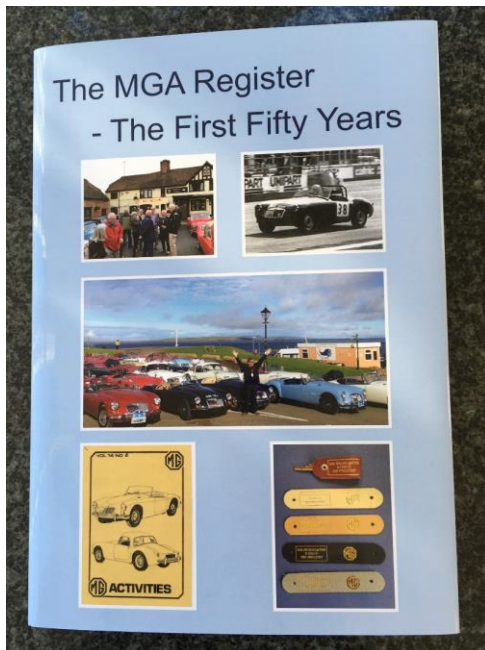


MGA Register

The First Fifty Years



This set of documents are the first two pages from a selection of the chapters in the Register's anniversary book.

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We hope that you will enjoy browsing these pages as you would in a high street book shop, please note there may be some minor additions when the book appears in print.

Ian Wilson

MGA Register Chairman

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Chapter 1 How It All Began by Roger Martin

By the late 1960s, MGAs had been out of production for more than five years and the earliest MGAs were over ten years old. They were typically owned by young men with more enthusiasm than car maintenance skills, who could not afford to have their cars maintained professionally. In addition, original equipment manufacturer (OEM) spare parts were being used up, except for those shared with other ongoing BMC models. Indeed, in the February 1969 edition of *Safety Fast!*, the monthly magazine of the MG Car Club (MGCC), MG specialist A E Witham of Walton-on Thames, specifically warned that the time had come when some spares would no longer be obtainable once existing stocks were exhausted.

This concern was echoed in the May edition of the same year when the *Safety Fast!* reviewer of the *MG Autobook Two* car maintenance manual, which covered the MGA, acknowledged that many spares for the MGA were no longer available from BMC and that improvisation may become the order of the day.

Recognising that the sharing of information on spares availability and interchangeability, reconditioning and repair services and the technical aspects of DIY maintenance had become such a valuable service to members of the then not-long formed Triple-M Register, some MGA-owning members of the MG Car Club felt that something similar would be beneficial for MGA owners.

Thoughts of MGA 'groupings' had been considered before 1970 and, indeed, the MGA Twin Cam Group had been formally instituted in 1966 for owners of that specific model of MGA. The first documented attempt at a broader MGA forum seems to have been when the MGCC North Western Centre invited MGA owners of both push-rod and Twin Cam cars for a lunchtime get-together on Sunday 27 July 1969. This was organised by Malcolm Knight and Bryan Ditchman at the *Tudor Rose* hotel between Hoylake and Chester, but nothing seems to have resulted from the exercise.

However, in 1970 prime mover Dennis Ogborn took the initiative. He had owned his MGA since buying it new in 1962 and regularly attended the monthly MGCC 'natter' at the Phoenix public house at Hartley Wintney. There, other enthusiastic MGA owners included George and Yvonne Ward, Peter and Val Harmer, Ian Andrew, Ralph Canby, a local twin cam owner,

and MGA-owning visitors from the Black Horse Natter in Gomshall. Dennis was encouraged by George who, like Peter Harmer, was already familiar with the benefits of a register through ownership of T type and Triple-M MGs, and so a proposal for a Register for MGAs with push-rod engines was conceived.

The first publicity for this occurred in the June 1970 edition of *Safety Fast!*, in a short item written by George Ward tucked away in the South Eastern Centre notes. It stated that at a recent Centre committee meeting the question had been asked "Is the time ripe for the formation of an MGA Register?" The piece stated that the last MGA had come off the production line eight years earlier and spares were beginning to dry up. Furthermore, it noted that a club-based mutual aid approach has helped owners of older MGs immeasurably and posed the question of looking to the future in respect of MGAs. The article ended with a plea for potential MGA Register volunteers, asking them to contact Dennis Ogborn.

Unfortunately, at this time, those in the MGCC hierarchy were not exactly well-disposed towards registers, the main club being primarily concerned with racing and a geographic area-based social approach to member benefits. Therefore, it was decided that a way to try to demonstrate demand was to invite interested MGA owners to that year's MGCC concours and gymkhana event at Beaulieu, to show support for the proposed MGA Register. The plan succeeded and twenty-four MGA owners duly turned up on the 23rd August 1970. The organisers hastily permitted an MGA-only parking area, albeit separate from the area cordoned-off for the main club event.

Quite what discussions took place within the MGCC hierarchy prior to September 1970 is unclear and there was certainly little mention of what was to come, either from MGCC General Secretary Gordon Cobban or Editor Martin Brent, in the September edition of *Safety Fast!* However, tucked away at the bottom of one page was a small box, with the following wording:

MGA	REGISTER
Active steps are being taken in the formation of the	Register
WATCH FOR FURTHER DETAILS	

MGCC Council approval was duly obtained and the MGA Register officially came into existence in October 1970 with the first appearance of an

MGA Register notes entry in *Safety Fast!* appearing in that month's edition. It stated that the aims and objectives of the new register were 'to encourage and assist all MGA owners by way of advice, technical information and spares availability, and to assist the MGCC in all pertinent matters'.

A 'temporary' MGA Register committee intended for the period up to mid-1971 was set up and comprised the following MGCC members:

Chairman/Secretary: Dennis Ogborn
Treasurer/Registrar: George and Yvonne Ward
Technical/Spares Secretary: Ian Andrew

The announcement also acknowledged the prior agreement between Dennis Ogborn and Mike Ellman-Brown, founder of the Twin Cam Group, by stating that 'Twin Cam owners must join their own Register (*sic*), as they will not be catered for in the MGA Register'.

However, some in the MGCC hierarchy were clearly still not that enthusiastic about registers as Dennis Ogborn alluded to in a letter to Roger Martin in November 1970 when he stated that Gordon Cobban "doesn't like registers organising anything" and as late as October 1971 the MGCC Council passed a resolution limiting the total number of registers to five. To enable this they decided that, for example, for financial purposes the Twin Cam Group would be considered part of the MGA Register and that the anticipated Z-Magnette Register should be 'administered' by the MGA Register.

Unfortunately, at a more practical level, the initiation of the MGA Register in early 1971 was significantly disrupted by a UK postal strike during February and March. This prevented MGA owners submitting their completed Registration Cards to apply for MGA Register membership, for which a five shillings annual registration fee had to be paid, as well as the dispatch of membership acknowledgement materials by the Registrar. Further complicating matters, during this same period George and Yvonne Ward and Ian Andrew sold their MGAs and relinquished their committee positions, which left Dennis Ogborn holding the reins. Fortunately, Peter Slip quickly assumed the role of Registrar and by the time that he was able to issue the first new-member 'welcome letters' and membership cards after the postal strike had ended the committee had evolved significantly. Geoffrey Harrad had become Treasurer and the Technical and Spares secretary roles had been separated and both split by area so as to give 'Northern and Midlands' and 'Southern and

Overseas' representation. In addition, London-based MG garage owner and MGA racer Vic Ellis had assumed a newly introduced Competitions Secretary role.

By mid-1971, membership of the MGA Register had reached the magic 100, and by then included members from Holland, Luxembourg, Germany, and Switzerland. It was proactive on the spares front and had announced that moves were already afoot to obtain aluminium-framed sidscreens and sill-reinforcement and pillar assembly sections, the latter being priced at £12 each. Regalia items were also already being introduced, with adhesive register badges becoming available at 20p each post free. However, the Committee had decided that metal register grille badges would be too expensive to have manufactured at that time.

In his MGA Register 'welcome letter' Peter Slip had asked new members to submit articles for publication to the wider register membership, asking for 'words of experience, wisdom or even outright nonsense!'. Gratifyingly, there were sufficient member contributions for him to be able to launch a newsletter in 1972, the first edition being in May. This was independent of the MGCC and was planned to be published approximately bi-monthly under the auspices of a registered company, 'Snowball Press', specifically set up for this purpose. The six company directors included Dennis Ogborn and Peter Slip. Interest was such that 135 of the then 312 MGA Register members paid the subscription of £1 plus six addressed envelopes for Volume 1. With content ranging from register and racing news, technical and DIY maintenance to MGA prices and general humour, MGAactivities ran to fourteen volumes, the last edition being published in 1987.

Perhaps due to MGAactivities being separate from the MGCC, an MGA Register Newsletter was also introduced, with then *Safety Fast!* scribe Andrew Thomas requesting content contributions from members in the December 1977 edition of the magazine. This had to be subscribed to separately from the MGA Register, MGAactivities and, of course, the main MGCC subscription fee. The early copies were distributed with MGAactivities by Snowball Press to members subscribing to both publications but this ceased in early 1978. It is not known how many of these newsletters were published but it is clear that by the end of the 1970s there was definitely scope for the rationalisation of both the publication of MGA related topics and of subscriptions generally.

Chapter 3 Reunion at the Phoenix Inn by Ian Wilson

On the 26th October 2019 a reunion lunch was organised by the present MGA Register Committee. This was to celebrate the effort and persistence undertaken by MG Car Club members during 1969 and 1970 to establish an MGA Register, within the MG Car Club. The 'agitation' as it was called was based at the South East Centre Natter held at the Phoenix Inn on the second Friday of each month

Members of the initial committee of 1970 together with members who were involved in the agitation were invited to attend the lunch, as guests of the present Register committee. The Reunion lunch was publicised in Safety Fast and the Register eNewsletter many months before the lunch date. The uptake was slow at first but, with time, the requests increased and the original reservation for 60 lunches was exceeded and revised several times to accommodate the requests to attend.

Anyone who has visited the Phoenix Inn will know that to seat seventy three, in an 18th century coaching inn with ceiling beams giving a head clearance of only 5ft 4 inches and small segregated rooms would make a cosy ambiance. The landlord, Andrew Ryder and staff were excellent in serving our lunch. A menu had been circulated to all many weeks before the event and the staff took the orders from each table on the day. This worked very well and avoided the usual hassle of pre-ordering and then forgetting what was ordered or a change of mind on the day.

Cars started arrive about 10.30 and Graham Eke did a great job in organising the parking in what was a rather full car park due to the England v New Zealand (All Blacks) world rugby semi final was to start at 08.00, resulting in many locals taking their place early to watch the game on the pub television. A good atmosphere prevailed at the bar with some early arrivals for the lunch, watching the end of the game and England beating the All Blacks 19 to 7.

Saturday 26th October turned out to be a wet day with rain starting just before lunch and not letting up for the remainder of the day. However the weather was dry as people started to congregate in the car park with a lot of reminiscing. Old acquaintances were renewed and many photographs and documents perused and stories exchanged.

MGA members gathering and chatting before lunch.



Photograph by Ian Wilson



Photograph by Nick Kay



Photograph by Ian Wilson

Left to right Alan Whitfield, Keith Jackson, Nick Kay and Richard Day.



Heather Macwaters and Norman Jack

Norman Jack is explaining that he has purchased two MGAs in the USA and these were it transit somewhere on the high sea.



Photograph by Ian Wilson

Bill Train, Warren Marsh and Kathy Train



Photograph by Ian Wilson

Howard Quayle, Yvonne Rowe, Martin Rowe and Barry Knight. Barry is an active member of the T Register and organiser of the T Type Rebuild Seminars. Deep discussion on the origins of the MGA Register were taking place between Howard and Yvonne and after 50 years there was an opportunity to check facts with people who were there at the beginning.



Photograph Nick Kay

Ian Wilson, Keith Jackson and Claire Kay with a coffee before lunch.



Photograph by Ian Wilson

Whenever there is a gathering of MGAs there will inevitably be a bonnet up and a gathering of people looking into the void, expressing their opinion as to the problem. This is Ian Evans twin cam that arrived with an intermittent fuel pump issue. It was soon fixed for their drive home.

Before lunch, the current chairman, Ian Wilson gave a welcome to everyone and an introduction of all the Committee members past and present.



Photograph by John Lakey

It was satisfying that some of the original members that were involved with the establishment of the Register or were on the committee could take part in the lunch. Some had travelled long distances to be at the Phoenix Inn: George Ward - Treasurer 1970 to 71, Yvonne Ward (now Rowe) - Registrar 1970 to 71, Ian Andrew - Technical and Spares Secretary 1970 to 72, Roger Martin – Registrar 1985 to 2007 and agitator, Geoff Barron – Chairman 1995 to 2002, Secretary 1985 to 1995, Scribe 1984 to 1985, 1994 and Technical Advisor to present day and Peter Harmer - Register agitator and supporter.

Chapter 4 The “Register” by Stuart Mumby

This Chapter looks at the development of the Register Database, from its humble beginnings as a manual index card system to the present-day Microsoft Access software. Other areas that come under the jurisdiction of the Registrar include the management of owner applications to DVLA for the re-assignment of original Vehicle Registration Marks and for Age-Related numbers.

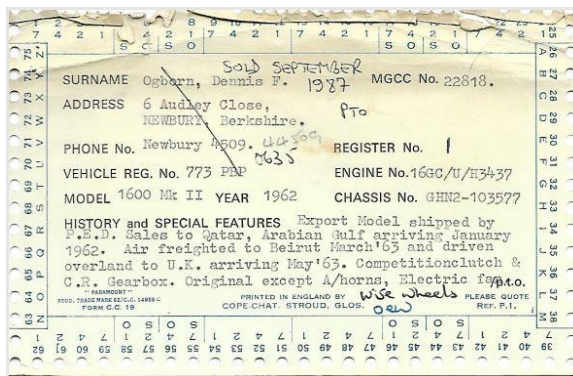
In the beginning

With the formation of the MGA Register came the requirement of a Registrar whose duty would be the establishment of a system of recording individual cars. The first incumbent of this post was Yvonne Ward (now Rowe), who held this position briefly in 1970 before passing the reins to Peter Slip who fulfilled that role from 1970 until 1981. He was succeeded by Roger Walmsley (1981-82) who in turn was succeeded by John Beavan (1982-85). In 1985 Roger Martin took over responsibility and continued in the role for a remarkable 22 years.



Yvonne Rowe, pictured in 2019 with her former MGA, which she owned when Registrar

At that time the register records consisted of two trays of cards, one in chassis number sequence and the other in the order that cars had been notified, that is Register number. These cards dated back to the inception of the MGA Register in 1970. In addition, John had compiled an exercise book, also in Register number order, for easier referral and to potentially record whether owners had renewed their MG Car Club membership each year. In the event, the latter never occurred as in those days there was little communication between the relatively independent registers and the main club office so the latter had no record of which members had registered cars and the former had no idea if registered owners were still members of the club.

An image of an early MGA Register index card. The card is yellowed and has a perforated left edge. It contains the following information: SURNAME Ogborn, Dennis F. 1937, MGCC No. 22818, ADDRESS 6 Audley Close, NEWBURY, Berkshire, PHONE No. Newbury 4509, VEHICLE REG. No. 773 PBP, MODEL 1600 Mk II YEAR 1962, ENGINE No. 163C/U/H3437, CHASSIS No. GHN2-103577. A handwritten note at the bottom reads: 'HISTORY and SPECIAL FEATURES Export Model shipped by P.M.D. Sales to Qatar, Arabian Gulf arriving January 1962. Air freighted to Beirut March '63 and driven overland to U.K. arriving May '63. Competition clutch & C.R. Gearbox. Original except A/horns, Electric 1990.0. WISE WHEELS'. The card is surrounded by a grid of numbers.

Early MGA Register Index Card – Register No.1



Dennis Ogborn's Register No.1, Betsy, with current owner Ted Hack

The two trays of index cards and the exercise book have been carefully preserved and are available in the event of a need to trace back to deal with queries. In practice, this is now a very rare event and so the cards and book can be looked upon as part of the historic archive material of the MGA Register.

Register No.1 was claimed by MGA Register founder member, Dennis Ogborn, for his 1600Mk2, GHN2 103577, affectionately known as Betsy.

Computerization

Roger Martin was a commercial IT manager with responsibilities for new technology at the time and was keen to get a first-hand view of the capabilities of the then emerging personal computer technology, so offered to try to computerise the MGA Register records. Rather appropriately, he remembers designing what was to become the Register database during spare time between meetings on a business trip to the USA where he was visiting IBM research and development establishments. Back home and using a borrowed Torch 8-bit commercial version of the BBC microcomputer he programmed a simple file management and printing capability using the then state-of-the-art utility dBasell. Data storage was then all external, facilitated on the Torch by two diskette drives, the data diskettes

themselves being known at the time as 'floppy disks'.



The Torch device, home of the first computerized version of the MGA Register Database

Long evenings were spent keying the information from the register cards into the computer system, firstly for those members who John Beavan had recorded as current paid-up members of the MG Car Club and later all other records. This effort brought a whole new dimension to the Registrar's capability. For example, for the first time, records could be easily searched by registration (licence plate) number and the whole file could be analysed by criteria such as model, type and year of manufacture. This might be old hat in the 21st Century but it was mind blowing in the mid-1980s when a query that might have taken days of effort with the card system could be achieved almost instantaneously on the computer. For some years, though, the card and computer systems were maintained in parallel, just in case either the 'new-fangled' technology didn't survive in the longer term or future Registrars were insufficiently computer literate to operate it.

The computer system demonstrated its worth later in 1985, when the advertising agency for the Embassy tobacco company approached the MG Car Club with a request for members to provide MGAs to feature in a television commercial for cigars. The agency wanted, at quite short notice, twenty white MGA roadsters for their advertisement that was to be filmed in North Yorkshire. Many tedious hours searching Register cards were avoided as the new computer system could easily extract potential car and club member details so that contact could promptly be made. In the event, eighteen white MGAs played their part in the film shoot.

Also, for the first time, printouts of registered car details could be produced for display and reference at club events, typically in chassis, registration number and owners' surname order.

This facility can no longer be provided as the free and uncontrolled provision of personal information has now been outlawed by the General Data Protection Regulations. For a while, before they were discontinued, the computer also printed the original style Register record cards.

The ease with which details of MGAs could be recorded, enquired upon and analysed with the computer prompted Roger to combine his personal files of MGA related information such that the combined database then also held information on MGAs advertised for sale or featured in magazines, seen on television or in films or just seen at events or on the road. This was done even if the chassis identity was unknown at the time of initial recording or the MGAs noted were Twin Cam models, not strictly part of the MGA Register's remit at that time. Some MGA traders were only too happy at that time to provide chassis data of their cars for sale to be included in the Register.

Liaison with DVLA

Predating any equivalent main club role, Roger also assumed the role of DVLA liaison with regard to MGAs, supporting owners attempting to licence their cars or obtain original registration numbers, perhaps because they had lost their documentation or had been imported from outside UK. Growing awareness of the MGA Register computerised records also led, on occasion, to Roger being contacted by the police and insurance companies needing assistance with MGA identification. On more than one occasion, in those days when less than scrupulous trade restorers were mixing and matching chassis frames, bodies and registration documents, instances occurred in which dealers attempted to claim the same identity for two MGAs.

Chapter 5. Technical Support

Ian Wilson

As we have learned the MGA Register was officially recognised by the MG Car Club, Central Council in October 1970 and in **Safety Fast**, for that month, Dennis Ogborn wrote the following:

"The aims and objectives are quite simply to provide encouragement and assistance to all MGA owners by way of advice, technical information and spares availability and to assist the Club in all pertinent matters"

This chapter explores the wealth of Technical Support, assistance and spares that the Register has provided over the past fifty years.

It is interesting the MGA Register initially had a temporary Committee of three officers:

Chairman/Secretary - Dennis Ogborn
Treasurer/Registrar - George Ward
Technical/Spares Secretary - Ian Andrew

The appointment of a Technical / Spares Secretary demonstrates the intent of the committee to provide Technical and Spares support from the start.

In the November 1970 edition of **Safety Fast** the following advert appeared:

**D.J.Sports,
R/O 146 High Street,
Waltham Cross**

MGA front wing from	£9 10s
MGA front valance	£2 15s
MGA door sill	£2 5s
MGA rear wing	£6 10s

In 1970 the average weekly wage was around £32 so spares at this time were available and affordable. However MGAs during this period were everyday vehicles used all year round for commuting and shopping. They would be at least 8 years old with some early cars 15 years old and many would have had several owners by this time. The second hand market would have greatly reduced the cost of

owning an MGA, which meant young single persons and students could afford one. So maintenance and repair of an MGA by their owner was a key part of keeping the cars running with minimal cost.

At the inception of the Register the only means of communication with members was through **Safety Fast**. However, at this time, **Safety Fast** had only 24 pages with one page devoted to all the Register Reports, this improved with time but still there was limited space for Technical Support and advertisement of spares for MGA owners. **Safety Fast** in February 1971 had a section titled 'Register Round Up - MGA Register' which included "A point to remember – a Register should be national and international and this is what your committee intends the MGA Register shall be". This followed in November 1971 with a re-organisation of the Spares and Technical Secretary role, which was split geographically north and south with a separate Technical and Spares Secretary for each area. The North Area included the Midlands and the Southern Area covered everything below including overseas liaison. The following appointments were made to provide the improved support both in the UK and overseas:

Northern Area

Technical - Jim Morris
Spares - M. Sinclair.

Southern Area

Technical and Overseas - Ian Andrew
Spares - Mike O'Neill

With the re-organisation of these roles the need to effectively communicate with members in providing technical help and spares information outside the constraints of **Safety Fast** became an increasingly important issue. To resolve this a separate independent bimonthly publication called **MGActivities** came into being. This was instigated by Dennis Ogborn and printed by Snowball Press. The first issue in May 1972 contained spares wanted and for sale, including a "BREAKERS PILE 58 COUPE – to sell parts, or the lot £50". This issue also contained some basic Technical Data on the MkII 1622 engine. **MGActivities** was published until 1987 and during this period contained a wealth of technical information, rebuild experiences and spares both wanted and for sale. The first 'in depth' technical article appeared in the second edition of **MGActivities** on "Modifying an MGA" by Bob Haigh, covering three full pages on replacing a burnt and

cracked MGA head with an MGB one in which he increased the inlet valve size and did some porting. This article was later followed up by Bob to include shaping and balancing of combustion chambers. In 1971 Vic Ellis published a three part article on getting MGAs to go faster with a section called Competitor Encouragement: Part one "Go Faster Hints" followed up in the next issue with Part 2 "The Moving Forward Bit 'engine'" and then in 1972 Part 3 "Janspeed manifold, scrutineering issues with boot firewall and petrol filler position". These were the first of many articles over the years by many authors to help MGA owners keep their car on the road, make them go faster and when required to make them stop.

During the 1970s and 1980s **Safety Fast** and **MGActivities** focused, over many articles, on the dreaded 'rust worm' and 'festering' of the MGA body especially the area between the outer sill, the inner sill and door pillars also between sill assembly and chassis. The sill and door pillar assembly is often referred to as a 'goal post' or sometimes an 'F section'. During the 1960s and 1970s several manufacturers were producing fiberglass replacement panels for the MGA including the sill reinforcement section. Some owners have in the past purchased a second hand MGA and were surprised, when subsequently undertaking work on their car, to find the inner sill section to be fiberglass and not steel. There were no reports in **Safety Fast** or **MGActivities** that the fiberglass sills were not structurally sound however there was a need for the original steel sill sections to be available to members undertaking their own rebuilds.

The MGA Register, principally Dennis Ogborn, took on the task of sourcing the sill section and the July edition of **Safety Fast** read: "Moves are afoot to obtain aluminium side screens and sill reinforcement sections. Watch out for news".

Sourcing and obtaining the aluminium side screens became a saga and we will deal with that separately although the process was concurrent with obtaining the sill reinforcement sections.

The Register, in November 1971, obtained the supply of sill reinforcement and pillar assembly at £12 each for left hand or right hand with no discount for a pair at £24. Three collection points were arranged at Newbury, Buckingham and Barnsley.

In January 1972 it became apparent that demand required a second batch of sill assemblies would be

required and these could be pre-ordered by sending a cheque made payable to the MGA Register, a current membership card and stamp addressed envelope to Geoff Harrad. Also in the following month a supply of 'closing panel inner sill' (part number AFH1656) became available at £1.50 a pair when ordered with the sill assembly or £2.25 when purchased separately. Later in the year both the sill assembly and the closing panel became available for delivery as well as direct collection.

In September 1972 Stu Holley wrote an excellent five page article in **MGActivities** with the title - Rebuilding: Doorpost and Sill Replacement, Part 1, Dismantling. The article included detailed drawing and clear advice on what is a complex part of restoring an MGA to achieve a good wing fit and door gaps. This was followed in early 1973 with Rebuilding: Part 2 Assembly, again with detailed explanatory steps on what to do and importantly what not to do.

There was a need by members, who were undertaking routine maintenance and rebuild for a supply of new shock absorbers and brake master cylinders and it was the Register they relied on to help. In February 1972 **Safety Fast** reported that these spares would be investigated and requested that if members knew of sources of these or other hard to obtain items they should provide the 'snippets' to the Register so they can be followed up for all the members.

Side Screen Saga

In July 1971 **Safety Fast** printed the following: "Moves are afoot to obtain Aluminium Side Screens" and by November Dennis Ogborn had commenced the task. This developed into a saga over the years and Dennis' documented the unfolding events in both **Safety Fast** and **MGActivities**. The following is an abbreviated account of what became known as the 'Side Screen Saga'.

Register members had indicated that fifteen sets of side screens would be required and after preliminary investigations the original equipment manufacturer was contacted, by letter, enquiring whether they could manufacture the side screens to the original specification. Several weeks lapsed before a response was received confirming fifteen sets could be manufactured at cost of £21 per set.

Chapter 6 MGA publications by George Dutton

“MGActivities”

Editor: Peter Slip

Date of Publication: May 1972 to November 1987

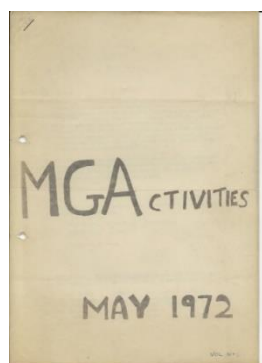
Annual subscription: (6 copies) £1.00 in 1972 rising to £3.50 by July 1982

Number printed: 84 editions.

The title *MGActivities* was suggested by Vic Ellis who served as the first Competition Secretary. It was published by Snowball Press, an independent registered company at 14a Cross Street, Reading and originally with Directors stated as Dennis Ogborn, Peter Slip (MD), Maggie Payne, Romy Owen, Anne Slip and Graham Payne. It was not under the control of the MG Car Club, perhaps due to the anti-Register attitude prevailing in some parts of the club at the time.

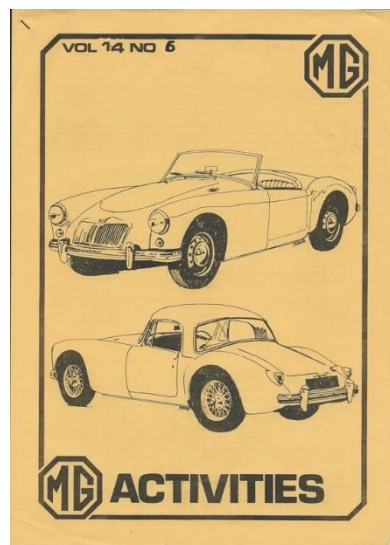
Vol.1 No.1 appeared in May 1972 and Vol.14 No.6 (final edition) appeared in 1987 - 84 editions in all. *MGActivities* mainly focussed on MGA Competition and did cover Tech issues and spares as well as cars for sale. In addition, there were two special *MGActivities* technical issues; one on the gearbox authored by Charlie Kaelin and the other on Floorboards and Sidescreens authored by Dick Gosling and Harry Tennant respectively.

It appears that the appearance of "Activities" Vol.1/No.1 was linked to tardiness, on the part of some Register Members, in renewing the 25p subscription paid to the Register in those days. In his own distinctive way, Dennis Ogborn wrote in *Safety fast!* of May 1972, *"to all you laggards, 'Delay no longer', or you will miss the coming 'things' to your advantage"*.



MGActivities The front cover of the first edition

In Vol.1/No.2 (now a mammoth 19 pages), Dennis Ogborn wrote that the Register now had over 200 cars, *"although a quarter have not renewed their subscription"* The Register was now pushing "Activities" as the main information source, Dennis writing in *Safety Fast!* for July-August 1972 *"all technical and advisory notes will appear in the Register publication from now on, so fill in the ("Activities subs.") slip or you might miss (vital information)."* In other words, don't rely on the columns of SF!



MGActivities The front cover of the final edition.

“The Development of the MGA (1955 – 1995)”

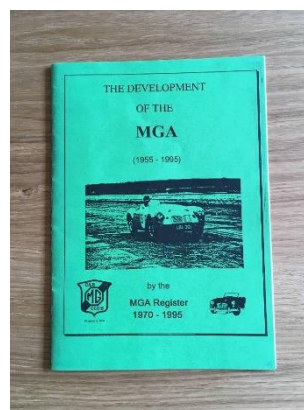
Author Rob Higgins MGA Register Historian

Date of Publication 1995

Number of Pages 24

Selling price not known

Number printed not known



Published to mark the 40th anniversary of the MGA and the 25th anniversary of the MGA Register, this soft back booklet was A5 size, bound with wire staples. There are 6 black and white photographs reproduced on pages 9 to 14.

Rob Higgins's main contribution is his research into the history of the Le Mans prototype cars and the first six production cars.

"The first six cars were used for testing and development by the works, and it is appropriate to discuss them in detail here. Unlike the Le Mans cars, which were handbuilt using specially manufactured components as necessary, these cars were built between 16 May 1955 and 23 June 1955, most likely using production components. All these cars were finished in Tyrolite Green with a grey interior, apart from the left hand drive car which was Orient Red with black trim. Tyrolite Green, if you are not sure, is rather like tinned mushy peas – a rather garish colour that is definitely an acquired taste!"

The book ends with quotations about the MGA from press reports in 1955 to contemporary writers in the mid 90's.

"The MGA is, in fact one of those cars whose cruising speeds are determined by road conditions, and this became evident after driving fast over French and Belgian roads. Long winding hillsides are a joy to traverse, the car rockets to the top in third gear. Autocar"

"We liked the new car's shape, speed, acceleration and handling; but we missed the conventional tool box and luggage space of the older cars. Wheels"

"This is a handsome job which should show up well in road testing. There is a strong desire to shout "The Prince is dead, long live the Prince". We feel the heir apparent has a long and successful reign before him. Sports Car Illustrated"

"The MGA is seen as one of the most photogenically appealing sports cars of all time, rivalled only by the Alpha Romeo Giulia Spyder. Professionals in the promotion business will go for an MGA since in the public mind it symbolises the archetypal sports car. Octagon Car Club Bulletin 1994"

"Mechanically it is simple, robust and reliable. The performance is perfectly adequate. The handling and road holding are among the best of any 1950s sports cars. It is a comfortable and easy car to drive and it is pretty. Original MGA 1993,"

"A Brief Guide to MGA Restoration"

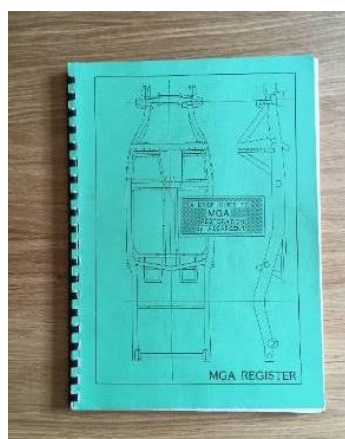
Author Andy Sargent

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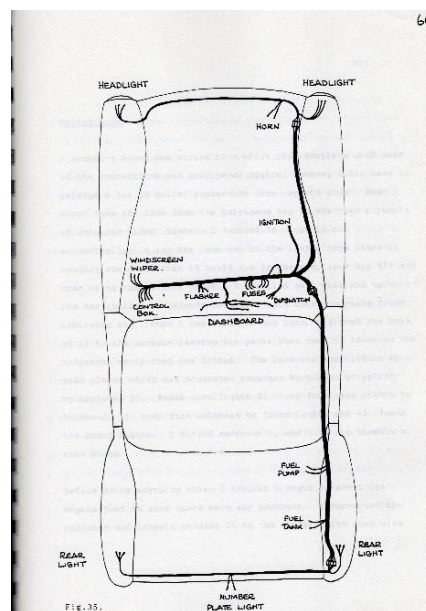
Number of pages 122

Selling price £6.00

Number printed, not known



Spiral bound with a soft cover, the A4 pages were copied in small batches to meet demand. Andy Sargent tells the story of his "hands on" restoration in terms that anyone can follow, illustrated with his own drawings. This one shows the layout of the wiring loom



Chapter 13 MGA Register Racing by Roger Martin

In the 21st Century, the MGA Register has no involvement with competition, motor racing or rallying, but this wasn't always the case. MGAs had been raced by wealthy enthusiasts since they first went on sale and, prior to the inception of the MGA Register, the MG Car Club amongst others readily accepted them as entrants within mixed sports and touring car grids.

By the late 1960s, MGAs had long ceased to be competitive at national and international level but had fallen in value to the extent that they offered a relatively cheap way into racing for the less well-heeled. So, also being strong and reliable with good basic handling capabilities, MGAs were chosen by a number of keen amateur racers at that time.

One such amateur was Vic Ellis. He already owned a 1500 coupe as his everyday car and decided to go racing with it. After a race in a mixed marque event he discovered the MG Car Club and started entering their races, typically mixing it with T-types and MGBs. Having carefully prepared the engine of his car to half-race 1650cc specification with assistance from his father who had contacts in British Leyland, in his first race at their summer Silverstone meeting in 1970 he won the Watkinson Trophy for highest placed MGA. Surprising many, he also achieved 2nd place overall in the race.



Vic Ellis

Another was MGA owner Roy McCarthy whom Vic had met at Brands Hatch in 1970 and persuaded to join him on the racing circuits. Other early MGA drivers starting lengthy club competition careers at about that time included Rob Innes-Ker, Neil Cawthorn and Colin Jones. Conveniently, Vic Ellis ran a club 'natter' at the Ship Inn at Mortlake, which Roy and Rob both attended.

MGA Register founder Dennis Ogborn was very keen on MGA racing and felt that there was potential synergy between the then new MGA Register and the MGA racing community. To this end he persuaded Vic Ellis to become MGA Register Competitions Secretary in 1971, which gave kudos to the Register and a second voice to the MGA racers at MG Car Club level administration.

The regulations were very loose in those early days. This resulted in some racing MGAs evolving progressively further and further away from standard, with ever increasing associated costs being incurred by those who wished to remain competitive. An extreme example was Ford employee Rob Haigh's car, which was eventually little more than an MGA chassis and body silhouette with mostly Ford RS components underneath.

Dennis Ogborn became increasingly concerned that the escalating specialisation and costs involved in racing MGAs would deter participation and risked reducing the number of MGAs being seen on the circuits. Therefore, he asked Vic Ellis to propose a set of what would become MGA Register Racing regulations, with the objective of levelling the field and keeping costs reasonable. To that end a meeting comprising Vic Ellis, Roy McCarthy and Rob Innes-Ker, with Dennis in attendance, was convened where the first set were drafted. There were to be just two classes; Standard and Road-modified, which would outlaw the more expensively or extremely modified cars such as that of Rob Haigh. Twin Cam MGAs would be eligible to compete in the Road-modified class.

The resulting MGA Register Racing championship had a number of trophies that were presented annually. Richard Fitzwilliam, he of the Fitzwilliam MGA Racing Team in the 1950s, donated the Fitzwilliam Trophy to be awarded to the overall champion.



MGA DINNER 1977

Prizewinners and Officials: From the left, Dennis Ogborn, Chairman, Jack Edney, Winner of Novices Award, Roy McCarthy, Overall and Modified Class Winner, Fitz Fitzwilliam, Guest of Honour, Diana Thomson, Lady Award Winner, Vic Ellis, Competition Secretary, Robert Innes-Ker, Standard Class Winner and Peter Slip, Register Secretary.

Awards Dinner scene as published in MGActivities

For the two classes there was the Snowball Trophy donated by the publisher of the 'MGActivities' newsletter for the winner of the Road-modified Class and the Ogborn Trophy for the winner of the Standard Class. In addition there were equivalent Snowball and Ogborn awards for 2nd and 3rd place class finishers plus an award for Best Lady and Best Novice finishers.

An annual dinner and dance was held at the end of each season when the various trophies were awarded and, when possible, Richard (Fitz) Fitzwilliam, would attend and present his trophy to the overall winner of the MGA Register Racing championship.

These regulations had the desired effect, resulting in healthy grids of between 20 and 30

MGAs at MG Car Club meetings during the 1970s, many sporting the MGA Register Racing decal specially created to publicise the championship. Numbers were such that from 1975 they were sufficient for MGAs to be given their own dedicated race at MG Car Club events.



MGA Register racing Decal

(Roger Martin)

