



Gareth Pearson's rare Golf Cabrio Quartett is not only a great example, it's usefully modified too. We headed along to Lancashire to meet this rag-top fanatic

The limited production GTI Cabriolet Quartett came as a mix-and-match package with no less than 64 versions being made available, thanks to a very extensive choice of interior trim, body and hood colours. The Quartett sales brochure even contained plastic sheets, each of which illustrated one of the colours or trim options, enabling prospective buyers to overlay these and get an impression of what the car of their choice would look like. All clever marketing stuff.

Such a surfeit of possibilities wasn't on offer when Gareth Pearson of Longton, near Preston, bought his Quartett though – as it was already eight years old. Not that this bothered him, as a Cabriolet in Inca Blue was his idea of perfection, neatly complemented by the car's dark blue hood and Mauritius Blue block fabric trim.

Gareth explains what initially attracted him to the Quartett: "What a great idea it was to let buyers create exactly the sort of car that they wanted. Someone made the right choices with this one. Years ago I'd promised

Rag-top To Riches



myself a GTI Cabriolet – and finally I fell for this one.

Shortly after buying the Golf, Gareth booked it in for a partial respray to take care of stone chips on the bonnet and where the paintwork had suffered on the leading edge of the rear wheel arches. However, Peter Bonney of Preston, who undertook the work, advised Gareth that a quick 'blow' simply wouldn't do if he intended to keep the car, and so a total respray became the order of the day.

Interior work came next. The front seats were replaced with Recaros, with MJ Interiors of Bradford carrying out a re-trim in half-leather, retaining the original Mauritius Quartett block fabric to create a distinctive but relatively stock appearance. A three-spoke leather-bound steering wheel and polished alloy golf ball gear knob with matching handbrake handle came next, courtesy of TrimSport.

A smoother profile was achieved by fitting colour-coded moulding strips, keyless handles with remote central locking and a

polyurethane bushes, an OMP lower strut brace and a set of polyurethane steering rack mounts. The braking system was revamped by installing a late-model MkII 16V servo, a 22mm-bore master cylinder, stainless steel braided brake hoses and zinc plated discs, cross-drilled at the front. Gareth comments: "These changes really tightened up the Golf's handling, as the suspension and steering felt a lot sharper. The car cornered with little body lean and the brakes were a lot more reassuring."

The idea of improving the performance of the stock 1781cc K-Jetronic fuel-injected engine was considered – and rejected. Gareth reasoned that the available performance was perfectly adequate for his needs.

So far, Gareth's true obsession hasn't been mentioned: wheels. At the moment he has five complete sets, his present favourites being BBS RS three-piece split rims with polished outers – 7x15 ET 25 at the front

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set of Wolfsburg badges to replace the side indicators. At the back, the boot lid was de-badged and a set of red, tinted rear light clusters was fitted.

Gareth still wasn't completely satisfied though: "I wanted a sharper handling car, so it was fair game for a few mechanical mods!"

The Golf received a thorough overhaul at Dubsport, who also fitted an FK coilover adjustable suspension kit with Koni inserts, uprated wishbones with

and 7.5x15 ET 18 at the rear, with Toyo Proxes T1-S 195/45R15 tyres. Second favourite are the colour-coded BBS RM split rims, as shown in the photographs.

Gareth simply adores his rare Quartett Cabrio, and is justifiably proud of the maintenance and preparation work he carries out: "The trick is to keep on top of things so that the car looks right. This involves frequent but little attention. For example, you hear someone say 'How do get rid of brake dust on the wheels?'. This is only a problem if you allow it to build up in the first place. Regular washing with hot, soapy water is all that's needed.

"Stone chips are a bigger problem – generally I just go into a sulk! I wouldn't recommend dabbing paint on. The best way of avoiding stone chips is to drive slowly on loose road surfaces and not to 'tailgate'. Anyway, you have to resign yourself to some wear if you want to use the car throughout the year. What really winds me up is someone saying 'I'm going to a show, but I'm not taking the car'. What's the point of owning a mint example and not driving it, leaving it in a garage where nobody can see it?" What indeed.



New Recaros look surprisingly stock thanks to the original type of Mauritius Quartett block fabric.



Major engine modifications were eventually ruled out.



Inside and out, this rare Cabrio is simply stunning.

