



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!

Marin Tour on Wednesday, November 10!
Reserve your spot and bring proof of vaccination

Past event photo from Marty Rayman



November 2021

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 MGOC holds a business meeting each month at an event known as the "Natter and Noggin" in the style of English clubs. *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.

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 Vice President: **Kirk Prentiss**, kirkprentiss@gmail.com
 Treasurer: **Marla Preston**, marlapreston@hotmail.com
 Secretary: **Mike Jacobsen**, 415-333-9699,
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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 1962-74: **Steve Lilves**, 415-924-3173,
slilves@sbcglobal.net
 MGB 1974-1980: **Ed Adams**, 510-483-6821
AdamsEddie77@yahoo.com
 MGB V8 Conversion: **Tony Bates**, 408-666-6174,
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Pre-war Midgets-Magnas-Magnettes: **George Steneberg**, 510-525-9125

PA/PB Midget 1934-36: **Eric Baker**, 510-531-7032,

mgb36@yahoo.com

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mrcraigk@aol.com

COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING IN *THE OCTAGON*

Direct all questions about advertising to **Mike Jacobsen** at 415-333-9699 or MikesMuseum@yahoo.com. 2005 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, 10 Willis Rd., Scotts Valley, CA 95066.

RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR THE MGOC

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

MGOCSE.ORG

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

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MARIN TOUR 2021 - Mt. Tam to Rancho Nicasio

Rancho Nicasio is a fully vaccinated restaurant and proof of vaccination is required.



View from top of Mt. Tam



Rancho Nicasio Restaurant - Marin

Date: Wednesday, Nov 10, 2021

Tour leaders: Andy and Marla Preston 707 795 3480

Meeting Place: Safeway Parking Lot, 1 Camino Alto, Mill Valley. Take 101 north or south and exit at E. Blithdale Ave and head west for ¾ mile, then turn left onto Camino Alto and the Safeway Parking lot will be on your right after ½ mile. There is a Starbucks next to Safeway for refreshments.

Time: Meet at 9:30 for a 10:00 departure

Tour: We will be driving to the top of Mount Tam which is a fairly easy and gradual climb. On a clear day the views are spectacular and on a cloudy day surreal as you are above the clouds. You can see San Francisco, the Bay Bridge, the Golden Gate bridge towers, Tiburon, Belvedere and the Pacific. There is a visitor's center, lookout point and bathrooms. There is a parking fee of \$7 per car.

After enjoying the views we will continue north along Shoreline Highway to Rancho Nicasio Restaurant for lunch. If the weather is pleasant we can eat outside in the gardens otherwise we can eat in the dining room. Face masks are required. Select your lunch choice from below:

Cheese burger w/fries 16

Fried chicken sandwich w/fries 16

Fish and Chips 18

Butter lettuce salad, blue cheese, dried cranberries, apples, walnuts, Italian dressing 12

Prices do not include drinks or tax and tip.



There will only be one check for the entire group, so **please bring cash.**

Please RSVP: to Andy or Marla Preston at 707 795 3480 or marlapreston@hotmail.com by Nov 3, **with your lunch selection**, so we can confirm lunch reservations.

From the Editor

Welcome, Sports Car Fans,

28 October 2021

The rain was very welcome but it spoiled our plans for the long-delayed club picnic. We hear "next year" all too often during these Covid times. Plan to participate in Andy and Marla's Marin Tour.

This is my first newsletter from my new home. Thuy has wanted to move near her family so we took advantage of the hot real estate market and relocated to our house in Garden Grove, in Orange County. Yes, I am a bit further south than I was. I have more room here for the MGs and my hobbies. Now I even have a large "Dan Den."

I plan to continue doing **The Octagon** – though I am always willing to share or pass along that privilege. I have been at it for 5 years (so far) this time. A couple down here has been doing the Vintage MG Club newsletter for over 30 years. I am up to 13 or more years in total for this club and the Columbia Gorge MGA Club.

But it will be tougher for me to get to many events. I need to finish the MGA with its a/c for making the long drive. There was an MGA coupe at the GOF with a/c. The owner claimed it did very well driving to the event. And I can haul the PA with my comfortable pickup truck.

Hope to visit with you soon.



Dan

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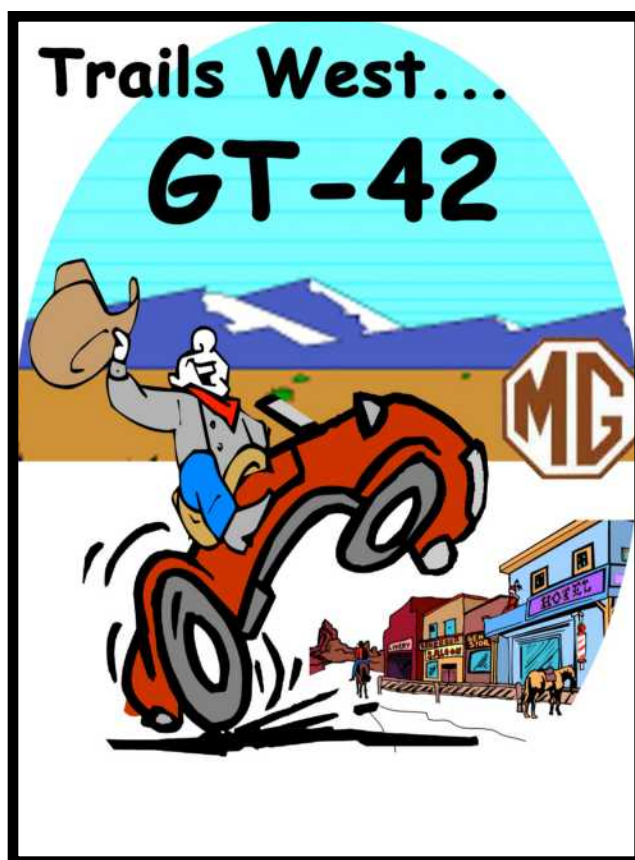
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Another rejected try for the GT42 artwork. Does it look like an MGA? Shocky art (modified public clip art)

Member Notes

News from John Hunt:

Hope all is going well. Times are changing, GB number plate sticker no longer valid abroad.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-58734265>

Reaction from Andy Preston:

Seems like a lot to do about nothing!!

Ignition Coils from Andy:

In Mike's article (which is very good BTW) I think the later coils had a resistance of 1.5 ohms compared to the earlier coils at 3.0 ohms. This was done to provide a full 12v to the ignition system even while cranking the engine in an attempt to improve starting and reduce emissions. However during normal operating the voltage drops to 8v (via the ballast), otherwise you'd burn up the 1.5 ohm coil. If Mike or anyone else still has the 1.5 ohm coil on their car it will burn up if they continue to apply 12v to it.

Tour Prep from Andy:

We did a trial run today in our GT and it was fabulous. The views from the top of Mt. Tam were spectacular. You could see everything in every direction – one of those rare days with clear skies and visibility. The drive down the mountain was just as spectacular with endless views of the coastline. This is one tour that you should try and make if you can.

Rancho Nicasio was also very good.

Thanks from Scott Pinsky:

Just saw your column in **The Octagon** and was surprised to see the lavish coverage of the XJ13! Many thanks for the very flattering shout-out! Great to see you at the Corte Madera show, as always. Hopefully the Jag will be drivable by the time of the Blackhawk show, in which case I'll take it out again with fingers crossed! If not, the MG is running again so I have that as backup.

Picnic thought from Mark McGothigan:

I am OK with standard picnic fare. The east bay hills are of course an extremely high fire hazard zone and the wind can kick up without warning this time of year. So seems chancy to me. If we are going to burn up the east bay hills, we should do it with a cracked fuel line or something MG related. :)

Idea from Kirk Prentiss:

Or, we can just break out a portion of "Lucas Canned Smoke" from the vintage suppliers and call it done.

Picnic memories from Jennifer:

As always, I enjoyed the recent issue. The promo piece for the club's annual picnic in the park reminded me of the time I figured out how to take the BART and the bus (and then walk the rest of the way to the picnic site).

Thanks from Wali Sultani:

Thank you for the advice and yes, I plan to sign up and have AAA shortly. However I still would love to have a experienced owner look over the car. Can't wait to have the car running so I can attend some of your events. (Wali is in Los Gatos. Can anyone help him out?)

2022 Officers from Andy:

Hi everyone, we need to post the candidates for MGOC Officers for 2022 in the November **Octagon**. I'm willing to serve as President for another year. Is everyone else willing to continue in their present positions for next year? If anyone else would like to be President, I'll happily step down; just let me know. I'll also send out an email to all members to see if anyone would like to run for any officer positions.

Ditto from Kirk:

Ditto — all the same as with Andy.

Ditto from Mike Jacobsen:

I'll re-enlist too.

Wearied in Boulder Creek, from Marja:

I'm just getting home from a LOOOONG day in the MG. 25 British cars drove the Redwood Roll: Santa Cruz (Pigeon Point) to UCSC then Empire to Ice Cream Grade to Pine Flat to Hwy 1 north to Pescadero for a brief stop then up Hwy 84 to skyline to Hwy 9 down to Boulder Creek, up Bear Creek Rd to Summit then drop down to Nonnos in Redwood Estates for a late lunch. Glorious weather even along the coast (and no cross wind!) although I was freezing when I left the house (38F). 150 miles on the TF by the time I returned home. I am not used to driving that long.

More Member Notes

Picnic canceled from Andy:

Hi everyone, the weather forecast for this week and weekend is for rain on and off; although Saturday's forecast is overcast in the morning and showers later in the afternoon. The question is: should we still hold the picnic and assume people will turn up in potentially poor weather conditions?

BTW, we will be in Hawaii, enjoying sunshine,

Car show report from Don Scott:

I chatted with the owner of the Frontline MGB. What a story, and what a costly venture. He owned the car in California, was able to get on the Frontline list of customers, shipped the car to the UK, and when finished, it was shipped back to him. Somewhere around \$100k, not including shipping and the cost of the car originally. Fitted with modern mechanicals, there's not much left that is MGB other than the body.

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MGs were not well represented at the Blackhawk show. Only one MGA, one TF, and one TD were at the show. There were no Mk1 MGBs, not even one. I used to own Morris Minors, so was impressed with the Traveler which is still in the hands of its original owner!

Response from Andy:

Hi Don, that's a good email. Would you mind expanding it into an article for **The Octagon**. Dan's always anxious to get new stuff and especially about current shows. You can also include that I took the E-type because it was the featured model being the 60th Anniversary of the E-type. I took 2nd Place in that class. See photo.

I was also disappointed with the lack of MGs represented and feel that next year we should try and make an exerted effort of behalf of the club to encourage participation by our members in all car shows.

Deluge from Marty Rayman:

I hope you did okay with the deluge of rain this week. We had over 16" here in Kentfield. Our backyard & cul de sac were under water until the tide receded. Our home was fine. Thankfully our reservoirs are refilling but have a ways to go. We hiked up to check one yesterday.





President's Ponderings

Proof of vaccination required

Marla and I just returned from a 5-day vacation in Oahu, and you need to show proof of vaccination all the time. In fact you can't even get an airline ticket or board the plane without showing your vaccination card and ID. It's the same when you check into the hotel, go on any trips or participate in any activities. I think the strictest were the restaurants where they write down the information from your vaccination card, check IDs, home address, phone number and address in Hawaii. I must admit that I had no problem with these additional measures and it makes you feel safer. I checked the Covid metrics for Hawaii and this scrutiny does appear to be reducing the cases on the islands. Good news.



Marin Tour

Let's hope for good weather and a clear day for the Marin Tour because the view from the top of Mt. Tam is breathtaking. In fact if you've never driven up Mt. Tam before and even if you have the views up and down are equally wonderful. In fact the best weather is in the spring and autumn because in the summer it's normally cloudy. Check the flyer for additional information and we hope to see you.

Back in my garage

Several months ago I removed the smog equipment from my 1974 MGB GT, in order to resolve a "missing" problem. That problem turned out to be a bad coil and I never put the smog stuff back on. The car ran fine but wasn't as smooth or have as much "pick up" as it used to have. I played around with various ignition settings and carb adjustments but nothing really improved. So I

decided to re-install all the smog equipment again which takes a long time. However, the results are surprising and the car now runs smoother and has more zip than before. This doesn't really make any sense to me so if anyone can explain why, please let me know. Or perhaps the engineers at British Leyland knew what they were doing!



Stay safe and remember
MGs like to be driven,

Andy

2022 Officer Nominees

President: Andy Preston, Incumbent

Vice-President: Kirk Prentiss, Incumbent

Treasurer: Marla Preston, Incumbent

Secretary: Mike Jacobsen, Incumbent

Please send or email other nominees to Mike Jacobsen

MikesMuseum@yahoo.com

320B Monterey Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94131-3141
(or to any other club officer)

Above: Andy's engine back
to factory specs.

My New Lucky Number, 74

By MGOC member John Hunt

On Sunday, October 17, I attended San Francisco Mini's All British Car Show at Blackhawk Auto Museum in Danville with my 1971 MGB GT and was entry number 74.

This was, all around, a wonderful show. It's an annual event and you always get a full range of British cars, including some very rare makes and models. In terms of quality and variety of cars, this one reminds me of the old annual British car show in Palo Alto next to the Stanford shopping center. In the past, I've seen a Bristol sedan and Harry Potter's car, not the actual movie car but the same model, a Ford Anglia. This year the rare delight was a Turner racecar from the 1950s. On the more contemporary side, my neighbor in the MG section owns a 2002 Frontline Racing MGB which was hand-built near Abingdon, England, using a British Motor Heritage shell with some modern updates including a Mazda motor which kicks out 290 horsepower. In honor of MGB's 50th Anniversary, they built a limited edition of 25 roadsters and 50 GTs primarily for UK market. Other interesting standouts included a Triumph Estate wagon from 1962 and an early 1960's Riley car which you really don't see this side of the pond.

Besides, wonderful cars, I have to say, the company there is always stellar. All British car people, can't get better than that! This year, I ran into our legendary leader, Andy Preston and his E-type Jag, and fellow member Mark McGothigan and his B. Also, ran into the Taft brothers Russ and Bob who brought their two Aston Martins and an MGB.

One of the perks of joining the car show is that your registration comes with a complimentary pass to Blackhawk Museum. The car section is always changing and often includes a number of Pebble Beach Concourse winners. However, it's more than just a car museum. They have added an excellent exhibit on Africa, China and the Wild West.

On a side note, I would like to extend a special shout out to Dan Shockey who made my car show day possible by installing my new ignition switch in my car recently. Dan is a car guru, many thanks, Dan!

Good day for our club. Andy Preston won participants' choice second place in Jaguar class with his beautiful E Type and I was fortunate to win third place participants' choice in MGB class with my 1971 MGB/GT. Hope you have a chance to enter this event in the future, it's a fun time. Safety Fast, Cheers!



Photo: Andy Preston

All British Show at Blackhawk Mini Owners of America, San Francisco

Photos Don Scott and Mark McGothigan

The Frontline MGB is in the silver color.
Info page 14



Photo Shoot at Marin Headlands

Andy Preston

Last month I was contacted by an Advertising Agency and asked if I would want to participate in a photo shoot with my 1967 MGB. I said "great" and initially it was scheduled to be in Glenn Ellen, which is just down the road from me and then rescheduled to the Marin Headlands starting at 4:00 to 7:30pm. Brrrrrrrrr.

The Agency were looking for a golden sunset overlooking the Pacific Ocean and got fog and mist instead, disappointing for them and freezing cold for everyone there. The shoot was for online adverts (which are those annoying banners that come up on the side of your screen when you're searching for things). The campaign was for a very high end luggage company called "Briggs and Riley" where a Carry-on Suitcase starts at \$625. Very nice stuff but above my pay grade.

This was a 2 day production photo shoot with a Producer, Director, Photographer and assistant, Wardrobe person and at least 5 grips who do all the donkey work. There were 2 models, male and female, which they refer to as "The Talent" and of course they were good looking. He was local but she came up from L.A. There were numerous vehicles and a massive RV where the "Talent" kept warm. I froze with the grips.



At 4:00pm we left the shelter of the parking lot and drove up the coastline to a wonderful overlook of the Ocean and lighthouse, but it was chilly. The premise of the shoot was that this couple was packing cases into their MGB as part of a trip along the coast. The photographer took hundreds of photos from various angles and I moved the car many times. I must admit that it was great fun and everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves regardless of the weather. BTW, the photos that I took belie the weather and make it look much better.

The drive home on 101 was exciting and I'm so glad that I had checked the heater and lights before I left.



Photos provided by the author



Lew and Nancy Reader were active members of the Peninsula T Register so we are happy to help their family sell these rare MGs.



1000-piece Jigsaw Puzzle - £15.83p

Code: BEN-JIG

Size - 660 x 550 mm (Landscape)

'1940s Race Day' by Victor McLindon

Now available for shipping to the US.
British car Christmas cards and other
gifts benefit BEN charity:

<https://www.cards4charity.org/ben/>

For Sale: \$60,000 or best offer for three pre-war MGs.

We are selling a collection of three pre-war MGs that includes a mid-restoration L-Type Magna, a mid-restoration SA Saloon, and another SA that could be used for parts. During his lifetime, the owner Lew Reader enjoyed driving the L-Type Magna and SA Saloon. We believe all the parts are on site to finish the L-Type Magna and SA Saloon. Lew hoped to restore all three MGs prior to becoming disabled. During his final years he remained active researching and acquiring an impressive collection of parts. Our website has over 1,100 photos showing each and every part. All three cars have titles.

Website: <https://3mgs.org/>

Please contact us to schedule an on-site review of the cars and their parts,
located in Watsonville, California.

Contact: Douglas at (925) 519-036(six)

Owner: Nancy Reader **Email:** info@3MGs.org



Captivated by MGs

By Marty Rayman of Kentfield

It started with loving my dad's '55 Studebaker & loving to look at my pack of vintage car trading cards back sometime when I was about ten. I was fixated on the MG TC, with the spoked, motorcycle style wheels.

Many decades, cars, model cars & books later, I realized that a right-hand drive car from the 1940's would be a difficult car to drive as we moved into the 21st century. In 1997 we were happy to become the owners/caretakers of a British Racing Green 1953 MG TD, named TeD. It delightfully drove like the 1974 VW Karmann Ghia that I owned. The unparalleled back roads of Marin County were a thrill to motor on in TeD.

We tried to be like Jack & Jacqui Kennedy. We even rented an Austin Healey & drove around the Cotswolds in England. Naomi was never thrilled to be a passenger in the TD nor to drive it. However, she was a car gal; see her with her dad's 1950 Caddy.

We both loved the lines of the MGA. With 92 horsepower it was about double that of TeD, handled infinitely better & the cockpit was far more comfortable. We sold the TD & in a moment of not mid-life but end-of-life crisis, we purchased a 1962 MGA 1600 MKII. It was one of the last ones, of about 3,500 that MG made. It had all the technological improvements that preceded the MGB. Gary in Iowa had done a detailed, beautiful, frame off restoration in 2012-13. We managed to convince him to part with it in June 2021 & then we parted with TeD.

We made some improvements to the Torch Red (a GM color) MGA; shoulder belts, badge bars for the collection that had adorned TeD and a trailer hitch welded to the frame to hold a Thule bike rack. With the bike rack I could combine two of my passions.

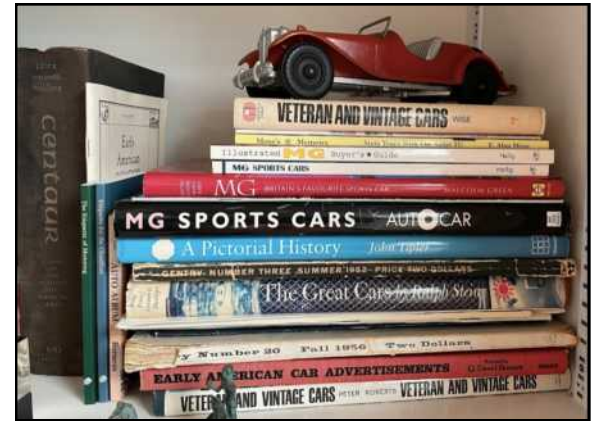
We continue to enjoy car events and in the past two months, displayed the MGA in three shows.

Cheers,
Marty

Here's the link to the Google SlideShow:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/HT7pSdMG9EW5Xmbd8>

Enjoy.



Photos from the author



Marty's son enjoys the MGA





Why have we never visited this place? We can all strap a bike or unicycle on the luggage rack and caravan up there.
- Dan

Photos from Marty

Marty has been to visit family in New York City recently. He reports seeing two MGs on 'The Streets of Brooklyn' - but only one parked on the sidewalk!



The Frontline MGB LE 50

THE EVOLUTIONARY MG LE50

We'd like to introduce you to the MG LE50. The natural evolution of the sporting Grand Tourer. There's no mistaking the car's silhouette. It's the classic MGB, designed in 1962 by Pininfarina, reimagined and re-engineered for the 21st century by Frontline Developments.

We've taken all the elements that made the original car a legend in its time and brought it up to date, allowing it to evolve into a sports car made for today.

The sports car you've been waiting for.

* Note that Pininfarina did not design the MGB but was consulted on the MGB/GT.

BODY/CHASSIS

To create the LE50, we start with an original iconic MGB and over the course of many weeks and months fully restore the body using all new panels that are hand built in Oxfordshire by British Motor Heritage to the identical specifications of the original and then apply our own exacting build standards. Every panel is examined, refinished and realigned until it's perfect. All panel gaps are symmetrical, every blemish eradicated. The original may have been fine in the 20th century but we've evolved a little since then.

ENGINE & TRANSMISSION

At the heart of the LE50 beats a brand new, factory supplied, 2.0 litre, 4 cylinder aluminium engine from Mazda. A billet crank and rods, Teflon coated forged pistons, solid lifters and variable cam timing offer the kind of performance and reliability unheard of when the original MGB hit the roads. 45mm direct to head throttle bodies, Omex engine management, 6 speed aluminium manual transmission and a 3.9:1 ratio rear differential bring the LE50 screaming even further into the 21st century.



PERFORMANCE FIGURES

- ✓ 0-60 mph: 5.1 seconds
- ✓ Top speed: 160 mph
- ✓ Power: 214bhp @ 7200rpm
- ✓ Max torque: 236 Nm
- ✓ Max rpm: 7800
- ✓ Power to weight: 226 bhp / tonne



Keep Planning for 2021



FALL-WINTER

Wed., Nov. 10, Sonoma Tour, MGOC, Marla & Andy Preston. See page 13

Sat., Dec. 11, MGOC Holiday Tea, Elaine and Mike, San Francisco

Jan. 8, 2022. MGOC Planning Meeting, Marcia and George, Berkeley



SUMMER 2022

June 6-10, 2022. NAMGAR GT in Colorado Springs

June 19-23, 2022. NAMGBR MG2022 in Peterborough, Ontario, Toronto-Ottawa, Canada

GOF West will be in Buellton near Solvang. Think Split Pea Soup. Dates to be announced.

1956 MG Streamliner at Bonneville

Check out the video of this important MG success.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83AQiSCZvIg>



Offside and Near-Side—a Mystery Solved

by **Terry Trovato**

Ever wonder why the eared knock-offs used to attach wire wheels to the splines on the right side of our British cars are stamped with "offside" undo? Obviously, the "undo" designation determines which way you should apply the hammer to the ear of the knock-off to loosen, or undo, the wheel. But "offside?" That's another story. It goes back to the horse-drawn carriage equestrian days in England prior to the invention of and manufacturing of the first automobile in the Mother Country.

A bit of background: The first automobile bodies in England were created by "coachbuilders," who had been building coaches that were pulled by teams of horses. More often than not the bodies of these coaches contained wooden skeletons and this practice was continued when it came to creating bodies for automobiles. And, to carry the equestrian theme further, when wire wheels, manufactured by Rudge-Whitworth featuring an eared, center-locking knock-off hub system came into vogue, the knock-offs designated to hold the wheels onto the right side of the vehicle were designated as "offside."



Why? Because an Englishman always mounts his favorite steed from the "near," or left side; hence, the right side of the animal is the "off" side.

It should be noted that the left-side eared knock-offs have a right-hand thread pattern, while the right-side eared knock-offs feature the reverse, left-hand thread pattern. This ensures that the knock-offs, when correctly applied to the designated side of the vehicle, won't loosen themselves while traveling forward. There are two common safety concerns here: One, never install the knock-offs designated for the left side on the opposite side of the vehicle and vice-versa. When affixed to the proper side of the vehicle, the knock-offs are self-tightening, but if reversed, they are self-loosening! Also, it is suggested one should never try and tow a wire-wheeled car backward via a tow-dolly.*

So, "Offside Undo?" Thank the equestrians from days gone by. [And I thought it related to "kerbs" - Ed.]

Stolen from the South Alabama British Car Club.



* I am convinced the dangerous condition is when braking, creating a force between the rotating wheel and the stopping force on the hub. Hence a fast run backwards with hard braking could loosen a knock-off. I do not hear anyone warn people not to brake when backing up. I do not worry about towing a car backwards with no braking force on the hub. The only danger would be should the brakes lock up somehow or the wheel bearings seize. (I also could forget to release the handbrake that acts on all four wheels on my MG PA!) However, I wire on the knock-offs when towing backwards to not offend and worry other folks.

Our UK MG folk often speak of offside and nearside and I was never quite sure what side they referred to. I assumed that the "nearside" referred to the side next to the driver in the UK, i.e. the right side. Wrong! Then I thought it must be the curb side of a right-hand drive car. Right! (No, "Correct" since it is Left.)

There is a cute cartoon that shows a spectator studying a knock-off on an MG at a show and announcing, "Ah, this car is a 'Undo.'" Sorry, I couldn't find the cartoon. - Dan

Note bailing wire holding knock-off



1950 MG TD John Von Neumann Special

From MGOC member Jeff Abramson

This MG was purchased new early in 1950 by John Von Neumann. Immediately the wood was removed from the body tub and replaced with electrical conduit tubing. The fenders, hood, gas tank, doors, front and rear valences were replaced with aluminum. The body was sectioned including the radiator and grille. The body was then dropped over the frame like an American hot rod lowboy.

All the special bodywork was done by Emil Deidt, famous Southern California auto body builder. The frame was lightened thru cutting holes out of the boxed frame. Holes were alternated on the inside and out to maintain strength. The front A-arm suspension was drilled to lighten it. The TD gearbox was replaced with the stronger and lighter TC gearbox.

Instruments not needed for racing were removed from the dashboard and the dash was made of engine turned aluminum, again to reduce weight. A second line from the gas tank was added and another fuel pump. The engine was ported and relieved, larger carbs installed and an extractor exhaust system put on.

A Lucas magneto replaced the standard distributor which required reworking the side push rod cover. The fan was removed and the generator brackets rebuilt to move the generator enough to accommodate the large magneto. A baffled 6 qt oil pan replaced the smaller 5 qt standard. The rods were lightened, polished and the entire engine balanced. The head was shaved to increase compression.

Two individual driver and passenger seats were installed replacing the original single bench seat. Wooden floorboards were replaced with sheet aluminum. Eleanor, Johnnie's wife, made a new aluminum suede covered steering wheel.

The front coil springs were cut and spacers added to the rear springs to lower the ride height and the center of gravity. Rear spring leaves were removed to soften the rear suspension and traction bars were added to reduce twist in the rear end. The front dumb irons were cut off to reduce weight and an oil cooler added to handle the heat produced by the engine mods. Adjustable Andrex shocks replaced the original lever shocks at the rear. The drive shaft was remade to adjust to the shorter TC transmission.

Von Neumann Special Racing History

The car was entered into the first Pebble Beach Road Race in 1950. Johnnie Von Neumann drove it to victory in this race. It went on to win the Palm Springs race, Torrey Pines, Sandburg Hill Climb, and Carrell Speedway. In 1950 - 1951 it entered 14 races and won 7. Many changes were made to the car to make it more competitive between each race. For instance, special Alfin finned aluminum drums replaced the cast iron factory drums and 72 spoke Borrani wire wheels with mag rims replaced the steel disk wheels.

In 1952 it was sold to Tracy Bird and Bunky Bell. They won a number of races with it and eventually sold it back to Johnnie. Josie Von Neumann then drove it to many wins in the ladies races. Weber Carburetors were added and new intake/exhaust manifolds made. Later Johnnie shipped the car to Switzerland and converted it into a run around town car with bumpers and tuck and roll upholstery.

Al Moss bought the car from Johnnie in the mid 1980s and returned it to race configuration. He raced it for several years and then had Don Martine drive it for him. In 1989 Al Sold the car to Don Martine who had over 20 wins in Vintage racing including the 1994 Collier Cup beating 49 other MGs. The car has won in vintage racing at Sears Point, Coronado, Lime Rock, Watkins Glen and at Elhart Lake. It won the race class at Santa Barbara Concours. It has appeared at the Pebble Beach Concours twice. In 2005 it won the Rolex Award for Best Performance and Presentation at the Monterey Historics Road Races.

In 2017, the car was sold to Jeff Abramson who continues to race the car.



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5-Main MGB Motor Into an MGA 1500

by Dan Shockey

I recently attempted this job. It was a complex series of tasks, though not especially difficult or exacting to accomplish. My 1500 motor was tired and starting to leak. It turned out that the valve lifter surfaces were badly galled and had worn down the camshaft. So I could have rebuilt the engine economically and gained back power equivalent to a 1600 motor. But I wanted a further boost in power and to add a/c. Plus, an 18V MGB motor came my way, appearing to be in like-new, rebuilt shape at a great price.

Andy Preston recommended that I use this engine with the stock MGA gearbox and I had initially intended to do that. It would have simplified the job to not much more than an engine swap. I have been storing a D-type early MGB overdrive gearbox for many years and wanted to use that someday.

Then I was laid off from my job and I appeared to have a time window where I could tackle the extended project. Not knowing what all was involved, Thuy told me to go ahead and do it. Halfway through the project, we decided to move house.

You can find various descriptions of what is involved in such conversions, most notable Barney Gaylord's MGA tech site on-line. I will only put in some notes to give you an idea of what is involved. I know many folks have considered such a conversion.

Engine

The early MGB motors, the ones with 3 main bearings instead of five, are the easiest swap. And many believe they remain the truest to the original. Three-main engines are considered freer-rev'ing. Nearly all MGA components bolt right up to this series of engines.

The 5-main engines have many advantages, however. They are much more available and have a much improved rear seal compared to the 3-main engines. A disadvantage is that they do not have a mechanical cable drive for the tachometer. However the mid-60s MGB electric tach is a near dead-ringer for the MGA tach. It can be converted to run on negative ground if you chose to do that.

My 1500 is an early car with the low mount starter. Later MGAs use a high mount starter, as do MGBs. In practice, this means that you have to either use an MGA starter and engine back plate or convert the tunnel to accommodate the different starter position. I was able to throw money at this and buy a new-style high-torque starter. With this starter, you do not need to modify the MGA tunnel and toe boards.

Gearbox

The gearbox (transmission) is the major change. I wanted to use the early (D-type) MGB overdrive unit since it is much

narrower than the later LH MGB unit.

It still requires significant changes to the gearbox mount in the MGA. The style of mounting is different plus the driveshaft is a different style and longer than any MGB driveshaft.

I had to obtain a rear plate from an early MGB motor then modify it to take the later rear main seal. This was tedious but not difficult. I used an early 5-main flywheel, one of those aluminum aftermarket ones with holes for either the MGB or MGA clutch plates. I chose to go with an MGA clutch plate with an MGB clutch disk. That required the use of an MGA front cover and throw out lever for the gearbox.

Old engine and gearbox out above. New gearbox at left.



I was able to modify the gearbox mount with cutting and bending, no welding, just the addition of some plates bolted in to shore things up. I had to cut up the MGA tunnel. Mike Jacobsen gave me a spare tunnel that was very useful. The tunnel is not much changed, widened a bit in one area, and the parking brake mounts as normal. I needed to put in access plates to get at the overdrive components later, without having to remove everything for service and repairs.

Engine Externals

I used the MGA manifolds, carbs, and as many externals as I could. I had to get the shortest MGB water pump to give me clearance for the radiator. I already had an alternator on the MGA so kept that now using the MGB mount. I put early MGB needles in the carbs. It was definitely too lean with the MGA needles.

Overdrive Shifter

The overdrive box was missing its shifter. That caused me consternation. I was able to use the shifter unit from a later MGB box but I don't have the automatic cutouts for the overdrive so that it can only function in 3rd or 4th gear. The shifter is quite a bit further forward than the MGA. You can modify a shifter to lengthen it – if I had one. (I was able to buy the housing only on eBay.) I created a shifter that is bent back at about a 45-degree angle to put the knob at about the right place for the MGA but further tunnel mods were required.

I had to shim the radiator forward using plywood, about 7/16", I believe. That required bending the flat panel in front of the radiator.

The gearbox is a rather tight fit inside the modified tunnel so I was concerned about vibrations. So when it vibrated badly at first test, I was really worried. It turns out that I had neglected to tighten the very-loose rear u-joint bolts! It is fine now.

Overdrive Testing

I tested the gearbox on the bench before installing it, using a large drill, a large drill bit the size of the input shaft (5/8"), and a bit of rubber hose connecting them. I am sure it was working though the speed change was not so apparent since the overdrive loaded down the motor. A stronger electric motor would have been better. I replaced the left cable knob on the heater panel with the O/D control switch.

Because we had decided to move, and with the GOF coming up, I set aside the MGA after only minimal testing. I have yet to get back to it and have not even completed wiring up the electric tach and the overdrive switches. The speedometer is WAY off, perhaps as much as 40% low.

Heater and A/C

I removed the heater completely while the gearbox and tunnel were out, and installed the a/c evaporator under the dash. The removal of the heater gave me a lot more room under the bonnet to work on wiring (and O/D) tasks. I will complete the a/c installation as Stage 2.

Plan of Work

I normally make a spreadsheet detailing all the tasks in order. In this case, I did not know enough to begin to create such a worksheet. It was 'winging it' more than I like to do. I really didn't know what all I would have to do at each stage. It came out better than I hoped – with the proviso that I am not quite done yet.

Each conversion will vary based on the engine, gearbox and model of MGA you are working with, along with preferences on clutch type (MGA vs. MGB). I plan to report back, perhaps even with a spreadsheet for future reference!

Above: Modified tunnel. Note a/c evaporator well forward under the dash



Belated Halloween Humour



Classified Ads

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

1949 MG TC: 5-speed; New tires and wheels; VW steering box, Original parts & spares; owned for 50 years. \$19,000. Member Jeff Stobbe, (831) 475-6233 or cjstobbe@live.com (Posted 11/21)

MG TA Tickford: Member Bill Hiland is selling his very special coach-built MG. Fewer than 40 are believed to still exist. Finished in the 'Cream Crackers' paint scheme, the MG is in excellent condition. In Morgan Hill. \$75k. (409) 314-2675, bill.otrc@gmail.com (Posted 10/21)

1959 MGA 1500: Running and partly restored. Owned since 1970s. Valued at \$20k. Will accept best offer. In Danville. Carole 925-786-7746, Caroleschmitt@comcast.net (Posted 10/21)

MGA Parts: As a service to members, I am passing along a source of MGA parts, including gearboxes, engine, radiators, rear end, disk wheels, fenders, door, removable hardtop, axles, hubs, and a new short tonneau. In Modesto. From flier at Dixon. 209-765-8989 (posted 10/21)

MG TD for sale: 32,000 original miles with new paint and interior. It's red. Purchased new by Carole's uncle who let Carole drive it to University. It's a Vancouver, BC, car. Rear end pumpkin was switched which allows you to go 65mph easily. We drove it 1000 miles recently with no problems. Member Walter, (408) 768-0214 (Posted 08/21)

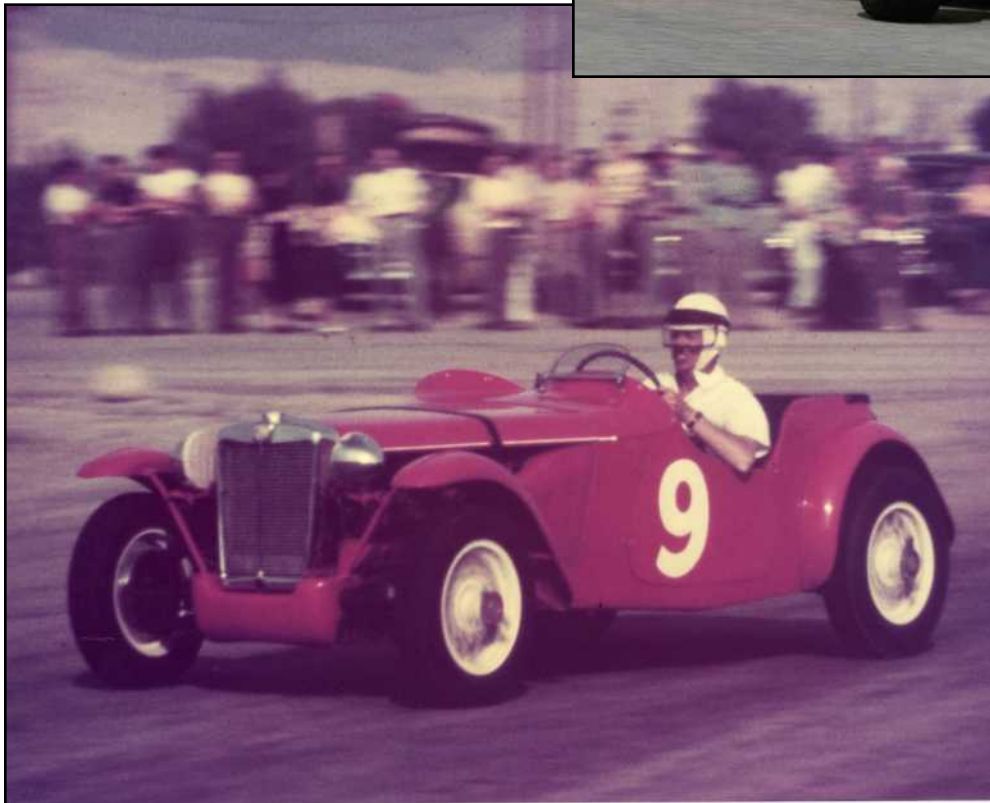
TD Luggage Rack Great shape! Member Marty Rayman, 415-250-6299 (Posted 10/21)

Enclosed Trailer for Rent: Enclosed car trailer for rent (16' x 8'). Trailer has integrated braking system and lights, 12 volt Electric Winch. Reasonable rates. Eric Baker (510) 517-2165

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



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Photos provided by the author

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North American MGB Register



Holiday Tea Party

1-4pm, Saturday, December 11
115 Pinehurst Way
San Francisco



Mike & Elaine

Caption?

"Sorry
Sport, only
room for the
luggage."

Andy's 1967
MGB

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