

Editorial comment

A good response on features, a poor turnout at the **AGM** and a chain letter with a difference

GREAT NEWS - after my plea last time for articles, they have come flooding in. Well, a slight exaggeration but there has been a very encouraging trickle. Thanks to all of you who have made contact

This edition carries articles from France and South Africa: both seem ideal places for an MGB. We also learn how to renovate a steering column, add this to Bernard's up date on the Register News and some rambling from me and we have run out of space. It's good news to see in the picture that Don Hayter designer of the MGB, is passing on his knowledge to a new generation - his grandchildren Alex, Sam and Megan.

It has been suggested that we could enhance the web site by listing a number of interesting quality sites that feature MGs. Neil Hyett has volunteered to coordinate this and would like some assistance. If you have a favourite MG site, email the address to neilhhyett@fsmail.net Neil also is interested in any tips you have discovered to help with the maintenance of your MGB.

News of Team Boys this period is that retirement is



IN ONE WEEK YOU'LL RECEIVE 16,436 HUSBANDS. AND ONE OF THEM IS BOUND TO BE GOOD LOOKING AND RICH'

going well, we both have now reached the FRP (Fully Retired Person) status. Paddy and the Boneshaker are looking forward to a full summer calendar and a number of bookings have been made. I have just returned from the MGB Register AGM, Unfortunately only the committee turned up, not a single other

member made the effort which was an unfortunate situation as it offers so little encouragement to those who work so hard on your behalf. One thought I had was would more people make the effort if we put on an event prior to the AGM, perhaps an MG speaker or a film show? What do you think?

Nicky was sent the following letter which caused us some amusement.

"As a wife of a husband who collects old cars this chain letter is designed to bring you relief and happiness. Unlike other chain letters, it does not cost you money. Simply send a copy of this letter to six other wives who are dissatisfied with the condition of their garage and garden because of husbands who collect old car parts. Then bundle up your husband and send him to the wife at the top of the list and add your name to the bottom of the list. In just one week you will receive 16,436 husbands, and one of them is bound to be good looking and rich'. Have faith in this letter. One wife broke the chain and everyone got her old husband back." Why do I have a large typed address label attached to a string around my neck? Enjoy your MGB. Roger

MGB Roadsters en France - Living the Dream?

By Greg and Cara Samways

MILES OF BEAUTIFUL countryside, forested hills, lush green valleys, wide rivers, narrow gorges dotted with picturesque historic towns and villages, spectacular chateaux - all connected by virtually deserted winding roads - where's my roadster!? Those were our first thoughts as we toured the Limousin/Dordogne regions in central France looking for a dream property to renovate, back in 2002. the year it all started.

My wife Cara and I have been coming to Central France every summer for more than 10 years to attend the Hurdy-Gurdy and Bagpipe festival at St Chatterier, but in 2002 we started doing the Le Mans run as well, with Cara's parents Christine and Peter Tipton. It was Peter's suggestion, as something of a nostalgia trip for the Tiptons, who have been involved in the MG Car Club for years and have had many enjoyable tours of the south of France with the kids in the back of the Roadster However for the first trip we decided to take the trusty old Land Rover Discovery, but unfortunately left it too late to get a space at the campsite on the Le Mans circuit

We panicked and reached for the campsite guide to find the only campsite with space was 20km away - nightmare or blessing in disguise?

It transpired that this campsite had four stars, a swimming pool, toilets that were cleaned every day, a restaurant and lots of people in lovely cars ranging from Morris Minors to Ultimas. We had really fallen on our feet Even better the Souffront Brothers who run the place laid on lots of entertainment including a mini concours. We just had to bring the MGBs next time.

In 2003 we packed the camping gear in a trailer and hitched it up to Peter and Christine's V8 MGB Roadster which slowed it down just enough for our standard 1.8 MGB Roadster to keep up! It went like a dream from the UK. until 20 miles before the campsite, when the 1.8 ground to a halt Peter and I managed to diagnose a faulty rotor arm - but you've guessed it we had every spare MG part known to man except rotor arms! So we took the V8 and trailer to the site, then returned in the V8 to tow in the 1.8.

Luckily we quickly managed to find an MGB

owner and borrowed his rotor arm, just to confirm our suspicions, but he didn't have a spare, We then spent the next two days talking to MGB owners on the circuit who said things like "Yeah, pain in the backside those rotor arms, always cracking have you tried nail varnish?" or "Don't make them like they used to", but no one had a spare either! In desperation we put a call out on Radio Le Mans pleading for a rotor arm, but to no avail!

Finally we thought we'd cracked it (well, in fact we already knew that we'd cracked it). We managed to blag our way into the Legends Race pit to speak to an old friend, Barry Sidery-Smith, who was preparing for the race on the Saturday morning. Professional pit crew, that's what we needed. Unbelievably they had left their spare rotor arms on the bench in the UK, and they were looking for some too! In desperation we ordered some spares from a supplier in Dunkirk the rotor arms were 3.5 Euros, and the courier was 25 Euros! Now all of our cars have a spare rotor arm on the key ring.

Chairmans Report

The Register AGM has just finished and this came one week after the MGCC Council Meeting and I must refer to both of these events.

MY REPORT to the AGM followed the normal format of covering the events organised by the Register during the year I don't intend to go over these again, as I mentioned them all in my reports during the year other than to say that we all owe a vote of thanks to the individuals and teams both from the Registers and the Centres who take on the responsibility of running events, without which we would be missing many of the benefits of membership of the MGCC.

At the AGM Dave Smith stood down from the committee and I thanked him for his involvement during the past six years. I also referred to the Register's position regarding the Kimber House project. The Register supported the investigation by the Board, but were dismayed when the final report focussed heavily on the most expensive option, namely a complete rebuild, and therefore our vote was cast against this proposal and supporting the setting up of the Sub Committee to review the available options. Following their report which I am sure as been referred to elsewhere by Club Chairman. Peter Best the Register supported the small scale development of the Kimber House site. The Register were very concerned by divisions which have become apparent within the Board of Directors and look to the future of a reunited Board who will take the MGCC forward. We will continue to support actions by the Board, which the Register Committee, after full discussions, believes to be in the best interest of the club.

I would remind all of you that the Register Committee's aim is to provide events and take positions in debates within the club which reflects the needs and wishes of members of the Register but we rely on your feedback so if you have any comments please let us know your views.

Finally, spring appears to be coming and by the time you read this we will be approaching summer I trust that many of you will be out in your MGBs supporting Register and Centre-organized events. If you would like to do a write up on any event you have attended, with photographs if possible, or have something interesting to tell us about your MGB then please contact Roger Boys as we are always looking for input to the Register News.

Bernard Rengger



First and second place in the Classic concours, but which one would get your vote?



The perfect transport for the happy couple.

We didn't enter the concours that year - pushing would have been too embarrassing - but we vowed to return the following year

In 2004 we returned completely prepared, only to discover that the concours was now so popular that it was invitation only. So off I went and got us invited! We also discovered that this year they had three cups - for first second and third places. However; the guy in the beautiful white E-Type continued to complain that he had never won in 5+ years, because the competition was putting Ultimas against E-Types and Aston Martin DB8s against MGB Roadsters. That was hardly fair but it gave me an idea. How about having three categories? Classics (25 years+). Modern and Kit Cars: one cup for each - simple. The management agreed and low-and-behold, the E-type came first and we came second with the MGB Roadster in the "Classics" class!

It was while sitting sipping champagne after our near victory that we looked at the brothers organising the fun and said "We could do this" - the following month we were searching for properties in the Limousin/Dordogne area. It was during this trip that it dawned on us that this was a beautiful place to go for a drive in the sun, with the top down. Could we set up a classic car hire business here and drive our dream?



Prize-giving prior to the champagne celebrations.

Six months later our house in the UK was sold, and 12 months after that we moved into our farm at Joffreny which is near Chalus. just south of Limoges, with 20 acres of land, a 120ft bam, a bakery and 1/2 a mile of river frontage with a forest on the opposite bank - complete with wild boar npping up the bottom field, migrating cranes and birds of prey circling overhead, snakes in the kitchen, mice in the walls, black and yellow salamanders under the patio and Limousin cattle and deer everywhere!

But the dream was almost shattered when we realised that we had twice as much work to do as we thought it was going to cost three times more than we had estimated and would take four times longer than we planned! However we are gradually coming out of the other side and now have everything in place to offer you MGB Roadsters for hire in the beautiful Limousin/Dordogne regions of West Central France. We also have lots of local knowledge so we can point you in the right direction. Cara and myself, and Chistine and Peter will be on hand at Joffreny all summer so why not come and join us for a natter (en francais, si vous voulez).

For further information contact enquiries@joffrenytours.com, or visit our website at www.joffrenytours.com

Overhauling an MGB early type collapsible steering column

David Brown applies ingenuity to his steering column

FOLLOWING THE 2005 Regency Run, my wife and I somehow returned with a 1972 MGB GT. In 1992 it had had a major overhaul and the car came with all bills from that date. It goes rather well but had a couple of odd noises from somewhere forward of the feet and a little slack in the steering, about 2/3 degrees of movement at the steering wheel.

The source of the noises was quickly found and a replacement NSF anti-roll bar link was fitted. In doing so I discovered that whilst the previous owner had replaced the steering bushes and pins together with new brake pads, discs, master cylinder and servo, he had forgotten to fit any split pins to any of the suspension nuts. When I placed a socket and bar on one it was so loose that the weight of the bar undid the nut! Also the spirit pins had been fitted to the new brake pads, but not bent over and could have worked out at any time. The moral of this is something that was ingrained in me as an apprentice, that is that before putting your tools away after a job check every nut bolt screw, split pin etc. that they are tight and fitted correctly.

That over it was now down to rectifying the steering slack. The ball joints had been replaced in the last 12 months, the rack appeared to have no slack in it and the UJ on the steering had been replaced, but needed tightening. I checked that the rack fixing bolts were tight - yes they were. But I still had this movement at the steering wheel, which was diagnosed to be in the actual column.

Each person I asked advised me that the early type of column was obsolete and no replacement was available. However an engineering company nearby said that they could overhaul it at reasonable cost and I delivered the column to them and collected it a week later. Yes the slack had totally gone, but after fitting it the bushes were so tight together with the steering I quickly developed very strong arm muscles.

"Don't worry, it will soon ease itself off and wear in, they are always like this. There is no movement between the two halves of the inner column," I was told. The car passed its MOT test OK, but was no longer enjoyable to drive and would not self-centre after cornering. After 1000+ miles I had had enough and the 2/3 degree movement had returned. So, this time I thought I would have a go myself.

I stripped out the column and dismantled it very simply, the inner column is released downwards and as it comes out it brings with it the lower bush. The top half comprises of a solid upper section and a hollow lower section with two flat areas that align with the upper section of the lower half. At the bottom end of the lower half are the splines that fit into the UJ. The flats on both halves were originally a tight fit to enable the turning movement of the top half to be transmitted to the lower half for steering. However the design is such that it is inevitable that wear will occur and slack come into the steering to the 2/3 degrees that I was experiencing. The design allows vertical movement in the event of a serious collision, enabling the bottom half to slide up more into the top half and thus prevent the whole column from ending up in the driver's chest.

The 'collapsible' part is a rather crude design in that the outer half has two 5mm holes through it a few inches apart. The inner half is roughly ground around the circumference between the flats (which are 180 degrees apart) and align with the holes in the top half. When assembled, white metal is poured through the two holes in the upper half and allowed to cool. This holds the whole assembly as a tight unit and in the event of an accident causing the bottom of the column to move up, the white metal will shear to prevent driver injury.

When I dismantled my column, the white metal had sheared as well as the bushes being far too tight a fit. The lower bush was retained and 'eased' to a better fit but the top one was replaced with an 'original design ball race' obtained from S & C Parts Group, Gatwick - part No. 15492. It comes with a plastic surround that has an earth connection fitted to it but on my column the bearing could only be fitted with this removed. On 'easing' the bottom bush I took the time to carefully examine the actual bush bearing surfaces of both column halves. These showed a distinct wave effect of dips and highs as if the metal had been squeezed into these over the years of use. With very fine wet and dry I levelled these off and achieved an excellent running fit for the bottom bush as well as easing the fitting of the new top bearing.

Next I turned to the repair of the collapsible section. I considered using melting white metal

into the joint as the manufacturer had done, but decided against this for two reasons. The first was safety as unless you are experienced with pouring this material, it can pose a hazard. Secondly, the way in which having to carefully align both top and bottom halves (to keep the overall column dimension within manufacturing tolerances) and pour in molten metal at the same time looked not the easiest way to get the job done. Get the two halves incorrectly aligned and the inner column could be either too short and not reach the UJ, or too long and the steering wheel be in the driver's face! (I exaggerate here for clarity).

The thinking behind the collapsible column is that of safety for the driver and this was very much to the front of my mind. My neighbour came up with a perfect solution: align the top and bottom halves to manufacturer's tolerance fit using the two holes in the upper half as guides, drill holes right through the lower half and fit an aluminium tube through. This has a low shear factor and is suitable because it does not transmit any turning forces, it is only an aligning and safety collapsible device. We therefore drilled 5.1 mm holes, the OD of the tube, pushed this through both holes and cut to length once fitted. These tubes are available from model engineering shops. How did we get rid of that 2/3 degrees' of lost movement? This was simply achieved by inserting .004 feeler gauge material as shimming between both flat sections as we assembled the column halves and then drilling through them before fitting the tubes into the holes. Larger movement would require thicker shimming.

All that remained was to reassemble the column from the lower end upwards, fit the new top ball race and then fit the assembly into the car. With the front off the ground it was now possible to turn the steering easily by hand BEFORE fitting the steering wheel. All that remained was to road test to correctly centre the steering wheel.

The car now has no lost movement in the steering and is easy enough for my wife to drive the car. It also now self-centres.

This mod is only from my experience with the early type of collapsible steering and would, probably, be appropriate for V8s and Cs but not the later type of collapsible column.

I hope that this may help someone else.



MGCC Northern Centre club house: first Leyland BGT import RSA is in typically fine shape.



MGBs in South Africa

Derek Howes. dfhowes2@mweb.co.za

THE MGCC NORTHERN CENTRE is based in Pretoria We are one of the few centres in the MGCC world wide that has its own clubhouse (see photo). Our membership runs at about 145 members with a wide range of MG models from a 1934 MG KI to the up-to-date MG TF, the largest number being the MGB. As the registrar of Northern Centre, "Vehicle Register" I became interested in the data collected for the register I noticed my MGB GT (see photo above right) was the oldest GT in our club. After further communication with the registrars of the other five South African MGCC centres, I learnt my GT was the oldest known imported GT from the UK factory on record.

Knowing this, I wanted to know more of my GT and how many MGBs came into RSA. After some research I found the records of the MGs imported into South Africa very vague. A past Director of British Leyland SA had said that they did not import MGs until the UK MG factory was to close in 1980 and then BLSA imported 250 rubber bumper MGBs in 1980/81. This I found interesting as I have an old copy of the Auto Data Digest SA which stated the following MGBs were sold in SA (see below). From this you can see why I was getting confused about the number of MGBs first sold in SA.

Year	Price	No. Sold
1966	R2900	18
1967	R2985	153
1968	R3125	105
1969	R3275	209
1970	N/A	3
1971	N/A	II
1972	N/A	59

As my wife, Sheila and I were in England for three months in 2004 visiting friends and family, I

'OWNING AN MGB IS A PLEASURE IN SOUTH AFRICA AS OUR WEATHER IS SO GOOD - BLUE SKIES AND SUN¹

had the opportunity to visit Gaydon, home to The British Motor Industry Heritage Trust The museum has a very large archive containing most of the build records for each BLC marque. I met the archivist Richard Bacchus, a most helpful person, who showed me the MGB build register which contain all MGBs built

I found my GT was exported to South Africa late 1966 and from my RSA registration papers I know it was registered on 1st Jan 1967. I checked the chassis number next to my number to find chassis 109328 is in fact the first GT to be imported and sold by British Leyland. 119 MGB GTs were export from the UK in one batch starting with chassis number 109328 and finishing with 109447, all registered in 1967.

Now I have the record of my GT plus I know correctly how many MGB GTs came into South Africa in 1966, when next at Gaydon I plan to check all MGB models exported to SA to find the total number of MGBs that officially came to RSA Of course, there were a few privately imported cars which I do not know how to trace in the RSA records - although South Africa is a beautiful country, we are very backward with maintaining records on a national basis!

Owning an MGB is a pleasure in South Africa as our weather is so good: last year we had just 59 days of rain in Pretoria, the rest just aquamarine blue skies and sunshine, definitely MG weather Unfortunately with the way our Rand has gone,

from two Rand to the pound in 1982 up to 18 Rand to the UK pound in 1994, many old cars including MGs were sold overseas. Now it's around 11 Rand to the pound which still makes old cars look good for UK buyers, but with transport and UK taxes not many are being sold out of the country now. In fact I know of one MGCC member buying four MGB basket cases, putting them into a container and shipping them to South Africa just for the spares.

The MGs on the coastal regions of SA do in general rust similar to those in the UK but if you check the records when buying a second-hand MG checking that the car was bought and used inland, then you should have a good rust free MG. Maintaining an MGB in South Africa is generally okay as we have at least three companies importing new MG spares, but at a price I must add. A few years ago where airlines did not worry too much about hand luggage weight I returned home to SA with a complete carburettor set air filters, cam shaft plus more with a total weight of just over 20kg! We cannot do that now unfortunately.

There are several companies dealing with restoring and maintaining MGs so there is no reason not to have your car in tip top condition. When you look around at our club days, most MGs are in lovely condition. Having six MGCC centres in South Africa there is plenty going on and every second year we have a SA Indaba where not only do SA MG members enjoy themselves, but also many overseas MG members come to join in too. So if you are at a loss to know where to holiday, bring your MG to sunny South Africa and do not worry about the lions and tigers - there are not that many!! Shala Mushli (Stay Well)