

WHEN I FIRST saw KLK 651, it was almost love at first sight. I had been bitten by the restoration bug, and the twenty-five-year-old derelict MG saloon caught my eye.

Resolved at least to make an offer for the old saloon, I looked around the quiet Oxfordshire cul-de-sac and approached the closest house. I knocked at the door, and stuttered apologetically to the tubby woman that answered, "The MG — is it for sale?"

"Ask the Garcias," was the reply, "next door."

Al Garcia, a USAF sergeant from Upper Heyford, laughed and grabbed my arm, "You wanna buy that? Come in."

Al started at fifty pounds; I started at five. Agreeing on £12.50, we shook hands, and he threw me the keys. "You're nuts," he said. "It's rotten and it won't drive." With a sinking feeling I thanked him and went out to my new car.

Inside was a shambles of sodden carpets, decaying leather and a soggy Daily Express headlining something about Kennedy and Cuban missiles. Tins of paints, boxes of spares, cigarette ends and an unbelievable odometer reading of 14,025 miles completed the sad picture. Remarkably the tyres were still inflated, and the front wheels moved the right way when the steering was turned so, beckoning a friend in a Mk 1 Consul to back up, I attached a tow rope.

We started down the road. The car steered. The brakes felt they had pressure, and with the windows open the car began to smell a whole lot better. But the first junction was a catastrophe as, slowing from only ten miles an hour, the brakes just did not work.

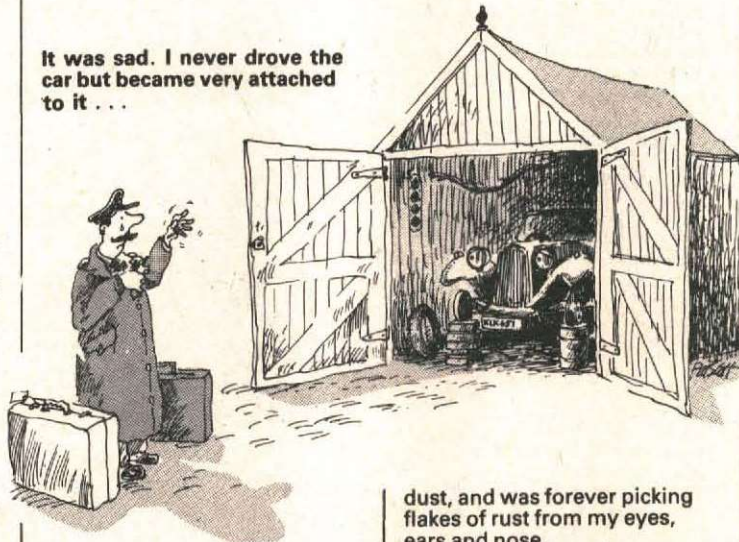
I hit the substantial bumper of the Consul with a crash and

Love at first sight

Ever started a restoration project?

Former RAF man, Mike Forrest, tells the pitiful tale of his tragic love affair with a thirty year old MGB Y type . . .

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leapt out. My pride and joy had a dent in the otherwise unmarked offside front wing. The massive and irreplaceable chocolate wing was damaged, and I had only gone thirty yards. I saw Al Garcia shake his head and walk into the house.

For six months it took up my weekends, evenings, waking thoughts and sleeping nightmares. The condition of the body was horrific. Every one of the wing and running board bolts had to be cut off, and as I stripped the car apart I cut my hands and arms, choked on rust

dust, and was forever picking flakes of rust from my eyes, ears and nose.

My wife thought I was loony as two hours in the garage made me look as if I had just come off the night-shift at Mountain Ash colliery. If there was an award for 'Masochist Of The Year' I would have won it for 1974.

But after a while things began to change. I wasn't so dirty, bleeding or bad-tempered — after countless hours the Y-type was finally rust free.

I discovered early in my ownership that the 1500cc, twin carb engine, together with the short gearstick wasn't quite right. My 'Noddy' guide to the

MG YA — a few pictures from an old magazine — said it should have a 1250cc, single carb unit with a great long gear lever as bent as a South American dictator.

The mystery was soon solved after I had joined the MG Owners Club and found my Y-type had an MGA engine and gearbox combination. I promptly sold this lot for £35. Big profits in the restoration business.

Slowly the body became whole. With welded doors, sills and boot floor the structure once again took shape, and eventually I was able to hang the doors and put in new floor boards.

At this stage I was ready to jack her up and start on the brakes and suspension, when disaster struck. As a serving member of the RAF, I suffered the thing I feared most: an immediate posting. In only six days I had to be 200 miles away — a household to move, car forgotten.

An enthusiastic colleague offered garage space for the MG, so we pushed the car around on the Sunday before I was due to leave.

I knew at that time I wouldn't finish the project I'd started only a few months before. A year later, almost predictably, I received a cheque from him for, would you believe it, £35.

It was sad. I never drove that car but became very attached to it. I wonder if the new owner ever finished it — or did he get posted too and had to pass it on to someone else?

● If you've had any similar experiences with your car, drop us a line and we'll pay £20 for any printed.

The title **The Guinness Book of Car Facts and Feats** sums up what this book is about. Any information you wish to know about motoring in general and all aspects of motor sport are in it.

With over 300 black and white and colour illustrations, the book is a fascinating mine of information for everyone — car owner or motor sport enthusiast. — J.P.

Guinness Superlatives Ltd., 2 Cecil Court, London Road, Enfield, Middx. Price: £6.95.

Collector's Cars by Lee Culpepper is a book to whet the appetite of anyone interested in cars from 1920 to the mid-'60s.

The pages are well laid out with more than 250 full-colour illustrations and manufacturers insignias.

BOOK SHELF

The author has listed many models I didn't even know existed, but I felt that he has only just scratched the surface with information about them. No sooner had I become interested in a car than it was over and went on to another one — with the same result.

On the whole it is an entertaining and informative book which leaves you wanting to find out a lot more — perhaps he's planning a follow-up? — G.R.

Octopus Books Ltd., 59 Grosvenor St, London W1X 9DA. Price: £5.95

With the current obsession for collecting anything old, particularly cars and things associated with them, it's no surprise to learn that diecast models have become collectors' items.

G. M. K. Thompson has been collecting these for a number of years (his collection fills a whole room in his house), and he has used this experience to write **British Diecasts — A Collector's Guide to Toy Cars, Vans and Trucks**.

Mainly a guide to Dinky, Spot-on, Corgi and Lesney Yesteryear models, giving comments on their relative



values (although there's no actual price guide), the book also includes a step-by-step sequence to show how to renovate models which are past their best. — J.P.
Haynes Publishing Group, Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset. Price: £8.50.