



MGB GT V8

Name Al McNaughton Gisby
Age 35 **Occupation** Product management consultant
From Oxford, now in Italy
First classic Mazda MX-5 Mk1 **Daily driver** The MG, the MX-5, or a Mitsubishi L200
Favourite driving song Any funk riffs
Most miles covered in a day 1,000 miles in 22 hours

HOME FROM HOME ACROSS THE ALPS

The plane was booked, extra garage space rented, fresh MoT issued and it looked like being a cracking weekend. It just didn't seem possible that the trip could be hampered by a volcano... airspace disruption in northern Europe... the mind boggles. It was maddening, but I'd been patient for so long that another couple of weeks would make little difference against a lifetime of ownership.

I bought the car last August, as a diversion while on a Scottish holiday, and left it in storage near Glasgow. I was the third owner. The colour had been changed from Tundra, but it still had matching numbers – although the history showed that most of the bodywork had been changed over its 35 years, so originality is a difficult subject!

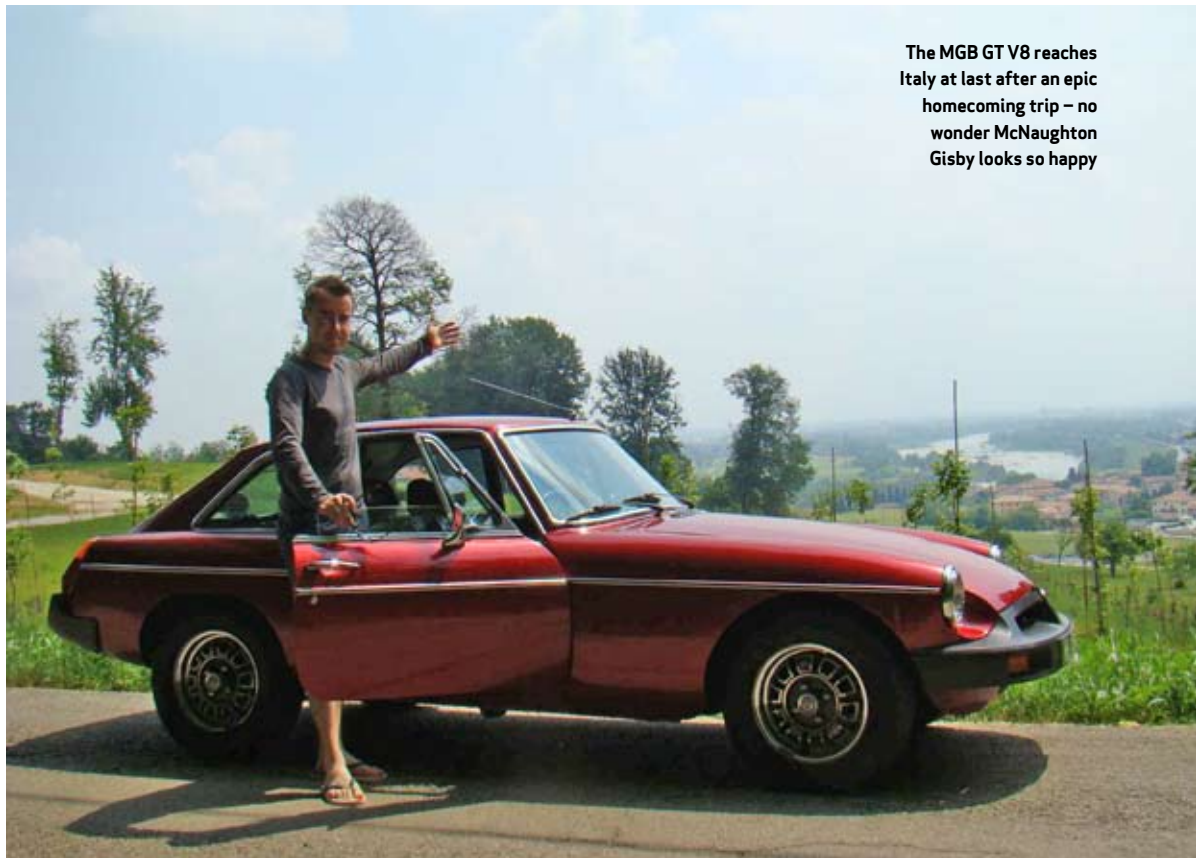
Last autumn, I took the A1 from Edinburgh to London, with a friend's support car as back-up, and the MG ran faultlessly. It was left in storage again, until the day I could make the road trip home to Italy.

When we arrived to pick it up, the driver's seatbelt remained

'This car is fantastic for long-distance touring, but push it and you can feel how rapidly technology has progressed'



A break from the autobahns in Germany



The MGB GT V8 reaches Italy at last after an epic homecoming trip – no wonder McNaughton Gisby looks so happy



Powerhouses: MG and Torness nuclear plant



Touring Austria, in the shadow of the Alps



Route Nationale with typical French scene

locked: an omen of failures to come over the next 1000 miles? Up reared the concerns that my girlfriend Ele – who until then had been supportive – was quietly dreading. The clothes-peg that I use on the choke was moved to prevent the seatbelt coiling back, and a rapid lunch with parents plus a full load of PG Tips sustained us until Folkestone.

A nice bloke on the Eurotunnel kindly informed me that there were sensors that detected fuel odour and spillage on the train, so it was best not to brim the tank just before boarding. I was pleased to learn that my car wasn't one of the worst 'stinkers' he'd ever smelled.

France went smoothly, as we opened her up and nudged three figures on a couple of occasions: 70-80 mph is generally enough, because anything more produces migraine-inducing wind noise.

"Is that coming from us?" Ele suddenly asked as an electrical odour crept into the cabin. "Might be," was all I could offer in response, but soon after the 'intermittent' indicators packed up completely.

We arrived in Luxembourg late, without a city-centre map. Eventually, we resorted to calling the hotel and the concierge came out to find us. 'You pays your money', but if I had chosen a lesser one I could still have been driving the wrong way down one-way streets the following morning. Dinner had long passed, so a *petit verre de vin rouge* as a night-cap in a small local bar sufficed.

Traversing Europe in a manner not seen since *The Italian Job* was our Saturday mission. The car didn't start: choke missing clothes-peg. With peg and choke back in union – and me trussed back into the leather by the faulty seatbelt – we were off. Within seconds of entering Germany, Porsches began hammering past. Although I have a V8, it was futile to attempt a similar display. This is a fantastic car for long-distance cruising, but push it to the limit and you can feel how rapidly technology has progressed. Its inadequacies really don't matter, though: the car is all about the huge pleasure you get from the grumbling V8, not the daily commute.

Innsbruck, the Brenner Pass, Bolzano and Bassano del Grappa flew by as we wound our way out of the Alps towards a well-deserved rest for both car and bums – albeit sadly too late for a wonderful Italian Saturday-night pizza.

An eight-month saga to bring my car home: is this a new record?

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