

HIGHLAND MOTORING



The Newsletter of the Highland MGOC

www.mghighland.co.uk

Contents:

Editorial

Batteries

2018 programme

AGM draft minutes

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2018. In this edition, I've highlighted the club programme for the year (the events & activities we support as a club) and some early in the season non-club activities that you may want to take part in.

The draft AGM minutes are also attached (thanks to Michael). You'll see that we are working with the MG Caledonian Club to allow members to 'guest' in each other club's events. 'Talks' (by email) have been going well and, weather permitting, the 2 chairmen and some other key members plan to meet at Perth this Friday (9

March) to seal the deal. Two MGCC events appear in our programme for this reason - still subject to final agreement at this stage.

Lastly, I need articles please for our next and following newsletters. Anything MG related would be welcome. Here below is one from Tim...

Richard Jenner

Batteries.....Don't Ignore Us Please.... (!)

Have you noticed that for some time an increasing number of new cars have their battery INSIDE a flapped box which whilst looking "tidy" presumably is to prevent you shorting out the terminals accidentally or as protection against engine heat or muck from the atmospheric and road debris elements? Such coverings mean that the battery is out-of-sight and possibly out-of-mind. After all we are severely advised on new cars NOT to touch anything (other than the screen-washer reservoir level....!) and leave everything else to warning-lights coming on when your oil or water levels are low or any other calamity in the electronic-sensor modern-era of monitoring your chariot. You are INSTRUCTED to avoid breaking the terms of warranty cover so leave them everything else to the manufacturer's official distributor lest you break the terms of your warranty...

In the "good old days" when the world was all milk and honey a vehicle's battery was "there" under your nose seen whenever you opened your bonnet hopefully; although not in the case of our 1947 Rover 16 or our MGC where along with other Abingdon built MG's of the post war era the battery(ies) are under the rear seat or parcel shelf just as "out of sight" and "out of mind" as today's cossetted boxed in batteries! Having the battery in view under the bonnet along with the radiator cap, oil dip stick and windscreen washer bottle allowed those of us who dabbled or did home-maintenance on our cars to check matters swiftly and relatively easily.



So vehicles' lead-acid batteries, (which frankly haven't changed in the way they work or are designed for 100 years), work hard. Once, all batteries had screw caps to check the individual cell electrolyte levels and if low we topped them up with ionised or distilled water. This worked well just as long as the specific gravity of the acid solution (electrolyte) around the lead cells was still the correct specific gravity. (Usually between 1.230-1.250 meant it was 70 % charged and between 1.11—1.130 meant your battery was FLAT). Now most modern cars are fitted with "sealed" batteries.

I suspect most drivers these days drive their cars without much thought for the battery. Once we would watch the ignition light to see if it went out once the engine fired - thus informing us that the dynamo was putting charge back into the battery via the voltage regulator; and later of course the alternator was a great improvement on the dynamo when it arrived in the 1960's and gave the battery a charge throughout the engine revolution range. At that time the trusty Ammeter, an instrument dial so loved by enthusiasts showed us whether the battery was charging or discharging as we increased the demands on it with headlights, horns, wipers and even the new-fangled heater! How those times seem to have disappeared and consigned to legend and myth!

So with the MGA, MGB, MGC, (which form the core of our MG classic motoring as regards pre 1981 owners club models) [*Midget owners' do you are with Tim? And your battery is somewhere sensible! Ed*] having their two 6-Volt in-series (thus 12V capacity) either -side of the differential in the rear axle ostensibly because (in the case of the MGA at any rate) there wasn't a lot of spare room under its bonnet for a front mounted battery but with sports cars looking for the nirvana of balanced weight distribution placing the batteries towards the rear of the car potentially gave a better weight distribution fore and aft, helping steering and spirited driving response. (Well - that was the advertising blurb of the day!!).

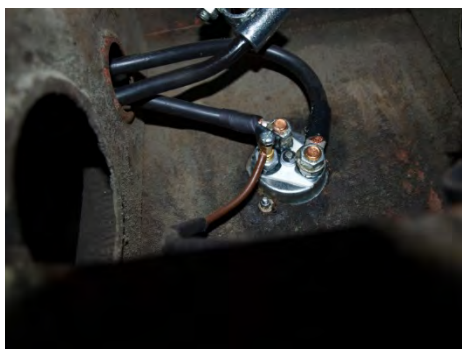
The price of this was that the batteries were now potentially ignored as regards keeping an eye on their casing-integrity, state of their positive and negative terminals - which if ignored and not smothered in petroleum jelly (yes that stuff young babies had put on their nether regions to avoid nappy rash from those rough "Terry" Towel Diapers..) could degrade and corrode with a nasty white acidic powder crust around the terminals meaning poor capability of passing voltage when required! Ergo if you can't see it you can't fix it.....ignorance is/was NOT bliss though!



I suspect DSU600G our MGCGT during its long lay-up by a previous owner in Strathpeffer between 1984-2002 (see earlier HMGOC Newsletters about this if you are in the least bit interested,,,) had its batteries left in place and heaven knows what a state they were in when the car was “exhumed” in 2002. They would have been long dead and I suspect with corroding terminals and dry cells... Not nice and potentially dangerous. Of course its major restoration between 2002 and 2005 then meant two new (but not heavy duty batteries) had to be fitted for its first MOT for almost 21 years. Since then I have changed them twice - the first time after not quite 6 years of use in late 2011 and they were probably almost past-it since conventional battery-charger charging them wasn’t too effective by then and the engine which requires a lot of voltage to turn through the starter motor began to turn sluggishly but still “fired”; so in 2011 I fitted two heavy duty 73amp hour batteries which have done, in my opinion, remarkably well with the on-off irregular use they get and only now, in January 2018 have I changed them again for direct heavy duty equivalents. (You pays your money and takes your chances!).



However I don't neglect batteries, and keep a regular eye on them possibly every 2-3 months taking out the rear GT “seat”, carpet and battery steel cover held in place by five Zeus fasteners, checking electrolyte levels topping up to just above the visible cells. This palaver gets more awkward as one ages and we don’t quite bend as well as we used to.....to access and check them. Hence even if you intend to check them it is often easy to find reasons NOT to be bothered to....I make good the petroleum jelly on the four terminals as well as the terminals on the battery master on/off switch I fitted several years ago.



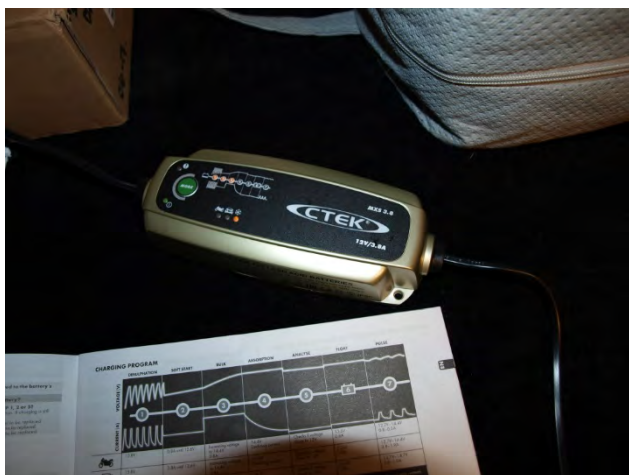
Even with these checks I hadn't noticed until just before November when laying up the car on its axle stands for the many tasks necessary to keep her tip-top for next season, that one battery had cracked its top rubber casing (see the photograph) caused by cell distortion in one cell which had dried out in the couple of months since last looking.



Since these batteries mounted low and outside under the car are subject to all that the Scottish wet climate and grit throws up at them I also used this winter lay-up to clean the last 12 years crud from the battery box cages and renovate them with "Hammerite Primer" and a couple of coats of "Hammerite Smoothrite" paint. Working on these cages with the driver and passenger front seats in position demands even more of the aforementioned contortions and good artificial light to see what you are doing though! Batteries when lifting them in and replacing them into confined areas are heavy too so ensure your contortions allow for this too!!



I also advocate the use of a battery maintenance charger, which allow the battery (ies) to be kept in tip-top condition prolonging their life even during non-road-use winter lay-ups. I have had several chargers over my 50 years of car ownership but today use a CTEK fully automatic Swedish Battery Charger (if you don't have a charger these are THE industry standard these days with for example Mercedes, BMW, VW Audi, Porsche, all recommending CTEK. Have a look at them on Google). Mine is a CTEK Model MXS 3.8. Programmable to suit your needs or you can use their in-built pre-set programme. They are quite safe to leave connected to the mains electricity since they go into a "Float and Pulse" mode preventing furring-up of the battery cells, even with sealed batteries; although of course as the photographs show the batteries I use and prefer are not sealed.



Keep an eye on your battery even if it isn't under your nose and it will not let you down cranking your sluggish thick oil engine into life even in cold weather and all accessories switched on, when you most need it!

Tim Moore

[Editor's note – my experience with the MGF is that it flattens a good battery within 3 weeks if ignored – too many background activities going on – alarm – radio -etc. I too use a CTEK MXS 3.8 and also give it a strong endorsement. They are supplied with spring clamps but also with a short 'tail & socket' which you can leave fitted to the battery.]

PROGRAMME 2018

The dates for club events are contained in the draft AGM Minutes below. As you will see, we have a record 3 events programmed involving night stops (**Saunter, Odyssey & Amble**). We also have 5 'day drives' in the programme (previously 4) so if anyone would like to step-up to organizing one of these, please let me know. We've asked for a **15 car stand at Tain** in June and at least one member of the MGCC will join us there.

The **15 April MGCC** satellite run will arrive at the Hunting Tower Hotel near Perth for lunch. The northern pick-up point is Montrose and you would need to be there by 1100 – alternatively, you could go direct to the hotel for the £10 soup & sandwich lunch. If you want to join-in with this, please let me know and I'll liaise with the MGCC contact.

For the **Spring Saunter**, there will be an optional RV at the Tore Services at 1100 on **Friday, 20 April** followed by a drive to Ullapool for lunch before going on to Lairg via Ledmore; let me know if you want to use this option or join at Ullapool (whether or not you are booked-in to Lairg – you could join for the day). On the **Saturday**, the plan is to head northwards on the A838 up to Durness then to drive to Tongue before returning to Lairg on the A836. On the **Sunday**, there is the option of joining the **Drive it Day** which departs the V8 Café in Inverness @ 1030 (or 1100 depending on where you look!) – details via this link: <http://www.highlandclassic.org.uk/public/events/did.php>

Other events early in the season are (thanks to the Highland Classic Motor Club website):

6th May 2018	Forres Theme Day	Grant Park, Forres	Arrive 09.00 - 12.30 Judging 10.00 - 14.00 (Judged Entry Deadline 8th April.) Winners Parade 16.30 Contact; forresvintagevehicleassociation@yahoo.co.uk OR patersonsharon@aol.com Late Entries on day will not be Judged.
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And:

12th May 2018	Inverness Classic Vehicle Show	Inverness City Centre	Registration Now Open! Limited Spaces. See Inverness BID website www.invernessbid.co.uk
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MINUTES OF HIGHLAND MG OWNERS' CLUB AGM HELD AT CHANONRY SAILING CLUB ON 21ST JANUARY 2018 AT 2.00PM

In Attendance:

Peter Poole

Stuart Brock

William Finlayson

Tim Moore

Christine Moore

Chris Silver

Hugh Mackenzie

Katherine Mackenzie

Michael Fraser

Richard Jenner

Helen Jenner

Paul Stirling

Jenny Stirling

John Mackenzie (who joined the club at the meeting)

Apologies:

Malcolm Hope

Alex Craib

Nick & Patsy Thompson

James Mould

Ronnie & Morag Thomson

John & Mary Ducker

Kevin Derrick

Roger Boyce

Dave Tennant

Ray Falconer

The Chairman welcomed Paul & Jenny Stirling (MGB Costello) attending for the first time and John Mackenzie (MG TF) who joined during the meeting.

Minutes of 2017 AGM

These were circulated at the meeting and approved.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary gave a positive report outlining contacts during the year with the Czeck Classic Car Club, the club providing a light coloured MGB Roadster to the Caledonian Centre for filming in Inverness and assisting a German MG owner on holiday in Inverness repair their windscreen wiper motor which had developed a fault.

The Secretary advise that 3 new members had joined the club during the year.

The Secretary's report was approved by the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer circulated the Club's Annual Accounts for the year to 31st December 2017. These showed a healthy financial position with a total balance of funds held by the club as at 31 December 2017 amounting to £1,043.40.

The Treasurer highlighted that the club paid out almost £230 on the Feather Flag (which got used 3 times last year) and still made a surplus of £20 in the year. The gift of the gazebo from Tim & Christine that was used at Tain and the Gathering of the Clans was much appreciated by the club particularly in the downpour at both events!

As a result of this healthy financial position it was proposed that the annual subscription remains at the current level of £15.00 per single/couple for the forthcoming year.

The meeting approved the Annual Accounts and agreed that the annual subscription remain at £15.00 per single/couple for the forthcoming year.

Approach to the Club from the MGCC Caledonian Centre

The meeting was advised that there had been communication between the MGCC Caledonian Centre and the Club around supporting each club's events. The MGCC Caledonian Centre had already agreed 'in principle' to support our Club events. The AGM was asked if we would reciprocate by agreeing in principle to support the Caledonian Centre's events and a schedule of these were circulated for consideration.

The AGM agreed in principle to the Club supporting the MGCC Caledonian Centre's events and agreed the Committee develop the proposal in conjunction with the MGCC Caledonian Centre.

Activities in 2017 and Update of Events in 2018

The Activities Coordinator gave a presentation of the activities undertaken in 2017.

For 2018 the following activities are planned:

April

15 MGCC satellite drive (invitation pending chairmen's meeting)

20/21 Spring Saunter

22 Drive it Day

May

8 - day drive (Tuesday)

18 - 21 Orkney Odyessy

June

10 - day drive (Sunday)

17 Tain Rally

July

12 - day drive (Thursday)

August

12 - day drive (Sunday)

22/23 MGCC Heather tour Fort William (invitation pending chairmen's meeting)

September

6 - day drive (Thursday)

23 – Gathering of the Clans (TBC)

October

3 - 6 Autumn Amble

Elections

The meeting agreed to the existing Committee remaining in post.

AOCB

1. An approach had been made to the club for financial support to help meet the costs of restoring an MGB that had participated in the 1968 London to Sydney Marathon Car rally.

The AGM agreed to provide £50.00 towards the restoration of the MGB.

2. Newsletter – Richard thanked those who had contributed to the newsletters during the year but pointed out that his job was editor, not chief scribe and more input from members was needed to provide content beyond just the reports and run details (and MGC GT & MGF articles). He was quite happy to help with formatting. Photos were always welcome and even brief articles on work done on the MG over winter would be of interest. Please contribute something in 2018.

Thanks

The Club thanked Chanonry Sailing Club for the use of the premises and to Helen for the provision of the catering.

Meeting closed at 3.20pm.