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HIS and HERS



When Judith Chambers agreed to swap her TF135 for a better example, husband Steve persuaded her they should hold out for the more powerful TF160 version. Then he went and bought a 400Ps SVR...

Steve: In some ways, the story of getting these cars begins with a Vauxhall Zafira! It was admittedly a roundabout route between that and the SVR, but bear with us and we'll explain.

Judith: We've had all sorts in the garage over the years. I always quite liked the MGs, and had a Metro and a Montego in the past when they were just family

transport. I chose them over the Austin versions because they were a bit more sporty and looked nicer. They were always a good drive, and so I had fond memories of the marque.

Steve: And I've always been a big fan of British cars. In 1998 we bought a brand new Rover 218, which was great. That was the first brand new car we ever bought, and it was a lovely experience at

the local Rover garage – they put flowers in the car for Judith and made it all very special. We went all over Europe in that car, but unfortunately it just wasn't big enough for prams and pushchairs when the children arrived. When we had to move on to something more boring but more practical, we ended up getting a Vauxhall Zafira. Buying that was a far more businesslike transaction, nothing like the Rover had been.

Judith: I think that getting the Zafira was what made Steve want a fun car again, because the Vauxhall was just so boring to drive. He did get a Spitfire initially, but you could only fit one other person in that. So after a while we moved on to a Triumph Stag, which was a four seater and had room for the family.

Steve: I did love the sound that Stag V8 made, especially roaring up a hill.

I could have listened to it all day, and one time I did just that when we went to Prescott with the Stag Owners Club – we always try and immerse ourselves in the cars, so always get involved with the relevant clubs for the cars we own.

However, the downside of driving Triumphs is that they are products of British Leyland in the 1970s. Now don't get me wrong because I love them, but they were probably not the most reliable

of cars to start with, and 40 years on things are unlikely to have improved. There is always something to do on cars of that vintage, and I'm not mechanically minded, so it always caused me hassle to get anything sorted. That is why we decided to move on to something more modern rather than a classic.

Judith: I had fond memories of my earlier MGs anyway, and I'd always



wanted an F or a TF ever since they came out. We couldn't afford a new one though, but every time I saw one, I knew it was the car I wanted. Eventually they trickled down to the secondhand market, and when we sold the Stag, I then got a Trophy Blue TF, a 2003 car that we bought around 2010.

Steve: I think it cost a little under £2000 at the time, which was a real bargain but still considerably more than they

were valued at in the various guides. I remember pointing this out to the seller, but he suggested I try finding one in the same condition as his car for the money the guides were quoting. I thought that was a fair point!

We kept that TF for a couple of years, but then decided to go looking for the best car we could find on the market. Aside from wanting one that was pristine, because our first TF had been a 135, I wanted a 160 this time around...



Judith: ...and for me it had to be light blue because I loved the first one so much. I wasn't worried about the power, but Steve thought it would make it different to drive and that would make it more worthwhile to change to a new car. I wasn't willing to say goodbye to my first one though, so we sold that to our eldest son and it stayed in the family.

Steve: This would have been around May 2013. We had a fairly limited choice because of the quite specific combination of condition, spec and colour we wanted. We eventually had to pay top money for this one - around £5500 with the hardtop - but it ticked all of our boxes. As a bonus, it was the TF Spark, which was the last limited edition that MG-Rover produced.

Judith: I felt at home in the new car right away, and though I am not a fast



driver I must say that you do notice the extra power.

Steve: The mileage was around 30,000 when we bought it, and it is still only 35,000. We take it on some of the MGOC club runs, often making it part of a weekend away. We've been down to Devon and Cornwall, to the Cotswolds, Pembrokeshire in Wales, and up to Betws-y-Coed in north Wales this year. These events are really good because the routes are chosen by local people so you get to see all the best roads, and the instructions are very easy to follow.

And then I got bitten by the SV bug. I didn't even know these cars existed initially - I'd heard of XPower, but thought they were maybe TFs with a bigger engine, something like that. Once I knew about the MG Xpower SV cars, I instantly wanted one. As I said earlier, I just love British cars, and this was like nothing else I'd ever seen from the likes of Leyland, Rover and MG.

Judith: I thought he was mad! I do sometimes still wonder why he had to have one, but I am starting to see the appeal. I think Steve had been looking at them for a while without me really being aware, noting whenever one came



ABOVE: The TF may lack some of the SVR's power and glamour, but it is light, nimble - and has a soft top!



one I'd looked at, but the seller was a smashing guy and I always think that if you trust the person who is selling a car, then the car itself will generally be OK.

Judith: As soon as Steve set eyes on it, I saw his face and knew it was coming home with us. At least it was blue!

up for sale and stuff like that, but I had never even seen one until we went to look at this one for sale. Up to that point, I thought he had just been dreaming.

Steve: It was for sale quite locally, in Somerset but at the other end of the county. It was the first

Steve: Well, can you blame me? Not only was it an SVR, (the higher performance version of the original SV with a 5-litre engine custom-built for MG by Sean Hyland in Ontario with the power raised from 320 to 400Ps,) but it was also the very car that had been unveiled to the public at the British Motor Show in May 2004 to launch the SVR. Who could have resisted that? I took it for a test drive, agreed the sale, and then went back to collect it on what was a mucky February day. The car looked pristine when we picked it up, but was filthy by the time I'd driven it across Exmoor and got it home.

It only had 4500 miles on the clock because for the first five years it had been kept in the showroom by David Wood at Luffield Cars. It was only registered in 2009 so it could head up a procession at Windsor Castle - they wouldn't let any unregistered cars go near the Duke of Edinburgh. That's why it has an 09 plate, which can be a little confusing for people.

The mileage is now up to 6500. I take »



ABOVE: The blue theme is carried through to the interior of this SVR, it is a wide car so there is plenty of elbow room, but that also makes it tricky on some club runs.



SVR and TF



it out at least once every few weeks, and we have done a few runs with it. It is a wide old car for some of the narrow lanes though, so probably the TF is the better bet on that kind of club run. The SVR is much better on a quick road, though I don't push it too hard, partly because it is not my regular drive and so I don't know where its limits (and my own!) are, but also because I feel like the custodian rather than the owner and I don't want to damage it in any way. Of course, you do have to test out the acceleration now and again, but generally on the motorway when there is no danger of coming a cropper.



Steve: Sometimes you want to just go out for a drive and enjoy your music, but you end up having a conversation at every set of lights and at every stop. You certainly can't hide in an SVR. I know it is not Judith's type of car, but I did notice her taking pictures of it at the Sherborne show this year, so I think she is a little bit proud of it.

Judith: I don't like standing out too much, and had enough of that when Steve bought a bright yellow ZR160 with a loud exhaust. However, I am starting to get used to the attention that the SVR attracts. It was a bit of a shock initially, though. I remember on one of our first trips out, Steve filled it up with fuel and went off to pay. I was doing something on my phone, but when I finished and looked up, somebody was taking a photograph of me in the car. It was like being ambushed by the paparazzi!

Judith: Well, there is something special about it. We were put in the supercar section at Sherborne, and there were dozens of really special cars there, but the one that people stopped at most was our SVR. Probably that was because it was the one they didn't recognise, but it attracted all ages, from the children up to their grandparents.

Steve: We were sitting behind the cars and could have belonged to any of them,



ABOVE: The SV had a 4.6-litre Ford V8. This was enlarged to 5-litres and tuned from 320 to 400Ps for the SVR, though a supercharged SVS with similar power from the smaller engine was ready for 2005.

so we heard all the comments, both good and bad. One person thought it looked like it had been thrown together, another said it wasn't bad – for an MG! At the other end of the scale we got one family who were quite emotional, saying they'd never thought they would see one of these and asking to sit in it. I think it boxed above its weight largely because it is so rare when compared to a line-up of 20 Ferraris, all lovely cars but all red.

I should say that technically I have offered the SVR for sale, but I don't really think it will be going anywhere. I just thought tentatively that having been there, seen it and done it, I might like to try something different.

Judith: I don't believe a word of it, and can't see him parting with the SVR. In fact I'm pretty certain we'll have 'his' and 'hers' blue MGs in the garage for quite some time to come.



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