

NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

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



Welcome to you all,
Since my last chat, Jeni & I took Bertie to France, we had a good time if a little stressful at times. Bertie decided to lose dipped beam before we got to Portsmouth, but fog lights and main beam saw us there. After the crossing, we headed south to somewhere out in the countryside to the east of Limoges. The second day we traveled some miles to the west of Limoges - a slight mistake saw us on the motorway going south instead of north, what the hell, the countryside was nice. Our second night found us just north of Limoges having been turned back at the Swiss border, at least that's what we thought (big mountains in the gloom). Drizzle starting, sat nav throwing a wobbly, hood down, lost in France somewhere but in the end a few hours late we found our destination, where we rested for a couple of days.

Fully recovered, we set off once again, hood down, sun out, towards Tours and

northward, until we stopped for lunch just north of Le Mans. We then decided to put the hood up as it was turning a little grey - just as well - it poured with rain, non stop all the way to Calais. We both got a little damp, as MGs are not designed for constant heavy rain for about 5 hours. A good meal and bed, ready to return on the ferry in the morning. All in all a good time. Car averaging over 30 mpg even on French fuel, 1,485 miles in all.

Anyway, enough of my ramblings. Garage/workshop/hobbies room now completed, date for occupation is now set at beginning of November. A good lunch was had on Sunday, organised by Gordon, with a good turn out and good food of course, in a nice venue. Many thanks.

Next club night we need all the bookings for the Christmas meal/party. Please help swell the numbers as it always proves to be a great night. On a more serious note, our AGM in

For your diary in the coming month

October

28th - Club Night

November

7th - Committee meeting

25th - AGM - 7:30

See page 7

**Club Night start
time 8:00pm unless
otherwise stated**



November. We require, new members to help on the committee - some of us want to retire!

See you at the next meeting.

Vic

Flying an MGB to Alderney

Well, not strictly true, but the recent experience of taking over the controls of a 1964 Piper Cherokee 6 seater light aircraft did have parallels with driving a classic car. Take all those vibrations, drafts, flickering instrument needles (even one for the cylinder head temperature) and the need to monitor key ones from time to time put me in mind of a typical drive in my B!

Taking off from a grassy and bumpy airstrip in a farmer's field was noisy, exciting and because of a fresh side wind, quite an adrenaline rush. Once airborne there was much chatter over the personal intercom interspersed with very polite and calming conversations between Dick, our pilot and those controlling the various airspaces through which we travelled. 30 minutes to Swanage and then a further 30 minutes over the sea to Alderney where we touched down in blustery but sunny conditions. Although we didn't actually have to show our passports, Dick had to notify the Island authorities in advance of our visit and submit



all passport and address details; apparently Special Branch also had to be informed. However our passage through the arrivals hall was unusually free of any bureaucratic requirements.

A short taxi ride took us to the upper part of St Anne's, the main town which was attractively garlanded and proved refreshingly free of the usual multiples with lots of interesting and individual shops. There was evidence of a lively community with advertisements for flying displays, a motor sprint and hill climb with vehicles coming over from Guernsey using the only car ferry access, various fishing events and even an Elvis night. As on the Jersey and Guernsey Wessex Club weekends, the out of town roads were epitomised by being narrow yes but also having substantial walls. Walking down towards the beach at Braye, we came across the railway (described on the map as the Mineral Railway whose first passengers were Victoria and Albert in 1854) which used to transport rock from the Mannez Quarry in the east of the island to the harbour to the west. Now the steam engine has been replaced by a diesel one and the carriages are ex London Underground.

After a pleasant lunch in the sun, we were lured onto the lovely sandy beach where we watched a couple of wind surfers and some of us even went for a paddle - these English habits are hard to suppress but we did draw the line at knotted handkerchief hats you'll be pleased to hear. The main harbour was, one must say, rather dark and sombre, no

doubt the beneficiary of the quarried stone brought from the eastern end of the island. In 1842 the British government was becoming increasingly concerned about the fortifications the French were building in Cherbourg only 25 miles away and as a consequence the British decided to make Alderney "the Gibraltar of the Channel". The designer of the (13) Victorian forts allowed his artistic flair to take over in places with medieval embellishments such as arrow slits, battlements and moats which were not necessarily required at the time.

Some of the forts look like fortifications from the Elizabeth 1 era rather than Victorian times. The construction of the long breakwater and the forts continued for 30 years until 1872 by which time the breakwater was 1,600yds long. Although the resident population is only 1,900, in summer this figure is exceeded many times over by visitors, arriving mainly by boat and so this enormous breakwater has its uses even today.



As with the other Channel Islands we have visited, there are numerous and enduring reminders of the German occupation. Examples include a large antitank wall, a harbour blocking battery, something called the German Anti Fire Direction Post, a hospital bunker, radar position, military and workers' cemeteries, a Fortress Kommandant's Bunker, water tower, flak battery and more and all this on an island only 3 miles by 1.5. As virtually all the inhabitants of the island had been evacuated prior to the invasion, the Germans "imported" workers to carry out all the building work and they were all housed in 4 "concentration camps" indicated on the map by the word "Lager". Out of a workforce of 6,000, 700 died on the island and the evidence of this was only one of the reasons that the returning islanders were so dismayed by the changes wrought on their island during the war. In fact the history of occupation of the island goes even further back and on the south coast is the oddly named "Nunnery", the best preserved roman fort in Britain which was built around 300AD.

Our return trip was uneventful apart from the slightly disorientating effect of flying into low cloud whilst trying to maintain the right altitude and direction, when I felt my hands gripping the control column ever more tightly! Just before landing, Dick pulled on the handbrake (in MGB terms) but I was assured it was the flaps he was operating and as we skimmed the hedge prior to landing, I felt we had been on a secret mission to spy on the enemy defences - great day out!

Jeff Rattle

When was an MG almost an Aston Martin

Not wishing to continue the debate relating to when is an MG not an MG - which actually is an interesting topic, I thought you might be interested in the connection between MG and Aston Martin.

As you all will no doubt know, three years after the MGB roadster was launched in 1962, the MGB GT was announced on the eve of the 1965 Earls Court Motor Show. The new body was designed by Pininfarina. In 1972, we were one of the 125,000 who ultimately bought one. Ours was a January 1970 car in red and looked absolutely fabulous.



John Thornley's aim was to produce a "poor man's" Aston Martin in which no managing director would be ashamed to turn up at the office in. Mechanically the GT was changed little from the roadster, although its extra weight required suspension upgrades including a Salisbury rear axle, stronger springs, a front anti-roll bar and wider tyres.



Now, when British Leyland announced its closure proposal for MG Abingdon, just days after the 50-year association with the town had been celebrated, there was trouble at mill. There was as I remember massive media cover, a huge protest march in London and apparently a debate in Parliament - which I don't remember!

Alan Curtis then chairman of Aston Martin-Lagonda reasoned that continued production and

development of the MGB was possible, adding a volume arm to Aston Martin's performance models. The idea attracted considerable business support, the Aston Martin Lagonda consortium comprised Alan Curtis, David Wickens of British Car Auctions, Peter Cadbury, Lord George Brown and the Norwest Construction Group. Together they tabled a substantial bid for the Abingdon plant and the rights to the MGB.

Part of the proposal was a restyled Aston Martin MGB, designed by William Towns. In June 1980 Aston Martin project engineer Kevin Martin was tasked with transforming a Russet Brown MGB. John Symonds of body builder Pressed Steel Fisher and Steve Hallam led a small team who had just six days to complete the prototype. The result was a

modern interpretation of the traditional chrome grill (why would they want to change the grille?) , a GT windscreen and side windows, Tickford sports seats and hood, black side mouldings, modified front and rear bumper, an Astrali four-spoke steering wheel, 14in Wolfrace wheels and a respray in metallic Silver Sand.

William Towns had further developments in view, including power from the about to be launched O-series engine. However the financial promises to the consortium failed to materialise and the bid collapsed. The Abingdon factory closed later that year.

PS

The car, registered DOL 341V, has survived. In some ways looking at the result, I'm glad it did not come to fruition - what do you think?

DOL 341V remained in storage at Newport Pagnell until it was sold to a private owner in July 1984. In August 1997 a long standing MG enthusiast purchased DOL 341V with around 1,093 recorded miles. The new owner was committed to the continuing maintenance of the MGB's originality and unique history.



The car came up for auction in 2011 with the following description:

"DOL 341V is complete with fascinating detailed history including the original MGB driver's handbook, various vehicle records from DLVA Swansea, BMIHT Certificate, a

bound book detailing Aston-Martin's proposals for the acquisition of the MG Car Company and a bound book detailing Aston-Martin's product concept for MG Cars.

The Aston-Martin MGB is totally original having covered a mere 6,800 miles from new.

ED

Photo Gallery

This year's Goodwood Revival had its usual eclectic mix of historic racing cars and bikes. It's always worth walking around the circuit, this time on Friday evening (in the rain) during a sports car race. A nice selection of historic motorcycles, Bob Dance and co - Jim Clarks mechanics - working on a problem on his 1963 championship winning Type 25. The Earl's Court show, this year celebrating the centenary of the Aston Martin. And a Vanwall transporter popped up from somewhere... **ED**



CLUB NEWS

2013 EVENTS LIST				
Date	Event	Club Event	Venue	Contact Details & Start Point/Time
28-Oct	Club Night (Talk - 1970-79 GP Seasons - When Sex was Safe & Motor Racing was Dangerous)	Yes	The Bell	<i>Paul Warn</i>
7-Nov	Committee Meeting	No	The Bell	<i>8:00pm Tom Strickland</i>
25-Nov	Club AGM	Yes	The Bell	Formal notification will be included in the Sept & Oct newsletter.
7-Dec	Christmas Party	No	TBC	Peter Hine



SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLES

MG has a computer system and tells my dealer that my MG3 will be finished on Oct 25th then in small print that it could take up to 2 weeks for transportation. With a bit of investigation we have worked out that this means the car comes off the Production line on the 25th and it could take up to 2 weeks to deliver the car to the dealer. So when will I actually get my car? I don't really know! I am hoping that it comes during half term as this would be convenient for me picking it up etc. MGs website has a great 'configurator' where you can play with all the different colour, options and graphic packs etc.. On the MG3 - Good fun whilst I twiddle my thumbs waiting. I have changed my graphic pack to something that better compliments my colour choice as a result. If I have to wait much longer I will probably want to change my car colour, wheel colour, wing mirror colour etc etc.

Please can I have my MG3!

Tom

Member's Secretary

Christmas Party

It's time for us to plan for the club Christmas party on Saturday 7th December. Whilst it's great that the club has so many members, it does make it a real challenge finding a venue for the Christmas bash when trying to predict how many to book for. Therefore to be sure to get the best arrangements for us all, I will be asking for confirmation and a £5 non-refundable per person deposit at the October club night. Full payment and menu choices will be taken at the November AGM in the usual way. If you can't make it to the October club night, please email me your confirmation (no phone calls please) and send me a cheque to reach me by no later than 1st November.



Peter Hine

AGM

Please be advised that in accordance with the Club's rules, two month's notice is given for our Annual General Meeting.

Wessex MG Club

2013 Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the above meeting will take place on the

25th November

at

The Bell Inn, Seend

commencing at

8:00 pm

Preceded from 7.30 onwards by the payment of subscriptions for the 2014 season.

Notice of any resolution to be proposed at the meeting should be given in writing to the Secretary before the 1st October.

The proceedings of the meeting shall be as follows:

Agenda for AGM

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approval of minutes of 2012 AGM.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Consideration of any motions received.

Break

6. Election of Committee for 2014.
7. Presentation of Awards.
8. Arrangements for 2014 AGM.
9. Any other business.