

EDITORIAL

THIS MONTH WE have a contribution from Ken Smith in the USA. Ken is a true MG person, involved with the publication of the North American Classic MG Magazine, which he occasionally sends to me. This particular article is lifted from that magazine as it caught my eye as a splendid example of a very early car saved, although personally I am not fond of the white wall tyres, it does look wonderful. Then David De Saxe, my star contributor of the year, has been reminiscing about the MGs he has owned over the years. Not too many people will have had an MG as a company car I guess. I was fortunate to meet David for the first time at the Focus Day and was able to thank him for his contributions in person. Is it not time that you put in writing your MG story? 500 words would do nicely please. Speaking of the Focus Day I have tried to cover the atmosphere of a special day - if you missed it you missed a treat. Bernard has also contributed his thoughts as Register Chairman to make you all think.

So another year has gone by and what a

great time Team Boys had. I am sat here in early January reflecting on the adventures that we enjoyed, the majority of which focused around the Boneshaker (1964 MGB). We have covered 8000 miles, our largest annual mileage in the 10 years of use. We froze in the snow on the Kimber Run in April and boiled on the Cotswold Caper in July with temperatures in the high 80s, and had loads of excellent days in-between, finishing with the superb Boxing Day run from Abingdon, a real treat after the excesses of Christmas Day. We had a great day despite having to turn round more times than I care to mention, too many mince pies for the 'aggiator or a few errors in the route! Our sincere thanks must go to all of the people who work so hard to put on the various events that we, and all of you have taken part in. During this period of reflection I also thought about all the friends that we have made through simply buying an old car 12 years ago, amazing.

Many of you will be interested to know what Nicky and Paddy (the Westie) received for Christmas this year. Both were suitably pleased. Nicky received a new mohair hood, not for her to wear, although some would say she needs a new hat, but for the Boneshaker,

no more draughts or water leaking down the back of her neck It was provided and fitted by Don Trimming of Birmingham 0121 373 1313 and we are impressed with their service, no wonder that they have been in business for 50 plus years. Paddy had a new carpet set for the rear shelf, which is his seat, much better than bare metal! My gift was a 12v battery! Now we are set to start the planning for 2007. Can't wait.

To finish off this time, I have a topical tip of my own. Those of you with a Roadster will, I suggest, have experienced the annoyance of the rattle caused by the hood catches when the roof is down. This can be completely solved by using a strip of Velcro, available in small packs, designed to hold cables from Halfords for a couple of pounds. These are used by sliding one under each catch, when hooked together they securely hold the catches in place; the photos will show how to fit them. I leave them in place even when the roof is up. Enjoy your MG in winter.

Roger



2006 MGB FOCUS DAY

THIS 2006 MGB FOCUS DAY was held at Abingdon during November and concentrated for the first time on a single subject: tuning your MGB be it for fast road use, rallying, sprints, track days or racing. The assembled group of 60 enthusiasts were initially addressed by Danny Walters, MGB Register Technical Representative. He introduced Gerry Brown who has spent a lifetime tuning and competing in racing and more recently historic rallying with considerable success.

Gerry set the scene for his presentation by explaining his personal credentials. His experience with MGs dates back 40 years to 1966 when he began competing in his MG TC. He first raced an MGB in 1976 and has raced and rallied Bs in all sorts of events ever since. He was co-founder and director of Brown & Gammons from 1977 until he left in 1993 to start his new business, Merton Motorsport, (01473 737256) in Suffolk preparing classic and historic cars. This gave confidence to the audience who realised that he had been there and done it with a great deal of success over a number of years. The MGB is a fun well balanced car, which is ideal for most types of competition;

the performance can be enhanced progressively without the need to spend huge amounts of money. Gerry emphasised the point that SAFETY FIRST = SAFETY FAST. He then covered the following subjects in the order that he recommended they were introduced.

- Comfort and instruments.
- Brakes.
- Suspension.
- Wheels and Tyres.
- Engine preparation and tuning
- Body Modifications.

Each of these headings was covered in great detail with practical examples being shown where possible, questions were answered and discussion encouraged during the six hours of the Focus Day.

It would be impossible to cover in an article the detailed information that was discussed. However the slides that were used by Gerry have been put on the Internet site and can be viewed there. A unanimous vote of thanks was extended to Gerry for the patient way in which he had explained all of the points that had been



Gerry, on left making a point to Danny Walters.

covered. Suffice to say that all the participants left fully motivated with a much greater understanding of brake pad materials and suspension spring ratings among many other points.

It was a wonderful day; thanks must go to all of the people who worked so hard to make it happen. What is planned for November 2007? Watch *Safety Fast!* where details will be published.

Roger



Very early 1962
MGB Roadster
looks identical to
Road & Tracks
November 1962
cover shot

ANOTHER EARLY MGB SURFACES

By Ken Smith

WHEN GARY GILPIN WAS seeking another classic car, he really didn't intend to buy an MGB. Already the owner of a 1957 Corvette, which he had restored a number of years ago, he was looking for a more collectible automobile. His first car had been a 1966 Triumph TR4 and so he began looking for a similar car, a restored TR 250 for example. One of the places he looked was on eBay and it was there he stumbled on a very rare, and really collectible car!

It was none other than a 1962 MGB roadster but even more remarkable was the chassis number GHN3L 111 and body number five which makes it one of the earliest MGBs manufactured, typically in Ins blue with chrome wire wheels, whitewall tyres and looking identical to the MGB on the front cover of *Road & Track* in November 1962.

The car had been restored in Oregon in the early 90s and was then purchased by a collector in Philadelphia, who after some ten years, and with very few miles covered, became

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disenchanted with the car mainly due to it having been restored. He already owned two MGAs, a TR3, a couple of Jaguar XKEs and this unique early MGB which was the prettiest of the bunch. The previous owner had just bought another XKE and needed room for his new acquisition

Gary drove down to Philadelphia, looked at the MGB, and bought it on the spot! However, due to the fact that the car had only been driven 300 miles in the last ten years and the water pump had failed on a test drive, he was rather apprehensive concerning his purchase, which had been restored some 2600 miles ago.

But a deal is a deal, and so home the car went to New York. Disassembling the original MOWOG water pump led Gary to have this restored, while during the past year a new pinion seal and rear brake cylinders have been fitted, and another 1000 miles have been put on the mileometer. This past winter some minor front suspension work has been undertaken and the car is now ready for some summer running, now with a pair of black and orange 1962 New York State licence plates.

He is in possession of a letter dated 1983 from British Motor Heritage verifying the numbers, and stating that this was indeed one of the first MGBs manufactured with engine number I8S GUH-280. Since he acquired it, Gary has already refused a couple of offers to sell the car. It is felt that this unique car is probably the second oldest MGB still running following GHN3LI02 and is sure to attract lots of attention, as it did at MG 2006 when Don Hayter actually signed the car for Gary!

MEMORIES OF SEVEN Bs



I CAN'T THINK THAT many MGBs - roadsters, at any rate - get registered as company cars, though readers may tell me I'm wrong. In 1963 I was single and a director of a Midlands grocery chain, whom I somehow persuaded to acquire my first one. A more suitable saloon for trailing round locations in Birmingham and the Black Country would have cost as much if not more than an MGB, so I couldn't lose on that score. It was, of course, a 3-bearing-engined, phase I example, though in those days we didn't identify it as a "pull-handle" model. It was equipped with wire wheels and overdrive, and was painted Iris blue with a blue hood and blue leather upholstery, and registered 550 JOK.

In addition to some local navigational rallies, including the famous Buxton, 550 JOK took me to France on the annual London-Andorra-Sete rally. Our only mishap resulted from taking off at speed over an unannounced hump-back bridge. The subsequent landing terminated the life of the tailpipe support bracket - amazingly, the silencer remained intact. In those days all French villages boasted a working garage and, trailing sparks, we limped into one of these late in the afternoon. The splendid French proprietor/mechanic squinted at the tailpipe, selected a piece of exhaust tube slightly larger, and proceeded to fashion a new bracket to the exact dimensions. The operation took until closing time, so I suggested the garage owner join us at the bar across the road for a glass or so of the local wine. After somewhat more than several of these and a speech I believe I made praising the inventiveness of the French and their brilliance as engineers, of which monsieur was a shining example. I remember little more of the day, as at nightfall we must have been taken upstairs legless and put to bed in the establishment, which fortunately had the odd guest room. An

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unscheduled stop, but great fun.

I'm not ashamed to say that I actually wept when the time came to part with 550 JOK, so fond of her had I become. I moved on to something unmentionable, but with the launch of the MGB GT it didn't take me long, of course, to realise the error of my ways and we put one on order B GTs were like gold dust then, and the only way I could secure one was by bribery in the form of buying for the company fleet two or three Morris 1100s from a Nuffield distributor in Coventry. Thus in 1967 I became entitled to the sole use of a new, mineral blue B GT, registered JDU 100E. I kept her for the better part of four years and, while the odometer didn't quite go all the way round to zero again, she wasn't far off covering 100,000 miles, letting me down only once. This was on the M50 near Abergavenny where an exhaust valve expired, having blown a neat hole in itself.

My favourite journey with JDU 100E was to Berlin and back. In those days you could cross the North Sea from Southend to Rotterdam in a Bristol Freighter operated by British Air Ferries. These fine aircraft carried three cars and the odd bike, and for a modest fare hugely shortened your journey to the Continent.

The date was August 1969. The Iron Curtain was firmly in place (Soviet tanks had rolled into Prague less than a year earlier), so when I reached Marienbon the bordertown between West and East Germany, I wasn't surprised to be told I had a mere two hours to drive across the East

German sector and present myself and the car at the West Berlin border checkpoint, otherwise they would "come looking for me". Mindful of the experience of the exhaust valve and its faulty metallurgy and what might become of me if another one failed, I prayed as I drove eastward for 160kms. All was well, however and a few great days were spent in a Berlin beginning to rejuvenate after the war.

My reception at the West Berlin/East Germany checkpoint on the return journey was even less friendly. My passport was confiscated while the guards proceeded to strip the GT. Protest was useless. Of course they didn't find anything, but I had a ferry to catch at Rotterdam, didn't I? Anyway, the journey from Berlin to Wembley Park including the search at the checkpoint and a leisurely lunch at a motorway cafe once in West Germany, took just over eleven hours. Could that be matched today, I wonder?

With a change of job I moved to London. No company car came initially with the new employment, and I felt B hunger pangs again. Leafing through the new cars for sale columns of "Autocar", I came across a BL dealer in Potters Bar with a Glacier white Roadster on its hands. I sold my existing wheels for roughly what I'd paid for them, found another £500 and negotiated a 5% discount (seems pathetic by today's levels, doesn't it!) with the Hertfordshire salesman, and became the delighted owner of GUR 950L. However, a company car arrived sooner than I had been led to expect. What to do? The answer came from a young lady colleague who had a three-year old Midget, which I had once repaired for her, and who said she'd need little persuasion to trade up to a B. Sadly, she had to sell GUR 950L on before too long. But it is great to record that the car is still in existence today, albeit repainted in a sort of flame red. I was astonished

to see it several years ago at Beaulieu. I was told the car had been abroad, then returned with its original registration number intact. It is on present DVLA records as in current use.

By now married, it occurred to my wife and me that it would be nice to have as our second transport an open car instead of an ex-London FX4 taxi. The dunderheads at BL were making sure the end of the MGBs wonderful production run was in sight, but in 1979 there were a few still coming off the line at Abingdon. Now living in Surrey, I visited a few local BL dealers, one of whom had a field full of new cars awaiting buyers. As I wandered idly among these, imagine my surprise as I came across a Roadster in Inca yellow, standing forlornly in its pre-delivery wax in a corner of the field. I asked the salesman if he would care to offer me a deal on the MGB. He smiled somewhat patronisingly and said he didn't have one. When I said, oh yes, he did, he went to his stock list and looked up triumphantly, saying sorry, sir, I'm afraid you're mistaken. A withering look told me what he thought of my suggestion that we both go down the field and take a peep, but I suppose he thought he ought to humour me, so down we went....

"The surface rust on the suspension components indicates it must have been sitting there for some time", I ventured, not sure whether the salesman knew where to look for suspension components. "I might like the car". I went on, "but since 1) it doesn't exist and 2) it needs cleaning up and then Waxoyling underneath. I wouldn't care to pay full price for it". I didn't but I now owned FPL 77V

I think it was my job requiring absences abroad that caused this car to be sold with little mileage on the clock. We certainly didn't have much use out of her but the arrival of a battered MGA meant the despatch of the B.

Once as time passed I regretted the sale,

production of the B had stopped. An MG specialist in west London who had helped me with bits to improve the A and keep it mobile said he'd find me a decent B, and then I could spend what I wanted to on it to enable him to bring it to the desired standard. LCD 178F seemed to be the best of an indifferent bunch, now British Racing Green but with patches of Pale Primrose in evidence. First gear was deafening (they all do that, Sir, as Graeme predictably announced). Anyway, with the car finally titivated to my satisfaction, I agreed to pick it up on the Saturday. But on the Friday I received a call from a less-than-happy Graeme to say that the car had been, shall we say, removed from his forecourt. I have to say that, disappointed though I was, I enjoyed a very good relationship with Graeme and his colleagues ever since.

But I was still B-less. Graeme didn't have anything else I liked, but another sports and classic car trader in Surrey did. He, too, specialised in MGs, was totally charming and likeable, as such persons are apt to be, and had the jolly habit of describing any old tat that came into his apology for a showroom as "mint". Such a description was applied gaily to a two-owner 1970 Pale Primrose Roadster registered FMV 269J. I suppose it was fairly mint, if you ignored the fact that the sills barely bridged the gap between A and B posts, but in many other respects it was pretty faultless. So I had the sills renewed and a bare-metal re-spray, the seats re-trimmed in black leather piped with pale primrose. The result was stunning, and we had a lot of fun with FMV 269J, including a wonderful drive across western France, Spain and down to the Portuguese Algarve, thence to Lisbon, where we had to park her for three days in that huge square on the waterfront while we explored the city.

Moving to Wiltshire meant the B once again had to go. But seeing almost daily a Tartan red

GT parked outside a nearby cottage made me hungry once more, and eventually I came across an identical car of identical vintage advertised for sale not far away. I had examined a few others, but was convinced that I was interested only in one within the chassis range 139472 to 187840 (i.e., a GHD4 car), as I think the specification of cars of this phase represents the most perfect example of MGB production.

I probably overpaid for PJN 629G, but she'd had only two owners, the original a lady to whom the car belonged for its first 30 years! She guaranteed the mileage (under 40,000). Everything was there from the original bill of sale from the Nuffield distributors in Southend-on-Sea, the owner's manual, service booklet, 1968 price list, the original RF60 log book and a full file of consecutive MOT certificates. The car itself was immaculate, having been professionally repainted after some minor metalwork repairs, and a photographic record as the work progressed was supplied. Waxoyl oozed from every pore. Even the original upholstery was in place, if somewhat tired, and the original carpets were barely worn. How many B enthusiasts will remember the rather odd, short-haired material used during that production period?

All I needed to do was to replace the worn rubber sill coverings and C-post trims, then clean up the engine bay and replace a few service components, such as the oil filler cap, engine breather valve and HT leads and then replace one or two incorrect components, such as the wrong type choke cable.

So that brings me to the present. These seven cars have been fun and if any of the cars are on the MGB register or if someone knows where they are, I'd be thrilled to know. In production order they were: 550 JOK.JDU 100E.LCD 178F, PJN 629G, FMV 269J, GUR 950L and FPL 77V.

David De Saxe

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

LAST YEAR STARTED with our now very popular Cotswold run, well attended as usual. This was followed by the register weekend held around Tunbridge Wells in Kent and thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part. Silverstone was for some reason not as popular as usual with MGB drivers and for the first time ever there were more MGF/TFs in the register parking area than MGBs. In 2006 we were invited by the Anglia Centre to join their Summer Gathering - a good event and exceptional weather but again attendance by MGB register members below expectations. I wonder why attendances were down?

Autumn saw us joining the Midget run followed in November by our Focus Day, which in 2006 consisted of an excellent presentation by Gerry Brown on tuning your MGB. One of my themes in recent Chairman's comments has been communication, in a loose organisation

like a Register it is difficult to get a fix on what members' views are on various topics. Following our drop in numbers at Silverstone I asked for your views but got no response, so at the Focus Day I tried giving out a questionnaire to those attending asking various questions regarding MGCC race meetings. I would like to thank all those who took the time to complete it and if the results are in any way representative, what you are looking for are changes to give more interesting racing. Following the survey I wrote to the club and by now a copy of this letter should be on our web site www.mgb-register.org. If any of you have any thoughts on this letter or MGCC race meetings in general, then members of the committee would be interested to hear from you (most telephone numbers and e-mail addresses are on our web site).

Looking forward, the first event of 2007 is our AGM scheduled for the 25th March hopefully at Kimber House but certainly in the Abingdon area. If you are interested in attending check our web site for further details or phone me. This will be closely followed by the Cotswold Run, an advertisement should have appeared in *Safety Fast!* and entry forms can also be downloaded from the web site.

Numbers are restricted so get your entry in ASAP. In early May the Register weekend takes place in Holland, as far as I know it is fully booked by now, but a phone call to Colin Lanning is worthwhile.

The MGB Register will be at Silverstone as usual. If you would like to help out in Register parking on Saturday or Sunday then please don't be afraid to chat to one of the committee members on duty or come to the register desk, let's see if we can show the MGF/TF boys and gals that 2006 was just a hiccup.

The Abingdon Works Centre is celebrating their 25th anniversary in 2007 and we will probably be joining them for their special Summer Day Out. In the autumn, we are again planning to join the Midget run and we then have our Focus Day. As usual, details of all events will be put on our web site and John Venables will cover them in more detail in *Safety Fast!* Remember the Register is here for you, if you don't feel that you are benefiting, let us know what events you would like or better still, come and help. Finally the committee would like to wish you all a good 2007 and look forward to seeing you at various events during the year.

Bernard Rengger