



MIDGET & MG6

MG

ENTHUSIAST

THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING MG MAGAZINE

www.mgenthusiast.com May 2017 / No. 349



MGA RALLY LOOK Canadian Coupé's new life

INTERVIEW

**IAN POGSON
ON A LIFE
SPENT IN THE
BRITISH CAR
INDUSTRY**

Supercar Survivor

This very last XPower SV was completed after MG's crash



**WIN
£250**

FOR YOUR MG STORY - SEE PAGE 50 FOR DETAILS



> STAG-ENGINE BGT V8

> T-TYPE RACING SPECIAL

> CRASHED TF REPAIRED

MAY 2017 ISSUE NO. 349 £4.60
9 773956 330120



The last MG XPower SV

X POWER SV

MGE Editor Simon Goldsworthy knows Paul Lewis as an enthusiast, TR7/TR8 owner and member of the TR Drivers Club, so when Paul slip that he'd just bought an MG SV, we asked to have a look. Before long Paul had arranged permission for us to bring our cameras into the secretive venue of MIRA where he works, providing a superb opportunity to get both the story and some pictures. This is what he told



miles and a Triton Green convertible. If I clear all those at the prices I want, then I reckon the SV will have ended up costing me something like £5000.

Driving the SV has been something of a learning curve. It came as a surprise to discover that the big 4.6-litre Ford V8 doesn't deliver its power low down, but needs to be revved to really hustle. And even though it will accelerate from 0-60mph in about five seconds, it doesn't feel like the kind of raw power that pins you back in your seat. I think that is because it is a big car. If you are in a small and low sports car like a Sprite, that feels fast no matter what speed you are doing. Move up to something like a Bentley and it can have awesome power, acceleration and speed, but you don't feel it in any dramatic way behind the wheel. The SV falls somewhere between the two.

I wouldn't like to compare it to the Bentley in engineering terms, though. You can walk around the SV playing 'spot the part.' It has got MGF door handles, a ZT light switch, the heating controls are very ZR/ZS, and at the end of the day it is based on essentially a kit car chassis. However, they might have gone for cheap MGF door handles but they also fitted top of the range brakes. It is always nice to have the money spent on items that matter most, but overall it was never going to be worth £60-£80,000 when new. They aimed too high; if it had been £45,000, then maybe it might have been more successful.

Mind you, it does draw attention. I had to fill up with petrol the other day, and the whole garage emptied as the guys came out to take pictures on their phones. Talk about embarrassing! Fortunately my daughter is 12 and my son is 6, so they are both still young enough to think this is cool rather than slumping down in the passenger seat trying to be invisible.

As you know, the TR7 has always been my first love. My uncle was a car dealer, and when I was 18 he found me a cheap TR7. The first thing that happened when I drove it was that the window fell into the door. Then it overheated on the way home - this was real 1970s build quality! I still have a TR8, and on paper it is very similar to the SV in that they both have big V8 engines in a two-seater body with a

short wheelbase and wide track. Yet to look at they are so very different, the Triumph being a chiselled wedge and the SV having far more sensual curves. Interestingly though, I found out recently that Harris Mann, the designer of the TR7, also had some design input into the SV - he did some of the interior trim, and was telling me that he wanted to make the centre console piano black, whereas MG went for matt silver (it has been painted white on mine).

This SV was still effectively a new car when I got it, with just 600 miles on the clock. A low mileage can be a curse as well as a blessing, because it is very easy to worry so much about devaluing the car that you never drive it. That wasn't going to happen to me, though. If I'd wanted a car as an ornament, I could have bought one without an engine... I didn't buy the SV as an investment either, I bought it to enjoy. In 20 years time I will be 70, and I might as well have some fun in the meantime. When you look back on the cars you have owned, it is not the cars themselves that you remember so much as the things you did with them, the experiences you had.

So far I've only added about 250 miles to the SV's clock, and the very first drive was not that perfect experience we all like to imagine as we drive off into the sunset. The problem was that the SV is a very wide car, and I was taking it along country lanes and finding it hard to judge whether I was too close to the kerb or other traffic. Now I've got used to it and everything is fine, but that first drive was a bit of a worry.

There are other things that have taken a little while to get used to as well. The seat belts, for example - MG

I may be well into TR7s, but I have always liked MGs too and have had Maestros, Montegos and all the rest. When the SV first came out, I just loved it but figured I'd never be able to afford one. Then last year I was coming up to my 50th birthday and thought: 'You know what, I'm just going to do it!'

I knew where there was one for sale. This had been left over at XK Engineering (who painted and trimmed the cars for the factory) when MG-Rover went bust, without paint or an interior. It hadn't been registered at that point either, but it did have a chassis number and it came out of the system officially via the receivers. The new owner then got the original SV trim supplier, Anderson and Ryan of Canley, to trim the interior. He also had the car painted. The factory had been planning to paint it Cobalt Blue, but this guy chose Ford White instead, which makes it unique. And with the chassis number 150, it is also the very last SV and the very last one to have been built on their homologation ticket for 2004.

I knew the lad who did all this, but he didn't use the SV and when he needed to free up some cash to put into the restoration of his dad's Austin-Healey, he reluctantly put it for sale and gave me first refusal. How could I say no?

To finance it, I had to sell some of my cars. Many years ago I missed out when MGs were cheap because I had no storage, then had to watch as the prices spiralled. [The same thing is happening to MGFs and TFs today, and

I reckon anybody interested will have to buy quickly if they want to get a decent car at a bargain price.] Fortunately I was better placed when TR7 prices were on the floor, and I bought several of them some years ago, certain that they would have to rise eventually.

To fund the SV I sold three TR7s last year, I have buyers for two more and that still leaves three to sell - a very early white FHC with 17,000 miles, a Victory Edition lookalike with 29,000



BELOW: Interior was trimmed by the company that did the production cars, but this console was painted white.



BELOW: A 4.6-litre, quad cam, 32 valve Ford V8 producing 324Ps at 6000rpm and 302lb.ft at 4750rpm powers the SV.



MG SV

got rid of the air bags and fitted inertia harnesses instead, but you can only release the inertia on them if you have the key turned to a positive position. Put the harness on first and you can no longer reach the key to turn it – this feels a bit like parking an Isetta up against the garage wall and not being able to get out! You also feel as though you are sat quite low in the car, which makes it difficult to see the corners.

I will be adding plenty more miles this year, though. I go to the Spa Classic in Belgium every other year with a friend, Gary Law, who has a TR6. We started doing this several years ago when we decided we just wanted to do more with our cars. Of course, I would talk at work about our trips, and this year I asked a few colleagues if they fancied coming along. There are also a few friends from outside MIRA who have signed up to come with us – our two cars have grown into a group of 11 this May, and I will be the tour guide with the umbrella.

It is interesting that once word got around, we discovered just how many people working at MIRA have classic cars that we never even knew about. We did limit the numbers because we didn't want it to get out of hand – if everybody had come along, then MIRA



RIGHT: Gill vents were black, but Paul had them dipped in carbon fibre, which was one of the factory options anyway.

would have had to close down for the duration! There is a heavy MG and Triumph bias among the cars, though there is also a Morris Traveller, a Rover P4 and a TVR.

As well as promising to be great fun, this run to Spa has given some people the incentive they needed to get their projects on the road. Some of them haven't turned a wheel for many years, so we are planning a shakedown run of a 200 mile round



trip to Skegness in April. That will be the equivalent of our daily drive going to and from Spa – the first day we'll travel down to Dunkirk, and the second day on to the circuit. I have done it in one go before, but that leaves you very tired when you get there and doesn't leave any leeway for if you break down.

And no doubt there will be some dramas along the way, especially with so many cars being fresh out of restoration. Even those in regular use can still suffer the odd mishap, of course. Last year, for example, the throttle cable went on my TR8 going to Le Mans. I had to cobble a new one together by borrowing a spare one that Gary had for his TR6, extending this with the string out of my sleeping bag! But everyone on this trip knows each other and we'll muck in together. Between us we'll have a good mix of tools and spare parts, and we are all engineers. What could possibly go wrong? 🤖

What indeed? Well, we will be able to tell you because Paul and the guys have very kindly invited the editor to accompany them to Spa! As a result, we will be able to bring you the story on that in due course, as well as the background to one or two more MGs that will be on the adventure.

Our grateful thanks to HORIBA MIRA for their great generosity in making sections of their test areas available to us for the photoshoot.



The MG XPower SV was based on the Qvale Mangusta, although it needed so many changes before it was ready for production that the initial purchase of the model was highly questionable. The Mangusta was tested at MIRA, as were the SV and the SVR that finally emerged. (Pictures courtesy of HORIBA MIRA)

