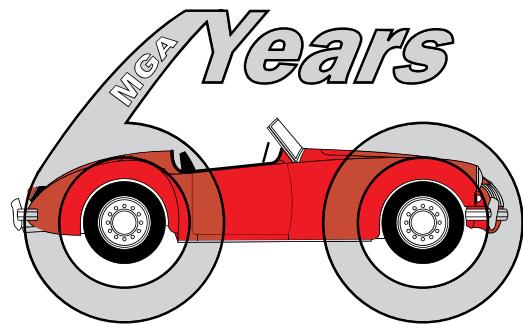


# The MGA is 60 this year.....!

By Philip Wiltshire



The "A" came to life all those years ago in 1955, so our club has decided to honour it with some tribute articles. Although I've been an MG enthusiast and driver since my twenties, it took me emigrating to the USA to finally achieve my dream of owning one. We purchased it from Flat Rock MI in 1991 and it shocks me to realize we've owned it for over 24 years!

Once you get snug inside an MGA you realize how close you are to the ground, each other and other motorists; although the standard 4 cylinder car could make 100 MPH and the Twin Cam 125 MPH, I believe that all the wins at circuit racing and cross-country rallies was a mixture of driving skill, perseverance and then the car. The MGA needs driving well to coax every last drop of performance out of it. Back in the day, the cars were not that modified when racing; there were many privateers and dealership sponsored cars and not just Works entries. Definitely a car for keen enthusiasts to have fun in at the weekend and then go back to work in on the Monday.

## "Sports Car of the Year 1955"

It all began at LeMans in France in 1955. MGs were always race-proven before they become street cars due to the "nature of the beast". So 3 unproven 4 cylinder prototypes code named EX182 were entered for the 24 hour race. Dick Jacob's flipped his car and was ejected suffering major injuries which took months to heal. The other 2 cars carried on to finish 230 odd laps averaging 82 and 86 MPH!

## MGA's had arrived!!

The Twin Cam version was being developed in parallel with the standard 4 cylinder model. A supercharged twin cam powered World Speed record attempts on the Bonneville Salt Flats in 1955.

So both versions were launched in 1955; the standard MGA costing £1,000 and the Twin Cam £1,250.

## Sebring

The MGA's first appeared at Sebring in 1956. Three cars were entered. It is said they came from dealer stock with little time for modification. This was not a Works entry. The cars had aero screens and arrays of extra driving lights; all were white in colour. They finished 23rd, 27th and 36th and snagged the class win.

1959 was the first Works entry and was a big one with 3 Twin Cams and a number of AH Sprites. Although a Works entry, the drivers were all from the US and BMC (MG) tried to select them so that they represented dealerships from across the nation.

The Twin Cams finished the race, 2nd and 3rd in class. The third car's engine blew up, but Sherm Decker pushed the car for part of a lap and crossed the line in 45th place!

On a personal note, I was able to ship the record breaker EX181 to the USA from the UK Motor Industry Heritage Museum at Gaydon (complete with a Curator / Minder) and showed the car at Meadowbrook when MG was the featured marque some years ago. This car achieved over 245 MPH at Bonneville on the salt flats. When you look at the tiny engine and cockpit, you can see why drivers like Sterling Moss are such heroes....



EX182-40 at LeMans in 1955. Ted Lund and Hans Waeffler drove it to 17th



1965 MGA Team celebrate all finishing in the Sebring 12-Hour Grand Prix of Endurance. See more Sebring cars on page 7.



Philip Wiltshire's 1958 MGA