

Sabrina – the seductress!

Words and photos by Mick Bath



I have owned BMWs, bikes and cars, for over thirty years and have been in the BMW Car Club for over a quarter of a century.

As an aircraft engineer, I appreciate the technology and build quality of these Bavarian machines. They are not perfect, but you can forgive over engineered front wings on E23s, corroded steering links on E36s and poor ball joints on E46s. Just look at the opposition to see the design flaws that they manufacture and foist on Joe Public. BMW badge cars are still in that select group that favour rear wheel drive.

Over the years, 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 the bland Euro boxes of today.

Meet Sabrina, my current mistress, whoops, motorcar! Old before her time, a 1950s war baby dressed in her mother's 1930s clothing. 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. No wireless, she needs you to talk to her all the time. She answers with rattles, knocks and squeals just to let you know she is listening. Reliable, of course not, just like any really interesting female she likes to keep you guessing with a mind of her own. Spirits of previous keepers whisper in your ear to remind you that you are not the first.

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 a squeeze every 1000 miles. Leaves a signature on the ground wherever she has been, never discreet.

So who is Sabrina? She is a 1952 MG YB Saloon. 1250cc, 0-60 – 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. 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 owners did buy, but there was no big queue of customers. There was always Rover and Humber to show you the modern way.

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, but she is a fickle mistress, always looking for a better offer.

Why Sabrina? Bewitched possibly, but gentlemen of a certain age might recall a certain well-endowed actress/ model of that name in the 1950s. My Sabrina has beautiful eyes, but just look at those hooters!



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 workshop

