

# NEWSLETTER

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

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



Phew! I've just waved off a son and daughter-in-law and twenty-two month old William. We have had a great weekend with them but now have to put the house back together. We walked along the towpath down the Caen Hill flight of locks this morning ( Sunday) Two boats got stuck in one of the locks that was marked with a warning of one boat at a time. Happy Days.

I expect most of our cars will be kept garaged for the next few months although my own will still be ready for the road

throughout the winter months.

It was disappointing that the Ghost Walk had to be postponed and hope that all goes well on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. If you haven't let Jane know just turn up by 19:30 in Devizes Market Place and we will see you there.

If not I hope to see you at Club Night for Paul's part four F1 motor racing instalment on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Graham**

For your diary in the coming month:

### October

22nd - Devizes Ghost Walk  
27th - Club Night - Talk

### November

6th - Committee meeting  
24th - Club AGM 7:30pm

See page 9 in this edition for more details.

Club Night start time 8:00pm unless otherwise stated



## Classics - Original or Modified

As Ken Binstead said in his reply on this topic, I couldn't have chosen a more controversial subject. In my view, this is what this newsletter is all about. We have a hugely diverse membership and in my experience, all have interesting stories to tell - if only I could get you to relate them through these columns. Well this item has certainly done the trick. I thank you all for taking the time to write.

In no particular order, I include your replies below.

I have my own views but in terms of a debate then there are very few older vehicles that cannot be improved in some way by modern advances. We have to look back at the technology that was around when our MG's were coming off the production line. No computers for a start and research and development was a relatively long slow process and relied upon what had gone before with some minor amendments. The MGA into the MGB is a fine example.

However I believe that completely unmodified cars have their place, but mostly in a museum. Any car that is to be driven regularly on modern roads can be made safer and more efficient by changing certain elements. For example how many cars now drive around on cross-ply tyres. Radials have proven to have a longer life, cooler running, lower resistance, greater comfort, greater puncture resistance, superior handling etc etc etc. Apart from the tread pattern they are visually the same so why not change to them.

At the other extreme some of you may have seen the letters page in Practical Classics in April this year when Dick Cooley was very proud to show his 1965 Triumph TR4 which had been painted black with red wire wheels and grill, Ford Escort RS2000 seats, Datsun 240z carbs and a host of other modifications. It certainly didn't flick my switch and caused a flurry of letters both for and against.

If any of you have been to the Goodwood Revival and seen Rae Davies hurl a 1950's A35 around the track in the St Mary's cup then you can appreciate that the body-shell is original but very little else but it begs the question is it still an A35.

Personally I am all for sensible modifications provided they don't detract from the spirit of the car. On mine I have improved the brakes, suspension, engine and electrics to name but a few. (The jury is still out about whether the bumpers go back on when I do the bodywork). It still looks like an MG but probably handles a bit better and has improved performance and that puts a smile on my face.

Originality has it's place but on a cold February day with the roof down and an asthmatic heater made in 1965 is just not going to keep the noise down in the left hand seat.

Ken Binstead

Classic car owners fall into several categories and each category has a different approach to the way they treat their classic car.

The first category is those that undertake a complete 'nuts & bolts' restoration with the body off the chassis. These people tend to try and keep the work carried out, as true to the exact specification as when first built in the factory, bearing in mind some components are now replica. It is not unusual for some of these restorers to criticise cars that have components that do not conform to the original specification.

The second category are those who like their cars to look as original as possible but have 'improved' them so as to make them safer, better to drive, more reliable and easier to service. Many of these improvements will be concealed under the body or in the engine compartment.

Another category are those that take a rolling chassis and then convert it into a Special. These vehicles are commonly used for hill-climbs, racing and off-road work.

The final category (that I can think of), are those that buy a classic and then modify it with additional body fixings, bling accessories and stickers. This probably applies to the newer & cheaper classics.

In conclusion, I think that the classic car market has a need for all of these cars, as they are cherished by their owners, and provide hours of enjoyment for the owners and public. The classic car market worldwide provides hundreds, if not thousands of jobs and is a multimillion pound industry. Classic car values have risen constantly over the years, which some now see as an investment opportunity. However, the cost of rebuilding as in the first category, seldom sees a true return on the investment.

### Nigel Fowler

I like to see originality as much as possible - however with modern traffic whizzing around so much, improvements to lights I think is a good thing. My TD has been fitted with a 5 speed which helps keep up somewhat with modern motors.

Less said about wipers the better!

If you go onto the Mathewsons site you will see my old Daimler Conquest, which I had for about 43 years and I kept that in as near factory spec as possible.



### Frank Fletcher

Is this the Daimler Conquest Frank? I have also included a link to the site-  
[Mathewsons Classic Car Auctions Thornton-Dale](#)

### ED

I believe that classics could be updated for things like brakes and suspension etc, or even engines to make them more user friendly and safer, as long as the exterior appearance is maintained.

There was a hideous craze in the 50's and 60's of re-bodying things that had separate chassis. A mate of mine had a pre-war MG midget with an Ashley body. It was sort of modern looking but was very over-bodied and retained all its outdated mechanics and worn suspension etc. It was also incredibly noisy inside as it was an enclosed coupe type body but with very poor sound-proofing between the old mechanics and the interior.

Even worse were modern looking body kits mounted on Ford floor pans with transverse leaf springs and side valve engines. Talk about sheep in wolves clothing.

I also include the following to further the debate...



Pat and I were on holiday in Shropshire and decided to drop into Wroxeter Roman Town on the way to Shrewsbury (Both highly recommended). Bingo, as we enter the car park we are presented with a real bonus. Lines of



vintage GN cars. It is the GN owners club equivalent of our spring weekend away. They go on a week away each year.

There are only thirty or so GN cars remaining in the world and sixteen of them are here.

They are cycle cars, basically 4 wheel motorcycles. Hearing them start up and drive off was amazing. All clattery motorcycle engines with exterior valves and pushrods chuntering up and down.

With Paul's survey in mind, I think that these cars are candidates for a modification to improve their owners driving experience. You will notice that none of them have brakes on their front wheels.

Malcolm Taylor

I don't agree with the current fad for originality. I have a 1949 TC with an amusing if minor racing record and a documented history of modification going back for most of its existence. So why should I want to make it appear to have just left Abingdon?

To my mind the Australian TC guru Mike Sherrell (and he is something of an originality freak) has got it right. His motto is:- Polish it until it shines and drive it, until it smokes.

Cars evolve over time. If it's your car, you do with it what you want. The next owner can always change it again.

Bill Ritson

I think there are 4 categories to this question depending on your reason for getting involved in the Classic scene.

For originality; then we have 'concourse'. These are those that just want to have a vehicle as it left the factory, original in every way without even any modern updates for safety or reliability etc. These are only interested in 'showing' the car and will spend all their lives cleaning and polishing even to the point of trailering it to shows. These people need to get out more!

Secondly; again those that want the car to be as near standard for model and year and totally in period but will use it and enjoy the classic motoring euphoria. We do have some of these in the club.

Thirdly; this, I feel, is the majority of our club members. As near as possible to original but with modern updates for reliability, performance safety etc. For example, uprated brakes with servo assistance and even larger discs where possible, modern seat belts, better seats, improved gearbox and axle ratios, electronic ignition, improved steering and suspension bushes, improved lighting and any other mods. that might appeal.

In the case of the MGB this will even stretch to a complete new body shell from Heritage. This route would not be acceptable to the true purist in categories one and two as, although produced on the original press tools and jigs and therefore intrinsically stronger and safer than a cut, carved and welded original rusty shell, they must retain the original regardless of the amount of new metal and panels, they still want to say it is the 'original' car! (the janitor's broom comes to mind!) These classics are used and enjoyed for what they are; a love of a particular marque or model or just plain nostalgia!

The fourth and final category is 'sport'; These are people that are interested in outright performance and winning and taking part in classic and club racing. This category is for the very wealthy particularly if you want to compete at classic events, such as Silverstone Classic, Goodwood Revival or Le Mans Classic.

In conclusion, all Classic Cars need to be used and enjoyed for what they were intended, whether original or modified.

**Ken Scott**

There seems to me to be several categories (not wishing to split hairs too much).

Totally unmodified: virtually every car is modified in some way as soon as it is used. You can't buy 1960s wiper blades, oil, oil filters etc. and what car is not re-painted, completely or in part, by the time it is 30 years old. At the Coventry Motor Museum, there is a display of unrestored cars - a Sunbeam Rapier comes to mind - with a commentary about restoration. As soon as you restore a car it becomes modified.



Restored in keeping: this group is restored as if to emulate what left the factory. Many replacement parts may be needed, a respray with modern paints and so on. The aim however is to keep faith with the original design and inevitably limitations of "old" technology.

Mildly modified: as above but allowing for a recognition that modern roads are busier and faster than yesteryear and are added in a safety context. Adding indicators, halogen lights, brake servos, safety belts and so on come into this group.

Modified: to make the car easier to drive in modern traffic; includes adding a 5 speed gearbox (yuck) power steering, radios, sat. nav. etc..

Modern old: this group includes the Cullam Mk2 Jaguar, the modified Jensen Interceptor and that awful "MGB" with the Mazda engine that Ken highlighted.

The degree of horror I have to the more highly modified cars probably depends on three main variables: how many were made, how many are left and how old is the car. One wouldn't dream of painting Chris Evan's Ferrari 250GT purple just because one liked purple. However, does it matter if someone does the same to a Cortina of the same age?

My vote therefore generally goes for unmodified!!!!

David Whiteley

I don't have a Classic MG but have had them in the past. I feel it is up to the owner, and what he or she may want. Personally I think to try and keep the car as original as possible is best, however, that is not always possible, especially in this day and age when parts are not always available from the UK. Once something is changed or added to, then perhaps it is not considered to be original anyway.

Anne Warn

## Photo Gallery



As seen in France - I'm sure we have all experienced this garage.

Roger sent this whilst he and Lynne were on their last trip to France. The MG is French registered and yes that is a frog mascot on the radiator!



Me, Peter and our ladies recently travelled to Brooklands for a Morgan day.



## The August Mystery Car

### The Saab Sonett

The Saab Sonett first went on sale in 1966 as the Sonett II (the Sonett I never made it to the showrooms). The Sonett II used the front-wheel-drive platform of the Saab 96 saloon (remember that oddity!).

But instead of a dull saloon body the Sonett featured a distinctive coupe profile, which I think has a touch of Triumph GT6 about it.



One thing the Sonett II wasn't was fast. The first generation car was fitted with an 841 cc engine which only put out 60 horsepower, and the performance it offered was a little underwhelming. Later versions of the Sonett II fared slightly better thanks to a new V4 engine which made 65 horsepower and considerably more torque.

In 1970 the Sonett III was introduced. This iteration of the model was significantly superior to the early Sonett's. It had a 1.7 litre V4 engine which produced 75 horsepower @ 5,000 rpm and 94 lb-ft of torque @ 2,500 rpm. The bodywork was also revised and improved thanks to a change in supplier. The Sonett II got its fibreglass body from a Swedish company which normally made railway carriages. But the new suppliers, Coggiola of Italy, were more adept at their trade and the appearance improved as a result.

In 1974 production of the Sonett III ceased with 10,236 cars having rolled off the production line.

The primary reason for the model's discontinuation was tighter safety and emissions regulations in the US - the intended primary market for the car. Redesigning the car to comply with the new rules would have been too costly and uneconomical so Saab killed it instead.

David Whiteley



## Club News

2014 EVENTS LIST				
Date	Event	Club Event	Venue	Contact Details & Start Point/Time
22-Oct	Devizes Ghost Walk	Yes		Meet Market Cross Car Park Devizes <b>Jane Bennett</b> <b>01380 723872</b> <a href="mailto:janexbennett@btinternet.com">janexbennett@btinternet.com</a>
27-Oct	Club Night (Talk Part 4 - 1980-89 GP Seasons)	Yes	The Bell	<b>Paul Warn</b> <b>01225 768676</b> <a href="mailto:paul.william.warn@gmail.com">paul.william.warn@gmail.com</a>
6-Nov	Committee Meeting	No	The Bell	<i>Tom Strickland</i>
24-Nov	Club AGM	Yes	The Bell	Formal notification will be included in the Sept & Oct newsletter.
13-Dec	Christmas Party	Yes	The Bell	<b>Peter Hine</b> <b>01672 512847</b> <a href="mailto:peter_hine@btinternet.com">peter_hine@btinternet.com</a>

I have received a flyer for the 2015 Gloucestershire Motor Show. Those of you who supported the event this year, will be interested to know that you helped to raise over £40,000 for "The Pied Piper Appeal".

Very many thanks

Peter Hine

## Secretary's Scribbles

I enjoyed the Road Pilot lecture last month and was amazed to find myself stuck behind a big flashing orange convoy on the way home- I think it was big agricultural machinery rather than giant dumper trucks!

I have actually seen 3 convoys flashing yellow abnormal loads since the lecture and have found myself to be much more considerate towards these slow moving vehicles. I am a little disappointed that they haven't been as impressive as the ones we saw in the lecture though.

I have been really busy this month - I only realised when I found that I couldn't keep up with the reading of my MG magazines! Don't forget to 'Like' our club Facebook page - search for Wessex MG Club.

Tom

## 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

## 2014 Annual General Meeting

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

**24<sup>th</sup> November**

at

**The Bell Inn, Seend**

commencing at

**8:00 pm**

Preceded from 7.30 onwards by the payment of subscriptions for the 2015 season.

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

The proceedings of the meeting shall be as follows:

### **Agenda for AGM**

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Approval of minutes of 2013 AGM.
3. Chairman's Report.
4. Treasurer's Report.
5. Consideration of any motions received.

### **Break**

6. Election of Committee for 2015.
7. Presentation of Awards.
8. Arrangements for 2015 AGM.
9. Any other business.

## Galileo clothing in Devizes are our club Regalia suppliers

At Galileo you can buy a polo shirt, fleece or in fact pretty much any type of clothing and then have our Wessex MG badge on. If you chat to the chap at the desk he will let you look through the large brochure of clothing. Alternatively you can take in clothing of your own and get our badge put on.



The shop is on Estcourt Street next to the British Lion pub -





**Retail Outlet**

10 Estcourt Street  
Devizes  
Wiltshire  
SN10 1LQ

**Tel:** [01380 724 442](tel:01380724442)

**E-mail**  
[sales@galileoclothing.co.uk](mailto:sales@galileoclothing.co.uk)

**Opening Hours:**  
Mon - Fri : 9am - 5pm  
Saturday : 9am - 4pm  
Sunday : Closed

not far from Morrisons (probably the nearest parking).