



# Meet Sabrina

by Mick Bath

**A**s a recent convert to MGs, and a relatively new member of the MGCC, I was delighted to see my YB featured in a previous Safety Fast!

I have been a petrol head from well before that term was coined for motoring enthusiasts. Virtually from birth I have had oil in my blood. Living in post war West London there were many fascinating car related places, AC, Lagonda and Maranello

concessionaires all with cycling distance, but I did not have to travel far to my first passion: Morgans. Our back yard backed onto F H Douglass and Son and was always full of engine and chassis bits. I wanted one! Of course as a teenager there was no way that I could ever afford even an antiquated three wheeler. My brother, Peter, and I cut our engineering teeth on these handmade machines. Dougie gave us little jobs to

do and even paid us pocket money. He explained such mysteries as fly-off hand brakes and sliding pillar front suspensions. Peter carried on after he left school and became an experienced motor mechanic at Nagles Garage in Kew. I joined the Royal Air Force as an Aircraft Apprentice, and went on to work on such diverse types as Comets, Canberras and Vulcans.

Of course, like so many RAF types, I have





had many interesting hobby cars. From a 1948 Triumph 2000 with a three speed gear change on the right-hand side of steering column, Peugeot 203 with upside down column gear lever through to the Citroen DS, goddess of weird and wonderful. All these cars have different characteristics and a soul, not like many of the bland Euro boxes of today.

Meet Sabrina, my current mistress, whoops, motorcar! We met on a blind date but from the first moment we connected. She spoke to me. The last four digits showing on her odometer were exactly the same as my RAF identity number! Old before her time, a 1950s war baby dressed in her mother's 1930s street wear. A timeless charm, some might think she is frigid because she does not have a heater, but the servoless drum brakes are guaranteed to get you hot under the collar at least once every trip. No seat belts, no air bags, just that feeling of insecurity so you must give her your full attention. She answers with rattles, knocks and squeaks just to let you know she is listening.

She will show you up in front of friends, like the time I tried to demonstrate her self-jacking system. Perfect manners before, perfect afterwards but no amount of coaxing could get her to curtsy to an

audience.

Does not like the rain, not keen on the dark, happiest when tucked up with a good page turning workshop manual in her carpeted car house. Craves constant attention, check oil and coolant before and during every journey. A handful of grease nipples that demand attention every 1,000 miles. Leaves an oily signature on the ground wherever she has been; never discreet.

So who is Sabrina? She is a 1952 MG YB Saloon. 1250 cc, 0-60 in a time to eat lunch; Top Speed, enough to cause tail backs on motorways. One of a small, by modern standards, production run of 1301 YBs built between 1951 and 1953. An ugly baby, unloved at birth. Born in Abingdon on Thursday August 28 1952 but only registered on October 6 1952. Why the gap? In the 1950s few people wanted a separate chassis with a body bolted on to it when you could buy for less money a snazzy all in one body and frame like a Morris Minor. Only a few discerning professionals that could not aspire to a Bentley VI could have the look for half the price. Lawyers, doctors and race horse trainers did buy, but there was no big queue of customers. There was always Rover and Humber to show you the modern way.

Her little sister was a very different

character. They shared the same undergarments and even the beating heart was from the same XPAG gene pool, but she was a little wanton, who preferred to go topless. Her name was TD, and the boys could not get enough and loved her from the cradle.

Sabrina is not a car; she is a 'motorcar'. She belongs to an age long gone, but not forgotten. Do I own her? Not really, my name is on the registration documents at DVLA, so she admits to me being her current keeper, but she is a fickle mistress, always looking for a better offer.

I still have not got my Morgan, but I did get the side opening bonnet with the patriotic Union Flags so I suppose in a way she is telling me to look no further.

Car was registered as YB 0686, XPAG SC2 17579. I do not know if current registration number, VEV 228, is original or if she has had a name change for personal reasons. I do not know much about her history, so perhaps some other club members could fill some gaps in for me?

Why Sabrina? Bewitched possibly, but gentlemen of a certain age might recall a certain well-endowed British actress of that name in the 1950s. Her name was Norma Sykes. Like the original, my Sabrina has beautiful eyes, but just look at those hooters!

