



Peter Best Insurance Services Ltd is an Independent General Insurance Broker established in 1985 which seeks to demonstrate passion, expertise and commitment in all its dealings with clients through the careful selection and training of its own staff and the support of the quality insurers with whom it has developed strategic relationships. Our ultimate goal is for a Company, where the name *"Peter Best"* truly is a *"name to live up to"*.

Peter Best

A Classic Adventure



Introduction

For nearly thirty years Peter Best Insurance Services Ltd, PBIS for short, has been growing, mainly organically, to become a leading specialist insurance broker specialising in schemes for motor, particularly classic cars and property, as well as most other personal lines, healthcare insurances and SME commercial risks.

From modest beginnings, since 1994 PBIS has operated from two offices at Maldon and Kelvedon in Essex and now employs some 35 staff. It embodies state-of-the-art IT and telephony systems and most customer facing staff either hold Chartered Insurance Institute qualifications or are working towards that goal.

In PBIS we work closely with our clients whether classic car clubs and their members or individual personal and commercial clients so that trust is quickly

established and where advice is required to be given it can be relied upon. This is why so many clients have been loyal to PBIS for many years.

In the following pages is an article reproduced by kind permission of Simon Goldsworthy, Editor of MG Enthusiast magazine, which appeared in the November 2012 issue. This recounts events occurring earlier in the lives of my wife, Marian and myself which indirectly shaped the business in the way you see it today.

At a time when the insurance market is dominated on the web by aggregator and comparison websites, direct writers and other significant players, please remember that if you want to talk to qualified career minded advisors, you will need to speak to a professional insurance broker – preferably ourselves.

*Passion
Expertise
Commitment*

SUPPORTING
CLASSIC CAR CLUBS
AND THEIR MEMBERS SINCE 1985



Series 3 & 90-110
Owners Club





The **Best** way forward

Peter and Marian Best talk about how they got started in the classic car insurance business, and also how their love affair with MGs started. You won't be surprised to learn that the two things are closely connected!

Report by Simon Goldsworthy



Have you ever wondered why Peter Best Insurance Services (or PBIS as it is now known) uses a boat anchor in its logo? If you were of a negative mind-set, you could say it is to suggest an appropriate use for the MGs that they help to insure. Then again, if that is your mind-set then you are unlikely to be reading this magazine! The truth is altogether

more noble – before changing career and entering the motor industry, Peter Best spent seven years in the merchant navy.

In fact, it was while in Millwall dock on board the Ellerman's Wilson line *SS Silvio* loading a cargo for export to Stockholm that his friend, John Strachan – who, like Peter, was a Third Officer but on the company's sister ship *Aaro* that was berthed astern – suggested that he should come and take a look at what they were loading. 'John had a TA and knew that I was into cars,' says Peter. 'This would have been in 1961, and they were loading the brand new MG Midget onto the *Aaro*. That was my first sight of the car, and subconsciously it was a defining moment in my life.' more on that shortly...

As Peter readily admits, the grass is always greener on the other side and when you are at sea, shore life appears attractive, especially at weekends! Later in 1961, berthed again in Millwall dock, he saw in the *Daily Telegraph* an advert from Ford Motor Co. who were looking for commercial trainees and graduates. Peter applied, and joined Ford in September 1961. He stayed with them for 13 years until early 1975, with highlights that included being one of the product planners on the original Transit, a spell as an overseas marketing representative covering the mainly commercial vehicle markets of South Africa, Malaysia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, a trip to the US and Canada launching the MkII Cortina and 2½ years with Ford of Europe in Cologne.

'Then, in 1975 Ford were having a big campaign for voluntary redundancy, and I just happened to have an offer from Volvo at the same time,' he says. 'It was a win/win situation for me, so I moved over to the Swedish company to help bring their Volvo and Daf car dealer networks together.'

It was at Volvo that Peter had his first real involvement with the insurance business. 'The Volvo 340 had been given a high insurance rating of five out of seven by the Association of British Insurers,' he explains, 'and that was killing sales. Realistically it should have been around three, but a lot of foreign cars were suffering in the same way. I contacted a number of insurance companies to see if we could do something about it, pointing out that if Volvo were able to offer an affordable insurance option, every dealer would be involved and so the volumes would make it pay. Sun Alliance came up with a suitable scheme for us and we never looked back.' To this day Royal Sun Alliance still have the Volvo Owners Insurance scheme.

Not surprisingly, this scheme was the model that Peter adopted when, in 1985, the board of the MG Car Club asked him about setting up an insurance scheme for their members. But to explain how he got involved with the club, I need to backtrack a bit and talk about the cars he owns. That takes us back to 2 June 1974, a day when Peter admits that he had a moment of madness. 'I'd been looking for a TD,' he elaborates, 'but saw two TFs for sale in *Motorsport*. One was local and the other was in Norfolk, so we looked first at the one just down the road that was being sold by a chap called Peter Faulkes. I wanted to buy it, but it wasn't quite ready yet as the ad had come out sooner than Peter had expected, so we headed up to Norfolk to view the other one. That was even less ready, fully dismantled and packed into boxes.

'However, and this was my moment of madness, I decided to buy both of them! The idea was that Peter Faulkes would help me rebuild the Norfolk car and I would keep the one I liked the most. So Peter finished his car first (956 BMG) and Marian started driving that while we got on with putting the Norfolk car (JRD 308) back together. Marian then started using this one as her own car. She used to take our two young boys out in it, both of them sharing the passenger seat. That sort of thing was simply accepted in those days.'



However, instead of selling one of the TFs, Peter ended up buying another one. He'd long since joined the MGCC – Peter Faulkes had made him do that in 1974 when he bought the first TF – and saw an ad in the club magazine for a TF in pieces, nearby in Chelmsford. Thinking that he knew most of the T-Types in the area but not this one, curiosity got the better of him and he went for a look. We all know how dangerous it can be to 'just take a look,' and before he knew it Peter was into another rebuild. He later found out that this car had been the factory prototype for the TF1250 and later TF1500. He certainly did the historic car justice, as it went back on the road

Top to bottom:
First office was in the Bests' home; the first event marquee was MG brown-and-cream; still attending shows – this was at MGB50.





PETER AND MARIAN BEST



Above: Friends and customers brought along a fine selection of MGs to help celebrate Peter Best Insurance Services' 25th anniversary in 2010.

Below: Pictured in the Abingdon factory, this car became Peter's third and (so far!) final TF.

in 1984 and won the T-Type concours at the MG Car Club's Silverstone event that year.

OK, so now we have a clear connection between MGs and insurance. Peter was on the board of the MGCC from 1984 to 1991 (and again as Chairman from 2000-2003 and from 2005-2007), which brings us back to 1985 and the MG insurance scheme. 'In those days, there were few schemes available for classic cars,' says Peter, picking up the story once more, 'and those that did exist were rather cumbersome. So I took Sun Alliance's Golden Age scheme as my starting point. That offered owners just 3000 miles per year, but most of us were doing more and so I upped it to 5000. We also incorporated agreed value from the outset, and made it exclusive to MG Car Club members. I persuaded Sun Alliance to back the scheme, and Marian quit her job as a medical secretary to administer it from an office we set up in the conservatory of our house with telephone training from the Sun Alliance Ipswich office.'

From those humble beginnings, the company grew. More



Peter and Marian took a leap of faith by starting their business; they obviously had a knack for it.

staff, more phone lines and two newfangled computers were brought into their Essex home, although the computers were not networked and all the policies were typed up on an IBM Golfball typewriter. It is a far cry from the present day situation, with the company employing 37 people at two separate offices, one in Maldon and the other in Kelvedon with a new state-of-the-art system about to go live.

'We started in 1985, and I left Volvo in 1991 to work full time in the business,' says Peter. 'At that time our customers were younger than they are today, hardly surprising since many of our original customers are still with us! They tended to be out and about a lot more with their cars than they are today too – don't forget that Marian was using the JRD 308, the Norfolk TF as her everyday car when we started.'

In the 1990s, the classic car business was steady but relatively static. It went ballistic at the end of the decade though, I think because all the hype that surrounded the new millennium persuaded people to throw caution to the wind and buy a classic. That's just a guess on my part though, as it is often impossible to understand why these sudden spurts occur.'

As a company, Peter Best Insurance Services very quickly started talking to other clubs after the launch of their MG scheme. They evolved three core products – the Abingdon Policy for MGCC members, the Register Scheme primarily for other British marques, and the Special Collectors' Policy for





The Bests waited a year after the MGF launch for any teething problems to be ironed out, then they bought this 1996 car.



Not an MG but in the family, this 1932 Morris Minor was the first car Peter and Marian bought as a married couple.



There have been other MGs along the way, notable among them an MGA and this round wheelarch Midget.



Jubilee BGT was driven into the ground, then restored and driven into the ground again before making way for the F.

non-British cars or non-club members – but now have over 30 schemes that cater for everything from Morgans to 4x4s and from motorcycles to light commercials.

Inevitably that has meant some restructuring of late, with three new directors – Adele Rand, Alice Davis and Barry Hermon – appointed to carry the company forward, with Peter still very much involved but taking more of a long term strategic role. The industry as a whole has also undergone some massive changes in recent years, as Adele explains: 'Regulation has had a huge impact on insurance. It used to be something that was more in the background, and any honest broker would be doing what the regulation required as a matter of course. But we now have to consider every little detail from a regulatory viewpoint, and you can't be as flexible as you once could with your underwriting. We have a lot more meetings these days to discuss and update our operating standards for staff; regulation is now a very big cost to companies.'

And that is not the only cost to have increased dramatically. We've all seen those ads on TV urging you to claim compensation for being mis-sold Payment Protection Insurance among other hard-to-prove things. Leaving aside the issue of how many fraudulent claims are encouraged by this or who actually pays the lawyers who help encourage such a remarkable number of victims to come forward, the entire insurance industry has to pay into the compensation fund for such people, even companies such as PBIS who have never had any involvement with PPI. Understandably, mine is not the only blood boiling when I see yet another smarmy suit on TV offering to get you some money on a no win/no fee basis...

There is another type of TV ad that must also have an impact on the insurance industry. I'm thinking here of the many price comparison websites that promise to bring down premiums. Adele Rand again: 'People are always price conscious, but many recognise that the cheapest policy is not always the best, and it may not give you the cover you need. The comparison sites ask a set of questions, but do not give out advice and there can be many things that customers should really know before they can make an informed choice. For example, many people

don't realise that they will not generally accrue a No Claims Bonus on a limited mileage classic car policy. They also assume that all comprehensive policies cover them to drive other cars, but that is not the case. And those are just two simple examples that spring immediately to mind. There are lots of other advantages in talking to somebody who understands your real needs with the benefits that classic car policies have such as agreed valuation, roadside assistance and recovery etc.'

Clearly these are turbulent times in the insurance industry, but there are more storms on the horizon. Take, for example, the Gender Directive that will come into force on 21 December and make it illegal for insurers to use gender as a factor when assessing risks and setting prices. This is a politically-led initiative that has no basis in data or fact and will cause all of us to pay more – the fewer risk categories that insurers can assess, the higher the overall cost of premiums will be.

Another rather inexplicable political decision was taken by our own government when they decided to exempt pre-1960 cars from the MoT test from November this year. 'We've taken the decision that we expect our clients to continue with a voluntary MoT test,' says Peter. 'If they don't, we will have to charge a higher premium because the risk will be higher, that is how insurance works. I wouldn't want my own pre-1960 cars not to have an MoT; it is the one independent annual check that they get and a natural time to also grease and service them.'

'If somebody in a pre-1960 car should be unlucky enough to

Below: The anchor in the PBIS logo recalls Peter Best's days in the merchant navy.





All Pete's Cash

When Marian was 17, she lived in Croydon and used to travel into London to college every day by bus. What she really wanted was a Lambretta, but her dad said that if she got a vehicle, it had to have four wheels. He took her to a used car showroom, and there they saw an MG J2 and an Austin Nippy side by side. Both were red, and both were for sale at £100. Marian freely admits that she didn't know one car from another, but she immediately chose the MG.

'The engine was half falling out and it wouldn't get out of first gear,' Marian remembers, 'but dad put it all back together for me. I couldn't wait to start driving, but I had to watch it getting rebuilt first. Then I used to drive it into London every day for work - dad worked nearby and he used to accompany me and my L-plates. We used to freeze to death in winter as it didn't even have a hood.'

'I took my driving test in that MG. I remember that the examiner was absolutely massive and didn't even open the door to get in, he just stepped over the side. I also remember one day driving through the centre of Croydon, and the policeman on point duty stopping all the traffic, bending down and saying to me: "I've got some parts for one of these and I'm moving to New Zealand. Do you want to buy them?" And this was all in the middle of Croydon High Street!'

By the time Marian and Peter married in 1964, the J2 had been taken off the road with another broken crank and replaced with a Ford 100E. The J2 subsequently moved with Marian's parents to the Wye Valley, but just sat and rotted. Eventually, in the mid-1970s they brought it back to Essex.

'It sat in our garage for a long time, but in the end we took the plunge and had it restored,' says Marian. 'That restoration lasted many years and we were writing out one huge cheque after another, but when it finally came back in the early 1990s, it looked



Marian bought this J2 when she was a teenager, but had to wait for dad to put it back together.



She still owns it and the MG looks better than ever after a restoration that earned it a new nickname.

absolutely beautiful. It had always been a bit of an old banger before, but now it was in tip-top condition. But because the restoration had been so expensive and the registration number of the car is APC 181, it has earned the nickname of *All Pete's Cash!*

have a crash, an assessor will have to inspect the car and if it was not roadworthy, then the owner will have been in breach of their insurance contract. And what do you do about custom cars, or a 1930s car with a modern engine? The system may work after a fashion for a year or two, but eventually we will get to the point where cars are on the road that have not been inspected for many years. That's not a happy thought. The government should have consulted the insurance industry before introducing such a policy.'


Another hot insurance topic at the moment is the cost of premiums for young drivers, and the PBIS team have some practical advice for anyone in this position. 'We have a very selective scheme for MGCC members,' says Peter, 'but we spend as much time talking to the parents as we do to the young drivers. Each policy has to be tailored to suit. Extra qualifications such as Pass+ will help with the cost, but the bottom line is that where everyday cars are concerned it needs to be a small cubic capacity saloon to bring the cost down. Youngsters have to accept that if they want affordable insurance, they will usually have to start off in a boring car. They can have a classic, but it doesn't really start to get affordable until they are at least 21 years old.'

'Telematics is the big thing that will help young drivers,' adds Adele. 'By recording their driving and paying only for the miles they cover, costs can be reduced for avoiding trouble hotspots, dangerous times of day or simply driving safely. It will also help to stamp out fraudulent whiplash claims as the boxes can record the actual speed of any impact.'

That technology is surely coming, but it is still some way off being commonplace. Other types of insurance that were formerly unheard of are very much present today, and here to stay. Some of these have been brought about by an increasingly litigation-happy culture in the UK - we tend to follow the USA



Right: Factory prototype TF, KBL 296, has also been restored to a very high standard.

with a 10 or 20 year gap in this sort of thing, so if you want to know where this will lead us, talk to anyone involved in running a business in the States today. The net result is that clubs as well as individuals need to be adequately insured. PBIS are in the process of putting together a brochure illustrating the insurance that clubs need to have in place. This may include cover for liability, employees, regalia, libel and slander, professional indemnity and more. It all sounds a bit daunting, and a small club with only Public Liability cover may still have to find £100-£150 per year, but the alternatives if the wrong person should inadvertently trip on a marquee guy rope at a show could end up being far more expensive. 

Maldon Telephone Numbers:

Classic Cars – 01621 840400

MG, Morgan, Morris, Austin, Wolseley, Riley, Ford, Triumph, Rover, Daimler, Jaguar and all other British marque cars

Classic 4 x 4's – 01621 840400

Land Rovers, Range Rover, Discovery, Freelander, other British, European, North American and Japanese 4 x 4's

Private Client Department for Executive Homes and Cars

Adele Rand 01621 878765

Residential Property and Private Motor – 01621 854485

Insurance for Classic Vehicle Clubs – 01621 854485

Kelvedon Telephone Numbers:

Classic Cars – 01376 573033

Especially Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Saab, BMW, VW (including Camper Van)

Classic Motorcycles – 01376 573033

British and foreign

Residential Property and Private Motor – 01376 573357

Commercial and Professional Risks / Commercial Motor / Liabilities /
Motor Trade / Charities and Not for Profit Organisations / Healthcare

01376 573373



A Classic Adventure