

# FROM THE CLUB ARCHIVIST

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Welcome to the Mid-Winter issue of the archivist's Newsletter.

## **Bun Throwing in Abingdon**

If you are a fan of MG cars, then I'm sure, like me, you will have a soft spot in your heart for all things Abingdon.

Not only is Abingdon world famous as the home of the MG Sports car but also for a rather strange and unique custom of bun throwing. Yes, that's right bun throwing.

The custom started in 1760 to mark royal occasions and continues to this day with the most recent event being to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of the Queen when 5000 fruit buns were thrown to the community from the top of the County Hall Museum.

The buns are always specially baked for the occasion, usually with a crown design on the top, and are often fought for, hoarded and preserved by local families and visitors. Many a family have broken up when fighting for one of these prize possessions. (Sorry I couldn't help but make that bit up!). There's even a local cafe named after the tradition. And yes, buns are their speciality!

Here's the assembled locals waiting expectantly for the buns to rain down on them.



Not long to go now... many a happy face of all ages. I'm sure the gent on the right is asking of his daughter "why are we doing this again"?



And here they come...





While most buns are dispensed by hand, some enterprising “bun throwers” have even constructed special catapults to lob the buns some distance to ensure that people at the back of the square get their chance of catching a bun. I wonder how many hit the ground first? (I guess the rule that as long as food is retrieved within 3 seconds, its still safe to eat)

### **MGB60**

MG Car Clubs around the world will celebrate 60 years of the famous MGB sports car on 25 September this year and our local Club plans to join in this celebration. Watch out for more information in the Club Newsletters.



At the time of its introduction (1962) the motoring press were very impressed with the B roadster. "The Motor" magazine called it "a delightful modern sports car ... a pleasure to drive", while the "Sports Car" publication said it was "unquestionably the best sports car made at Abingdon". When people think of the MG sports car, most people visualise the B Roadster.

The phrase "half-a-million MG's" referred to the number of MGBs manufactured over the 18-year production period when production ceased in 1980. What was the basis for this phrase? I turned to my "Bible" on all things MG – "The Story of the MG Sports Car" by F Wilson McComb, my first ever MG book that I bought followed some years later by the revised and updated edition edited by Jonathon Wood.

The break down of the stats are: 387,259 MGB roadsters and 125,621 MGBGTs making a total of 512,880. In addition, there were about 9000 MGC and MGCGT models produced plus 2591 MGBGT V8's. I'm not sure we will ever find out for sure, but it would be interesting to know how many of these cars are intact and still on the road around the world.

A huge industry has grown up to keep these cars running through remanufacturing parts and components and there are many specialist engineers who focus just on keeping these cars together for their owners. There's no doubt that a major contributor to keeping the cars operational was when British Motor Heritage started remanufacturing body shells for the B roadster in 1988. Orders for the body shell when introduced far exceeded BMH expectations and kept the factory busy until 1993 when production stopped to make 2000 body shells for the MGRV8 model. BGT and midget shells have since been produced too.

When first introduced the B body shell cost GBP2600 while the price has escalated to GBP13,000 today with the BGT and BGTV8 shells costing GBP14,000 to GBP16,000. Double those figures to convert to NZ dollars and the amounts seem pretty hefty. Still these cars are part of motoring history and need to be preserved "at all cost"!



The MGB has proven to be an excellent Club racer and they have often been very successful in rallying. Many have been customised ... some people have gone somewhat over board as evidenced by these conversions.



### **Cecil's desk back home...**

In my first Archivist's Newsletter I spoke of the return of Cecil Kimber's writing desk to Abingdon. Since then, the desk has been sympathetically restored to maintain its patina and is on display in the John Thornley suite at Kimber House – the HQ for the UK MGCC.

The restorer confirmed the story that Cecil appears to have used green ink when writing and signing documents as evidenced by an ink spill stain in one of the draws.

The plan is that Marie and I will visit our daughter in the UK next year (deferred since 2020 due to COVID) and I will no doubt want to revisit Abingdon, particularly given that the 100 years of MG celebration starts in June 2023 and extends over the next year. So as a bit of amusement, I plan to take my green pen and write a letter using Cecil's desk. Or is this going a bit too far? Send me your thoughts.

**In closing here are some more photos from MGB50 to wet your appetite for MGB60.**





Yours  
Russell Walker  
Club Archivist

