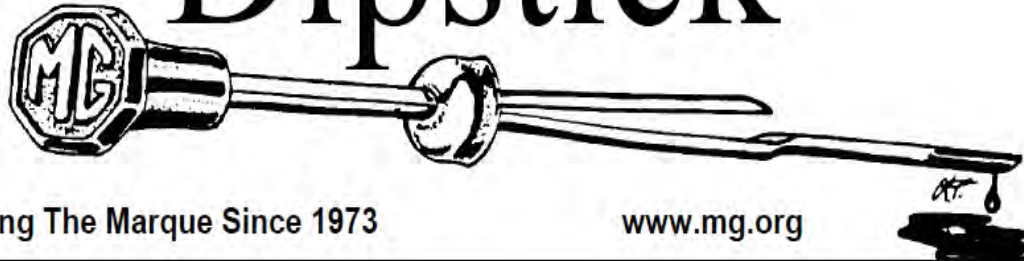




The Dipstick



Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

www.mg.org

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A visit to Abingdon

By Alan & Beckey Watson

They say that hind sight is 2020, so we're taking this opportunity to look back at a bucket list check off trip to Abingdon, England last September.

We landed at Heathrow Airport and proceeded to Enterprise to pick up our Vauxhall rental car. It was 9:00 AM local (4:00 AM our time) as we headed on the M-25 to the M-40. Our final destination of the day was the town of Southam, about two hours from Heathrow, with Abingdon literally the half waypoint. A nice break after only catching a catnap or two on the flight over we thought, so we planned a detour. Abingdon has been on our destinations radar for a long time.

The town known as Abingdon from 1974-2012 is a typical small English town -- narrow streets, brick buildings, parish church, railway station, etc. And, notably, from 1929 to October 1980, it was the home of the MG Car Company. It was also home to Morland Brewery, brewer of Old Speckled Hen, until 1999, when it was purchased and production moved to Suffolk, England. The old brewery has been pulled down and houses built. The town is now back to being called Abingdon-on-Thames.

The MG Car Club was formed in 1930 by the MG Factory to support MG Owners. The club's headquarters are now at "Kimber House," where Cecil Kimber, founder of The M. G. Car Company, resided while he was the managing director. The house is right next door to what used to be the MG Factory Headquarters. That building is still there, but it has been converted to apartments.



We walked up to the front door of Kimber House and found it to be locked. We rang the bell and a charming lady opened the door and invited us in. In our sleep-deprived, time-changed, overly-excited-to-be-there state, we're not sure if they were open to the public that day, or if she happened to be there and let us in. As Alan wandered around with his mouth open at all the paraphernalia, Beckey engaged the lady in conversation. She was telling her all about TMGC, our club events, and how members drive all across the USA in their MGs. Our hostess seemed interested enough, but maybe she couldn't understand our American accents and just nodded to be polite.

Amongst the displays we saw an MG lamp, handmade tools and toolbox, and a small showroom with modified MGs, and some daily drivers being restored. We also saw the original photograph of the MGs coming off the assembly line from the Factory Headquarters, circa 1930's -- a copy of which hangs in our living room.



It was surreal to walk through the car park and see current model MGs parked between a Ford Focus and a Prius. We walked up to the gates of the Headquarters that are now apartments, and could imagine the sights and sounds and smells of our LBC's rolling off the assembling line, squealing tires around the town's test route. It was indeed a look in the rearview mirror.



May Activity Report from Tad

The Activity Report for May is both the easiest and the toughest one I will write. At this point, there is nothing on the schedule due to the coronavirus and social distancing guidelines.

The Spring Tour has been postponed until 2021. Beckey and Alan have pushed everything back a year, so once again, we will be traveling to the Lexington area. Many Tourists are leaving their reservations in place, but if late April 2021 is a better travel time for you, let B&A know and they can add you to the list.

Also, Hank Giffin reports the T-series mini-GOF has been pushed to Apr 30 – May 2, 2021. (Same venue and schedule of events.)

With government mandates for restaurant closures in place until June, the Dessert Drives in late May are cancelled. As we move ahead, we'll see about options to reschedule.

When will baseball be back? No one knows. Maybe we pick a non-event night to attend. With the usual Harbor Park crowd, that would probably allow the recommended 6-foot separation. We'll see once the box office opens.

What dates are in pencil? Everything else. NAMGAR GT-45 is still on the schedule for June 1-5 in Colorado Springs. I would check their website before heading out the door. And NAMGBR MG-2020 is still on the schedule for June 20 – July 1 in Calgary. Again, if you are making this 5000-mile round trip drive, it would be to your advantage to include a re-check of the website as part of your travel planning.

And finally, we have our potential next meeting on Saturday, June 6th. This is scheduled as a drive-out to Ashland, followed by an Alan Watson rallye course, ending with the meeting at Chez Watson in Beavertdam. This date butts right up against the current end of isolation, so we'll have to wait and see how/if/when this will actually happen. That's a great reason to renew your subscription to The Dipstick!

I've signed off this way before, but it means more now than ever. Until we meet again, enjoy the ride!



Dipstick Calendar – May 2020

May 1-3 – Spring Tour – Central VA

Hosted by Beckey and Alan

Postponed until 2021

May 1-3 – GOF Virginia Beach

Postponed until 2021

May 6 (Wed) – Monthly Meeting – VA Beach

Cancelled

May 27 (Wed) – Dessert Drive – Peninsula

Cancelled

May 28 (Thu) – Dessert Drive – Southside

Cancelled

June 1 – June 5 – GT-45 – NAMGAR – Colorado Springs

Currently still scheduled.

www.gt45.co for details

June 6 (Sat) – Monthly Meeting – Beavertdam

Hosted by Beckey and Alan

Look for update in June Dipstick

June 28 – July 1 – MG-2020 – Calgary, Canada

Currently still scheduled.

www.NAMGBR.com for details

July 7 (Tue) – Monthly Meeting – Deadline Brewing, Virginia Beach

Tentative

Summer Tech Session – TBA

Aug 5 (Wed) – Monthly Meeting - Hampton

Hosted by Faith and PJ

Sep 1 (Tue) – Monthly Meeting – Ocean View Fishing Pier

Sep 19 – Wings & Wheels – TRAACA - Pungo

Fall Tour - TBD

Oct 7 (Wed) – Monthly Meeting / Elections

Hosted by Renee and Bill

Fall Tech Session – TBA

Nov 4 (Wed) – Monthly Meeting

**Dec TBA – Holiday Party
Hosted by Ashley and Billy**



Marque Time



Well, like so many other things in life, I would imagine that no one saw this coming. And although our Club activities aren't the most significant aspect of our lives, they are something that all of us enjoy as a group.

Usually by the time of the month that this issue of the Dipstick is published many of us have returned from the Spring/Wine tour. And like everything else that is club related, not to mention so many other things in our lives, that didn't happen this year.

And on the subject of the annual club drive, here I sit, all dressed up and no place to go, so to speak.

As many of you know, I have a car that has been notorious for some bad behavior. In particular, some of these drives have been marked by a dense smoke and noxious fumes from my exhaust. And, among other things, I've also had issues with brake lights that didn't work, tires that went flat, and an engine that had a head gasket leak that needed coolant replenished at the rate of about a quart per hour.

So this year I made every effort to get my car in absolutely great condition. I put on a new top, replaced the head gasket, corrected some electrical issues, and have the car in the best overall condition that it has probably been in since I've owned it. And here it sits at my home wanting to get out and get back into the game.

And that might also describe the situation many of us are in. But I know that we will all get through this, and, on the bright side, if there is one, we will most likely appreciate the simpler things in life even more. In particular, I know that I will relish the times that I'm able to get together with my fellow TMGC members and enjoy the cars and the company of good friends once again. Until then,

Safety Fast,
Robert

Tech Tip from Terry

Shake-N-Bake is a term you probably thought was reserved for the kitchen. No-it's the name of a handy tool used to help remove stuck screws. I suppose you could use it in the kitchen, but more appropriately it could come in handy instead of those hammer operated impact drivers that we're accustomed to using. It takes heavy hammer blows to move the screw bits in small incremental amounts, and on a car without a lot of support behind the stuck screw (a body panel for instance), you could do some damage. Shake-N-Bake is the answer. It's used with an air impact gun. Either compressed air type or battery



operated will work. Those tools deliver hammer-like twisting motion, so all you need is to keep enough pressure of the bit so it doesn't slip and damage the screw head. Shake-N-Bake helps you to hold the bit in place so it won't slip. The neat little handle on it lets you twist gently while letting the air impact gun do its work. Watch the neat video to see it in action.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3FKoUrZOPY&feature=youtu.be>

Eastwood sells this tool, called the "Screw Buster" and it's the cheapest version of this I could find letting my fingers do the walking on the internet. I see it on sale currently at only \$19.95.

There are other versions of this tool, including the original brand Shake-N-Bake, produced by Wivco Design Products for nearly \$40, and the Norther Tool version is higher priced but comes as a "kit" with some extra pieces in two different sizes. Even Wal-Mart supposedly offers the Shake-N-Bake unit at just over \$43. So-like most other tools, you can find them at all prices with a little exploration, but at any price, if you need to remove stubborn screws, this might be the answer for you.

By Terry Bond



The Case of the Disappearing Coolant

Is the coolant mysteriously disappearing in your MGA? Mine is (...or was). The freshly rebuilt '58 MGA has a new radiator, new hoses, crisp clamps, OEM water pump, etc. The temperature gauge stressed me out quickly hovering around "H". I could not see any coolant leaking under the hood or on the ground. Visits to Frank Linse's MG Urgent Care prescribed a new 7 PSI cap and an IV drip of leak sealer. Was I doomed to carry 2 liters of coolant with me forever? Finally, with the help of Frank and Doug Kennedy we spot the culprit! Buried deep within the dark recesses of the massive power plant a nasty looking leaking petcock is discovered. Removing the old petcock is another story. But needless to say, I have not had to check the coolant level since replacement

By Eric Fee



My history with Little British Cars

by Mike Haag

My history with little British cars (LBCs) started almost 60 years ago and it was my Mom who had the first LBC in our family. In the early 60's, my Dad bought Mom her first car, a 1961 English Ford Anglia. At the time, there was an English Ford dealership in East Rochester, NY near where we were living. I remember it was light blue in color but unfortunately I have no pictures of it. She drove it for a couple of years, but with a growing family, my Dad upgraded her to a larger car, a 1964 Ford Cortina. It was white with a blue interior, and I do remember riding in it. In fact, I still have the Motorola AM radio that was in the car at the time, although I can't remember why I have it. Again, after a couple more years, my Dad bought her a 4-door 1966 Ford Falcon, thus ending her association with little British cars.

Forward to the summer of 1972 when hanging out with a friend of mine, we went over to his boss's house who happened to be a car guy. Sitting by the side of his house was an early MGB, black with red interior and a lot of rust on the bottom of the doors, sills, and fenders. This was New York State where they salt the roads and cars began to rust after a couple of years back then. The car wouldn't start and he said the clutch needed replacing. He wanted \$100 for it, it was tempting but with no place to



1964 Cortina



1976 TR-7

work on it or store it and with no experience with MGs, I passed.

In 1980, while living in Blacksburg, VA I saw an ad for a 1976 Triumph TR7 in Roanoke for \$375. It was missing a couple of parts, like an engine and transmission. I looked at it and the body and interior were in excellent condition, and it had factory AC. A young guy had owned it and blew up the engine, I forgot his story as to why it was missing, although I remember he said he couldn't afford to get it fixed. I bought it and the next weekend drove out to my parent's house and borrowed my

Dad's truck to tow it back their house where I could work on it. I located an engine and 5 speed transmission at a

junk yard near Hopewell, VA that specialized in foreign cars. After a few months of working on the occasional weekend when I was able to visit them I got it back on the road. It was fun to drive, when it was running good, but I seem to remember it had a lot of niggling issues, many electrical. My introduction to Lucas electrics. I traded it in after a couple years for a new Toyota truck, my first new vehicle. I remember the dealer gave me \$2800 as a trade in and I couldn't have signed the papers any faster! Thus ended my association with LBCs for a decade.

In the summer of 1993, while living in Portsmouth and working for the Navy, I gave a coworker a ride after work to pick up his Volvo at a repair shop. While there I noticed a red rubber bumper MGB (didn't know they were referred to that back then) and I thought it was a cool looking car. I started looking in the paper and the Trading Post (remember that?) for late MGBs, thinking that the latest versions must be the best since they would have included all the various upgrades and improvements over the years. Of course, later I learned that wasn't necessarily the case with MGs. I located a 1979 MGB in Virginia Beach in September, it was listed as running but needed a water pump, along with new paint and interior but the price of \$800 sounded good so I went to look at it. It was being sold by a retired Navy chief for his wife, who bought it brand new from Checkered Flag Motors. He started it up and there was no smoke or knocking noises, but she did scream like a banshee and ran hot with that bad water pump. I took the plunge and bought my first MGB. The next month, in October 1993, I attended my first meeting of the Tidewater MG Classics car club and felt very welcomed and was so impressed that I joined that night!

Not having a garage to work on it, I rented a storage unit near the house, with no power and began what turned out to be a 1 1/2 year effort to get it back on the road. In fact, the first real drive was to a club meeting at Andy & Cynthia's house in Norfolk. I was so glad it got me there and back home again! For the most part, the car has been pretty reliable with many miles of driving fun over the past 25 years.

Sometime around the summer of either 1994 or 1995 I spotted an old MGB sitting in a field next to a tire store on Military Highway just west of the Gilmerton Bridge. I stopped and spoke with the owner who said it was an abandoned project. It was a 1966 needing a lot of work and the engine and transmission had been pulled but went with it.



1966 MGB

He wanted \$150 for it all and in a moment of weakness I agreed. Got it towed home, along with the engine, transmission, and a bunch of parts in my truck. I got Scott Coogan, a former club member who had a British repair shop at the time and who did the sheet metal work on my 1979 B to start work on some of the necessary repairs. The engine had sat outside for years and was locked up, and no amount of penetrating oil and brute force over the next couple of years could free it up. I stripped off the ancillaries and discarded the block. After a while, Scott moved to another location and lost some storage space. I retrieved the car, had it sandblasted and primed, then moved it to my garage for storage. Around 2012 and needing space and having lost interest, I gave what was left of the car to Mark Childers. Of course, now I wish I had kept it as the early model B's (it was titled as a 1966 but was actually a 1965) have gone up considerably in value. But, no space or time usually beats wishful thinking.

In 1998 a brother-in-law told me about an MGA he saw for sale in Salem, VA. We went to look at it but when we got there, I found out he had 2 MGAs for sale and he would only sell the both as a package deal. Both cars were complete but needed total restoration. He bought them to restore but then needed to sell both after buying a Cobra kit car to build. The price was right and the one I wanted had the Twin Cam wheels and 4-wheel Dunlop disc brakes. I was hoping it was one of the rare Deluxe models but after a more thorough inspection after I got it home, it turned out not to be. Not sure how it got those wheels and brakes and with no history, it's a mystery. I got it running but after all these years, it is still my retirement project.



The MGA Project

I had no room for the second MGA so Barry Tyson agreed to store it in his garage. Since I wasn't interested in another project, after a couple of years I ended up just giving it to him and signed over the title. It has wire wheels with an early MGB engine and needs much work and as far as I know he still has it sitting untouched in his garage.

Around the 2004 timeframe I bought a 1973 MGB from the husband of a coworker, who happened to be a club member back in the 80's. I got it running, but after deciding I didn't need another unfinished project, sold it to a club member who was looking for a 73 B.

My last purchase of a British vehicle was in late 2017 for a 2005 Land Rover Freelander, their compact SUV at the time. Although not an LBC, it has the heart of an MG since it has the MG Rover KV6 engine.

Well, that's my story. I know there are much more interesting stories to be told out there than mine and I look forward to reading them.

Some scans from the TMGC Archives!

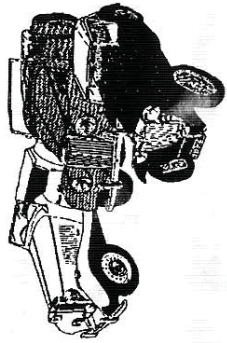
FIRST MEETING OF M.G. "T" CLASSICS
SEARS PARKING LOT/ PEMBROKE MALL
VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
MAY 6, 1973



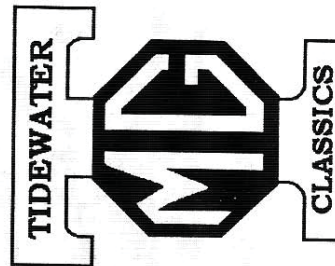
RIGHT TO LEFT:

- MIKE ASH
- DAVE BARROWS
- DICK DARAZZO
- CHUCK SOUDER
- RUSTY LEMODE
- JACK MANHERZ
- HANK GIFFIN
- BOB KENNY

The Tidewater MG Classics



Twentieth Anniversary Dinner
May 22, 1993



1973 - 1993



Editor's note: This is likely Tad's final month as our esteemed Activities Chairman. Thank you Tad and Karen for leading us on so many interesting adventures over the past 10+ years. Whether a one day drive out or an extended trip like Crooked Road or Tour de Bay, you provided us with fellowship, history, and some of the best twisty roads in Virginia and beyond. You will be sorely missed.....the club wishes you all the best in NC!



***The May meeting is cancelled,
due to COVID-19 restrictions.
Stay tuned for further
developments!***



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