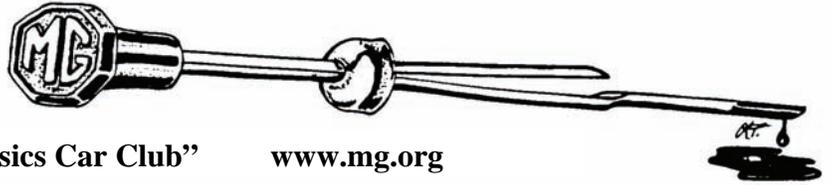


The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

www.mg.org

Volume XXXIII, Issue 3

Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

March 2005

MARQUE TIME

Thanks to Bill Seib and Leslie Paul for hosting a great February meeting and Alan and Beckey Watson for organizing a marvelous rallye.

I am finally back to working on cars. Really enjoy the process of bolting clean parts on a clean, freshly-painted TD body. Took three TD radiators to Midway Radiator in Norfolk. They replaced the core on one and boiled-out the other two. It appears that they did a good job. I am pondering the chrome replacement versus the re-chroming. While it is often cheaper to buy new chrome parts, the quality is not normally as good as one can get by having the original part re-chromed. But the cost of re-chroming is usually greater than buying new. Oh the decisions one has to make.

Frank Linse welded new floor board brackets into my son Josh's MGA. Frank does beautiful work ... hum, I have some badly rusted quarter panels (these are the four pieces of body sheet metal that covers the wood frame on T series) which I can take over... It was nice getting the "A" out of the garage and into Frank's... but he finished quickly and now I need to retrieve it. As part of my garage make-over, I am trying to maintain lots of room to work on cars and one less car makes that easier. Josh and I are trying to "quickly" get the "A" mechanically okay so that he can have fun driving it for awhile before a much-needed complete restoration. Well, he has owned it for about a year and a half, and now must devote time to his newly arrived daughter. What is more important...cars or kids?

I am looking for a new person to handle Regalia. Frank Linse has done a great job and now it is time for someone else. (No, I am not just attempting to reduce his duties so that he has more time to devote to working on my cars.) Here is your chance to help your fellow members by obtaining MG-related goodies and making them available for sale at meetings.

Hope to see you at our March meeting.

Andy Wallach

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check www.mg.org for the latest info!

- March 1 Tuesday meeting at Wendy & Mark Hiby's (see map on back page)**
- March 5 SCCA Rally School and TSD Tour
www.odr-scca.org
- March 12 TRAACA Swap Meet
www.aaca.org/tidewater
(TMGC will have a table, so join us!)
- March 15 Dipstick Deadline**
- March 20 Tech Session at Frank Linse's (see page 3)**
- March 26-27 SCCA Evolution Driving School
www.odr-scca.org
- April 2-3 SCCA Solo II, www.odr-scca.org
- April 6 Wednesday meeting at Betty & Jim Villers**
- Apr 8-10 GoF South XXXIX, Kenilworth Lodge, Sebring, FL, Suzy Maxon (727)736-1990
- April 15 Dipstick Deadline**
- April 17 SCCA TSD Tour, www.odr-scca.org
- April 22-24 The Gathering, Shelton Vineyards, Dobson, NC, triumphclub.org/
- April 23 CVBCC Show, Williamsburg
<http://www.Williamsburg-bcc.com>
- April 24 Brits on the Green, Alexandria, VA
CapitalTriumphRegister.com

FEBRUARY MINUTES

Doug Kennedy

MR. SPEAKER..... MR. SPEAKER..... With a hearty yell El Presidente Andy was introduced to the gathered assembly on this the second of February, also the night of some other President's State of the Union Address. The meeting started at 8:02 Lucas Standard Time.

Mike Jones was welcomed as a new/old member with a project or two. Robert Davis then threw out the evening's first jab as he reminded Andy that he owns a few projects of his own.

Vice President: Alan's hair was complimented by the President. We all looked on a bit stunned.

Minutes: Approved with great huzzahs.

Treasurer's Report: In \$20, Out: \$94.90, Left \$1914.38. Chuck Hudson asked whether we earn any interest on our accounts. This was a great question and after some discussion Jim explained our current situation where we don't have any fees so we've got a pretty good deal going.

Newsletter: Sue recruited writers. Cynthia stepped forward for the upcoming rally. Sue also had certificates for last year's contributors. Write now to claim yours later on.

Membership: We have 104 members and a crashed computer according to Robin. Unfortunately he needs to recreate the mailing list a bit. 110 Newsletters go out a month.

Activities: Beckey talked about the Valentine's Day Rally on 2/13 at Virginia Wesleyan College (The Harvard of Southeastern Virginia, see www.vwc.edu). Ending place will be at Pembroke Pizza. This is a gimmick rally and will be a ton of fun. Oh, and it's at Virginia Wesleyan College, bringing you nationally recognized undergraduate education since 1961 in small classes with outstanding student-professor contact.

Wine tour planning is underway. May looks like the date. Wine, food, and fun so keep the month open. Details to follow.

Historian: Get your history to Sue.

Spares: Mark presented a list that contained metric equivalents for English bolt sizes. Andy hopes to have available a complete listing of TD nuts and bolts. Mark

informed him that it already exists as well as a list for B's. He'll grab a copy for us.

Regalia: We need a successor to long-time regalia Guru, Frank. Please see Andy if you have interest.

Clubs: Freshly retired and energized Mike gave us a report of some locations for upcoming register meetings.

Old Business: We couldn't remember any.

New Business: After a lengthy introduction Andy gave us an impassioned speech looking for new business, controversy. Unfortunately, we're lovers, not fighters so we moved on.

Marque Time: The Secretary discussed the beauty of XM satellite Radio. He also talked about the results of the MG auctions at the Barret-Jackson auction.

Mark discussed a new bill that would outlaw spinners, and might include eared knock-offs. Much debate/conjecture/wild guesses ensued.

Terry let us know that March 12 will be the AACA flea market down at the Hickory Ruritan Club. Pass Mark's house, make a left at the rock that looks like a bear, go a mile, make a right at the bear that looks like a rock and it's on your left. The MG club will have a table to gather and sell your stuff.

Sue and Terry are stripping. Oh, their MG.....for a complete resto.

Vince and Frank paid \$800 for their last B paint job. Good price for a good job. Scott Coogan did a Mercedes for Mark for \$1400--it turned out great.

There was no raffle so we all adjourned to the chow like anchorman to the studio for post-speech analysis.

Membership and New Members

Robin Watson

Total membership 104

Since our February Dipstick we have one new member who has rejoined:

Mike & JoAnn Jones
333 Millstone Rd
Chesapeake, VA 23322
757-482-2577

jnesmp@prodigy.net

Mike met up with some of our members at the February meeting at Bill and Leslie's. They have a 1960 A and a 69 C-GT.

Car Sick?

Bring it to the **Tech Session:**



Sunday, March 20th starting at 10am

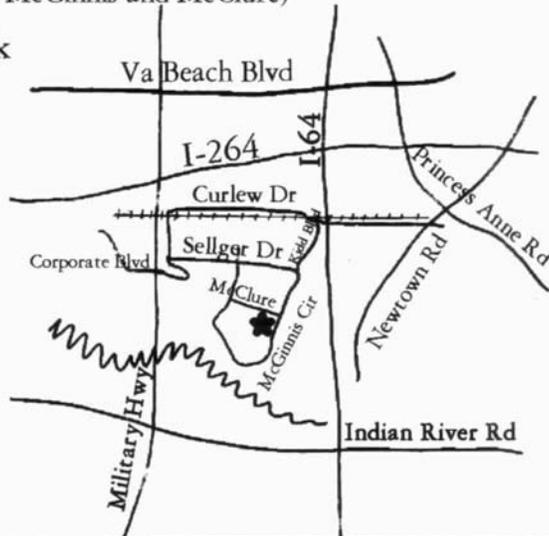
Frank Linse's garage

301 E. McGinnis Circle

(corner of McGinnis and McClure)

Norfolk

461-7783



structions from none other than their son, Alan Watson.

Eleven couples turned out for the rallye. Of the married couples, there was



Vince and Pam Groover



Tom and Marie Early

a combined total of 177.5 years of marital bliss. The adventurous love birds came in 7 MGBs, 1 TD, 1 MGBGT, 1 Japanese MG

Acura TL, and 1 Swedish MG Volvo.

The objective of the rallye was to have fun with your mate while counting objects, finding clues, staying on the road, giving directions and by all means not arguing with the one you love. Well, all I can tell you is that Men are from Mars and Women are



The Villers' depart from Venus and being in an MG or a "wannabe" doesn't change this fact.

If you did not attend this fun-filled event you missed looking for missing letters in marques, counting (fire hydrants, bridges, seahorses, cardinals, and stars), and a lover boy that delivers all while trying to decipher scrambled street

Gary and Beth Campbell

Valentine's Gimmick Rallye

Cynthia Faschini



The first ever Valentine Eve rallye took place on a cool Sunday afternoon on February 13, 2005. Becky Watson greeted all the participants with a goodie bag filled with a heart shaped name tag displaying a picture of the happy couple and their MG, a festive pencil, raffle tickets, and a rose bud filled with kisses. What can I say, Becky is the BOMB. The rallye kicked off at 3:05pm from Virginia Wesleyan College with Robin and Olive Watson, the longest married couple (49 years), taking off with in-



Rallymeisters Becky and Alan Watson



Janice Klasek and Jerry Johnson

names... Even through all of these obstacles everyone found the final destination, Pembroke Pizza and Pasta, to be greeted by an-

other six members waiting to hear all of

the details. As cupid's couples arrived there was much ado about the answers to the questions with discussions and light bulbs going off for the less seasoned rallye mongers. As usual, the winners were Betty and Jim Villers with a close second



James and Emily Simpson, Frank and Morris Worrell



Robin and Olive Watson

(determined only by mileage) to Sue Bond and her daughter Lindsay.

When all is said and done, 13 MG's and 28 people enjoyed a spectacular Valentine Eve rallye. In my humble opinion



The Winners! Jim and Betty Villers (with their fabulous prize)

Becky and Alan Watson did a fantastic job, not missing a beat and challenging even the best



Raffle winners Cynthia Faschini and Andy Wallach

o f 4 us.

Rallye Postscript (or Why We Lost)

Susan Bond

While looking for clues in the Thoroughgood neighborhood, Lindsay and I stopped to talk to long-time friend Sam Kern who was on his Sunday walk. After the usual exchange of news, Sam (who has owned his TD for many years) said there was a nice TD parked at the Middle School and we should have a look. So we detoured from the route and arrived just as the owner was getting in. Lindsay wanted a picture and I told him why we were in the area and handed him a copy of *The Dipstick*. He said he was a member a long time ago, and was Vince still in the club? His lucky day, Vince and Pam were participants, so we invited him to Pembroke Pizza and found out his name was Tom Hall. A strange reunion (You've put on weight, you've gotten old....) but they seemed glad to see each other and it was nice to see 2 TDs in the car park.



So, we lost the rallye but found a TD!



Life with LBC's

Harry Watson

I bought my first LBC in the spring of 1963 while I was stationed at the Naval Submarine Base at Groton, Conn. A roommate of mine introduced me to the TR-3A. I found a 1959 TR-3A and knew from the start I had found a true treasure. My first memory of driving it was stopping at an intersection and hearing this loud noise behind me. Looking in the rear view mirror, I saw the chrome bull dog on the bumper of a Mack truck. Quite intimidating but I grew to accept it and enjoyed my road travels.

I bought a new TR-4 in the summer of 1963 while I was at Dam Neck attending one of many major schools in my navy career. I drove it all over the East Coast and instead of trading it for a Cobra 3 years later; I traded it for a Corvair and a wife.

My Navy travels brought me back to Dam Neck in 1972 without the Corvair or the wife. I always enjoyed my TR-3A and wanted another. I located a 1960 behind a foreign car garage in Norfolk. A real basket case. I bought another TR-3A, which was wrecked, for the engine, transmission, interior and dash. I really found my treasure now, including Ken-



nie, my wife. I got the TR on the road New Year's eve 1972 and Kennie got her first ride in my chariot. I

remember the first warm day in the spring of 1973 when I picked her up for an outing. I had the side curtains off and as we made the first turn at an intersection, she remarked "slow down!!!! I don't want to fall out". We chuckle about that to this day. We married in December of that year. Later while stationed in Charleston, SC, the crankshaft broke just when I was getting transferred to Dam Neck for my final tour. I towed the TR to Va. Beach later and completely restored it less "body-off". It was just like a showroom car. I sold it later as the kids, Harry II and Kara from my previous marriage and Janet from Kennie's previous marriage, were growing and the TR wasn't.

I got into a 1950 Ford years later as the kids graduated from high school. I took a long time doing all I could myself restoring it to original. I did all except the engine machine shop



work. I showed it for about 3 years after completion but I needed to get my hands back on the wrenches and in the grease and dirt. I sold it and began searching for another Triumph.

Later that year, 2001, a friend told me her sister wanted to sell her 1973 MGB-GT. When I arrived in Rockingham, North Carolina to pick up the car, Kennie remarked "you paid what for the piece of #@&%???"



She evidently hadn't seen a gem in the rough before or envisioned the possibilities. I

used 'come-alongs' to drag it onto the trailer from her back yard. It had been sitting there for many years. The tires were dry rotted and rolled off the rims as I dragged it onto the trailer. I got it home and took full

inventory of the engine and was able to start it after a few days of preparation. I rebuilt the front suspension, brakes, clutch and carburetors and started driving it until I was ready for the complete tear-down.

I stripped the whole car down leaving the dash and wiring harness intact. The whole body was stripped to bare metal and filled where needed. The machine work on the engine ensured new engine performance when completed. The car had a standard 4-speed transmission. I replaced it with an overdrive transmission which performs great. I had the custom interior done locally. After many long months and many home projects, the car finally emerged as the gem for which I had envisioned a few years earlier. Kennie agrees it is a true treasure and a gem. Kennie was the first to ride in it just like the '60 TR-3A of years past. This time it was New Year's Day 2005.



I had quite a bit of experience with the TR-3A and TR-4 but this being my first MG, I want to thank everyone in the club for all of their time, advice and information which made my restoration an enjoyable and rewarding experience.



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	Becky Watson	426-2600
Historian	Susan Bond	482-5222
Technical	Mark Childers	432-9155
Regalia	Frank Linse	461-7783
Clubs	Mike Ash	495-0307

The Barrett-Jackson Extrapolation

-or-

How I stopped guessing at my car's value and embraced the Speed Channel

By Doug Kennedy

A couple weeks ago I found myself staring longingly at the Speed Channel as the Barrett-Jackson auto auction was underway. There, on my TV screen was the solution to a problem that will vex me as soon as I win the lottery; how best to spend my 70 million dollars? 1954 Olds Concept car that sold for 3 mil; I'll take two. 25th anniversary Lambo Countache for \$150,000; what a bargain, get me a couple for the kids and a spare for the babysitter. 1974 AMC Gremlin with a 2005 Viper Engine and Ostrich skin interior; well, a guy's got to know his limitations, I'll pass on that one.

But as the cars drove by and I periodically harumphed "that's a good deal" (as if any car above 300 grand could be considered a bargain) I was struck that there were forces at work that impact my own beloved 69 MGB. Simply put, I call it the Barrett-Jackson Extrapolation. You see, every auction tells a story. This one was no different. The story that was being told explains how best to place a value on our cars. Oh sure, there's the sentimental value that makes them priceless. But come on, sentimentality will go out the window as soon as someone walks up to me with a bag of cash. Anyway, after drooling over the horde of Hudsons, plethora of Plymouths and myriad of MOPARs, a lone Austin Healey rumbled onto the screen. AH-HAH! I perked up, it's about time that some British iron showed up. As I set my mental top bid I noticed that my estimate was left in the dust. Higher and higher it rose until my "guesstimate" was tripled. "Honey, find the B's title. Get Barrett-Jackson on the phone. "We've got a restored 1961 MGA to buy with the money we'll make off of the B", I yelled. As the trained empiricist however I knew that the devil's always in the methodologically valid observable details. So, I parked myself in front of the computer and researched the sale prices of any MG's that had been auctioned along with the Austin Healey. I figured a little comparison shopping was in order.

Well, it was a pretty good year for most MG's that were lucky enough to drive across the Barrett-Jackson auction block. Here are the results:

1952 TD Mark II: \$49,680

1936 PB: \$25,920

1938 SA: \$68,580

1947 TC: \$60,480

1958 MGA Racer: \$26,460

and most unsettling, 1965 MGB Roadster with
\$30,000 spent on restoration: \$14,040!

'36 PB



'52 TD

Ayyyy, Karumba, the former owner of that B must be having a stroke over that investment. But then again, the SA owner can comfort him with a few fine Cuban cigars. As I started looking at images of the cars (you can search all results at www.barrett-jackson.com/auctionresults/default.asp) I looked deeper into their descriptions as well. What became apparent in looking them over and doing the same with a bunch of other cars (it's very addictive) was that a car's value was closely tied to a series of variables I now call the Barrett-Jackson Extrapolation. By understanding the complex equations you can extrapolate the true auction value of your car and revise your retirement plans accordingly.

Here's how it works.

Step 1: Guesstimate the "average value" of your car based on your recent looks at Hemmings, Ebay, the Auto Trader, or The Sacred Octagon.

Step 2: Subtract 25% off the value you guesstimated in step 1 because there's no way you can be honest with yourself when it comes to your own car's value.

Step 3: Add or Subtract the following amounts as they apply:

1. Completely original: +\$5,000 per decade
2. Major components from different decades: -\$5,000 per decade
3. Includes bill of sale, original title, and original salesman's card: +\$2200
4. Title is photocopied and odometer reading is mysteriously smudged: -\$3600

5. Thank you letter from Cecil Kimber: \$3750
6. Repossession letter from Bank of America stuffed under seat -\$1280
7. Original British Blue anti-freeze: \$1776
8. Modern Green Anti-Freeze: -\$1450... dripping on floor -\$950
9. Original Esso spare can of oil in boot: +\$775
10. Modern Amsoil plastic quart stuffed under hood: -\$550....dripping on floor -\$875
11. Wire wheels: +\$1130
12. Disc wheels: -\$400
13. Documented history as a factory racer: +\$8500
14. Unpaid speeding tickets behind front seats: -\$400
15. British Racing Green: +\$3100
16. Olive Drab Green: -\$2600
17. Original SU carbs with leaky float bowls, and ovaled throttle shafts: +1100
18. Weber carb in perfect condition: -\$890
19. Working convertible top: +\$500
20. Hardtop: -\$500
21. Valve cover signed by Carroll Shelby: +\$5800
22. Original engine replaced with a Plymouth Hemi: +\$9800
23. All octagon badges removed and replaced with chrome "MOPAR": +\$3200
24. Total production of model less than 100: +\$8400
25. Total production of model greater than 500,000: -\$2300
26. Total spent on restoration: -\$2 for every dollar spent.
27. Found in a barn: \$0--Come on, there aren't any barns left.



'38 SA

Step 4: After completing the calculations in step three you have the current auction value of your car. You may extrapolate the future auction value by using the following formula:

Future Value=G times E plus T minus R divided by E plus A minus L

Where **G** = Guesstimate

E = Estimate of future desirability

T = Time spent on restoration

R = Resale value after mistakenly backing the car into the garage door

E = Each time you have to explain to someone that it really is the original color

A = Awards won (not counting "Most Potential", "Rustiest", or "Least Desirable")

L = Least amount of distance ever driven before AAA needed a call.

So you see, it's easy. If you want to retire wealthy in 20 years just find the following:

British racing Green 1932 C-Type, (one of 44 total produced) that was raced by Carroll Shelby on the way home from the dealership. He also then graciously signed the valve cover before it was put into hermetically sealed storage. It was started once a month since then and comes complete with extra original fluid supply, documents in maple box with the return address "C. Kimber" and a hand written note of appreciation. Also includes prototype MOPAR replica of the same model with supercharged hemi engine and superbird wing over the rear end so it could be raced at Talladega during the rumored "Guinness Cup" series planned by NASCAR during the oil embargo of the late 1970's

Well, I'll continue to scour Hemmings and always look to the left and right when I ride in the country in the hope that the perfect investment is out there under a tarp someplace. In the mean time the message is clear to me. The value of our cars is in the enjoyment of their use. Be it restoring, polishing, fixing, or best of all driving, their value becomes evident when we are in their company. With spring just over the horizon it's the perfect time to look ahead to better driving days and the opportunity to invest in some fun with our own collectibles.



'47 TC



'58 A

Notes from the Editors....

Susan Bond

Many thanks to Cynthia Faschini, Harry Watson, Doug Kennedy and Geoff Wheatley for their articles this month. It is great to have lots of stuff to print during the car-show-less winter months. Our Valentine's Run was a lovely success, tho some of Alan's clues were diabolic — he says we have Dan Kirby to blame for that, he learned it all from him. Next month are the TRAACA flea market, where we will have a table so you will have a place to park any goodies you buy if you want to shop some more or have lunch, and the Tech Session at Frank's, your chance to clear out the cobwebs and do some tuning before the first show in April.

I have no idea when my GT will get painted. The painter is trying to get a friend's car ready for an AACA national show in March so he hasn't been out to see it yet. I am not doing too well in the wheel department, had 6 of them checked for balance and have only 3 good ones. Sure am glad I had them checked BEFORE I sandblasted and painted them. We are having a discussion about painting the wheels, is it better or easier to mask (either with the plastic mask or with tape) and spray the black, or just do it freehand? When they were made, they were painted black and the silver was put on last. How did they do that?



The Not So "L" BC

Geoff Wheatley

I enjoy my MGs, even the mass-produced MGB that had a production run of almost eighteen years – not many cars can say that! However, if I had a wish and money was no object, what would I add to my collection? Well, there is only one classic vehicle that I really lust after but doubt that I will ever own: the 1931 eight-liter Bentley.

As far as we know, the total production of this unique car was around one hundred and many had various bodies apart from the standard Vanden Plas as fitted to the four and a half liter Bentley and its predecessors. The actual production period of the Bentley Company was short, little more than ten years, from 1921 through to mid-1932. We think of these cars as monster green vehicles, with an equally over-large blower sticking out of the front, winning races all over Europe and even in North America. Despite this impressive record the company never made any real money and, like the pre-war MG Company, managed to struggle along with one foot in the red for most of its short life.

The idea of a super-powered vehicle had been around in Britain from the moment Rolls and Royce decided to produce a luxury motor car. However, no one was keen to throw their hat into the ring as the financial investment and expected return did not balance out. In Europe there were various small companies producing vehicles that could be called competitive in the sense that they did win the major motor race events of the day, but none were strictly designed to burn up the rubber and show a clean pair of heels to any

contender. They were modified versions of custom production cars made for the rich and famous to parade around the streets of Paris, Rome or Berlin. The Brits were years behind the Europeans when it came to motor vehicle production and the use of such contraptions on Britain's unpaved roads. It took years to get the speed limit raised to twenty miles an hour and it only hit thirty-five after the end of the First World War.

Mr. W.O. Bentley was born in 1888 and, at the ripe old age of sixteen, went to work as an apprentice at the engineering works of the Great Northern Railway Company. It is interesting to note that many of the British vehicle manufacturers from the turn of the century started their engineering lives in and with the British Railway industry. The development of the steam locomotive was at its peak in the late nineteenth century and the technology was certainly on the cutting edge of the time. Bentley finished his apprenticeship in 1910 and decided that he would try to join a motor vehicle manufacturer as a development engineer. As already indicated, there were not that many people gainfully employed in that specialty in 1910. Sure we had Austin and Morris fighting each other to get a major foothold in the UK and Ford swamping the American market with his cheap vehicles, but design and/or development were not important ingredients in the success of these corporations. Rolls Royce trained their own engineers who guarded their positions like pots of gold, which in reality they were, and the other quality manufacturers and their employees did much the same thing. To get his foot into the door Bentley obtained a post as a supervisor for the maintenance of a fleet of London Motor Cabs, most imported from France which had a booming motor cab industry and proved to be the salvation of Paris in the First World War when they were mobilized to move troops to the front line to repel a major German attack.

After two years looking after taxi cabs Bentley teamed up with his brother, raised some cash and opened a Motor Sales show room in Hanover Street, London, an up-market area with wealthy neighbors. They imported the popular French D.F.P. vehicles which were powered by a fifteen horsepower engine that served its purpose but was never enhanced to create better performance. (This was the policy of the day, make a basic, sturdy engine and use it until the casting blocks wore out.) W.O. Bentley decided that he could improve the performance and at the same time make the engine more flexible. His modifications were so successful that the redesigned two-liter engine not only pushed the performance to 50% over its original but when fitted into a sports style chassis won various events at the then new Brooklands race track.

By the time the First World War commenced, Bentley was recognized as a leading motor engineer and later as a development engineer for British aero engines. The famous Bentley piston for aero engines was used by several manufacturers both in the UK and overseas. Another famous power unit designed by Bentley was the Rotary aero engine where the engine went round in company with the propeller! About 30,000 of these were produced during and after the war. Obviously this power unit produced a financial return to its designer who invested this, in company with a few other speculators, into the Bentley Motor Company. The

idea was to produce a high-speed sports car that would hold the road at sixty miles an hour and stop when required. (Not always a standing feature with cars produced at this time!)

My use of the term Sports Car may be misleading as the advertisement of the day described the car as a Speed Tourer which covered a multitude of functions. It also helped when a new owner wanted to obtain insurance. The fact that the car could travel in excess of sixty miles an hour on roads that were designed for carts and cattle in most of the country made the insurance industry nervous. Therefore the term Tourer was more reassuring than Sports.

This same analogy applied to the MG Sports car in later years. If you study the advertising of the 1930's you will seldom see the words "sports" or "speed" used. Also, if you study the settings of most advertisements, they are always in an up market location where furs and diamonds abound. Typical is the famous 1933 advertisement for the tiny MG J2 set against a British country house shooting party or the equally inexpensive fabric M Type parked outside a five star hotel complete with five star guests. Marketing then was as important as it is today, perhaps more so.

Back to Mr. Bentley; by the fall of 1919 Bentley had designed a three-liter power unit that would become the symbol of the Bentley name. It was shown at the first post-war Motor Show to much acclaim, but production of the actual car did not get under way until early in 1921. Why? The answer was money, or rather a shortage of the stuff. The car had to prove itself that year or the company would simply fade away as so many others had done before the war. The car and its four-cylinder engine did not let the investors down. That year it won three major British events and, in 1922, entered the world famous Tourist Trophy Race held on the Isle of Man. Three cars were entered and took second, fourth and fifth. Such a performance had never been seen before from a company that was only eighteen months old. The Germans and the French got a further shock the next year when a private entry driven by John Duff won the LeMans, a first if ever there was one!

The three-liter series was in production until 1927 and proved its worth all over the world. Total production was just under 1700 so it is easy to see that no fortunes were made during this period. The price of the car was by any standards expensive, in today's dollars you could expect to pay \$50,000 for the vehicle without the body, so the entire car could run you into a six figure purchase, but so can many other high performance cars today. You had to have a few extra bucks to buy a Bentley in 1927 but, if you did, there was not much on the road that could out-perform your vehicle with reliability and with comfort thrown in for good measure. On hairpin bends you could out-drive any other car and, with the blower at full blast, nothing would pass you. On top of all that, the car would stop when required with four-wheel anti-lock on all Bentleys after 1927, a unique feature at that time.

The famous big six was launched in the summer of 1927 and had a waiting list for orders by Christmas. It has been described as a sports-type limousine and I guess that's not a bad description when you look at the bodies that were fitted. You could have a two-seater or a four made to your own dimensions with whatever item of comfort you desired.

The car would do a guaranteed 85-mph. Some did more as we saw on the racetracks of Europe where this car dominated these events. Most entries were private, as the company did not have the money to support a works team.

In the 1927 LeMans the new four and a half six-cylinder set a standard of design and production quality that has never been equaled. It was early into the night with the cars entering the second half of the twenty-four hour race. At a location called "White House Corner" in France six competitors were involved in a crash, a truly nasty pile-up. By some miracle one of the three Bentleys entered managed to get out of the mess of the crash and returned to the race. Today we would have walked away and called it a day with the twisted axle, defective steering, loss of brakes, only one working headlight and various other items of the car either falling off or simply left behind after the crash. On top of all that, it was raining cats and dogs with a side wind to help things along. Thirty miles ahead was the leader, a French entry that looked like it could take a fifteen minute rest and still cruise home to the winning post. The Bentley was driven first by Sam Davis, then by his co-driver J.D. Banjafield who forced this broken heap of a car to keep going and even managed to catch up with the leader about three miles from the finish. In a desperate burst of speed, with the blower going at full blast and both men holding the steering wheel, the Bentley passed the finishing line fifteen seconds ahead of the French Aries, much to the surprise of the driver! What a recommendation of quality and design, not to mention sheer bloody guts!

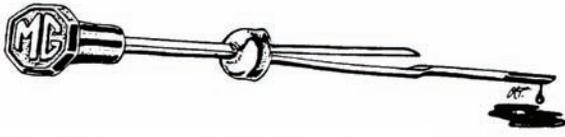
Sad to say, the Bentley Motor Company went out of business in 1932, but the name still lives on, purchased by various companies over the years and now in the hands of a European group. The Bentley eight, my dream car, was capable of speeds in excess of 140 mph and it is said that you can take your hands off the steering wheel at that speed and it won't move an inch. Don't think I would like to try that or do 140 in a car that's seventy five years old, but to simply sit in that bucket seat and watch the road disappear under the front wheels would be my idea of ecstasy.

MG Sightings

MG on Ice — Robin Watson was watching the International Series of the women's double Bobsledding shown on January 22 on the Speed Channel and saw this entry. If you look close you can see the MG logo just in front of the driver.



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