

# NEWSLETTER

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT



The WESSEX MG CLUB  
 At the Bell on the Common Broughton Gifford

"Gone Fishing." I'm having to write this earlier in the month than usual because Sandra and I are off to Exmoor for some sight seeing, some tramping around and to sample the taste of trout from the upper reaches of the River Exe. That's if I can catch some of the little blighters! (or is it bloaters). Some improvement in the weather would be welcome but what ever happens we will be back in time to take part in the Mystery Run at the end of the month. You should be able to find start point and time elsewhere in this edition.

I have recently circulated details of our quest for a new meeting venue because we have out-grown The Bell. Together with Vic, I have looked at a number of potential pubs located central to the membership. The reality is that the options have been somewhat limited if our most important requirements are to be met. I still have to wait for the closing date for Members' comments, but at the time of writing it looks very much as though we shall be moving to The Oliver Cromwell on the A342 at Bromham. This offers most of what we need not least of which is a larger meeting room. A decision will be made towards the end of the month after which details will be published in Enjoying MG, the Wessex web site and of course in our monthly Newsletter to Members. It will be a

wrench to leave The Bell after many years but it has to be if we are to be comfortable at our meetings particularly if the membership numbers continue to grow as they have this year.

The Buxton trip was a great success despite terrible weather on the Sunday. I have written a full report which should appear elsewhere in this Newsletter but many thanks to Andrea and Paul for making all the arrangements. The numbers attending this year were a little down on previous years and I wonder if we need to change the formula a little. We surely haven't run out of interesting places to visit, but are we going too far, or for too long, or is it too expensive or at the wrong time of year? Maybe two shorter breaks spread throughout the year would be preferred. Please let Committee Members know so that next year's trip can be tailored to the requirements of the majority. Can I take this opportunity to welcome new Members Ian and Dee Willmott, and the return of former Members Terry and Sue Warder.

You join us at a time of change but be assured that the fundamental values of friendship and fun centred on MG's will continue to dominate our activities. Now, where's that reel, line, flies.....?

*Gordon*

For your diary in the coming month

### May

**27th** - Cotswold Wildlife Park Run.

**28th** - Club Night. Mystery Run. **7:30 start from the Bell.**

### June

**23rd** - Bath Pageant of motoring.

**25th** - Club Night. BBQ.

**For details see page 10.**

## OF ACRONYMS AND SPEEDING - RELATIVELY

This item leads eventually, after a bit of meandering, to the reproduction of a letter I had published in the press concerning my grandfather speeding in his lorry (sorry not an MG). My grandfather drove before the First World War, which

was in itself quite rare, because there wasn't much to drive. But he drove commercial vehicles. He was reputed to have driven

the first commercial motorised vehicle in

Reading, my home town, which was a brewer's dray (pic attached). During the war he was a non-combatant, medic/

ambulance driver (pic also attached). I am not sure if the picture was taken in France or Greece. His wartime experience is another separate and fascinating tale.

Anyway, the lorry in which he was convicted of speeding belonged to 'Jacksons', a scrap metal dealer in Reading. I am not sure if the incident occurred before or after the First War, but certainly in early motoring times. A local joke in Reading was that AJS (the motorcycle) was an acronym for 'All Jackson's Scrap'.

Grandad was a bit of a character and good for a few family tales. At one time he drove buses, but

got the sack. He was driving his bus up Bull Hill in Arborfield and at the top is 'The Bull' public house. I can only assume that the bus was empty, because he stopped it and entered the pub, to re-emerge some time later.

Someone must have reported him to the company and he was called in for a disciplinary hearing. His story was that the radiator was overheating and he had gone in to get some water to top it up with. They obviously didn't believe him.

Oh yes, the letter! That was triggered by reports in the press that the financial cuts were causing the Police to reduce the use of speed cameras. Strange really, because I thought they made a fat profit from them.

Here follows the letter:-

### SPEEDY SOLUTION

As the police seem to be losing the services of fixed speed cameras to help them in their war on motorists, will they have to revert to doing it the hard way? My late grandfather used to regale us with his tale of being booked for speeding.

He was driving a load of scrap metal to Bristol Docks, along the

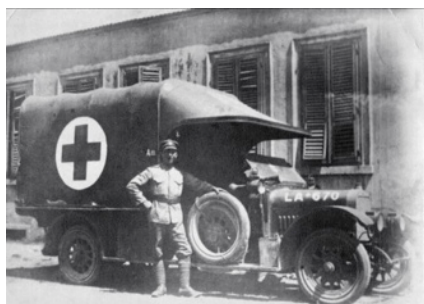
A4, through the Savernake Forest, where the speed limit for his vehicle was 12mph. He was prosecuted for doing 17mph.

How did they catch him? Two policemen cycled out from Marlborough Police Station, synchronised their stop watches, measured the distance between two trees (which they then hid behind) and awaited the arrival of my unsuspecting ancestor.

Letter ends.

On reflection, the above account is not that dissimilar from my first speeding ticket. I was driving my sporty A35 van (well, it had a 'go faster' chequered radiator grill) around a long curving bend in Reading, with the van well heeled over, as it was wont to do. Suddenly a policeman stepped out in the road and raised his hand. Idiot, doesn't he realise this thing is totally unstable and the breaks aren't much to write home about. As I struggled to keep it under control and arrest it's progress, I thought I would end up being done for flattening a copper.

Do you realise you were doing 48 mph, Sir? How do you know? He points back up the road to his mate knelt behind a wall fiddling with a pile of boxes with wires and dials everywhere. The first radar speed trap I had seen! To-day it would be a hand held gun. With regard the handling, just before I sold the van, I discovered that one of the rear, lever arm dampers was detached from the anti roll bar! Might have detracted from the roadholding a bit? **Malcolm**



**Bletchley Park Visit 9th September**

Hi All,

I'm pleased to say that we now have enough people for the Bletchley Park run to be able to confirm the 'catered' option. If you would still like to go, then it's not too late to put your name down. For those that have confirmed, I will collect the money at the next club night. Again to note (and sorry to keep repeating this), the money is non refundable.

Thanks

**Peter Hine**

Name	Attending	Option (See news letter for Details)			To Pay	Paid
		1 (£22 per person)	2 (£12 per person)	3 (N/A as we have over 20 people now)		
Roger & Lynne	2	X			£44.00	
Paul & Danela						
Tom & Nancy	2	X			£44.00	
Gordon & Sandra	2	X			£44.00	
Paul & Anne	2	X			£44.00	
Ron & Ann	2	X			£44.00	
Peter & Sue	2	X			£44.00	
Colin & Chris						
Ged & Shirley						
Jeff & June						
John & Priscilla						
Paul & Andrea	2	X			£44.00	
Vic & Jenny	2	X			£44.00	
Kevin	1	X			£22.00	
Philip & Gina						
Eric						
Ken & Ann	1	X			£22.00	
Tony & Jenny						
David & Carrie						
Jackie	1	X			£22.00	
Viv						
Bob						
David & Donna	2	X			£44.00	
Sandy						
Malcolm	1	X			£22.00	
Graham & Jane						
Terry & Sue	2	X			£44.00	
Ian & Dee						
	24					

## PEAK DISTRICT WEEKEND

How did we manage to select England's wettest weekend in 2012 for the Wessex Weekend Away? The answer is only by bad luck. However, on return to Wiltshire and seeing flood water in the fields, it is obvious that for once the weather in the north was a little kinder than at home. Six cars set out in convoy



on Friday morning in overcast conditions heading for the Spa town of Buxton in Derbyshire where rooms had been booked at The Palace Hotel.

Paul and Andrea, who had planned the trip and made all the arrangements headed up the convoy to our first comfort stop at Wellesbourne where we were guided to a favourite haunt of theirs the airfield cafe where it could be a mistake to choose the large 'all day breakfast', as Vic found out when he had to reluctantly leave a significant portion of the



best tasting bacon you can imagine. The rest of us settled for more modest portions before heading off again. All the while the weather stayed dry but sufficiently threatening for all soft tops to remain in the up position.

We took the ring road around the east side of Coventry to join the M69 for a short distance to junction 1 then returned to 'A' roads en route to Burton on Trent. This brewery town seemed to be our first downfall because the convoy got split up at the various roundabouts and other junctions.

However as luck so often has it on these occasions, after following a variety of routes all cars soon converged and the convoy continued north. Our next stop was at the gateway to the Peak District at Ashbourne where further refreshment was taken in the form of tea and cakes. It was then only a further 20 miles or so to the Palace Hotel at Buxton, where we settled in to our rooms and around the dinner table organised the following day's activity a trip to Chatsworth house the home of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, a thirty minute drive to the south.

Next morning the weather continued to be overcast but dry and undeterred the ladies stepped out 'Abbey Road' style and suitably clad for the drive via Bakewell to

Chatsworth. The view of the house from the entrance drive fail to impress and the same can be said of the inside as our tour around the house immediately revealed. There was art work, sculptures, fine furniture, lavish rooms and decorations.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Duke inherited the estate in 1811 and substantially extended the house to its present day size by adding the north wing which doubled the size of the accommodation. Today the house and estate are held in trust and the 12<sup>th</sup> Duke and his family occupy private apartments and pay a market rent which they



took over in 2004. The running costs amount to some £4m annually.

Unlike many stately homes, visitors are allowed to touch some of the items of furniture and artefacts. A member of the public even played on the grand piano kept in the library. After the exhausting tour of the rooms it was time for lunch at the restaurant housed in the old carriage house with the obligatory gift shop and garden centre in the adjacent stables.



From here we went to the extensive gardens with its lawns, maze, serpentine hedge, cascade, rock garden and currently a display of modern steel sculptures painted blue, orange and green by Sir Antony Caro. By now the weather had started to close in with drizzly rain and a cold wind and so it was back to the cars and head back to the hotel.



But not before we had a stop Bakewell where after taking tea with the most enormous custard slice you have ever seen, we purchased Bakewell puddings in The Old Bakewell Pudding Shop for home consumption.

That evening, after dinner, we were joined by two couples from the Chesterfield MG Group. We exchanged stories about our various activities and it was beyond midnight before they left for their hour long journey home. They provided us with a scenic route across the National Park which we chose to follow the next day. The weather on the Sunday closely matched the forecast from the previous evening. Strong winds and heavy rain. Undaunted we set out in convoy but within two hundred yards had separated because unknown to me some were heading for a filling station off the designated route. On realising this, a small (and more select) group followed the route provided and were soon enjoying the wild country views, tiny villages, hills and dales despite the driving rain.

On returning to the hotel in Buxton and after a brief break, we joined two other cars on a trip to the Blue John Cavern near Castleton at about 410 metres above sea level. This is where the semi-precious mineral blue stones are mined and made locally into jewellery. By now the wind and driving

rain was so strong that the short walk from the car park to the entrance to the mine was a hazardous downhill journey that we only just managed without injury or at least loss of any head gear. On entering the shop we were informed that to see the mine workings we would have to descend some 247 uneven, slippery steps. We chickened out, some bought jewellery and we braved the gales once again, returned to the cars and drove to the nearest pub where we took refuge from the storms beside a warm fire. On return to the Palace some of us took a dip in the hotel pool.

On our final day after a walk around Buxton including a ceremonial taking of the waters, we had a



largely uneventful journey home, except of course the separation of the convoy in Burton on Trent. Soon we were all back together again and motored on for a late lunch stop at an Italian restaurant in Moreton in Marsh.

We had covered some 450 miles without breakdown and had a thoroughly good break despite the storms on Sunday, and on behalf of all those who went on the trip, our grateful thanks goes to Andrea and Paul for making all the arrangements.

**Gordon**

# WHY I BECAME AN MG ENTHUSIAST (Part 3) (or confessions of a former Austin Healey Sprite Mk IV owner) The Italian Job

If you have become a follower of these confused confessions you will know that in 1977 Priscilla and I had survived a trip down to the Dor-

dogne in our 1275cc 1972 Spridget. Whilst Priscilla changed dozens of

nappies, bottle fed a newly-born, mewling infant and bravely cooked food for a family of French gourmands, I explored some of the darker recesses of the car's owner's manual in order to fix some dodgy brakes and non-functioning headlights. But in the process we had developed both the confidence and taste for foreign travel in an open-topped sports car.

We were both surviving our NQT (newly qualified teacher) jobs in our respective schools in Cambridge and I was cycling to work. In the autumn of 1977 my father was taken into hospital during the winter for a cancer operation, so I found myself travelling down to London every weekend in the Spridget during some very snowy weather. I remember waiting ages at a level crossing somewhere between Kew and Richmond and switching off the engine, unwisely as it turned out, to save petrol. Once the barrier finally lifted I tried to restart the engine, only to hear a pathetic clonking noise from be-

neath the bonnet and, very soon afterwards, a good deal of honking from other cars behind me. Being an enterprising youth I

remembered my days of bump-starting motor-bikes and wondered if I could perform the same trick with a car. I duly hopped out, pushed all my weight against the windscreen pillar

and managed to work up a reasonable pace – thereafter it was easy to hop back in, drop the clutch and I had another bingo moment! Doubtless the frustration of those behind me rapidly turned to amusement, and in my dreams perhaps even admiration!

Having learned this trick (mercifully there was no Youtube in those days) I never replaced a battery until it was totally clapped out, and remember many one-man bump starts outside our house on icy mornings when, in those days, cars would often fail to start. At least LMG 80K would. Just as my first Spridget consumed numerous exhaust systems, this one chomped its way through a series of starter motors.

In the summer Venice and Florence were our chosen destination, so we took the Harwich to the Hook of Holland ferry and made it down to stay with friends

in Karlsruhe in a single day - yes, you can cruise at 90 mph in a Sprite! From there we visited King Ludwig II's castles in Bavaria including Neuschwanstein (try saying that when you've had a few...) which he virtually bankrupted Bavaria to build – it is perhaps not surprising that he was deposed for alleged madness and then mysteriously “drowned” the next day in a lake in very shallow water. Now comes the X-rated bit: it was very hot and Priscilla was tempted by a swim in a beautiful lake that we passed on the way back to the campsite. Not worrying about minor things like a swimming costume

she plunged in, to realise belatedly that the melting snows a little higher up the slopes ensured that the temperature on the water was little above freezing. She emerged looking rather bluer than she had gone in! But we were

young and invincible....

Now I have always liked mountains, so one of the aims of this trip was to explore some of the alpine passes that I had first learned about at a young and impressionable age when watching film of the Monte Carlo rally. We headed over the Fernpass (easy) and headed via Landeck for the Stelvio, one of the highest and narrowest passes in Europe at 9045 feet with over 60 hairpin



bends, 48 of these on the northern side. We were finding out, as Jeremy Clarkson did more than thirty years later in Top Gear's tenth season when he rated this as Europe's greatest driving experience, that this would satisfy the fantasies of any petrolhead. We climbed and climbed, and as we went up so did the Spridget's water temperature – but this problem was held in check by the simple expedient of switching the heater on to discharge the excess heat. Quick thinking, eh! We began the hairpin section needing full lock to get around the bends and dodging trucks and post buses, the latter having the right of way by law. The view over the side was vertiginous, but this was too much fun to worry about matters such as safety.

On the steep sections the back of the car seemed to be scraping the ground and I became convinced, during our obligatory Kodak moments, that the springs were going to fracture. But we made it to the top, by which time we definitely needed the heater on anyway, and celebrated in mid-summer by hurling a few snowballs at each other.

The descent on the southern side was a breeze by comparison with fewer of those “are we actually going to make it?” moments. Having been so drawn by the lure of the Stelvio, I had completely neglected to look at the map in advance and was delighted to re-

alise somewhat belatedly and naively that we had yet another pass to navigate – the Gavia. At this point the fairly narrow road gave way to an unsurfaced stretch of bumpy track so, convinced that we had gone wrong, we consulted the map. Hmm, actually no – this pass actually had a dirt surface – and although not quite as high as the Stelvio it was still the tenth highest pass in the Alps. As we ground our way upwards avoiding the pot-holes it dawned on us: that this was fabulously beautiful, that we were pretty ex-

hausted and that a noisy thunderstorm was about to overtake us. Fortunately we spied a couple of tents on a mountainside and turned off onto an even bumpier track, making a hurried stop before we crossed a bridge that would clearly collapse under the weight of the car.

The deal in this “basic” site was that you crossed the rickety bridge over a mountain torrent strictly on foot, backpacked all your camping gear in, jumped over another small stream and then could pitch your tent on an alpine meadow steep enough to ski down before cooking your meal using water from the aforementioned stream. I remember making it to the farmhouse to pay before the storm broke, which it then did in spectacular fashion, to be given over-generous quantities of insanely strong espresso coffee by the farmer's wife who

spoke no English – and we spoke no Italian!

Camping at altitude is great if you have a high-tog sleeping bag, which we didn't, so having thawed out the next morning and drunk plenty of stream water we hauled our gear back over the stream and set off once more. The Gavia is a truly beautiful pass and the splendour of the views pretty much made up for the fact that I was convinced that the Spridget would fall apart somewhere along the seventeen kilometres of unmade road before we reached civilisation, but we eventually made it to the top and once again threw the obligatory snowballs. The descent to Ponte di Legno narrowed to single track for some stretches, so it's just as well that Spridgets are

tiny, but in any case the only traffic seemed to be families of Italian sightseers so we mercifully avoided a collision and descended safely to the much greener and

warmer valleys below. Phew!

The road gained a tarmac surface, widened, and as the traffic became heavier we started to experience the delights of Italian driving. I remember the relief as we were able to pitch our tiny tent on a grossly overcrowded campsite – we didn't bother with reserving in advance on those days! But the car (oddly) was still going and all of Italy beckoned. Next stop Venice!

To be continued....





## A RESTORATION STORY

In July 2010 David and Carrie Whiteley bought a MGA as a restoration project. If memory serves, the first time the restored Marilyn was seen on a club run was the Shalbourne Manor Classic Car and Bike Show last September - a year later!



Not content with restoring Marilyn to her former glory, David and Carrie have found another project.....



Something altogether different in terms of age and materials - a 1947 MGTC.



I'm not sure who's more enthusiastic Carrie or David. David has found through the MG Octagon club that the car is known to the T Register and has been assigned the number 10612. The register records the build date as 31st January 1947.

Watch this space.

**Ed**

## CLUB NEWS

The WESSEX MG Club 2012 EVENTS LIST				
Date	Event	Club Event	Venue	Contact Details & Start Point/Time
27 May	MG's in the Park	Yes	Cotswold Wildlife Park	Tom Strickland 01249 447125 9.30 Wharf Car Park, Devizes.
28 May	Club Night – Mystery Run	Yes	Its a Mystery!	Tom Strickland. 01249 447125. <b>7:30 start at the Bell</b>
4/5 June	Queens Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday			
23 June	Bath Pageant of Motoring Rotary Club Charity Event. <a href="http://bathpageantofmotoring.com/">http://bathpageantofmotoring.com/</a>	Yes	Bath Race-course	Vic Wright 01380 859618 Adult £10, Seniors £6
25 Jun	Club Night - BBQ	Yes	The Bell	Gordon Newman.01225 755645. <b>7:30 start. Bring your own food</b>
15 Jul	Sherborne Castle Classic Car Show <a href="http://www.merlinevents.com/castle.html">http://www.merlinevents.com/castle.html</a>	Yes	Sherborne	Gordon Newman. 01225 755645. Depart Warminster Services 9.30. Adults/seniors £8.
22 Jul	Club Summer Picnic	Yes	Studland	Jeni Wright. 01380 859618. Beach games & summer sun fun. Details to follow.
23 Jul	Club Night – Boules Evening	Yes	The Bell	<b>7.30 start.</b>
28 Jul	Salisbury Race Meeting First Race 6.10 Last 8.45 <a href="http://www.salisburyracecourse.co.uk">www.salisburyracecourse.co.uk</a>	No	Salisbury	Evening meeting with Abba tribute band to follow. Depart 4.30 Devizes Wharf. Tickets £6.
20 Aug	Club Night – Driving Test	Yes	Tom's Field	Tom Strickland. 01249 447125. Details to follow.
27 Aug	Bank Holiday			
9 Sept	Club visit to Bletchley Park	Yes	Bletchley Nr. Milton Keynes	Peter Hine. 01672 512847. £22 per head. See Peter's email 13 March Option 1. <b>Payment at May Club Night.</b>

The WESSEX MG Club 2012 EVENTS LIST				
Date	Event	Club Event	Venue	Additional Information
16 Sept	Club Treasure Hunt Walking Treasure Hunt.	Yes	Frome	<i>Tony Neale. 01373 465044.</i> Details to follow.
23 Sept	MGB 50 MGCC/MGOC Event <a href="http://www.mgb50.com/MGB50/MGB_50_Home.html">www.mgb50.com/MGB50/MGB_50_Home.html</a>	Yes	Blenheim Palace	Details to follow. <b>Make your own ticket application.</b>
<b>24 Sept</b>	<b>Club Night -</b>		TBC	Details to follow.
<b>22 Oct</b>	<b>Club Night</b> Richard Edmonds Classic Car Auctions <a href="http://richardedmondsauctions.com">http://richardedmondsauctions.com</a>	Yes	TBC	Roger Binney. 01380 830524.
3 Nov	Roger & Lynne's Party	No	Edington Village Hall	<i>Roger &amp; Lynne. 01380 830524.</i> Details to follow.
<b>26 Nov</b>	<b>Club AGM</b>	No	TBC	Formal notification will be posted nearer the time.
8 Dec (Prov)	Christmas Dinner	No	Bromham	The Greyhound



## SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLES

We now have our new Kitchen so the house is just about there at last - what a big step forward a proper kitchen is! We still have an ugly trench of a new driveway heading right up to the house and we are waiting a long time for the big static caravan (which is sold) to go. My garage is still half blocked so the BGT still lives outside. I am looking forward to giving the BGT some proper TLC after its winter outside on my Parent's verge - you will remember that it clearly let me know at the time that this wasn't the proper way to treat her. I would dearly love not to have to drive her through the salty days next winter and I am hoping to find a way to avoid this.

We are going to take the girls to the Cotswold Wildlife Pk on the 27th May- let me know if you are coming and meet us at the wharf in Devizes at 9:30am.

The Mystery Run is planned on the map and I need to check the route in the car ready for the May Clubnight - please note that it is a 7:30 pm start at the Bell.

**Tom**