

QC pleads guilty love of classics

Stephen Solley is a law unto himself as far as classic cars are concerned – just look at the selection of vintage motors in his garage. Renée Kaufman met him

OF all the cars in all of the world why choose an MG Y-Type, a couple of D-series Citroens, a Lotus Elan, a VW Beetle, a Packard Super 8, and a Cadillac?

Stephen Solley – QC, travel author and car collector

has a quick explanation for this odd-mix collection: "I was never interested in owning an Escort. And I've always loved old cars."

Just to prove it, he reveals that his first car was a Gogomohil, the 250cc micro-car which was a gift from his mother. From that time on, Stephen was sold on off-beat motors.

The Lotus Elan was discovered in a Suffolk barn: "It brought back great memories of the Sixties."

The Packard stood out from an auction "full of Imps and A40s", while the five-seater drop-head MG was prized from a lady in Cheltenham: "It was in pristine condition, but I gave her a sob story and it worked."

But car collecting reached fever-pitch only a couple of years ago: "When I was able to buy a Cadillac for less than a Nissan Sunny, with just a few miles on the clock, I had to jump at the chance," reveals Stephen.

The Cadillac in question – an Eldorado – was built just before the Gulf War: "I bought it blind," he says with great pride. "It was

brought over from the States by a friend, and it's lived up to my expectations."

While other car buffs might start rambling about horsepower and 0-60 speeds, for Stephen the absolute *piece de résistance* is the radio. He says: "It's un-nickable, no self-respecting villain would want it. So I can leave the Caddy outside my East London home without a worry."

Radios certainly seem to be a vital motoring accessory. He's just had the original radio in his roadworthy DS23 Citroen adapted to tune into FM stations.

PRICELESS COLLECTION: Stephen's pride and joy: (from left



Which car is the best head-turner?

The early 70s Beetle is a rascal. I turned up at court in it recently and the judge couldn't believe his eyes



● STEPHEN and Helen Solley's book, *Splash Guide to France* – published by the AA – costs £7.99 and is now

to




to right) an MG Y-Type, a Packard Super-8, Cadillac Eldorado and Lotus Elan

But the Citroen-D – like his other motoring acquisitions – are not museum pieces. The Solleys even use it for their motoring trips abroad, and it's proved to be a wise choice: "When our eldest child was very young, we set off to France. But we'd forgotten to add him to our passport so we hid him in the footwell."

What causes Stephen, and his wife Helen, more concern is the welfare of their kids on long holi-

day drives: "From experience, we knew that if we could only find a hotel with a swimming pool, they would be happy."

Now everyone is happy – the Solleys have just produced a Splash Guide to France. They've done the hard graft and tracked down every French hotel with a pool. "Now you can have your dream motoring holiday in France, without a degree in French hotels." 

What would you like as your next car?

I'd love to teach my sons to build a kit car, but I'm just not capable

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