



Welcome to the MGB Newsletter

Silverstone has been and gone and I missed all the fun, we were walking in the Lake District this year. What I missed the most was not meeting all the people that I have got to know through owning an old car, such good friends. We did receive a text message while sat on the top of Black Crag from Neil Hyett advising me of how well our Rocker Box racer performed first time out. I think this is best summed up as 'could do better'. Having said this, for a first attempt we were very proud only to have been beaten by the eventual winner!

This month we have two technical articles one of which, written by Bernard Rengger, was due to be included in the last four-page spread but was edited out. I did not notice this; it was drawn to my attention by Rick Willoughby first, then a few minutes later by a Jim Slater from the USA, my thanks to all who drew this to my attention, sorry Bernard. It is odd how we get lots of feedback when we make a mistake. Following the last four pages we had people advising me that an incorrect picture of John Watson's

MGB was included. His car is currently undergoing extensive restorations. It would be wonderful if some of you could also submit some articles for publication as well as helping us get the facts correct. I am often contacted by members who have an interesting story concerning their MGB but are for some reason reluctant to commit this to writing, such a shame as we would all enjoy your story so don't be shy!

We have included an article written by a car, unusual but interesting as it's about a boomerang! Now you have to read it to find out what I am on about. When I was searching through some old files that I inherited when I took on this role of scribe six years ago, I discovered an article written by Don Bishop who sadly is no longer with us. It covers the rack and pinion steering, a component that I have not seen covered before, hence it's reproduced for you.

John Watson, our Chairman, in his write up provides more information about MGB50, our biggest event ever planned, which will take place on Sunday September 23 2012 after the Olympics. If you own an

MGB you will have to be at Blenheim Palace Oxfordshire on that date.

Talking about the Olympics I was one of the lucky ones and did manage to get some of the tickets that I applied for and am looking forward to three days of world-class sport in London next year. It was a tense time waiting for the money to be withdrawn from my account, when this happened I cheered out loud in the bank, people thought I was going mad because who in their right mind is pleased when money is taken from their account and they don't know what they have bought! As I wandered off, I felt a little foolish but extremely pleased.

Remember the very successful first MGB Lecture October 2010 on the Bloodhound Project? Well, we are promoting this event for the second year. The subject selected continues to follow our theme of great British engineering achievements, hence we have selected the iconic delta wing aircraft the Vulcan for this year's talk. We have three enthusiastic speakers to entertain us, one of whom we hope will tell us all about the famous flight made to the Falkland Islands during the Argentinian invasion. Please take a look at the advert in the July copy of Safety Fast! and make sure you get your tickets as soon as possible they are selling fast. The important date is October 6 2011.

What to do if your car's condenser fails

If you are driving along and the engine just dies (no spluttering, just dies) the most likely causes are either rotor arm failure or condenser failure. The first thing to do after checking there is no spark is to unclip the Distributor Cap, lift out the rotor arm and replace it with your spare (you do carry a spare don't you?), if the car now fires up then breathe a sigh of relief and carry on with your journey making a note to buy another rotor arm as a spare at the first opportunity.

If, however, changing the rotor arm does not solve the problem then it's probably the dreaded condenser failure, this now leaves you with three options:

1. Call out the emergency rescue services (and wait for a couple of hours for them to turn up only to be told they don't carry spare condensers).
2. Change the condenser yourself (assuming you are carrying a spare).
3. Put into action your pre-planned get you home fix (recommended). Assuming you have decided not to use

the rescue services and you don't have your pre-planned get you home plan ready then you are left with changing the condenser. This entails removing the Distributor Cap and diving down to the engine bay to remove the very small Phillips screw which holds the old condenser in place and then replacing this screw to hold the new condenser in place. All this without dropping the screw on the ground, never to be seen again or letting it fall into the body of the distributor necessitating removal of the complete distributor (all this in the dark and possibly in the rain). Incidentally, you can make it easier for the next time by cutting the securing hole in the new condenser into a slot, but this won't help you the first time.

The alternative is to have your get you home plan ready to put into action. You do this by:

1. Bolting a spare condenser onto the inner wing (making sure you have a good earth).

2. Extending the wire from this condenser by a length of wire sufficient to reach the output side of the coil and fixing a female spade connector to the end of this wire.
3. Changing the male connector on the output side of the coil for a twin outlet version.

When/if you suffer condenser failure all you do now is to reach down to your spare condenser and connect the wire from this to the output side of the coil. (If you are extremely unlucky and the old condenser is shorting to earth all you do is cut the wire from the old condenser to take this right out of the circuit.)

I can assure any of you sceptics that this fix does work as I recently had a condenser fail as I was on my way to the MGB Register weekend but with the above fix I was able to carry on and drove over 400 miles over the weekend without problems.

Bernard Rengger

My boomerang won't come back!

Apparently one of the traditions of our local MG Meeting is that if you are unfortunate enough to win the Club's boomerang in the raffle then you must take it on a journey and give a report of its exploits, and as luck would have it just before our forthcoming trip to Santander in Spain through to Cherbourg in France, Heather won the boomerang. I felt that although this is a local tradition, my friends in the MGB Register would also like to hear about an interesting trip through Spain and France.

My journey to Europe started early in the morning with a mad dash to Portsmouth to catch the ferry to Santander. What a surprise when I arrived at the docks; Heather and Bill's friends turned up in a Nissan 370Z, a mustard-yellow modern sports car. Every other time we had been with them they had been in a MG V8 which I knew well, but this new car had a Sat-Nav and air conditioning – what was Buzzy Bee, my navigator's assistant, going to do now? We boarded the ferry together and were able to get to know one another in a spacious hold on the boat.

Twenty-four hours later we arrived in Santander on a hot sunny day. As soon as we were away from the town we left the main road and experienced Spain's new and improved roads, regardless of the category of the road (well most of the time). From Santander we travelled west along the Pilgrims' road to Santiago to a 12C monastery, which sheltered the Pilgrims in Santa Domingo de la Calzana. After a night's stop in this very comfortable Parador (I was garaged for the night), we were off again continuing west. The road today was picturesque and the scent was magnificent with many miles of gorse bushes along the side of the road. One thing I could not help to notice was on the hills along the roads were hundreds of wind turbines, something I had not seen in such profusion in the UK. After a lunch stop in the centre of a village where a number of people came and admired both cars we arrived at what I am told was an old walled town of Sos de Rey Catolico where we stayed for three nights and were able to admire the surrounding countryside. On one run we apparently took a new road

that had been built especially to service these new wind turbines which we were now able to see up close – my word they are large!

The next day again took us through some lovely scenery, and I was getting quite excited because I thought that we were going across the Pyrenees – I so enjoy the challenge of the mountains with its steep climbs and magnificent views, but this time the main part of the journey took us through a magnificent gorge then later through Tunnel du Vielha which was 5250M long arriving at our next night stop at Vielha with an elevation of just 2273M. Although I was hidden in a garage, I am told that the views from the restaurant in the Parador were marvellous.

The following morning we crossed the border into France where the quality of the roads deteriorated with many of the minor roads being very poor and shook my bodywork immensely, although by going on the 'yellow and white roads' there was much less traffic than when we did venture on the National Routes. Another long, hot day took us to a small village called Listrac. It was so small that even the Sat-Nav in the Z lost its way on one occasion. (This device was only used on rare occasions as both Linda and Heather enjoy reading the 'old-fashioned' maps.) The destination was a converted Priory owned by friends of Linda and Malcolm.

Over the next two days we went for a tour round the Dordogne area. On the

first day we visited a Chateau just outside of Bergerac and on the second day we ventured to Bordeaux – the only large town we visited on the tour. I did not like this trip at all, the temperature according to a sign outside of a Pharmacy was 36°C and there were roadworks just before the town centre so you can imagine the queue. Fortunately Bill found an underground car park just in time. I was pleased that the journey back to Listerac, after Heather and Bill had viewed what I am told was quite a nice town, was much easier with no traffic.

Before leaving the Priory the all-important 'Throwing the Boomerang Ceremony' was performed. This is the reason for writing this report. Heather and Bill went into an open space and Heather attempted to throw this funny-shaped stick, not once but three times and not once but three times the stick did not return to Heather. Heather shouting, "My boomerang won't come back". There were many knowledgeable people telling her how to throw the stick but the changes did not seem to make any difference so once again this stupid stick was packed away in the back of the car for return to our local Club.

Our next destination was Ile de Re. A small set of islands off the east coast of France which is joined to the mainland by a long bridge. I stayed in a garage for the next two days but I was told how nice this place was, especially the town of Martin de Re the main town on the island. It had a lovely secluded harbour and fortified walls around the town which Heather and Bill explored. But there was one very unusual sight which I did see – donkeys in pyjamas! Yes, these unusually large donkeys, which had been brought to the island it was believed by the Romans, wore protective





leggings which because of their colouring looked just like pyjamas!

From here we went to St Ouen Les Vignes near Amboise on the River Loire and again visited two Chateaux the one we visited on the first day I am told devoted itself to art and an artistic garden. I don't think Heather and Bill were that impressed. One wing of the Chateau appeared to be shored up with large pillars of wood in every room and on these pillars hung enormous bells. Was this art, or was the wing about to fall down? And the theme of the garden was 27 different small gardens each depicting the meaning of life. After visiting half of these, the sun and the heat provided a good excuse not to visit the rest! As someone who loves gardens, Heather said not one of the 15 gardens inspired her and she is no wiser about the meaning of life. The next day Heather and Bill visited the Royal Chateau d'Amboise where the French Royal Family spent a lot of their time

and where Leonardo da Vinci was buried in 1519. It apparently was a very interesting place with lots of French history.

From Amboise we went to Crepon a small village outside of Bayeux especially so that Linda could see the Bayeux Tapestry. After the visit to Bayeux I was taken along the Normandy coast to visit one of the graveyards from World War II before going back to the Manor House that was home for the night, and finally onto Cherbourg via Carteret. Apparently I am told Heather and Bill used to visit this location by sailing boat back in the '60s and apart from there being more yachts in the Marina than in those days, the place had not changed much since then. Our last night was in Cherbourg so that we could catch the fast ferry home early the next morning. Gosh, I was really crammed into a small space on this craft; thank goodness it was only a two-hour trip before reaching Poole. The odometer at the end of the journey

showed over 2,000 miles, more than when we had left Wimborne.

Well that would be the end of my story except when Bill and Heather took the Boomerang back to the local Club meeting and Nigel, its leader, did not believe that it would not return so he went out onto the cricket field and threw it several times. Admittedly his throws were a lot more robust than Heather's and he gave quite a display but the boomerang would not come back. Perhaps this apology for a boomerang should be replaced by the real article or it should come with a written warning that this boomerang won't come back.

**Cheerio from A. Brown,
MGB and Brown B's owners,
Bill and Heather Charlton.**

How's your rack and pinion?

Now, I am sure that you all are aware that your MGB has been blessed with a rack and pinion. But, in case you are not so aware, the car has rack and pinion steering gear and it's housed in a tube at the bottom of the steering column. If you care to get down and have a look, it's the tube-structure which goes across the front of the front suspension cross-member, with a rubber bellows at each end, from which protrude the track-rods which connect with the front suspension and wheels.

The rack-and-pinion requires very little attention, other than a squirt of oil now and again to help keep things moving. As is the case with almost everything mechanical, eventually wear will develop between the pinion (which is turned by the steering wheel, via the steering column) and the rack (which is forced right and left by the turning pinion). Wear will manifest itself either by an increase in the effort needed at the steering wheel and/or by free play at the steering wheel, i.e., the wheel can be turned slightly without it moving the front wheels. A measure of adjustment is possible by removing shims on the rack cover but there comes a time when the only thing to do is to rebuild or replace the unit as a whole.

Here there are three main options: (a) if you are really clever (mechanically)

you can try rebuilding it yourself, using new parts as necessary; (b) go for a professionally-reconditioned exchange unit from a reputable spares supplier; (c) buy a new complete unit, again from a reputable source. (Here I am making the assumption that you are undertaking the job of removing and replacing the rack yourself. If you are putting the job in the hands of your favourite repairers, ask their advice.)

My own car's steering had got to the stage where there was indeed about a half-inch of free play at the steering-wheel rim. I had adjusted the mesh of the pinion into the rack some time ago, with some success, and considered all the options as above. In the end, after looking at prices etc., I thought that after a quarter-million miles both I and the car deserved a new rack complete; and was staggered to see how relatively little cash outlay was involved. I mean, under £80 including VAT for a new unit struck me (and still strikes me) as darned good value for money.

And it came to pass that a new rack-and-pinion arrived on my doorstep one day. Hasty and enthusiastic removal of the wrapping revealed a nice new unit, whose label provided me with the first surprise: it was made in Argentina! It is nicely finished and closer inspection showed that

certain (what I regard as) improvements have been incorporated, chief of which is the replacement of the shim adjustment by what was obviously a screw pin and locknut, sealed at the factory with paint. Lubrication has gone from oil to what must be some sort of grease. I was particularly pleased about this, because no matter what I did to the old unit, in the way of replacing the oil seal at the bottom of the steering column, using jointing compound where I could etc., it still leaked oil onto the driveway. Came the time to 'off with the old, on with the new' and soon the old unit was sitting on the driveway. Removal is easy as the whole unit is held onto the cross-member with two screws and two nuts and bolts, one nut and bolt on the steering column universal joint (adjacent to the distributor) and tow track-rod ends. You need a taper-breaker to loosen the track-rod ends from the radius arms but



apart from that you can do the job with spanners, although a ratchet set can make life easier.

As I was going to reuse the track-rod ends which came off the car, I laid the old unit as flat as possible and measured the distance between the existing lock-nuts before I loosened them (the new unit came without t-r ends, of course). I knew that the measurement could only give a near approximation of their position on the new unit's track-rods but it would be close enough to let me drive a couple of miles to a tyre depot for a tracking check. Then I loosened the lock-nuts and removed both the ends and the nuts – note that the threads are normal right-handed on both sides. So far, so good.

I made sure (by trial and error) that the new unit was in a central position steering-wise and ran the track-rod lock-nuts on an equal amount each side so that, as far as I could judge, they were at about the same distance apart as when I measured on the

old unit. I offered up the unit to the car, engaged the splines of the new column into the universal joint (steering wheel central) and sat the mounting brackets on the cross-member mounting bosses.

Here I must digress a little and urge a degree of caution. Now, when the job was done in the factory, any slight inaccuracy between the machined bottom of the unit's mounting brackets and the cross-member bosses was taken up by inserting the appropriate shims which, after final alignment of the unit with the steering column and tightening of the fixing bolts, were riveted to the bosses, there to stay ad infinitum or until such time as the unit was replaced. My car had been fitted with a 'new' cross-member, and there were not shims because the fit was good. When the new unit sat in place, there was quite a large gap at the rear faces of both the mounting brackets; and instead of shims they both needed a pair of washers to take up the gap.

The other snag I came across was that the holes drilled in the mounting brackets of the new unit were far bigger than needed to take 5/16 bolts (one side was drilled almost 1/2 while the other wasn't much less), so I had to make the bolts sit on flat washers otherwise they would have disappeared down the holes to give no grip at all! Everything then sat well and the column was nicely aligned in the universal joint so the locking bolt there was inserted and tightened.

However, in the end, all was well. A tracking-check revealed toe-out of about one degree, so the ends were wound in a total of two-and-a-quarter turns (i.e., half each) and the second check was within the toe-in required (1/16 – 3/32). I must say that the steering is now much lighter than it was. It's one of those things which creep up. I wish I had done it 50,000 miles ago.

Don Bishop

MGB Register Chairman's Report August 2011

In my last report I sent in the wrong picture to the Safety Fast! Editor, it was of a Frontline Midget, some of you noticed the difference, this month I have a picture of EBW45B's engine area, with my exhaust manifold now coated in ceramic, courtesy of Zircotec. Reports on the success of this heat insulation will follow in future SFIs.

Did you get to MGLive!? What a weekend! Our main job as the MGB Register was to announce and promote the ideas for MGB 50, more detail is in this issue of SF!, over 150 of you purchased the special edition T-shirt (see picture) we have produced, if you want to purchase one go to our www.mgb50.com site and click on the clothing link.

On the Saturday of Silverstone, MGCC Director Howard Gosling, from the V8 Register, and I, had the pleasure of showing

20 top Chinese motoring journalists around our event, they are so keen and interested in promoting the heritage of the MG marquee. I also met them on the Wednesday after MGLive! at Kimber House where the Nikons and Canons, were working overtime.

Back to MGB 50, one of the plans we have is to have an Olympic Torch-style route around the MGCC & MGOCC Natters, if your venue would like to be included in this please email mgb50@mgownersclub.co.uk asap.

For up-to-date information on MGB Register events and MGB50 go to the two websites.

Happy MGBing.

John Watson

Mob: 07770 575 236



The MGB 50 T-shirt available from www.mgb50.com

