



Availability of spare parts and specialist servicing

Maintaining a classic sports car also requires spare parts and specialist servicing for the particular model so the availability and reliability of the supply of spares is an essential concern for any enthusiast. The technical support provided by both the Club and its Registers includes information on spares and service suppliers. The Club, for example, publishes an annual Trade Member Directory which lists the specialist MG spares and service providers who are members of the Club's trade member scheme. Many Registers also have useful information on recommended spares suppliers and some also have recommended lists of service and maintenance specialists too.

Good spares availability and specialist vehicle servicing is particularly important for limited production models like the MGA Twin Cam, MGC, MGBGT V8, MGRV8 and MGZT260V8. Fortunately there are a number of specialists around the UK with a particular knowledge and experience of models like these and specialist suppliers stocking essential spares.

The key feature of the leading spares suppliers for each model is they provide a good range of spares so they are able to meet most requirements. They are seen as "full service" specialists stocking not just the popular, fast moving items but also essential items for which there is lower demand, unlike some of the "cherry picking" traders in the market who only have a limited range of fast moving spares or special offers.

The full service specialists are also active in resourcing parts which have become no longer available – for example Clive Wheatley has recently remanufactured RV8 hardtops and heater hoses and Brown & Gammons took over the former MG Rover spares holding operation for the RV8 a few years ago which underlines their major commitment to the model. Other suppliers like Rimmers offer useful lines for modern MG enthusiasts.

Costs of running and maintaining a classic sports car

Whether your aim is to get an MG in excellent condition with the prospect of limited planned and unexpected future maintenance costs or a car in need of moderate or even substantial

Doing your research

It's vital to research thoroughly before buying an MG so you have a good understanding of the features of the model, the key areas of concern you will need to check when inspecting a car, the costs of running and maintaining the car and the pricing levels for various grades of the MG model. Many of the well established Registers within the MG Car Club who provide support and services for individual MG models have useful outlines or briefing notes on the history and specification of those models. Many also have technical details and useful information on the availability of spares and specialist maintenance and repair services. The monthly Club magazine, *Safety Fast!* carries a good selection of MGs for sale as both classified and trade adverts. In some cases Register websites carry adverts for cars for sale. So what research does a prospective purchaser of a classic MG model need to do?

Specification and features of the car

You will need to gain an awareness of the specification and features of the model when it was launched and subsequent changes and improvements to the body styling, mechanical components, trim and accessories during the production run is an essential starting point. A good introduction to the MG marque is set out in "The Magic of MG" by Mike Allison and for more detailed information on individual models there are specialist titles – for example a useful collector's guide "The MGA, MGB and MGC" by Graham Robson and a book much sought after by V8 enthusiasts, "MG V8 – 21 years

on" by David Knowles. But unfortunately many of these titles are no longer in print and secondhand copies trade at extraordinary prices. Some of the Register websites have very good background information on individual models.

Technical information

Information and guidance on maintaining a classic sports car is essential as many enthusiasts will want to carry out much of the routine servicing and maintenance themselves. Before the arrival of sophisticated engine management systems, the servicing workload on most MGs was relatively straightforward and within the capabilities of many enthusiasts, so gaining an awareness of the basic maintenance requirements is a good starting point. Reading through the driver's handbook for the model will soon give you an overview and then delving into a workshop manual will extend your awareness.

Some of the Registers have collections of technical notes and articles available to their members – for example the V8 Register has three successful series of workshop notes for the MGBV8, RV8 and ZT260V8 models based on contributions from fellow members with useful maintenance advice and spares tips. Copies of the workshop notes are supplied on a neatly packaged CD and many of those notes are also available online for convenient reference.

Guide to buying a classic MG



refurbishment, it is important to have a clear idea of your budget. In addition to the initial outlay to purchase the car, you will also need to develop a realistic budget for running and maintaining your car. In many ways the main risks are unexpected costs for the repair or replacement of major mechanical components and particularly work on the bodywork to deal with corrosion. A thorough inspection of the car before purchase is the key to identifying problems and as the costs of remedial work can be large, so having a professional vehicle inspection is a wise investment.

Key areas of concern you will need to check when inspecting a car for sale

Each classic MG model has particular areas of concern with bodywork, engine, gearbox, transmission and suspension so you will need to get familiar with them by a combination of reading material and speaking with someone who owns the model. The Club's Registers can help, but there is one area which is common to most classic MGs from the early sixties – most have original steel body panels which had minimal rust protection on the production line. So checking out the areas prone to rust is essential. The individual model guides in this "So you want to buy an MG?" series highlight the key areas of concern you must check thoroughly.

Price information and guides

Getting a feel for market prices of classic sports cars needs time for studying both adverts with cars for sale but also viewing cars because the factor which determines value more than anything else is condition – and particularly the condition of the

bodywork, both what you will see immediately but also potential problems revealed by a closer inspection.

For mid range priced cars and rougher examples, anyone aiming to have a car in good to very good condition has to take account of the outlay that will be required to bring the car up to that standard. That outlay might be simply the expense of engaging a specialist to refurbish or repair the car (very rarely on a fixed price basis, so cost overruns are normal) or a combination of cost and personal effort if the owner decides to do the work him or herself. Logically those cars should be priced on a residual value basis – that is the market value when refurbished to the standard you aim to achieve less the costs of the necessary work – but if you look at cars for sale that is generally not the case. Very often the refurbishment or rebuilding costs required to bring a Condition 3 or even a Condition 2 car up to or near Condition 1 standards are far greater than are reflected in the pricing.

So clearly other factors are at play – possibly some buyers buy in hope or partial ignorance, others may rationalise that any major expense that becomes necessary will spread over many years so that will be more affordable than a higher initial purchase price for a better quality car, and some may have lower aims in terms of the standard of car they wish or can afford to have. Economic conditions generally and the cost of motor fuel also play a part but whatever factors may influence price, the reality is supply and demand in the current marketplace determines the price.

Price guides for MGs in classic car magazines like Classics Monthly provide a broad indication of prices for individual models but the guides in some of the popular classic car magazines are less representative of likely prices. Whilst adverts in various publications, in Safety Fast! and on Register websites also provide a guide, without an inspection of the condition of a car offered for sale the value for money assessment cannot be made.

Where to find your classic sports car?

Finding the MG you are seeking can take time because the supply of good and reasonable quality cars depends on current owners deciding to sell up. For most classic MG models there is a seasonal effect with more cars offered for sale from March to October each year. Some owners do not want the hassle of selling the car personally so either sell to a trader or increasingly specialist traders take cars into their showrooms on a commission sale basis. Under that arrangement the seller's car can get a good exposure to potential buyers, both in the trader's showroom and in the adverts on their website and in various classic car publications. There are useful benefits for both parties – the trader has additional stock with no stockholding costs (other than showroom space) and the seller avoids what many regard as a hassle of having assorted buyers visiting their homes – including the inevitable bargain hunters or timewasters.

Where to buy a classic MG

The two sources of classic MGs are from enthusiasts selling up (private sale) and from a traders (trade sale), both specialist and general traders who have MGs for sale. The distinction between a private and trade sale is important for both the liabilities on the seller and your legal rights as a buyer. Some traders have MGs for sale on behalf of their owners, typically as "commission sales". In those cases it is important that a buyer knows what is provided by way of information and assurances relating to the car and any warranties from the trader. Sellers using the "commission sale" route will need to ensure the arrangements are documented with trader to clarify what services are being provided and the amount of the sales fee and any charges payable by the seller.



Buying from an enthusiast as a private sale in the UK

Buying privately from an enthusiast who has decided to sell their MG can be a good way of obtaining a sensibly priced MG and you have the benefit of face to face contact with the owner to assess how they may have driven and looked after the car. In many cases the seller will also have a history file with records of servicing, evidence of major refurbishment or repair work, MOT certificates to corroborate mileage claims and much more. But you do need to be aware that you have less legal come back than buying through a trader. Cars advertised for private sale must be "as described" but that is about as far as the legal obligations go.

Some small-scale traders like to pose as private sellers so when you first call them it is worth just asking about the "car". Then, if they are selling more than one car as many small traders often do, they may be forced to respond by asking "which one?" which will give them away!

Buying from a trader in the UK

If you buy a vehicle from a trader in the UK, then the transaction is covered by the Sale of Goods Act 1979. This means the car must be:

- **Of satisfactory quality**, bearing in mind its age, what it cost and how it was described to you. It should be free from

serious defects, other than those you were made aware of.

- **As described.** If the dealer says it has a 2-litre engine and you find it's actually got a 1.6-litre, you can reject the car and seek a refund or replacement.
- **Fit for any reasonable purpose.** The car should do all that you would reasonably expect of it, including any particular purpose you stated to the dealer at the time of the transaction.

So you need to retain a copy of the advert and any notes you make of what the trader tells you about the quality, condition and specification of the car.

However, if you pay for the car to be inspected, the trader is not responsible for any faults the inspection should have found. You should always get a statement on the condition of the car from the trader. If your car is subsequently found to be faulty, you have six months from the date of purchase in which you can reject it. You can demand repair or a replacement, unless it would cause 'disproportionate' or 'significant inconvenience' to the seller.

As many classic MGs are specialist cars it is advisable to buy from an established specialist trader with both a knowledge and experience of the model and an ability to provide good quality

post-purchase support with both a maintenance and spares services. It is also better to deal with specialist traders who have a reputation for fair trading so seeking the views of fellow Club members will provide very useful information as a guide to the standing and integrity of various traders - both reassuring reports and less so.

Buying a reimported car

With MGs like T-Types, MGAs, MGBs, RV8s and MGFs, buying a reimported which was originally exported to an overseas market is another purchase route. In the case of the RV8 it is a particularly important route simply because such a large proportion of the RV8 production originally went to Japan and now many are appearing at auction there and being bought for export to Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the UK.

Finding the right car for you

The classified and trade adverts in Safety Fast! are a good place to look for classic MGs for sale. Equally the adverts on some of the Register websites can be very good too – some are very active and they have the virtue of posting adverts very rapidly so you do not have the frustration of having to wait for a monthly publication date. There are several clear advantages for a seller of using this online route – the advert is usually placed within a day or so of being ordered so the car is in the marketplace rapidly and also the Registers' websites are visited by enthusiasts for the models supported by individual Registers. On some websites you can have an additional webpage with a set of photographs illustrating each aspect of the car so potential buyers can see the car in detail. Another advantage is the advert can be revised or amended at any time – so if the MOT or the road tax is renewed, or the price amended, that can be added as a prompt change to the advert. Many buyers report they had followed the adverts on a Register website closely during their successful search for car. Finding a car through a specialist MG trader or from adverts in the leading commercial classic car magazines are the traditional routes.

This series continues with "Part 3 – Checking the car that's for sale".

Article contributed by Victor Smith.