Welcome to the MGB Newsletter

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When I was asked to put these four page spreads together, I always wondered how many people read them. Having now been doing this task for the MGB Register for the past nine years I am becoming convinced that not many do and if they do, they do not have opinions or stories to tell. I have regularly asked a question or requested your MGB story to share with fellow members but very rarely do I get any response, which is disappointing. Take for example the last four page spread in February when I posed the question below.

What is your experience of battery conditioners? I have had my Airflow System now for eight years, and always plug it into the MGB to monitor the battery whenever I leave the car in the garage. My current 12v battery has been in the car now for seven years. Is this your experience, please let me know?

Not a single comment was received!

This month George Wider has sent me an interesting article on the manufacturing process used to produce the MGB. Was it one of the early versions of the now very sophisticated 'just in time' manufacturing process so very prevalent today? I got an enquiry from John Bailey asking about his MGB which was displayed at the 1969 Scottish Motor Show. I persuaded him to develop his story for you all to enjoy. We then have a couple of technical questions which have been fielded by the Register's Technical Expert Graham Dix. Graham is always willing to share his extensive knowledge with you, contact him via the website shown above. John Watson has provided his regular words from the Register Chairman.

Our first motoring event of the year was the Spring Run held on April 6 and I have included some pictures and a few words for you.

Roger.

The Road to Abingdon

(or Just in Time – Old Style)

One of the reasons for the long post-war success of MG sports cars was due to the clever use of many components from other factories within BMC, BMH or BL Empire, clothed in a unique body. Whilst most of the design and development was carried out in the MG plant at Abingdon, the factory was an assembly plant using mainly brought in components.

The MGB is a fine example of this practice with its bespoke bodyshell fitted with mechanical and electrical parts many common to other vehicles. So much so, that by the time of the MGB introduction in 1962 every part came from outside the plant.

The majority of all MG MGBs were assembled at the factory at Abingdon then despatched for owners across the globe. A number were assembled elsewhere in the world from CKD kits. These kits were brought together at Cowley using parts from the various suppliers – Abingdon's only role being to supply a car number.

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Let's look at where some of the major components and parts came from before arriving at Abingdon or elsewhere for the assembly process.

The biggest and most significant component of the MGB is the bodyshell. All the major MGB pressings were made by Pressed Steel at Swindon. A multitude of pressings were brought together at this plant to make up wings, doors, bonnet, boot and underbody and other body parts.

From 1962 the major body parts and sub assemblies were sent to Morris Bodies in Quainton Road, Coventry. Here the bodies were finally assembled, painted and partly trimmed, as had been MG bodies of earlier eras. The bodies, complete with windscreen and erected hood, arrived at Abingdon on transporters. The practice of sending sub assemblies and parts from Swindon to Coventry to build roadster bodies continued until 1969.

The MGB GT was introduced in 1965 and again all the major bodyshell parts were produced by Pressed Steel. However the build process was slightly different. The complete bodyshell was assembled at Swindon and then transferred to Pressed Steel Cowley for painting and trim before moving on to Abingdon for final vehicle assembly. 1969 saw the introduction of roadster body assembly at Swindon too – these also going via Pressed Steel Cowley on their way to Abingdon for similar treatment as the GT shells.

So each UK assembled MGB body was painted, largely trimmed and glazed before entering the gates of the Abingdon assembly plant.

With MG being part of the very large BMC Empire when the MGB was introduced, it was logical that parts would be sourced from within it whenever possible. The engines and transmission came from Longbridge – the Austin – to Abingdon, each pre-painted engine already fitted with auxiliaries such as starters, dynamos or alternators. The BMC Empire also made amongst its products tractors, developed from the Nuffield range. This division, BMC Tractors and Transmissions based in Ward End, Birmingham, supplied Abingdon with the front hubs complete with the Lockheed disc brake and the assembled back axle. Other BMC units involved include SU for the carburettors and fuel pump and Radiators Branch for the grille, the radiator, the oil cooler radiator, the exhaust system and the petrol tank.

Some other sub assembly work was carried out in Abingdon using parts from outside suppliers. This included completing engines and the front suspension assembly. For this, John Thompson supplied the front cross member, Cam Gears the steering rack

The photos show various stages of MGB production between the late 1960s and 1980 at the MG factory in Abingdon.

and Armstrong the shock absorbers.

Other well known names in the industry used in the MGB included Auster for the roadster windscreen assembly, Lucas the wiring and lighting, Smiths Instruments (whatever the logo on the dial and heaters), Coventry Hood for the hood, Wilmot Breeden for the locks and body fittings. Many of these parts were delivered not to Abingdon but directly to the factories sites where the sub-assembly work took place or to the CKD unit at Cowley. For examples the door locks would go to the body assembly location as would the roadster hoods.

So when one hears stories and myths about MGBs being made at Abingdon, take them all with a pinch of realism. In truth the cars were only assembled there using sub assemblies and from parts all made elsewhere.

This assembly practice used by MG, 50 years ago, is largely the pattern used today by car makers – the only real difference now is that they place the assembly unit alongside the body plant.

The logistics of such an operation in the days before many dual carriageways and most motorways existed must have been extremely difficult. So the road to a completed MGB from Abingdon or elsewhere was a long and often a long complicated one.

George Wilder

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Technical Topics

Our Technical Guru, Graham Dix receives a number of contacts from members asking for advice. Lots come to him via the phone and some by email. We have reproduced a couple here to show the type of information requested. If you have a question Graham is only too happy to help if he can, he is contactable on 01235 201871, email: tech-advice@mgb-register.org – Roger

Question: I hope that you can help. I have had my 1965 MGB since 2008 and the rev counter has never worked. It used to pulse when the indicators were on!

The car has been converted to negative earth; the rev counter is negative earth. I recently had ignition problems that I could not solve so took the car to a local auto electrician who diagnosed, among other faults, a faulty coil and fitted a new one. Hey presto! The rev counter worked perfectly but after a short while the car did not. I went to my local garage who discovered that a ballast resistor coil had been fitted. The garage replaced this with the correct coil and the rev counter stopped working. Apart from that the car goes perfectly. Any ideas please? Donald.

Reply: Check the white wire from the coil, it should be on the positive side and white/black wire on the negative side. If correct then it sounds like a faulty rev counter or possibly loose or dirty connections at the back of it. Before buying a replacement, try using a length of wire to connect direct from the positive terminal on the coil to the connector on the rear of the rev counter (leave the existing wire on the coil terminal). If that works then wiring is at fault.

Thanks, will check it out tomorrow. I know that it is not a faulty rev counter as it worked perfectly when connected to a ballast resistor coil. It puzzles me that it won't work with the correct coil. Could it be that the wrong rev counter has been fitted? Donald.

Reply: The correct rev counter for your car is a positive earth Smiths unit. These can be internally modified to work with a negative earth conversion but you stated that you have a negative earth rev counter. It should be marked negative earth on the face. If so then it this is compatible with your negative earth set up. Thinking about it – I most suspect the wiring/connections as the coil with the resistor allowed more current to flow and probably overcame the high resistance in the wire or connectors. The length of wire test would therefore be my first test option. Regards.

Thanks, sounds right. I found what looked like a dodgy connector behind the dash and redid it. Rev counter now reads 1,000 rpm at tickover but refuses to register above 2,000 so will now check out the rest of the wiring. Thank you very much for your help and advice, it is very much appreciated. Makes my membership subscription worthwhile!

Fuel starvation

Question: I have a minor irritation with fuel starvation. This occurs only after about 4-5 miles driving above 60mph, it cures itself when I slow down to circa 55mph. I have overhauled the carbs and both I and the local garage think they are fine. I wonder if it is due to insufficient air due to some low pressure developing in the engine compartment. I have a traditional housing and element. Filters are clean but have not been replaced for a few thousand miles. Do you have any advice?

Reply: I do not think it is due to any low pressure issues in the engine bay. Are you sure it is a fuel issue and not an ignition fault? Did the problem occur after overhauling the carbs? If you can confirm it is fuel starvation then it is likely to be one of the following:

- Faulty fuel pump not pumping sufficient fuel for the continued higher revs.
- Partial restriction in the fuel line.
- Partially blocked in-line filter if fitted.
- Floats not set high enough in chambers.
- Weak mixture either generally or at the higher revs (if latter then wrong needles fitted).
- Needle assembly unable to rise fully.
- Ignition faults could include faulty coil, condenser or poor electrical connections on low tension circuit or faulty HT lead.

What Should I Do with MGB GT FWB 696H

I am the current owner of MGB GT reg. no. FWB 696H, chassis no. G-HD5/188746-G. I have recently discovered that it is a car with a bit of history of which I am trying to find out more details. It appears that the car was built by the Abingdon factory for the 1969 Scottish Motor Show held at the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow which was held in the November of that year. So if when you have read this article you can provide any further information on its history please contact Roger who will pass it on to me.

Although I have not owned the MGB for very long, the story of how I came to own the car may be of interest. The story begins in 1968 when I had rebuilt a Lotus Élan rescued from a write-off. When finished I realised that I would be unable to tow my trials car behind it, therefore I swapped it for a year old white MGB GT. Although only a year old the car was in poor condition. It had no front bumper, grille or slamming panel and the bonnet was held down with a leather strap. The overdrive did not work and the head gasket was blown. I did all the mechanical repairs myself but entrusted the bodywork to my local MG specialist, Bill Nicholson (yes the one with the quick MGB!). He discovered that the factory had produced some 50 cars that year in metallic blue. Bill acquired some of the paint and I finished up with a beautiful metallic blue MGB GT which I ran for several years. It was registered LAH 666E – I wonder if it still exists?

Over the next few years I competed in sprints and hill climbs with a variety of Mallocks and other single seat race cars at events around the country including MGCC organised ones. Fast forward now to 2012 and I had ceased competing. My partner then said that I was bored and needed a hobby. We decided that the classic car scene looked interesting so I thought I would join in; therefore I purchased an MG Midget locally. It needed a lot of work and it certainly kept me busy. I was no longer bored! However, it soon became apparent that I was not getting any use out of it as it was always off the road. This was not the intended plan. I decided then if I was going to do the job properly that I should start again with a clean sheet.

I decided that it would be an interesting project to build a replica of my original MGB GT around a Heritage shell. I paid a visit to my current local MG specialist, Halls Garage, to purchase a donor car as a source of mechanical parts. Things, however, did not go to plan! Whilst waiting to talk to Steve Hall I found myself looking at a BGT and a BGT V8 in his showroom. When I opened the bonnet of the GT, I found myself thinking, "Why get my hands dirty?"

The outcome was that Steve sold me FWB 696H. I did not appreciate that it had a history until I got the Heritage Certificate for it. The original engine 18GG-RWE H/9070 has been replaced and it would be interesting to try and find out if it still survives today. So what is the car like today?

It was originally built to a high specification for display at the show. The factory fitted options included wire wheels, heater, heated rear window, Dunlop SP tyres and overdrive and these features (except the tyres!) are still there today. The car has been completely rebuilt using the original body shell. It has new sills, wings, doors etc together with new metal where the original was rotten. Now comes the hard part. In view of its history, do I replace the non original upgraded parts that have been fitted? For example it now has Koni dampers and is now Tartan Red whereas it was originally sprayed Flame Red. Do I enjoy the car as it is now or make it as original as possible? The jury is out on that one! What is your view?

John Bailey

Photo courtesy of Rory Game of Classic Cars

MGB Register Chairman's Notes

by John Watson

I have just returned from a damp but very successful MGB Register Spring Run. We had over 100 entered cars ranging from a very pretty 1936 MGTA to a 2004 ZT-T 260; this shows that we always welcome all MG owners to our events.

You should receive this magazine in very early May. At that time Gill and I will be with some close MG friends in North Carolina, hopefully with some warm weather.

As a note for your 2015 diary, we are planning our Spring Run for Sunday April 12. This will be the 25th run we have arranged and will return to Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire.

In late March we held our MGB Register AGM. We were pleased to see some new faces at the meeting. We welcomed Paul Baker to the committee; Paul has taken on the responsibility of this year's MGB Lecture to be held on Thursday October 9. This year the subject is on how to keep the Battle of Britain flight in the air. I have included a picture of Paul's engine bay with his newly installed Weber carb with a stage two modified head and new cam.

To see all our MGB events and contacts go to www.mgb-register.org or contact me on 07770 575236 or email chairman@mgbregister.org.

MGB Spring Run 2014

Photos: John Watson

April 6 saw the Spring Run to Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire take place; this was the start of the MGB Register's fantastic motoring year. However, we need to turn the clock back a couple of months to when all the work started; our committee decided that this year we would try to make the event more open to members by introducing three separate alternative routes, one beginning at Hatton World Warwickshire, the other as in the past from Millets Farm near Abingdon, and the third choice was to join us at the end but to make your own route. We eventually had a total of 112 cars entered. Final numbers were 83 from the south, 12 from the Midlands and 17 following their own route.

The route planning had proved to be a little difficult this year as the weather was against us, and there was lot of water about during the planning runs, so it was important to make sure that we avoided the extensive flooding! Unfortunately it proved impossible to avoid some of the huge potholes that have infected all of the lesser, more interesting roads in our country. All drivers were warned of these before they set out.

When the day dawned we were not blessed with blue skies, it was in fact overcast and damp which sadly may have put off some drivers as 16 cars did not make it to the start. It was actually dry as the participants set out on the route from the south. Both routes found interesting villages, picnic spots, country pubs and challenging roads.

On arrival at Waddesdon the cars were directed by the marshals up the main drive to park up in front of the majestic Manor House, making a wonderful colourful display. There was lots of chat and discussion about the route and the condition of the roads; to the best of my knowledge no-one got badly lost! Picnics were enjoyed and exploration of the grounds and the house was undertaken by lots of people. As the drizzle started, cars began to drift away, having enjoyed the day.

A big thank you must go to all the people who worked so hard to put on this event. I am sure that everyone who took part will appreciate the effort that goes into making an enjoyable day out, even if we cannot control the British weather!

Roger Boys