

Editorial

Stopping faster; keeping your cool, reflections on some great events and launching the new Lunch Bunch

IN THIS **EDITION** we have contributions from Bernard Rengger and Peter Cole. I have written the rest as the reserves of articles are now down to nil. Is there anyone out there with an MGB who can write? If so please get in touch - we are interested in your exploits.

So what have Team Boys been up to during the last few months? The most significant event is that I have joined the ranks of FRPs (fully retired persons). I did not need much persuading to take this momentous step particularly when a friend, (some friend!) reminded me that I only had 20 years left having just turned 60 (I know I don't look it) and only then if I was lucky Nicky who is much younger is continuing to work, partly because she enjoys it so much, but more important we need the income to keep the MG going!

The Boneshaker had its 41st birthday just prior to Christmas and we arranged a run out to the The White Hart Inn in Stockbridge Hampshire, which to our surprise was attended by 19 people, the majority coming in their MGs. It was here that the Lunch Bunch was launched, as a number of those attending are also FRPs or soon will be. It was decided that it would be a good idea if once a month mid week we would nominate a pub somewhere in the local countryside, advise everyone of the date and location by e-mail, get the MGs out and find the pub to meet up with like minded people. A pie and a pint with the opportunity to put the world to rights sounds like a splendid idea Perhaps you could organise something similar in your area? Let me know if you do and I will include your plan here.

The following week we decided to go to the annual Christmas Carol Concert in Winchester Cathedral. We wandered through the town admiring the festive lights and the shop window decorations before making our way to the Cathedral. Imagine our surprise when we realised that it was packed. No room in the inn came to mind, and then a very helpful Verger came to the rescue leading us to the choir stalls where we were able to sit in the Vergers' allocated seats.

When the service started all the lights were slowly dimmed and the whole place was bathed in candlelight and the lone voice of a chorister rang out singing *Once in Royal David's City*. What a wonderful sound in such a special place pure magic. We joined in the carol singing with gusto accompanied by the main choir; the impressive organ and approximately 2000 other people who made up the congregation, a very special and moving experience.

Talking about Christmas reminds me that one



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of my presents this year was The Brake Fluid Alarm Kit supplied by TE Electronics Ltd (www.teelectronics.co.uk). It was after lunch while sitting in my favourite chair in front of the fire that I took out the kit to examine the contents and my mind wandered back to the time I first heard about this safety device. We were having lunch with a group of MG people when the conversation focussed on Alan Moore's story about the day his wife took their MG out of the garage and was moving slowly down the drive towards the road. She put her foot on the brake and nothing happened. Don't panic, apply the hand brake, get out rning husband! It turned out that the contents of the brake fluid reservoir had been sucked into the brake servo. As you know one story leads to another and Bob Owen, the inventor of the kit told how he had the same problem but this time it was while leaving a motorway A much more serious situation, but he too stopped before hitting anything.

This motivated him to set about developing the warning system, A very comprehensive write-up on the kit was published in the August 2005 edition of *Safety Fast* Since these initial stories I

have heard of numerous other incidents when this dangerous condition has occurred to MGs with a single brake circuit This was the catalyst for me putting the kit on my Christmas list It comes in a very smart box with full clearly written instructions, which I started to read with interest while the fire continued to crackle. It was not long before I was motivated to head out into the garage and put on my very smart new MG dustcoat and start work.

The work went well as there are not many components. A fluid sensor replaces the cap on the brake fluid reservoir (this contains a float which constantly checks the fluid level), and a beeper goes behind the dash to give a reassuring sound when the check has been completed after turning on the ignition. There is a red LED panel light which can fit in the dashboard as mine does or in the supplied box just below the dash. The wiring is not difficult once you have worked out if your car is positive or negative earth. All the connectors required are included along with a tiny screwdriver to make the final adjustments.

I had just completed the wiring and was about to test the unit when a loud shout announcing more food was heard and a small white dog leapt enthusiastically on to my lap! I was suddenly awake - I had nodded off and it was all a dream,...

Most of you who know me will have guessed this to be the case, as spanners do not figure high in my world. The kit has now been fitted professionally by Richard Chapman of Manor

Chairman's report

The year started with our AGM in March followed swiftly by our ever popular Cotswold Run. We then started to plan for our summer meet held at Highclere Castle in North Hampshire by kind invitation of the Abingdon Work Centre. As 2005 marked the 25th anniversary of the launch of the LE MGB, the final version of the MGB before the factory closed, we decided to feature this model along with any other special editions, the jubilee launched in 1975 and the MGB GT launched in 1965. Little knowing that MG production was about to cease with the closure in its 100th year of the Longbridge site - talk about history repeating itself

However I am getting ahead of myself for in April 35 MGBs made the journey to France for what was to prove the most successful Register weekend so far Silverstone saw the MGB Register again playing its part setting up the event. Incidentally in spite of posters and appeals asking for volunteers to spend an hour or so at the event on Sunday evening cleaning up and packing away, we received just one offer of assistance from a 17 year old young lady! For 2006 I trust more of you will volunteer to help. It really is unfair to expect a few Kimber House staff and an ever aging and small group of volunteers to do it all,

September saw us all enjoying ourselves at the MG Midget-organised autumn run and an extra bonus of a second Register weekend, this time in Wells, Somerset. Finally we all got together for our now familiar end of season event at Abingdon for MGB Focus Day

We are now looking forward to our 2006 programme and intend to follow a similar format

- 2nd April: The Cotswold Run
- 28th April: Register weekend in Tunbridge Wells
- 23-25 June: Silverstone
- 2nd July: Summer Gathering this year in a new part of the country namely Suffolk at Igworth Hall by kind invitation of the Anglia Centre.
- 6th August: a second mid summer get together this time an invitation from the South East Centre to their event in Chichester
- 3rd September: the Midget Organized Autumn Road Run.

» 11th November: the MGB Focus Day (provisional date at present). All these events will be listed on the Club Calendar and our Website. John Venables will be reminding you of events in the monthly Register updates in *Safety Fast* so there really is no excuse for not entering and enjoying the company of fellow enthusiasts. I note in December's *Safety Fast* that the MGF Register want to better the numbers of MGBs at major club events, so make sure you MGB enthusiasts turn out in numbers that the MGF Register can only dream of.
Happy MGB motoring.
Bernard Rengger



Clockwise from left The challenge for Keith Allen and Clive Stokes (photo Keith Allen); Boneshaker with decoration (photo Roger Boys); ready for Boxing Day Run (photo Roger Boys); the Brake Fluid Alarm Kit in situ (photo Roger Boys).

Garage, Wantage who was a bit sceptical of it initially considering it to be another gimmick designed to relieve people like me of our money. However when it was installed and tested he changed his mind and stated that it was an excellent safety kit well designed and easy to fit

At the same time as this work was being completed, we had an uprated heater matrix and fan fitted (this was Nicky's present). We also decided to have a Kenlowe fan installed along with a new radiator the old one being the original. This was because on our trip to Northumberland earlier in the year the car's temperature began to rise and fast approached boiling over as we sat in a traffic jam on the A1 near Newcastle. 'Fit a Kenlowe fan' was the answer I was told, so get it fitted professionally she said. I was a bit concerned about an electric fan because I had had one many years ago in a Ford Escort and seemed to spend my time worrying if it would come on as the temperature rose. Hence my insistence on having an override switch fitted. We splashed out and had the Fan Thermo-switch kit that fits into the top hose - a much neater location for the heat sensor I am pleased with the installation of the override switch, which works well and provides that little bit of reassurance.

Our last event of the year was to take part in the 12th Boxing Day Run, which is organised, by John Harris and Mike Page from the Abingdon Centre. This event sets out from the town square

in Abingdon, which is specially opened for the MGs to meet up. There were about 25 others who had decided that this was a good way to spend Boxing Day, so much better than shopping! Having signed on and entered the draw, which had a first prize of £100 that I was looking forward to collecting at the end of the run, we set out on the route. This was where the new heater came into its own as we had the roof down, so much better to have a warm Naggator. The route took us through the lanes of Oxfordshire providing the opportunity to see some of the very pretty villages. We saw a number of other MGs following what we thought was the same route, but they turned off left when we went right. This is a little alarming, but it's important to follow the naggator's directions to the letter. She proved to be right as we drove into the car park of the Foxcome Lodge Hotel where we were made most welcome. The draw took place and we did not win the £100, better luck in 2006! It had proved to be an excellent way to finish off the MG year

To end these ramblings, I recently received a picture of an MGB which has become a challenge for Keith Allen. There is some work needed. Clive Stokes (pictured) has volunteered to help. Keith has vowed to have the project completed by Silverstone 2006. Hopefully I will receive further information indicating the progress which I can pass on to you. Team Boys hope to see lots of you during the coming year. Enjoy your MG.



The MGB Register Weekend

Peter Cope reports on an excellent event that confirms that the Register has come up with a winning formula

I HAVE OWNED MY black rubber bumpered GT for 20 years this year so I have taken it out for a number of celebratory treats'. In July it went to Silverstone where it was very pleased to win 1st place in its class in the R.O.O. Then in September it was off to Wells for the MGB Register weekend.

I have attended many 'B' Register events over the last twenty years and they have always been good fun. However I think that with these weekends, now in their fourth year the Register has found its most successful format. Normally held over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend, this year the main visit had been to France and so it was decided to hold an extra event in the autumn. This meant some regulars were unable to come but it was good to see some new faces who soon got into the swing of things.

The weekends, which are based in traditional town hotels, usually start on Friday with dinner then two days of runs, eating and drinking, not necessarily in that order and on Monday a final visit to an interesting venue in the morning before everyone says goodbye until next time.

Whilst the 'B' is quite able to cope with modern traffic I see no pleasure in driving on motorways, especially when this would include the M25. So I planned a cross-country route along the A272 from Kent to Winchester then Stockbridge, Salisbury, Warminster, Farnham and straight through Shepton Mallet to Wells. Interestingly I tried the AA website before I left and it insisted I went via Andover whatever towns I requested on the itinerary. So I stuck to my own 'sat nav system', a well-worn spiral bound atlas and a 'post-it' with a large arrow

drawn on it! Point the arrow at the next important town or road number and it's easy to keep track of where you are going.

I always run on Shell Optimax 98 octane and keep a booklet listing Shell petrol stations in the car "No longer available, it's all on our website," they told me when I rang for a new one. "Just how do you carry a computer in the car?" I asked. "Print a list before you go," was the glib answer Hold on though. I'm paying a pound a litre for petrol so surely it's not much to ask the petrol company for a list of where I can buy their product, is it? Anyway feeling rather pleased with myself for having navigated the one way system in Winchester having arrived in Stockbridge just at lunchtime and worked my way through Salisbury I filled up at the last Shell station just before Wilton. To my amazement it was only 95.9 pence a litre here, over ten pence cheaper than locally at the time. Later in Somerset I paid 107.9 pence for Esso 97 octane. Someone's profiteering and the Government is taking a fortune in extra unplanned tax and duty. Guess where I filled up on the way home!

Arriving in Wells in mid afternoon and having checked in, I was able to take a stroll around this lovely old city. I had last visited there in ... well let's just say that we went on a family outing from Bristol in my grandfather's Ford Popular! Gathering in the bar before dinner, about thirty in all, we were issued with our Rally Plates and Route Books, beautifully produced with comprehensive instructions and historical notes, by local members Celia and Jim Sheppard.

It rained quite heavily in the night so on Saturday morning, to work off the bacon, fried

eggs, sausages and black pudding, the more energetic were out leathering off their cars. Then we made our way right around the city's one way system to the Cathedral green opposite the hotel where we all assembled on the lawns for a photo shoot set up by Celia and Jim, who later very kindly gave us each a copy including our own car as a souvenir. Then it was off on a gentle run through the Somerset countryside to Stourhead. As I had been here before I decided that coffee was the priority, whilst some members went round the house and wonderful landscaped gardens before lunch. Next and just a short drive away was an afternoon stop at the Haynes Motor Museum at Sparkford. Whilst I had my lunch, here Nigel and Jan took the opportunity for the first of several cream teas!

As always the museum is fascinating, as it reflects one man's interest and the cars all looked cared for. There is an example of just about every make and model that you can think of. I was particularly interested in the Riley Elf as it was painted in Faun Brown, the same colour as my newly acquired MG 1300 and not one that I could recall or find in old colour charts. However it was the wonderful pre-war Alfa Romeo in the famous 'red' display with bodywork very much in the Tickford style that was the one I most wanted to take home.

The run back brought us fine views of (and then close to) Glastonbury Tor but the day was soon over and we were all back in Wells in plenty of time for dinner. This time, after the beef, the charming Polish waitress persuaded me to have the sticky toffee pudding. So it was



Above
Wells Cathedral with
MGs and a fine line of
cars on the Wells
weekend (left) (photos
Roger Cooper)

no wonder that I slept like the proverbial log!

Sunday morning, however saw us all up and out sharp as we had a train to catch! Making our way through some wonderful old villages we arrived at Cranmore, though in plenty of time for a ride on the East Somerset Railway. On the platform was an old cast iron 'gents'. Even more fascinating though was the telephone box. Probably uniquely, built into the back of the structure was a stamp dispenser and pillar-box. It appeared to still be functioning but as the train was now about to leave, there was no time to find out. After a gentle run we stopped at Mendip Vale where the Croatian engine, masquerading as a British Railways loco, ran round the train to pull us back to Cranmore.

Then it was off again and after stopping to admire the view across Somerset towards the Bristol Channel from a local vantage point, we soon arrived at Wookey Hole. We all gathered in the cafe firstly for a quick lunch and then went on the visit, which these days, after emerging from the underground guided tour, includes a dinosaur park, paper mill and a mock seaside pier with all its novelties. Afterwards the route continued towards the coast until we reached Cheddar where we turned right through the crowded village and made our way up the famous Cheddar Gorge. Even today this still seems quite a climb but nothing like it had been in that Ford Popular!

Carrying on through higher ground we soon saw lakes in the distance and dropping down arrived at the Chew Valley Lake picnic site. A post war reservoir to supply Bristol with water, it is nevertheless very attractive especially in the

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late afternoon sun that greeted our arrival.

This was another opportunity for Nigel and Jan to indulge in a cream tea whilst the more energetic went on a walk around the lakeside. Our cars caused quite a lot of interest amongst the normal Sunday afternoon collection of Astras and Micras, but so too did three fine old motorcycles that were parked in front of the cafeteria. It was soon time though to make our way back to Wells.

With some time left before our final night's dinner I went for a walk around the Bishop's Palace in anticipation of seeing one of the famous swans ringing for food but I had no more luck than on my visit all those years ago! However the lady at the entrance assured me that they did still ring for food but rather logically only when they couldn't find any in the moat. Walking on, open countryside appears quite unexpectedly just behind the Cathedral. Wells is a very small gem of a city and you realise that this is how all Cathedral cities were in their early days.

The final treat was kept for Monday morning, a guided tour of Wells Cathedral itself. A perfect example in miniature, the Cathedral is full of beautiful stonework, glass and carpentry. These tours can often be tediously boring, but our guide covered all the important aspects of the

building without us really realising. If it was there, we saw it! Highlights were the scissor arches around the central crossing, a unique medieval answer to a major structural problem of the time that no computer could ever have devised. Equally memorable were the ancient stained glass and the huge chest in the shape of a fan designed to contain the bishops' copes (of particular interest to me - check my name!). This has only recently been dated to Saxon times. Over a thousand years old, it makes my 28 year old 'B' seem positively new!

Then it was on to see the 14th century astronomical clock strike eleven. Every hour on the hour for over 600 years the jousts have ridden round knocking each other's heads off! This was the end of the formal tour but we all walked up the fine curved stone staircase to see the Chapter House - the octagonal Chapter House! How very wise the masons were and what a fitting and apt end to a splendid weekend. Thanks are due especially to Celia and Jim for organising all the runs and to Roger and Joan Cooper for dealing with all the advanced preparations, hotel and bookings. To all the members too for being such fun and good company. The car performed perfectly all weekend and there was just time for a final tea in Petworth on the way home.

Next year the regular event will again be held over the May Bank Holiday weekend and this time it will be in my part of the world, Kent. I understand that the bookings are already heavy before it has even been advertised, so if you want to join us (and who wouldn't), then please contact Colin Lannmg soon.