

# NEWSLETTER

**WESSEX  
MG CLUB**   
AT THE BELL INN SEEND

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



I hate short winter days. It's cold, often wet and even when the sun comes out, it is low in the sky and blinds me whenever I turn towards it.

This is Grumpy Old 25% Chairman's February chat. Marilyn hasn't been out for ages, it's too cold to work on the TC and after two bits of warranty work, those darned Germans have asked for our other car back for some recall work.

There was some publicity recently about a survey of modern car reliability. Apparently the conclusion was that the Germans are not as good at making cars as they think they are and if you want a reliable car, buy Japanese. Boring, they say, but reliable.

What say you, Tom?

You sound-off to Roger often enough about his German velocipede.....

I wonder how this debate would have played-out 40 or 50 years ago.

Red Robbo was in charge at British Leyland, Jaguar made beautiful cars but they were fragile and it was probably fair to call the Cortina "a Dagenham dustbin". The vast majority of cars from that era are not with us anymore, gone to the scrap-yard in the sky due to rust and a lack of interest in their heritage.

Contrast that with the MGB. Of 49,810 MGB roadsters sold in the UK, 16,294 are still licensed or on SORN. That's 33%. For the GT, the figures are 64,907 sold and 15,360 (24%) still licensed or on SORN.

Why are there so many MGs around? They were made to the same appalling standards as Allegros and Marinas, not to mention early XJ6s. When I was trying to hang the doors on our 1965 MGB, someone told me to whack them with a hammer if they didn't fit - because that's what they did in the factory.

For your diary in the coming month

### February

**25th - Club Night**

### March

**3rd - Cob Web Run**

**16th - Skittles**

Evening

**25th - Club Night**

For details see page 9.

**Please note that unless otherwise stated club nights start at 8:00pm**

These statistics show the historic value of our enthusiasm for old cars. To me, it is astonishing that, 30 years after the last MGB rolled off the production line, nearly 30% are still around. I am now feeling a more cheerful and positive 25% Chairman.

This was helped-along by an amusing and challenging quiz at the January Club night. Created by Roger and administered by Quizmaster Vic, it certainly wasn't easy, perhaps bordering on the obscure! Judging by the reactions of those around Carrie and me, most "right" answers were by process of elimination or guesswork.

However, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves so it just proves that you don't need to pander to people's vanity to entertain them.

Romance will be in the air at our Valentine Dinner on 16 February - two days late but what the heck - and certainly the menu looks good! Our thanks to James and Luke at the Bell and to Paul Warn, Jane and Peter for the organisation.

The evenings are now getting noticeably lighter and before we know where we are, the Prod and Poke evening will be upon us. In the meantime, we have two interesting Club nights to enjoy, starting with Peter's "Bring a Thing" on 25<sup>th</sup> February. Regrettably, I won't be with you - a clash of commitments - so Paul will be honing his chairmanship skills that night.

Happy motoring and "Safety Fast".

**David Whiteley**  
**25% Chairman**



P.S. so what about the heritage of the Allegro, I hear you cry. I couldn't find a reliable statistic for the number originally sold on the U.K. market but it looks like this was around 500,000, of which just 33,000 were still around in 1993. Voted "the worst car ever" in 2008, now there are only 481 left, of which 209 are licensed.

I am half surprised there are that many.....

"GO FOR IT" SKID PAN EXPERIENCE



I won the "a skid pan driving experience" at the 2012 Club Christmas party. This was our first party with the club; we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves largely because you all made us feel welcome; thanks.

I did the skid pan drive on 2nd February and really enjoyed myself. We began by driving some laps of the doughnut shaped course without any advice or help. We used 2 cars, one front wheel drive and the other rear wheel drive. The instructors were ex police and positive and helpful at all times. The cars were full, that is, 5 drivers in each, changing around after a few laps each. At the end of the first session we had a lecture on the technique re-



quired for each of the cars and then continued with the driving to put into practice what we learned. The afternoon was completed with a timed fun drive off. The gathering of 10 drivers was a random mix of ages and sexes. There was very little evidence of ego in the driving, fun was had all round. I heard a young lady say that she felt all learner drivers should have this experience; we all agreed. I had a great time learning some things which I thought I knew about and enjoying the relaxed positive driving experience. Many thanks for the prize, most enjoyable.

**Terry Gazzard**

ASPIRATIONAL CARS

I have been thinking about which cars I would like to own or have owned.

I would love to have had a go at Rally Cross so my ideal car for that is a



Mini.

Another car from the past is the very sexy E-type Jaguar. I am sure I would be disappointed but I have always thought it looks great. I would certainly need someone to look after it and get me home when it went wrong! Have faith!

A VW Golf GTI is an extremely practical car but is great fun - I am assuming

they still are. A Golf GTI to my mind is the right size but enough power to weight to be fun.

I really enjoyed my Mazda MX5 as an everyday car if only 2 seats are required. It holds a surprising amount of luggage and the aero-



dynamics allow me to have the roof down all the time apart from in pouring rain.

I would love to own a Merc SLK as it appears to me to be a grown up MX5 but, to me, the simplicity of the MX5 is extremely attractive.

Lastly, I have always hankered after an Aston Martin DB7. A real luxury British car and a really beautiful car. I was taken for a ride in one about 15 years ago and



fell head over heels for it.

I have always enjoyed all our MGs and would be sorry not to own an MG of some sort but the aspiration cars are just that! Isn't it fun to dream!

Carrie Whiteley

## MYSTERY CAR

The Mystery Car is a Lotus Elite, which I am sure many will have recognised. The reason that I suggested it is because I consider it to be one of the most beautiful cars ever built. It was introduced at the 1957 Motor Show to much acclaim. It was the first production road car introduced by Colin Chapman. Not only was it beautiful but it was way ahead of its time in that the body was a stressed fibreglass monocoque with a bonded in sub-frame to carry the engine and front suspension and similar at the rear to carry the axle and independent rear suspension. The body was made by BAC at Filton but there were many early problems with the bonded in components pulling away. The engine was the famed Coventry Climax FWE of 1216cc producing, initially, 75bhp. This modest power coupled with the light weight of the body made it a spectacular performer and it went on to win its class at Le Mans 6 times and twice in the Index of Thermal Efficiency class. Only 1030 had been built when production ended in 1963. Many are still running which is, in part, due to the availability of complete new bodyshells at ginormous expense (shades of MG Heritage?)! Its major downside was noise due to the fibreglass monocoque acting as a sound box.



Ken

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Well there were no responses to Ken's mystery car. Either you are all MG centric or you have lost that boyhood enthusiasm for all things on four wheels. Well, despite everything we will persevere. For those that are MG centric here is a pic of a MG derivative.



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STUFF THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST

TESTING EXEMPTION -

YOU ARE PROBABLY AWARE BY NOW THAT PRE-1960 VEHICLES IN THE UK ARE NOW EXEMPT FROM



THE NEED FOR MOT TESTING, SINCE NEW LEGISLATION CAME INTO FORCE ON 18TH NOVEMBER. HOWEVER, PRE-1960 VEHICLES CAN STILL BE TAKEN FOR TESTING VOLUNTARILY.

WHICH SEEMS TO ME A GOOD IDEA TO AVOID POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CLASSIC CARS BEING INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTS AND GIVING THE CLASSIC CAR MOVEMENT A BAD NAME.

INTERNATIONAL HISTORIC MOTORING AWARDS - HELD IN LONDON LATE LAST YEAR. MUSEUM OF THE YEAR WENT TO THE NATIONAL MOTOR MUSEUM, BEAULIEU. RACE SERIES OF THE YEAR WENT TO THE RAC'S WOODCOTE TROPHY, AND THE RESTORATION OF THE YEAR WAS RECEIVED BY PAUL RUSSELL FOR THE MAGNIFICENT 1929 MERCEDES-BENZ



680S SAOUTCHIK TORPEDO. MOTORING EVENT OF THE YEAR WAS DESERVEDLY WON BY THE WINDSOR CASTLE CONCOURS OF ELEGANCE - AN EVENT PERHAPS THE CLUB SHOULD HAVE GONE TO.

CLASSIC VALUE SEMINAR -

A SEMINAR HELD BY COYS AUCTION HOUSE AND CHARTERED ACCOUNTS BLICK

ROTHENBERG AT THE COYS SHOWROOM IN RICHMOND,



LONDON, CONFIRMED THAT THE VALUE OF CLASSIC CARS HAS GONE UP BY 30% ON AVERAGE OVER THE LAST DECADE- FASTER THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER INVESTMENT.

## AND FINALLY...

A spot of number plate trivia

Firstly, any idea who owns FAB1, MAG1C, A7, CHU8B, 1ANN, or VIP1?

The most expensive number plate sold in the UK is F1. For years this belonged to Essex County Council and reputedly spent some time on the chairman's Volvo, before it was sold for £440,000 to a Bradford based business man.

A1 was the first number plate issued in London in 1903. It was assigned to Earl Russell, who queued over night outside London County Offices to secure it. Times have changed!

Number plates were first issued in 1903, but display only became compulsory in 1904. Letter codes were assigned alphabetically, according to a region's size. Hence London was A, while Scotland had S.



The current registration system (consisting of a 2 letter region identifier, a 2 digit year code and 3 random letters) is due to continue until 2049.

Under the current system F was picturesquely assigned to Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire and stands for Forest and Fens. G was assigned to cars from Kent and Sussex, to represent their epithet as the Garden of England.

Lastly, the answers:

FAB 1, contrary to popular belief is not Lady Penelope's but is owned by Chris Evans.

MAG 1C is owned by Paul Daniels.

A 7 is owned by Her Majesty the Queen.

CHU 8B is owned by Chris Tarrant. He's a very keen angler.

1 ANN is owned by The Princess Royal.

VIP 1 was bought by Roman Abramovich in 2006. Before that, it graced the "Pope Mobile"!

**CLUB NEWS**

2013 EVENTS LIST				
Date	Event	Club Event	Venue	Contact Details & Start Point/Time
22-24 Feb	International Historic Motor Show	No	Stoneleigh Park	
<b>25-Feb</b>	<b>Club Night (Bring a Thing Night)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Peter Hine see last month's newsletter.</i>
3-Mar	Cobweb Run - Hilliers Romsey	Yes		<i>Meet at Devizes Wharf for 10:30 departure</i>
16-Mar	Skittles Evening	Yes	Cross Keys Rowde	<i>Vic Wright - see below - Page 11</i>
<b>25-Mar</b>	<b>Club Night (Talk - WW1 Wiltshire Soldiers - Finding the Forgotten)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Tom Strickland</i>
<b>29/30/31 Mar</b>	<b>Easter Bank Holiday</b>			
<b>9-Apr</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b>	No	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Tom Strickland</i>
20-21 April	Bristol Classic Car Show	No	Shepton Mallet Show Ground	
<b>22-Apr</b>	<b>Club Night (Prod &amp; Poke &amp; Chips &amp; Chat)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	
26-29 April	Club Spring Weekend Away	Yes	Llangollen	<i>Roger Binney</i>
5-May	IWM Duxford Spring Car & Motor Bike Show		<b>TBA</b>	<i>Paul Wheal - overnight stay? or visit museum on another day with an overnight stay.</i>
<b>20-May</b>	<b>Club Night (Mystery Run)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<i>David Whiteley</i>
1-Jun	Vintage Nostalgia 2013 - Warminster	No	<b>TBC</b>	<i>Peter Hine</i>
2-Jun	Lions Chippenham Cherished Vehicle Show	Yes		<i>Tom Strickland to get a pitch</i>
8-9 June	Gloucestershire Motor Show	Yes	Highnam Court	<b>TBC</b> <i>Peter Hine</i>
<b>24-Jun</b>	<b>Club Night (BBQ)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Paul Warn</i>

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8-9 June	Gloucestershire Motor Show	Yes	Highnam Court	<b>TBC</b> <i>Peter Hine</i>
<b>24-Jun</b>	<b>Club Night (BBQ)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Paul Warn</i>
21-Jul	Classics at the Castle		<b>TBA</b>	
July ?	Summer Picnic		<b>TBA</b>	
19-Aug	Visit Marlborough College	Yes	<b>TBC</b>	<i>Peter Hine</i>
25-Aug	Action Day & BBQ	Yes	Tom's Field	<i>11:00 am Tom Strickland</i>
1-Sep	Bath Classic Car Show - Supports Help for Heroes	Yes	<b>TBC</b>	
Sep/Oct ?	Walking Frome Treasure Hunt	Yes	<b>TBC</b>	<i>Tony and Jenny Neale</i>
<b>23-Sep</b>	<b>Club Night (Review of Spring Weekend - slides etc. and discuss 2014 Spring Weekend)</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>TBC</b>	
<b>28-Oct</b>	<b>Club Night (Talk - 1970-79 GP Seasons - When Sex was Safe &amp; Motor Racing was Dangerous)</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<i>Paul Warn</i>
<b>7-Nov</b>	<b>Committee Meeting</b>	No	<b>The Bell</b>	<i>Tom Strickland</i>
<b>25-Nov</b>	<b>Club AGM</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>The Bell</b>	Formal notification will be included in the Sept & Oct newsletter.
7-Dec	Christmas Party	No	The Greyhound Bromham	Peter Hine

## SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLES

Since last months stuck throttle I have checked the price of carb rebuild kits and well a bottle of redex is much much much cheaper! I am going to try the old squirt into the carb trick... I shall have a go later in the week. Today I have done some satisfying jobs on the ZB, I have removed each wheel drum in turn to check the brake shoe condition etc. I cleaned each out and now feel a good level of confidence for the summer ahead. I also got the grease gun out and did the front suspension etc and finally I balanced out all the drums by inserting a screw driver in a strange hole.... Yes I still have drums all round. They work pretty well although I know there is an expensive calliper upgrade available. There are 2 cylinders in the front ones and single cylinders in the back ones. Unlike MGBs and Midgets there is no square peg on the back plate to twist. - instead the wheels have a mysterious hole on the front that you line up using a torch, then you put in a screw driver and adjust much in the same way as an MGB. You have to do it twice at the front for each cylinder. I now need to road test to check. I will let you know if I get another stuck throttle!

### Tom

I would like to welcome all members to an evening of entertainment (Skittles!).

We are provisionally booked for Saturday 16th March with the first ball thrown at 8pm.

A Chilli Con-Carne supper will be included. The approximate cost will be £5 a head. I need to know ASAP if you would like to join in so I can finalise arrangements with the pub.



Please phone/email or let me know at February's club meeting

### Vic

## OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT BOX'S UNDERGROUND QUARRY

As briefly mentioned at the club meeting on 28<sup>th</sup> January, I have been in contact with someone (Martin Weebly) who is prepared to lead a group of us (max 10) underground in Box and to explore the old stone quarry. Pictures taken in the quarry can be found by going onto the website [www.boxunderground.weebly.com](http://www.boxunderground.weebly.com) and clicking Gallery.

### **Note from Martin Weebly:**

The trip last about 2 - 3 hours depending on group size and ability. The terrain involves a small amount of crawling and scrabbling over rocks but nothing strenuous. It is slippery and muddy underfoot so **old clothes and wellies are the order of the day.**

A couple of things to mention:

#### H&S

There is none - it is at your own risk. This may be an issue for you if you are organising an official club trip but not if a group of like minded people happen to follow me around for a couple of hours. The trip is in a disused stone mine that is not open to the public.

#### Numbers

Trip size is limited to about 10 people. Normally done on Tuesday or Wednesday evenings.

#### Costs

Because of the H&S difficulties with this sort of trip I do not charge. What usually happens is there is a voluntary donation afterwards. I supply hard hats and head torches and trips cost me about £3 per head because I run every trip with new batteries. As a guide most people think about £5 is fair.

The plan is to go underground and then retire to The Quarrymen's Arms afterwards for a pint or two where the ladies might want to join us.

I imagine that we would want to undertake this in slightly warmer weather (although the temperature down below is pretty constant) so a date in April or May might be most suitable. If you're seriously interested, could you let me know by e-mail, giving me your e-mail address and tel. number and any preference you might have for a Tuesday or Wednesday evening.

As I said at the club night, I have told him that many of us are of a certain age and he doesn't seem concerned but do note the point above about H & S.

Jeff Rattle  
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