

MARKET INSIDER



Max Bontempi

Motorstorica, Brescia, Italy

I WAS born here in Brescia but, perhaps unusually, I didn't grow up dreaming of Ferraris and Maseratis; when I was 12 I fell in love with an old Jaguar Mk2 and convinced my father to buy it, and ever since I've had a thing for British cars. As soon as I got my driving licence I bought a 1966 Triumph TR4, and over the years my garage has been home to Aston Martins, Lotuses, MGs and many more.

These and pre-war French racing cars are the focus of my business, which I started in 2004 with my wife, although I spend as much time providing valuations, research and advice as I do selling cars these days. I offer transport, insurance and breakdown services, too, having unexpectedly become a sort of 'fixer' for foreign customers who want to enjoy their cars on historic events in Italy.

The vast majority of my clients – around 90% at present – are based overseas, and as far away as Japan and Argentina. (The most exciting car I've sold in the last 12 months was a gorgeous ivory 1933 Aston Martin Le Mans Special; that went to Argentina.) The ongoing economic problems in Italy have really slowed the domestic market. Consumer confidence is very low, there isn't a whole lot of disposable income splashing about, and new tax laws mean it has become very expensive to buy certain classics – in particular those between 20 and 30 years old with lots of power.

It's hard to see things picking up in the next couple of years, but there is an encouraging level of enthusiasm for British cars here. Flat-floor E-types are popular at the moment, and there's always demand for Astons, MGs and Rileys. I like Austin-Healey 100s for the future, especially the BN2 100M.

It goes without saying that the UK remains the best place to find good examples of British classics, but they're not in desperately short supply out here, either. I don't have to import many cars and, although I've built a good network of contacts over the past decade, I tend to buy direct, and usually from private owners. Part of the fun of the job for me is visiting a vendor, having a chat and a pint, and taking their car out for a drive.

www.motorstorica.com



Casualty of war

One of the great forgotten cars of the 1930s finds its way home

IT MAY not be true that history is always written by the winners (in many cases it was simply written by those who knew how to write – grumpy monks, usually), but the old aphorism does help to explain why most of the world would struggle to identify the car pictured above.

In 1944, Allied forces began a bombing campaign intended to destroy Auto Union's manufacturing plants, which had long since stopped building civilian cars in order to supply the Nazi war effort with military vehicles. The

Siegmar-Schönau factory of Wanderer was blown to bits, and the marque went with it, never to be resurrected.

That Wanderer has often been treated as a footnote in automotive history is about as unjust as the Scopes Monkey Trial, for it was responsible for one of the very best cars of the 1930s: the W25K. Powered by a beautiful, Ferdinand Porsche-designed, supercharged 2.0-litre straight-six (the 'K' is for *Kompressor*) and capable of 90mph, it was a legitimate alternative to the BMW 328. Build quality was out of this world, and the styling faultless – equal parts European elegance and American adventure, with that hugely distinctive, shield-shaped radiator.

Despite its obvious qualities, few were made (Audi puts the number at 259, other educated estimates are lower) and you wouldn't need many fingers and toes to count the survivors.

This car, currently hiding out at Steenbuck Automobiles in northern Germany, is an early (1936) example without running boards. It ended up in Nevada after WW2, but found its way home in 2006 and has since been fully restored; it has a replacement, unblown engine, but in every other respect looks picture-perfect.

At €410,000, it will only appeal to those in the know, but we suspect that those few wise folk are busy counting their cents right now...

www.steenbuck-automobiles.de



Historik racing made easy

SUFFOLK-BASED classic Porsche specialist Historika has announced a range of new arrive-and-drive packages designed to appeal to those looking for a first taste of wheel-to-wheel action, as well as those interested in buying one of Historika's race-ready 911s. Prices range from £2500 for a UK track test to £5000-plus for a European meeting, and include transport costs, entry fees and around-the-clock support from two Historika mechanics.

www.historika.com

SHOWROOM STAR

'Windmill & Lewis' MGB £75,000

'I COULD have ten good MGBs for that price!' we hear you cry. This is not merely a good MGB, however, and greatness costs. 222 WAE might be the most significant non-works racing MGB there is, and was campaigned relentlessly between 1964 and 1970 on behalf of Bristol dealership Windmill & Lewis. Built to works spec, with a lightweight body and an improved 1840cc engine, it gave even Cobras a run for their money on the UK circuit – and, having been carefully maintained since its retirement from serious competition, it still might.

www.cotswoldcars.com

