



The famous MG record breaking cars.



1896 Wolseley - the first one



MG SA; Introduced in the 1935 Motor Show. It created controversy due to the design departure MG made, away from sports car style.

The Pilgrimage

Final Installment

By Simon Dix
MG Club of St Louis
All provided by Simon Dix

Although I have been to Beaulieu in the distant past, going back to before I even moved to the USA, I had not previously been to, or even heard of the Heritage Motor Centre (HMC) at Gaydon. Robert Rushing was up on all things MG and as Gaydon was in relatively close proximity to everything else we had planned, this became part of the vacation as well.

The museum is located on the grounds of the Land Rover/Jaguar/Aston Martin factories. Why this came to be is pretty convoluted, but a search on Wikipedia can explain it in detail

if you wish to learn more. One other attraction on site was the Land Rover Test Area that allows customers to drive through some rugged terrain and get an idea of what kind of abuse their new Land Rovers can take.

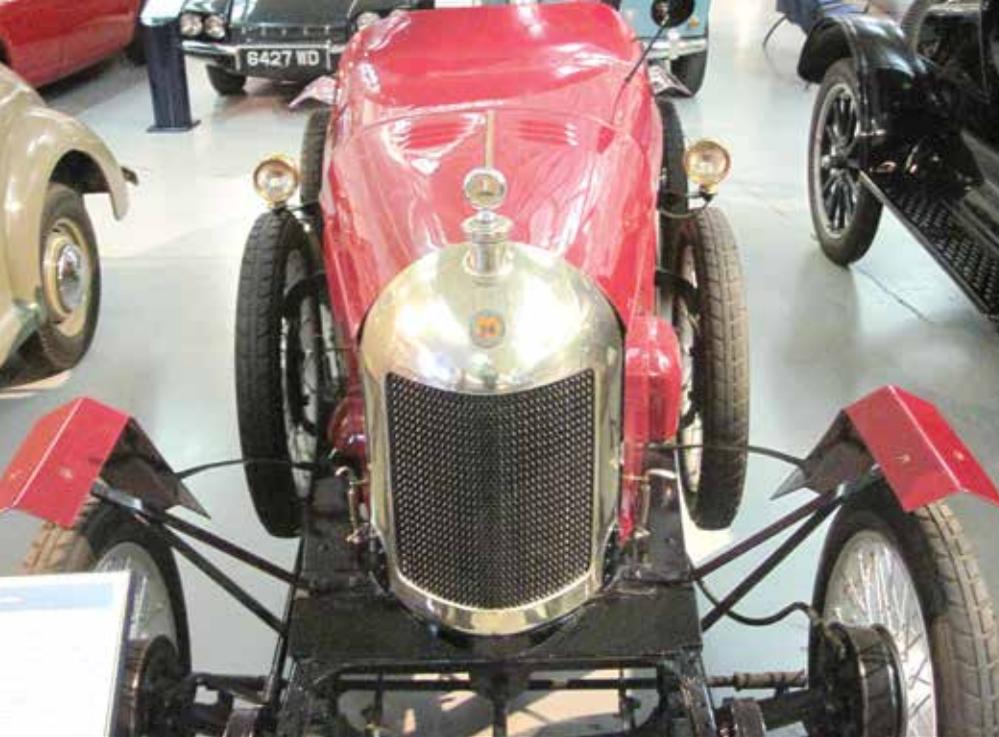
Although we wandered around by ourselves for a while when we arrived, there was an organized tour that we linked up with and a great guy named Bill Lacey gave us the tour. Bill's approach was to not go car by car and talk about the car's specifications, but more on the overall history of the automobile and the British motor industry. He started us off at the very beginning of motorized vehicles, which seemed to be bicycles with engines! This period lasted for some years and Britain was relatively backward compared to France and Italy as examples; in those countries cars were moving



The beautiful MG 18/80.



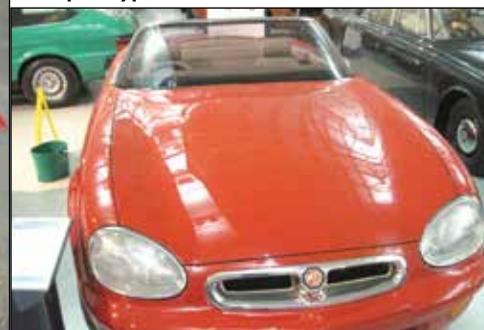
The well known elegant MG Magnette



ADO70 - Mini-based Midget replacement prototype.



1966 MG Midget concept - ADO34 - based on the Mini



1989 MG DR2 Prototype based on a TVR.



An early MG prototype model.

1925 MG
'Old Number One'

Although traditionally referred to as 'Old Number One', this is not the first 'MG' car. A saloon based on the Bullnose Morris chassis had been advertised under the famous initials early in 1924 and several more 'MG sports Morris' cars followed before the year was out.

The car registered FC 7900 was a one-off special completed in March 1925 for Cecil Kimber. He entered it in the Land's End Trial and was awarded a Gold medal. His passenger on that occasion was Wilfred Matthews, who was later described by Kimber as "my first passenger in my first MG". Kimber was manager of Morris Garages in Oxford, the business which lent its initials to MG.

Early MGs, including this 'Kimber Special', were based on standard chassis with special coachwork, far more elegant than the normal range of Morris bodies. Old Number One had bodywork by Carbodies of Coventry and used a special overhead valve version of the sidevalve Hotchkiss-type engine normally found in the Bullnose Morris. This engine has been dated to 1921.

The car is reputed to have cost £279 to build and, soon after the Trial, Kimber sold it to Harry Turner of Stockport for £300, thereby making a profit. After it had gone through several ownerships, MG bought it back in 1932 for the princely sum of £15.

Engines: 4 cyl, 1496cc	Top speed: 82mph [132km/h]
Power: 40 bhp	Coachwork: 2 seater sports
Price new: n/a	Registration mark: FC 7900
Accession number: 1900-1-38	



Cecil Kimber sat here.



3/4 view of "Old Number One."

around at 60+ miles an hour while in Britain we had motorized vehicles at around 20 miles an hour top speed.

Bill continued to take us through the early 1900s and we learned that originally there was no standard for the positioning of the clutch, brake, accelerator pedals, and other controls. This made it difficult for the drivers to switch vehicles. If that wasn't tough enough, many vehicles ran on different fuels so you couldn't just pull in somewhere to fill up. In fact, if you wanted to travel from Gaydon to London in those days, you would need to order your particular fuel and have it shipped to a druggist (since most chemicals were only sold through pharmacies in those days) several days in advance. This would allow you to fill up on the way down and then you would have to do the same again for the return trip.

It wasn't until the start of the First World War that things started to get standardized. The founder of what was to become the British School of Motoring (BSM), made an offer to the Army



2004 MG SV X-Power



Morris factory fire truck. (Not a clown car.)



Some great classics line up in the museum.



The only MGB on display



Special display case from the MG Car Club.



1985 MG Metro 6R4 Group B Rally Car.

to train drivers on Austin vehicles that had the Accelerator, Brake, Clutch arrangement that we now know as the standard. Hmm... A, B, C - I'd never thought of it that simply before. As we went along the time wall, we also discussed and viewed the changing of the road surface. What started out as cart tracks became better with loose rocks, then packed rocks, then tarmac, etc.

It seemed that everything led to the mid-1930s when things changed and became the basis of what we know today. Everything from the concept of the engines, through to the road surfaces and even the road signs and speed limited are still, in Britain, based on those defined in the 1930s. Sure, the signs have been modernized, but the concept of a warning red triangle and a symbol of the warning being given, for example, remain unchanged to this day.

Another interesting fact was the Automobile Association (AA) and Royal Automobile Club (RAC) started

out, as Bill put it, "as paid spies!" Their beginnings were to go out and find speed traps, which were very popular in the early days of motoring. Apparently, the Police were not in favor of cars from the very beginning and because of the dust kicked up and other dangers to the broader non-driving population, the majority of people were also not in favor. Cars were not the norm for ordinary folk so there was a class element involved as well. Obviously, the AA and RAC evolved from being paid to find speed traps but an interesting start for sure.

From just looking around at the cars, there's a great selection to see. We also learned that the total collection is about twice as big as what the facility can display. That gets handled by simply rotating the cars so you may not always see the same thing each time. Not surprisingly my interests were focused on MGs; but they had Aston Martins from the latest Bond movies, three-wheeler Post Office cars



A wide variety of cars on display.



Display of Prototypes.



The display of car badges and pins.



More historic regalia of signs, clocks, and cups.



The MG clock from the factory offices.



The winning Monte Carlo Rally Minis.



Jackie Stewart's F1 car.



The last MG Midget built.



Cut away of an MGB-GT. Below is the engine.



(Dell boy and Rodney: Only Fools and Horses anyone?), the last Classic Mini, and a Land Rover with caterpillar tracks – quite a variety.

On the purely MG front there was a surprising number cars in the centre. It's hard to pick a highlight from all of these so I'll perhaps pick three! First choice would probably be seeing Old Number One for the very first time; second was seeing the relatively famous MGB/GT that has been cut in half, and thirdly I would choose seeing all three of the record-breaking cars.

There was a lot to see at the centre and I would have liked to have spent a little more time there. However, this wasn't quite as interesting of a car thing for our spouses and the absence of somewhere on site that could produce a full English cream tea was another factor. As such we decided we'd better be on our way and go to Warwick for said Cream Tea; and very tasty it was too! The Heritage Motor Centre is well worth a visit so if you're over in the UK take some time if you can to go and look for yourself.

Sidebar

By Robert Rushing

Besides the car collection, the BMHT museum also houses all the production records for BMC and British Leyland. One of the things I wanted to do while visiting the museum was to see the actual build entries for my 1971 MGB. I made my way to the back office and talked to the staff. I guess they get stammering people with starry looks in their eyes often, because they gently guided me to the counter and had me fill out the info card before calling the historian.

After reading my card, he went to the shelves and brought out this huge metal case and opened it up. Inside were large sheets of lined paper. He flipped through them until he came to my production record. It was in about the middle of a long list of car numbers. There before me was my car number stamped in black ink in large block number, next to that was its stamped build date (by one of those old style date stamps), hand-written notes about the color and interior, options, etc, and all the relevant information such as body and engine numbers.

It was very neat to see that bit of history and I wish I could have taken some pictures, but the selling of the certificates is one of the ways they keep the lights on and the car collection together. To help towards that end, I ordered a copy of my certificate while I was there. You can order yours as well by going to www.heritage-motor-centre.co.uk.

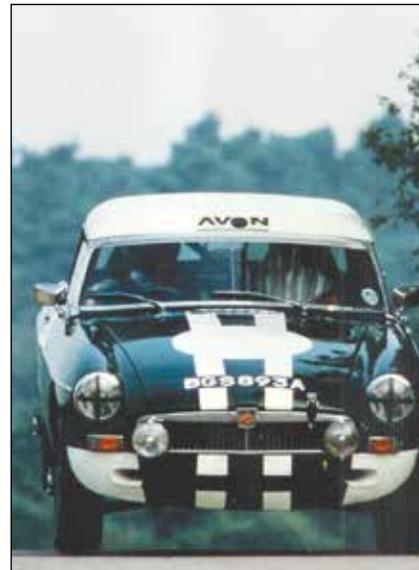


Malcolm Gammons and Glenn Jarvis - International Rally Britannia 1993.

Rally Photos

All Rally Photos by Tony Large • Submitted by Ken Smith

Tony began photographing rally car events in the UK during the mid-1970s and has continued on to this day. These are just a few of his early photos. To see more of Tony's work, go to www.tonylarge.net.



Malcolm Gammons and Glenn Jarvis coming in for a landing.



Malcolm Gammons and Glenn Jarvis - The Charrinetons Historic Rally of Great Britain. 1993