

FROM THE CLUB ARCHIVIST

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Welcome to the autumn issue of the archivist's Newsletter.

The long-awaited announcement of the date for the celebration of 100 years of MG cars is taking the MG world by storm. Yes, 2023 is the year in which we will celebrate the 100-year anniversary of the most famous sports car in the world.

For a long-time, MG fans were expecting the big event to be held in 2024 or even 2025. Remember the MGBGT Jubilee model released in 1975 to celebrate 50 years of MG cars, well they got that wrong. I think the basis for that date was the year 1925 when the so-called Old 1 MG was produced. As we know, Old No 1 wasn't actually the first MG car.

In fact, the basis for adopting 1923 as the start date for the special event is the year in which the Raworth bodied Morris super sport special was produced. Only six were ever manufactured and none have survived. Such a shame. Thankfully we still have photographs of the car to see what it looked like. It would be nice if someone built a replica of the first ever MG car. Now there's a project for someone. (Editor's comment – are the drawings still available, I suspect not, otherwise I'm sure someone would have had a go already at the project).



Raworth bodied "MG". The name comes from the coachbuilder that produced the body – Charles Raworth and Company of Oxford, UK. While it's not a particularly sporty looking car to our eyes of today, by the standards of the time, it had a certain sleekness about it.

The survival rate for early MG cars isn't that great. For the Bullnose MG, of which 336 were produced between 1924 and 1926, only 8 survive, while for the 14/28 model only 10 out of 290 that were produced remain today. Taking all MG cars produced between 1923 and 1931, 102 survive from the total of 1862 that were produced. That's a survival rate of only just over 5%. So, they are pretty rare things.

Talking of Oxford, while the town is probably best known as a centre for learning with Oxford University dating back to the 1400's, the town did have a significant motor industry history in the 20th century. The first MG car was first produced there as we have seen in 1923 and the MG company only moved to Abingdon in 1929. The area in Oxford called Cowley was the centre for the motor industry. The motor industry has largely long gone now.

Here is a wonderful street sign/mural that portrays the history of Cowley. Interestingly, the sign seems to be suggesting that the first MG was dated 1922. To my eyes the blue car would appear to be an image of Old No 1. (Not only is the date wrong but so too is the colour. It should be red!)



Cecil's house now a pub.

We've just enjoyed the celebration of Cecil Kimber's birthday, one of the highlights in our club calendar. This reminded me of my visit to Cecil's house in Abingdon. While it's not uncommon for a pub to be closed and converted to a private home, it's not often that a private residence becomes a pub. But that is indeed what happened to Cecil's home in Abingdon. It's now the Boundary House pub at 69 Oxford Street, Abingdon.

In 2018 while walking part of the Thames River Way, I called into the pub for an evening meal. It is a now a highly unpleasant sports pub with huge TV screens towering down at the punters and screaming out football results while in the corners gambling machines strip the drinkers of their hard-earned cash. I couldn't get out fast enough.

When I read some recent Trip advisor reviews, the reviewers strangely gave the pub good ratings. It could almost have been an entirely different establishment they were describing compared with my experience of it 4 years ago. Maybe things have improved, but I doubt.



A much more pleasant environment is the pub where the Abingdon Works Centre MG Car Club meet, called the Midget. There they have lots of MG memorabilia around the walls. I did enjoy my pork pie lunch there with a cold lager.





While on the theme of Abingdon, I couldn't resist not including these wonderful photographs taken in Abingdon recently (not by me I might add but flogged from a blog site called Abingdonblog)





While most of this Newsletter has talked about Cecil Kimber and Abingdon, I'd better include some photos closer to home before I close.



A very pleasant Christmas BBQ - Macraes domain - December 2010. Kevin and Doreen and John and Isobel and a mystery man. Any guesses?



Passing through Alexandra in January 2010 heading for the Queenstown street races. Barry and Bev's TD being discussed by Blair and Barry with David checking out things inside the car.



FAT 2018, club members being entertained by Alpen horn musicians from Switzerland while enjoying the stunning views over Lake Ohau. These instruments could be dismantled such that they can be taken on board an aircraft as cabin luggage!



Alistair discussing his RV8 with Bill? at a Best of British event held on the Portobello domain in March 2020. Alistair has since replaced the RV8 with a rather nice TF which sports a hardtop with a colourful Union Jack painted roof.

Regards
Russell Walker
Club archivist