

FARINA MG & RILEY REGISTER NEWSLETTER

For the enthusiast of the
BMC Farina Riley 4/68, 4/72,
MG Mk. 3 and Mk. 4 Magnette

Millennium Issue

No. 26



MG & RILEY FARINA REGISTER

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May I start by wishing all our members a very happy Christmas and a superb Millennium. Who would have thought that our cars would still be running about by the time the end of the Century came around? Some of you who own the older models will also be celebrating your cars 40th birthday, which is quite an achievement it has to be said.

No rallies to report on this issue, as this is traditionally a less active time in the classic car world although I am sure you are catching up on various jobs on your cars. The ban on leaded petrol seems to have fizzled out into a minor irritation since the appearance of Lead Replacement Petrol at the pumps. I am still keen to get my cars converted though from a cost point of view if nothing else, (unleaded much cheaper at the pumps).

I hope everyone likes the "one off" colour edition which you will also find the updated lists of surviving cars enclosed with. Please do inform me of any changes you are aware of to keep this list as accurate as possible. Any spare photos would also be welcomed along with the history of your car for my records.

Plenty for you to read in this edition but one point I wish to raise is about members who live close together but might not know each other. Does anyone wish to have their name and address in the next issue for the purpose of meeting other owners?

Finally thank you to Keith Hutchinson for all his efforts. Keith has now stood down as Riley Secretary. His replacement is Andrew Idle, a Riley 4/72 owner from Bingley, West Yorkshire.

All the best

Mick.



John Dodsworth's Mk. III Magnette.

This rare Mk. 3 Magnette was recently rescued from an uncertain future by John Dodsworth of Darlington, County Durham. John who is also the proud owner of a black Riley 4/72 spotted the MG at the side of the A1(M) Motorway and decided to investigate. YAD 567 had been kept in various locations around the country of late due to the nomadic lifestyle of its previous owner, who did not have any real plans for the car. After a few weeks of haggling John finally acquired the car and was amazed how solid it was, it also ran very well indeed. Long-term plans are to bring the car back to life but it will have to wait until his Riley is finished. The good news is that it has now been saved.



ATTENTION LINCOLNSHIRE OWNERS

Norman Green confesses to feeling slightly out on a limb in Farina terms. He lives in the Lincolnshire seaside resort of Skegness, which is located quite a few miles from the nearest major town. Subsequently he is not aware of any other Farina owners near to him. However, I am aware that we have a few members in and around Lincolnshire, so please get in touch with Norman at 139 Drummond Road, Skegness, Lincolnshire, PE25 3BS. Telephone: 01754 768809.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Following our entry into the Practical Classics Club guide I have received a lot of promotional material from various companies. So here they are.



P.D. GOUGH & ASSOCIATE are manufacturers of stainless steel exhaust systems. They are currently offering an impressive 35% discount off normal retail prices to club members. All exhaust systems carry a vehicle life guarantee. They are at: The Old Foundry, Common Lane, Watnall, Nottingham, NG16 1HD. Telephone: 0115 938 2241, Fax 0115 945 9162.



CLASSIC MOVES are a car transportation company who are offering discounted rates to club members. They are at: Sycamore Lodge, Thornley, Newark, Notts., NG23 7BS. Telephone: 01522 704484, Mobile 0780 348 7288.



PURE RESEARCH produce a product called EDTA+ which can prolong the life of your battery. It is in powder form and is added to the battery to act on the sulphating plates and give it a new lease of life. It is described as being beneficial to batteries which are not in constant use (e.g. classic car ones). I have one free sample available to the first member to come forward. I tried it myself on my A60 but I think the battery was worn out so my test didn't really work, so any other budding scientists out there who would like to try this sample and report back to me on the results? The product is available from Pure Research, 89 Station Road, Cropston, Leicestershire, LE7 7HG. Telephone: 0116 235 1610. The owners name is Terry Pruce. The price is £13.95 and will do three batteries.



R. KITCHEN are a motor factors who I use all the time for my service items like filters, distributor caps, etc., etc., the owner Geoff is very helpful. They are Unipart stockists and have been selling, Leyland, Austin Rover and Rover parts for years. They are at: 4 Skipton Road, Colne, Lancashire, BB8 0HN. Telephone and Fax number is 01282 861663. A mail order service is available.

THE ULTIMATE IN BADGE ENGINEERING CON TRICKS?

There was much public criticism even back in the gracious days of 1959 when BMC announced to the world its new model which based on one shape and design was to provide the new family man's car in five famous marques!

Curiously, the first to arrive was the Wolseley 15/60, a few weeks before the 1958 Motor Show, followed by the Austin A55 Mk. 2, Morris Oxford 5, MG Midget Mk. 3 and Riley 4/68.

It was the MG purists who were particularly disappointed, they were expecting a car with fine breeding and handling qualities. The reproduction of letters below written to Autocar and headed "On the Consumer Side", 27 February 1959 is probably typical of some feeling at the time:

One Car, Three Grilles?

Pinin Farina made an excellent job of designing the new Wolseley 15/60... but with the announcement of the Midget, A55 and 15/60 all using the same body shell, I anticipate that in the near future BMC will announce that an entirely new type of car will be available. This will be known as the Maudslayi and have as standard equipment, three different, interchangeable radiator grilles which can be exchanged in a matter of minutes.

This will have many possibilities. For instance:

- (1) Wolseley for visiting wealthy friends or taking elderly relatives for afternoon drives; or*
- (2) M.G., for attending Motor Club functions or other sporting occasions; or*
- (3) Austin, to be parked outside the house when the rent collector calls.*

In the latter case the radiator grille would be slightly rusty for best effect.

Pinin Farina is at the top of his profession... I await with interest the announcement of a new Morris Oxford - or will it be another grille?

Peter L. Milner, Sheffield

Divergence from Tradition

Mr. John Thornley's book, 'Maintaining the Breed', traces the history of M.G. cars from No. 1 of 1927 to the MGA's of today. I like to think on parallel lines of what might be called the distaff side, beginning with the ZA and ZB Tickford coupes and progressing via the VA 1½ litres, the Y series 1½ litre saloons to the ZA and ZB Midgets, all impeccably bred and behaved.

Now we have this new Italo-American Midget Mk. III. Consider its points - shorter wheelbase narrower track, greater body length, height and width, and smaller wheels.

I can see no reason why the monster BMC concern has produced such a car when we were all looking forward to something like a small Aston Martin Mk. III.

E.P. Jowett - Okehampton, Devon.

Had hoped for Gran Turismo

Having just seen the latest creation by Pinin Farina in the local showrooms, I feel I must write to say how shocked my friends and I are. When the new A40 was announced, we all said here was a car designed by somebody with vision, a small car which looked and felt big-bags of good features and an unusual-shaped body which somehow looked right. This was followed by the Wolseley 15/60; but when the Austin A55 came along we definitely began to worry. We consoled ourselves with the thought that the Magnette and the 1.5 Riley still remained, and the Magnette would probably be the model Signor Farina would make his piece de resistance.

The new Magnette would probably be a cross between the Alfa-Romeo Guilletta Sprite coupe and the Lancia Appia. It might even have the twin camshaft engine, and perhaps even a 5 speed box. Certainly it would be Gran Turismo in the best Italian traditions.

What do we get? The same old BMC formula. Take a 1½ litre B-type engine (common to every model in this class from the Morris Commercial to the MGA), add two cars, stick on a four-speed gearbox, admittedly very good, and surround it with the now well-known body shell, put on a different radiator grille and hey presto, we have an exciting new model.

J.W. Mitchell, C. Edwards, G. Brown, Chelmsford, Essex.

Another correspondent came to the defence of the Magnette Mk. III and to set the record more in balance his letter from 17 April 1959 is reproduced below:

It is amusing to notice that with the announcement of each new model there is a crop of angry letters bewailing its loss of character and its repulsive styling, and sighing for what might have been. Contributors of your issue on 27th February are well up to standard.

Possibly Mr. Milner had not noticed the the ZA and ZB Magnettes shared the same pressings as the 4/44 and 15/50 Wolseleys, or realised that it is impossible to produce a car in relatively small numbers with an individual body at a reasonable price. There are differences between the new MG and Wolseley other than the radiator grilles. There is a higher tuned engine, a stiffer suspension, better seating, a laminated windscreen, and several minor items.

Mr. Jowett may not remember the many Y-type owners who threw up their hands in horror when the ZA was announced; this was not a 'real' car - it had not running boards! They complained that it shared a body with the 4/44, conveniently forgetting that the Y shared many pressings with a Morris. Now the ZB is all that was wonderful, and the new Mk. III beyond the pale. When Mr. Jowett has the

opportunity to drive a new Mk. III he will find the roadholding, lack of roll on corners, brakes and comfort just as good as the ZB. Visibility is vastly improved, the steering is much lighter if slightly less sensitive, and petrol economy is greater. It may be a mile or two slower at maximum speed, but has greater torque up to 65 m.p.h. It has, unfortunately, more greasing points and an interior mirror which vibrates. The finish is well up to the standard expected of MGs.

As for the other 3 writers, goodness knows what their ideal car would cost, what with twin-cam engines, five speed gearboxes, an individual body, disc brakes no doubt and all the rest; there would be such a small market for this inevitably expensive model that no large manufacturer would find it worthwhile.

I cannot speak more highly of the Mk III than to say it is as good a car as the ZB, and perhaps those who shudder at the styling will remember their views five years hence when the next model is announced, and when they fly to the defence of the Mk. III - the last real car.

B.C. Wilkinson, Grimsby, Lincolnshire.

What the purists failed to grasp was that BMC wanted to produce an MG and Riley saloon within reach of the upper executive's price bracket and not something which would be for the few only. By achieving the economies of scale of mass-production of one body shell and the basic running gear, BMC were able to offer its customers a low-production variant at only 22% more than the price of the Austin A55 Mk. II To be precise, the prices were (inc. Purchase Tax) £878.17 and £1072.10.

For that additional sum, the customer on the Magnette III got an MG interior complete with door fillets, clock, walnut dash, under the bonnet twin carbs, modified exhaust manifold and one or two other little subtleties for better performance. There was naturally the MG grille and little touches such as more chrome on the back door diagonal swathes on the waist line and the posh glass screen water bottle. The engine was painted dark red, even though it was the same 1500cc unit as that which powered the green-painted Austin.

The hub-caps were pure MG and this variant together with the Riley had silver-painted road wheels - cream, light grey etc. like the other cars.

The bumpers had different overriders fitted as compared with the Austin and Morris.

An automatic reversing light was incorporated into the boot lid strip.

The bodywork was altered from the Austin by modifying the back wing to incorporate very distinctive cut-off tail fins. This was not supposedly a Pinin Farina idea - it was something that BMC's in house people came up with. Of course, the MG grille shape necessitated that this car had its own bonnet and the same applied to the Riley too.

The windows, doors, front wings, suspension, steering, gearbox, axle, brakes, clutch and electrics (apart from the wiring detail) were exactly the same on the MG and Riley as the Austin. I say exactly the same - but one of the correspondents above suggests that the MG suspension was stiffer. I think he is incorrect there.

No handling upgrades were deemed necessary over and above the basic Cambridge then and the Autocar writers and test staff were constantly harping on about the lack of rack and pinion steering and the shorter wheelbase. It was inferred that the handling of the Magnette III was not up the standard of its predecessor.

That said, the MG was a very smart-looking car and I think that the passage of time has made us look at it with different eyes. Looks are of course subjective, but I think that of all the Farina 1500s, the MG was the best looking. The bold and simple frontage design suited its front grille perfectly, and the truncated tail fins balancing out the shape with its long back wing.

Many now feel the early 1500cc Farinas with their narrow track, short wheelbase and elevated stature (caused by the coil springs sitting nearer vertical on the smaller wishbone arms than the 1600 versions) look more majestic than the later ones.

I would go along with this view, I think BMC were sensitive in 1961 to toning down the tail fins and giving the later cars a squatter look which made them look more modern at the time.

However 40 years down the line, the 1500cc versions are the most stylish and impressive to look at and of course extremely rare in MG and Riley form.

Andrew Idle.

'MAGNETTE IN THE BIG APPLE'

Hi, I'm Tim Gladding from Long Island, New York. My home town of Northport is about 40 miles from New York City. I've been into MGs since I was a kid and purchased my 1953 MGTD Mk. II in 1968 while I was still in college. I restored it in 1974-75 and I still have it. When I was first married the TD was great for my wife and I but after my son was born it wasn't too long until the three of us could not use this car anymore. It was about this time that I started looking for a mode of MG transport that could fit the three of us. I bid on a Y type at a local auction but was unsuccessful. A few years went by before I noticed ads in Practical Classics for 'Farina' type MGs, Rileys, Austins etc. On Super Bowl Sunday I saw an ad in a local newspaper for an Austin Cambrian which I purchased but immediately gave to a friend of mine. A few months later, the 1960 Magnette joined the family. 'Wallace' has proven to be a marvellous car for family outings and running around town. First of all, it is the only Magnette around on or near Long Island. Secondly, everyone takes notice of it; more than the TD. People think that the TD is a replicar. I bought it from the third owner who claims the second owner had it in Trinidad. I'm not sure about this since it is left hand drive. I did have a local mechanic come running from his shop while I was stopped at a light claiming he had worked on these cars extensively in Jamaica. He just could not believe he was seeing a Farina in this small town.

The car runs and drives very well. It will need a respray this winter along with a new interior. Front steering needs some attention also. It is only missing the spare tire tray. I went to the Beaulieu autojumble this September but only found a few small bits for this car. Since I've had it, I put a rebuilt dynamo in, electronic ignition, radiator and a control box. The former owner had completely redone the braking system.

I try and drive it a least 3 or 4 times a week and it attracts a small gathering wherever it's parked. I know of a few others in the States. One in South Carolina, 2 wrecked ones in Ohio, one in New Hampshire and one in California.

All in all, a fun, reliable car.

Tim Gladding, Northport, Long Island, New York.



Tim Gladding's smart, green 1960 Mk. III Magnette sporting it's New York licence plate.

FARINA TOUR TO SWEDEN

As I mentioned briefly in the last issue we are planning a Farina invasion of Sweden. We are visiting Farina fanatic Ilya Meyer in Gothenberg. At the time of going to press we have four or maybe five owners and cars interested in the visit. All the models are represented except the Morris Oxford. I will be able to provide accommodation details in the near future. The dates are around the 17th to the 24th of June depending on the ferry departures. The crossing which takes 25 hours is operated by Scandinavian Seaways and connects Newcastle to Gothenberg direct. A brochure is available by telephoning them on 0990 333 666. The new brochure is not out until late November but sailings are expected to be outward Friday, homeward Sunday. Please get in touch with Mick if you are interested in what promises to be a great adventure.



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BOOK REVIEW 'THE CARS OF BMC'

Friend and member Stuart Clarke phoned me the other week informing me of a book he had bought which he thought might interest me. I think it may also interest a few of you.

The book entitled 'The cars of BMC' is written by Graham Robson. It was first published in 1987 but an updated version has been printed this year. The publication which is just slightly smaller than A4 consists of 300 pages with around 17 in full colour. All models produced by BMC are covered with photos, technical details and model changes etc. The book is not particularly complimentary to our cars, rather reflecting the mood of the time like the letters earlier in this issue. I would still recommend it though as a good book to have for all fans of BMC cars. It also contains an interesting shot of an Argentinian Di Tella pick up body shell. The book priced at £19.99 is available from: Motor Racing Publications, Unit 6, The Pilton Estate, 46, Pitlake, Croydon, CR0 3RY. Or in the U.S.A. from Motorbooks International, 729 Prospect Avenue, Osceola, Wisconsin, 54020-0001. Priced \$39.95.

Classifieds

Rare **A60 Countryman Estate** car for sale. 1965 model, 36,500 miles on the clock, two tone colour scheme (green with a grey roof). Grey interior, restored 14 months ago all receipts of work completed since owned are available, replacement carpet and some interior work completed. A fine example of this marque, good runner, excellent reliability, M.O.T. and Taxed until October 2000, recently valued at £2,800. Offers invited no lower than £2,000. Delivery arranged if necessary, Mick has a photo if anyone needs to see it.

Mr. G. Stephenson, 22, Silverdale Drive, Hanover Estate, Winlaton, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE21 6EH. Telephone 0191 4142908.

Riley 4/72, 1967, for restoration. Phone Stuart Clarke for details. Wirral 0151 625 5055.

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