pay for and too many cars to maintain, it just seemed to make sense to thin out the fleet a little. The problem is that all of our other cars are either family heirlooms or have huge sentimental



There's no speedo, but the all-important rev counter looms large through the wheel.

attachment, so the L-Type was really just closest to the garage door. I'm delighted to have done it though, because it is another car saved and it gave me an awful lot of enjoyment. Hopefully it now belongs to somebody who appreciates the car and enjoys it too. And I may be biased, but I think they got something of a bargain. I've been very lucky to have a father who works on my cars, a father-in-law like Mike and a friend like Oliver. Between us we have sheds full of parts and these enabled us to build this car for a realistic price. I sincerely doubt that you could commission one of your own and get it built for what we were asking."

And did Tim go to the auction to say farewell? 'I'd like say I did as I love auctions,' he replies, 'but there was an ERA club dinner that night. It was probably just as well because otherwise I might have ended up bidding on something else.'

Finally, the question has to be asked: how will Tim and Jane get their boys to MG events from now on? 'It's really rather simple,' says Tim. 'They can ride with their grandparents."

Best of both worlds

An MG VA would make a fine addition to anyone's garage, but Keith Bush is doubly blessed because he owns both a saloon and a tourer.

Words: Mike Taylor

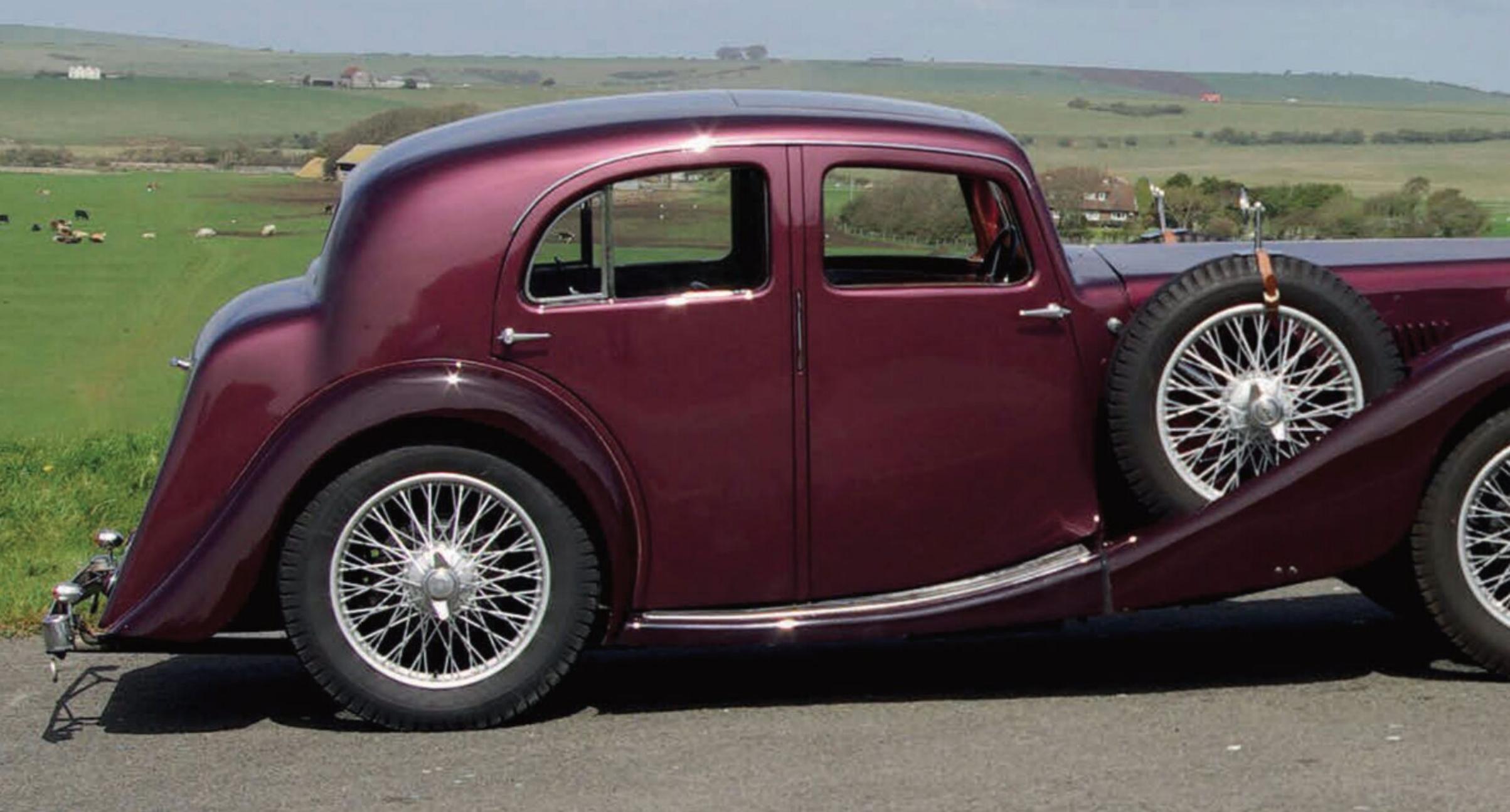
his car was designed around the seating accommodation for four persons, and the first drawing was produced as long ago as September 1935,' wrote Cecil Kimber in 1936 when describing the styling influences encompassed within the MG VA. 'No less than four sample bodies were built before the design was finalised, and it follows the author's ideas on design. This is only a small car of 1.5 litre capacity with a 9ft 6in wheelbase and therefore it is not possible to have the sweeping lines that one might otherwise have employed, but at any rate, there are little or no straight lines in the whole design. It follows the precepts set out by the author on what he considers

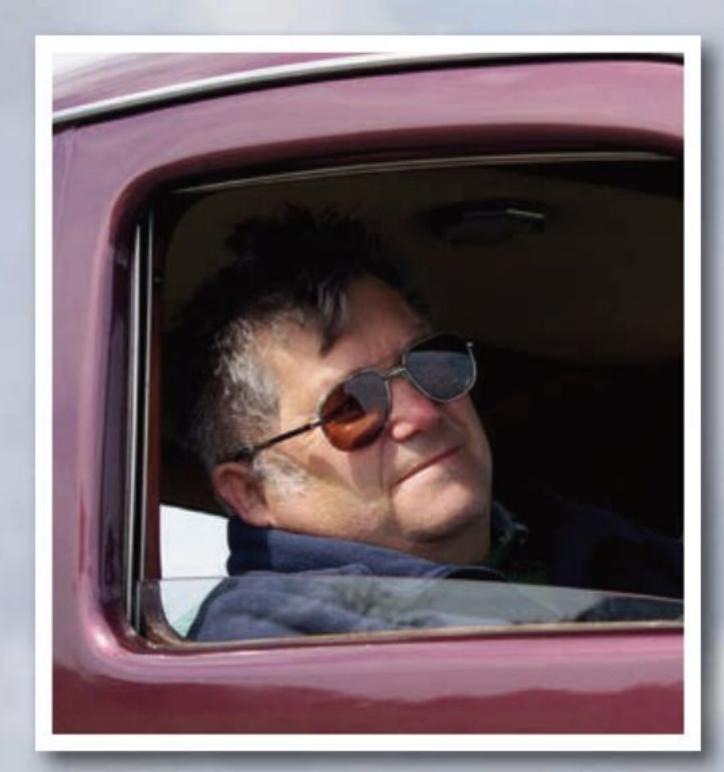
is the best possible design for today for ready acceptance and approval by the public, but it is a long way from being the ideal car that logical reasoning tells us will come in the future. This design, like practically every other motorcar design, is marred by the present necessity and public insistence upon the fitting of bumpers and this is an example of utility overcoming artistry.'

As most – though no doubt not all – readers will know, it was Cecil Kimber who, in 1924, began producing sporting versions of Morris models. They were called MGs, and were built by a separate company to Morris, the MG Car Company Ltd in Abingdon which was wholly owned by William Morris.

In 1935, as part of a rationalization programme, William Morris - now known as Lord Nuffield - sold the MG Car Company into the Nuffield Organization, his sprawling commercial organization with wide ranging concerns. In charge of the rationalization programme was Leonard Lord who, like Nuffield, disliked motorsport and that year MG's competition programme was axed, serving as a severe blow to Kimber who had enjoyed a free hand at Abingdon and for whom this activity had formed a vital aspect of MG's heritage - sales of MGs relied on race publicity.

Other changes were also about to take place; MG's drawing office





Above: Keith Bush bought his first VA in 1992, a car he kept for 20 years.

Below: Keith sold his original VA to buy this saloon, and also swapped a TD for a VA Tourer similar to the green car in our pictures.

was moved to Cowley while two new models were launched in quick succession to boost business, the TA Midget and the hefty SA saloon, the latter focused on competing with Jaguar's SS. Sadly, the impact from launch publicity was lost when both cars experienced a tardy route to market, held up by Nuffield's intransigent production processes, while brand loyalty took an added blow since the SA's bulky design and overt luxury was in sharp contrast to recent models.

The VA completed the new model line-up; it was a scaled down version of the bigger SA available in saloon, tourer and convertible form and based on a chassis frame unique to the model, though axles and other components were shared with mainstream Nuffield products. Sadly, the VA also suffered similar delays to the previous models in reaching showrooms, thus limiting the effectiveness of any press launch propaganda.

Powered by a Nuffield 1548cc ohv engine which produced 54bhp at 4500rpm, this was sufficient to give the 23cwt (1168.4kg) car a maximum speed of 75mph, or 82mph in Tourer form with the windscreen folded flat. The engine was fitted with twin 1½in SU semi-downdraught carburettors and drove a cork-inoil clutch through to a four-speed gearbox with part synchromesh and a natty remote control gear stick, though such items as big end shells, springs, rear axle casing, clutch and even door handles were updated during the car's life. Of all the models available in the VA range, the saloon sold in the largest numbers, boosted by such refinements as a dashboard-mounted damper control and adjustable steering column, with the option of an on-board jacking system. Sadly, however, the VA had a relatively short two-year production life with some 2407 cars of all versions built in total.

Approaching the delicately styled VA saloon featured here, the first impression is one of surprise – the overall dimensions (14ft 3in long and 5ft 2in wide) are smaller than you anticipate given its flowing bonnet, wings and sloping rear tail, the overall



VA SALOON AND TOURER



effect being achieved by exquisite proportions of length, height and line. Kimber and the talented Cowley stylists gave the VA saloon an elegance which reflected the sporting motoring marketplace of the day, its shape complementing the soft-top two-seater sports model and larger SA which also bore the world renowned octagon branding.

This car is owned by Keith Bush, a professional auto electrical and mechanical engineer who first started his MG ownership career in 1976. 'We were doing work on MGs in the garage where I worked,' he recalls. 'My first was a 1966 MGB GT and I paid £100 for it. Driving it home I thought: Why I have bought this pile of rubbish? Then I discovered that the tyres had been

inflated to 40psi all round. Once I'd dropped them to 26psi, it improved the ride enormously.'

Back to today and we should perhaps explain the two cars in the pictures. The red saloon is Keith's car, but while he also has a VA Tourer at home which is currently undergoing restoration, the green car in our pictures is not his car. Instead it belongs to a fellow VA owner who wishes to remain anonymous, but who kindly brought it along to our photoshoot to show the contrast between the two versions.

As well as being lovely in its own right, Keith's saloon is also rather special in that it was the first car off the VA production line in late 1936. As such, it features one or two

differences to the standard model. Aficionados will immediately note that the headlamps are of a smaller diameter than standard and that they lack the more usual MG emblems in the centre, while the running board rubbers – which usually extend over the front wings – fall short on this car at the running board tips. Also, originally the car had no rear bumper as part of its styling, although one was fitted later in its life.

Asked to describe his route into VA ownership, Keith continues: 'I spent three years restoring a MkI TD. Shortly afterwards I saw a VA saloon while I was at an MG show and liked what I saw. Then I noticed an advert for one in Yorkshire in 1992 and bought it.

After a huge amount of work, my wife





Police-spec engines give the VAs a bit more oomph, but Keith says 40-50mph is still the most comfortable speed.

and I had a great deal of enjoyment with the car for 20 years, at which point I sold it to buy my current saloon. In between time I'd seen an advert from someone in Belfast offering to swap a VA Tourer for a TD." Keith says he quickly responded and made the deal - that is the tourer currently under restoration.

'The story behind the purchase of this VA saloon began with a Dutchman, Bas De Voogt,' continues Keith. 'Bas (pronounced Boss) bought the car in 1981 for £1150 from a scrapyard, which had advertised it in Exchange & Mart. He then embarked on a comprehensive research programme which revealed that, originally, it was finished in white and was used by MG's

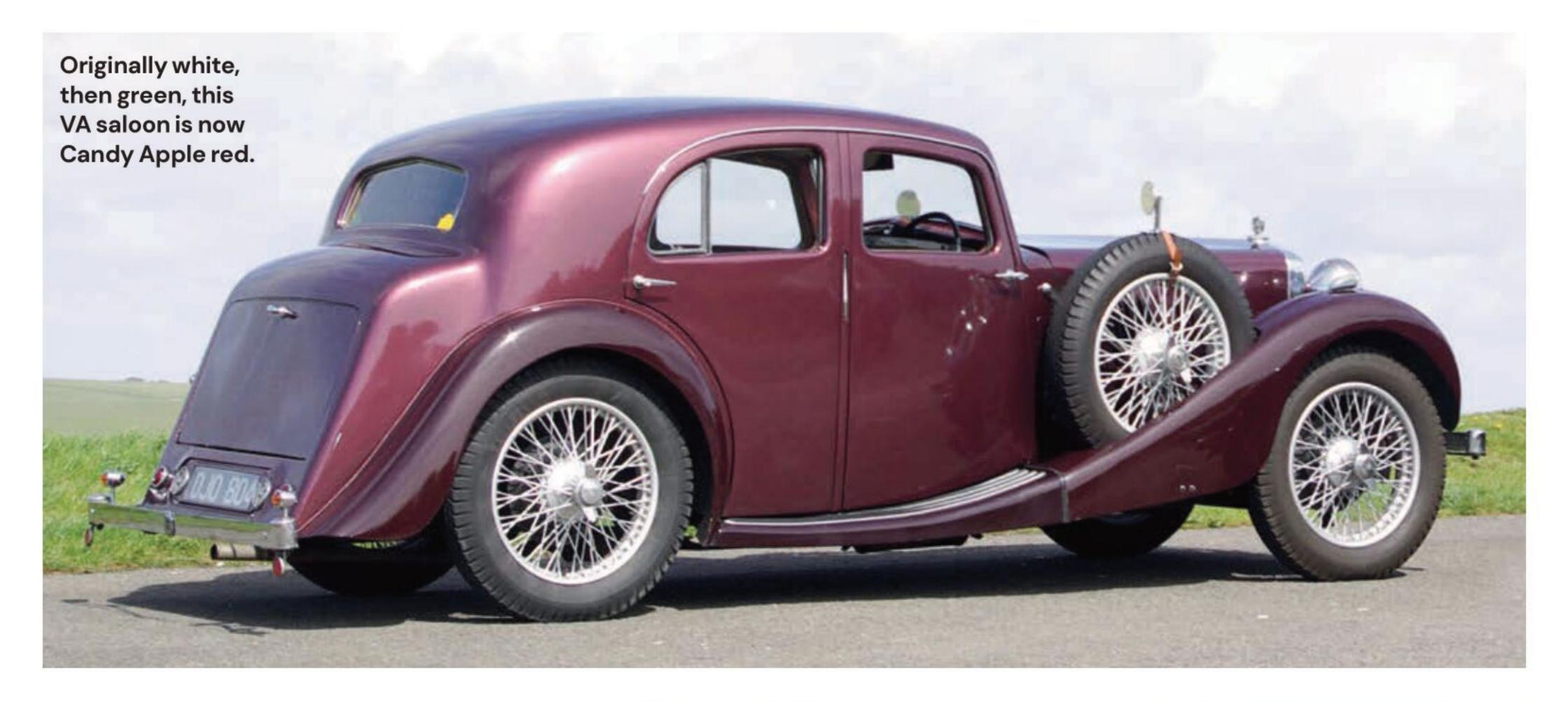
press department for photos for the VA's launch. It had then passed into the hands of a lady doctor, by which time it was painted green.

'After completing the rebuild, Bas had the car re-sprayed Candy Apple red. Sadly, however, he began to feel unwell and contacted me offering the car for sale. I declined because at that point I already had the VA Tourer project and my original VA saloon. Bas was then diagnosed with MS and decided to fit automatic transmission, so I found him a Morris Marina engine and automatic gearbox (really!) which he then had installed. Later, Bas's condition deteriorated and again he offered me the car to buy. This time I accepted, and sold my original VA saloon to fund the purchase."

Step inside a VA and the immediate impression, as with most pre-war cars of this calibre, is of quality leather trim and wood veneer. The hide-covered bucket seats hold the body firmly in place and the squabs give good support for legs and thighs. The instruments are clustered together in a centrallylocated black dashboard located in a polished wood facia; the two large instruments are speedometer to the right and rev counter to the left with supplementary gauges on either side - water temperature and ammeter on the left and oil pressure and fuel content on the right. Below are the ignition switch, starter button and lighting controls.



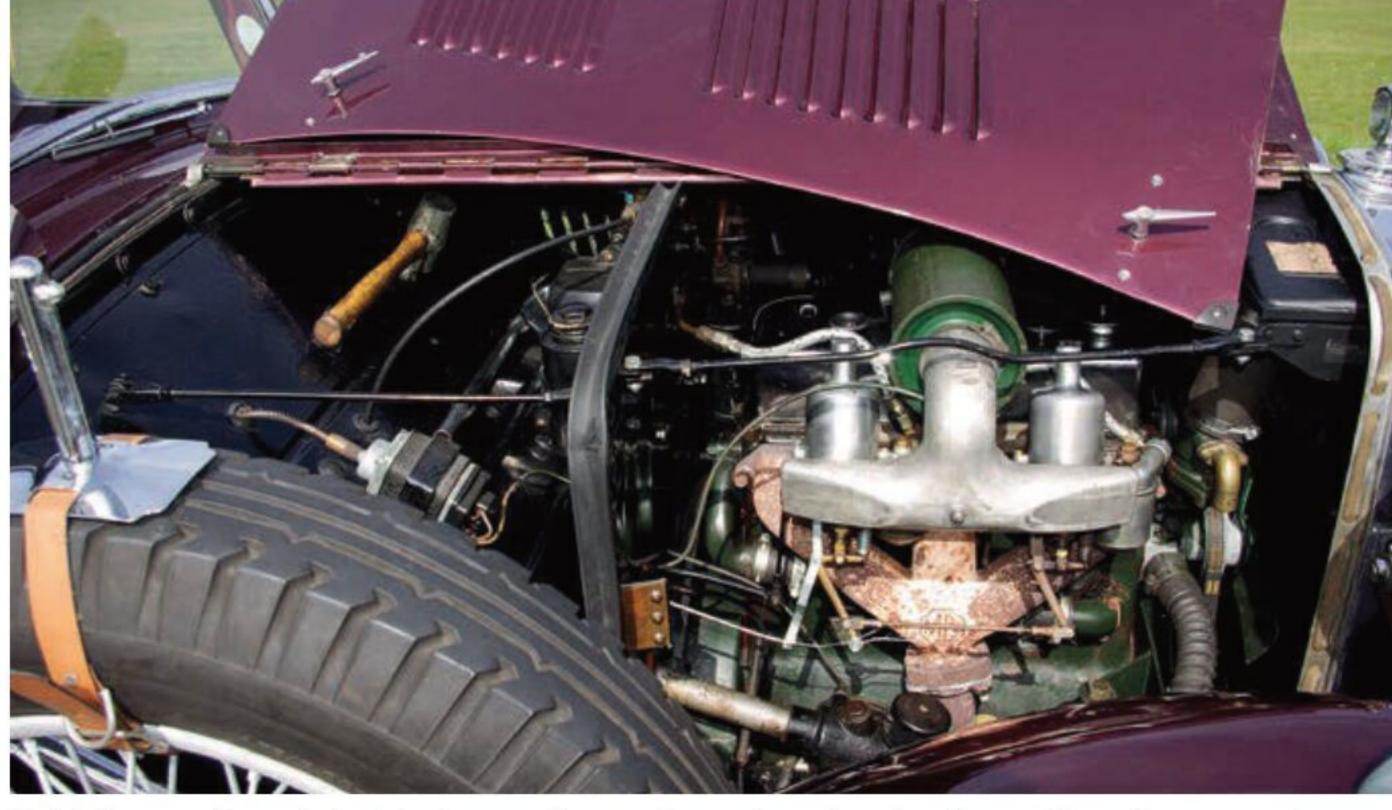
VA SALOON AND TOURER



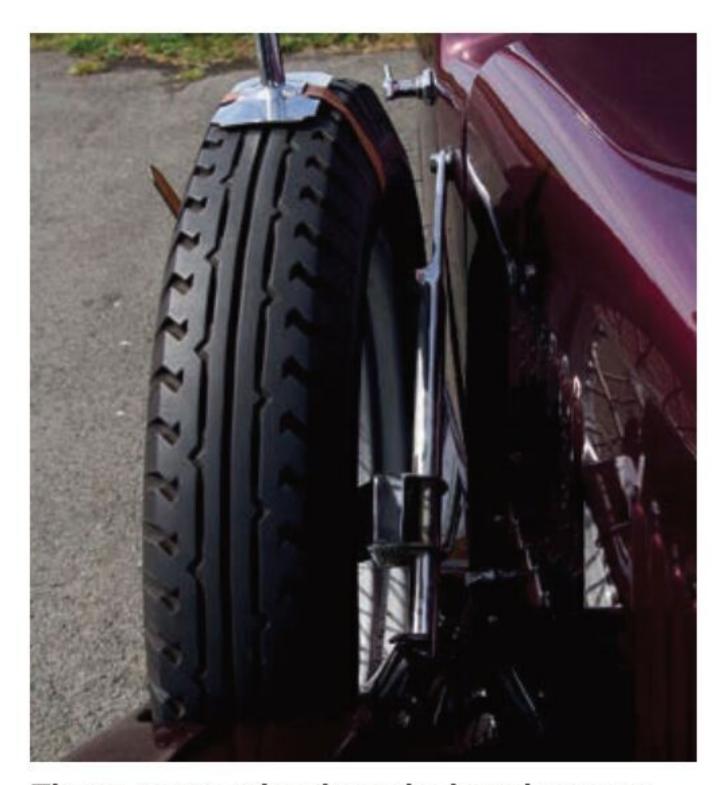
The driving position gives a commanding view over the tapering bonnet, ideal for aiming the car through corners. The steering wheel is extra large by modern standards with its four spokes, the indicator control set centrally on the wheel boss. Twist the ignition key, pull the starter and the four-cylinder ohv engine springs easily into life. The remote control gearshift, typical of MGs of the period, has a short stick with limited travel to select each gear. Into first, release the fly-off hand brake (an item unique to this car as production models had ratchet type levers) and let the clutch begin to bite to produce a silky-smooth take off, the cork-inoil mechanism helping to ensure a judder-free action.

At low manoeuvring speeds the steering needs a good tug to turn the large wheel while the lock, 2.5 turns of the wheel, is disappointingly poor. Into second along the delightfully short-throw gearbox and then across the gate into third begins to reveal something of the engine's capability in moving this four door saloon with a sprightly feel. Keith has increased the capacity to Police VA 1740cc capacity (MG supplied a number of VAs to the police force for use as road traffic vehicles), so power output has increased from 54 to 63bhp.

Along the byways of East Sussex the VA is a pleasant way to go period motoring. One alteration Bas did make to the car during his ownership



Keith has replaced the Marina engine and autobox that had been fitted by a previous owner with the original MG units.



Those spare wheels make handy spots for hanging a mirror on each side.



MGs of this era are famous for almost obsessive use of the octagon logo at each and every opportunity.



was to fit a high ratio final drive. 'This, together with the auto 'box made the car gutless to drive,' says Keith, 'so one of my first jobs after I'd bought it was to overhaul and install the original engine and manual gearbox that had been fitted when the car left the factory. With the taller final drive progress is pretty relaxed although, if the car had the original factory-fitted differential, it would make first and second gears almost redundant."

Steering is perhaps this car's weakest point. The slim 5.00x19in tyres are typical of their type and time and, combined with the cam and peg steering, give a vagueness of control that needs familiarisation; a corner approaches, a dab on the brakes and turn the wheel and... nothing. In desperation the novice VA driver applies more lock in an effort to gain a reaction. Then, at the last moment, the car begins to respond, turning in more than desired and causing the driver to

unwind the wheel. Realising it is too much, more lock is applied, and so on. It's a characteristic that proves disconcerting to the uninitiated and can result in sawing at the wheel before you learn to anticipate the bend before entering it and applying the necessary degree of wheel to get round. In contrast, the hydraulic brakes are up to their job and create confidence. Again it's a matter of anticipation and treating them with respect. Keith says he prefers to keep to 40-50mph, especially along these back roads, as this best suits the VA's suspension. Anything more and undulations tend to create a joggly, ship-at-sea sensation, the leaf springs all round and period hydraulic dampers finding it hard to cope, especially the front end which can wallow unnervingly on less than smooth surfaces.

Asked about future plans for the saloon, Keith simply smiles and says: 'I'm looking at investing in an overdrive unit to further improve the car's relaxed cruising, but at over £800 it is not a cheap modification.' Treated with the respect it deserves, this VA saloon has huge charm and charisma which reflect an age when MGs were creating their own special reputation for safety fast! sports models. As Cecil Kimber outlined all those years ago, the car sits comfortably between the larger MG SA saloon and the smaller two-seater sports cars.

And finally, we should not forget the immaculate 1939 VA Tourer seen here and belonging to our anonymous visitor. Called 'Valentine' by its previous owner who had the car for some 22 years, its light green coachwork has remained the same, as well as having an engine overhaul and an interior re-trim. This car, too has the police specification engine and today is in regular use that includes anything from trips to the Continent as well as being used to visit the local Cash'n'Carry store.



Three times a winner – 57 years apart

The former Dick Jacobs MG YB is enjoying a second stint of successful competition life in the hands of its enthusiastic new owner, Marc Hanson, and its re-emergence is delighting MG diehards and casual motorsport spectators alike.

Words: Andrew Roberts



ention MG's sporting exploits to most motorsport enthusiasts and it is the Brooklands Double Twelve C-Types, the Mille Miglia K3s and the Le Mans MGBs that will invariably spring to mind. Rarely does the YB saloon enter the equation, yet three of MG's most significant post-war successes came from Abingdon's underrated sporting saloon, in the hands of one of the best-known names in octagon history, Dick Jacobs.

Jacobs was one of the most influential personalities to have been associated with the marque. Special builder, successful driver and team manager, and garage proprietor with the famous Mill Garage at Woodford in Essex, he has left an indelible mark on MG history. Today he is best remembered for the pale green MGA Twin Cams that are still raced in historic events and the MG Midget Coupés – universally known as the Jacobs Midgets – two of which raced under the Mill Garages banner and later the BMC Works team, while an identical third example was raced independently by John Milne. But now very much in the limelight again is the Jacobs YB, which is in

the enthusiastic ownership of Marc Hanson and has been delighting spectators as far afield as Goodwood, Silverstone, Crystal Palace and Jersey.

At the end of the 1951 season, Dick Jacobs found himself pondering the future. The days of success with the MG TD MkII were clearly over, with the Lester-MG, Cooper MG and other low volume sports cars now able to qualify for production sports car racing. MG, it seemed, had nothing in the stable, but now the YA saloon had been updated to the YB with an improved specification. The potential of the car with its modified front suspension that considerably improved its handling, changed rear axle and smaller wheels was clear to Dick and he suggested to MG that a team of three cars should be prepared for the Daily Express Silverstone Production Touring Car race. But the difficulty of supply meant that this idea was rejected. And that, it seemed, was that.

However, even if there was to be no Works team, could there be scope for a private entry, he wondered? Nothing ventured, nothing gained so Dick made his request to the then Nuffield Sales Manager, Tom Sangster, and elicited

a favourable response. As a normal purchase – and as Dick was to recall, 'through the proper channels and at the correct price' – a maroon YB was delivered to Mill Garage just three weeks before it was due to race at Silverstone. It was duly registered UHK 111, the number it still carries to this day.

Unlike today's cars that can be driven quickly from the moment of delivery, the YB had to be carefully run-in for 600 miles. This was achieved by nightly sessions of at least 100 miles and with the engine thus bedded in, the painstaking Jacobs preparation that had paid such dividends with his previous MG entries could now begin. First, everything was checked. Then the cylinder head was removed, the valves ground in, 'accidentally' substituting 150lbs valve springs and finally increasing the carburettor choke size. That was the extent of the preparation; otherwise the MG scrutineered exactly as it had been sold, even down to the carpets. For the race, hubcaps were removed, tyre pressures changed and headlights twisted around to reduce drag.

There was a strong entry for the BRDC Daily Express 1952 Production

MG Y-TYPE



Touring Car Race, including Roy Salvadori (Bristol), Ken Wharton (Healey Saloon), Sydney Allard (Allard Monte Carlo Saloon) and Stirling Moss in a Jaguar MkVII. The YB was running in the 1500cc class and facing the Jowett Javelin Works entry of Bert Hadley along with a further two Javelins, the more aerodynamic 1.5-litre cars from Bradford having a decided advantage on the Silverstone straights. Undaunted by the challenge, Motor Sport reported that 'the highlight of the race was the manner in which Jacobs 1.25 litre MG saloon vanquished the Javelins... he received applause from the appreciative crowd when passing Marshall's and Bennett's Javelins on the inside of Stowe Corner...'

Jacobs now had to catch the flying Hadley, and help came from an unexpected quarter. Moving over to let eventual winner Moss past in the Jaguar, Stirling indicated that the MG should get into the car's slipstream, towing it to Stowe Corner. As a result the YB closed up on the Javelin and

with a lap to go, overtook the Jowett to win its class by 10 seconds, the luckless Hadley suffering engine problems.

For 1953 the regulations for the Production Touring Car race were eased, with Stage 2 tuning allowed. Dick Jacobs therefore decided to fit twin SU carburettors, manifold and twin fuel pumps of the MG TD Mkll, in addition to bigger valves and springs. There were 28 entries in a well mixed field that included Stirling Moss in a Jaguar MkVII. This time the Jacobs YB was not the sole MG, for the well used YB of Autosport founder and editor Gregor Grant - this same car being part of the themed display in the main marquee at this year's MG Live! - was also entered, driven by Dick's old team-mate and later the accomplished motorsport photographer, George Phillips.

Competition appeared to be strong, the class also including two Simca entries, an Austin A4O and a Riley 1.5 in addition to MG's strongest opposition, the three-car Jowett Javelin team. In a spectacle long denied to modern racegoers, the well-practised Le Mans style drivers' sprint across the track to the cars saw the Jacobs YB quickly away, and with the help of another friendly Moss slipstream the opposition was left in its wake, a gap of eight seconds between the MG and the quickest Jowett. With George Phillips finishing third in the other YB, this was another dominant Abingdon performance. Motor Sport opined that 'Jacobs drove his MG very well indeed.'

For the 1954 Daily Express Touring Car Race, Dick Jacobs had hoped to run the new ZA Magnette, drawing on his long relationship with MG's John Thornley. But delays to the model's introduction saw this a non-starter and Dick told him that he would again enter the YB, with Abingdon offering support. While the essentially prewar design had achieved back-to-back class wins, could the faithful old YB still remain competitive? This was the question now exercising the Jacobs mind, but a careful



reading of the regulations gave cause for optimism. Now, virtually any modification to the engine was permitted, provided the bore and stroke remained unaltered.

Mill Garage became even more of a development hive than usual - a special Y-Type Coupé using the last YB chassis was also being built for



Full bore for the MG YB on its way to a class win in the Moonlight Sprint at Victoria Avenue, St Helier at the Credit Suisse Jersey International Motoring Festival. (Photo: www.kandidprints.com)

a customer - and it was decided to follow a similar course to the MG development shop who were working on the 1500cc XPEG engine. A 30thou overbore of the cylinders fell inside the regulation parameters, and Martlet pistons with raised crowns to provide a higher than standard compression ratio were selected. The XPAG 1250cc engine was now fitted with the 1500cc camshaft, but it retained the TD manifold and the twin 1½in SU carburettors.

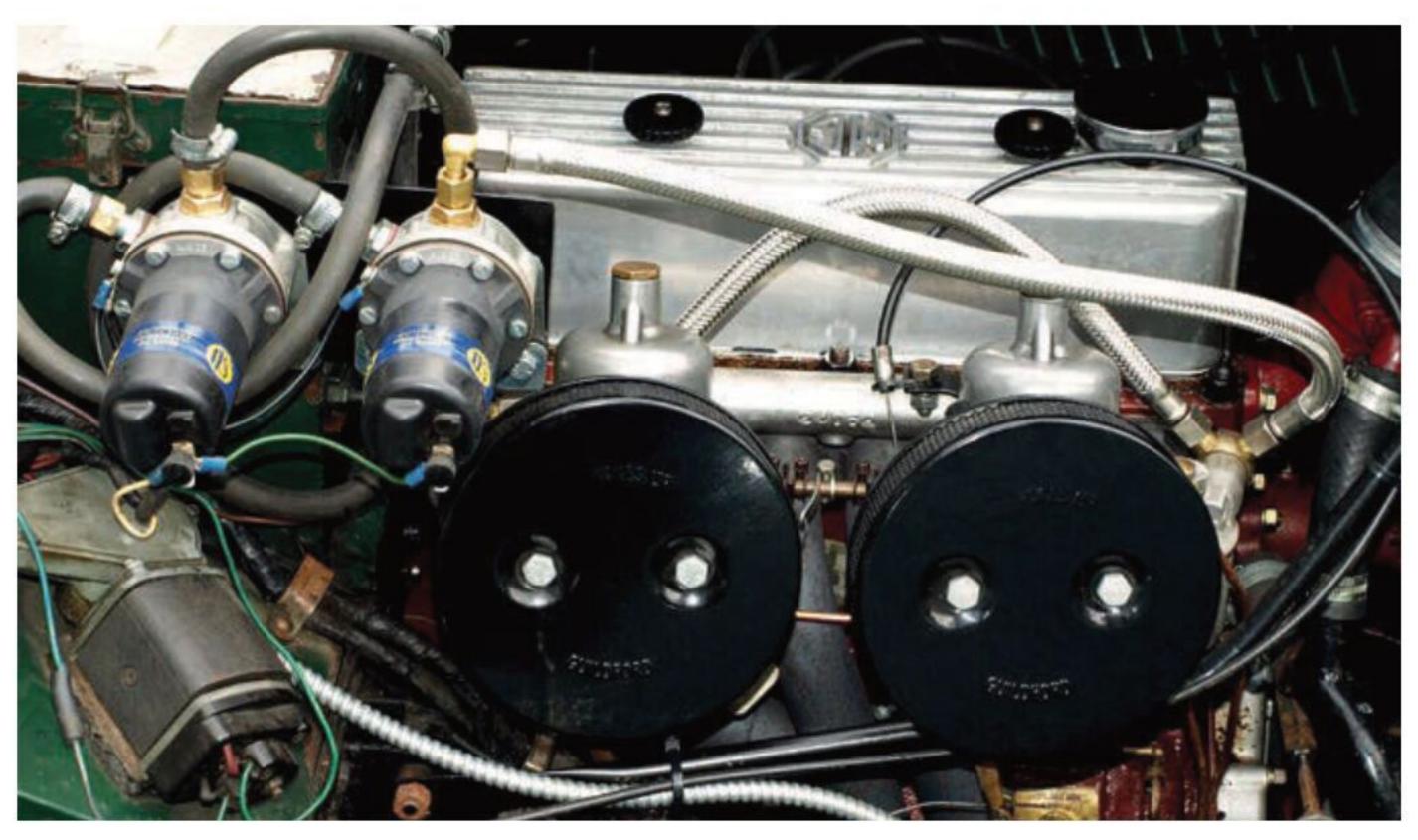
Dick Jacobs was to recall that 1000 miles of running-in were required, the task falling to him in nightly stints at the end of the working day. However, the anticipated performance increase proved disappointing. The maximum revs in top at 5800rpm were always identical, with a recorded speed of around 84mph. This was clearly

insufficient, given the strength of the potential Silverstone opposition and despite experimenting with different carburettor needles and changed ignition settings, the best that could be achieved was 6100rpm in top gear, which delivered 88mph.

Then came the breakthrough. As a desperate last measure the TD manifold was removed and replaced with the 1500cc one from an XPEG engine. Additionally, twin 1¾in SU carburettors were fitted, with their jets unchanged. The results repaid all the hard work; 6900rpm in third was good for 70mph while 6600rpm in top meant over 95mph. The only downside was less acceleration below 3500rpm, but this was not judged to be an issue at Silverstone.

Now all was set to take on the opposition in the 1500cc class. Not only was the YB faced with a brace of its Jowett Javelin rivals but a Borgward, a Volkswagen, a Riley and another MG. Practice recorded times similar to the Jack Fairman Borgward, but at the expense of a blown cylinder head gasket. Much overnight work that included trueing the head and cylinder block before the fitting of a new gasket put everything to rights, and the YB was ready to record what would be a crushing class victory.

From the Le Mans style start the YB took the class lead that it would never relinquish, although the big Jaguars of Ian Appleyard and Tony Rolt were to lap the Abingdon saloon. The similarly mounted Moss had suffered starter motor problems and



Underbonnet area of the former Jacobs MG YB with the twin SU fuel pumps prominent.

MG Y-TYPE



trailed the leading Jaguar duo, but still provided his customary tow for the YB although, as Dick recalled, it was not really needed. Motor Sport, rarely enthusiastic in its reporting, merely said: 'Dick Jacobs MG was considerably faster and won its class' ...leaving its readers to work out that the margin was over two minutes!

The YB had done everything that had been asked of it and with its racing career over - Dick Jacobs was to return to Silverstone in 1955 for the Daily Express Production Touring Car race and record a fifth consecutive victory, but driving the YB's successor, the Works MG ZA Magnette – it was returned to standard tune and road going trim to become the family car, used on the school run for daughter Pat and for weekend outings. Ultimately UHK 111 was sold on, inevitably passing through a number of hands over the years but surviving the period when cars of this vintage had little or no



Steering wheel and dashboard instruments remain original; the only addition is an electric tachometer fitted beneath.





value. Happily, she was restored in the 1970s, but then saw little use.

Offered for sale at the MG Car Club Silverstone International Weekend in 2009, UHK 111 found a new owner in Marc Hanson, who immediately set about the car's mechanical restoration for sprints and historic events. In 2010 the YB was sprinted at both Goodwood and Crystal Palace, acquitting itself well at both of these historic venues. 2011 saw further speed event activity - returning to the Crystal Palace Sprint, the YB again featured strongly but it was the Credit Suisse Jersey International Motoring Festival in June that saw another triple success for the Jacobs YB class wins in the Moonlight Sprint and the two St Hellier hillclimbs at Westmount and Mount Bingham making a unique hat-trick. The success was even sweeter, for repairing a suspension problem incurred on the final run at Crystal

Dashboard plaques proudly confirm unique competition history of MG YB UHK 111.

MAY 10TH 1982

AND

MAY 971 1953

AND AGAIN MAY 1510 1954

MILL GARAGE

Palace had been touch and go, with just days separating the two events.

Would Dick Jacobs have recognised his former mount? The answer is very definitely in the affirmative, even though the YB's original maroon paint was lost during its previous restoration when the car was painted green instead. Mechanically, the YB is back in the Stage 2 tune of 1953, ensuring that this remains a very rapid Y-Type that is regularly used on the road and is typically driven to and from events, just as it was in the Jacobs heyday.

Marc Hanson, who regards himself as very much a custodian of a piece of MG history, is determined that the patina of this venerable old competitor should be retained. There is no intention of replacing the well-worn leather, for example, and the original walnut dashboard, still proudly carrying the plaques recording its racing exploits, remains splendidly unrestored. Under the



A delighted Marc Hanson at the wheel of the former Dick Jacobs MG YB he's successfully returned to competition.

bonnet there are correct period touches that include 1950s antifreeze labels, Tudor screenwash bottle and original chassis and body plates, together with a scuttle plaque identifying chassis number YB 0414 as the BRDC Production Touring Car Silverstone Class winner in 1952, 1953 and 1954, driven by Dick Jacobs.

The impression – and it is an entirely correct and authentic one - is of a well-used competition car that is still being appreciated and doing precisely what its racing heritage suggests. What it also does is highlight just how successful the Y-Type was in period, for along with the rallying examples that were spearheaded by Len Shaw and the much-campaigned YB of Gregor Grant, the model assuredly punched above its weight and kept Abingdon products to the fore. Certainly in Marc Hanson's keeping, it seems that the Dick Jacobs MG YB will continue in the same vein.

The captain's chariot

MG's NE was built for the sole purpose of winning the 1934 Ulster Tourist Trophy. With only seven built and having achieved its goal, it is one of the most sought after but least known MG models around. Captain George Eyston's NE has been in Australia for about 80 years, and currently resides in Perth.

Words: Craig Watson

ver since the dawn of motor racing, car makers have carefully dissected the rules to get the most out of their machines within the regulations. And for just as long, race organisers have changed the rules, ostensibly to keep things fair but often simply to prevent one team from dominating an event. This has always gone on and competitors will always try to find (usually legal) ways within or around the rules to be more competitive. This is not surprising when you consider that victory in a major event can have a huge impact on sales – especially for a small concern trying to compete with the motoring giants.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the most important road race in Britain was run by the Royal Automobile Club, but because laws prevented racing on public roads in England, it was held at Ards in Ulster. Known as the Tourist Trophy, or TT, it was originally for touring cars (hence the name), but from 1928 to 1936 when it ran at the 13.66-mile Ards circuit, sports cars were allowed to enter. In order for touring cars to remain competitive, the TT was run as a handicap event.

Many cars built specifically to win the TT are revered by motoring historians and collectors. The car on these pages is one such racing special. Although it didn't actually win the TT, it was part of a three-car team that did and it has resided in Australia for over 80 years.

MG had always successfully promoted its products both for and through motorsport. In 1931 they won the TT with a supercharged C-Type, and in 1933 they had one of their greatest wins with Tazio Nuvolari in a K3 leading A.P. 'Hammy' Hamilton in a J2 for first and second outright and first place in both classes. All of these wins were with supercharged cars, but for 1934 the TT organisers decided that MG was gaining an unfair advantage with the blower and banned superchargers from the race. Part of this decision was based on the fact that, apart from race cars, MG was one of the very few companies offering supercharged

MG, along with a few other competitors, were rejected in their appeal against the new rule, but by the time a decision had been made it was only four months before the

cars for sale to the public - a





NE MAGNETTE

event. So, MG had only from May to August - the race being on 1 September – to build an entirely new car that could be competitive. The four-seater N-Type Magnette (NA) was released in April 1934, a few weeks after the P-Type Midget. MG boss Cecil Kimber ordered that seven chassis be taken from the production line to be converted into racing cars specifically for the TT – these would be known as the Ulster T.T. Magnette (NE type), usually simply referred to as the NE. The cars' chassis numbers were NAO516 through to NAO522 (all survive today!). The 1271cc sixcylinder engine was improved with the compression ratio increased to 9.8:1, a larger carburettor fitted and other minor changes. Together these lifted the maximum power available by 30% to 74bhp. While the K3 had used a pre-selector gearbox, the NE reverted to a manual change.

A narrow, two-seater boat-tail body was quickly designed and built, with a large capacity 18 gallon fuel tank inside the tail - a nod to aerodynamics which were only just becoming understood. The windscreen was apparently of a lightweight gauze material rather than glass, and the rudimentary roof was the minimum required to meet the rules. Although those rules stipulated that cars must be listed for sale and run in normal trim, headlights were not required. Interestingly, no NE-Types were sold to the public, but it may be assumed they were considered a development of the NA Magnette.

The first three cars (NA5017-5019) were completed by the end of June and entered in the Light Car Club Relay at Brooklands, driven to third place outright by the ladies' team of Irene Schwendler, Doreen Evans and Margaret Allen at an average speed of 87.85mph. The final four cars were finished just in time for the TT.

Having won the 1933 race, Nuvolari was invited to drive the lead car, NAO518, which was painted in Italian racing red in preparation. However, Nuvolari was contracted through sponsorship to the Standard Oil company, but the MG team was sponsored by Castrol and had to use Castrol oil. The sponsorship issue



couldn't be resolved and Nuvolari reluctantly refused the offer, so NAO518 was driven in the TT (still painted Italian red) by Bill Everitt.

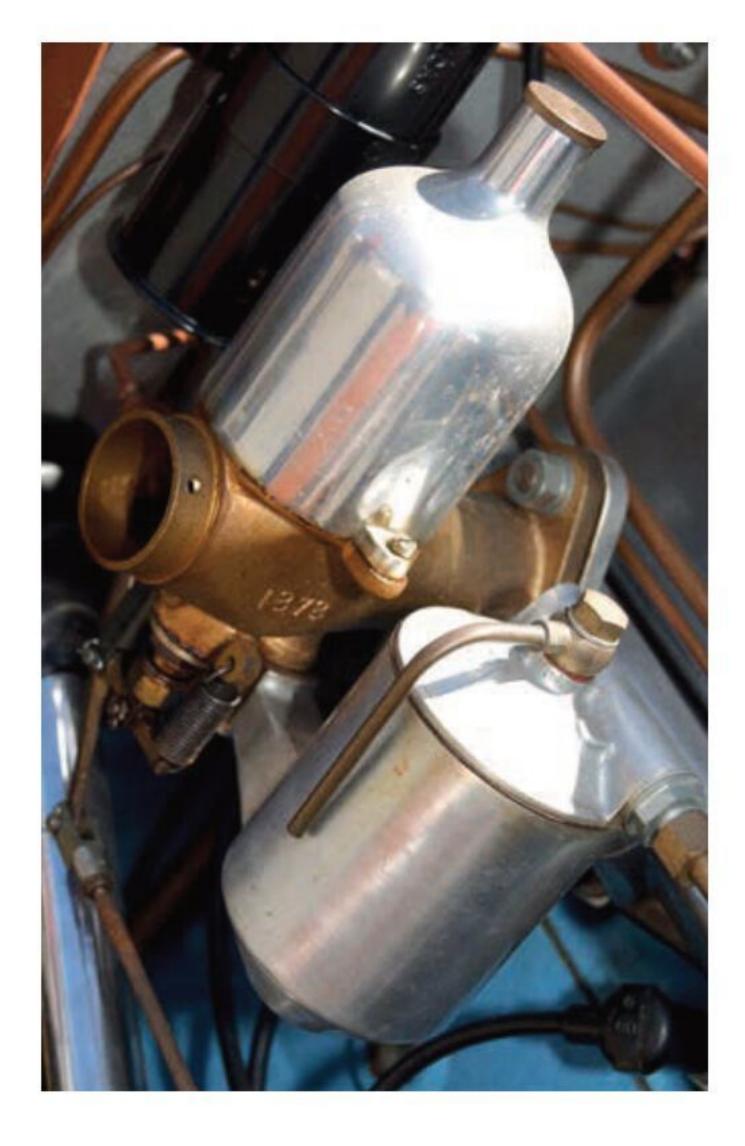
Three cars were official MG company entries in a team led by Captain George Eyston (NAO520), with the other drivers being Wally Handley (NAO521) and Charlie Dodson (NAO522). These were all painted in Eyston's usual livery of cream and brown. Two other cars were loaned to Norman Black (on a bend it/mend it basis) driven

by himself (NAO517) and 'Hammy' Hamilton (NAO519). The seventh NE (NAO516) was completed to the same standard, held as a spare car but not needed.

The handicap system for the 1934 race was seen as favouring larger engined cars, particularly the likes of Bentley, Lagonda and Aston-Martin. This became evident during practice, when Eddie Hall was quickest by far in his privately-entered Bentley. The MGs were first away, with the rest of the 1.5-litre class two minutes



Four NE Magnettes – driven by Eyston, Dodson, Handley and Black – round Donaldson hairpin in tight formation during the 1934 Ulster TT for which they were designed. After six hours of racing, Dodson won by a mere 17 seconds from the chasing Bentley.







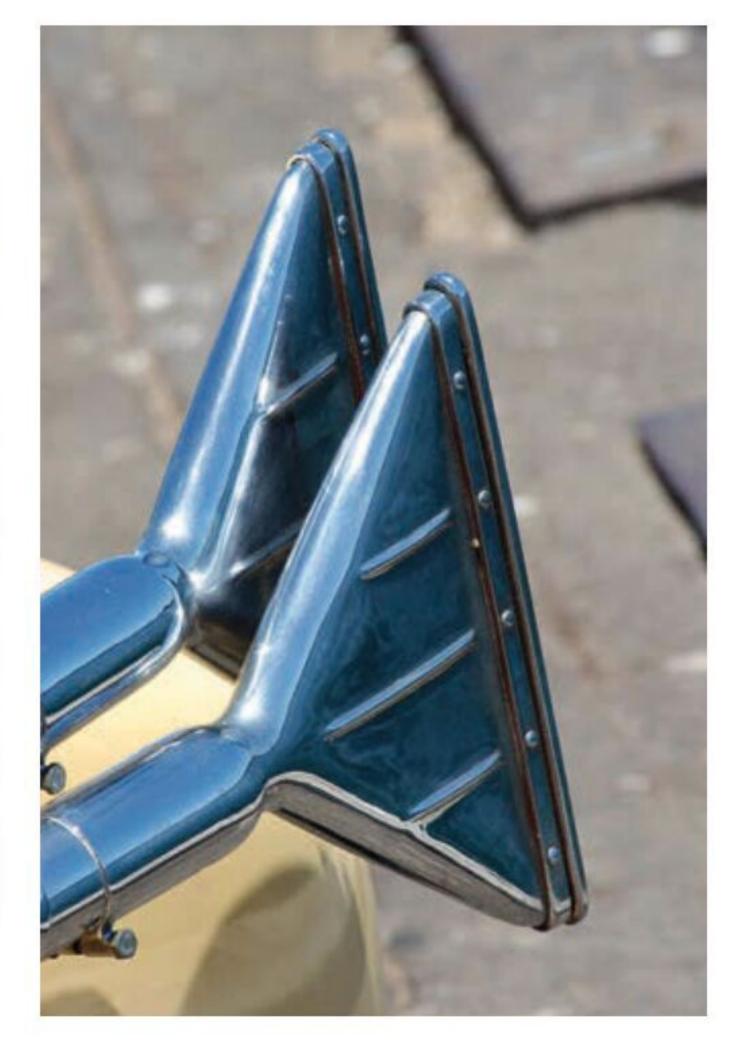


later. Cars were flagged off in groups according to their engine capacity, and Eddie Hall's Bentley was in the last group away, seven minutes after the MGs.

Early in the race, Black retired due to a defective rotor arm. Everitt had a wheel collapse shortly afterwards and was also forced to retire - some standard wheels had got mixed up with MG's special racing wheels, which were more highly tensioned. Apparently it had been decided not to paint them black, as had been

normal practice for the team, and it was not possible to distinguish them by appearance. The remaining wheels were tested for tension, then the rest of the MGs hurriedly brought into the pits to have all four wheels changed as a precaution.

Handley also retired, with a broken gearbox, followed by Eyston – who had briefly held third place - with engine problems. Meanwhile, Dodson had led the race almost from the start, but Hall was gaining ground on every lap. In the end, Dodson held on



to win by a mere 17 seconds to Hall's Bentley, giving MG its third outright win in the TT. Of the six MG NEs entered in the race, Hamilton's was the only other one to finish, in 14th.

As the NEs had been specifically built for the TT, they were surplus to the needs of the MG team afterwards. Three were fitted with P-Type bodies to be used in trials (rallies) for 1935, alongside the Cream Crackers team of fourcylinder P-Types. The team of former TT cars became known as the Musketeers – NAO517 called Athos, NAO519 called Porthos and NAO522 called Aramis – and won many First Class Awards, including winning the Welsh Rally outright.

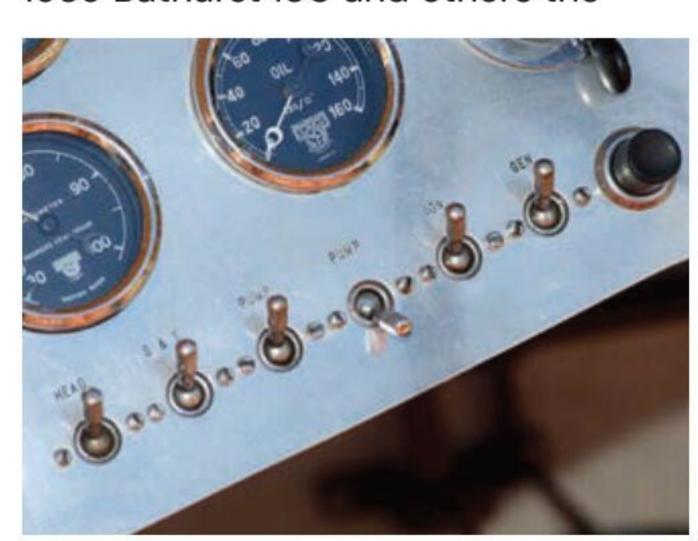
In mid-1935 William Morris sold all his privately owned companies - MG, Wolseley, SU and others - to Morris Motors. In June of that year Morris Motors cancelled all racing operations within its companies and closed down MG's experimental and design departments at Abingdon, moving all design work to Cowley. The Musketeers cars were sold to the Evans family at Bellevue Garage and raced in the 1935 TT, finishing 10th, 12th and 13th. NAO518 and NAO521 apparently languished at the Abingdon factory for some years before being sold off. Today NAO518, the car prepared for Nuvolari and raced in the TT by Everitt, resides in





California, while NAO521 was advertised for sale in 2010 in the Netherlands and now resides in Switzerland.

Two cars, NAO516 and NAO520 were apparently also prepared by Bellevue Garage before being sold and imported into Australia in 1937 or '38 by John Sherwood – both arriving with their TT bodies but painted light blue. The early history of the cars in Australia is a bit vague, with some reports suggesting NAO520 won the 1939 Bathurst 150 and others the







Castrol 200. The car was certainly entered in the 1938 Australian Grand Prix at Bathurst, but bearing failure in practice meant it was a non-starter. It would appear that in one of the major races at the Bathurst Easter meeting in 1939 NAO520 finish first, with NAO516 in third place.

Both cars changed hands a number of times after the war, with NAO516 being the subject of a feature in Australian Motor Sports and Automobiles in February





1965, when it was owned by Bill Lockington in Melbourne. It was later sold overseas and ended up in a collection in Germany.

NAO520, our feature car and the one driven by George Eyston in the 1934 TT, eventually found its way to Melbourne car dealer and enthusiast Lance Dixon in the late 1960s. By this time it was fitted with a Holden engine, but Dixon managed to track down a correct N-Type engine and gearbox in England in 1971. He then undertook a complete restoration of the car back to its Eyston team colour scheme and, registered 70.382, used it regularly in vintage events. Dixon's wife Yvonne also drove the car in Vintage Sports Car Club events, and in 1977 she tied for equal first place for the Post Vintage Thoroughbred Trophy.

At some point during this time the car was re-registered NE 934, and in 1982 it was bought by Peter Briggs for display in his York Motor Museum - opened in 1979, about 100km east of Perth. While Peter has some very special cars in his collection, he says his only favourite is whichever car he is driving at the time. 'So the MG NE is my favourite car today,' he smiles. 'That is just a gorgeous car. It is a beautiful car to drive and the sound is incredible. When driving along, you get to a certain speed in third gear and a sound comes out that actually sends a chill down my spine. Not many cars do that. Some do, but not many.'

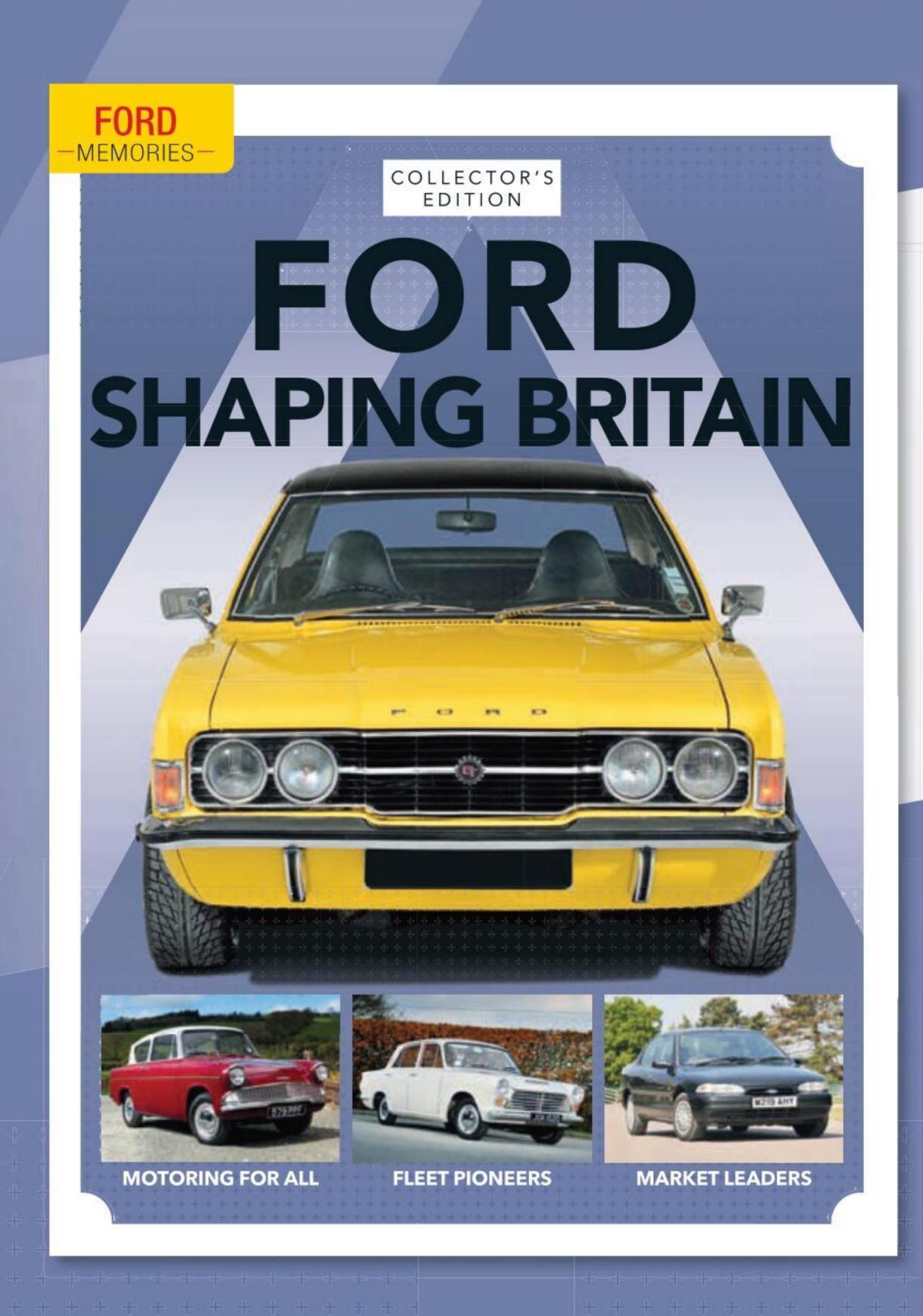
Peter competed with NAO520 in the Pre-war Racing class at the MG Nationals meeting in Adelaide in 1986, taking part in the Concours d'Elegance, motorkhana and Speed Sprints. At the following year's Nationals in Perth, the car won its class in the Concours d'Elegance, was third in the speed event and third in the motorkhana in its class. The car was completely restored for the 1995 Nationals in Perth, where it again won its class in the Concours.

Today it remains an important part of his collection, sometimes being on display at the museum and other times sitting at Peter's home. This MG NE is an extremely rare car in anyone's terms, has an enviable history and is the only one of its kind in Australia.

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he rapid growth of the MG Car Company in the 1920s was largely down to the industry of its founder, Cecil Kimber. At first the company produced a range of saloons and tourers that captured the buying public's imagination, firmly pitched in the mid-range and sporting sectors. These were based on highly successful contemporary Morris models, of course. By 1925 the Morris Oxford and Cowley accounted for some 41% of the total UK car market, though sales were

beginning to flag. However, that year William Morris purchased privately the Wolseley Car Company. This gave Morris the components it needed to design and introduce a baby car to compete with the Austin 7.

Called the Morris Minor, the power unit was a largely new engine. Designed by Wolseley's powertrain engineers, it had a capacity of 847cc, a bore and stroke of 57x83mm, and it featured a single overhead camshaft driven by a spiral bevel geared shaft located on the front of the engine that

passed through the dynamo carrying an integral armature. Carburation was a single downdraught SU. The engine produced 20bhp at 4000rpm, while the gearbox was a non-synchromesh three-speed type. Maximum speed was recorded as being 65mph.

In 1928 Kimber set his sights on producing a small MG sports car, the Minor providing the components he needed for its design. Immediately, the rush was on to have an M-Type 'Midget' ready and on display at London's Olympia salon that year.



The public were quick to embrace the new MG and began competing in Midgets from 1929. The following year MG's Racing Department was responsible for developing a team of Works cars that were entered in the Monte Carlo Rally and Brooklands Double Twelve. Further modifications that winter included the adaption of a four-speed ENV gearbox, which produced the first 750cc car to achieve 100mph in early 1931.

MG's two seater sports racing car programme moved ahead, and during

1933 alone they realised a total of over 500 successes. The larger P-Type Midget was introduced in 1934. Again, power was supplied by the 847cc OHC engine linked to a four-speed gearbox; maximum speed was 74mph with a 0-60 time of 32 seconds. Dubbed The World's Finest Competition Car in the company's brochure, coachwork was described as being available in duo colours with leather upholstery to match. Such was demand for MG's baby sports cars that a PB version was launched, powered by a 939cc

OHC engine which produced 43bhp at 5500rpm. This was MG's answer to the growing threat from Singer. Observers suggest that the engine size hike transformed the car, making it into one of the best small sports cars of the period and laying the foundation for the next generation, the iconic T-Types that form this feature. To gain a feel for these cars, their quirks and characteristics we've brought together one each of the T-Type incarnations, and asked their owners to tell us about their experiences.



TA owned by Colin Reynolds

olin Reynolds' delightful
Wedgewood Blue MG TA is the
earliest car in our line up of
five T-Type cars. Above the sleekly
sloping front valance is a chrome
badge bar that carries a Lucas fog
lamp and horn trumpet, ex-Works
components which were part of the
standard package when the car was
new. Careful inspection of the front
suspension under the gracefully
sloping wings reveals the modified
friction-type shock absorbers and
hydraulic pipes which feed the 9in
Lockheed drum brakes.

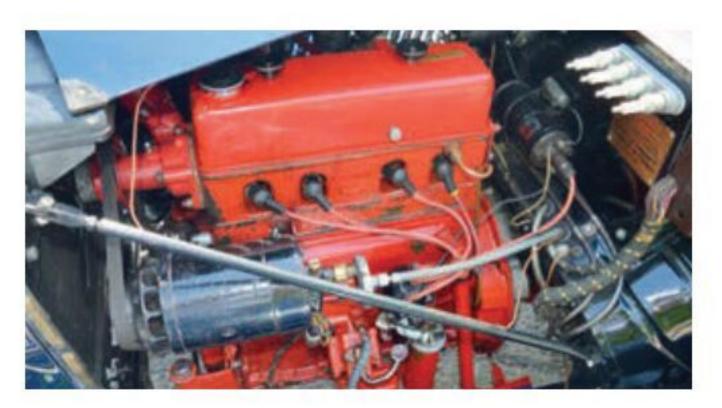
Inside, the first of the T-Types was laid out in traditional MG style – 100mph speedo ahead of the passenger and a rev counter (including a dainty little clock) in front of the driver. The windscreen wipers were linked by a pantograph arm driven off a motor mounted on the top lefthand side of the windscreen. Interestingly, the TA (along with the larger VA) was the first MG to be offered in uprated police specification.

Looking at the car with fresh eyes, the styling is beautifully proportioned with all parts combining in perfect unison to give the TA a strong sense of style and flare. Certainly it soon overcame the reluctance of those MG stalwarts who decried the loss of their Wolseley-derived OHC engines and no fewer than 3003 examples found buyers. Colin's TA is a 1937 model, which he has owned for 26 years.

'My first vehicle was a Morris
Minor,' he tells us. 'It was my brother's
car on which I learnt to drive, and
it became a hand-me-down. My
overwhelming memory of that car
was its unreliability; it did break down
a lot! In fairness we had no money so
it wasn't maintained properly – we
drove on bald tyres and did all the
things that you could do in the 1960s
which you cannot get away with now.

'My fascination with MGs and owning one came into focus when I was on a plane flying to Florida in 1976. I was reading Classic Cars magazine, saw an advert for a TD and immediately thought what a nice looking car it was. When I arrived back in the UK I went to see it.'

During his flight home Colin had begun to create an image in his mind as to what an MG, especially a postwar TD, would be like to drive, and as soon as he got behind the wheel and





took it for a test drive it lived up to all his expectations. 'One delight in particular was looking along the long tapering bonnet,' he grins.

'The Minor had been a rag bag of a car, while the MG was in far better condition and repaid me by being much more reliable,' continues Colin. 'Looking back on it today I thoroughly enjoyed the TD and I do regret selling it, but I only had room for one classic car and I wanted a project, something that would be a hobby. In the event I went back to the same dealer where

I'd purchased the TD and he had a TA in the kind of restorable condition I was looking for. So I sold the TD and bought my TA, which needed a complete rebuild. Having taught myself how to service and repair the Minor and the TD, the thought of restoring a car from the ground up held no horrors for me.'

Colin's first task was to attack the body, which fell off as soon as he began working on it. The chassis had to be cleaned of the rust which had built up over the years and then re-painted. I then set about the suspension. Without doubt the task of cleaning up and painting what amounted to boxes of rusty rubbish was the most daunting aspect of the whole restoration and it took all my determination to keep going.

'Next came the engine, which I rebuilt myself. However, the gearbox and back axle were in reasonable condition so I fitted the drive train back into the chassis.

'The ash wood frame was completely rotten, so I bought a replacement kit which included the timber frame and metal skins, and I assembled it piece by piece. Finally, I restored the interior using a re-trim kit, which comprised leather sections stitched together, which was used to cover the seat base squabs and bench seat back rest. As for the re-spray, the car was professionally repainted. We chose the colour after seeing a BMW in a car park, the shade going well with the chrome and cream upholstery. Overall the restoration took around three years to complete."

Colin says he clearly recalls his first thoughts as he drove the car after he'd finished all the restoration work. They were not good! In fact he said to himself: 'This is terrible, it's awful, why have I wasted three years of my life doing this?' But of course there was still some fettling to do, adjusting the brakes and so on, and gradually his appreciation of the car improved.



Also, the TA is not as stable as the TD and there was a bit of acclimatisation to be done getting used to the way the car bounces along. But happily he reports that it does grow on you.

'The furthest journey we've done in the TA was to France,' continues Colin. 'Being a pre-war classic the locals were just all over it. They love inexpensive old classic cars like the MG - stop anywhere and a crowd will gather. However, having used and enjoyed the car over all these years the gearbox is now beginning to show signs of wear, so at some point I'll have to take it out and rebuild it. As for my plans for the future, I simply intend to keep working on it and enjoying it."





THE TA IN A NUTSHELL

The first of the T-Types was introduced in 1936. It utilised the MP JG 1292cc ohv engine measuring 63.5mm x 102mm, itself derived from the Morris 10 engine. The valves were operated by conventional rocker arms activated by push rods from a duplex chain driven camshaft; double valve springs were fitted to reduce the chance of valve bounce. A novel addition was a basic closed circuit air system with the valve cover breather linked to the air cleaner. Fitted with twin SU semi-downdraught carburettors, it was rated at 50bhp at 4500rpm. Maximum speed was recorded as being 80mph, with a 0-60 acceleration of 23 seconds.

The gearbox was a four-speed unit with synchromesh on the top two ratios and a very low first gear. Hydraulic brakes replaced the previous cable brake system fitted to the PB,

though the drums were reduced in diameter from 12in to 9in for the TA. A 'fly off' type handbrake was retained, while the wheelbase and track dimensions were increased by three inches and seven inches respectively giving the mainly unaltered body shape a longer, sleeker appearance and improving comfort and road holding.

The bodyshell retained the ash wood frame clothed in steel construction technique of earlier cars (a process that would continue up to the introduction of the MGA) and all were two-seaters. Inside, the trim quality was improved with a carpet covered section over the transmission tunnel. A novel addition was a 30mph warning light set in the instrument panel. There was also larger luggage accommodation behind. Overall, the Midget had grown up in almost every way, and it helped MG to become ranked among the largest sports car manufacturers in Europe.

FIVE ALIVE: TA / TB / TC / TD / TF



TB owned by Roger Roodhouse

n early 1939 Major 'Goldie' Gardner took a specially engineered aerodynamic 750cc MG to speeds in excess of 200mph at the US Bonneville Salt flats. The achievement was a worldwide sensation marking the year as significant in MG's illustrious history. By far the rarest of our five MG T-Type sports cars is the TB, and it too was launched in 1939, this particular car being built in October that year.

It belongs to Roger Roodhouse, who told us: 'I learnt to drive on a three-speed Ford Popular and I got very efficient at double-de-clutching, which was a technique that has come in handy with the MG. The Ford was my brother's car and I eventually bought it from him and used it as my own means of transport for some time. My greatest memory was the immediate sense of freedom it gave me, and I recall on one occasion driving down to the South of France in it. That was a long, slow haul, but we made it.'

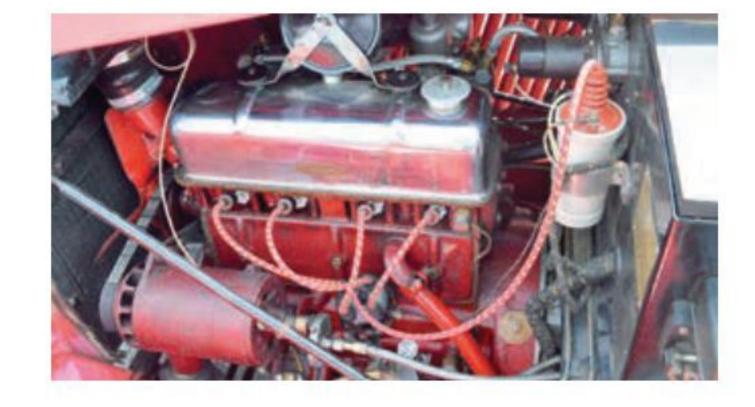
Roger and his friends had always been aware of MGs, especially

classics like TCs, agreeing with each other how nice they looked. Roger was introduced to the marque and TCs in particular when a friend bought one in 1967 for around £110. Then another friend bought one too, both owners seeming to enjoy their cars without constantly breaking down.

'I bought my own TC in 1968,' recalls Roger. 'It was fun to drive, but I never thrashed it and probably never went above 60mph. After 18 months of constant use it was looking a little tatty. My grandfather had a garage and I also helped my father repair and service his cars, so restoring the TC was just a matter of working my way through all the jobs that needed to be done. The whole project took me three and a half years to complete.'

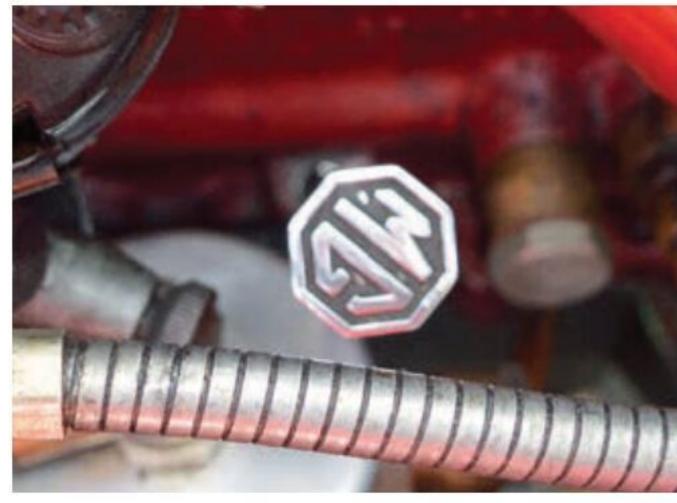
Sadly, the arrival of children meant Roger was no longer able to afford to keep two cars. 'By then I'd owned the TC for about 15 years and it was just languishing in the garage,' he says. 'My brother persuaded me to sell it to him and I became MG-less.'

Fast forward now to the time when his father passed away in 2005 and





Roger decided to use his dad's legacy to buy another MG. 'The owner of the first TC whom I knew from years before had amassed a collection of MG bits, including a TB chassis which lay down the side of his garage for 40 years. My brother then bought all the parts, built it into a running car and used it for several years before deciding he wanted to undertake another rebuild. I bought the TB from him in October 2005.'



he changed the oil filter to a modern

system,' he adds. 'There's a switch

spin-off-type. 'I also replaced the fuel

on the dashboard which controls the

petrol pumps and in all my MG years

the only time I broke down was when

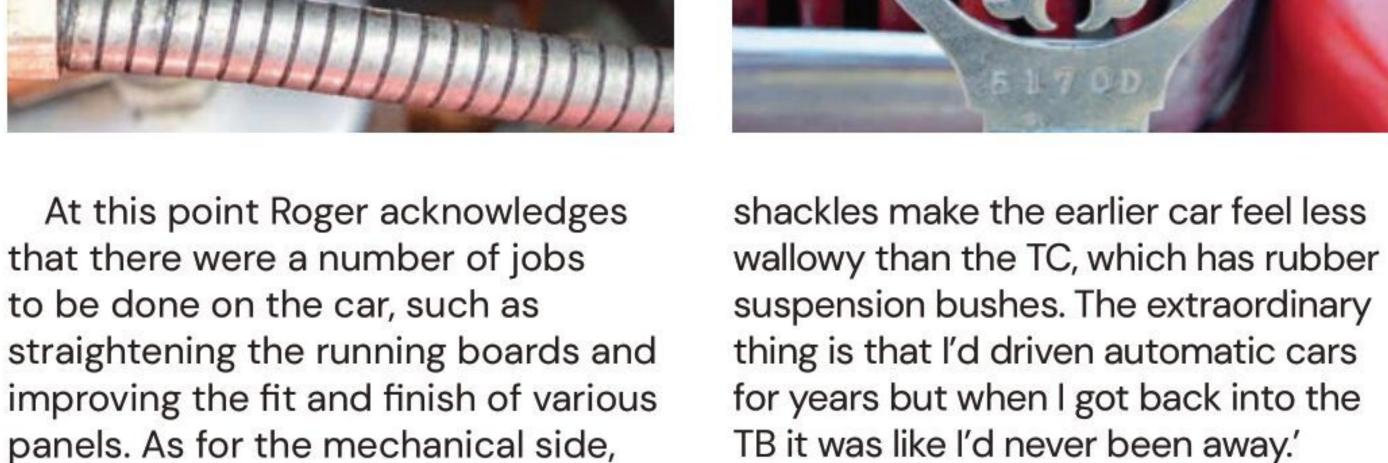
So how did driving the TB compare

with his earlier TC? 'As soon as I got

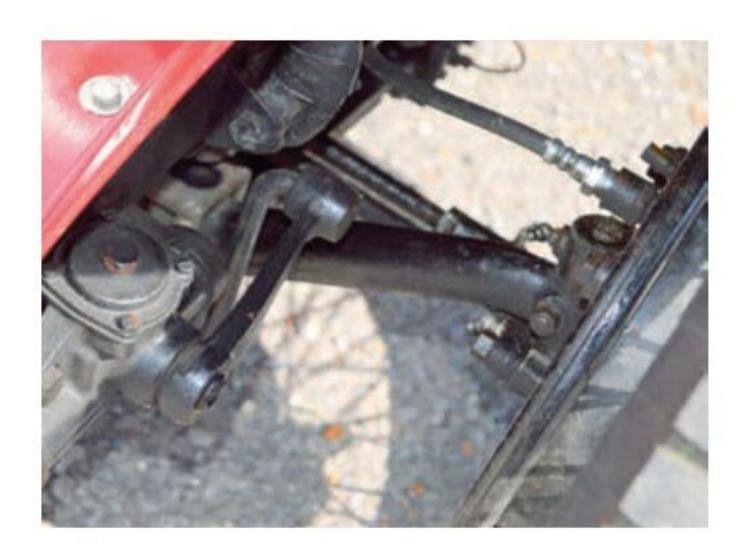
in to drive the TB for the first time

I immediately felt the difference,'

one of the petrol pumps failed."



One of the most significant jobs Roger has undertaken over the years is to fettle the twin SU carburettors. 'For years instead of the engine dying back on the over-run it would continue racing. I finally traced the problem to a carburettor body, which had become slightly warped, causing the butterfly to stick open. I managed to locate a replacement, and after fitting it and adjusting the mixture correctly, the improvement was immediate."



Reflecting on his career with MGs Roger says that in the early days when he had the TC he'd drive down to Cornwall and back without thinking twice, but now his journeys are very much shorter. 'The longest trip I've done in the TB is probably to Goodwood, which is about 45 miles each way. No matter where we're going though, we always seem to arrive with a smile, if a little hot in summer weather."

So what of the future, I ventured? 'My plan is to continue to enjoy the car. We meet up with other groups and go out for lunch twice a month, which are very pleasant social occasions."





THE TB IN A NUTSHELL

Launched in 1939, the MG TB continued the company's established pattern of regularly introducing improvements to their range of sports cars. The TB was fitted with the totally new ohv XPAG engine with a capacity of 1250cc from a bore of 66.5mm and stroke of 90mm. This not only revved better than the previous unit, but also raised power to 54bhp at 5200rpm with improved smoothness. The engine featured a stout and balanced counterweighted crankshaft carried in three main bearings, with H section conrods and aluminium alloy pistons with three rings.

The cylinder walls were fully water jacketed to prevent

distortion under prolonged heat build up, while the overhead valves were supported on triple springs. The inlet tracts were kept purposely short to help fuel vapour flow. An SU fuel pump supplied petrol from the larger rear mounted tank, a dashboard control operating the fuel supply with three gallons in reserve.

For the first time the clutch was a single dry plate heavy duty Borg & Beck, which replaced the earlier cork insert plate type running in oil. Drive was taken to a four speed gearbox with a stubby remote controlled gearstick.

The chassis followed established MG principles with boxsection side rails and tubular cross members. The TB was available as an open two-seater, or a more luxurious Tickford Drophead Coupé.

FIVE ALIVE: TA / TB / TC / TD / TF



TC owned by John Morgan

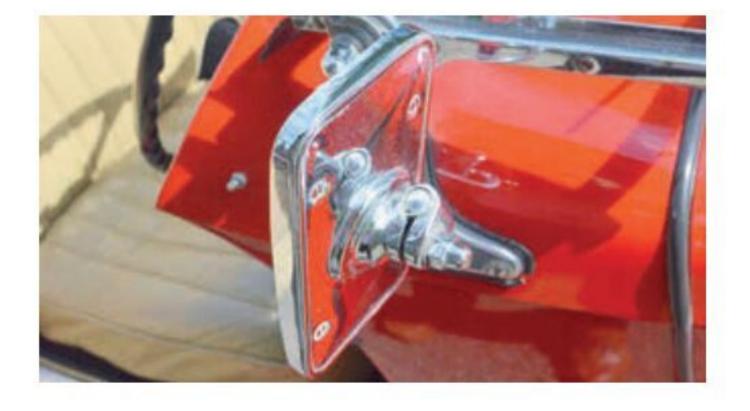
learly, for some MG owners keeping their cars for many years is nothing unusual. John Morgan, for example, has owned his immaculate TC for 28 years and also still owns the car he learnt to drive on, a 1951 Austin A40 Devon (though he actually passed his test in a driving school's Morris Minor 1000). 'My father bought the Devon in 1958 and I have happy memories of using it to go on family holidays,' he recalls with a smile. 'Luckily we have been able to keep the Devon, and only recently we drove up to the Wirral in Cheshire in it for an Austin Counties Car Club event.'

However, it is clear John's passion is focused on MGs, for in addition to his TC he also bought and sold two MGBs in quick succession before buying his current MGB, which he purchased new in 1973. 'Back then I thought it would be nice to have it converted to a Costello V8,' he says, 'but the oil crisis intervened and it still has the 1800cc engine.' He also has a 1972 Midget, which has been fitted with a Stage 2 Oselli engine.

With the contemporary MG duo in his garage during the 1980s, John began to hanker after an older model MG, something with running boards. 'But, at the time I wasn't prepared to spend the kind of money they were selling for,' he says. 'However, by the early 1990s the situation improved and there was a drop in prices. Even though I'd never even driven a TC at that point, I thought it would make a lot of sense – parts were easier to purchase than for pre-war Triple-M cars, often with a choice of suppliers offering bits.'

To start the ball rolling John put an advert into the club magazine for a TC under the Wanted category, and the owner of the car in our pictures responded. 'A couple of friends came with me and gave their nod of approval, saying that it was pretty straight and performed well,' remembers John. 'Despite looking at a few more TCs, I eventually went back in 1994 and bought this one.'

In fact the MG TC was an ex-Californian car, which had come back to the UK via Denmark. 'Closer investigation revealed that it had PVC





upholstery and a dreadful paint job which easily chipped,' John continues. 'One interesting thing which did emerge was that when I was stripping the body down ready for a re-spray and unscrewed the wings from the ash wood frame, I found that the hole centres for the two sets of screws were 20mm different; that showed me MGs were all hand built.'

John bought an upholstery kit to replace the very un-original looking





seat material. As for the engine, when he stripped it down John found that while the car had been in the States it had been mildly tuned with an 80thou overbore, a gas flowed cylinder head and a re-profiled sports camshaft.

'One nightmare problem which sometimes occurs with MG TCs is that the oil thrower at the rear of the engine can cause oil to impregnate the clutch surfaces,' he says. 'This happened on my car. In the event got through two clutch repair kits trying to solve the problem."

Another weakness common to TCs also showed itself a couple of years ago when the differential casing broke up. 'There was a big bang,' remembers John with a grin. 'Fortunately, a TC enthusiast is machining replacement differential casings. Another modification is a rear hub lip seal that's part of the retaining nut and prevents oil from getting on the rear brake shoes. Luckily, there are several companies who can supply replacements parts."

Today, John can look back on many years of enjoyable motoring, including covering much of the UK as well as driving twice across Europe. 'It does get lots of use,' he agrees. 'Overall, I've covered 22,000 miles, and perhaps this might have been even more had it not been for the mechanical maladies. The nice thing is that on a sunny day with the top down the TC feels faster than it really is. In fact, you are most likely only doing about 40mph. I certainly made the right decision to buy it. The only problem is trying to summon up the enthusiasm to go out into a cold garage during the winter and work on it."





THE TC IN A NUTSHELL

Eager to re-establish domestic manufacture in 1945, much of the design specification of the pre-war TB was retained in developing the TC so visual similarities between the earlier TA and TB and the post war TC were clear. The only difference was the change from trunnions to rubber bushes and shackled road springs beneath, and a slightly wider body to improve interior accommodation. The power unit was the same 66.5 x 90mm ohv engine of 1250cc capacity producing 54.4bhp at 5200rpm. A sign of the times was that synchromesh had now been fitted on the

top three ratios. Weather equipment was considered comprehensive for the time, with an easily erected hood and Perspex side screens (which soon misted up when it rained!).

The TC series quickly proved a hit, especially with postwar UK military and USAF personnel, who delighted in the car's capabilities, especially in club competitions on tracks which were soon being established on war time aerodromes. The TC was also the first MG to be exported in any numbers to the USA, where its ability in motorsport was also quickly recognised. TC production ran for four years and a hugely impressive 10,000 were built.



TD owned by John Heagren

ohn Heagren is the owner of the rich Autumn Red MG TD, the fourth T-Type on our list. John's introduction to automotive ownership came in 1963 when he bought a situp-and-beg Ford Popular for £75. 'I certainly never thought when I began driving I'd one day end up by owning an MG TD,' he says with a smile.

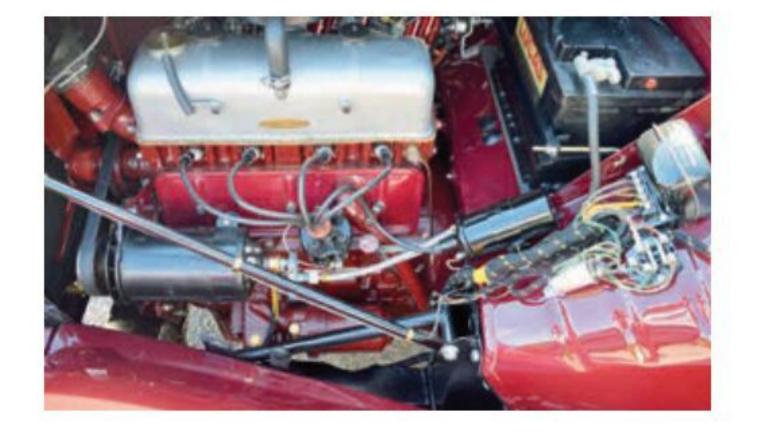
With its independent front suspension and steering rack borrowed from the Y-Type, it's perhaps no wonder that some people suggest driving a TD is very similar to a modern car. Only the period wings, running boards and slab fuel tank behind reveal something of its timeline charm.

'I got into MG ownership when I bought an MGB Roadster,' John tells us. 'Next, the V8 version was launched in 1973. Immediately it was released, I fancied one. I traded in the 1800cc model for £2500 and bought an MGB GT V8 new, costing £3000. It was a powerful car, especially in those days with a 0-60 time of 7 seconds.' In fact, so enamoured was John with the V8 that he kept the car

for 20 years. Clearly John loved this car and today is sorry to have sold it. 'During the early days I used it to drive along the beach in Cornwall while on holiday, but that was before I became involved with owning classic cars,' he adds quickly.

John developed a desire to become involved with concours when he owned the MGB GTV8. 'It all started when I went to an MGB Owners Club show, parked the V8 in what I thought was the visitors car park and quite to my shock and surprise won a prize," he says. 'The whole idea of cleaning a car so that it won prizes gripped my imagination, and I began working on the MG. Initially I knew nothing, so I began to ask those involved with concours preparation about which products to use and the techniques. Overall, it took about two years before I brought the V8 out and onto the concours circuit.'

However, John then sold the V8 and moved on to an MG TC, which was an ex-police car. 'I used to put it on display at car club meetings and several people gave me parts





originally associated with MG police vehicles including a set of cuff links and a warning bell for the front badge bar. Then I traded it in for an MGA, which I kept for several years, but I still liked the idea of owning and driving an olde worlde-type car. I did look at a pre-war MG J2, but it was too much of an antique and I wasn't persuaded, so a TD version it had to



be. In fact I looked for a TD for some time before eventually finding one for sale in Bournemouth. I went to see it and it was rubbish. The dealer had used a library picture to advertise the car, and when I walked into the showroom I couldn't believe the poor condition. Later, I found a better TD advertised in a magazine by someone in Essex, and I bought it in 2010.

'The paintwork was in the same condition as it is today. Yet even though I did pay a lot of money for it, there were still areas of the car



that required work, especially to bring it up to concours condition. For example the brightwork needed re-chroming and the engine had to be totally cleaned. Every nut and bolt was replaced. Also, the underneath was re-painted, including the underside of the wheelarches."

John has now been heavily involved with the concours circuit for many years, and I asked what had been his most prized concours trophy. 'The award I am most proud to have won was the Benson & Hedges Concours



in 1989 at Stratford with the V8,' he says without hesitation.

So what of the future for John and his glistening red chariot? 'The TD is still running well so I have no plans for doing any mechanical work on it," he concludes. 'It doesn't do many miles. In fact, it's only been used four times this summer. However, I will continue to prepare it, taking it to shows for exhibition, meeting people and chatting to them. For me, that's what makes it so worthwhile and enjoyable.'





THE TD IN A NUTSHELL

Though the war clouds of the late 1930s were looming large, a popular belief (which lasted into the 'phony war' of 1940) was that hostilities would soon cease. At MG, development had begun on the new Y-Type saloon in 1939. It would feature the same XPAG 1250cc engine as the TB, but with a single carburettor, different valve timing and a lower compression ratio. The chassis comprised the standardised parallel box section tubes shaped to pass above the rear axle, with lateral rails providing a rigid structure capable of withstanding considerable torsional stresses. For the first time tiny outriggers were added to give support to the floorpan. Significantly, Alec Issigonis had developed a coil spring independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering in 1936/37 for the Morris Ten; it was never used there on cost grounds, but the design was resurrected for the Y-Type saloon.

The chassis and suspension was then modified for the TD

Midget, resulting in a major step up in ride quality, handling and controllability. With twin SUs the 1250cc power unit developed 54.4bhp at 5200rpm. The brakes were hydraulic twin leading front shoe type and the handbrake was now a conventional ratchet lever design located between the seat squabs. The revised dashboard featured the speedo and rev counter ahead of the driver. The TD was launched in 1949, and went on to sell nearly 30,000 examples.

Later cars featured a change in sump and bell housing size to accommodate a larger flywheel and clutch assembly, which were not interchangeable with the earlier car. The TD MkII was also offered to satisfy the demands of the competition buyer and featured stiffer dampers, larger 1.5in SU carburettors, and a modified cylinder head with larger valves that added up to give a power hike of 5.5% and better handling. TD production peaked in 1952 before the impact of other sports cars, notably the Triumph TR2, began to take effect and the model was discontinued in 1953.

FIVE ALIVE: TA / TB / TC / TD / TF



TF owned by Tony Simmons

ooking the sleekest of the five T-Type MGs, the TF combines the period charms associated with separate wings and running boards with the introduction of the more aerodynamic lines that were beginning to emerge during the early 1950s. In addition to the more modern shape (more modern in comparison to the earlier T-Types) of the MG TF's exterior with its faired-in headlamp pods and lower, backwards sloping radiator grille, MG also gave the car a contemporary look and feel inside with the regular art deco style dashboard treatment emulating that of the Y-Type saloon featuring octagonal shaped instruments on a sloping facia, and individual bucket type seats.

'My interest in cars really took off when I was a teenager,' explains owner Tony. 'I used to clean cars for pocket money and enjoyed riding in friends' cars when I had the opportunity. My own first car was a 10hp Ford from the 1940s. Sadly its ancient cooling system froze up one winter, having a terminal effect on the engine. Then I progressed to MkII Ford



Zephyrs, Granadas and 3-litre Rovers. I've always loved big cars and they were very popular in the 1960s.'

Tony then moved on to a love of motorbikes, unfortunately falling off too many times over the years before arthritis determined he couldn't hold a bike upright any longer. 'I then decided I wanted an old car, and the old car I wanted most was either a Series 1 or a Series 2 Bentley,' Tony continues. 'In February 2006 I went down to a dealer in Sevenoaks, Kent, who specialised in luxury cars and saw a beautiful Series 2 in silver. It was £26,000. Had the dealer been



in the showroom, I'd have bought it. Luckily, he was out, and that night I went home, looked on the internet and came across Classic Chrome based in East Sheen. On their website was an MG TF, something I'd never even considered before."

Finished in a mellow creamy yellow, Tony showed the website illustration of the MG TF to his wife Sally, who immediately said what

a pretty car it looked. There and then they agreed to go and have a look at it the following day. 'Despite the dealer not being prepared to negotiate on the price, we bought it anyway,' smiles Tony. 'Neither my wife nor I had been in an MG before, but as soon as I got in to drive it home, I was impressed with how comfortable the ride was and with how well it went. With hindsight,

even if I'd been able to squeeze the Bentley in the garage, I would have been marooned in it and unable to get out because it was too big. The TF is a far more sensible choice."

From the outset Tony and Sally's TF was pressed into service for international touring. 'The first long journey we did was to France. Then, driving along we could both smell petrol. I stopped, lifted the bonnet and to my horror the carburettors had come loose on their manifold studs and were flopping about. Luckily none of the nuts or washers had come off so, as I had some tools with me, I managed to tighten everything back up. But the awkward bonnet design meant all my spanners were too long, so when I got back home I cut them in half with my angle grinder!"

Tony also recalls another occasion in France when the car started to boil, a core plug having failed and allowed the coolant to escape from the engine. 'We had to be transported home that time,' Tony says with as sigh. 'On another occasion we were on our way to Brooklands when the engine began to make an unhealthy noise. Sadly, I thought it prudent to

FIVE ALIVE: TA / TB / TC / TD / TF

turn round and head for home, driving very gingerly at less than 2000rpm. That resulted in me having to fit a new crankshaft.'

During a trip down to Clermont-Ferrand in central France, the TF began heating up again. Luckily Tony and Sally met up with knowledgeable MG enthusiast John Venables, who recommended installing a Ford five-speed gearbox out of a Sierra, which would help reduce engine temperature when cruising. 'Immediately I arrived home, I bought the Ford 'box through the MGOC. It came complete with instructions and I was able to do the conversion with simple spanners and an angle grinder. Overall it took around three weeks to complete, and the modification has really transformed the TF. While the ratios are no better, with the fifth gear it makes for a far more relaxed and economical ride, and keeps the temperature down too.'

From that first drive to the South of France in 2006, Tony and Sally have toured across Europe including Germany, Denmark and Switzerland, one trip taking in the 10th Anniversary of the Berlin division of the MG Car Club and they were most welcoming. So their spontaneous decision to buy a TF appears to have been the right choice, the little MG giving them many miles of fun and economic motoring.

From that first glimpse of a TF on the internet, how does Tony view the



car today and what plans does he have for the future? 'We'll continue to enjoy the MG as it gives us a huge amount of pleasure,' he concludes.

'It was certainly the best decision my wife and I have ever made and we'll continue to use it and make new friends.'

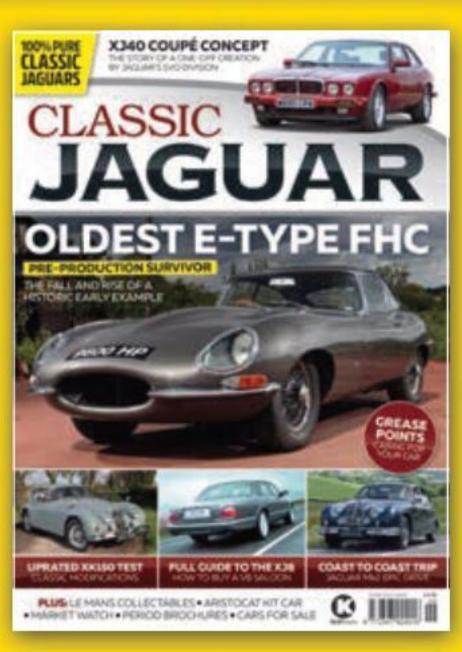
THE TF IN A NUTSHELL

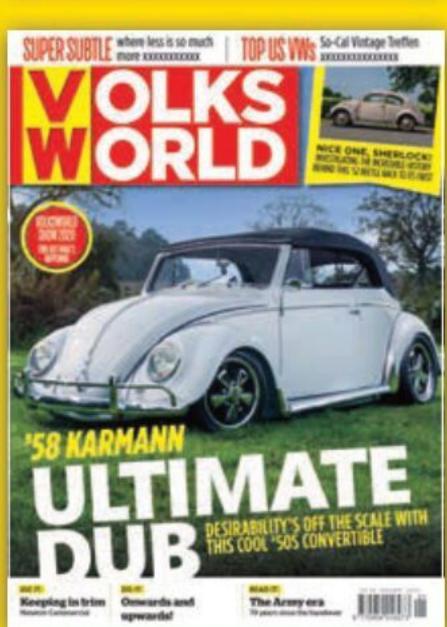
By the early 1950s the influence of the Austin-dominated management board was making its effect felt on MG. Having decided to build the Austin-Healey, the only change they would sanction for the T-Type was a refresh of the body styling. The TF was launched in September 1953 with a smoothed out body silhouette, but despite a raked radiator grille (which hid a separate radiator) and angled rear that retained the separate boot-mounted fuel tank, the aerodynamic improvement was limited as the separate running boards and wings were retained. In the cabin the main difference was the dashboard, which now featured octagonal instruments in a gracefully sloping panel taken from the Y-Type saloon.

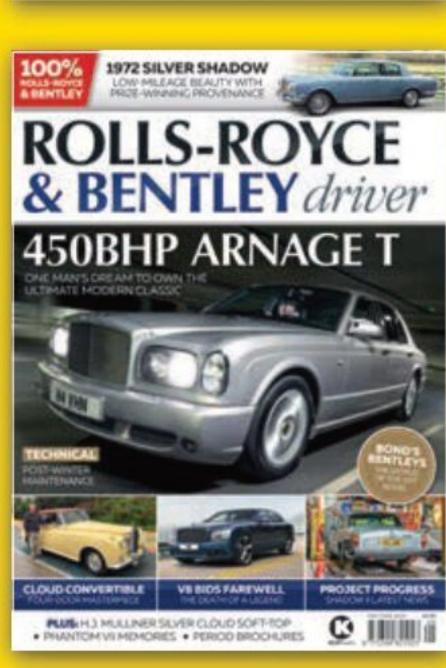
Under the bonnet was the same XPAG power unit now rated at 57bhp at 5500rpm. However, the car was not a sales

or media success. One immediate criticism was that the bonnet sides could not be opened as on previous T-Types, making maintenance room more restricted. However, scuttle shake was addressed by the addition of a vertical steel hoop mounted on the chassis frame supporting the dashboard/windscreen assembly. Maximum speed was given as 75mph, little better than pre-war T-Types. However, the ride, handling and comfort qualities were all a marked step up making the car an enjoyable vehicle to ride in.

To satisfy demands for greater performance, in mid 1954 the TF 1500 was introduced. Siamesing the cylinders allowed for an increased 72mm bore to give 1466cc, and the new XPEG unit produced 63bhp at 5500rpm with an equally marked increase in torque. Performance was increased correspondingly, with a maximum speed of 86mph. Production of the TF ceased in 1955 to make way for the more contemporary styled MGA.





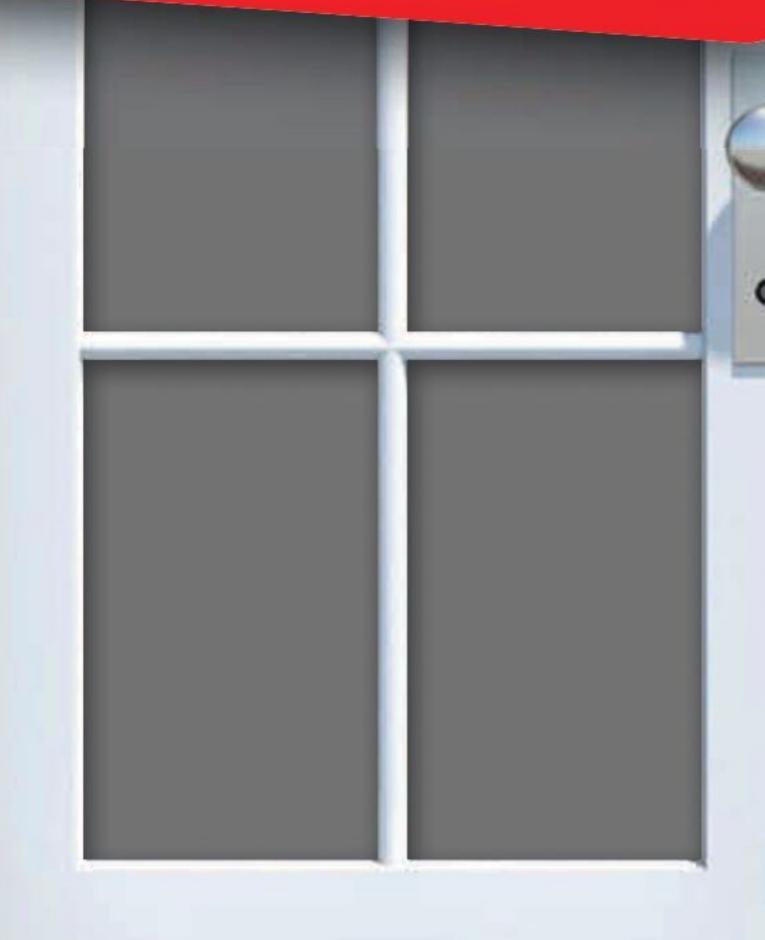


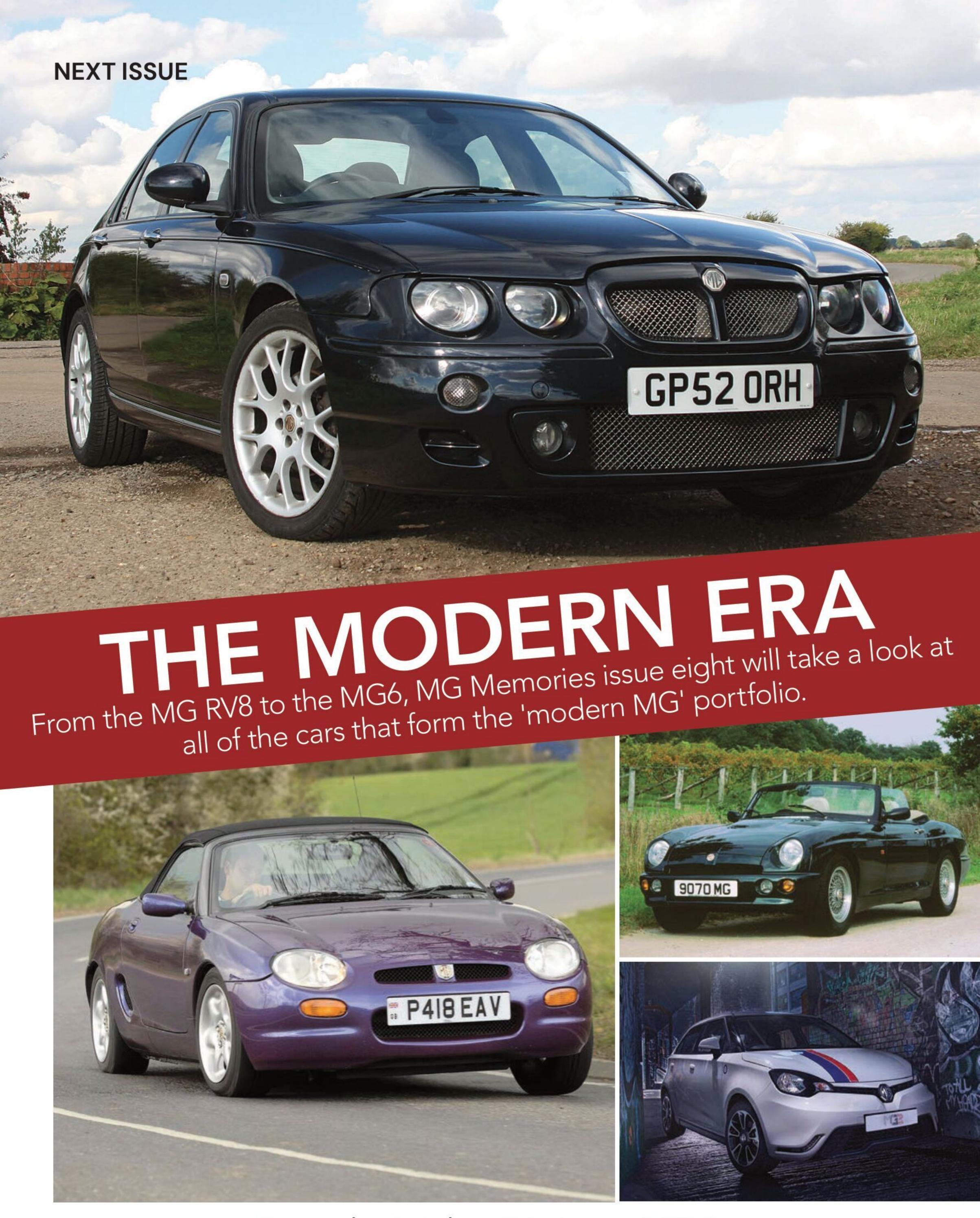




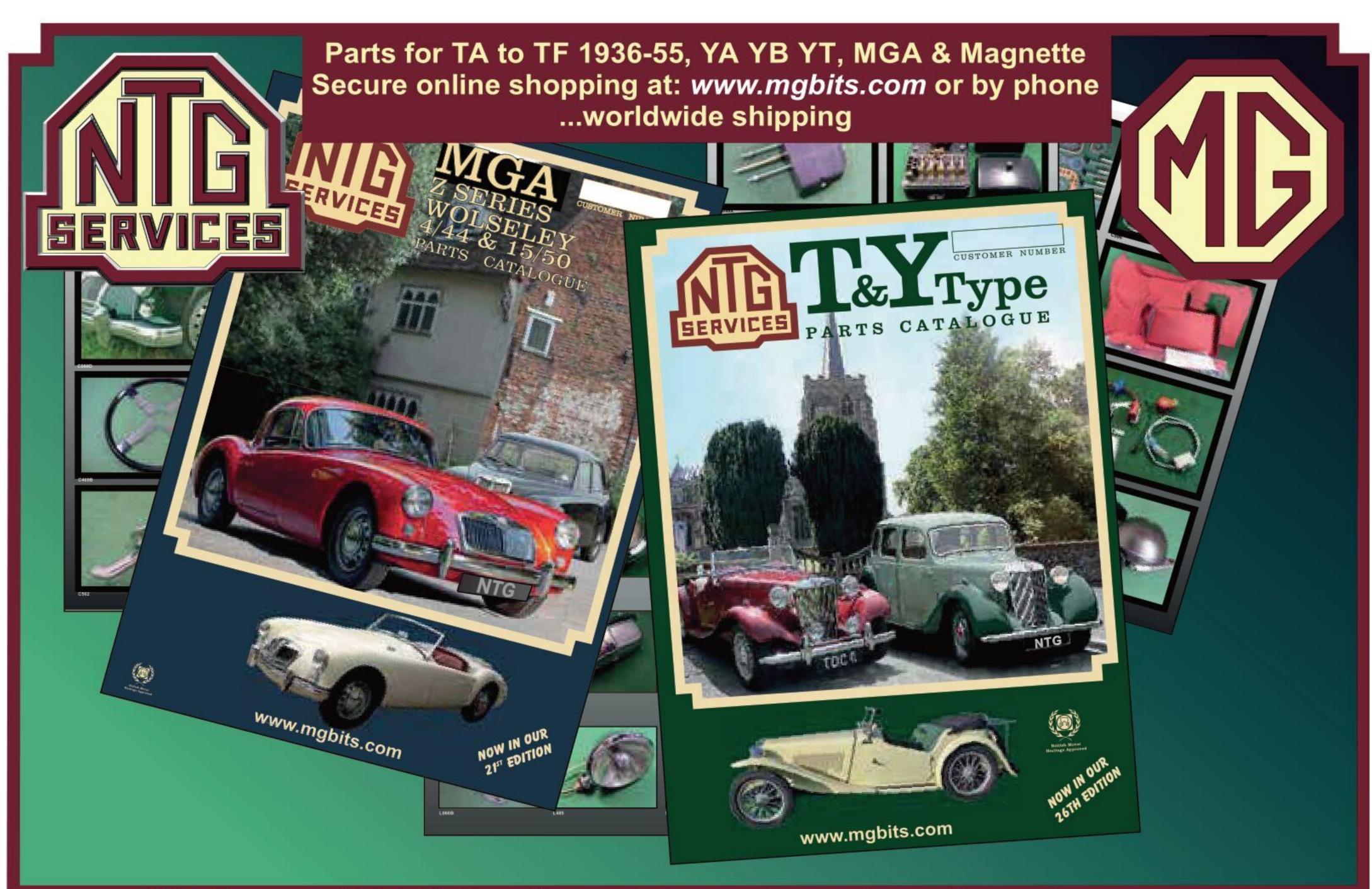
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MG MEMORIES: HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

A look at the cars that started the MG story

MG Memories issue seven travels back to the very start of the MG story to look at the cars that kicked things off for the manufacturer.

From the 14/40 built in the Oxford factory, Humble Beginnings takes a look some of the early cars that put MG on the road of car production. We also feature some limited number specials, such as a TA Airline and NE Magnette, and also talk to MG specialist Barry Walker.

Follow our model journey from the early 14/40 and Morris comparison, the 18/80, the J-Type, through to the M and P-Types, before rounding this issue off with the ultimate T-Type group test – A-F.

