



Welcome to the MGB Newsletter

This is the first time since I have had the privilege of submitting the articles for our four-page spread that I have had too much copy. Great, please keep it up, makes my job so much easier. Thanks go to Peter Bramble for his words on his racing year, David Askew for the update on the all-important Register, and of course John Watson, our esteemed Chairman, with his notes. The rest was down to me.

You will all want to know what the Boneshaker (1964 B Roadster) got for Christmas 2009. Well, you will have to read the article on the MGB Practical Maintenance Day. As I have now run out of space all I need to say is, "Enjoy your MG in 2010".

Roger

Practical Maintenance Day

The 2009 MGB Practical Maintenance Day was surprisingly well attended; we had 44 people keen to learn about their MGBs. It was gratifying to see that some new faces had made it this year.

The demonstration conducted by Danny Walters (MGB Technical Expert) assisted by Dave Cato concentrated on the little things that make a big difference. The focus was very much on the service jobs that everyone can do. There was also a section on how to keep the dreaded rust at bay. This was followed by a Q&A session where lots of points were covered including which oils to use where and how to adjust the quarter lights among other topics. There were two tips that I picked up which I have used to great effect. The first came from Bernard Rengger and concerned the refitting of seats, which if you have ever been faced with this seemingly simple task can prove very difficult because nothing seems to line up. The first tip was to tape the seat runners to the fixed bracket with masking tape which stops them falling off as the seats are turned up the correct way, the tape can be removed relatively easily when the seats are in place, simple but very effective. The second was to obtain some longer bolts (30mm/1½ inches) and fit them into the keep nut fixed to the floor pan, but from underneath. These then form a stud and the seats can be

placed onto them and secured with a nut. The problem of lining up the wooden slats, spacers and seats disappears. On my car I was only able to put the rear bolts in from underneath as the front ones went into a box section; however, by using the longer bolt in the conventional way and putting a taper on each with the grindstone they were easily fitted.

The second demonstration taking place in the other room was conducted by Yvonne McPhillips from PJM Motors and was on how to refit a complete carpet set to a Roadster including the boot area – it was my Christmas present for the Boneshaker that was to be fitted. This demonstration

was impressive, like so much in life it is simple when you know how. In the unique, very amusing and athletic style displayed by Yvonne and her colleague Sandra it was made to seem very simple. One of the secrets is to use plenty of brushable adhesive then slide the carpet into position then heat it up with a steamer. Yvonne used a converted wallpaper stripper. The application of heat softened the backing of the carpet and enabled her to ensure the fit was perfect. This technique worked very well on the wheel arches and the box section in the doorways, the glue used cures when pressure is applied. A contact adhesive was used in areas



Yvonne from PJM Motors in full flow. Photo: John Watson



where instant sticking was required, for example on the boot lid. The cutting of the hole for the gear change mechanism was also easy when you know exactly where to cut the carpet, this is always considered to be a risky procedure for an amateur. The demonstration of how to measure and mark up was explained, and then with a sharp knife and loads of confidence the tricky job was done. While Yvonne was delving into the footwell of the car Sandra demonstrated the technique used to cover the door caps.

Yvonne's company provides all that you will ever need to complete this job yourself along with plenty of advice. During the lunch break they previewed a DVD that demonstrated the techniques employed when not only replacing the carpets but also covering seats, this will shortly become available and will prove an invaluable aid. This DVD consisted of a series of still

pictures with written explanations on screen. The advantage of this method is that a print can be taken of the relevant page and then taken out into the workshop and consulted as work progresses. Having seen this excellent demonstration, there was no-one in the room who did not feel confident that they could have a go at re-carpeting their car. However, Yvonne did say that as an alternative to 'do it yourself', PJM would do the complete job for you in their workshop, and some faces brightened up on hearing this. PJM can be contacted on 01630 652873, www.pjm-motors.co.uk or Yvonne@pjm-motors.co.uk

One of the great things about this type of get-together is the ability to network and exchange ideas. Again during a conversation I picked up that it is possible to replace the flat glass in my original equipment Tex door mirrors with a convex glass, ensuring that the rear view is greatly

improved, particularly on the nearside. I placed an order with Tex Automotive Ltd on 01993 893500 (or you can order via www.texautomotive.com) for part number M97702Q and received the two mirrors requested by return of post, £12 well spent in my view.

Overall it proved to be an excellent day and a big thank you must go to everyone who took part, in particular Neil Hyett who was the main man coordinating the event. Prior to this year's Practical Maintenance Day there was talk about it being the last for some time as the attendance had been dropping. However, I think the enthusiasm seen this year will cause a change of mind, so watch this space. I even heard suggestions that the working of all the electrical components could be explained and that Yvonne could show us how to fit a new hood to a Roadster. Now there are a couple of challenges!

The date for this year's event is 23/10/2010.

New MGB Register Competition Reports web page

Do you race, rally, sprint, use your MGB in hill climbs, production trials or auto tests, in fact in any competitive motor sport? Would you like more publicity for your efforts and a way of giving more exposure to your supporters and sponsors? If the answers to these questions are yes, then read on. The MGB Register is announcing a page on our website, mgb-register.org, where you can file your reports/experiences with photographs. All you have to do is write a piece (with photos if possible) and send it

to MGBcompreports@bigfoot.com as an email attachment, we will then put it on our website under the page heading of COMPETITIONS for everybody to read. Our MGB Register website gets several thousand hits per month so in the two months that your piece will be on the site you will gain significant publicity for your efforts. Don't be shy, we would like to hear from you no matter how successful you are, whether you are at the front of the grid, midfield, or at the back and just

entering for the fun of it. As long as you are using your MGB in competition we are interested and so we are sure are the hundreds of MGB owners who watch motor sport and enjoy seeing MGBs taken to the limit and keeping alive a competitions history that goes back to the launch of the model in 1962.

The following is part one of a report from a racer on his year. If you want to read his full report then click on our website and go to the COMPETITIONS page.

A year in the life of an MGB racer. Part one

By Peter Bramble

This is a year in the life of Team Slap My Top. If you have never seen us in action or on the racetrack here is a brief history. It is a 1966-ish MGB Roadster that was built from a bare body shell, which one day I will pay for. It was built in my front garden as I had no garage and at Entune 2000's workshop (08700 278378). It was built up from two MGB GTs, one of which was reborn into a road car. It has raced in the Cockshoot championship and the Total Butler/Peter Best championship. We have had many adventures with this car, some of which still cannot be told! The car runs in class B in both championships, which is for road-going cars. It has a 1950s

engine, a standard four-speed gearbox with competition overdrive, a banjo axle and lots of lightweight body panels and paintwork, courtesy of Stevie Wonder. The name Team Slap My Top comes from one of BBC Radio 2 DJ Alex Lester's shows, and he proudly broadcasts that it is the best looking car on the radio. If you are an insomniac or travel in the early hours of the morning, you already know him. We also send him reports of our races, which are broadcast usually the same week. Our year has no fixed time and the year starts and finishes on the last day of the season. As soon as the last race is finished we start the new season. For the

2009 season the car had been rebuilt at the rear after I had reversed into the tyre wall at Oulton Park trying a different racing line to everyone else. Luckily, as I was airborne when I hit the tyre wall, the chassis was not damaged; only two rear wings, the boot, driver's door, rear boot panel and Sebring valence. After a talk with John at Entune, we decided that the engine would go to him to be rebuilt, and as the head was on its last legs, he would arrange for a new one to be built. After the usual several cans of lager, oaths and bruised knuckles, the engine was dispatched to Entune with the message, "Will it be ready next week?" The reply was unprintable. The car was then



jacked up in the garage and inspected. The steering rack had some play in it, possibly because of one of the off-track experiences I had tried. The brakes also needed replacing at the front end, the discs seemed to have minor cracks in them and the pads were worn, and as I was going to the Autosport show I would leave the decision until then. I phoned John and asked if the engine was ready yet. It wasn't, but he said it would be ready for Christmas. I said that would be OK and, as I would be travelling up from Rugby to Manchester to visit my father, I suggested that we could put it in on Christmas Day. The reply was unprintable.

At the Autosport Show in January at the NEC I bought some interesting front brake discs from EBC. They asked which brakes I usually used and I replied the car



in front! They were sorry that they hadn't heard of that make. I worked on the car throughout the month and by the end it was almost ready, except for the engine, which I don't expect until March. I just enjoy winding John up. The camper van needed some bodywork and, after being repaired, we painted it in our usual style. The trailer was also checked over and after checking we had four wheels it was pronounced fit and healthy. As we all know, the economy is currently not too healthy and my main sponsor, Revolution Recruitment, informed me that they could not continue their sponsorship. This put me in a dilemma, as I could not afford to compete in two championships without a sponsor. A compromise solution was reached, and I decided the Cockshoot Cup would be my main championship, but I would compete in the Peter Best at Brands Hatch, Mallory Park and of course,

Silverstone. There were one or two minor things to fix to the car but eventually we travelled up to Entune to have the engine fitted but the head would not be ready. As usual, we were on the last minute as this was Monday March 30 and we were racing on Saturday. The engine was fitted and there weren't any more spare nuts or bolts than usual and the engine fired up eventually. We then packed up and travelled north to visit Peter Burgess (01773 520021) to go on his rolling road on the Thursday. Peter did his magic, but it is still stressful to watch your pride and joy on the rolling road, with the engine screaming away and half expecting bits of your engine to exit through the block. So we were ready to race, well as near as we ever are.



MGB Registrar's Update for 2009

Total number of MGB details held on the Register database is currently 15,542 (December 2009).

Over the past couple of years there has been a renewed interest from former MGB owners wishing to discover if their 'old' MGB is still around. There are several ways of finding your 'lost loves' (I am talking about the MGB not the person in the passenger seat!). One is to send me the UK registration and chassis number and I will see if the car is listed on the MGB Register database, another is to check on the DVLA website (UK cars only) which shows whether the car is currently taxed in the UK or on a SORN (statutory off road notice), and lastly you can write or email the MG magazines' lost and found columns. The three main MG magazines are *Safety Fast!* (MGCC), *Enjoying MG* (MGOC) and *MG Enthusiast*. *Practical Classics* is also worth a try.

I have several success stories and my favourite is the MGCC member from Germany registering his latest MGB and enquiring if his honeymoon MGB was

still around. The car was on the Register and was currently in Bristol. I passed on contact details and received an email from Bristol a few weeks later to say the car had been sold to the member from Germany who had flown over, bought the car and driven off to Germany – I never did find out whether it was a surprise wedding anniversary present. I think he was either very romantic or deeply in the dog box!

If you already own an MGB and would like to trace its history you can obtain a heritage certificate from the Motor Heritage Centre in Gaydon, Warwickshire (www.heritage-motor-centre.co.uk). The certificate will show the date your car was built, chassis, commission and engine numbers, colour and any extras fitted by the factory. In some cases the delivery dealership is also shown. If you are the current owner of the MGB the DVLA will sometimes, for a fee, supply you with the information it holds for that vehicle.

A question that arises time and time again is: "What is a totally original MGB?" In my book this car does not exist unless it was taken from Abingdon and cocooned for the last 30 or more years. I find it very hard to believe any MGB that has been on the road has not had any of its parts replaced. Tyres, mild steel exhausts, radiators, brakes, spark plugs, points, wiper blades, and light bulbs to name the more common items must have been replaced several times. I think to be classed as an 'original' car it would have its original panels, interior and paint, (although some 'originals' have been painted more times than the Forth Bridge), and not have any additions that were not on the optional extras list. Rebuilt and re-shelled cars are fine as long as they have been done properly. I am not a purist and providing your MGB looks and sounds like an MGB and you are happy then get behind the wheel and enjoy driving it!

In the last few months several very early

Register cars have reappeared, register number 88 being the latest one. Incidentally the first car on the Register is a white 1973 MGB GT, registration number MPK 656L/GHD5 291072G, last shown on the road in August 1988. If you are the current owner or know the whereabouts of this car, please contact me.

It has been the Register policy for quite a while not to delete an MGB's details from the Register. If the car is sold, or scrapped, the entry is marked accordingly and the owner's details changed to read 'previous owner'. This enables the Registrar to keep track of the cars and their history.

On the Register website many of you will have noticed the online registration form – this has proved to be very popular and of course it can be used to change or update your car's records.

As MGB Registrar the biggest problem I have is resolving the confusion over chassis/commission/engine numbers. The chassis number, allocated and attached at Abingdon, is usually found on the left-hand side (looking from the front of the car) in front of the radiator support panel. For Roadsters it will start with GHN and for GTs it will be GHD then a number 3 (for cars built from 1962–67), 4 (for cars built from 1967–69) or 5 (for cars built from 1969–79). From June 1979 a new system was introduced called VIN (Vehicle Identification Number) which for a UK spec Roadster would appear as GVADJ1AG/5*****.



Chassis number plate on an MGB

DVLA V5 UK registration certificates show MGB GTs that have been re-shelled into Roadsters as MGB GT Coupés, with their original GHD chassis number. The later body shells have the BMH re-shell number stamped into the body shell and this is recorded on the V5 UK registration document following the original chassis number.

The commission number was allocated and attached at the body plant and was prefixed G for MG and 23 for MGB, the suffix letter denotes the body plant:

Suffix F = Bodies Plant, Coventry, 1962–69 Roadster;

Suffix P = Pressed Steel, Swindon, 1969–70 Roadster, 1965–70 GT;

Suffix Z = Pressed Steel, Cowley, all cars from 1970–76.

The engine number plates are riveted to the engine block below and in between the second and third spark plug. It should begin with 18G for the very early MGBs through 18GA, GB, GD, GF, GG, GK to 1971 when the 18V series engines were introduced. Works reconditioned engines begin with

48G or the very late ones with BHM. There were other engine reconditioning firms and garages producing replacement engines – some good, some not so good.

Another question I am often asked is: "Is my car tax free?" In the UK, providing your car was built before December 31 1972 then it is eligible to be classed as an historic vehicle and to be currently free from road tax. Many MGs were built in late 1972 and not sold until well into 1973. My own MGB GT was built in October 1972 and not registered until March 1973, so qualifying as a historic vehicle. The latest registration of a 1972 car that I have come across was a December 72 build, registered in June 1973. A heritage certificate will show when your MGB came off the production line.

For a complete breakdown of chassis numbers and everything to do with MGBs and their production, I recommend Anders Ditlev Clausager's book, *Original MGB with MGC and MGBGT V8* (ISBN 1-870979-48-6).

The Register is currently working to get the database online once a secure password system has been found. This will also enable the extensive photo library to be accessed by Register members.

If you have any MGB Register queries please contact me (MGCs and V8s to their own Registrars) and I will do my best to answer your query or I will know a man who can!

David Askew, MGB Registrar

MGB Chairman's Notes January 2010



Happy New Year to all MG drivers, passengers and owners.

In January two years ago Gill and I were in sunny New Zealand. On our travels around the Islands we met up with MGB owner Rachel Dean who has just informed us she has started a company offering a private coach and MG cars to visitors to NZ (her contact details are: www.rachelsbus.co.nz), and she is also offering a good cup of tea and a chat at her home in Fielding, north of Wellington.

Hopefully as you are reading this EBW 45B is having its engine and gearbox removed. Two new heritage door shells are being cut to accept pull handle door fittings and the plan is for a complete respray, with a new clutch, front and rear suspension being fitted, to be back on the road when we have our first MGB Register event.

This year our Spring Run will start from Millets Farm just outside Abingdon on **Sunday April 18** and after a casual journey through some of the best Cotswold roads we will finish at the National Arboretum at Westonbirt. The entry form is in this issue of *Safety First!*, or visit the www.mgb-register.org events page where all of our 2010 events are listed.

We now have a new clothing range for MGB owners, offering the new silver or black Register badge on ladies and gents polos, vests, jackets and caps. Visit

www.mgb-register.org and follow the MGB Shop link, where you will also be able to choose other items from our shop.

In November I had the privilege of reuniting a 1964 MGB with its original registration as well as saving a 1972 BGT that had been garaged for six years, with the owner wanting it to go to an MGCC member who would restore it back to life – as so many older cars are being used for the scrappage allowance this was very satisfying.

What would YOU like your Register to do for YOU?

On **Sunday March 21** we will hold our Register AGM, so please come along – we would like to hear your thoughts and comments. Join us in the new John Thornley Conference Centre at Kimber House, Abingdon, or if you are unable to make it call me on 07770 575236 or email me on: john.watson45@ntlworld.com

In conversation with...

Dennis Wharf chats to the popular Sprinter and Hillclimber Kim Johnson

An ancient Austin Seven regularly thrashed around a field by five school chums finally gave up the unequal struggle one day, requiring some urgent attention. The recalcitrant machine, it was decided, could be fixed provided it was removed to one lad's home, where the necessary tools could be found. Thus, undaunted, the five proceeded to push the car down the adjacent lane for the necessary repairs. With its bald tyres, no brakes, insurance, tax or MOT and a 12-year-old at the wheel, they never for a moment considered anything was awry; unfortunately, however, the local bobby who apprehended them viewed things slightly differently. So it was that at the tender age of 13, Kim Johnson and his mates had amassed no less than 23 motoring offences, receiving a severe dressing down from their local chief constable in the process, who was probably struggling to keep a straight face as the five explained how they had meant no harm, and anyway how were they supposed to mend the car if they hadn't pushed it down the lane? How indeed?

This took place in 1961 and was Kim's first driving experience on the public highway, and we enjoy much laughter as Kim recalls this story plus his competition and working days over lunch in a delightful Cotswold pub, a few weeks before last Christmas. That old Austin of course gave way to far more rapid machinery from Austin's great pre-war rival, MG, for the presence of Mr Johnson at any hill climb or sprint meeting over the past 30 years has ensured MG honours have been strenuously upheld. Competitive, smooth and fast, Kim has enjoyed immense success over those 30-plus years, driving many different cars, but mostly at the wheel of his well-known MG Midget, or in more recent times two ex-development MGs, an RV8 and an F. However, until the age of 13 sailing had been Kim's main passion, for his father had owned a variety of boats, both large and small, in which the young Kim had learned to sail and navigate, but that old Seven and a subsequent visit to

Silverstone changed all that, and he was hooked for good.

Regular visits to races, sprints and hill climbs, reading specialist magazines and watching what television coverage there was of motor sport in those days, whetted Kim's appetite to compete more and more, so that by the age of 17, driving test passed, and at the wheel of a family cast-off Wolseley 4/44, "a dreadful car in many ways, but possessing a reasonable chassis", his competition career began, as he explains. "That old Wolseley wasn't very quick, in fact looking back sprinting the thing was pretty horrendous. On my first event, at Honiley near Kenilworth, I was driving at my 'ten tenths', when half way round the course I heard this tremendous roar. It was Alec Poole in an Abingdon-prepared Wolseley Hornet, a very hot re-badged Mini Cooper 'S', coming up behind. He went past me doing at least twice my speed – hmm I thought, there's more to this game than meets the eye! Even with twin carburettors things didn't improve that much. Then, in 1966, on a visit to the local scrap yard for some parts, I came across an MG TF which had been driven sideways into a lamp post or letterbox or at least something large and unforgiving. I scrounged 50 quid from my folks as I hadn't long started my apprenticeship at

Longbridge and didn't have any money of my own to speak of, and began to rebuild the MG – but with little or no money it has to be said it was a pretty rough rebuild! The following year I joined the Austin Apprentices' Car Club, and began competing regularly in sprints, hill climbs, auto-tests and anything else the MG could be entered for, including two not noticeably remarkable MGCC circuit races. Gaining experience and with confidence growing, I was developing a strong desire to compete more competitively, and decided a Sprite or Midget would be necessary if I was going to move on." So towards the end of Kim's apprenticeship in 1970, along with fellow apprentice Tim King, they started building a mod-sports Mk I Sprite. Fast, nimble and compact, these were the machines to have if you wanted to compete at the very top – and being young, ambitious and competitive – they did.

With great enthusiasm the two mates started to prepare the car "trouble was we hadn't reckoned on the levels of corrosion we were about to find". Kim recalls with laughter, "The more we took the damn thing apart, the more there wasn't there! I started welding it in the hope that we could salvage something from what was really Tim's road car, but knew we'd be pretty lucky if we managed to salvage



Kim powers the RV8 up Prescott Hill in 2006