



The Dipstick



Dedicated To Preserving The Marque Since 1973

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A COVID Escape *by Jim Villers*

With the absence of meetings and the ability to "mark time", I have wondered how to share my acquisition with the club. On the first of December, I took possession of a white 1959 MGA. It came from across the street and some of you may remember the car as it was in my garage for a Christmas party five years ago. At the time, I was getting the car drivable for my neighbor who had just moved in with hopes that he would become active with the club. His interest evolved to track driving and the MGA sat in his garage for the past five years.



The car is interesting; it was last registered in 2005 and last drove five years ago after my extensive work. Somewhere in the car's past, it had an owner like me that had made many interesting upgrades. First was the replacement of the original 1500 engine with a later MGA 1600 engine. A spin-on oil filter was installed with an oil cooler behind the grill. It has a temperature sensitive electric fan in front of the radiator. The electrical system was converted to negative ground and a Lucas 16-ARC alternator installed. These are excellent upgrades.

My first task was to get it running so that I could evaluate what I bought. As many of you know, I am a great fan of Weber carburetors and I have plenty of spares so my first expenditure was for a Weber side-draft DCOE carburetor manifold.

With old cars, nothing is easy or direct. After spending a day rebuilding a spare DCOE carburetor, I removed the stock intake manifold with the SU's attached and installed the new manifold. Fuel was next, draining the tank of smelly "stuff", replacing two in-line fuel filters and finally flushing fresh gas through the system into a can before attaching the fuel line to the carburetor. With some starting fluid and patience, the engine finally came to life but ran poorly. Using a wide-band air-fuel measurement gauge, I was able to change the carburetor fuel jetting until the engine started immediately and ran like a top.

A test drive demonstrated that this was a solid car with good brakes (I had replaced all of the brake system five year ago). It was now time to focus on appearances.



Washing years of grime made a big difference but it exposed the work that needed to be done. While the paint was OK, it was an old, inexpensive, "paint over rubber" job and much of the unpainted rubber was badly deteriorated. So, I removed everything from the exterior of the car, windshield, headlights, tail lights, everything. I next cleaned the paint with a mild polishing compound, smoothed the paint with a clay bar and then provided a good coat of high quality wax. This was a great improvement, while not a show shine; it became a very presentable car.

I then reinstalled the exterior items with new rubber. I added new bumpers and new chrome accessories to add sparkle.

I next focused on raising the convertible top. Years of storage makes vinyl very stiff and the incorrect folding of the top made it very difficult to just remove it from its compartment. After finally getting the frame erected, I let the top sit in the sun for an hour or so prior to fastening it in the raised position. With more sun, it became a little more flexible and with plastic polish the rear window became clear. This twenty some year old top became fully functional.

Driving the car became a learning experience. It had sat a year or so with flat tires and, while "new" tires, they were not round. Driving the car should loosen up the rubber so that they would return to their manufactured shape. This was also a learning process; my normal mode of just inflating tires to 25-30 psi was not correct. The owner's manual says 17-20 psi; this lower pressure improved the driving experience and rebalancing the tires provided an additional improvement. The final item was topping off the Armstrong hydraulic shock absorbers with fluid. The left front shock was dry and not providing any damping of the wheel bounce. A little fluid made a huge difference.



With the car on the road and driving smoothly, I was impressed with the power and speed of the car. The latter 1600 MGA engine made it is a strong runner. My appreciation of speed was dashed to a great extent when I checked my speed with GPS; my speedometer was very "optimistic"; an indicated 60 MPH was actually 52 MPH. This was discouraging as at a real 60 MPH, the engine revved at an unpleasant 3600 RPM.

As most of you know, I installed a 5-speed transmission in my MGB to lower the engine speed at cruising speed. The MGA engine speed needed a lot of lowering.

One advantage of the MGA is that multiple rear end ratios are available to replace the standard 4.3:1 within the "banjo" differential. The early MGB utilized the same banjo rear axle with 3.9:1 ratio gears and the aftermarket makes a 3.7:1 ring and pinion gear sets for the banjo rear axle.

I ordered an inexpensive 3.9:1 differential third member from eBay and put myself in a back-order queue for a 3.7:1 gear set. I bought the spare third member so that I could set the gears up on my bench before removing the third member from my drivable car. With the uncertainty of receiving the 3.7:1 gear set, I decided to just install the 3.9 gears to see how it works and whether an additional lower gear set is needed.

Swapping out the third member was easier than I thought. I did need to utilize the existing spider gears that matched my old 10 spline axles but the entire swap was easily done in a day. This new gear ratio was a huge improvement. The MGA now drives like a stock MGB; first gear is usable, second and third pull longer and cruising with traffic is comfortable.

Now with the holiday season over and with COVID vaccinations in process, I look forward to driving my "new" MGA, named Snow Ball, on club events and enjoying the wineries, breweries and great roads of Virginia.





Marque Time



I don't know about you, but I definitely have more time on my hands than I normally would. There are some positive things to take from that, including being able to spend a bit more time working on projects, including our beloved cars.

To pass the time one evening, I was looking through some old LIFE magazines and found a favorite old ad that featured an MGA, a Sprite and an Austin-Healey 3000. From there I continued to look for ads that contained various MG models throughout the years. Some of these ads were not for the cars, but for other products or services, such as one for Travelers Insurance. I have forwarded a few of my favorites to our esteemed Editor and hope that he may include some in this edition of the Dipstick.

So I'll keep busy and try my best not to go completely buggy. But I'm beginning to think my doctor might be right. I drink too much. The last time I gave a urine sample it had an olive in it.

Yes, I know, I "borrowed" another line from the great Mr. Dangerfield. What, did you expect anything less from me? If you did, that's great. That means you have very low expectations, which is perfect for me.

Until next time,

Safety Fast,
Robert

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Activity report

February 2021

Rest assured that meetings and activities are high on everyone's agenda. Even though meetings are on hold due to Covid restrictions, your faithful officers are diligently searching for suitable meeting locations... if they have to sample every brewery within a 50 mile radius! We are all looking forward to getting together again, so if we just hold out a little longer, it will happen. There are some tentative activities, such as the annual Williamsburg car show April 24, the TMGCCC April 30 Spring Tour, , NEMGTR mini GoF in Va Beach 5/1-2, their International GoF in Atlantic City June 14-17, and Moss Motors "Cars and Coffee" June 5. Mark your calendars accordingly and be ready to jump!

Meanwhile, I took my own advice and adjusted rear and hand brakes to get ready for Spring driving season. There's also a few lube and other prep jobs that are needed, so I better get to it. Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Bruce Easley

It's got a wooden frame, wooden engine, wooden wheels, and a wooden gas tank. Did he ride it? No, wooden start...



TMGC Calendar As of Feb 2021

Local TMGC events for 2021 are TBA at this time due to the Covid-19 situation.

Feb 3 (Wed) – **Meeting Cancelled**

Mar 2 (Tue) – **Meeting TBA**

Mar ? (Sat) – TRAACA Swap Meet, **tentative**

Apr 7 (Wed) – **Meeting TBA**

Apr ? – Spring Tech Session (**TBA**)

Apr 24 - Williamsburg Club Car Show

Apr 30 - May 2 – Mini-GOF
Founders' Inn, Virginia Beach

Apr 30 – May 2 – TMGC Spring Tour (TBA)

May ?? (Sat) – Drive your MGA Day

May 4 (Tue) – Tentative meeting, hosted by Cynthia & Andy, 545 Mayflower Road, Norfolk, VA

May 26 (Wed) – Peninsula Dessert Drive (tentative)

May 27 (Thu) – Southside Dessert Drive (tentative)

Auto Club Marks 30 Years of MG Enthusiasm

(Reprinted from the June 1, 2003 Beacon)

BY BOB RUEGSEGGER
CORRESPONDENT

When members of Tidewater MG Classics, an organization of automobile enthusiasts, recently assembled at the Aberdeen Barn restaurant on Northhampton Boulevard, they celebrated 30 years of classic cars and friendships.

Peggy Craig and Anna Worrell teamed to organize the anniversary affair, with the assistance of Beckey and Allen Watson. There were door prizes, spark plug candy favors, three speakers, and a big birthday cake.

Mike Haag, the president of the group, is a relative newcomer. He's only been a member for 10 years. "You don't have to own a classic to be a member," he said. "Just show an interest in MG cars or anything related to MGs and you're good to go".

"Anybody can join or come by the meetings. It's just a wonderful group, a laid-back group with a lot of good folks from every walk of life," he said. "It's the cars that bring us together, but the people who bring us back."

Members such as Roy Wiley, Hank Giffin, Mike Ash and Roosevelt Moseley have been coming back for 30 years, to meetings, tech sessions, rallies and assorted gatherings. They are among the founding members. Wiley and Ash are past presidents.

"I fell in love with the MG because it's smaller and it's a sports car," said Moseley, owner of a vintage 1953 MG TD. It's something that you can work on yourself."

The club has an expert on almost every aspect of mechanical and restoration work. "On Sundays we have our tech sessions," Moseley said. "That's when we work on the cars." When eight MG devotees gathered with their cars in the parking lot of Pembroke Mall on May 6, 1973, they didn't envision the organization they founded would be around 30 years later. After they mustered at Pembroke Mall, they drove to Jim Banvard's house, held a meeting, and formed the Tidewater MG "T" Classics. Twenty people attended the first meeting; Jim Banvard became the group's first president.

Susan Bond, co-editor of the group's monthly newsletter, The Dipstick, and keeper of the archives, drives a 1972 MGB-GT with 007-MGB license plates. "I like a roof over my head," she said. "MGs are fun little cars. They're fun to drive, they're easy to work on, and you can get parts for them anywhere." The 10-page newsletter that Bond and Peggy Craig edit includes a column by the club a president, technical articles, photos, coming events and writeups of recent events.

Bond also has worked on compiling archival material for the Tidewater MG Classics CD presented to the members at the celebration. "All the stuff that I was putting in the archives has been put on a self-loading CD," said Bond, who worked with others on the project for about three years. The group recently drove to Gloucester, took a downtown walking tour and visited the local museum.

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Mike Haag, president of Tidewater MG Classics, is a relative newcomer to the club. He's only been a member for 10 years.

In a few weeks, some members will travel to Virginia International Raceway to watch vintage MGs race.

Giffin, who spoke at the anniversary celebration, races his vintage MG TC. Members typically buy, sell and trade cars with others in the group and look out for each other. A few devotees, such as founding member Roy Wiley, have owned more than one MG at a time. Wiley once laid claim to nine.

Some members, such as Ash, are mechanics. "I've been doing all my own

technical work for years," he said. "I've written a couple of articles, and I'm the technical editor of the MGA Register." Ash owns several T series MGs. His first was a 1955 MG TF, which he brought from England in 1967. Kate Fisher is the third generation of her family associated with the MG Classics. Her grandfather, Dave Barrows, just had a passion for MGs. Fisher still has her grandfather's 1952 MG TD, which is undergoing restoration. "He lived on 86th Street and Atlantic Avenue, and he would park his MGs outside the garage, and all the summer people would check them out," said Fisher. "He'd get all the girls in their bikinis to pose next to his cars, and he'd, take their pictures," she said.

Several years ago, Fisher's grandfather gave her the little red car that she had admired as a child "I've kept it. I won't let it go," she said. Doug Kennedy and his wife bought a 1969 MGB that was about to be junked. They towed it home and put it back together, bolt by bolt, with the help of club members.

"I owe a lot of these people for that," said Kennedy. "A lot of these people are practically family members."

Robert Davis credits Jim Banvard and the late Dave Barrows with initially pulling together the club.

"The cars initially bring you together, but your relationships with all these wonderful people is what keeps you coming back" said Davis.

"Being associated with this club gave me a lot of the lifelong friends that I have today. Joining this club was one of the best things to happen to me in my life."

NEWSFLASH: Moss acquires Victoria British! Check out the latest issue of Moss Motoring for details. Or click the link to see the Moss press release. (You may have to paste it into your browser.)

<http://www.mossmotoring.com/victoria-british-acquisition/>

The February meeting has been cancelled due to that pesky COVID Pandemic.

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