

# The Dipstick



“The Newsletter of the Tidewater MG Classics Car Club”

[www.mg.org](http://www.mg.org)

Volume XXXII, Issue 5

Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

May 2005

## MARQUE TIME

Thanks to Jim and Betty Villers for subjecting their driveway to so many MGs at the April meeting. (I checked, my TD did not drip even a drop of oil in their beautiful yard) The hosts and food were wonderful. Members, such as the Villers, are what make the Club.

A serious moment before discussing my travels with Vince. We will be holding elections in five months (October) for club officers. Please think about what you can do to help keep the club vibrant. Several officers have done such a good job that we have elected them to their office more than twice (which violates our by-laws). I know that I'll be leaving the presidency and affording someone else the honor of leading this exceptional organization (and composing Marque Time each month if they desire).

I am such a nice guy that I accompanied Vince Groover to pick up a TD in northern New Jersey. He managed to buy it, instead of me, just because his New England MG 'T' Register magazine, "Sacred Octagon", got delivered in the mail a few hours earlier than mine. But I hold no grudges. Though, I am wiser now. When you go with Vince, you need two tow vehicles and two trailers--one to tow the vehicle you are picking up and the other to tow the 1<sup>st</sup> tow vehicle. Two days hanging around repair shops off Exit 3 of the New Jersey Turnpike with Vince is not my idea of fun. We left Virginia Beach at 5 am, made great time, had the TD and sundry parts loaded by 2 pm and were barreling down the Pike when his van started losing power. We limped into a service area, got towed to a repair shop, and spent the first night. After fitzing with the van for half a day, the repair shop towed the van to a dealership which couldn't look at it until the next day. So... another night. The dealership replaced the fuel pump, which involves dropping the gas tank. (MGs are so much more practical--you just hit the fuel pump with a hammer and it works again.) We made it home at about 9:30 pm. Vince bought a wonderful T; body in great shape, no rust and no rot.

Well, I hope to get my pay back. Vince is accompanying me to Georgia to pick up a TD. Yes, I know I already have three TDs, but this is a Mark II. Unfortunately it is not in as good condition as the TD that Vince purchased. In fact, it may not even have a body. So if you know where I can snatch a TD body, let me know.

Andy Wallach

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## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Check [www.mg.org](http://www.mg.org) for the latest info!

- April 30 Hampton Block Party  
[Carlyle@marker20.com](mailto:Carlyle@marker20.com) (see page 3)
- May 1 SCCA Solo II, [www.odr-scca.org](http://www.odr-scca.org)
- May 3 Tuesday meeting at John Jones**  
(see map on back page)
- May 14-15 Wine Tour Weekend,**  
**Charlottesville**
- May 15 Dipstick Deadline**
- May 15 RTR Show, Virginia Aviation  
Museum, Richmond  
(formerly at Boulders)  
[www.richmondtriumphregister.com/](http://www.richmondtriumphregister.com/)
- May 20-22 Jefferson Cup, Summit Point  
Race way
- May 20-22 Carlisle Import and Kit Car Show  
[www.carsatcarlisle.com](http://www.carsatcarlisle.com)
- May 28-June 5 Drive Your British Car Week  
[www.britishcarweek.org](http://www.britishcarweek.org)
- June 1-5 NEMGTR GoF Mk 78, Eisenhower  
Conf Center & Resort, Gettysburg, PA
- June 1 Wednesday meeting at Gary and  
Beth Campbell's**
- June 4 Brits on the Bay  
[www.tidewatertriumphs.org](http://www.tidewatertriumphs.org)
- June 5 British Car Day South, Salisbury, NC  
[www.carolinahealeys.com](http://www.carolinahealeys.com)

(Continued on page 3)

# APRIL MINUTES

Doug Kennedy

The meeting opened at 8:05 Lucas Standard Time as El Presidente Andy gaveled the boisterous crowd to order. Jim and Betty were thanked for their hospitality on an absolutely fabulous evening weather-wise. Typically it rains with monsoon proportions.

John Collins was welcomed as a visitor. He has a blue 71 B. Also, Dennis Gaskin was in attendance as a visitor. He has a 79B.

The minutes were approved as written. The Secretary pointed out that this evening is April 6, also known as Tartan Day, the national celebration of Scottish people's contribution to the United States.

**VP:** Playing Hooky.

**Treasurer:** In \$85. **Out:** \$264.04, **Left:** \$1393.31. Jim pointed out that upcoming regalia purchases will knock us back a bit.

**Newsletter:** Peggy Sue/Sue Peggy reported that we needed some writers for upcoming events so some volunteers stepped forward. Lots of National meets upcoming as well so always think about not only attending but also penning your thoughts afterward. Send your work to Peggy first for her proofreading skills. Mark also thanked Sue for her skill with CAD software and turning Mark's scribbles into legible work.

**Membership:** Robin informed us that our membership is holding steady. He's working on tech session attendees who weren't members but will now get the heavy hand.

**Activities:** Beckey in absentia (AKA Robin in a high voice) explained that the winery tour was full. The Williamsburg show is on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Hampton block party on the April 30 from 6-10PM is looking for cars to be there after 4:30. Meet at Marker 20 off of Queens Way. Mass e-mail should be on its way to everyone. Jim raised the issue of the club forking over the fee for the wine tasting since it was a club event. A hearty discussion ensued. Actually, it was bordering on the controversial for this club since we hardly ever disagree on anything! Points were made both pro and con for the issue. The advance payment was \$125 and was paid by Beckey to reserve our spot. After beating it around a bit it was decided that the group of participants will reimburse Beckey. All were certainly most thankful that Beckey has assisted the club.

**Technical:** Mark stepped to the plate with a connector for MGB heater hoses. It's a 1/2" to 5/8" hose adaptor. By connecting them together you can bypass the heater core and keep the cockpit much cooler. Dynamat (Not Dynamite, Andy) also will keep the exhaust heat away. Jim added that exhaust wrap will help cool as well.

**Regalia:** Becky Hassler started her reign as regalia honcho. She is forwarding items for the Michigan gathering. Please get her your regalia ideas.

**Old Business:** In Vince's absence Roy assumed the mantle of this office for the week.

**New Business:** None.

**Marque Time:** Andy waxed on about his trip to New Jersey with Vince which turned into a two day fiasco and a new \$800 fuel pump for Vince's van. Although Andy won't admit it, Vince's find was quite the catch. The Secretary then complained with great exaggeration about Vince degreasing his car in front of the Secretary's house.

Leslie spent an hour trying to talk her car into running. The vehicle finally listened.

Robin is installing some bearings and rings. He's tired of hearing those following him complain about smog and oil blowback.

The raffle was held for either a coffee mug or MG note pad. After keeping his no-win streak alive the Secretary nudged El Presidente into closing the meeting. We agreed and ran to the chow with the speed of children running away from a steaming plate of Haggis.

## 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

## Upcoming Activities (continued)

June 4-5 SCCA Solo II, [www.odr-scca.org](http://www.odr-scca.org)

June 10-12 Moss Motors Gold Cup Car Show at Virginia International Raceway, [www.virclub.com](http://www.virclub.com)

### June 15 Dipstick Deadline

June 24-26 Virginia Festival of Speed at Virginia International Raceway, [www.virclub.com](http://www.virclub.com)

June 18 SCCA TSD Tour, [www.odr-scca.org](http://www.odr-scca.org)

June 26 Original British Car Day, Buckeystown, MD

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### New Event (from an e-mail)

Hampton EventMakers Block Party is having an English Car Meet

Saturday April 30, 2005 at the Downtown Hampton Block Party

Pre-Meet Reception at 3:00 p.m. on the deck at Marker 20  
21 E. Queens Way, Downtown Hampton  
4pm to 8pm

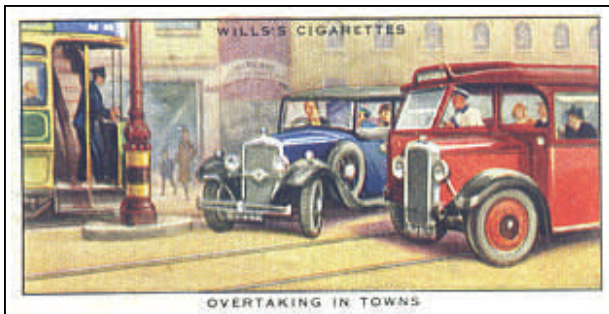
Call early to save a space

Sponsored by Hampton EventMakers, Tidewater MG and Marker 20

Prizes for the best cars

Free to enter

Call Carlyle Bland at 757-291-1408 to register or email at [Carlyle@marker20.com](mailto:Carlyle@marker20.com)



## Membership and New Members

Robin Watson

Total membership: 106

Since our April Dipstick we have one new member who joined us at the March meeting at Jim & Betty Villers' home. For those of you that would like to keep their Directory up-to-date and put the details in your copy:

John Collins

3104 Merrimac Ct.

Chesapeake, VA 23321.

Phone: 757-966-5164

Email: [collinsj@cox.net](mailto:collinsj@cox.net)

John has a 1971 MGB

## Tech Stuff: Creature Comforts

Mark Childers

Once again, the deadline looms near with nary an epiphany in sight. The April meeting at the Villers' home brought up about as good a subject as any: keeping your cool in the summer. MGBs, especially GTs, are quintessential Easy-Bake Ovens in the automotive world. Sure, at speed, a top-down roadster gets all the fresh air one can handle, and with the rear vent windows open, the GT actually shows signs of flow-thru ventilation. But after five minutes of stop and go traffic, the mercury starts rising, especially underfoot. The design team that drew up the 1.8 litre engine, way back when, definitely had the home market in mind, placing the exhaust ports on the left side. Left-hand drive cars put the driver in a literal hot seat, directly over the exhaust, with the manifold only inches away from the feet, separated only by a large heat-seeking tunnel. Compound the exhaust with coolant conducting heat into the heater matrix, and on a blazing August afternoon, one could roast a turkey in the left side footwell, or fry eggs on the carpet, given that one was of a mind to do so... the cure is to cool your jets....

There are several things that even a rank amateur can easily accomplish in a couple of weekday evenings and be ready for a drive on Saturday morning:

1. Install sound abatement matting to reduce noise and shield the feet from the heat. A relatively inexpensive but very efficient product comparable to "Dynamat"<sup>TM</sup> is the aptly named "B-Quiet" ([www.b-quiet.com/compare.html](http://www.b-quiet.com/compare.html)) foil covered, adhesive backed insulators that can be purchased at Lowe's, Summit Racing, and other speed and off-road shops. Prices vary widely and wildly--from \$1.50 to \$7.50 per square foot. Form a syndicate and buy in bulk from a jobber or distributor rather than a retailer, and save big. A proper job entails removing the footwell carpet, installing the Dynamat making sure that all surfaces are covered at least from the shifter forward for best protection. These mats provide superior sound abatement to the OE and after-market felt underlayment, but loses some of the felt's cushioning ability. One solution is to buy a half-thickness felt for those areas where comfort is an issue. The mats can also be installed on the backside of the doorskins with an amazing reduction in road and engine noise (especially if you have door-mounted speakers). I've also used them on the top of the underdash kick panels, on the battery box shelf, and on the quarter panels, and trunk floor as soundproofing. The reduction in road noise is amazing. But for heat reduction, the footwell is the major player. Use the best stuff here. And, while some folks are happy listening to the howl, purr or growl of a 500 watt-equivalent exhaust

system, there is one nice upside to all this effort for electronic audiophiles: the stereo doesn't have to overcome a lot of additional background noise. And for those with a passenger, the shout factor drops a few decibels as well making for a kinder, gentler trip for both. If you are restoring a car ground up, consider covering the entire firewall before installing the dash.

2. Header wrap is a fairly new product, resembling the stuff that ortho docs use for making casts. It can be purchased from Summit Racing, Jegs and others online. Wrap the exhaust pipes back to the first muffler connection while the stuff is wet; it forms easily, and will harden into an unbelievably efficient insulator. Once installed and cured, you can actually touch the exhaust pipe without getting burned. The upside is that higher gas temperatures are more efficient in getting exhaust to the muffler. The downside is that higher temps erode the inside of non-stainless steel headers and pipes, and may shorten their service life, but by how much is anyone's guess at this early stage.

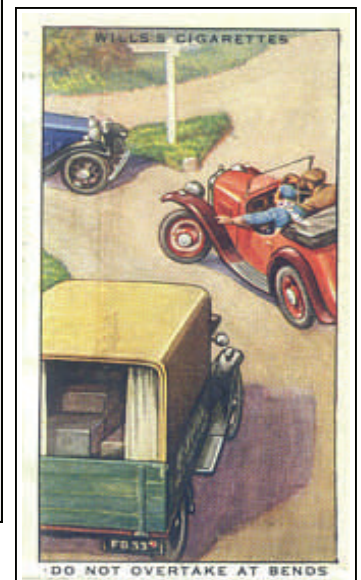
3. Jet-Coat the exhaust manifold or headers. I saw a demonstration done with a pair of late 60s big-block Chevy Novas, a combination making for a cramped and hellishly hot engine compartment. Both engines had stock cast iron manifolds. One engine had the jet coating, and the other didn't. At a sustained 3000 revs, the treated exhausts were not much more than uncomfortably warm from a half an inch away while the untreated exhausts were virtually unapproachable to the unprotected hand, while closed-hood temps plummeted about 50 degrees f in the treated vehicle. A second upside to Jet Coating is that it provides a smoother and more efficient gas-path between the exhaust port and the exhaust pipe. While it won't give any seat of the pants *oomph*, a non-parasitic improvement can certainly translate to better efficiency and fuel consumption on a long trip.

4. Bypass the heater matrix during the summer. If your engine is not cooling as efficiently as you would like, and you cherish the heater for its ability to cool down an overly warm motor, consider routing a couple lengths of heater hose into the front of the radiator compartment and use a piece of 1/2" or 5/8" copper pipe with aluminum-fins used for hot water baseboard heaters. Insulate the heater hose with black foam water pipe insulating sleeves to decrease loss of heat inside the engine compartment. In the winter with the heater connected, the insulation will provide more heat.

5. If you haven't discovered the secret handshake to get that under-dash fresh air lever to work, it's supposed to be a two-positioned affair that opens and closes the fresh air vent flap. It doesn't do anything to affect the airflow to the heater or de-mister, although in the dead of winter if the flap is leaking around its seal you might as well have the top down because it will greatly dilute the heat while providing a steady blast of frigid air through the center dash vents. With the car

underway, move the lever until you get best air, and note the handle position as it is different from car to car depending on linkage wear and seal quality. The fix for a leaker will be addressed in the near future, as will the latest in heater valve upgrades for next winter....

Drop the top, crank up the tunes if you are so inclined, splash on some sunblock and hit the twisty back roads of Pungo or Hickory, or dodge potholes in Portsmouth. Just do it before another lovely spring day disappears into the past. And, as the Roman chariot drivers said to one another before hopping onto their four-horsepower open roadsters for a hot-lap across the English Midlands, "*Salus Velo!*"



## March Tech Session at home of Frank Linse

Robin Watson

Well, Frank, you did it again! What a great turn out for the March Tech Session on the 20th! All our members' MGs are either running good or in the garage being worked on. Just last month we were talk-



ing about the up coming Winery Run and what a good idea it would be for those going on the run to bring their cars in for the final check-up before the 450-mile weekend tour. Today there was a lot of talking about the cars but the only one being worked on was Susan Bond's B-GT. She was working on the windscreen washer pump and also looking for a vibration that



Andy Wallach & Susan Bond

may be coming from a worn universal joint. Jerry Johnson was looking at the reason for the squeal coming from the front brakes.



Jerry Johnson and helper

When I arrived Frank and Tom Sawyer were getting all set up for the arrivals. Tom was here from Canada with his son Christopher. It did not take Tom long to start working on a manifold that needed some broken studs drilled out (a little bit smaller job than he took on at last year's



Tom Sawyer, Andy Wallach, Tech Session when he Chuck Hassler, Mike Jones stripped down an MGB to take back with him). He made a good job on hitting a center with the drill, and then a few of us started with different ideas on how to get the last bit of thread out. Unfortunately, broken studs in a manifold do not usually break because of over tightening, they break because of time and heat working on them along with sometimes the wrong type of nuts, which means they are still not going to come out any easier with an extractor. But we tried and before I would let Andy Wal-

lach try a regular extractor I wanted to try one of my favorite extractors (the Tang of a File). This did not work any better than the regular extractor so Tom finished up drilling out more. We were then able to get at some of the loose thread with a small chisel and needle-nosed pliers. While trying to tap the holes I backed off thinking we were going to finish up with a broken tap. However, our great MG helper mechanic, Vince Groover, who was there with his grandson Jared and his 79 B, came along with a larger wrench (more courage than me) and finished the job.



Frank Hurley with his new addition to his collection--a 1961 Daimler (not a Dimeler), Mike Jones in his TR 7 Spider, Mark Davidoski in his 65 B, and Carl

Fisher came along with some fuel pumps that he wanted Frank to look at before he brings in Kate's '52 TD for Frank and Vince to work on. Chuck and Becky Hassler had their 80 B LE, that they loaded up with memorabilia that they had arranged to pick up



from Mark Davidoski's B Frank. Gary Campbell came **without** his B. While bringing it out of the garage the accelerator cable broke. Frank fixed him up with another one. Also, Bob McClaren in his 71 B,



J.D. Hawthorne's A Mark Childers, Roy Wiley, James

Simpson and daughter, Emily, in their Midget, Mike Haag and his 79 B, Jerry Johnson in his 76 B, Craig Cummings in his 69 B-GT, JD Hawthorne with his 57 A and Roosevelt Moseley who said he



was now retired and has a B to James Simpson's Midget go with his 53 TD and was coming back into the club.

Frank's 74 B was out front on the street and also my 74 B. That made a total of 11 MGs and 2 other British cars, 20 members and 3 other MG owners that as membership chairman I must work a little harder at.



## Aragona-Pembroke Little League Parade April 2, 2005

One member, Sam Kern, with his 1953 MG TD joined in this year's Aragona-Pembroke Little League Parade

celebrating the start of this year's season. The parade started at Bay-side High School, wound



its way through Aragona Village and finished at the Little League Ball Park and Club House in Aragona. None other than Riptide, the Tidewater Tides official mascot, rode with Sam in the TD. He was a real hit riding in the small car and the few hundred active kids



Riptide and Sam

in the parade made it a very spirited event. That is, until it started raining buckets about 10 minutes from the club house where Rip Tide leaped out and Sam hastily put up the top and retreated to the garage to bail out the TD. Fortunately, cover was only about a mile away.

## A Diamond in our Midst

Peggy Craig

A very interesting article recently appeared in "The Beacon" about our own Leslie Paul. It appears she and husband, Bill Seib, have many more interests than just MGs, Key West décor and Jimmy Buffett. Little did we know all the wonderful things Leslie does for her community. She's an ODU swim instructor and a part-time librarian at the Virginia Beach Central Library but what she and Bill do in their "spare" time is mind-boggling.

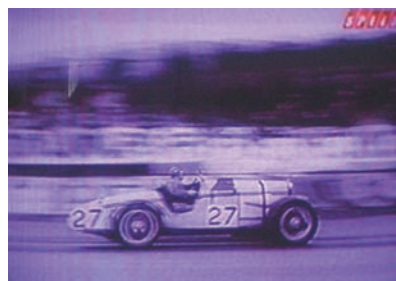
Leslie's passion is reading and she's devised her own projects to support this passion. Last year she gave books to Corporate Landing Elementary School students and this year provided two new paperback books to each student at College Park Elementary (500+ students). Last year Leslie sold some property and set aside \$10,000 to support passing on her love of books to others.

Both Leslie and Bill donate time and money to Hope Haven, St. Mary's Home for Disabled Children, the Dwelling Place, the American Red Cross, Food Bank, VB Library system, "Shop with a Cop" program, their church and international relief agencies. Leslie is chairperson for the Red Cross annual "Swim-a-thon" and personally raised more than \$1,000 in pledges. She also finds time to teach swimming at the Carolanne Farm Swim Club. Leslie doesn't just limit her good works near home. While others take summer vacations she goes on mission trips to Bolivia.

These good works seem to be just a sampling of what Leslie and Bill do for others. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all had a just a tiny bit of what drives them in us all? Our world would be such a much better place.

## MG Sightings

Robin Watson sent these in, seen on Speed channel, Legends of Motor Sport



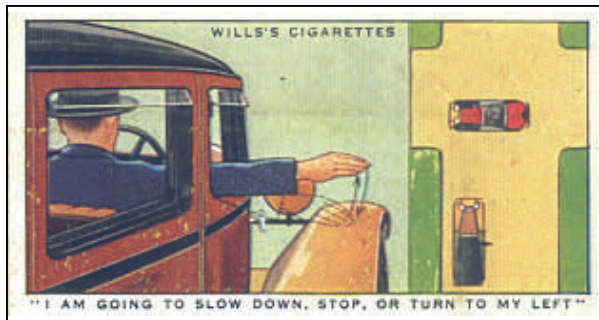


Mike Haag sent this in:

This sign is in front of an old BL dealership in Middletown RI, next to Newport. It's now a used car lot and repair shop. The sign is still in good shape after 30 some years of



New England weather. Maybe it survives as a testament to the toughness of these Little British Cars.



## MG Rover

Though it didn't make our local paper until April 15, MG Rover went into the British equivalent of bankruptcy on the 10th. The Shanghai company they were planning to merge with backed out and the British government will no longer give them money. It seems there is very little of substance left of the company: "The land has been sold, the car parts business has been sold, the intellectual property rights have gone, the car finance business has gone to the directors of the Phoenix consortium, £500m of cash that was in the company

five years ago has been burnt through. Even the Rover name is not owned by the company, it is leased from BMW." ("More Gloom than Hope at MG Rover" By Jeff Randall , BBC business editor, BBC News, April 12, 2005)

In July of last year, a subsidiary of Caterpillar acquired the "ownership of marketing, sales and distribution of MG Rover parts and accessories worldwide". (Automotive.com) MG Rover has the option to buy the business back in 5 years. Figure the odds.

Mike Haag added this:

If you go to our website and click on the MG Rover link ([www.mg-rover.com](http://www.mg-rover.com)), you can get the latest official information, what little there is. Looks like it's been put into "administration", likely equivalent to our receivership. They have brought on Price Waterhouse for consultants. I still think that Ford should buy them, like they did Jaguar, Aston Martin, Land Rover, Volvo (car division). They have turned around Jaguar with increasing productivity, engineering (yeah, some of the hardware is Ford based). They saved Aston Martin from extinction! Buying MG Rover would give them a popular, small sports car, something they don't have, along with the European sports sedan of MG, something they don't have either. I'm sure they could meet all Federal regulations quicker and easier too. Maybe we should start a letter writing campaign

Geoff Wheatley added this:

Over the past two weeks an Employee Trust has been set up to provide compensation to the Longbridge employees. Interestingly the Bishop of Birmingham has become one of the Trustees of this fund. As of today's date, Quote. "There is not enough money in the Trust to Provide Comfort for the Administrators to continue payment to employees." End of Quote. In short the company will be unable to meet its obligations to pay full redundancy pay to all the Rover/MG employees. However, Quote" It is hoped that the Company can emerge from insolvency and the Trustees remain hopeful that car making at Longbridge is not at an end." End of Quote. I suspect that this final statement is simply a touch of sugar coating to an otherwise devastating set back for Rover/MG. Even with the financial support of the British Government it now seems impossible for the company to survive or even dig itself out of bankruptcy and pay off its creditors. The workforce have the first call on any available money and from today's statement it is obvious that they can't even meet that requirement. If the existing assets are so weak that employees can't be paid after one week of closed production there would seem little hope of a fairy godmother turning up at the last moment with a pot of gold! It was

only a few weeks ago that the Board of Rover/MG were forecasting a break even return on investment by the close of 2005 with plans for overseas production and exports world wide in a matter of a few years. There is a suggestion that the British Government should purchase the trade name M. G. to save it going overseas. Time will tell if this happens.

Stop Press News, April 18th 2005...

The British Government has committed 275 million to help the work force. This will provide enough financial support to give the workers about six weeks pay in addition to unemployment benefits. One can only ask why this financial support was not provided to help the company in February when their financial backs were against the wall and with a little luck the company could have been saved. The Chinese investors were waiting for some show of support from the British government before committing their money to help Rover/MG. As we know, nothing was promised until the company went into bankruptcy. This loss of Britains last Motor Company could be a major issue in the May Elections.

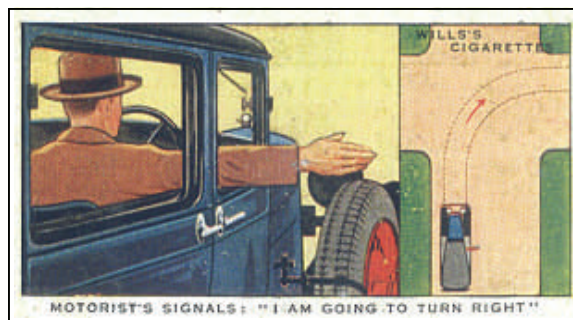
## Notes from the Editors . . .

Susan Bond

No one commented on the cigarette cards so you are getting some more this month. I like the one with the waving hand on page 7 – the label says it could mean just about anything! If my memory is correct, when we were living in Scotland in the 70's a waving hand just meant slowing down, and I had to do hand signals to pass the driving test. When we went back in '79, I renewed my license and it doesn't expire until 2025! Only 10 more years to get over there and make use of it.

Those of us who went to MG 2001 in Minnesota saw 2 new MGs, shipped over specially for the show, and we had an MGF in the club for a year when the Straws were here with NATO. I guess we won't see any more "new" MGs on these shores, unless someone ships one in after it turns 25 years old. When the Big 3 are having problems, I guess it is too much to expect a small company like MG Rover to succeed. Oh well, we'll just have to keep driving the MGs we have.

Don't forget "Drive Your British Car Week." Now that the rules have been relaxed, and we can drive our antique plated cars just about anywhere, there is no excuse for leaving them in the garage this week. You all do have a copy of the state law in your glove boxes in case you are stopped, don't you? Do I need to run it in the Dipstick again? Let me know.



## The MG Midget

Geoff Wheatley

The older I get the more time I spend reading. Strange as I never had either the time or desire in my youth except for the then current version of "Playboy"! At middle age the Reader's Digest and the sports page were my main diet with any issue of a motor magazine thrown in for good measure.

Now, in the twilight of my days I seem to be drawn to publications of the past, especially the 1930s. Through the good services of "Brit Books", I recently obtained a unique publication on the history of Brooklands, which, in turn, attracted me to further study and, of course, more books on this fascinating location. A few weeks ago whilst wandering around a local flea market I stumbled across several issues of the British publication, "The Motor". I recall that this was one of the most successful publications in the UK, both after and before World War Two. They were famous for their detailed road tests on new and almost new vehicles; you usually purchased their road report before you ever ventured into the jungle of new or second-hand car sales. One of the publications purchased was dated December 1937 and to my delight had a full road test on the then new "M.G. Midget, Series 'T'". This was, of course, the car we now know as the MGTA which first saw the light of day in the summer of 1936. When the car was launched the MG fraternity gave it thumbs down reaction. The previous range of MG beauties, including such delights as the 'J' series, the 'P' series and, of course, the 'PB' types were truly sporting vehicles with overhead cam engines and custom made bodies. To many the TA was a collection of Morris Motors parts, including a basic push rod engine derived from the Morris Ten family sedan. The whole car was perceived as something slung together without any desire to attract the truly sporting fraternity who were regular visitors to Brooklands, both on and off the track. The MG Company had been losing money on most of its production prior to the introduction of the TA. Not because the market was diminishing but simply because of the high labor costs in producing the famous



marque, which had eaten away at the profit derived from increased sales. Add to this the costs of fielding a factory race team with all the required support services. In the summer of 1935 Lord Nuffield in company with his new Managing Director, Leonard Lord, introduced a rationalization policy that withdrew MG from all sponsored racing activity as part of an overall cost cutting directive that was implemented throughout the Nuffield Empire (Morris, Wolsley, Riley and MG). He also made it quite clear that any future cars produced by MG must utilize, wherever possible, Nuffield Motors parts, including the power train. This policy resulted in the birth of the MGTA in the spring of 1936 which was on the sales floor of the Nuffield showrooms by mid-summer. As indicated, the early sales were slow despite the attractive purchase price of two hundred and twenty-two pounds, most of the MG competitors were at least twenty pounds higher but, of course, they were fully designed sports vehicles while the TA was, to most enthusiasts, a bits and pieces car. Even the cheap and cheerful Austin Seven Sports version was outselling the TA in the following twelve months and gave the new car a run for its money on the race track, beating three MGTA entries at Brooklands at the 1936 August Bank Holiday race day. Lord has also reduced Kimber from managing Director of MG to General Manager and began directing production operations from the Morris works at Oxford, including all future design and development activity. However, within twelve months Lord had gone after a serious disagreement with Billy Morris over his salary, and Kimber was back in his old position as MD of the Abingdon plant, although the MG design team was never reinstated and the policy of utilizing Nuffield parts continued through to the post war period.

Kimber needed something to boost the sales of the TA and was always aware of the importance of good media support. He was a past master at utilizing the press to promote the MG marque and I suspect that he had a quiet word with the editor of "The Motor" towards the end of 1936. The end result was the 1937 road test that I had stumbled on at the flea market. The review is detailed in performance data, including a 33-mpg achievement even when the car had been pushed to its limits on a 100-mile test run. At a Brooklands test run the car was reported to reached 77 miles per hour with the screen in place; with the screen down, it hit the magic 80-mph. "A cruising speed of between 68 to 70 mph can be comfortably maintained", reported the writer whose name did not appear on the data! The synchromesh gearbox gets full praise although the double de-clutch method was preferred by the driver and, of course, reported as a true way to drive any Midget. (The 1936 version of the TA did not have a synchro gear box that was fitted early in 1937 to try and im-

prove sales) A brake performance also came in for praise with a 90% efficiency level recorded. But, quote, "The car did not pull up all square under extreme braking conditions". (My question, "What lightweight sports car ever does?") It is common knowledge that Kimber did not trust hydraulic brakes although they had been around since 1921 and the Morris family of vehicles had utilized this system since the late 1920s. I suspect that this introduction was also part of the new Nuffield rationalization policy.

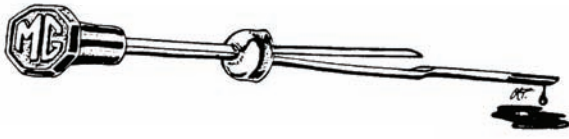
Suspension was similar to the PB with half-elliptic leaf springs at the front and rear. The PB used friction damping at the front and hydraulic lever arms at the rear. The TA used Luvax dampers all round which was certainly a major improvement, again similar to the system fitted to the Morris and Wolsely vehicles. Two cars were produced with the attractive Air-line coupe body as used on the P and N type MGs. A Tickford version was available in 1938 at the bargain price of two hundred and sixty-nine pounds. This was assembled at the Tickford Coachwork factory located in Newport Pagnell, Bedfordshire, about forty miles from Abingdon. The basic car was exactly the same as the Abingdon product but the luxury finish and superb coachwork made this vehicle a very desirable buy. Today even more desirable as indicated when one turns up at a GOF!

The total production for the TA was 3003 vehicles, which is impressive considering that the car was in production for only three years. It was the highest production figure for any Pre-War MG despite the fact that it was not suitable for any series race track competition but was useful for the ever popular mud-plugging, a term used by the trials brigade. The main problem was the power train as the engine was prone to burn out main bearings when pushed. However, the car did boast one marked improvement that had been sadly missing from the MG sports range since the M Type hit the roads of England nine years earlier. The side screens did keep out the rain and were easily stored and fitted. The convenient storage box located at the rear was to continue through to the MGA with success. I have driven several restored versions of the TA and found them to be slow off the mark, and not very comfortable, even the TC can be considered user friendly compared with the TA, while the TD is sheer luxury in comparison! I have yet to drive a Tickford but live in hope.

The final comments of the 1937 road report are, "In short, a practical small car combining economy, speed and safety". I guess you could not ask for a better evaluation than that, but I notice that the word comfort is not utilized.

Geoff Wheatley, June 2004

# The Dipstick



## The Tidewater MG Classics

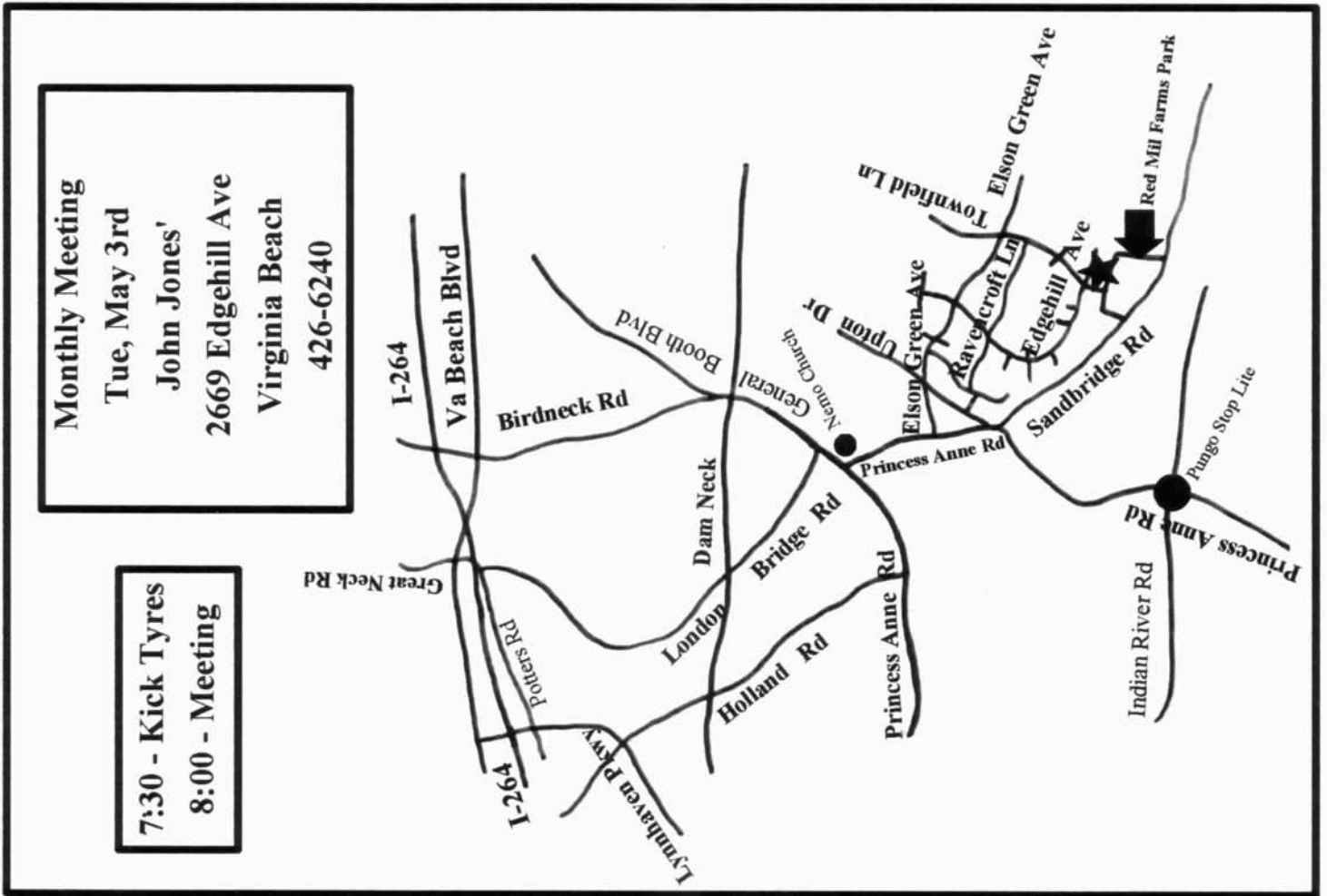
Susan Bond  
541 Forest Road  
Chesapeake, VA 23322

Affiliated with



North American MGB Register

## FIRST CLASS



Monthly Meeting  
Tue, May 3rd  
John Jones'  
2669 Edgehill Ave  
Virginia Beach  
426-6240

7:30 - Kick Tyres  
8:00 - Meeting