

**MGB****ROGER BOYS**

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Welcome to the MGB Newsletter

This month we have a varied cocktail of words talking about the MGBs that we love and other related subjects. John Watson has pitched in with his Chairman's Report so our allocated space is full.

This year at MGLive! we are very fortunate to have on display the first MGB press demonstrator car; it has been loaned

to us for the event by the owner Anthony Binnington and will be in the MGB Register area of the main marquee. The car is a most interesting early example, which has been well used in various forms of motor sports. In March this year I had the pleasure of meeting up with Anthony at his fantastic garage to find out the history of the car and

also to obtain Anthony's interesting story. Both were to prove fascinating and are included here. If you make it to MGLive! at Silverstone make sure you talk to Anthony and look at his wonderful car.

Will we see you there? I do hope so.

Roger

Chairman's Thoughts

Our main event as a Register was the AGM held at the end of March. I would like to thank all the MGB owners who joined the outgoing and the incoming Committee for an interesting meeting and in particular Chris Wilkins and Richard Homer for joining the Committee. The main change was that our Registrar, David Askew, will now be taking on the PR duties for the Register, with new Committee member Chris Wilkins having volunteered to take over the duties of the MGB Registrar. David will assist in the hand over.

We are particularly interested in developing the PR role and would ask

for stories to be fed through to David of news regarding your event or car. Chris will also be very interested in information concerning your car for the Register, therefore contact Chris if you want to ensure your MGB is on the Register or to find out what information is currently held.

Next month, at MGLive! Silverstone, we hope to meet as many MGB owners as possible in the Register parking area, where you might be asked to help line up the Bs for a couple of minutes as we are always short of volunteer parking attendants. The MGB Register reception table is located in the main MGCC marquee, please come

and meet your Committee and have a chat. We will have some special offers on our regalia table as well as a display of the new MGB clothing range.

If you fancy a weekend away with other MGB owners, we still have a couple of spaces on this year's event in September, for full details go to the events page at www.mgb-register.org or telephone our organiser Henry Cole on 01202 470771.

Please make contact with me or any of the Committee members if you want to discuss any items regarding the MGB Register.

John Watson
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Anthony Binnington's MGB ~ 1962 523 CBL ~ Chassis No GHN3/528

This MGB Roadster started life as the first MGB press demonstrator, and then became a regular competitor at MGCC Silverstone meetings, taking part each year since 1967 and it was the last MGB to be prepared by the Abingdon Factory for an international race – the 1969 Circuito de Mugello.

The car's build date was August 27 1962. It carried the registration number 523 CBL and was sprayed Iris Blue, it is believed to be the second RHD MGB to have been built. It was destined to become the first MGB press demonstrator and was the car tested by *Autocar*, *Autosport* and *Motor* for their road tests on the model's launch in September 1962.

The original registration number 523 CBL was changed to OMO 70 in late 1963 soon after the car became the personal property of Tim Binnington, Anthony's father. Tim managed the Show Shop at the Factory; the department where all the press cars were prepared. The registration OMO 70 came from his then road car, an

ex-Works MGA Coupé. Anthony told me that he would like to obtain the original registration number for the car again and during 2010 he will have a go at finding the required documentation to back up the application.

In 1967, the Factory re-painted it in its present colour of Basilica Blue, which those of you who know your colours will realise was an MG Midget colour of the time, it was in this year that the car began its racing career, driven not by Tim but by his youngest son Anthony.

The MGB was modified in 1968 with an ex-Works 3-bearing race engine and aluminium body panels from the Competitions Department. This enabled it to achieve some impressive performances, resulting in 14 top three places from 16 club races that year. In 1969, it was prepared by the Factory for the 1969 Circuito de Mugello, an important road race in Italy where it ran as a private entry. This seems to be the last time an MGB was prepared by the Factory for an international event.

It's impressive career continued and outright wins were gained in Modsports races at both Silverstone and Brands Hatch MGCC meetings in 1969 and 1970. In 1972, Anthony was keen to go F3 racing and OMO 70 had to go to finance this adventure, so OMO 70 was sold. For a few years it had a more normal life as it was used as a road car from 1972, during this period it was re-sprayed Harvest Gold.

The story then took a dramatic change as in 1974 Anthony decided it was time to return to club racing in Prodsports trim for the 1976–77 season, and was just able to raise the required sum to buy back the



Suitable home for a famous MGB



car. His intervention returned the car to racing trim and success came during that year, as OMO 70 was able to set the Class Silverstone GP circuit lap record in 1977. The partnership was back in action. It was then raced mainly in MGCC events until 1985 when it was restored to its original works specification for historic racing.

In historic FIA spec over a period of 23 years it has competed widely including several Eifel Classiks at the Nurburgring, Coys Silverstone GT races and three trips back to Mugello while competing in the 'Modena Cento Ore Classic'. Fortunately, it has never received any damage of note and retains all its Works components, aluminium panels and some of the original suspension today. The car is currently using a 5-bearing engine but the original 3-bearing engine and gearbox is carefully stored in the garage as a spare.

It was very apparent during our conversation that Anthony has a great regard for the car in which he has had some wonderful experiences and lots of adventures in exciting places. The plan for the future sees this continuing for a number of years as Anthony still retains the enthusiasm and the car is structurally and mechanically sound – couple this with the fettling it receives and I am convinced numerous victories lie ahead for this wonderful historic car.

Let's move on to the story of Anthony Binnington, a man who has achieved what many of us simply dream about. He became a racing driver on a low budget, achieving lots of success through talent and a great deal of persistence. He has remained busy preparing his car for most of the events he competes in, he is very approachable and modest about his achievements, and very much enjoys talking about the car answering questions happily, so don't be shy when you meet up with him at MGLive!

The story starts in early 1967, the MG Car Company was carrying out high-speed development work at Silverstone on the soon to be introduced MGC and Anthony was very fortunate to be included as one of the test drivers for a couple of days. This development was being carried out by the Show Shop Department of the MG Car Company based at Abingdon and run by Tim Binnington. As a 19-year-old, Anthony was shocked by the faith put in him by his father who had little to gain and possibly a lot to lose by including him in the



Out into the sunshine

test driver line-up. If he were to damage one of the cars it would have been very embarrassing and have led to questions back at the Factory. However, Anthony was lucky, he didn't crash and from that first day just about managed to keep up with the experienced test drivers. Naturally his learning curve for the course included a couple of spins, fortunately out of sight, on the other side of the circuit.

Anthony very much wanted to go racing but as a poor student even go-karts were out of the question. However, one day his father took pity on him and offered to let him use his own car OMO 70 in a handicap race at the 1967 MGCC Silverstone race meeting as long as Anthony promised to look after it! Anthony's track experience from testing the development MGCs was of great benefit and this first race resulted in a surprise outright win. He took part in two further races that year and they both resulted in Class wins so he felt that he was on the way to great things. One dilemma he experienced at the time was that John Thornley, MG Car Co Managing Director, had a son Peter, who was also racing a standard MGB in the same events and Anthony's Class wins came narrowly at his expense. This he felt was perhaps not very politically correct. However, John Thornley was a fair and generous man and he kindly eased the

path for OMO 70 to receive some used competition parts from the Competition Department's stores to continue racing in a more modified form. So in early 1968, OMO 70 received some aluminium front wings and doors, which it still has to this day, although they have gained a certain 'patina' after 40 years of racing, these along with a Works 3-bearing race engine coupled to a close-ratio gearbox, made the car more competitive. In this not particularly developed state and still running almost standard suspension it became one of the faster MGBs in English club racing.

In 1968, as Anthony turned 21 years old, a small legacy was received on his birthday, which was just enough to buy OMO 70 from his father. Therefore, in 1969, despite still being a student he was able to continue racing OMO 70 somehow and after winning the MGB scratch race at the MG Car Club Silverstone meeting, it was agreed that the MGB would be prepared at the Factory to take part in that year's Circuito de Mugello on the old 62km road circuit near Florence, Italy as a private entry. This was an international event which the Comps Dept had prepared a car for in previous years. The circuit was very twisty and demanding and wound through the mountains just north of Florence including the famous Futa pass from the Mille Miglia. Despite trying very hard Anthony found it quite impossible to learn the circuit. Race day in mid-July was swelteringly hot and he was totally unprepared physically and organisationally for the demands of this type of racing, particularly the heat. Half way round the second lap he slid the tail out a little too far on one of the hairpins and brushed a wall bursting a rear tyre. He had to stop and change the wheel with the standard jack on a steep gravelly incline, the exertion of wheel changing



Looking great at 48 years old



made him so hot and dehydrated that he could hardly continue driving. The fact that he had not even thought to put a bottle of water in the car shows the level of naivety. Anthony only just managed to drive the remaining 40km back to the pits, where he was very relieved to hand over to his co-driver Martin Ridehalph. Unfortunately, the brush with the wall had dislodged the electric fan, which cut a hole into the radiator. Fortunately, Jean Denton was also competing in an MGB and she offered the team the use of the one on her road car if they cared to go and extract it, but it was located in a car park on the other side of the circuit. So during a very long stop the replacement radiator was duly obtained and fitted and they were able to carry on to finish the race, albeit well down the field, despite a spirited drive by Martin, who also left the road at one point, but who Anthony felt made a rather better fist of it than he did. With the Comps Dept being run down in the late sixties and the MGB

no longer being considered sufficiently competitive for international racing this effectively turned out to be the last time a Factory-prepared MGB took part in an international event, although it was not of course an official 'Works' entry.

In 1970, Anthony was finding it increasingly difficult to remain competitive in Modsports races against heavily modified and much lightened cars, but he was happy that during his last race with the car he had an outright win in a 20-lap Modsports race at a damp Brands Hatch. Anthony's father had retired from the Factory in 1969 and the Comps Dept closed in the same year, so the avenue of parts support disappeared completely.

Between 1971 and 1975, OMO 70 reverted to being a road car as Anthony was desperate to try single seaters but needed to sell OMO 70 to be able to put down a deposit on an F3 car. So he de-tuned OMO 70 and sold it. The cash was used to buy the Works March 713M which had been

raced by James Hunt in 1971. Therefore having obtained this car, 1972 proved to be the realisation of a dream and Anthony was able to take part in half a dozen European F3 events. But after a couple of expensive accidents he simply ran out of money. The world economic downturn of 1973 made the chance of finding any sponsorship for the following season remote so the March had to be sold. The plus side was that it left Anthony just enough to buy the MGB OMO 70 back and, in 1976, with the introduction of the more standard 'Production Sportscar Racing' rules he was tempted to try and race her again. Over two years he did 10 Prodsports races, gradually improving the car's competitiveness. At the final championship race of 1977 on the Silverstone Grand Prix circuit it was fully competitive, taking the lap record. During the period 1978-84 Anthony used the car in various MGCC races including some early BCV8 rounds.

Anthony still owns and competes with the car. Since 1985 it has taken part in Historic GT racing, mainly in Europe, plus competitive rallies such as the 1987 Coppa D'Italia and several Modena Cento Ore Classics (which each time included nostalgic returns to race at 'Mugello'), the Manx Classic, and four Eifel Klassiks on the Nordschliefe where a top 10 finish out of 180 starters was achieved.

Thanks Anthony for sharing with us your story, I very much enjoyed the time we spent chatting together. We are also grateful for your kind offer to lend the car as the star attraction on our Register display at this year's MGLive!

Roger Boys



Anthony joins in fresh from working on OMO 70

The Conversion of a Sceptic

This is a tale of conversion and if it inspires only one person to take up the driver training offered by the Institute of Advanced Motorists the writing of this article will have been worthwhile.

My story starts about 25 years ago, when my employer offered me for the first time, an automatic car. As I had never driven a vehicle of this type I thought it would be worthwhile undertaking some training. I had hired a small automatic car for a few days and knew that I would like the transmission, particularly as I would be

spending a lot of time driving in heavy traffic and in towns. When the Granada was delivered I contacted the IAM to organise some training, imagine my surprise and disappointment when the man I contacted said that IAM did not recognise automatics and offered to teach me to drive it as a manual. This was not what I expected to hear, as I felt that the designers working for Ford had produced an automatic car that was safe to drive as it was produced. He turned me into a sceptic. I put this disappointment behind me and drove

automatic cars to the best of my ability, completing an average of 30,000 miles per year in the course of my employment over the next 25 years.

My next encounter with IAM was last year when my local MG Natter organised a talk by the Chairman of the Newbury branch of the IAM, Mrs Catherine Lloyd. It has to be remembered that the majority of her audience that night were in a similar age bracket to me, late fifties early sixties, and like me, held some entrenched views about their driving ability. There was



some detailed questioning which gave an indication of our views; Catherine answered all patiently. When the presentation was over, the discussion continued among us, with strong views being expressed about the need for further training. Unusually for me I remained quiet, as I was beginning to think that my previous view of the IAM was wrong and training was something we could all benefit from. That evening talking it over with my wife we realised that in almost every aspect of life I had undertaken training to improve my skills, but as a driver I had never received any since being taught to drive at the age of 17. It was then that I decided I would undertake the IAM training with the aim of becoming an Advanced Driver; my cheque was in the post the following morning. For some reason, I expect, a lack of confidence that I would achieve my objective; I decided to keep my decision to myself.

As an automatic driver I explained to the Chief Observer of the Newbury IAM Group my desire to be taught by an instructor who understood the needs of the automatic driver and was capable of overcoming my scepticism, it was Catherine who drew the short straw. My first drive was a little daunting, as I had begun to read the IAM book, *Advanced Driving – the essential guide* and realised that there was a lot to learn. Catherine did her very best to put me at ease as I drove her round for the best part of an hour. When this first drive was over, I was expecting to be severely criticised, but I was pleased to receive lots of encouragement and it was agreed that we had some areas to work on. I realised that I had collected numerous bad habits over the years which had to be eliminated if I was to progress. I had to master the push pull method of steering and using the steptronic area of the gearbox to achieve greater control of the car, neither of which I had ever used previously, and there were a lot more techniques designed to achieve a smooth and safe drive, some of these were new to me. Slowly over the next couple of months I progressed. I purchased a copy of *Roadcraft – the Police drivers' handbook* along with an up-to-date version of *The Highway Code* and these made bedtime reading. Slowly I began to understand and master the basics of the system, which focuses on gathering information then adopting the correct road position, speed, gear and acceleration for

a given situation, and more importantly I began to appreciate the value of using it all the time. Limit points, making progress and slow to flow became second nature to me and I began to drive more smoothly. One of my greatest difficulties was maintaining the correct speed within speed limits, for some reason I was constantly allowing the speed to creep up. I had to overcome this habit, as I would fail my advanced test if this continued to happen.

During my Check Drive, an assessment taken prior to applying for my test, conducted by John Hutchinson, I pulled away from collecting him and let myself down badly, by racing away and quickly getting up to 40mph in a 30mph limit. Despite this rush of blood, the rest of my drive was much more controlled and following an intense debrief, to my relief John recommended that I put in for my test. One hurdle overcome. For various reasons there was a delay of nearly two months before the test date was agreed, during this time I had a couple more observed drives with Catherine, the last of which, due to over-confidence on my part, was a very poor drive, breaking the speed limit on a regular basis being the most glaring of errors committed. As I drove home, I reflected on the fact that I had been left in no doubt that if I continued with this trend during my test, I would fail.

Following this disappointing performance I was determined to practice on every occasion possible and make sure that I was concentrating hard on the areas of weakness. In fact, the day prior to the test, a wet Sunday, I remembered that our local postman, a recently qualified Advanced Driver, had mentioned that he had taken his test in Basingstoke, so off I went and drove 70 miles around this area observing every speed limit to the letter; this drive definitely helped with my confidence. However, the following morning, the day of the test, all this confidence had drained away and I was as nervous as I had been in years. I recalled that Catherine had recommended that I complete a drive of some 15 miles before I reported for the test; this I did and the nerves seemed to evaporate. I had a coffee with the examiner and he explained the details of the test that he would conduct. Off we went and I carefully maintained the correct speed as we navigated the traffic in Newbury. As we passed a 40mph sign he asked me what

the sign said, I quickly checked the speed we were travelling at and replied 40mph, and the other sign on the post? I had no idea – it was, he explained, a clearway sign. I put this observation error out of my mind and concentrated hard on my driving desperately trying at all times to remember the signs that we passed, I was not caught out again. It seemed like no time at all before we were back in the car park to complete the reversing manoeuvres. Sitting in the café I received a detailed breakdown of the drive and my confidence began to wane, I was going to fail. He then asked me four obscure questions on the Highway Code, which I struggled with, and I was convinced I was staring at failure. He then started to fill out the assessment sheet, and my confidence began to rise again as I was being marked 'good' in lots of the boxes; however, the knowledge of the Highway Code was indicated as poor. He finished, and looked at me, not smiling, then stood up and offered his hand saying "Congratulations you have passed." Wow, I had made it, fantastic.

I have to say a big thank you to Catherine and everyone who supported me during this process, your goal has been achieved, I am no longer a sceptic but a convert.

If you have not undertaken the IAM Driver Training, please do so, you will find it very satisfying and enjoyable, you will also learn to achieve greater car control, become much more observant and above all achieve greater safety by avoiding the many dangerous situations which are all too evident on our busy roads today. If I can help you in any way please contact me on 07966 132295 or email rogerb@newbury.net

Your first step is the most difficult, so do it today. You will not regret it; make contact with IAM now at:

IAM
IAM House
510 Chiswick High Road
London W4 5RG
0208996 9600
Email: enquiries@iam.org.uk
Website: iam.org.uk

And put your cheque in the post.

Roger Boys



GINNY CARTMELL

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MGC Day Sunday July 11 2010 at Haynes Motor Museum with Skittle and Carvery Saturday Night at the Halfway Inn Country Lodge

Once again, the Committee are proud to present this year's MGC Celebrations. Hopefully by now you have all received full details on how to get involved and maybe some of you have already sent back your entry forms. Well, that is great if you have, but those of you that just keep looking at

the details on the kitchen table and saying "I must fill that out and send it back to Ginny", please get on and do it. We have got another great event lined up for you all and I am very much looking forward to meeting up with you all again soon. Anyone wanting more information, an entry form,

or any other help regarding C Day, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mike and Angie Haughton are defiantly keeping everything crossed this year with regards to making it to Haynes Motor Museum. Last year did not go quite to plan. Read on and all will become clear.

Well, we almost made it to...MGC Day 2009...

On the way to the MGC Day gathering last year, we got stuck in some heavy traffic and the temperature gauge started creeping up and up...and up. We eventually got out of the traffic and I thought once we got some clear road and air flow through the radiator it would cool down – but no such luck! Steam everywhere and the engine pinking like mad meant it was time to pull over to let the C cool off. We were at the end of a slip road off the motorway, and within 15 minutes a helpful Highways Agency team was passing by and stopped to check us out. We had a 2-litre container of water – and luckily these chaps had another gallon – and that just about topped up the radiator.

However, after waiting a while to make sure everything had cooled down, the C just wouldn't start. Not even a suggestion of firing up. After another 15 minutes of tinkering I gave up and called the AA. The guy who turned up to help was a 'subcontractor' in a transporter truck and had almost no tools as he thought we were an MGF with head gasket failure! I

had flattened the battery, so to try and get us started he hauled the car up onto the transporter and tried a bump start rolling back down the ramp – but no luck with that plan either.

He then decided that it definitely was a head gasket failure due to the overheating. He took us 20 miles up the road to a motorway service station where we then had to unload and wait for a 'proper' AA transporter, for the rest of the journey home to the Wirral.

So back at home I was checking the adverts in *Safety Fast!*, planning to call round on Monday to get a new unleaded head (as it was something I had in mind to do anyway) – but I thought it was worth a further 'tinker' in the comfort of my own garage. It took me about 30 minutes to work out that two things had gone wrong, perhaps each contributing to the other. First, the pipe from the thermostat housing to the expansion tank had split – this sprayed water straight back onto the manifold – hence all the steam (without even getting to the steam railway centre!).



And second, the inside of the rotor arm had disintegrated and was loose on the distributor spindle so, although making sparks at the plugs, it was not in the right order.

The repair cost me the grand total of £1.80 for a rotor arm, and a new length of pipe I had lying round in the garage – and the C fired up and ran fine! Needless to say, I was extremely grumpy that we had missed MGC Day and also that it was such a simple thing that had gone wrong. Live and learn I guess. Let's hope I make it this year, it looks like it could be a great weekend.

Mike & Angie Haughton

Ex Works MGC Roadster Prototype FRX 692C

History Profile

The first project code allocated in 1961 for the new 'Six-Cylinder MGC Sports Car' was ADO52, but it was not until 1965 that the first Prototype MGC Roadster was manufactured.

Initially starting life as a pre-1965 MGB pull door handle body shell assembled by Pressed Steel in Swindon, Wiltshire, the original shell was then taken to Morris Bodies Plant in Coventry where the

extensive off-tools modifications were made to accommodate the torsion bar front suspension necessary to take the Alec Issigonis newly designed seven-bearing six-cylinder engine.

The original body shell floor pans were cut across the car beneath the seats and the fronts of the rear pans were then raised to allow fitment of the channel section that supports the rear of the torsion bars that have vernier adjustment to determine the

ride height of the front suspension.

In order to fit the six-cylinder engine, a unique 'U'-shaped cross member was fabricated complete with engine, steering rack and front torsion bar mounting points.

The original Mk1 MGB transmission tunnel and inner front wings were cut and shut to allow the fitment of the new cross member, engine and four-speed manual transmission with overdrive unit, and the optional Borg-Warner BW35 automatic transmission.