



Northumbrian

February 2014



“I’m sure we can squeeze it into the garage at home Marion”.

Read about John and Marion Mitchell’s trip to Cuba !

www.mgnorthumbria.org

Chairman's Chat

Hello again,

February already that means our season of runs starts again next month. Winter doesn't seem to last long these days especially compared to last year.

A couple of weeks ago in lovely winter sunshine I set off with Emma & Judy to test a possible venue for the Chairman's Run (30/3/14). Emma had her B's roof down, of course, but we couldn't get Judy's down. I navigated with Judy with the roof up and we got to our destination. First impressions very good, plenty of parking, nice décor with pictures of old planes and plenty of room. I spoke to the landlady who said they used to run the Avalon in Whitley Bay, known then and now for its links with biker clubs.

While reading the menu the landlord, who is also the chef, came out to chat. A former MG owner with plans to become an owner again, one day. There is a very large menu on a Saturday and we all enjoyed our meals, including deserts. Following a discussion about how they would look after us all with a Sunday lunch on 30/3 we agreed we would be back.

Realising the need to keep both my ladies happy, it was Emma's turn to enjoy my company on the return, with the roof still down this meant getting my hat on. The afternoon sun was setting by the time we left and we did get some strange looks, they must have thought we were mad.

Down to business.

By the time you read this the Corbridge group of 10 volunteers should have met and started the task of organising the show. Entry details will follow soon and you will receive an email or form if you have previously entered the show. If you haven't then visit the website for information.

The September trip is progressing well and hopefully details will be confirmed in the next week or two.

Best wishes

Tim Cook

New MG Dealership in Newcastle

This should be opening shortly, although the exact date is not yet known.

*Fox & Hounds Garage
388 West Road
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE5 2ER
0191 2288025*

Cuba, brief history and its American cars

When Christopher Columbus discovered Cuba in the 14th century he would never have known that he would eventually ignite the passions and desires of the Spanish, French, Dutch and English to colonise the island. It had much to offer with its strategic location and abundance of sugar.

After centuries of turbulent occupation, in 1909 the Cubans finally gained an element of control over their country and declared Home Rule.

However, in the early 1920's the Americans realised the commercial viability of the island and gained a firm grip, much to the distaste of many islanders.

In 1959 Fidel Castro was determined to be the People's President and with little bloodshed, gained power, nationalising American interests. The US retaliated by initiating an embargo restricting trade between the two countries, a relationship that exists to this day.

Staring economic disaster in the face, Cuba turned to the Soviets to open trade markets and provide defence aid.

As the US already had missiles in countries within what is now known as the European Union trained on the Soviet Union, the latter decided it would locate their missiles in Cuba to offer capability to strike the US. We now have the start of the Cuban Crisis of 1962 which so many of us will remember. This is the closest the world has come to a nuclear war, thankfully defused by rapid agreement on both sides (US and Soviet) to remove their respective deadly weapons.

With the US embargo in place, the Soviet Union continued to support Cuba until the dissolution of the former country to become Russia in 1991. It then saw little economic value in Cuba and began to cease support and so commenced the demise of the country.

As Marion and I walked off the Virgin Atlantic 747 named 'Pretty Woman' recently in Havana, the adventure was about to begin.

Some 60,000 American cars known locally as *Maquina Automobiles* exist today. Imported onto the island during the 1950's, they share the decaying highways of this crumbling country with a few Russian Moskvovich and Volgas.

Due to the existing embargo and subsequent lack of spare parts, most of these old, outrageously designed leviathans have been re-engined with Soviet diesels. Further to this, other functions of most vehicles such as gear change have also been modified. These early cars were either automatic or column change. Quite often now this function is accomplished by a lever projecting out from the dash. The Cubans are ingenious at keeping the old cars running.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the older and poorer the neighbourhood, the more interesting the cars become. Most vehicles in presentable condition operate as taxis. If they are convertibles there is an even greater chance that the driver will go home to his family with a smile on his face at the end of the day! The tourists flock to pack two or three on the plastic rear seats for £20 an hour, sliding about whilst rounding corners and soaking up the grandeur of Havana.

The Cuban Government stipulates stiff rules regarding ownership of these cars and are now making this somewhat 'difficult' in the hope people will buy new cars to stimulate economic growth.

Another cloud on the horizon is that the US has been observed trying to forge a more friendly relationship between the two countries. This could result in Americans being allowed onto the island and returning the cars home for restoration. The value of a good car such as the iconic '57 Chevrolet is under \$10,000, far less than its value back under the Stars and Stripes.

In conclusion, we travelled with Saga Holidays on a 14-day quite intensive tour. You certainly see Cuba and cover virtually the length of the island. One difficulty may be taking your eyes off those most beautiful vehicles, a fond memory to many baby-boomers on both sides of the Atlantic.

John Mitchell

Event Diary for February

5th **Clubnight**, Backworth 8.00 pm.

Guest speaker Kevin Prosser - "How not to restore an E type Jaguar".

Following on from John's article on Cuba, there was an interesting item on the radio just recently. Cars from abroad can now be purchased, the only slight snag being the price.

Such is the import charge imposed that the example quoted on Radio 4, a new Peugeot 3008, was on sale in a Havana dealership for the equivalent of £140,000! The price of a 3008 here ranges from £16,995 to £24,500 (inclusive of VAT) in case you were wondering.

New Member

This month we welcome to MG Northumbria **John Hetherington** of Newcastle. John has a green Midget reg. OVK 62M.

Could you do this?

We need a volunteer to put together a route for this year's Heritage Run. The start and finish points have already been determined so it "just" needs the bit in between.

If you would like to have a go but have not done a route before don't worry. There is plenty of helpful advice available.

Please contact Mike Mitchell if you are interested.

0191 2676448 or e mail

mjsmitchell@btinternet.com

Parts for sale

I have quite a number of MGB parts for sale, if anyone is interested because of the amount I have it may be easier to phone or e-mail me to find out if I have what they are looking for. If this is ok please contact me to arrange thanks,

Jimmy Clynes

jimclynes@talktalk.net

01661 833072

The club's research department have unearthed a little known fact. During the 1960's Monkees member Peter Tork owned an MGB GT. Later, gripped by nostalgia for his former pride and joy he wrote a song about it which was included on a solo album released in 1994.



Here are the lyrics to prove it!

Lately my mind is drifting back
To former days that used to be.
I think about some folks I knew and of my MGB-GT.
People let me tell you that if I had to make a recipe
For fun in driving I would have to spell it MGB-GT.
Cruising, using, choosing it,
amusing myself without a care;
Striving, thriving, hot-rod driving,
not arriving anywhere.
Folks, this little car of mine
was like a kitten purring throatily.
Sometimes it even seemed to soar
into the heavens, my red MGB-GT.
Tooling, fueling my good feeling,
schooling me in ways to know
Soaring, flooring it, adoring it,
my little way to go.
Folks, this little car of mine
was like a kitten purring throatily.
Sometimes it even seemed to soar
into the heavens, my red MGB-GT.

And I, I didn't give time to my car
and lost my car to time; what did I know?
And so life carries on,
And lots of things are better now for me.
And yet I think back on those golden times
When I had my red MGB-GT.



It's interesting that he chose a B GT rather than a roadster, which was presumably more popular in the US, especially in California.

The MGB GT V8

(With thanks to Don Hayter for his reminiscences.)

The MGB was designed by Don Hayter on a sheet of paper. No CAD systems in those days. In fact he says that the sheet was 15 by 8- feet that is! Don is particularly proud of the single curve from forward of the nose to behind the tail, straight from the record breaking EX181.

It was introduced in 1962 and developed into the GT which was a Farina design. This was signed off by John Thornley “instantly”.

In 1973, largely to compensate for the poor reception of the MGC GT (the press slated it but it was a superb GT in the true sense) the V8 was announced. It took only two weeks to develop. Surely not you ask, but the B was originally designed to have a V4 under its bonnet, hence the space available. Whereas the C needed a new front end with torsion bars, the V8 could manage with B suspension as the alloy V8 was very similar in weight to the iron straight 4.

MG's engineer's assessment of the Costello V8 conversion was that there were unacceptable points of design. For the factory V8 a redesign of the steering column, tweaks to the exhaust system and joints and changes to the carburetion and manifold were needed. A pair of SU HS6 carburettors obviated the need for a bonnet change and there was room for twin fans for the radiator. The development V8s destroyed gear boxes until a stronger 16 tooth first gear was fitted. The V8 engine was the biggest used in an MG up to that time. Dunlop wheels were tested to MG's specification, the testing stopped after one million reverses on the test machine.

The wheels were as tough as the machine. Dunlop's tyres though had a problem of control in assembly. Once this was fixed the 175 x HR14 was approved.

Oh and by the way 20 Bs were built with O series engines, these were signed off OK but the lack of sufficient engines put paid to that idea. One was also turbo charged.

However, typically for poor old British Leyland, the BGT V8 was announced just as the war clouds loomed over the Middle East and in no time at all petrol had shot up in price. I had briefly a hundred mile daily commute in that year and petrol leapt from 40 something pence to over 70 in a month or so (for an imperial gallon that is). So V8 production finally closed because senior management stopped the supply of the V8 engine from Rover – the low volume supplied to MG did not justify continuation!

I can recommend the MGB 50 DVD at £15, not for the car pictures but for the reminiscences at the forum in Abingdon School in the September, I was there and it was great. I am sorry that I didn't ask Don about the soft top V8 in the club; however he now has for sale a genuine factory open top V8. See adverts in MG magazines at the end of 2013.

Bob Heslop

Memorable advert for the V8 launch

If you've just bought a Reliant Scimitar GTE, a Datsun 240Z or an Alfa Romeo 2000 GTV, this will ruin your day.

At 124mph, the new MG is practical, the fastest thing on four wheels up to £3000. It does 0-60 in a brief 8.25 seconds and reaches its top cruising speed in 12 seconds. The lightweight 2.0 litre V8 engine which gives 137 bhp at 5000rpm and 193 lb. ft. of torque at 2800rpm.

The lightness of the engine, the uprated suspension and wider body lines give the V8 outstanding handling characteristics. It has Laycock over drive, brake servo, alloy wheels, low electric cooling fans, heated windows, head restraints and HIC pedigree. All is standard.

The new 124 mph MGB GT V8



from British Leyland: Makers of the best selling cars in Britain.



Corbridge Car Show 2014

As you will appreciate, it is always desirable that the club is made aware whenever a member changes their classic car. For Bob Heslop, this is especially important to enable him to keep the entry list as accurate as possible.

If you have recently changed your car, or will be doing so shortly, please ensure that you let Bob and our secretary Eillen Dalgarno, have the new car details as soon as possible.

Thank you.

For Sale

Morris Series 2 Saloon

Vehicle with family from new, when collected from Cowley.

First registered 24/3/1955, 2 door Saloon

Cylinder capacity 803 cc

Empire Green

Full restoration work carried out in 2005 by Nottingham Minor Centre, portland Farm, Sibthorpe near Newark. Further work carried out by Classic Cars of Darlington in November 2013.

Original interior seating and rear differential need attention.MOT till mid November 2014.

For Sale at £4250.

Richard Beavan Tel 0191 2377679

Photos of this car can be seen on the club website. Unfortunately due to technical problems it was not possible to show them here.



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