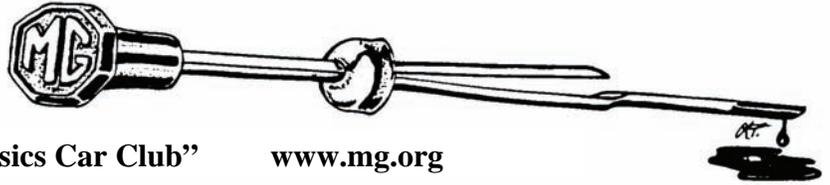


The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

www.mg.org

Volume XXXII, Issue 6

Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

June 2005

MARQUE TIME

Another wonderful monthly meeting at John Jones' home. Thanks John for your hospitality. Many members came away with a new hat after purchasing one from Becky Hassler, Regalia.

I had the pleasure of Vince Groover's company on another road trip to pick up a car. (See separate article.) This one's a MG TD Mark II Conversion. I have completely dismantled it and will probably send the frame out for sandblasting. I am making very slow progress on assembling a TD for my wife Cynthia. The windshield is together and installed...only very slight crack in a corner when I inadvertently picked up a longer screw and attempted to use it during the second time attaching the bottom of the frame. (You need to insert the rubber seal before attaching the bottom rail to the side rails.) Spent most of an afternoon just installing the bonnet (hood) latch mechanisms. First, one needs to know which way, forward or aft, the handles are supposed to point when closed. I thought the front ones should point forward and the rear ones, aft. Of course, they are all supposed to point aft. Then they have those stupid "MG" initials on them ... and it doesn't look too swift if the MG is upside down when closed. So after putting them all on once, I took them all off, and finally got them right. Hopefully, I'll retain some knowledge by the time I get to restore my other TDs. Replaced the radiator stay bars after breaking off the ends of the ones on the car while trying to adjust the distance between the radiator and the scuttle top (cowl). One makes this adjustment so that the bonnet (hood) fits snugly against the scuttle/firewall and the radiator shell. Luckily parts are interchangeable among cars and I can pilfer parts from three other TDs. In preparation for going on the Wine Tour Weekend to Charlottesville, I installed some foil-back insulation under the carpet (on top of the floorboards and transmission cover) in the MG TF. Hopefully this will keep some of the heat out of the cockpit.

I have found some "liquid rubber" which is sold to repair insulation on wires, called "liquid tape". I am going to use it to glue/repair rubber parts. It has been so long since the front suspension of Cynthia's TD was rebuilt that the rubber seals have deteriorated even though the car has not been driven. I do not want to take apart the swivel pins to install new seals...so I am going to cut the seals, install them, and glue them back together. I am also going to see if I can use this "liquid rubber" to rebuild the rubber on some TD bonnet (hood) buffer plates.

Will miss the June meeting. Vice President Alan Watson will have a chance to attempt to maintain some order.

Andy Wallace

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check www.mg.org for the latest info!

**May 25 Ice Cream Social Run (see page 3)
(Writer needed!)**

May 28-June 5 Drive Your British Car Week
www.britishcarweek.org

June 1-5 GoF Mk 78, Eisenhower Conf Center
& Resort, Gettysburg, PA
www.nemgt.org/

**June 1 Wednesday meeting at Gary and
Beth Campbell's (see back page)**

June 4 Brits on the Bay
www.tidewatertriumphs.org

June 5 British Car Day South, Salisbury, NC
www.carolinahealeys.com

June 4-5 SCCA Solo II, www.odr-scca.org

June 10-12 Moss Motors Gold Cup Car Show at
Virginia International Raceway
www.virclub.com

June 15 Dipstick Deadline

June 18 SCCA TSD Tour, www.odr-scca.org

June 24-26 Virginia Festival of Speed at VIR
www.virclub.com

**June 26 Tech Session at Mark Childers
(see page 3)**

June 26 Original British Car Day,
Buckeystown, MD
www.chesapeakechaptermgtclub.com/

MAY MINUTES

Doug Kennedy

After new regalia sales slowed down the meeting was gaveled to order by El Presidente` at 8:16 Lucas Standard Time. John Jones was thanked for his hospitality as he welcomed us to his fledgling VW restoration studio.

Minutes: Approved as published.

Vice-President: More well-deserved thanks to our host, especially for what the Secretary hopes will be a trend of snacks BEFORE the business meeting portion of the evening.

Treasurer's report: In: \$66.00; Out: \$135.00; Left: \$1324.31

Newsletter: Peggy was missed because of her upcoming knee surgery. We wished her well. Sue delegated out writing duties for upcoming events. Feel free to volunteer if you have an event you're attending. Sue presented Old Cars Magazine and announced that we have again won the Golden Quill award for the second straight year! Kudos to Peggy-Sue and all our writers. We hope to make it three years running and become a newsletter award-winning dynasty. Send your articles now to be part of next year's campaign.

Membership: Robin reported that we have 107 members now. Your first warning WARNING WARNING WARNING....dues renewal is upcoming. Robin discussed how best to address reminders so we would have as few stragglers as possible. Bottom line is that we all need to pay our dues in a timely manner to make as little work for our conscientious membership chair as possible. Also, paying your dues means you get to stay in the membership directory.

Activities: Beckey discussed the upcoming wine tour. As of this writing there were a couple slots open for two cars/four people, or one car packed with four people. Lots of shows coming up. Ice Cream run May 25. E-mail blast coming. June 1 meeting at the Campbell's house. Brits on the Bay that weekend, 6/4 at Virginia Wesleyan College, the Harvard of Southeastern Virginia. June 26 will be a tech session at Mark Childer's house. Other meeting locations for the year are now spoken for.

History: Get your skeletons out of the closet and send them to Sue.

Technical: Mark has the entire MGB early tech manual on a CD. Jim Villers is willing to burn it onto a CD for you. It's PDF formatted. Mark also showed a u-joint that had some massive rattling issue. Make sure you grease that U-jointy thing so it doesn't wear out on you. Ignore the "sealed for life claims" since the lifespan may be six months. This, of course, produced our typical spirited discussion of 3,000 different ways to grease a fitting.

Regalia: WOW!!!! Becky Hassler had on hand her collection of new apparel and the members went into a buying frenzy. Hats were flying out the door and landing on heads as quickly as they could be produced. She is also ordering nametags so see her with your order.

Clubs: Mike was missed, we moved on.

Old Business: We relished our efficiency and moved on.

New Business: See "Old Business"

Marque Time:

Alan Watson is now the owner of a 63 Midget. Mark's helping him out with spares and Frank is eyeing the body work. He has also dealt with Victoria British recently on a return and they handled a return extremely well so thumbs up for them. Lastly, Alan had an MG towed by Sandbridge towing and was given incredible service. Their car may be appearing in a national ad campaign! Check back in the newsletter another month for more info.

Robin got an email regarding the future of MG and a Russian connection. Unfortunately, that seems to be untrue and our beloved Marque is in sad shape for its future.

Andy and Vince scavenged a TD from Georgia. Andy has info being prepared for a future newsletter.

Vince's found TD from New Jersey runs like a top. He believes it hasn't run since 1968 and has 22,000 original miles on it at the most!

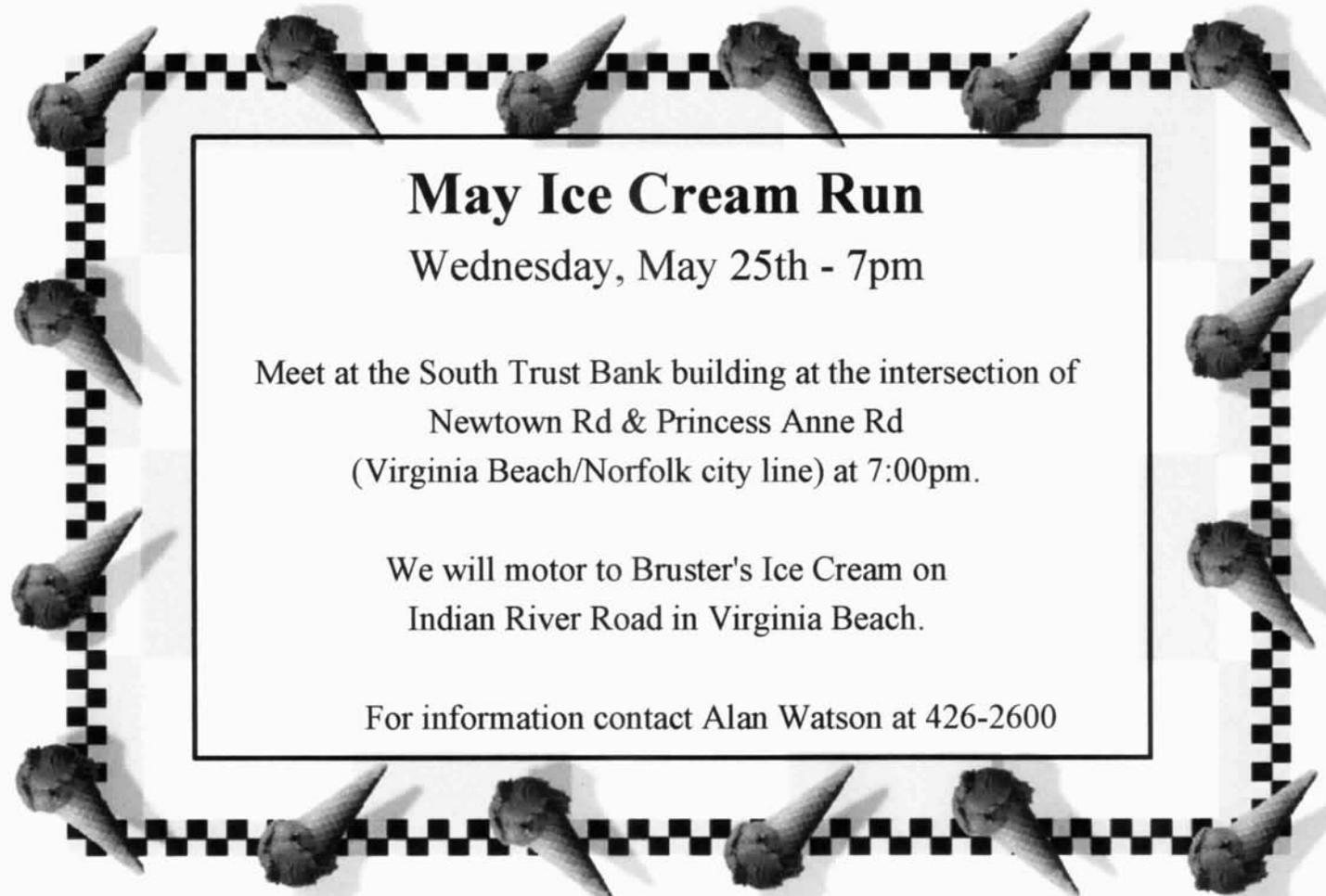
Mark Childers has a connection to a rubber bumper B for \$2500. It's pale lavender, garage kept and in good shape. Give him a call if you're interested. Ladies.

The raffle was held for a new MG bucket hat or "ladies" sleep shirt/fat dude's TV shirt. The Secretary kept alive his losing streak, and we all adjourned to the chow like a nervous bride heading for the Greyhound Terminal.



Officers and Committees

President	Andy Wallach	622-8315
Vice President	Alan Watson	426-2600
Secretary	Doug Kennedy	460-5037
Treasurer	Jim Villers	481-6398
Editors	Peggy Craig	382-7547
	Susan Bond	482-5222
Membership	Robin Watson	721-9277
Activities	Beckey Watson	426-2600
Historian	Susan Bond	482-5222
Technical	Mark Childers	432-9155
Regalia	Becky Hassler	874-1477
Clubs	Mike Ash	495-0307



May Ice Cream Run

Wednesday, May 25th - 7pm

Meet at the South Trust Bank building at the intersection of
Newtown Rd & Princess Anne Rd
(Virginia Beach/Norfolk city line) at 7:00pm.

We will motor to Bruster's Ice Cream on
Indian River Road in Virginia Beach.

For information contact Alan Watson at 426-2600

June Tech Session

Sunday, June 26th

Starting at 10am...until....

Mark's having a "Big Parts Giveaway"

Those parts he's been storing alongside his garage are up for grabs
Come by and fix your MG problems and you could go home with a few extra parts



Mark Childers

3909 Pine Grove Landing, Chesapeake

(past the USN Northwest Radio Station off Ballaback Road)

432-9155

Email: ifixmgs@cox.net

Upcoming Events (Continued from page 1)

July 2-3 SCCA Solo II, www.odr-scca.org

July 6-10 NAMGBR MG2005, Olympia WA,
www.mg2005.com

July 5 Tuesday meeting at Carmen & Paul Thiergardt's

July 7-10 Historic Sportscar Racing at VIR
www.virclub.com

July 8-9 NEMGTR GOF Central, Bloomingdale, IL

July 12-16 NAMGAR GT-30, Mackinac Island, MI

July 15 Dipstick Deadline

July 17 SCCA TSD Tour, www.odr-scca.org

July 30 Brits by the Bay, Pasadena, MD, www.tracldt.org



Membership and New Members

Robin Watson

Total membership 107

Since our May Dipstick we have one new member who joined at the car show in Williamsburg, Mike and his son, Ryan. For those of you that would like to keep their directory up-to-date and put the details in your copy:

Mike & Ryan Donovan
301 Dinwiddie St.
Portsmouth, VA. 23704
(757)637-5091, Email:
englishgentt@aol.com
Mike has 1977 B.

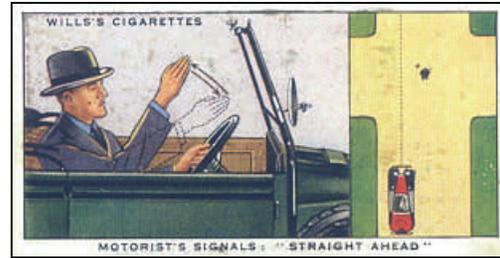
Membership Renewal for 2006

Robin Watson

June is upon us once more and membership dues should be in by July 1st. I have enclosed with this month's Dipstick a Membership Renewal form. You can help the club keep the records up-to-date and also help to get the new 2006 Directory out on time by renewing promptly. During the first week of September the 2006 Directory will be going to the printers and those members that have not renewed by the middle of August will not be listed.

April Meeting

Better late than never, here is the great picture Jim took at the meeting at his house.



CVBCC Show, Williamsburg

Robin Watson



April 23rd, for a few days prior we had been warned of thunderstorms for this area and a few of us wondered if this would be a wash out (weather wise). I decided that I would load up the boot with rain gear and the large umbrella. I also had in the front with me a couple of pieces of shower curtain that I had cut about 30 inches square that make for a great knee and leg cover in heavy rain. I had decided to at least make the meeting point at Cosmo's and then decide if I was going on to the car show. I was first there in Alan's 72 B.



Robin with Alan's B



Chuck & Becky Hassler

Susan came in with granddaughter, Taylor, as co-pilot in the 72 BGT. Vince arrived in his 79 B, then along came Mike and Denise in the 79 B. After we had eaten and felt sure no one else was going to meet at Cosmo's we headed for the Ferry at Scotland to cross the James River into Jamestown.



Frank Linse & Deborah Eisenbath



Don Price

This had given the show setup crew a very busy time and if I understood correctly they had only been informed of the change on the Friday before the show. Also, the caterers



Denise Starke & Mike Haag backed out of the show, but the organizers of the show did well in making the changes to the parking and they also gave us a lunch menu on entering that we could order a lunch to be delivered to the show ground. A few of us were walking around with a light jacket on, then the sun came and a



Kerry Hurley

few members put their tops down. Lunch came and a few spots of rain put the tops back up.

Many of our members received prizes for their MGs entered



Frank Hurley

We had both entered our Bs but Alan was committed elsewhere today so I took his B because it looks a bit better than mine. I walked around outside Cosmo's in the dry wondering if other members were on their way.

When we arrived at the car show we were greeted with a "park on the road only this year" because of a car show that had been held when the weather was bad and the grass had been messed up.

we looked over his new addition to his stable, a 1950 TD and in a couple of minutes with a fuel pump hanging on the side of the engine going into a gas can on the floor the engine was running like a new one. A great finish to the day for me even though that stop-off caused me to get the shower curtain out and put over my legs to catch the rain between Vince's home and mine.

in the show. Doug & Eiko Wilson had first in British Open with their 52 MG TD, and first in the MGB Rubber Bumper with their 76 MGB, Vince Groover had second with his 79

MGB. Kerry Hurley had first in the MGB Chrome Bumper with her 71 MGB. Craig & Joyce Cummings had first in



Doug & Eiko Wilson

MGB GT with their 69 MGB GT. We also had the following members stop at the show: Thomas Day and daughter, Sara; Frank Linse & Deborah Eisenbath in Deborah's 76 B; Chuck & Beckey Hassler in their 80 B-LE; Roy Wiley; Don & Debbie Price in their 75 B; Jon & Bobbi Suponski; Gary & Beth Campbell in their 78 B; Frank & Kerry Hurley in their 71 B and also their 61 Daimler.

After the show was over

and it was time to move on, some of our members decided to stop off and do some sight-seeing, hoping that the storm would not catch them on the way home. Vince and I decided to head for home. On the way Vince asked if I would like to stop off for a break. I shouted a "yes" as we took off from the lights. The stop turned out to be a great one, in his garage where

Susan Bond & Taylor Sumner

we looked over his new addition to his stable, a 1950 TD and in a couple of minutes with a fuel pump hanging on the side of the engine going into a gas can on the floor the engine was running like a new one. A great finish to the day for me even though that stop-off caused me to get the shower curtain out and put over my legs to catch the rain between Vince's home and mine.



Beth & Gary Campbell

Cummings had first in MGB GT with their 69 MGB GT. We also had the following members stop at the show: Thomas Day and daughter, Sara; Frank Linse & Deborah Eisenbath in Deborah's 76 B; Chuck & Beckey Hassler in their 80 B-LE; Roy Wiley; Don & Debbie Price in their 75 B; Jon & Bobbi Suponski; Gary & Beth Campbell in their 78 B; Frank & Kerry Hurley in their 71 B and also their 61 Daimler.



Vince Groover



Susan Bond & Taylor Sumner



Bobbi & Jon Suponski

A Little Motor-Related Humor

E-mailed from England by Robin Watson's sister

A few days ago I was having some work done at my local garage. A blonde came in and asked for a seven-hundred-ten. We all looked at each other, and another customer asked, "What is a seven-hundred-ten?"

She replied, "You know, the little piece in the middle of the engine. I lost it and need a new one. It had always been there."

The mechanic gave the blonde a piece of paper and a pen and asked her to draw what the piece looked like. She drew a circle and in the middle wrote 710. He then took her over to another car which had the hood up and asked, "is there a 710 on this car?"

She pointed and said, "Of course, it's right there."

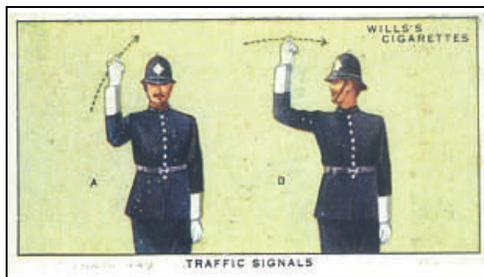
Do you know what she was talking about? If not, turn the page.



Notes from the Editors . . .

Susan Bond

Not much space left for notes this month, you did a good job filling this issue! Thank you for getting everything in promptly, too. Peggy went in for knee surgery the day after the deadline (I am writing this the next day and didn't want to bother her yet) and we are trying to get this out early for the first Ice Cream Run of the season. See you there!



"BRING ON traffic"

MGs for Sale

For Sale-MGTD 1950 Convertible. Antique white/black leather interior. Very good condition. Must see to appreciate. \$18,000.00. Call Rachel Richardson 463-8440.

1974 MGB (rubber bumpers). \$2,500 obo. Original owner. Covered, garaged and not operated since 1993. Very little rust. Needs work to get back on the road. Located in Bowie, MD. Call John or Cindy at (301) 805-6837



MG Acquisitions

This in from Beckey Watson, Alan's "new" Midget joins the stable.



Vince and the "Mark II TD"

Andy Wallach

As many of you know, I accompanied Vince Groover to upper New Jersey to pick up a TD that came with an extra engine. Vince bought the vehicle only hours before I called and offered to buy it. A few weeks later, when Vince learned about a TD Mark II for sale, he asked me if I wanted it. If not, he would buy it. I, not having a Mark II, readily agreed to buy it.

For those of you who are not familiar with the Mark II, here is some background. Mark IIs are relatively rare. Of the 29,664 production TDs, only approximately 1710 were Mark II models. The Mark II was designed for competition, having a higher compression ratio (modified cylinder head), larger valves, larger carburetors, two fuel pumps vice one, additional adjustable shocks both front and back, and higher final drive ratio. Basically, more horsepower and gearing for a higher maximum speed.

Vince explained to me that the car was in poor shape and that the body was practically non-existent. He negotiated a better price than the seller was offering and even got some photos e-mailed. Vince claims that he forwarded the photos to me, but I never received them. I was not overly concerned about the car's body, knowing that I could obtain one or build one from parts.

Off Vince and I go on another road trip; this time to Georgia. I, intelligently, provided my own tow vehicle, after spending two days on the last trip awaiting repairs on Vince's van. We left at about 4am and were in Brunswick by 2:30pm. During the trip, Vince filled me in on some of his Georgia kinfolk dating back to the 1700s.

The Mark II was on a trailer. I have never seen a worse looking vehicle. There was no body except the



firewall, the frame sat on the rear axle because the rear springs were off the “car”, there was no paint on any of the pieces ... just rust. But there was the mount for the second fuel pump and there were the extra shocks so at least it was a Mark II. While being attacked by sand fleas, we put various loose pieces in the bed of our



pickup and winched the car from the trailer onto our trailer (two of the car’s wheels were frozen). Off we went to the seller’s house on Saint Simon’s Island to pick up the engine and various other pieces. After a



beer at his home and admiring his Model T and Shelby Cobra, the seller/our host took us out to dinner. After dinner we loaded the engine block, cylinder head, and

some other parts. While lots of pieces were missing such as the oil sump, gauges, lights ...again, the vitals for a Mark II were there. I traded cash for a bill of sale and the car’s number plates. Vince gained cash by selling our host a cylinder head.

Our host sent us off the next morning at 4am with a cup of coffee. Overall, we enjoyed fine southern hospitality. We were back in Norfolk at about 3pm, off-loaded the “car”, returned the trailer, I dropped off Vince, and eagerly returned home to admire my new possession. My father-in-law, upon seeing the “car” stated, “And to think that I allowed you to marry my daughter!”

I then researched the numbers. The car number is TD/25857. Mark IIs have car numbers with the prefix “TD/C” vice “TD”. According to the car number, it was manufactured in about February 1953. By then, MG was designating Mark II engines as “TD3”; but my engine number was XPAG/TD2/26245. I then checked the number stamped on the rear-end. It is 8/41. Mark IIs should have 8/39. I measured the valves, they are larger..... Conclusion: The car is/was not a Mark II but a “Mark II Conversion”.

One naturally compares Vince’s purchase/trip to New Jersey and my purchase/trip to Georgia. What did Vince obtain? A very-low mileage, body-perfect (ready for the paint-shop) complete car, smooth-running engine (started right up after forty years), uninstalled new leather interior/seat kit, extra full engine with brand new crank. What did Andy obtain? A pseudo Mark II rust bucket, no interior, no gauges, no fittings, no body, dismantled engine without crank, oil pump, pan, water pump, fan, valve cover and various other necessary components. What did Andy endure? Being towed off the Jersey Turnpike. Two days hanging around repair shops in southern Jersey and staying at economy motels. What did Vince endure? Wonderful overnight accommodations at a beautiful home on a resort island, drinking beer, and admiring pretty cars.



Vince’s TD

Here's what the blonde was looking at!

Any good ones in your e-mail lately? Please send them in!



All that Glitters is not Gold!

Geoff Wheatley,
Public Relations Director,
New England MG T Register

"So how many classic cars have you restored?" is the standard question that I get asked at virtually every car show that I attend. The next question is, "How much do I have to invest to get a nice car like yours?" followed by, "So, what's this car worth?" My answer is usually, "MANY" followed by, "THREE TIMES AS MUCH AS YOU EVER ESTIMATED" and the final reply is, "WHATEVER SOMEONE IS WILLING TO PAY". These are not "smart ass" answers but simply an honest reply. I have restored six T-type MGs, a couple of pre-war classics and three MGAs. Also, various MGBs, all chrome bumpers, of course, several early Midgets and a couple of early post-war British delights. The joy is finding the cars and restoring them to at least their original condition. Sometimes we go a little overboard and add a few chrome extras that were not there when the car left the factory but that can be justified as "dealer extras". (You can certainly get away with that comment this side of the pond!)

I also judge T-types when I'm not showing, which can be a very interesting experience, sometimes even dangerous! More on that in another issue of this excellent publication!

The type of question that I do like to hear is not related to costs, time or value, but "How do I know what cars to buy for restoration?". Over the years I have purchased a couple of real horrors like the wrong engine, "Bondo Filler" bodies held together by the rust under the gleaming new paint, half eaten frames that are covered with black under seal to hide the decay, lights that don't light, wheels that don't turn or stop, etc. On the other hand, I have certainly learned a few tricks to ensure that my hard-earned cash is not invested in a restoration nightmare. As T-types are my first love, let me give any would-be buyer of these classic cars a few tips when you are considering a purchase of a TC, TD or TF. **FIRST**. Don't believe all that is shown on the ID plates. Remember these can be purchased quite easily. Engine plates are the same. They are readily available for someone to fix and tell you that all the numbers match, however not

that important when all is said and done. I've seen some excellent vehicles with replaced engines that work better than the originals. However, sellers can't reproduce that chassis stamp so look for that. On the TF it's under the left or right wing, depending if it's a left or right-hand car. On the TD, especially the Mk II, it can be found in virtually the same location. Remember this when someone is trying to sell you a Mk II that has been fitted with some extra goodies like double fuel pumps, etc. The number for a genuine Mk II should read "TD/C", not "TD2". The first Mk II came off the line in May 1950; (TD/C 1123) so don't be put off if the production number seems low. These early vehicles did not have the Mk II badge on the rear or side panels but they did have the "bonnet bump" for the extra large air cleaner, an item that's worth its weight in gold today. Even after many years of restoration I still read as many books on these cars as I can. You can never stop learning something new, even after thirty years. If you want to buy a TD or a TF buy a couple of detail books on the car. There are several on the market, all worth reading. Next, get a couple of books with pictures so that you can look and compare. Remember that the cars in the photos are usually both beautiful and correct. Don't be over impressed by gleaming paint and new chrome. They are desirable but not that important when the rest of the car is in need of total mechanical and electrical restoration!

One giveaway on newly painted cars is the body seams that seal the gaps between the wings and the body found on all T-types and the MGA. They should be free of paint; i.e., the tub and wings were separated and painted individually. When the car was reassembled the old seams should have been replaced with new seams in the correct color, like black, green, gray, etc. **THEY SHOULD NOT HAVE A SPOT OF PAINT ON THEM ANYWHERE**. A quick, cheap paint job where the car has not been taken apart will cause these seams to be covered with fresh paint. I have seen big money spent on cars that have this obvious defect simply because the purchaser did not take the trouble to either read a few books or invest in a pre-purchase inspection by someone who knows what to look for.

NEXT, look at the interior. Have the carpets been recently replaced, yet no other interior work seems to have been carried out? This is a good indication that the wood floor is suspect, the tunnel housing may need attention, the floor struts are weak and so on... If they are stuck down with adhesive, beware, you can't lift them up to see what delights are underneath. Look at the instruments. Make sure they all work and are correct. How do you know? Buy a picture book that shows what they should look like. All T-types are prone to wear on the real drive splines, especially when the rear wheels have not been correctly tightened. A dodge that I have seen is to slip thin nails into the worn splines to take up the slack. **TAKE OFF THE REAR WHEELS AND CHECK**. If the owner is not happy with this request, go see another car. Also, while on the rear end, get into the car and try reverse. If you hear a slight knock, the rear transmission is in need of work and that can be expensive. **DON'T BE FOOLED BY THE SELLER'S ASSURANCE THAT ALL OLD CARS DO THIS...**they don't! Check the gearbox, especially on the TD and TF, which have tender gears. The TC is a more rugged unit but should also

be thoroughly tested. If you can't get into any chosen gear without some serious effort, don't be misled by the statement that the car needs a clutch adjustment. Also, whilst your foot is on the clutch, put on the hand brake and put the car into second or third gear. Now, slowly let out the clutch. The car should stall. If not, you may well have a worn clutch plate, or worse. If the car overrides the hand brake you may have other problems that can cost you money.

Look at the way the doors fit on any T-type (or any British sports car, for that matter). With the T-type they should always be flush at the top where the front blends into the scoop of the tub. On the others they should follow the line of the car top and bottom. If not, you may have a twisted body or even worse, poor wood at the door support. There is no real way that I have found to check the wood on these early cars unless you strip the body, but owners don't usually like that idea. However, you can look for tell-tale cracks in the body seams, especially where the rear hood fits the tub. If there are serious cracks, you may well have serious wood problems and these can be REAL EXPENSIVE. The engine should be clean and the firewall the same shade of color as the car, except for the early TC when the firewall and engine were a battleship gray. (Lots of dispute over which shade of battleship gray, but as no one really knows, you can buy a tin from the local hardware store and paint away, you won't lose any points from this judge!)

Look at the electrics like lights, rear and front. Again, get a picture book so that you can see which style of headlight or rear light was used with your particular car, they are different.

FINALLY, step away from the car and take a long, intense look at the vehicle. Can you see any body ripples, especially on the doors where there could be body damage covered over with the plastic crap? Does the car sit right, not leaning one way or sagging at the front or rear? Get someone to bounce the car at both ends and look to see how WELL THE CAR CORRECTS ITSELF. Try the steering wheel for play whilst no one is sitting in the car. There should be no more than a modest amount of play. If the wheel turns a couple of inches or more you have steering or front end problems.

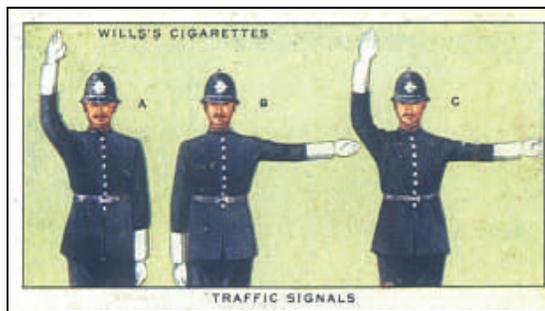
OK, now you have sorted out most of the obvious things but that's only half the story. Drive the car to a local garage where you can put the car on a lift and take a serious look at the underneath. It will be dirty and oily but that is normal—never seen a British sports car yet that did not shed a few pints of oil during its lifetime. Look for the obvious, like lose or broken springs and/or exhaust fittings. Look for patchwork repairs. Beware of a car that has been smothered in spray under-seal from the local car shop. This can hide a multitude of sins. Expect to pay for the use of the lift. It's a good investment in the long run. Again, if the owner is not willing to allow this inspection, move on to another car. There is always one or even two just waiting for your attention.

Take a good look at the top and the windscreen. A top is not expensive and relatively easy to fit but a windscreen can be expensive, both in terms of purchase and fitting. I have taken a few windscreen frames apart only to find that the replacement process is both time consuming and not

cheap. If you want to get the correct end result that will stand up to car show inspection (I think the most demanding is the MGB), this is a task that should be left to the local garage-- unless you are a dedicated martyr!

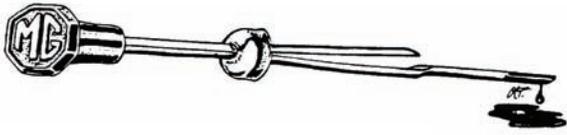
Most of the things I have mentioned can be fixed but always at a price, even if you are a DIY person. Remember, every time you locate something that is not right, you are in a better position to bargain. Over the years I have seen a lot of cars that claim to have come from the sunshine belt—no snow, little rain, kept in a private garage and all that stuff.... That's fine except that in hot, humid climates the rust starts from inside the body, not the other way around, and is more difficult to trace. I had a call just a few days ago regarding an MGA that I was interested in buying for restoration. It was advertised as being in top condition. From the photos that were sent, I had to agree, however I consequently found out that the car had not been started for three years. It had been sitting in a nice comfortable garage awaiting its owner to return from a job assignment in the Middle East, resulting in brakes frozen, electrical system corroded, petrol pump and various other mechanical items (like the wiper motor) non-usable. In short, the car looked great but the investment to get it back on the road could be substantial. On top of that, the engine may well have suffered through lack of use. End result, I did not buy the car and neither should you in similar circumstances.

You may have been told to always check the oil and see if it's black and burnt. Good idea but not very reliable as it's very easy to drain out the bad stuff and pour in some new oil just for the buyer's benefit. Black and/or sooty exhaust is a better guide to what the engine may be like. Put your hand over the end of the exhaust pipe (with a glove on, of course) and see if the engine eventually stalls after a few moments. If so, the engine's exhaust system is in decent condition. If not, you may well have a leak in the system that needs attention. Put on the wiper motor, even if it's not raining, but ensure that the windscreen is wet while the wipers are running. I usually take a small spray bottle of water with me for this test. It's not your car yet so don't try it dry as it could scratch the glass. Remember, all that glitters is not gold but sometimes you can find a gem under a pile of dust and grime. It's basically a matter of simple, common sense. Three years ago I found a 1952 MG TD with 45,000 original miles under a pile of dust sheets. More recently, a 1962 Austin Sprite with 29,000 original miles. Both in excellent restoration condition once I had taken off the dirt and grime. In short, be prepared to crawl up, down and all the way around in order to see what delightful restoration gem awaits your attention. Happy Hunting!



These all mean "Stop"

The Dipstick



The Tidewater MG Classics

Susan Bond
541 Forest Road
Chesapeake, VA 23322

Affiliated with



North American MGB Register

FIRST CLASS

Monthly Meeting
Wed, June 1st
Gary & Beth Campbell
5013 Farrington Dr
Virginia Beach
434-1431


7:30 - 8pm - Kick Tyres
8:00 Meeting