

Wynes & Tyres

March 2022



www.memphisbritishcars.org

British Sports Car Club, LTD Memphis, Tennessee

BSCC Officers 2020-2021

President	Al Ross
V. President (jointly)	Chris Irving / Paul Burdette
Treasurer	Jerry Farrar
Austin Healey Marque Leader	Jim Hofer
Empire Marque Leader	Tom Wilson
Jaguar Marque Leader	Dave White
MG Marque Leader	Paul Burdette
Triumph Marque Leader	Jon Brody
Lotus Marque Leader	Chris Irving
Secretary	Jim Duke

Membership Meetings

Coletta's Italian Restaurant
2850 Appling Rd.

Mark your calendar - **Monday,**
March 21st; 6:00 p.m. for dinner, 7:00 p.m.
for our program



Two, back-to-back BSCC gatherings highlighted February. The regular Membership Meeting was on Monday the 21st, and Taco Tuesday returned on the 22nd. Both get togethers brought folks out in hordes - all seats were taken at both meetings.

Chris Irving spoke on highlights of the TVR motor company, listing several of the notable cars produced. He especially focussed on the Chimaera, since that's the model he and Pam have at home (he drove his F-Type Jag to the meeting - a larger boot than the TVR's was needed).

Pam Irving took the floor as Chris concluded his program. She read from an amusing letter written to her husband's new mistress, the TVR. Maybe you can persuade Pam into sharing it with you.

Jerry Farrar, our treasurer updated us on the club's financial situation - we have over \$3,000 in club funds on deposit, along with some monies from the North American MGA Register for whom the BSCC will host the 2023 annual convention. The NAMGAR monies will be dispersed supporting the convention.

Taco Tuesday's return is wholly due to Ileana Feltman's effort. To which we can only say "OLE!"

Here are a few snaps of members enjoying both gatherings . . .





I was backing my car into the garage and asked my son to spot me, and let me know when I hit the wall.

I heard a bang. "3:45 PM", he said.

Events of 60 Years Ago 1962 - When Gas Cost \$0.28 A Gallon and A New Home averaged \$12,500

1. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth in February of 1962
2. Cuban Missile Crisis when USSR tried to deploy missiles in Cuba brought the world to the brink of world war,
3. Marilyn Monroe sang Happy Birthday to President Kennedy
4. Rioting at 'Ole Miss followed James Meredith attempting to enroll
5. President Kennedy proposed a "Consumer Bill of Rights."
6. The Space Needle in Seattle opened
7. Marvel's Spider-Man superhero made his first appearance in a comic.
8. Marilyn Monroe was found dead on August 5 after a overdose of sleeping pills
10. Oral Polio Vaccine developed by Albert Sabin given to millions of children to combat polio

11 The MGB was introduced



A wife texted her husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen, won't open."

Husband sent back: "Gently pour some lukewarm water over it and then gently tap the edges with hammer."

Wife texted back 10 minutes later: "Computer really messed up now."

MGB - 60 Years



In the late 1950s, the beautiful MGA was clearly losing out to the MG Midget (a badge-engineered Austin-Healey Sprite). Also painfully obvious, by then, was that new rivals, such as the Sunbeam Alpine and Triumph TR4A were proving to be very stiff competition.

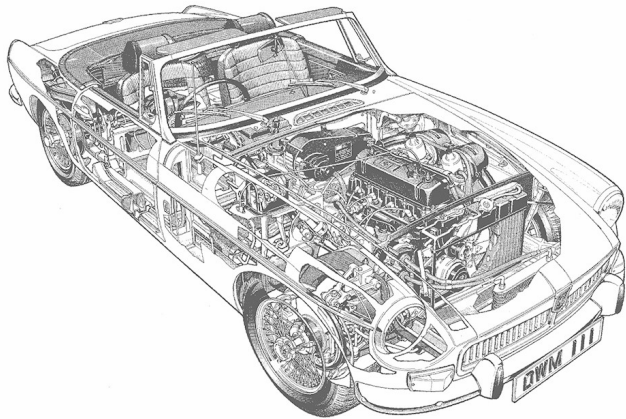


The MGA's performance and handling was still more than competitive, but its harsh ride was outclassed by rivals. While their performance and roadholding were equal to the MGA they also offered comfort and civility that was alien to the MG.

So, during the MGB's development, emphasis was placed on retaining the driver appeal of the MGA, while adding comfort and room denied to owners of the older car. The MGB would have a lot to live up to; the MGA was quite simply the most successful sports car of its time, more than 100,000 sold by 1962.

The MGB would also prove to be a success – though the extent of its success must have surprised everyone, not least the management at Abingdon at the time. The basic mechanics of the MGB remained pretty much as with the MGA, but the structure was completely new.

The bodyshell was an immensely stout monocoque that had been very effectively styled by MG's Don Hayter, with Pininfarina's aid.



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located by simple leaf springs, was used. The spring rates were much softer than the MGA's, in order to get the comfort and ride the Engineers were chasing.

The MGA's engine was enlarged from 1622cc to 1798cc, and thus provided enough power to offset the extra weight of the heavier



The front suspension and rack and pinion steering came over from the MGA, the whole assembly being mounted on a detachable crossmember. Of course, by 1962, this front-

monocoque structure of the MGB. With a suitable increase in torque as well, the MGB proved to be quicker than its predecessor.

So, at the 1962 London Motor Show, MG wheeled out the new car to considerable praise – and, as they had with the MGA before it, the company made sure that marketing and sales emphasis was placed firmly on the US market. The UK press lauded the car; Motor magazine, for instance, commented that the MGB was a *'delightful modern sports car with a marked bias towards the 'grand touring' character - a pleasure to drive.'*

And so it was that the MGB's long and successful career as the quintessential British sports car was born.

A GT version appeared late in 1965; a closed coupe version of the roadster, styled in part by Pininfarina. Mechanical changes were limited to the addition of a front anti-roll bar and

THE FRONT SUSPENSION

K

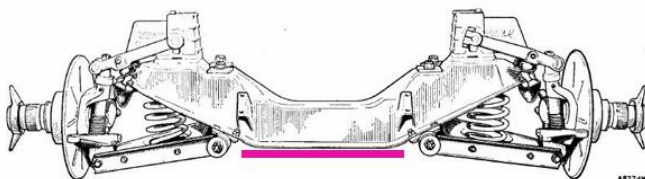


Fig. K.2
The front suspension cross-member and the suspension units

end suspension was rather long in the tooth; it had been derived from that of the 1947 MG YA saloon, effectively a pre-war design. Not that this mattered, because the set-up had proven to be a delight in the MGA and continued to be so when installed in the MGB.

For the rear suspension, various kinds of coil spring arrangements were tried, but in the end cost management won out, and the traditional arrangement of a live rear axle, sprung and



Salisbury-type rear axle. The GT's rear seats were only suitable for the smallest of children, but luggage capacity and versatility were much improved over the roadster's.

The next year, the MGC was launched, as BMC tried to fill the gap in their offerings left by the end of the Austin-Healey 3000. The engine chosen for the MGC was the BMC C-Series.



What set this application out as being a failure from the start was that the heavy seven-bearing-crank engine was lugubrious in the extreme, being decidedly unwilling to rev. And, because it was such a heavy power unit, it



upset the weight distribution of the little car, creating significant understeer.

Then, to meet the ever-tightening federal emission laws, later MGBs only muster 82bhp from their 'clean' B-Series engines, which saddled the car with less-than-adequate performance (0-60mph in 18seconds and 90mph maximum speed).

When the first major reorganization of British Leyland was undertaken in 1971, the company's car producers were split up into Austin-Morris and the Specialist Car Division (Jaguar, Rover and Triumph). Abingdon's MG

management must have been severely disappointed to be excluded from the 'specialist' category since they only produced sports cars. Maybe this was a very early omen of what lay ahead.

A bit of serendipity - in late 1969, Ken Costello, a saloon racer and head of the special tuning division of a Leyland dealer, happened to spot



a Rover V8 on the floor of a workshop in Hays, Kent. After thinking it over, he borrowed a red MGB from a friend, bought a used Oldsmobile 215 ci engine and went to work. By December, the car was running and sorted. The performance was incredible, so Ken started the **V8 Conversion Company** with eight employees. Customers would supply the MGB which Ken and his mechanics would convert using a Rover V8.

The Motoring News for March 1971 had a test-drive article on Costello's conversion, and they were enthusiastic. BL's director of engineering saw the article and convinced Costello to bring a car to Longbridge for BL's inspection.

They too were impressed, and asked Costello



to take a car to London so BL's chairman, Lord

Stokes, could see it for himself. After he was suitably captivated, Stokes asked Costello what he'd do if BL produced a version, to which, Costello responded, "I'll keep on building them because it will take you two years to get into production."

BL launched the MGB GT-V8 in August 1973. A couple of weeks before the launch, Costello took out the only ad ever for his conversions, it warned customers to "**be aware of imitations.**"

Unfortunately, the car was launched just as the effects of the 1973 Oil Crisis began to bite deeply – any V8-powered car was going to be seen as a bad thing when the national speed



limit had been dropped to 50mph and gas station lines became a fact of life. Oddly, and perhaps fatally, British Leyland elected to not export the V8 car to the United States where it might have been a natural fit.

Things could get worse – and worse they got the following year, when British Leyland rolled out the 'federalized' version of the MGB (MKII), resplendent with huge, 5mph-impact absorbing rubber bumpers and raised ride height to



comply with the new US impact laws. It wasn't until 1977 that the MGB was once again made to handle well, when rear anti-roll bars were fitted in order to counteract the effects of the raised ride height.

The MGB GT V8 is often viewed as the optimum MGB, with its smooth, strong engine and nimble road handling. The 3.5-litre engine truly felt at home in this car, which makes it all the more surprising to learn that it took five years from the formation of BLMC for this car to reach production.

Then, a only year later, the V8 model was quietly dropped – there was simply no demand for it in the UK and supplies of the ex-Buick engine were tight in the run-up to the launch of the Rover SD1, so the new executive saloon would have to take precedence over the MGB.

The final insult for MG with regard to the V8 model came when the Oxfordshire police force stopped using it in favor of the V6 Ford Capri. In all, 2591 V8s were sold, but this figure could – and should – have been much, much higher. If only the GT V8 had been launched back in 1967, instead of the MGC.

After that, the MGB, along with the Midget, was left to wither and die. As *What Car?* magazine noted in its 1979 road test of the MGB GT, 'The MGB has long been the butt of countless saloon-bar jokes and the object of derision in the motoring press. We feel, nevertheless, that it has appeals besides those of tradition and its much-vaunted period charm – it is cheap to buy and run and is surprisingly comfortable for two people even though time has clearly passed it by in terms of performance and interior design.' So obviously, the MG's charms were not lost, even in the face of the increasingly sophisticated opposition.

When the UK economy suffered in an international recession and terrible inflation in the mid-to-late 1970s, the currency exchange rates brought about such pressure that it became impossible to sell UK-manufactured

cars in the US at a reasonable price and still make a profit.

Of course, the US prices of MGs had to be kept at a reasonable level in order to keep sales going – the MSRP of a 1977 MGB was \$5,150 in 1977, and reached \$7,950 by 1980. In 1979, BL claimed that they were losing nearly \$2,000 on each MGB sold in America. It is questionable that this figure was strictly true, but it was still used to justify the actions of BL's then Chairman and Managing Director, Michael Edwardes.

Abingdon workers were already demoralized by the designation of Triumph as the corporate sports car marque, and saw their own factory's days as numbered. It therefore came as no surprise, with all that was going wrong within BL at the time, that Michael Edwardes made the decision to close the Abingdon factory, thereby bringing to a halt the production of all MG cars.

Actually, the announcement of closure was subject to another unbelievably insensitive and badly-timed decision. September 1979 was the 50th anniversary of MG Cars, and BL celebrated the event very publicly, lauding the company for all its achievements, such as the successes at Le Mans, sales in the US and the fantastic industrial relations enjoyed by the Abingdon workforce.

The residents of Abingdon saw celebrations the like of which they had never seen before, including the flying-in of 150 US MG dealers and their families – invited in recognition of their outstanding achievements in selling the car across the Atlantic.

The week-long celebration culminated on Sunday, 9 September in a carnival through the streets of Abingdon, and was rightly viewed as a grand event that managed to lift the spirits of all involved with MG at the time.

The very next day, Edwardes made public the plans for BL to close the MG factory by June 1980, and to stop production of the MGB and

Midget.



Vague promises were made regarding the future of the marque, but in essence, the workers and their families were given a right-royal kick in the teeth by the management that they had served so well. The last MGB, a pewter grey MGB GT, rolled off Abingdon's assembly line on October 23, 1979.

These were bad years for BL, and especially so for their sports cars, exacerbated by the neglect of MG, the failure of the Triumph Stag and TR7, and the company's inability to launch a direct replacement for the Jaguar E-type. However, what makes the MGB story all the more lamentable is the fact that Leyland had an undoubted success on its hands, a car that gave the entire company a higher profile in the world's biggest car market; yet a succession of 'dynamic' managers allowed the car – and the marque – to die.

However, MG didn't quite die, but was left on life support until the arrival of the new MGR V8 in 1992.



Wants & Gots

I remain looking for a buyer for my 1974 MGB, chrome bumpers. It's been in my garage for about 9 -10 years, just some surface rust, and clearly needing some TLC, tires and a top. Did I say I can't find my keys? \$2,000, for a new owner, should one of your members be interested. 63,707 miles.

Richard Stutz

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Ironies of life!

The doctor hopes you fall ill.

The police hopes you become a criminal.

The lawyer hopes you get into trouble.

The priest wants you to get married.

The coffin maker wants you dead.

Only a thief wishes you prosperity in life!

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