

There's something about the 2002. It's a wonderful little car, one of BMW's most iconic designs, that still turns heads and puts smiles on faces even after all these years. In essence little more than a compact three-box coupé, the 2002 somehow managed to take such a simple concept and turn it into the stuff of legend.

Richard McHowat is a man who loves 2002s. He's spent most of the past 30 years owning and restoring the diminutive classics and while things haven't always gone to plan, he's never let the odd setback get in the way of his passion. It was whilst working in Jordan during the late '70s that Richard came across his first 2002s, liked the way they looked and decided that ownership beckoned. Fast-forward to Hong Kong, 1981, and Richard's first-ever 2002, a Tii which he spent six months restoring with help from his father who was in Germany at the time and able to send out parts. HKD 36,000 later, Richard had himself a pristine 2002. Unfortunately he then had to leave Hong Kong due to his job and because he had to get rid of the car prior to his departure he only managed to get HKD 11,000 for it, quite a loss. Being left so far out of pocket would probably have been

enough to put most people off, but when Richard found himself back in Hong Kong a little while later, he managed to find his old car and decided to buy it again, for just over twice what he sold it for. It was looking slightly worse for wear so he again restored it before having to leave the country a second time! But Hong Kong wasn't done with Richard yet and he found himself returning to the country with his job a third and final time. Naturally, first thing he did was track down his old 2002, buy it and then restore it for a third time before leaving Hong Kong in 1989.

After owning and restoring the same car three times, most people would have had enough of 2002s. But by now the bug had well and truly bitten and Richard was determined to get his hands on another one. Now back in the UK, he bought himself a Golf yellow Tii which he owned and enjoyed for three years before having to travel to Thailand. He managed to resist buying any 2002s out there, instead buying a 2002 Turbo upon his return to the UK at the end of the '90s. For enthusiasts, this is without doubt the pinnacle of 2002 ownership and the one to which most people aspire, but unfortunately for Richard it wasn't quite the experience he'd imagined it would be.

During eight years of ownership he drove it just 500 miles because it was never running properly and always being repaired. Richard agrees that the Turbo is a great car but you need a strong stomach to own one. Even when it was working Richard was never sure when something else was going to go wrong, making it a difficult car to own. Though he loved the Turbo, ultimately he decided he'd had enough. The question is, where to go after owning a 2002 Turbo? As far as BMW's own efforts go, that was the ultimate incarnation of the car so anything else would be a step down.

But, of course, you could always turn to a company with strong associations with the factory, in this case Alpina. The tuner produced no less than seven different road-going versions of the 2002, culminating in this wonderful rarity, the A4S. It's hard enough to find information about them, let alone find an actual car to buy, so Richard did extremely well not only to get his hands on one but also to find such a magnificent example.

This particular car was in the care of Martyn Edwards, another man who likes a 2002, and his acquisition of this car is a story in itself. He originally spotted the car for sale in 1997 in a German











magazine by an Alpina collector. One would assume that advertising the car as being for sale meant that the collector had every intention of letting it go. Not so. It took Martyn six years of negotiation before the owner agreed to sell him the car. Yet that still wasn't the end of it because he then refused to send over the paperwork. Most people would have lost their rag at this stage, but as seems to be a recurring theme with 2002s, patience is a virtue and the paperwork eventually found its way to Blighty.

The car had been off the road for a while so Martyn's first task was to get it up to scratch. The inner and outer sills were replaced and the car was treated to a full bare metal respray in original Chamonix white with almost all the body parts refurbished or replaced, including all the chrome and brightwork. Needless to say the end result was, and still is, absolutely spectacular and I wager you'd struggle to find an Alpina 2002 in better condition anywhere, assuming you could actually find one...

Richard knew about Martyn and his A4S, so when he heard that the car was up for sale he wasted no time in taking the plunge and snapping it up. Selling the Turbo was not a problem and a 2002 fan from Norway hopped over to the UK to collect his new purchase and managed to get a few hundred miles

from home in Oslo before the head gasket went...

After the highly-strung and unpredictable nature of the Turbo, the more straightforward A4S is a much better proposition, not least because of the amount of money this car has had spent on it. The engine was completely refurbished by the German owner in 1981, the head refurbished by Alpina in Buchloe and a brand new five-speed Getrag dogleg box purchased from BMW. From 1990 the car was dry-stored and between 2005 and 2009, when Martyn registered the car, he covered less than 500km, making it an exceptionally well-looked after example.

So just what goes into making an A4S? The engine is a development of the A4 motor, itself based on the fuel-injected M10 powerplant, with a 10.0:1 compression ratio, a 300° degree cam, Kolbenschmidt pistons, modified con rods, a 7000rpm redline, a modified exhaust manifold and an Alpina exhaust system and back box: the engine develops 163bhp at 6950rpm and 143lb ft of torque at 5500rpm. The car came fitted with a four-speed manual gearbox as standard, but in order to compensate for the narrow power band, a close-ratio five-speed Getrag 'box was available, complete with an LSD, as fitted to this car. Lower, uprated springs were fitted with Bilstein front shocks and adjustable

Koni rears, while the semi-trailing arms were reinforced together with the front spindles. Thicker anti-roll bars were fitted front and rear and Alpina also altered the steering rack ratio to make it quicker. The brakes were uprated to cope with the additional performance, with vented front discs and bonded metallic linings in the rear drums, while the four-inch wide steel wheels were replaced with more substantial 5.5x13-inch alloy items.

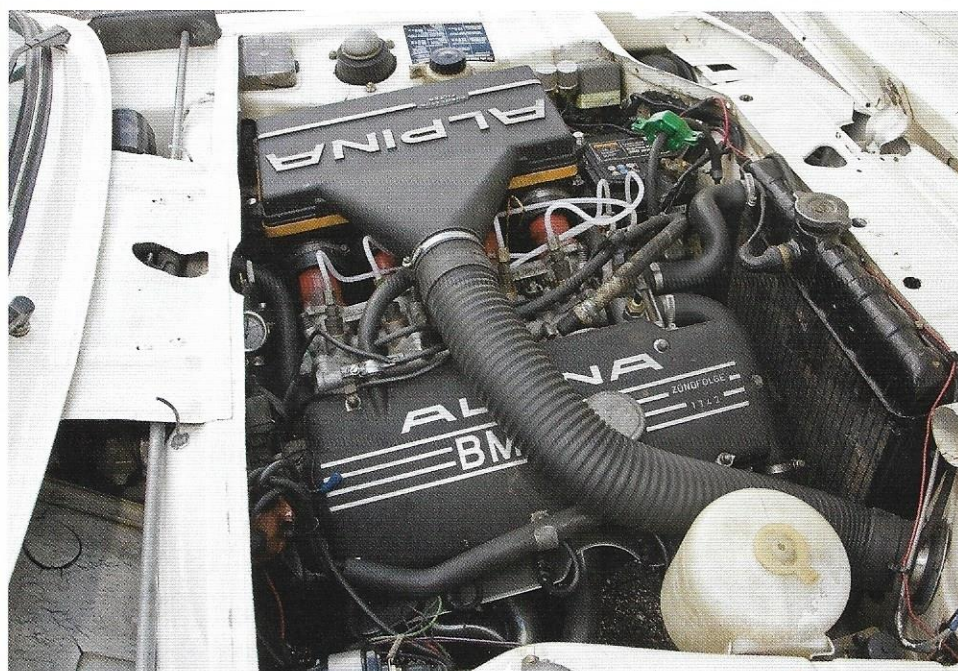
The end result is a proper little sports car and in the case of this A4S, opening the driver's door is like stepping back in time, so well preserved is the interior. For such a small car it's surprisingly roomy while the thin pillars and large windows give it a light, airy feel. All the additional Alpina interior appointments are completely original – the instruments, gearknob and steering wheel, although the wonderfully supportive seats are from a 2002 Turbo and in the footwells you'll find the incredibly sought-after original BMW coco mats.

If anything, though, the car looks even better from the outside – the bodywork is factory-fresh with not one blemish or chip in the paint. Those are the original Hella H-series spotlights, rechromed to perfection, and the car wears its original Alpina front spoiler, which gives the diminutive two-door a bit





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more road presence. The boot spoiler is a 2002 Turbo item. The only non-standard items are the stripes and exhaust. While Martyn had acquired a set of brand new, still boxed, decals for the car, he didn't like the colour so had a set made in the official Alpina colours which, he later found out, had once been fitted to the car by a previous owner. The exhaust is a rorty-sounding stainless steel system from Fritz's Bits.

Richard has only owned the A4S for six months but in that time it's already given him far more joy than his Turbo did in eight years. The A4S is everything that he could have hoped from 2002 ownership and the chance to own such a rare car was too good to pass up – as Richard says, "not many were made and very few are left," and there are only a handful of UK cars. It's quick too, being so light, the close-ratio gearbox making up for the comparative lack of grunt. The comprehensive chassis upgrades means it copes with the additional shove with ease and is a superb back road blaster.

Richard had been thinking of moving the Alpina on, but now that a throttle problem has been cured he's had a change of heart. He says he's still open to offers but he's equally happy to hang onto it and you can't blame him – for 2002 fans, I can think of no greater prize ●

