

The Mystery of the MGB boot

The article that George Wilder wrote for us last month on production at Abingdon, prompted regular correspondent Peter Cope to send me a copy of a photo that he had bought. This has led him to ask a number of questions, which I found to be interesting. It then raised further questions, and all from an old photo! I sent it on to George who provided some of the answers. Hope you enjoy the correspondence as much as I have. You may also notice something that raises a question. Here is Peter's original email. - Roger

I bought the accompanying photograph at a recent event because it showed the arrangement of how the tools, jack and pack-away hood were intended to be laid out in the MGB boot, something that has always defeated me in my 1963 car.



However closer examination at home showed this to be a rather more interesting photograph than it first appeared. Clearly it is a left hand drive B (probably for the American market judging from its number backing plate) without its boot lid. Closer inspection shows that it is fitted with the original larger painted fillet plates on the rear bumper so it must be an early car, maybe even pre production. Looking closer still and

you will see that it is also missing its windscreen and windscreen wipers and it is standing on axle stands. The ignition key also has a key fob which I don't recall coming with cars from the factory (though I do remember the spare key that was screwed to the bulkhead under the bonnet!). Does this mean that it had been used on the road? In the background there is a bench and vice amongst other things so it must be in a workshop and not on the production line. Finally at the front are three white coated men apparently working in the engine bay, which also means that the bonnet has been removed? There is a manual sitting on the scuttle too.

The back of the photograph has the usual BMC photographic department stamp and is numbered 106224. Compared to other photographs in my collection this seems to be quite an early number amongst the MGB photos indicating that it was indeed taken during the initial days at least of production if not before. It seems a strange picture to take for publicity purposes so can anyone identify when and where this was taken and what was going on?

Peter Cope.

I noticed that the securing bolt for the spare wheel was different to any I had seen.
Roger

Here are George Wilder's comments...

Interesting how an old picture can raise so many questions which are in fact good fun!

I must start by saying that Page 17 of the readily available MGB Drivers handbook for early cars illustrates clearly how the pack away hood, frame and tools should be stored in the boot. This information should not be news to owners of cars with such hoods.

It is interesting picture of a development car; no doubt the same car is featured on page 25 of MGB, MGC and MGB V8 by Knowles. The pictures in the Knowles book show a LHD prototype with and without engine. In the latter case it has no bonnet so probably relates directly to the picture you sent. So perhaps the chaps in white coats are checking a procedure for service reasons. In fact if studied closely the chap on the right is actually in the engine compartment - you can't be that close to the scuttle otherwise. The LHD car in the picture is an early car development car as there is, I believe, no record of any production MGB being sold with a two spoke steering wheel. This wheel is only found in pictures of the development cars and is also in a sketch of the car illustrating an early accessories leaflet. The fitting holding the wire wheel in place was changed at car no 4512 in December 1962 to quote Clausager "improved clamp to prevent damage to luggage". The key fob referred to is almost certainly one used "locally in the development area" to ensure keys to cars were not lost. Note they kept the boot and glove compartment keys separate from the ignition key. I think one can make out the mileage on the speedo suggesting the car had been used, almost certainly using "Trade Plates" which is why it does not carry a registration number. The instrument to the left of the steering wheel will be the fuel gauge - a reverse fit to the RHD drive car. The bolts for holding the boot to its hinges are unwisely stored in the gutter around the boot - which has been used judging by the scraped paint on the boot

stay bracket on the left. One feature the picture does show when blown up a little is the chrome strip fitted inside the instrument hood which was deleted in May 63 - body number not quoted but around 11100 to 11200. It also shows the large C on the choke cable knob - difficult to get today.

That's all for the moment

George

After this correspondence in conversation with George we came up with some other interesting questions, someone out there in MG world will know the answers.

- I wonder why they ever fitted two 6v batteries.
- I wonder why the seats are mounted on wooden slats with metal inserts.
- I wonder why the RHD versions did not have the bonnet release and fresh air vent controls on the driver's side.
- I wonder why the boot and glove box locks share the same key.
- I wonder why the position of the front side lights/indicators changed on chrome bumper cars.
- I wonder why the GT had such a complicated trim to the front and rear screens.

Roger