



Looking over the showfield at Waterfront Park on the banks of the Ohio River.

# MG 2016 IN LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

By Brian Woodhams

Every five years an All Register event is organised by the North American Council with 2016 being the fifth. Basically, the MMM, T, MGA, and MGB Registers all come together for what is a superb MG bonanza jamboree. The last All Register event was in Reno, Nevada in 2011. The MG scene in North America is very much alive and well, and although attendees are young in spirit, they are getting older. There has been no new MG available in America since 1980.

Peter Cook and I attended the event and represented Kimber House. I was

hosted by Alan and Laura Magnuson in Denver, Colorado, and attended the Rocky Mountain Centre club meet the evening after arriving. Alan is the Chairman of the North American MGB Register (NAMGBR) and took a lot of stick that evening over recent breakdowns of his Grampian (grumpy) Grey 1966 MGB GT – the car I was scheduled to drive the 1140 miles to Kentucky in temperatures of 35 deg C plus and high humidity. The three-car convoy set off at lunchtime the next day. After two days' driving, we broke the journey to meet up with members of the MGCC of St Louis. Known as the 'Gateway to the West', St. Louis is a

large and impressive city with a massive 630ft arch that dominates the city skyline. The MGCC St Louis had made a contribution to the Archive project at Kimber House, so we were doubly grateful to Robert and Vonda Rushing, and Simon and Tara Dix for their time in hosting us and showing us the sights in their city. In recognition of the St Louis club's contribution to the Bill Wallace archive Peter Cook presented a plaque to them. The next day we drove the remaining 265 miles into Louisville to our hotel, which was one of the six hosting attendees and their cars. The North American Nuffield Trophy, currently held by MGs of Baltimore, was brought to the event by Baltimore Chairman Richard Liddick and his family, and was on display at all the major events.

Monday was registration day which went off very smoothly. The MGCC UK had been given our own stand which was manned all day by Janine and I, and by Linda and Peter Cook. The Nuffield Trophy was prominently displayed along with some *Safety Fast!* magazines, which soon disappeared! We met up with South East Centre stalwarts Piers and Linda Hubbard, and in the evening a large contingent of the attendees went



1929 MG M type of Rob Orander from Raleigh, North Carolina



1938 MG SA Tickford of Lee Jacobsen from Michigan in the hotel car Park



2004 MG SV of Ron Neal from South Carolina on the showfield

to Churchill Downs, the home of the Kentucky Derby for a conducted tour and supper.

Early on Tuesday morning Peter and I attended the North American Executive Council breakfast at which we were both introduced and spoke briefly. The programme included conducted tours on the Bourbon trail around Bardstown, the Corvette factory, the Louisville Slugger baseball factory, and Kentucky pie making. For two days there was a full programme of technical sessions. They ranged in topic from 'Five-speed for all post-war MGs' and 'Insurance Valuations', to 'Timing by the Numbers' and John Twist's 'Rolling Technical Session' (John once worked at University Motors in London). In the evening I attended the NAMGBR dinner, and I made a brief presentation. Peter attended the parallel NAMGAR event where a framed print from Kimber House was presented to one of the behind-the-scenes stalwarts of the MGA Register, Dave McCann from Ohio, by Chairman Carol Shamonsky. A fun evening with the other Registers

followed, with dancing to 'Captain Rat and the Blind Rivets' – very popular!

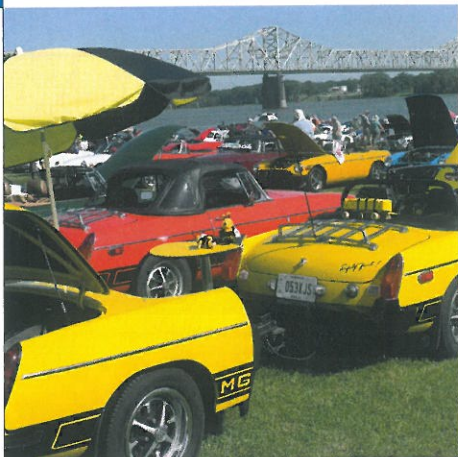
Much of Wednesday was spent on the MGCC stand socialising with attendees and swapping tales of rebuilds, technical merits and demerits, and ideas for appealing to potential younger members. Three cars from each Register were lined up in the conference room in the hotel, and the owners invited to speak on the history and

unique features of the cars – a sort of MG timeline.

The car show took place at Waterfront Park on the Kentucky side of the mighty Ohio River with Indiana on the far bank. Tony Burgess ran the Rocker Box racing, and Bob Gloyd ran the Concours. There were 820 cars registered for the show. It was a very warm day, and the freeway overpass provided some welcome shade – it was no surprise that the ice cream vendor sold out! After the show it was back to the hotel and a mad rush to get the results out for the pre-banquet awards, with some classes having awards down to sixth place. We then moved onto the Banquet where a thousand people were catered for. Peter Cook and I were both recognised by Rick Ingram, Chairman of the North American Council, as well as the contingents from Australia and Canada. Of the many awards from the Concours, one deserves a special mention. Barry and



Rolling Tech Session – John Twist fettling the Canadian 1953 MG TD of Bob Mills



MGs at the Waterfront Park

Joyce Humphrey won the overall award for their immaculate red MGB Roadster. They divide their year between Boston and Florida – the ideal combination for a forty-year old British car.

Having said our goodbyes, we set off on our long drive back to Denver. There were some technical problems which were fixed without too much difficulty. We learned, though, that while the modern high-torque starter motors are a great improvement, they are not much good if they lose their bolts and end up dangling under the engine held on only by their wiring. But with help from John Mangles of All British Car Repair, we were up and running in fairly quick time. John, I should add, had helped to fix no less than four MGs that day, and became our hero – the MG family and the Marque of Friendship!

The list of people to whom I owe thanks is far too long to list, but I hope they know who they are – most are mentioned above, but there are more!! This was truly a great International Event – well done the North American Council.



Andy York's otherwise unremarkable Teal Blue MGB GT V8 on display at the Kentucky event reveals an interesting story. Car VIN number GD2D2UD98G, a prototype built in December 1972 at Abingdon, now resides in Indiana. This LHD V8 – one of perhaps 10 – was made at a time when Abingdon had every intention of exporting the V8 to North America. Six pre-production cars (three LHD, three RHD) were hand-built and tested after six four-cylinder versions were taken off the Cowley assembly line, and shipped to Abingdon's development shop (later seven more LHD V8s were made). The development cars were different from the later production V8s in a number of respects: the inner wings were modified by hand in order to accommodate the exhaust manifolds, the oil drain plug had a temperature probe fitted, the engine was the higher 8.5:1 compression as opposed to the production cars' 8.25:1, and on Andy's there are three aluminium testing tubes at the front which may have been used to monitor differential air pressure or, perhaps, to measure the asbestos given off by brake pads.

Details are hazy, but apparently in the mid-70s the car was found in very poor condition in an orchard in southern England. It had never been registered in the UK, so was somehow disposed of by Abingdon as incomplete. Andy's late father, Lyle, got to hear about the car, and asked a friend of his (Peter Wood) to purchase the car on his behalf and to renovate it. The car underwent extensive repairs and the intention was to import it into the USA. However, as the car had never obtained US certification (EPA) it was refused entry. Fortunately Lyle York was friendly with an Indiana senator who was persuaded to add a 'sunset clause' to a motoring bill which was then making its way through the Indiana legislature. The 'sunset clause' allowed a collector to import one uncertified car per lifetime into the USA. The car has since been in the ownership of the York family and is an interesting talking point at MG events. It is also an example of what 'might have been' had BL senior management taken a different turn.

Another unusual MG appearing at the Kentucky event was EX186. Now owned by Joe and Cathy Gunderson of Colorado, this is a car which is not supposed to exist. EX186's stunning appearance is a fine example of Cecil Kimber's dictum that "a sports car should look fast, even when it is standing still". Its appearance clearly indicates MGA origins, but there are also signs of MGB as well.

EX 186 started life in 1958 as a reborn EX182 with an original 1489cc Twin-Cam engine. John Thornley and Syd Enever wanted to win Le Mans outright, and realising that even the twin-cam engine would be outperformed by competitors, they wanted to compensate with a very lightweight and aerodynamic body. They opted also for a De Dion-type rear suspension. Similar to the situation in the mid-1930s, Abingdon wanted to compete in racing but was faced with an overall corporate policy which was opposed and was led, again, by Leonard Lord. So EX186 was essentially a 'skunkworks' project kept secret from Lord and other BMC directors, even though sponsors like Dunlop and Esso were persuaded to get on board. EX186 was successfully race tested but the project was cancelled by Abingdon before the car was entered competitively. The final straw was the cancellation of twin-cam production.

The car was destined for destruction as per normal Abingdon practice, but somehow it was crated up, labelled as 'spare parts' and shipped to Californian distributor Kjell Qvale who kept the car until 1966 when it was sold, still unraced. Licensed, the car was driven for about two years on public roads until it required an expensive engine overhaul. It was then stored in a barn on a walnut farm until tracked down in 1982 and bought by MG enthusiasts Joe and Cathy Gunderson who have been restoring it as a (very) long term project. Clearly a beautiful piece of engineering,



EX186 is, alas, another one of those 'might have been' projects in the history of the marque.