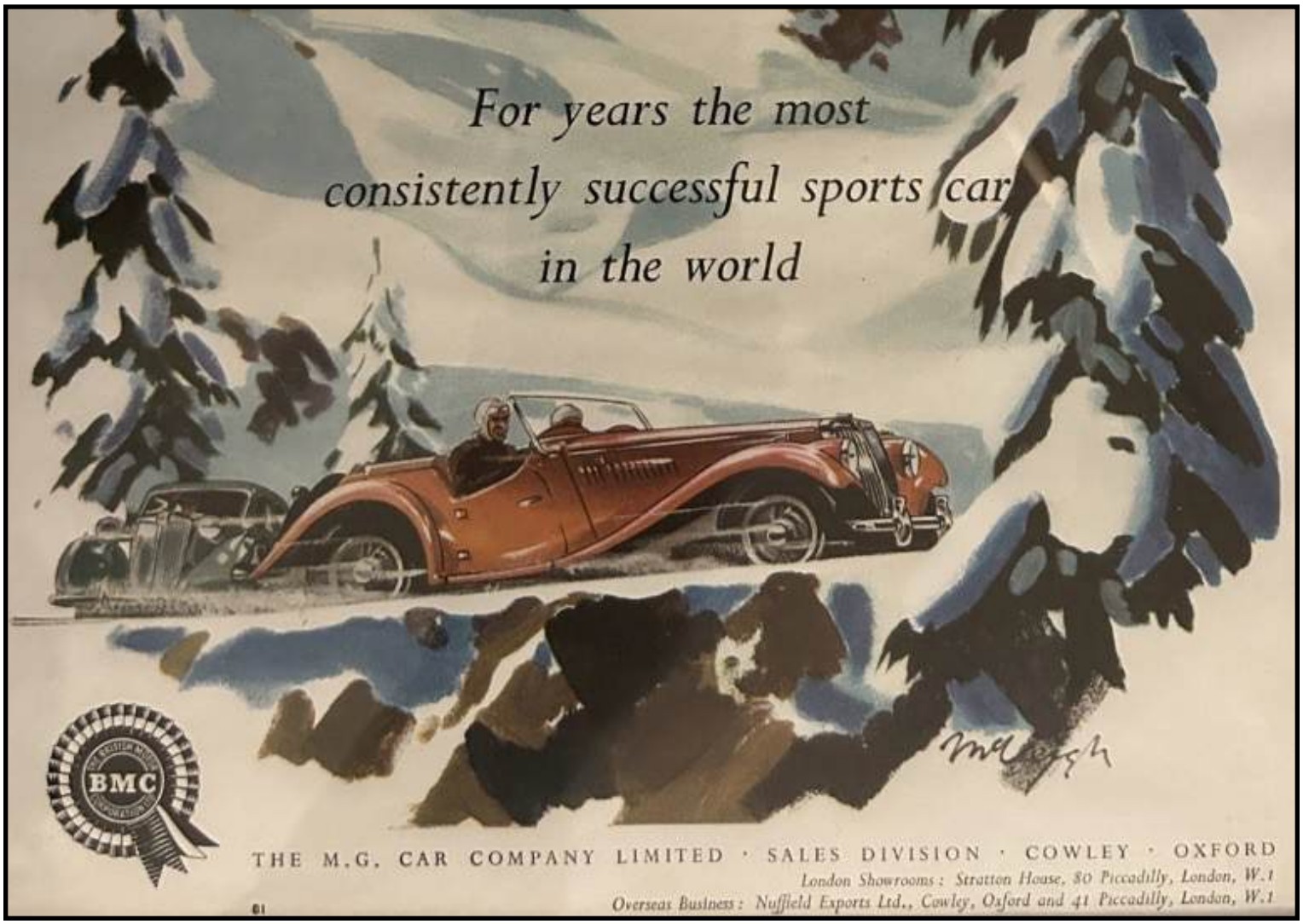
THE OCTAGON

Newsletter of the M.G. Owners Club
The Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club

North American MGB Register

Since 1957!



December 2026

About *The Octagon* and the MG Owners Club

The M.G. Owners Club, formed in 1957, is the Northern California Centre of the M.G. Car Club, formed in England in 1930. The Peninsula T Register was formed in 1973 and is now an informal sub-group of the MGOC. We receive a copy of the MGCC's *Safety Fast*, available to members on loan from the Corresponding Secretary. The club is also associated with the North American MGB Register, the North American MGA Register, and the New England MG T Register. *The Octagon*, our newsletter, is published monthly by the MG Owners Club. Opinions expressed in *The Octagon* are not necessarily those of the MGOC, its members, or Board of Directors.

DIRECTORY of MGOC OFFICERS for 2024

President: **Doug Hollander, *hollander.douglas7@gmail.com***
Vice President: **Andy Preston, *andypreston@att.net***
Treasurer: **Marla Preston, *marlapreston@hotmail.com***
Secretary: **Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699, *MikesMuseum@yahoo.com***

BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE

Member-at-Large: **Mark McGothigan, 510-333-6962, *mark.mcgothigan@gmail.com***
Member-at-Large: **John Hunt, *huntsails@comcast.net* 925-330-7849**
Member-at-Large: **George Steneberg, 510-526-8951, *j2george@pacbell.net***

APPOINTEES

Commercial Advertising: **OPEN**
Corresponding Secretary: **Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699, *MikesMuseum@yahoo.com***
Archivist: **Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699, *MikesMuseum@yahoo.com***
Photographer: ***OPEN***
Registrar: **Steve Kellogg, 408-355-4125, *sfkellogg@verizon.net***
T Register Director: **Jim Carlson, 408-224-3992, *mgjim@comcast.net***
The Octagon Editor: **Dan Shockey, 309-696-0803, *magnut_dan@hotmail.com***
Webmaster: **Alan Havey, 925-922-2436, *havey@pacbell.net*, *webmaster@mgocsf.org***
Regalia: **Andy Preston, 707-795-3480, *andypreston@att.net***

CLUB ADVISOR PROGRAM

Feel free to call these members, who have volunteered to help with purchase, repair, and restoration of various M.G. models, etc.

MGB: **Steve Lilves, 415-924-3173**, ***slilves@sbcglobal.net***
MGB Early & Originality: **Don Scott, 707-942-0546, Don@napanet.net**
MGB V8 Conversion: **Tony Bates, 408-666-6174, *avbates@yahoo.com***
MGC: **Tom Doyle, 520-220-6228, *wtdoyleii@gmail.com***
M.G. Midget: **Christian Rowcliffe, 415-359-6319, *Car@rowcliffe.com***
MGA Coupe: **Andy Preston, *andypreston@att.net***
MGA & Twin Cam: **Mike Jacobsen, 415-333-9699, *MikesMuseum@yahoo.com***
Z-Magnette Saloon: **Eric Baker, 510-531-7032 *mgpb36@yahoo.com***
T-types: **Jim Carlson, 408-224-3992, carlsonconsulting@comcast.net**
Pre-war Midgets-Magnas-Magnettes: **Dan Shockey, 309-696-0803, *magnut_dan@hotmail.com***
PA/PB Midget 1934-36: **Eric Baker, 510-531-7032, *mgpb36@yahoo.com***

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING IN *THE OCTAGON*

Direct all questions about advertising to *webmaster@mgocsf.org*. 2026 rates are: monthly (yearly): full pg. $25 ($240), half page $18 ($175), third page $12 ($120), business card $8 ($75).
All ads expire on Jan. 1st, and fees for a partial year will be pro-rated to that date. Deadline for ad materials is the 10th of the preceding month. The MGOC makes no claims as to the reputation or quality of work performed by businesses advertising in *The Octagon*.

MAKING CONTRIBUTIONS TO *THE OCTAGON*

Your stories, photos, tips, questions, and anything MGOC-related are always welcome in *The Octagon.* Please make your contributions by the 15th of the month preceding the issue in which you want them to appear. Please email all contributions to *magnut_dan@hotmail.com* or send them to: Dan Shockey, 12632 Edith Dr., Garden Grove, CA 92841

RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR THE MGOC

Have you helped recruit any new members lately? The club roster is available from Steve Kellogg upon request.

MGOCSF.ORG

Upcoming events, MGOC history, photos, membership forms, *The Octagon*, and helpful links are posted on the Club Web site at http://www.mgocsf.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

MGOC Annual Brunch …..……3
MGOC Holiday Tea ……..……4
From the Editor ……..……5
President's Commentary ……..……..6
Sonoma Tour Report ……..…7-12
MG Driveway Shelter ……..……13
In Search of Merch ……..……14-15
Keep Planning; Brit Lingo ……..……16
To Drive a Stick Shift ……..17
MG Driving Gloves ……..……..18
Road to Bracken Hollow ……..…19-21
MG Magna Christmas Ad ……..…..22
Meccano Garage and MGs ……..……..23
Classifieds; Hidden Gem ……..……24
A Clunk Too Loud ……..……..……25
Back Page: Christmas Tree; Crossings ……26

MGOC Annual Brunch at Moss Beach Distillery

Sunday January 24, 2027

Moss Beach Distillery, 140 Beach Way, Moss Beach, CA 94038



Photo: Andy Preston



Our Annual MGOC Brunch will be held again this year at the Historic Moss Beach Distillery at Moss Beach. This is always a popular event, so sign up early. It will be a *Champagne Brunch* and held in a private room overlooking the Pacific.

Time: 11:30 Sunday January 24. **Please arrive no later than 11:30 to be seated.**

Cost: $40/person (MGOC members) and $55/person (non members) paid in advance.

Your *Brunch* will include: Bottomless glass of sparking wine or Mimosa, fresh baked pastries, tea or coffee, orange juice and your choice of one from 4 entrees:



1. Coastal Crab Cake Benedict
2. Grilled Salmon
3. California Coastal Omelet (with or without Prawns)
4. Pork Chop and eggs

Please advise Marla of your entrée when you sign up.

RSVP by January 17, 2027 with your entrée choice and check made out to the MGOC and mail to: Marla Preston, 7305 Rebas Way, Rohnert Park, CA, 94928
707 529 1446, marlapreston@hotmail.com



Holiday Tea Party

And Toy Drive - Saturday, Dec. 5

Still in San Mateo!

Hosted by Elaine & Mike

Bring your favorite tea, teapot and favorite food treats
(All optional - come anyway!)

Bring a toy to share through the Toy Drive!



When: 1pm to 4pm, Board meeting at 12:30pm
Where: 2029 Kings Lane, San Mateo, 94402







From the Editor



Merry Christmas, Y'all! 25 November 2026

I wish you a warm hearth and time to toast before it. And a jolly good Christmas Feast, possibly the "roast beast" that the Whos gave us. May El Nino bring us only good gifts this winter.

It seems like I have been ill since finishing the last newsletter. Caught something that lasted nigh on 2 weeks, was better, then caught it again, or another of its ilk, that I am finally besting. We got the MGA out twice in between, for a fun club lunch and for a wonderful memorial service for a great MG man.

The Holiday Tea was an event we developed since it was tough to get on evening calendars this time of year. We used to have a club dinner before Christmas then moved it to January to save on cost and catch more folks. Now it is a luncheon at a fun spot where we can drive the MGs. Be there!

MG More Goodies to All!

Dan





Left: From my mantle to your home screen. Wish I could find more of these. Above: Thuy at the memorial service.





From Me to Me: Soviet 3" dash chronograph

Cartoon by Brian Sonner of Placerville

December Comments

November is half over as I write these remarks. With Thanksgiving, Black Friday and holiday decorating, Connie's and my November MG events are brought to a halt. The month had a great start however with Andy and Marla Preston's Fall Sonoma Tour. Fearing traffic and anticipating a very early morning rise, Connie and I opted to stay over night in Santa Rosa. It was an easy drive and hotel check in was early. Dinner posed a problem when the hotel recommended fish restaurant was booked until late hours. Checking Google for restaurant options, we opted to take a stab at CA' Bianca Ristorante Italiano. What a find, located in 1850s Victorian, the food and service was excellent. The restaurant is located at 835 2nd Street in Santa Rosa and Connie and I both highly recommend it.

We met the group the following day for a splendid ride east over the mountains through a couple valleys and then over Mount Veeder and the Mayacamas Mountains to the V. Sattui Winery in Saint Helena. The ride continued from there to lunch at Cafe Bellini in Petaluma. This was the kind of tour that makes our organization fun and worthwhile. Connie and I have never been on any of the east / west roads of the first half of the tour and we enjoyed the beauty and remoteness of all of it. We have no reason, knowledge or draw to those areas that Marla and Andy shared with us and would never have been without their tour. I think each member of our club has experienced a unique spot they could share for a tour. Something to think about for January's planning meeting.



Events coming up are Mike and Elaine's hosted MGOC Holiday Tea Party on December 5th. (Bring a toy for donation, and your favorite tea and tea treat!). January will feature the 2027 Planning Meeting. Come and bring your ideas.

Safety Fast!

Doug



Photo: Mark McGothigan

Join us!



Cartoon by Brian Sonner of Placerville

Fall Sonoma Tour

From Tour Leader Andy Preston

What a great day! Great weather, great cars, great roads and great people. When you plan a drive in November you never know what the weather will be like but it was perfect. Clear blue skies, sunshine and not too hot; around 70° F. I mention that because the drive was not for the faint hearted and took us over part of the Mayacamas mountain range that separates Sonoma Valley from Napa Valley and rises to over 2300 feet at the peak. On a hot day it can be hard on the cooling systems of our little cars but not today.

We had 8 MGs, equally divided between 4 MGAs and 4 MGBs, I Volvo P1800, I Jaguar, I Mini and I Audi. (Please note that you don't have to drive an MG on our drives; you're more important than the car). Attending were: Don Herrick (MGA), Doug and Connie (MGB), Dennis O'Dea (MGB), Sheryl King (MGB), Andy Hunt (MGB), Mike and Elaine (MGA), Mark & Kristi Cederburg (MGA), Scott Pinsky (Volvo 1800S), Barbara Tapp, Marcia & George, Jean & Bill Thomson, and Andy & Marla (MGB).

The first part of the drive took us along beautiful country roads and the historic areas of Glen Ellen on our way to Trinity Road which marks the start of the steep and winding climb up and over Mt. Vedeer. Trinity Road was badly damaged during the devastating 2020 Sonoma and Napa fires which burnt over 61,000 acres and destroyed 1,500 structures. However the road was recently repaved and is now in good condition, albeit, a steep and winding climb. The scars of the fires were still present as we started our slow and gradual climb to the top of the mountain. No one overheated which shows our cars are still up to the task, quite a testament.


Preston Photo

After we reached the summit it we were treated to a rare view of the entire Napa Valley as we started our downhill descent down Oakville Grade to our first stop and V. Sattui Market Place and Winery. The place is absolutely fabulous and was completely remodeled in 2025 into an 8,000 square foot Italian style market place with winery and extensive picnic grounds. Definitely worth a visit! Several of our members took the opportunity to purchase cheese, wine and merchandise.

The second part of our journey took us along the quieter country roads and through some of the lesser known areas and wine growing regions of the Napa Valley where we were surrounded by vineyards and fall colors of the vines. Our final destination and lunch stop was Café Bellini in Petaluma where we were seated in a private area and able to order off the open menu. I was very surprised how quickly the food came up and also at the same time. Once again the food and the service was wonderful. No wonder I keep coming back.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and especially those who travelled many miles from the Bay Area to join us on our drive. We had great fun and hope that you did too and look forward to the next one in 2027.


Hollander Photo



Photo: Barbara Tapp



Photo: Doug Hollander



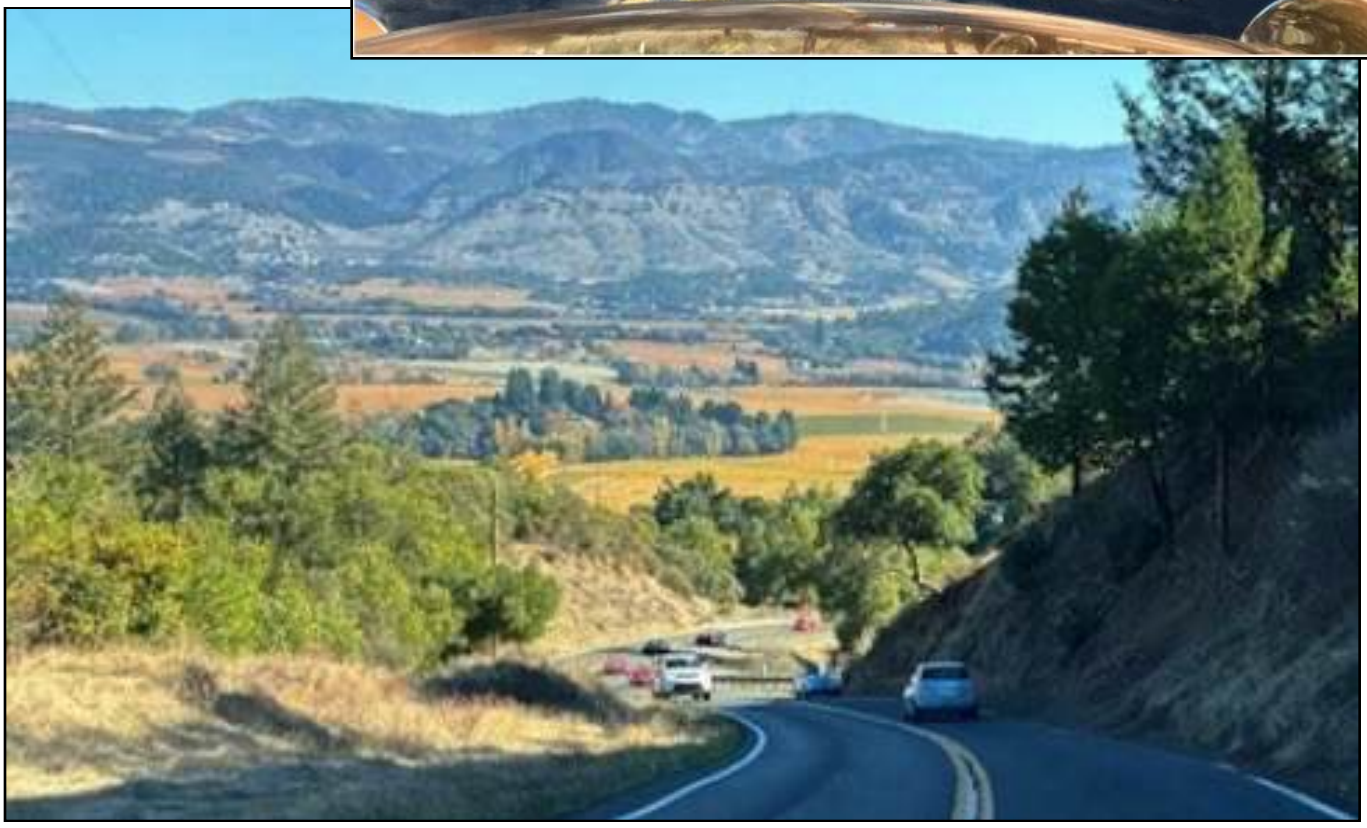
On the Road Again!

Photos Left and Below:
Doug Hollander



MG Vistas!

Bottom:
Barbara Tapp
Photo (while driving!)



Very Scenic Tour!
Barbara Tapp Photos right and below

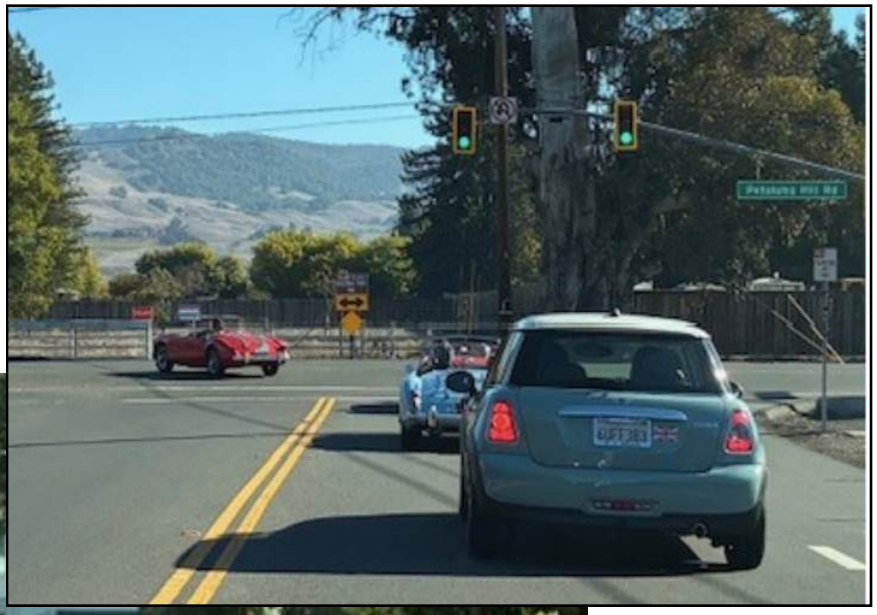




Photo: Doug Hollander





MG Overeating Club: Andy Preston photo above; Andy Hunt photo below









Well earned respite

Andy Preston photos above

Andy Hunt photo at left

Why are toys from my era in a museum?

This one in Indianapolis. Yes, we went there on purpose.

Always wanted one of these. Attach it to my nursing home bed some day. Zoom Zoom Beep Beep!

Merry Christmas memories!

Dan Shockey

Shockey photo



Compact Driveway MG Shelter

By Don Herrick, San Jose, CA, MG Owners Club

Living in Silicon Valley, garage space is always at a premium, and finding covered storage for a small MG collection in a typical suburban neighborhood is a challenge. I recently put together a compact driveway setup for my Midget using a metal-framed shelter with a waterproof PE tarp cover.

Sizing & Sourcing

The Midget is 11' 9" long by 4' 6" wide. Most standard temporary car shelters are 20' x 10', which is overkill for our cars and takes up way too much driveway real estate. However, you still need enough clearance inside to actually open the doors once you pull in, so anything close to the car's exact dimensions won't work.

I settled on a **12' x 8'** footprint as the sweet spot. I couldn't find anything that size locally, so I ended up ordering this from Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/GREEN-PARTY-Motorcycle-Waterproof-Protected/dp/B0D7BTQL1J (currently price $276).



A Few Practical Mods

The shelter works well out of the box, though I made a couple of tweaks to make it more durable and easier to live with day-to-day:

- **Sacrificial Roof Tarp:** I attached a color-matching, heavy-duty tarp directly over the top. The California sun and wind will eventually chew through it, so having an inexpensive, off-the-shelf sacrificial layer protects the custom-fitted cover underneath and extends the life of the whole setup.
- **Roll-Up Door Conversion:** The stock zippered door gets pretty tedious if you're driving the car regularly. I tied the factory door permanently in the open position and hung a smaller tarp over the opening instead.
- **Bamboo & Bungees:** I attached a piece of bamboo along the bottom edge of the new door tarp to give it some rigidity—it makes rolling it up a breeze. To keep the wind from blowing the flap around when it's down, I mounted a few bungees permanently to the side frame poles and just hook them into the tarp's grommets.



One Quick Word of Advice

Overall, it's a great setup to keep a Midget outside. Just be sure to **anchor the legs properly** to the dirt, asphalt, or concrete. The shelter is light enough that a good gust of wind could shift the metal frame right into your bodywork if it isn't tied down.

Hope this helps anyone else trying to squeeze another LBC onto their property.



Photos from the author.

In Search of Merch

Photos and text from William T. (Tom) Doyle

I would venture to guess that most MG owners today have never been into an MG showroom. Unless you are the original owner of an MG, you would never have had the opportunity to visit a MG showroom since British Leyland ceased MG North American operations in 1981. (*Or be an old guy like me. – Ed.)*

However, MGs are still made today by a Chinese company by the name of SAIC and they are imported nearly everywhere but North America. If you live in Mexico, England, or Spain (and too many other countries to list) you can in-fact visit a MG showroom and check out their current models.

In August of this year my wife and I booked a trip to London and western Europe. We spent 5 days in central London and while in London one of my bucket list items was to visit the London MG showroom and purchase some MG merchandise.

After doing to research, I found out that the London MG Motors UK showroom was located near Picadilly Circus in central London. While my wife visited the British Museum I took a London taxi to the MG showroom. The London MG showroom is located at 47-49 Picadilly Circus and is about 45’ wide by 150’ deep. The showroom was bright and clean with modern industrial accents. The showroom had three MG models on display with the highlight being the new MG Cyberster electric sportscar.

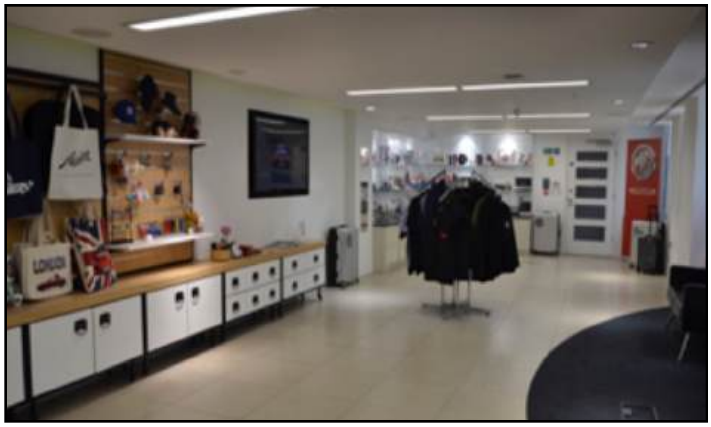
I surveyed the showroom and spoke to the sales clerk and said that I was from the States and owned a 1969 MGC GT (which she had no clue what that was). I told her that I had never been in a MG showroom and was quite excited to visit this one. I told her that I wanted to purchase some MG merchandise to take back with me on my return trip to the States.

I picked out a polo shirt, sun glasses, vest, and ball cap. She offered me a coffee mug and straw hat for free as they were trying to clear some of their MG@100 items. At the cash register I reached into my pocket and to my alarm my wallet was missing! I searched everywhere for my wallet but it was nowhere to be found. I had no choice but to put the items back while I figured out where my wallet had gone.

I don’t think I was pick pocketed, and the last place I used my wallet was in the taxi paying for my fare. I had booked the taxi through the hotel I was staying at so I contacted them and told them that my wallet was missing and asked for the phone number of the taxi company. I gave the hotel my US based cell number just in case someone turned up with my wallet. I contacted the taxi company but all I got was their answering service. All I could think about was how difficult it would be to cancel my credit cards while overseas. Luckily, I had left my passport back at the hotel.

I asked the MG sales clerk the best way to get back to Kennington (where my hotel was) and she directed me to the nearest London Underground station, which was the Picadilly Circus tube stop. I headed there, purchased a ticket and was just about to find the correct platform to depart from when I got a call from a London number and low and behold it was my taxi driver and he reassured me, he had my wallet and after dropping off his current fare he would meet me back in front of the MG showroom.

Photos from the author





I headed back to MG showroom and waited outside. In about 20 minutes my taxi driver showed up and he gave my wallet. It appeared that my wallet and its contents where 100% intact. I asked the taxi driver to wait outside while I purchased some MG merchandise inside the showroom. I purchased 250 British Pounds (BP) of merchandise including a vest, a hat, some sun glasses, golf shirt, cork screw, key chains, and some coffee cups. After completing my purchases, I took the taxi back to my hotel with my MG merchandise haul. Many thanks to my taxi driver for being so incredibly honest and saving my vacation. He got a healthy tip from me!

The following day we took a train to Salisbury to visit Stonehenge. After arriving in Salisbury, I found another MG showroom about ¼ mile from the train station. After a short walk, I arrived at the MG lot and showroom. I would say this dealer was more a traditional car dealer with a lot of new and used cars for sale, a showroom, and service bay. This dealer had many new and used MGs in the lot whereas the showroom in London had only three models. I suspect if you purchased an MG from the London showroom they would send you out to somewhere in the London suburbs to pick it up or have it delivered to your London flat.

I was sort of shocked when I looked at the car sticker prices at the Salisbury MG dealer. The new MGs sedans in the low to mid 20,000 BP range with the exception of the MG Cyberster sportscar. That would equate to $26,000 to $30,000 for a new electric vehicle which I am pretty sure is well under what an electric sedan would cost in North America. As you can see from the photo, you could get a used MG for under 16,000 BP or $21,400

After strolling through the car lot, I entered the showroom and spoke to a very nice saleslady and asked if they had any merchandise for sale. She informed me they didn't have any merchandise for sale, but offered me a personal tour of the MG electric Cyberster sportscar where I was able to sit in it and inspect all the gauges and feel the comfort of the interior. The sticker price of the Cyberster sportscar was around 59,000 BP or about $79,000.

I told her I would buy this one on the spot if I could import it into North America, but alas that is impossible since USDOT has banned



MGs from being imported into the US. While new MGs are not technically banned from the US, new MGs models are not imported because they do not meet US federal safety standards, and the manufacturer, SAIC, has chosen not to spend the millions of dollars required to certify them for the American market.

After a bit of scare about almost losing my wallet, I found the MG dealers to doing a steady business, the facilities were clean, modern and well organized, and the sales people were helpful and polite to this American MG enthusiast. I can now say I have been to and experienced an MG showroom and my bucket list item is checked!

Tom Doyle, is the proud owner of a 1969 MGC/GT. Tom lives with his lovely wife Heidi on the North Shore of Lake Tahoe. He enjoys writing about British Sportscars but would rather drive one than write about them!



MG is entering into Canada now, with primarily electric cars. There appear to be quota and tariff issues to work out.. - Dan

Keep Planning for 2026 & 27!



WINTER

Sat, Dec. 5: MGOC Holiday Tea, Mike & Elaine

Dec. 13: SSTS Holiday Party, Golden Gate Yacht Club

Sun., Jan. 17: Planning Meeting, Marcia and George's

Sun., Jan. 24: MGOC Annual Brunch, Page 3

2027: MGOC 70th Anniversary, Events to Come!

Sept. 20-24: GOF West, Grass Valley, CA

2027





Borrowed from the TC Motoring Guild



BRITISH SLANG LESSON

Quid

"Quid" is slang for a British pound, much like "buck" is used for the US dollar. The term has been in use since the late 17th century, originally used by thieves and beggars in the 17th century as slang for money. One theory is that it comes from the Latin phrase "quid pro quo," which means "something for something." Others believe it originated from Irish Gaelic.

To Drive A Stick Shift

By Glen Baldwin, Vintage MG Club (Orange Co.)

I learned how to drive a stick shift during the test drive of my first car, a 1958 MGA. The salesman was a good teacher and even though I was a poor student he was very patient and we survived through heavy resort town traffic. After the paperwork I drove home a nervous wreck. But the gearbox and clutch survived. That afternoon and the next morning, finding any excuse to hop in and take it for a spin, I was putting the car through its paces; beginning to learn the true spirit of this iconic sports car.

There was just one problem, I didn't have a license. Really two. I needed a job. I was $800 in debt for the car and the gas gauge was getting low. I had to get a job. Actually three! School was starting in a few days and I was not going to relive the embarrassment of my motorcycle debut last year.

But I had to get my license first. There would be no time for the DMV with either school or a job. Oh yeah, I had a fourth problem. My mom worked all day and could not take me to the DMV.

I am a linear guy; work the problems in order; drive myself to the DMV. I was worried about the written test. It had been months since drivers ed and that was in Oklahoma. Some of the rules were different. I wasn't sure which ones.

However, I was confident about my driving. I'd taken to getting through the gears fairly smoothly and I knew I could whip this little sports car in and out of any parallel parking space and I could stop and corner on a dime. Get through the written and I'll be OK. I headed over to the DMV, top down, wind in my hair, really got the MG going not my mom's Pontiac. I found an empty parking space and as I walked up to the building I notice that my MGA really stood out in the lot.

I stumbled through the written test, missing a lot but not enough to fail. I don't think my feet touched the ground as I nearly skipped outside to move the car.

The middle-aged examiner gave a little surprised look over his glasses as he peered down at me and my car. He was somewhat awkward getting in and as we sped off the wind shuffled his hair and papers. He had me immediately turn off 19th St. and right into a neighborhood.

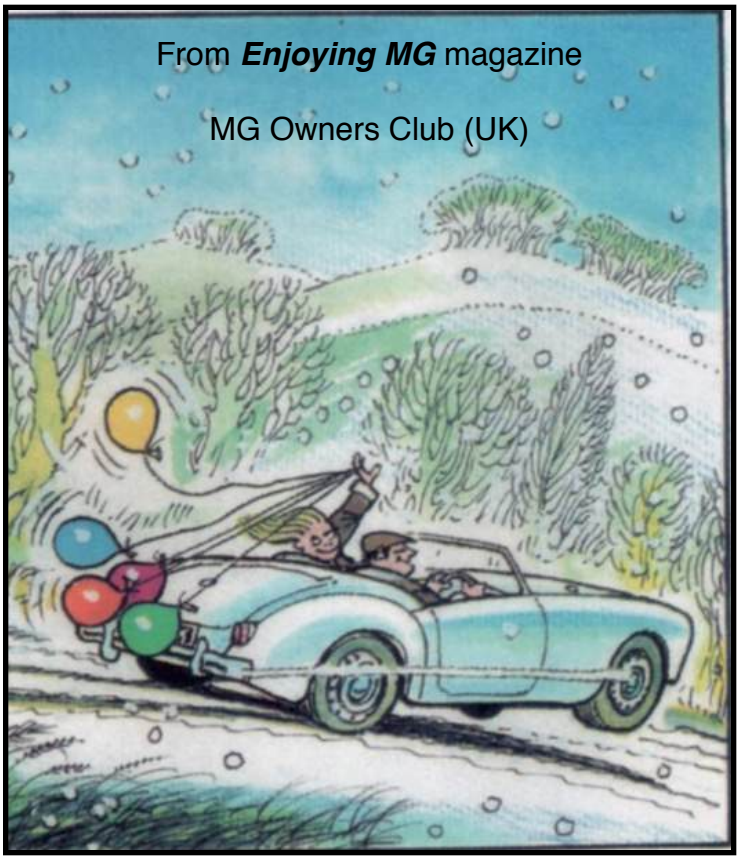
Unmarked birthday card art



You could hear the sporty exhaust note as I worked the gears through those curvy quiet streets what fun! But he didn't like my just clutching at an uncontrolled intersection. I was supposed to use the brake, too. After a couple more turns he asked me the speed limit. I said 25. He asked the cars speed. I said 50. In a hushed tone he said, “That's too fast for the purposes of this test.” And he directed me back to the DMV.

We never did the parallel parking. I learned a few lessons that day, not the least of was a little humility.

A few days later I passed in my mom's Pontiac. Safety Fast.



Photos from the author

Motoring Accessories – Driving Gloves

By Jack Orkin, Peachtree MG Club

Most of us that enjoy top-down motoring in our MGs and other sports cars are aware of the dangers of sun exposure. And most of us use sunscreen and clothing that provides some sun protection. I have also discovered Nelson golf sleeves (there are other brands) to cover my arms when it is too hot to wear long sleeve shirts. But one part of our anatomy that still gets a lot of sun exposure is the back of your hands.

Some of you wear traditional driving gloves for the comfort and grip they provide but many of them have "string backs" (or other open backs) which do not protect your hands. Kathy and I found some sun gloves at REI when we were getting shirts. They are made of sun blocking material, but the palms are not grippy leather that would be good for driving.

Well, let me introduce you to a new motoring accessory – sun gloves with grippy leather palms. During a drive at the Southeast British Car Festival recently, I was wearing my golf sleeves and Bruce Rausch of the Sun Coast British Car Club (they get a lot of sun in south Florida) came up to me and said he noticed my sleeves and asked, "What about your hands?" while showing me some sun damage on his hands.

He then showed me the driving/sun gloves he uses and let me try them on. They were nice, soft and grippy, full coverage gloves. I was impressed and asked where he got them. Turns out they are driving gloves, but the kind designed for driving golf balls! And they are available from – are you ready? – MG Golf! No kidding! Go to MGgolf.com. You should be able to remember that!



The website is easy to use, and the gloves are very reasonably priced. I ordered a pair of the Elite model. Since they are golf gloves, you order them individually, so you need to order a left and a right.

The Elite model is made of cabretta leather. I had to look it up, too. Cabretta is thinner and lighter and feels like kidskin but is made from sheep skin. A pair of these is less expensive than a nice pair of (car) driving gloves. And you can personalize them if you want.

For a nominal charge, I uploaded our club's logo, and they printed that on the clasp. Shipping was fast and reasonable since they ship in an envelope via the USPS.

They are still getting broken in, but they feel great and are very grippy. And you can drive your car or your golf balls with them!

DynaGrip Elite

The Ultimate Golf Glove. Available with personalization! Only $9.75 each!



In time for Christmas!



THE ROAD TO BRACKEN HOLLOW

A CHRISTMAS ***GHOST STORY***

A WINTER'S JOURNEY

It was Christmas Eve, 1954, and the snow had begun to fall in earnest by the time James Hargreaves turned his MGTF off the main road and onto the narrow country lanes that led to Bracken Hollow. He had left London just after luncheon, bound for a weekend of good cheer with his old college friends, the Listers, who had taken a small manor house deep in the Wiltshire countryside.

By four o'clock, the light was fading fast. The MG's headlamps cut narrow tunnels through the swirling snow, the flakes dancing like silver sparks before vanishing into darkness. The heater, such as it was, provided little more than a suggestion of warmth, but James didn't mind. He loved the way the car purred through corners, the firm feel of the wheel, the faithful thrum of the XPAG engine as it worked through the storm.

THE STRANGER BY THE ROAD

He passed through villages long since shuttered for the night, cottages glowing faintly with Christmas candles, and began to climb into higher ground. It was there, on a lonely stretch where the trees formed a white, ghostly tunnel, that he first saw the figure.

A man stood at the roadside, hand raised, his shape half-lost in the drifting snow. James slowed instinctively and drew the MG to a halt beside him. The man wore a long, old-fashioned, dark overcoat, and his hat was dusted white.

"Evening," James called, leaning across to open the passenger door. "You look half-frozen, where are you bound?" The stranger inclined his head politely. "To my home near Bracken Hollow, if you're going that way, sir." James smiled. "As it happens, I am. Hop in."

The man slid into the seat beside him, brushing snow from his coat. He smelt frowsty, like something that had been locked away for a long time, and his face was very pale and thin, but his eyes were curiously bright. "You're very kind," he said in a low voice that carried a faint Edwardian lilt.

THE OLD ROAD

The MG moved off again, tyres crunching through the snow. Conversation came easily at first: the weather, the

treacherous roads, Christmas plans as he was on his way to his family home, but something about the man's manner was odd. He spoke as if the countryside around them were frozen not merely in winter, but in time. When James mentioned the new bypass at Devizes, the man frowned slightly, as though the word bypass was unfamiliar.

The snow deepened. Twice, the MG skidded, once badly enough to make James's heart race. Each time, the stranger's hand gripped the dashboard with startling strength, yet he said nothing. At length, they came to a fork in the road. The man pointed to the left. "That way will take you to Bracken Hollow, by the old road. It's quicker."

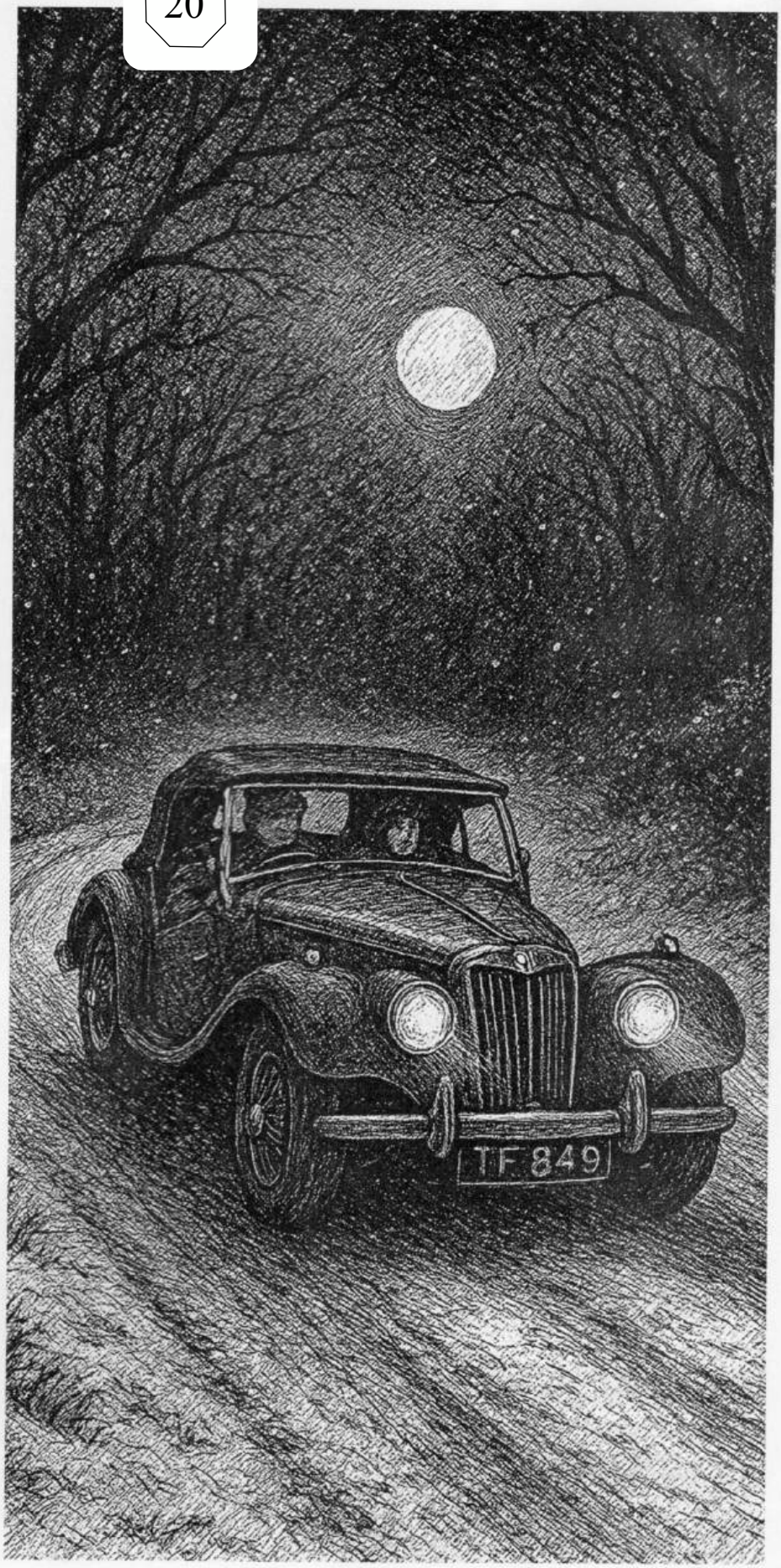
James hesitated. His map showed only one route, bending right. But visibility was poor, and the stranger's confidence was reassuring. Trusting him, he turned left. The lane grew narrower, hemmed in by skeletal trees. After a mile or two, they passed through a broken gatepost and onto what seemed the remnants of an old drive. The MG's headlamps fell upon a great house, its roof heavy with snow. He saw several rooms lit by candlelight and the shape of two children looking out of one of the windows.

The stranger touched James's arm, which tingled under his touch. "Here we are. Thank you." He stepped out and stood for a moment in the beam of the headlamps. His face was oddly peaceful, almost relieved. "Will you be all right from here?" James asked. The man smiled faintly. "Quite all right now. You've done a kindness, sir. None would stop on a night like this." And with that, he turned toward the house and vanished into the darkness.

THE TRUTH OF IT

After some difficulty finding his way James drove on, puzzled but thinking little more of it until he arrived at the Listers' home, in Bracken Hollow, twenty minutes later. The house was bright with light and laughter. Over brandy, he recounted his encounter with the strange man and how he had been directed down a road not marked on his map, leading to a run-down house.

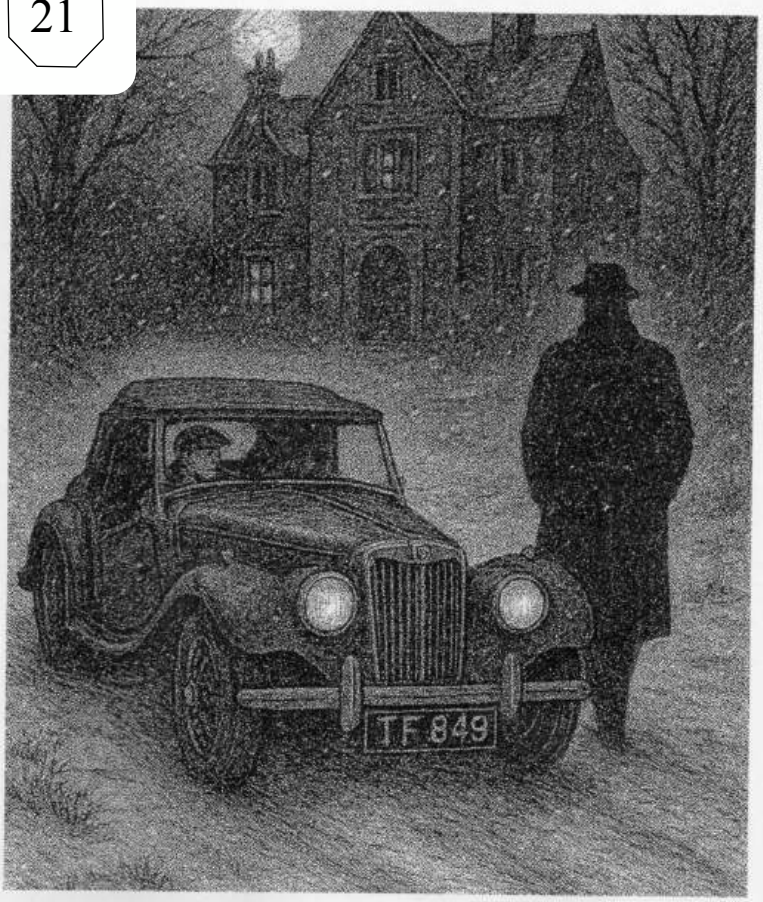
His host, Charles Lister, frowned and stared at James. "Left fork? Good Lord, James, you must have taken the old road! But that's been unused for years and now overgrown to such an extent that it's »



not suitable for vehicles. How on earth did you drive down there?" "Well," replied James, "the road was fairly clear apart from a covering of snow." "That house you mentioned sounds like Bracken Hollow Hall, but that was burnt to the ground on Christmas Eve in the winter of '34 and has never been redeveloped. The owner, a George Jeffries, was away but was coming back on Christmas Eve to spend Christmas with his family.

"When the fire took hold, his wife and two children were trapped inside and never got out. He had tried desperately to get home, but the snowy conditions prevented him. He might have been able to save them had he been there." James moved uneasily in his chair, and the colour had drained from his face. "What happened to George Jeffries?" asked James. "Apparently, he died of a broken heart a year later," replied Charles. "He said he was going to his home near Bracken Hollow," said James. Lister nodded gravely. "He got there all right. Twenty years too late, as I think, tonight James, you gave a lift to a ghost!" James felt sick and sat in silence.

Later that night, long after the others had gone to bed, James stepped outside. He was having difficulty taking it all in and started to think he had imagined it all. The snow had stopped, and the world lay still beneath a silver moon. He crossed to where the MG stood in the drive, its red paintwork gleaming faintly. And there, to his astonishment, on the passenger seat, lay a thin dusting of un-melted snow, just enough to mark the outline of where someone had sat.



Notes, Permission from the Author



Hello Dan,

Thanks for your comments regarding my Ghost Story. I had put this together several years ago but could never find a suitable ending that I was happy with, so shelved the idea.

Anyway, with AI now available, I used ChatGPT and asked it for a suitable ending. After some editing on my part I came up with the ending I was hoping for. The sketches were created by ChatGPT after instructions from me on what I was looking for. The strange thing is the drawings which Chat produced were as if it had read my mind and were just as I imaged them, scary!

Yes, we are more than happy to allow you to reproduce the story in your magazine as long as you give the MGCC UK credit for it.

You will be pleased to hear that I have, with the help of ChatGPT, created a Part Two being a follow up to the first part with James returning to Bracken Hollow. It is more blood curdling than the first and I am sure you will enjoy it.

It will appear in our Christmas Bumper issue, and would be happy for you to use this as well once it has appeared in our mag. (*Wait for next year! – Dan*)

Kind regards

Colin Grant
Deputy Editor Safety Fast!

P.S. If you love British MG ghost stories, see ***The Octagon***, January, 2023, and February, 2025 (or email Dan)

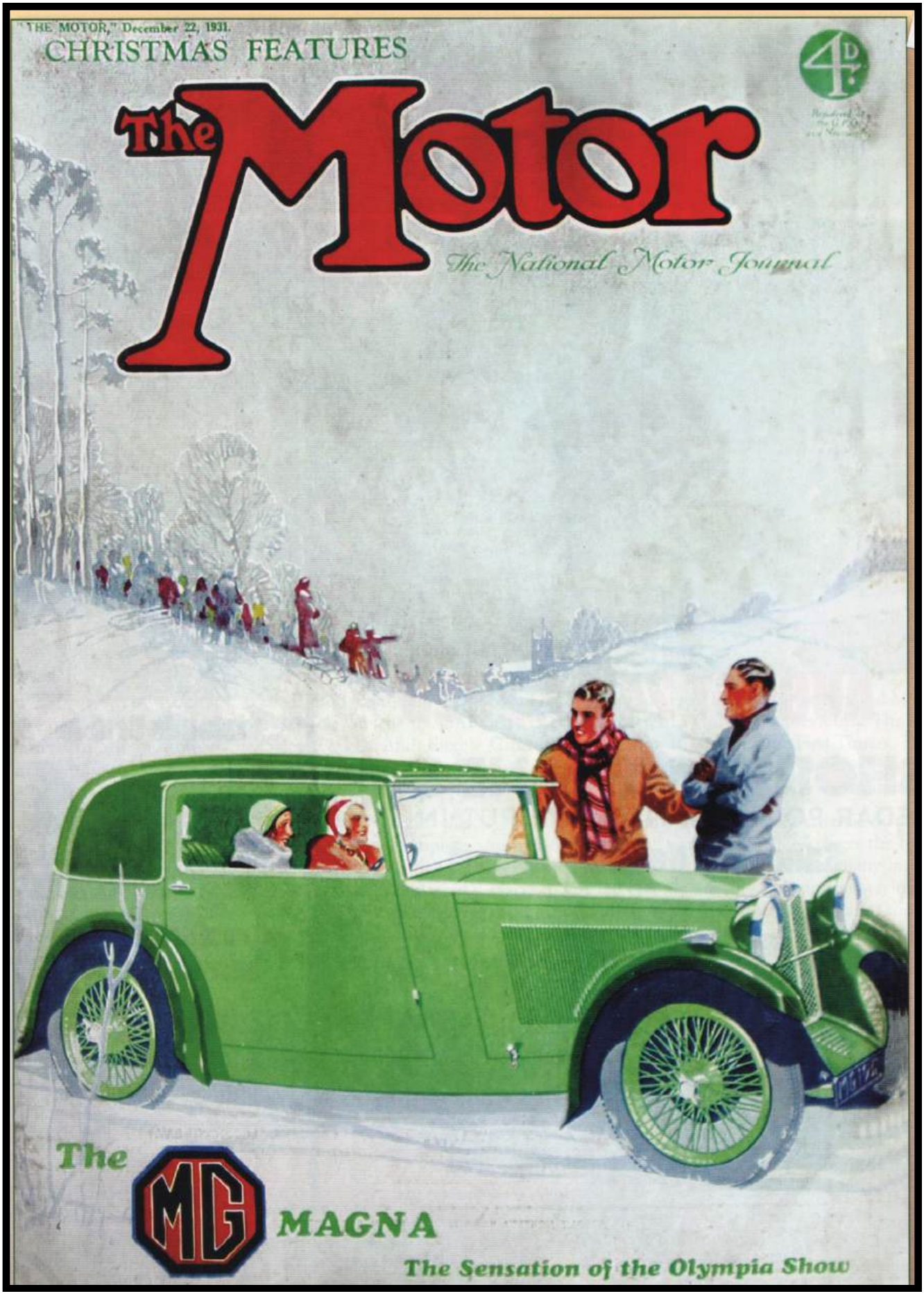
"THE MOTOR," December 22, 1931.

CHRISTMAS FEATURES

4D.

The Motor

The National Motor Journal



The MG MAGNA

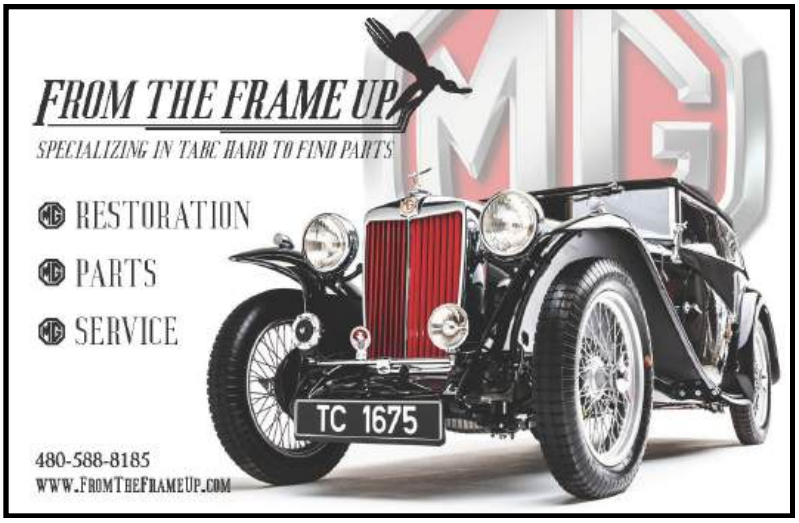
The Sensation of the Olympia Show

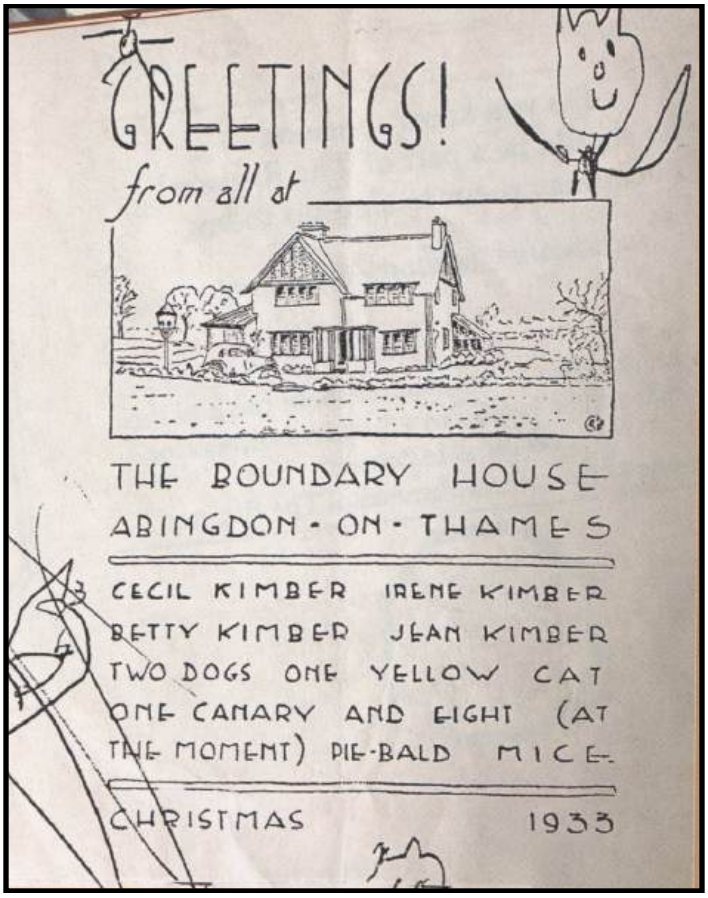
Photo: Rod Ptak, Bristol Model Engrg Show



A Meccano Garage complete with rare pre-WWII Meccano MGs. Made by MG enthusiast Pete Evans of the UK. Sadly Pete passed away in October, 2026

Right: Christmas Card from the Cecil Kimber family, 1935, From Jean Kimber's collection





The Hidden Gem

Art by Richard Wheatland. Used with permission



Classified Ads

Ads are free to MGOC members and $6.00 per month for non-members. Some ads picked up from other clubs.







Free MGB Exhaust System: To deserving project. Little used on 71 GT. Also a Bell 2" Sport Exhaust to sell, Member Scott in La Honda, **seldredg@comcast.net** (Posted 12/26)

1952 TD: Runs, in excellent condition. Cream color with burgundy grille and dash. Peninsula T Register badge, In Los Gatos area, Asking $13,500. Non-Member Rebekah, **rebekahrquinn@gmail.com** (posted 12/26)

1967 MGB Tourer: Runs, in excellent condition, Red with wire wheels, Top is good. In Los Gatos area, Asking $16,500. Rebekah, **rebekahrquinn@gmail.com** (posted 12/26)

1953 TD: Matching numbers survivor. Solid wood. Rebuilt brakes, New tires and dynamo. Runs well. In Lafayette. Member Jerry Burr, **zero260@comcast.net** (Posted 10/26)

We list ads for 3 months. Advise if you want them extended. For additional ads, see prior issues of *The Octagon* or MGOCSF.org

A Clunk Too Loud

By Mike Jacobsen

We didn't take the MGA to the RR Picnic because I'd just found the cause of my front suspension clunk and the car was still apart.

After thinking the missing brake pad retainer and loose pads were causing the clunk (nope), and then that the loose shock was the cause (nope again), I think this time I have it. I was looking around in the front suspension and saw that the locator piece for the RF spring was caught down in the spring.

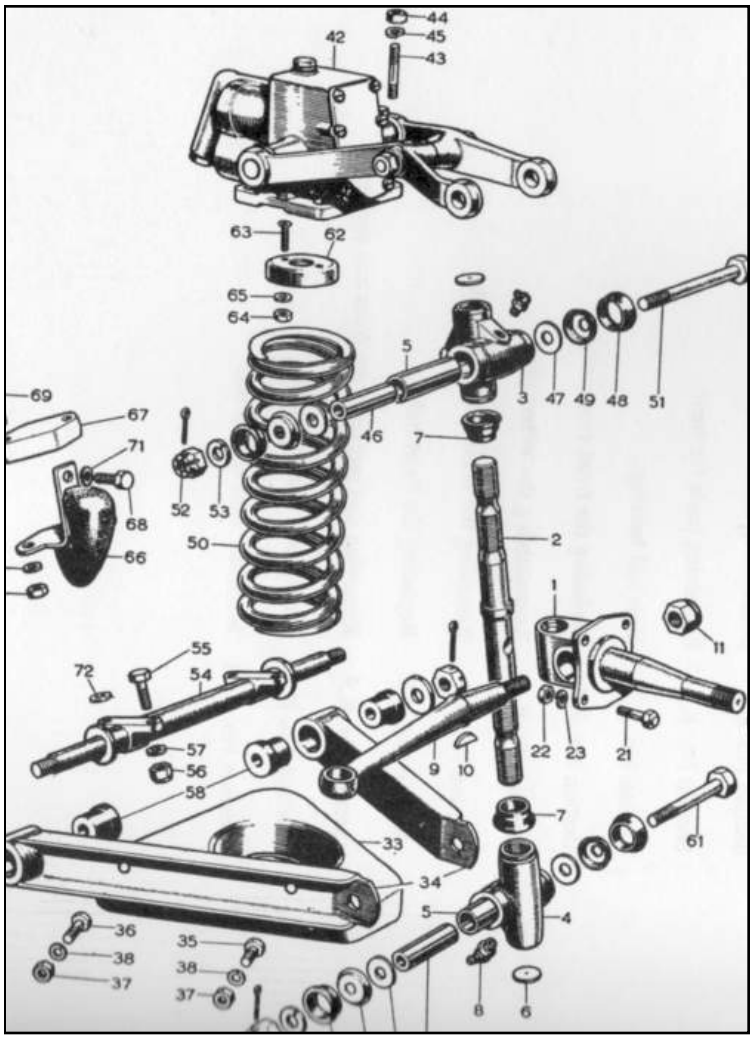
Ah ha! I just need to unbolt the lower link, lower the spring tray, pull out the spring, and get the piece out. Then I'd just reinstall everything. It went according to plan until I pulled out the spring, and then also pulled out the top coil that was stuck up under the shock. The spring had broken!

I had three old springs in my stash (two of which I think I got when we stripped one of the Manina's cars ages ago) so I figured one would work. To be a little more sure, I took out the LF spring and lined them all up, picking the two that were the closest in height. Bolting the spring locator back in required unbolting the shock so I could hold one of the attachment screws still while installing its nut from underneath.

I got it all back together tonight but haven't had a chance to road test it yet. This better be it because I'm out of places to look now.

Update: I took the MGA out this afternoon and the clunk is gone. Now I need to find the rattly noise. It sounds like a loose heat shield around the exhaust somewhere in back, but the MGA doesn't have that.

Illustration from MGA Factory manual



I suggested Mike check the engine fan since that rattle could have serious consequences if it breaks. But Mike had already eliminated that as a source. Mike has been around lots of blocks. – Dan







From ***Safety Fast!*** Magazine

MG Car Club, UK

Sonoma Tour Crossings - Photo: Barbara Tapp

