

Stories to tell

One of these cars fulfilled a boyhood dream, the other was an impulse buy triggered by its amazing history. Can you guess which is which?

STORY BY SIMON GOLDSWORTHY

I need to start this feature with a word of thanks to Chris Shurlock, whose MGF we featured back in the May 2015 issue and who suggested to Peter Ganczakowski (usually shortened to Peter G) that he should get in touch with us regarding his own MGs. And I am very glad that Peter took this advice, because not only is his pairing of a TC and a Y-Type interesting for where the two models sit in MG's production timeline, they are also two very lovely cars.

Of the two, it is the TC that Peter actively sought out, whereas the YA was much more of an impulse buy. As usual though, before we get on to the

cars in question, I am keen to get an idea of Peter's automotive background. After all, some of the owners we interview have MG blood running through their veins and others stumble across the marque rather by accident.

As it turns out, Peter falls somewhere between these two camps – on the one hand he does have some history with MGs, but on the other hand his passion has tended to be for sports cars in general rather than exclusively devoted to the cars from Abingdon. So, for example, he can count a Fiat X1/9 and a Daimler Dart on his list of previous cars, along with a chrome bumper BGT and a rubber bumper MGB Roadster. However,

despite his roving eye, it is the MG link which goes back the furthest.

'I guess I was about 14 years old in the early 1970s when my eldest sister's boyfriend Nigel, who I recall was an engineering undergraduate at the time, had restored a well used T-Type of 1940s vintage,' Peter said. 'He and my sister Krystyna often enjoyed summer outings in the car from our family home in Bedford. On one such day, Nigel kindly offered me a ride and I willingly accepted. This was the first occasion I'd ever ridden in an MG, and it made a lasting impression on me – so much so that I always hoped one day to own one.'

As we shall see that dream took



nearly 50 years to come true, but we'll start with the MGBs. The BGT was Peter's second ever car, bought when he started work after leaving university and replacing a Russet Brown Morris 1300. He got the BGT simply because it was an affordable sports car – like any young blade the allure of a sports car was strong, and in those days insurance wasn't the huge cost that it is for younger drivers today.

'I ran that BGT for five or six years as my only car,' he told me, 'before finally selling it and moving on. A while later I bought another B, but this time a Roadster. That one was, like my Morris 1300 had been, a Russet Brown car. It came with the rubber bumpers and rather unattractive orange and brown striped cloth upholstery seats. I did a lot of work to that car and planned on changing the colour, but though things never progressed that far, I did change the interior to leather, fit new carpets and carry out whole lot more improvements. That became a very nice car, and I kept it several years.'

Though Peter has maintained his interest in sports cars and always kept a soft spot for MGs, he has



never owned a pre-war car. The TC is of course a post-war vehicle, but it retains enough of the TA and TB DNA to count as basically a pre-war design. As such, it had always been floating about on Peter's wish list of cars. However, for 20 years it was the Daimler Dart that provided his classic driving pleasure. The fibreglass

Daimler combined his love of old school styling and engineering with a real punch from the 2.5-litre V8 engine. 'With older cars everything is straightforward, but once you get onto modern cars I wouldn't know where to start with all the electronics,' he confided. 'But being essentially a 1960s car, the Dart was from an era »

MAIN IMAGE: Peter's two MGs may be relatively close in age, but they are very different animals to own and to drive.





when you could still just jump in and drive without having to acclimatise yourself too much before each journey. I sold it just before I retired not because it needed any work, but because I was finding that parts were getting hard to source for such a rare car. And besides, I fancied a change and always had it in mind to buy that T-Type MG of the 1940s – as well as my boyhood memories of Nigel's car, my other interest is in open cockpit

flying and historic aviation in general, and a pre-war MG is of course the archetypal pilot's car!

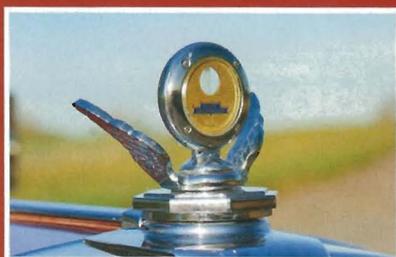
With a gap in the garage and money to spend on a retirement toy, Peter went to an H&H auction at his local Duxford venue with a view to buying a T-Type. He chose the right time and place because there were no fewer than six examples on offer in this particular sale – two TAs, three TCs and a TF. Of those, there were two TCs

that piqued his interest.

A black one had some very interesting provenance in that it had once belonged to Goldie Gardner, but Peter was a little disappointed with the condition when he saw it. 'There was clearly still some work that needed doing,' he explained. 'The wings were fibreglass rather than steel for example, and I wasn't keen on the fact that modern shock absorbers had been fitted. It certainly hadn't been



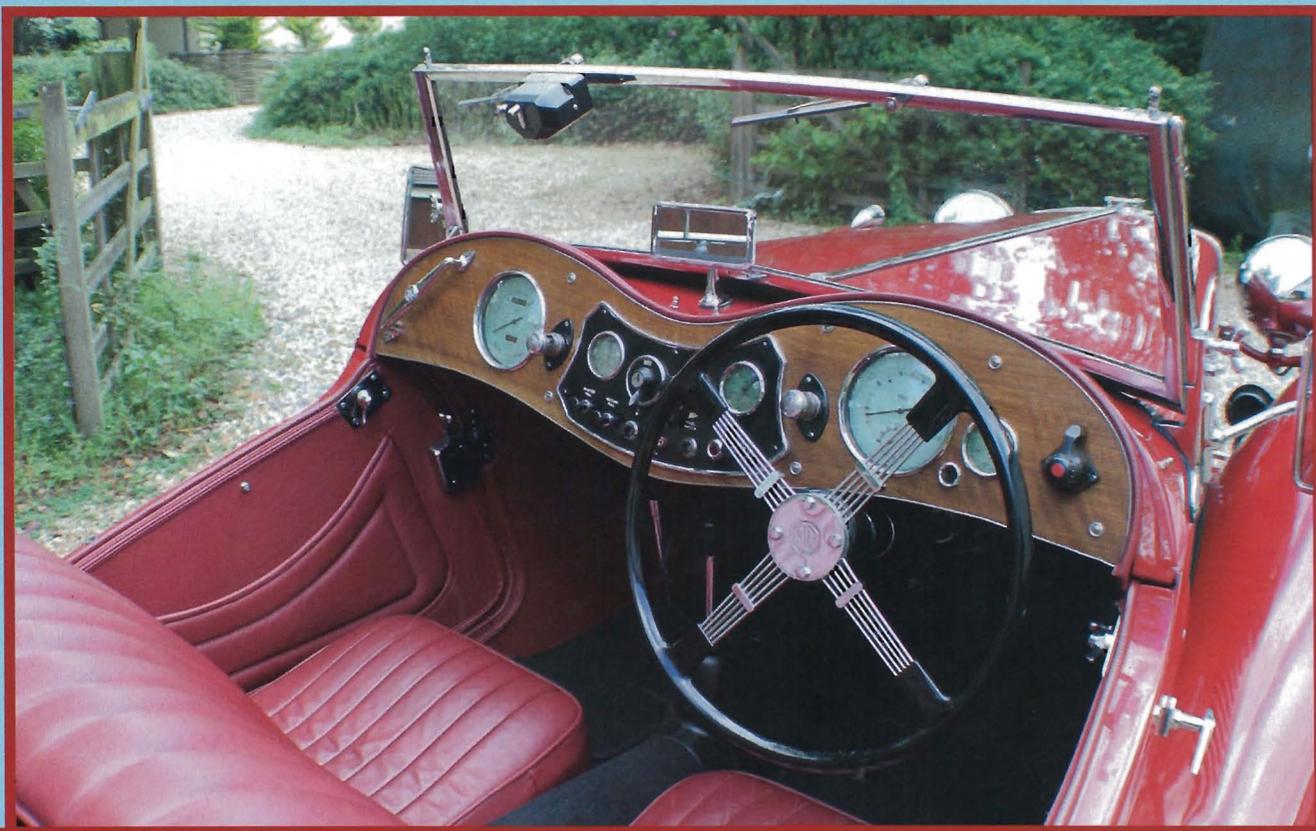
Above: No self-respecting sports car could have fewer than two carbs.



Above: This temperature gauge sits between wings on the radiator cap.



Above: The restoration was obviously carried out to a high standard, with great attention paid to the detailing. No wonder Peter was drawn to this car at auction.



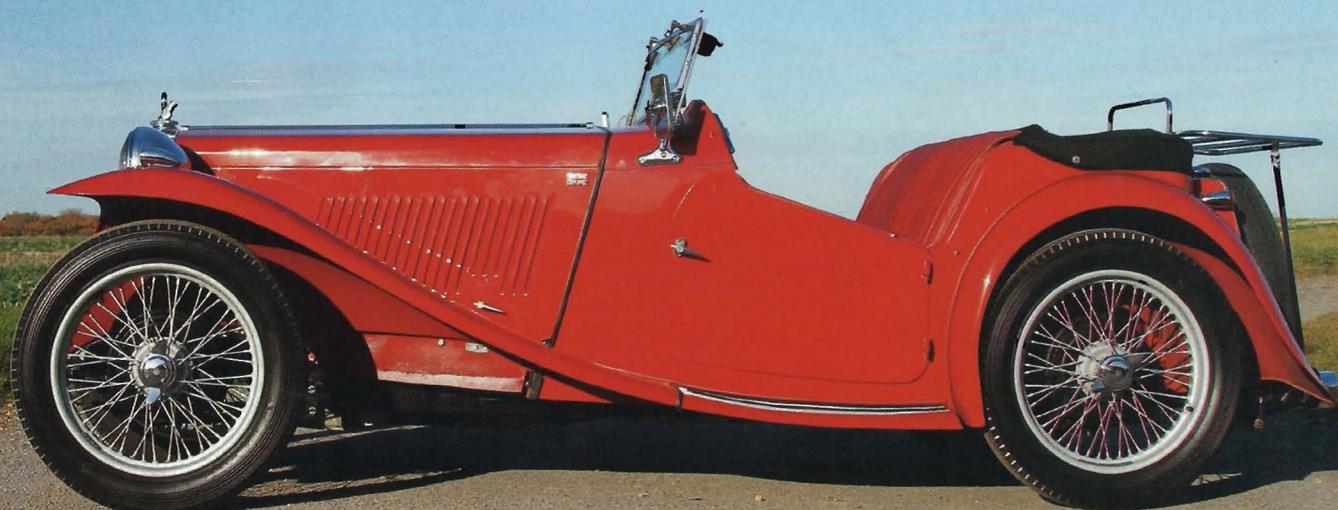
ABOVE: As you would expect, the TC is a much more elemental car to drive than the more sedate and subdued YA, but that only adds to Peter's driving enjoyment.

restored in sympathy with its period, so despite the interesting provenance, I graduated to the red one instead. Although this one had been restored and fitted with a replacement (but original type) 1250cc XPAG engine, it was very clean and well presented.'

GR 8671 was first registered on 18th October 1946, making it an early TC. Unfortunately it didn't come with much paperwork, certainly nothing from before 1972. Peter has been told there have been six owners since it

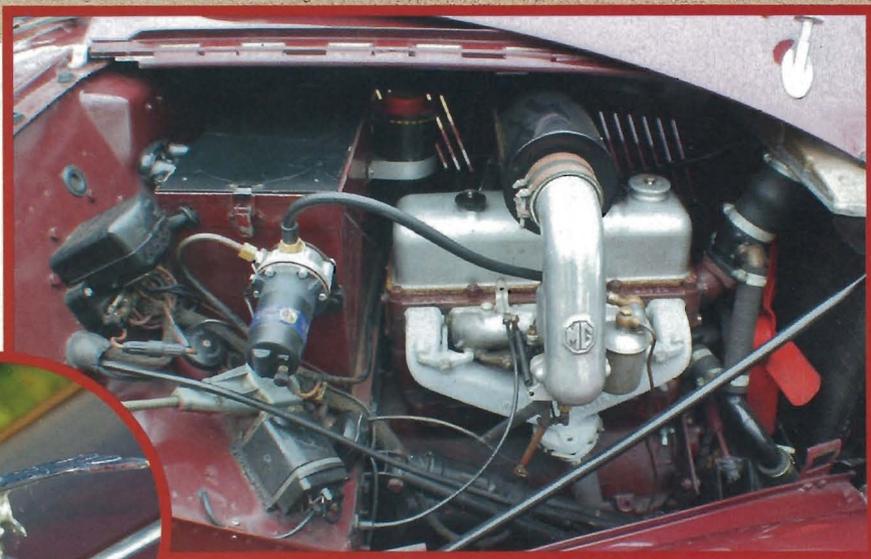
was built, but the first 32 years of its life are something of a mystery. Of its later life, the paper trail shows that a restoration was started in 1997, but that the owner died and this task wasn't completed until 2014 by the next owner. He sold it right away, and it was the following owner who entered it in the 2016 auction at Duxford.

'The first drive was very different to anything I had experienced before,' Peter related. 'People do say that these cars drive like a wheelbarrow, »





ABOVE AND RIGHT: The beautiful proportions of the Y-Type are best seen in profile. Power came courtesy of a 1250cc XPAG engine, but with a single carb whereas the T-Type had two.



« but that is a bit harsh! Compared to the Daimler it is well down on power, but it is still great fun to drive. It takes a little getting used to as the pedals are positioned very closely together, but it isn't as though I've had to adapt to a centre throttle pedal or anything like that.

I was keen to get a TC rather than a TA or TB as it did incorporate some improvements to the suspension and brakes, added synchromesh to the gearbox and enjoys a little more width to the body. I wasn't interested in performance as I have a modern car – a Mercedes SL350 – for that, but I've always thought the TC is one of the prettiest MG cars ever built.

So why, I wondered, did Peter then go and buy a Y-Type? After all, you could liken that to a TD with a roof! It turns out that the YA was something of an impulse buy last year. What

happened was that H&H were holding another of their Duxford auctions, and since it was only just down the road from Peter, he decided to pop along. Just for a look of course, not to buy anything, but he made the classic mistake of registering to bid. As a result, when his friend pointed out a rather interesting 1950 Y-Type for sale just 20 minutes before it was due to pass the rostrum, there were no administrative details to stop Peter from wagging a finger.

'In my defence, the YA came with a very unusual pedigree, having done just 23,070 miles from new,' he said, 'and the provenance on this one goes right back to when it was new. It was bought by a GP in the Lake District, and at that time you had to sign up to an agreement when buying a new car which meant you could not sell it for three years. Most cars at this time were going for export and there was a long waiting list for anything in the UK, so this restriction was intended to stop people from buying a scarce car and



ABOVE AND RIGHT: When the dog wants to come along, then the Y-Type is the natural choice; the mileometer reading of just 23,184 is genuine, and still on its first go round the clock; the Y-Type's cabin was extremely well appointed for a car this size.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Lighting upgrades include discreet flashing indicators to supplement the trafficators, wired up to operate in tandem from the switch mounted on the steering wheel.



simply selling it on for a profit.'

However, the story is that the GP who bought Peter's MG took a job abroad just one year later. He kept the MG in storage, no doubt expecting to return to the UK in the near future. However, plans clearly changed and in the event it was 22 years before he returned! In all that time the poor old MG had been stored, neglected and barely driven. As if to rub salt into the wound, when the doctor did eventually return to the UK, he sold the car shortly afterwards.

Even then it was not destined for regular use, but went instead into a private collection in Windermere. It didn't go back on the road until 1993, by which time it still only had 14,000 miles on the clock. It was then sold to a chap called Jack Connell, and in 2005 it passed to his son. He gave it

a bare metal respray in its original shade of Pallendine Red, but it was sold by the family at auction last year still with barely 23,000 miles recorded.

'I bid for it on largely because of the amazing story behind it and the car's excellent condition at the sale,' admits Peter. 'Basically I was lucky and got it at the reserve price, which I think was pretty good. If a bidding war had started, then I would probably have bowed out. I don't know why people weren't fighting over it, but maybe October was not the ideal time of year to sell a car like this.'

This is not to say that Peter stole the Y-Type. He has since had it valued at £18,000, but although he only handed over £15,000 at Duxford, he has since spent a further £1500 on some suspension work, a tune-up and a service, along with one or two other

little bits. Doing those sums means that although Peter had in the back of his mind that it would be something of an investment (and it may yet show a decent return on his outlay), it is just as well that he also bought it simply because he liked it.

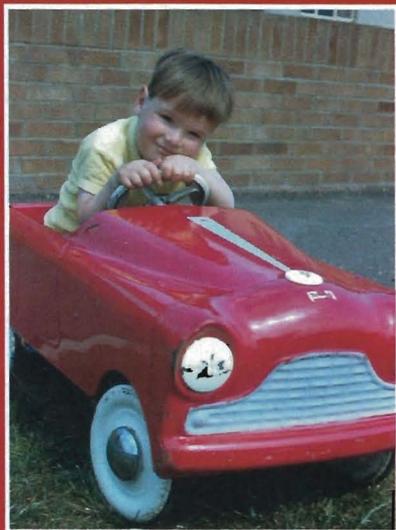
Talking of prices, Peter is equally candid about the TC, saying: 'The hammer price was around £25,000 for that, so more like £28,000 once you factor in commission, taxes and the like. I then spent another £2000 or so with Brown and Gammons, so clearly the TC is not going to make me any money in the short term either. However, that is irrelevant because I never intended to turn it over for a profit, I wanted to have some fun.'

Inevitably I have to ask how the two cars compare, and I'm surprised when Peter says that of the two, the YA feels »

BELOW: The YA came with 16in steel wheels. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but we think they better suited the styling than the later YB's 15in rims and deeper wing profiles.



OTHER VEHICLES



Above: Peter's first car looks like it was influenced by Ford's Zephyr; the BGT had to work hard for a living as an only car; Russet Brown MGB also stayed for several years; Peter counts a Fiat X1/9 and Daimler Dart among his past sports cars.

« more sprightly. Then again, the engine on that is low mileage and untouched, and clearly that is more than enough to compensate for the lack of a second carburettor. However, 'sprightly' is not the same as 'sporty!'

'Clearly the TC feels more sporty to drive, though in truth its performance is rather modest in comparison to my Daimler Dart,' says Peter. 'The Y-Type is as you would expect a saloon to be – comfortable and nicely appointed. It is both smoother and quieter than the TC to drive, partly because of the low mileage no doubt, though the extra sound insulation on a saloon must also make a difference. Independent front suspension on the YA also helps with the ride – the TC is lighter and more harshly sprung, so on a rough road you do get thrown about more. The Y-Type does seem to pull better too even

though it is a heavier car, but maybe that just means I need to do a little fettling on the TC engine!'

While I am asking the inevitable questions, I also enquire how, with two such lovely cars in the garage, Peter decides which one to take to club meetings and the like?

'It is interesting, because I have never really been one to parade my cars,' he replies, 'I prefer working on them and driving them. But since I retired two years ago I've had more time, and I now quite enjoy the social aspect of club meets. The choice of car really depends on the weather and the time of year – on a nice summer day I will take the TC with the top down, but in more inclement weather the Y-Type is the more likely option. The Y-Type has the added advantage that I can take our Border Collie pup safely in the

back with me as well!'

And finally I ask Peter whether he is planning to go to the next H&H auction, just to have a look of course!

'I'd better not,' he laughs. 'I certainly couldn't acquire any more vehicles. If I had to sell one of them to make some room, I'd probably sell the Y-Type. The provenance and the story behind it are great, but it is largely the look of a car that appeals to me – I really want an open sports car and I've always hankered after a classic MG roadster. However, I now feel very privileged to be the custodian of two classic period MGs. For in simple terms I regard myself as no more than a custodian. One day they will pass to other enthusiasts who will no doubt derive as much pleasure from them as I have to date. That's the great thing about this passion that we all share!'

