



David Newton

Auction Report contributor for Safety Fast!

David Newton clearly enjoys classic car auctions a great deal. His fascination with the cars and items of automobilia on offer, his enthusiasm for auctions and meeting fellow enthusiasts there and the sense of excitement with what is a live marketplace have drawn him to many auctions over the last decade and more. His series of reports on recent auctions has been a welcome new feature in the revived Safety Fast! Those reports have provided authoritative information on interesting MGs and related items he has seen at auction and a useful insight for Club members into both the auctions and market trends. David joined the MG Car Club in 1975 and his enjoyment of his MGs has been part of his passion for sports cars, not least Porsches. He has had a major involvement in Porsche Motorsport. So I was keen to meet David and learn more about a fellow Club member and his enthusiasm for MGs and classic car auctions.

David began going to classic car auctions in the early 1990s, travelling all over the UK and occasionally adding a car to his collection. He is a self confessed "auctionholic" with an extraordinary knowledge of classic cars and an unrelenting appetite for attending auctions. His regular auction reports in Safety Fast! provide a fascinating window on part of the classic car world many fellow Club members may rarely see. His enthusiasm for the auctions bubbles through his reports with a useful combination of information on the cars appearing at auction and the prices achieved and market trends, together with comments which give a flavour of the atmosphere at the various venues. David feels strongly that a good auction is full of fun so the auctioneer must have a good sense of humour.

David was brought up in Somerset where his father had an engineering business on the same site as a main BL dealership, Marshalsea in Taunton. As a young boy he was smitten by the sight of Mini Coopers arriving at Marshalsea and was allowed to drive one on private land at an early age. Later he drove an F registered MGCGT and again loved that model. In the late sixties he had a Saturday job de-waxing cars arriving from Abingdon and his first car was a Midget Mk 3 in Harvest Gold with chrome bumpers. This was followed by an MGB Roadster in Damask and in the late seventies a black MGBGT V8. After the closure of the Abingdon Factory, David switched to owning Porsches but after ten years he bought another MGBGT V8, this time in Citron, which he had for ten years for daily use and trips to mainland Europe. Today David has an immaculate RV8 and regards the model "as a very special car which has a strong following" amongst discerning enthusiasts. He feels "RV8 prices are surprisingly low and

they represent excellent value for money and the galvanised bodies are another plus point".

David runs Sandydown Bodyworks, a vehicle repair business, on a spacious and well organised rural site near Stockbridge in Hampshire employing fourteen skilled specialists working on all makes and models, but particularly older cars. An example in progress when I visited was a rare 1973 Porsche 911 Sportomatic undergoing a complete bare metal rebuild. Both the workshops and business have a welcoming and well managed feel.

Classic car auctions are usually held at prestigious or noteworthy venues around the country which adds to the sense of occasion. The RAF Museum at Hendon saw a Bonhams' auction earlier this year when the majority of vehicles offered for sale came from the estate of the late Denis Lucy, an Irish collector of some significance. Some classic car auctions are held at motor shows or motorsport events which provide an additional attraction and a convenient opportunity for many attending to review the lots beforehand and then follow the auction action too. The Bonhams' auction at the Goodwood Revival is always popular, attracting interest from a large number of people drawn to the "memorable step back in time" theme of that race meeting. Visiting the auction marquee is part of the enjoyment of a long weekend meeting at Goodwood. Other venues are horse racing courses like Sandown Park or Kempton Park and country estates like Blenheim Palace.

Automobilia at auction is an opportunity to bid for a wide range of

interesting items ranging from a set of "Cream Cracker" cufflinks to an individual tool to make good a missing item in an MG tool kit. David feels much of the automobilia coming up at auction is from people who acquired it many years ago and are either clearing out to downsize or their executors are selling as family members do not feel holding that type of item is for them.

The cars that come up at auction can be mouthwatering or simply wonderful if they are a model you love. David bid for a LHD mid-engined 1969 Porsche 914/6GT, a particular favourite of his as an example of a Porsche/VW collaboration between 1969/75, and secured it when it was knocked down at £36,000 at the International Race Car Show. He frequently sees £20,000 plus MG refurbishments, where the detail of the work is phenomenal, going for £8,000 to £10,000. An MGC Sebring Replica in Iris Blue was sold at Blenheim Palace and MG TFs from the fifties, for so long not a popular model, are seen as a very desirable and usable classic. Many bidders for MGBs seem to be in their fifties or older and buying for nostalgia, but the puzzle for David is the prices of MGBs have not moved much over the last ten years. David feels the MGBGT V8 is an exceptional car but has seen a similar stagnation in prices which does not reflect the specification and inherent attraction of the V8 powered model.

It was fascinating meeting David and learning more of his real passion for classic car auctions and MGs. But equally he is a Club member who has much wider interests and an engagingly relaxed and urbane manner.

Victor Smith