

Auction records under attack

No sign of economic gloom as prices surge ahead for some very rare and superbly turned out MGs



Very rare and first-class YT Tourer deservedly set a new record for the model at auction.

The credit crunch may be biting in the budget end of the classic car market, but when it comes to real rarities buyers are still prepared to pay record money for the right cars. This was amply demonstrated by a very strong line-up of MGs at Brightwells' recent auction.

One was a YT tourer. These unassuming four-seat cars are real rarities, but worthy ones too. The styling by Gerald Palmer was effectively an adaptation of the Morris 8, with frontal and rear treatments more in line with MG styling.

With rack-and-pinion steering and the 54bhp version of the XPAG 1250cc engine as installed in the TD, it was capable of 70mph and considered spritely enough for MG ad flacks to claim '*virile acceleration, remarkable road manners, instant response to controls and superb braking.*'

Just 175 YT tourers are known to survive worldwide and to give a further idea of rarity I've recorded only four other YT tourers selling at auction since 1995. The right-hand-drive 1949 car that came up at Brightwells' Leominster, Herefordshire sale on July 2 had been found abandoned in a garden in Samfya, Zambia in 1977 by a British diplomat. The car was shipped back to England and changed hands a couple of times before being acquired by Y-type aficionado Richard Emery who, from 1997 to 2002, treated the car to a first-class restoration costing in excess of £20,000.

Five years later the car is still in outstanding condition and deservedly made £17,600, which by my reckoning is a YT

tourer auction record by a country mile; in fact most price guides top out at around £15,000 for YTs and the next highest price I've recorded was £12,000 in 2003.

By comparison with the YT, the pre-war J2 Midget might be considered fairly common considering 2083 were built from 1932 to 1934. Yet for many, this lithe and lean two-seater, which with its twin-carb 847cc 36bhp engine could reach 65mph, is a favourite among the pre-war Midgets. Certainly it was a gem to drive, and a jewel to behold, as at £199 in 1934 – twice the price of a Morris Minor – it should have been.

The 1934 car at Brightwells was treated to a total nut-and-bolt restoration in the mid-1990s and is still in show condition. Pleasingly, it still retains its original engine and number plate (JA 4275). On the day it made an above estimate £24,200 to set a new auction record. Indeed, the closest any other J2 road car has come at auction is £20,700 in 2003, so again this is a significant result that suggests the right cars are keeping abreast of inflation.

Rarer still than the J2 is the C-type Midget, which grew out of George Eyston's successful 1930 750cc 24-hour record attempt at Monthèry in France. Amazingly, Eyston regularly topped 100mph in his supercharged car.

Just 44 C-types were made; better known as Monthèry Midgets they went on to score a string of competition successes. They were exotic machines and sold

for £295 in unblown form and £345 with a Powerplus supercharger.

In 2002 a restored supercharged C-type Monthèry Midget sold at a UK auction for £82,000. However, the car at Brightwells was not the genuine article but a replica – or perhaps re-creation is a better word – built up in the mid-1990s by renowned competition specialist Peter Gregory on a 1931 D-type chassis. It really looks the part though with a perfect replica of the C-type's boat-tail body complete with undertrays and aero screens. Power is provided by a supercharged version of the D-type 847cc engine. It made a deserving £33,000, but in terms of market movement it's hard to assess as in my records there are no similar C-type re-creations to compare it with.

There was one other significant result when a 1954 TF 1250 made £21,175, which is only £250 shy of the highest price I've recorded for a TF 1250 at auction. Mind you, this was an exceptional car. Bought for £17,800 in fully restored condition in 1997 the owner subsequently decided the car could be improved upon and embarked on a second full rebuild. Since then the car has never lacked the slightest attention and this year it beat no fewer than 100 other cars to win *Best in Show* in a local transport festival.

The TF may not have set a record, but it reinforces the same market message made by the other cars I've mentioned. Credit crunch or not, further up the market where buying opportunities are rarer there is no shortage of ready and discerning buyers willing to pay good money for the right cars.



J2 also set a new auction record for its model type.



Two-time restored TF 1250 was just £250 shy of a record.



Gorgeous C-Type recreation sold for a deserving £33,000.

AUCTION CALENDAR

Readers are advised to confirm dates, venues and viewing arrangements.

- Aug 9:** Coys, The Nürburgring, Germany. Tel: 020 8614 7888. www.coys.co.uk
- Aug 15:** Bonhams & Butterfields, Quail Lodge, Carmel California, USA. Tel: 001 415 391 4000. www.bonhams.com
- Aug 15 & 16:** RM, Portola Plaza, Monterey, California, USA. Tel: 001 519 352 4575. www.rmauctions.com
- Aug 16 & 17:** Gooding & Co, Pebble Beach Equestrian Center, Pebble Beach, California, USA. Tel: 001 310 899 1960. www.goodingco.com
- Aug 31:** Royal Dutch Car Auctions, Het Loo Palace, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0)578 561 115. www.royaldutchcarauctions.nl
- Sep 9:** Barons, 10th Anniversary Sale, (includes British Heritage) Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey. Tel: 02380-668413, 08454-306060 (local call rate). www.barons-auctions.com
- Sep 13:** Bonhams, Beaulieu Autojumble, National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, Hants. Tel: 020 7468 5801. www.bonhams.com
- Sep 19:** Bonhams, Goodwood Revival Race Meeting, Goodwood, West Sussex. Tel: 020 7468 5801. www.bonhams.com

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