

# Member Featured Car of the Month July 2012

## Tim Dunham's '68' MGC GT

Steve Powell & Tim Dunham

I'm Steve Powell and in 1989 I bought two MGC GTs; a primrose yellow one, disassembled, and a green driver. I bought them from an estate. I used the green one for my daily driver until I sold it shortly after the restoration of the yellow one was completed in 1996. The chrome wire wheels were rebuilt and a sun roof was installed putting the car back on the road before the end of 1996.

This car was just a pleasure to drive! We drove it to Mid-Ohio one year for the British Car Showdown. It was a beautiful clear cool morning and we cruised up there with the sun roof open letting cool air circulate through the car as we cruised in overdrive. The last trip we took in the car prior to selling it was the club tour to the Indiana gambling casinos. This is the trip where the wind blew trees down in the parking lot of the motel in Madison Indiana. Thankfully none of our MGs were damaged.

I sold the car when the opportunity to buy my MG TC came along. There were two owners between me and Tim Dunham. Now I will let Tim tell you what he has done to the car since he as owned it and what his plans are for its future. Look for that in next month's issue. (Steve Powell)



I, unfortunately have not had the time to execute many of my plans (dreams) for the 1968 MGC GT which now lives safely in my very nice neighbor's garage. Perhaps of more interest may be my rapid path to classic car ownership. When I was 16, I acquired a 1957 Jaguar Mark VIII saloon car in good running condition for the large sum of \$200! I sold it a few years later to purchase the boys dream, a 1966 Corvette roadster, with a 427 and factory side pipes. Of the two (except for the financial value of the Vette) I wish I had the Jaguar.

I had read about the Carlisle Import and Specialty Manufacturer show for several years. Finally, I hooked up with my old Porsche car buddy to go see the show in May of 2008. Originally, I was going to the show to see the wild specialty (kit) cars. That was enjoyable, but, I have always had a love for "old, smelly British cars". If they are weird, so much the better. Unbeknownst to me, the old British car bug bit me quite hard at the show and left a permanent infection. My friend stayed with his Porsche / Mercedes roots, but I just could not develop a passion for the German cars. They are quite nice and I do have fond memories of my Porsche Turbo, but the passion was missing for me. Therefore, besides the "kit" cars, I examined every British car there at least 3 times with a few forays over to the Citroen section (I *did* say I like weird). I almost bit on a 3 axle, 6 wheel Land Rover for \$13,000. Not sure why, but it met my weird factor quite nicely.



We were done with the show Saturday afternoon, so we got back late that night, a day earlier than planned. That Sunday morning I woke up with a case of the serious British car fever! I remember in the Dayton Daily News a few weeks ago there was a 1968 MG for sale. I think it was a rare model, with a 6 cylinder engine. The weird hairs on the back of my neck were well beyond tingling. I ran out to get the morning paper and I was in luck; the car still was advertised for sale. With trembling hands and fighting a loud voice in my head saying, no, 'do not do this, Tim,' I called the number. The owner's wife said the car was still available and I could see it that evening after her husband returned from a golf game. Well, by that Thursday the car was sitting in my garage and the title was in the safe! What had I done? I was just divorced the year before: how was this a smart financial move?

Well, it certainly has been good for the mind and the soul (and actually gentle on the wallet, particularly when you look at the cost of German car parts). It had been years (20+) since I had done any work myself on a car, but, I decided that learning to maintain and improve the C (that quickly became known as Midge...MidGe) would be part of my



old British car hobby. At first the car started and ran great, but I ran quickly into frustrating, no run problems. With great help from club members (thank you!) and John Twist, I got it figured out. In close succession, one of the needles in SU's was not tight, therefore, it would stop fuel/air flow to At the same time the out, causing the running. Frustrating once diagnosed, a experience. Since had the headlight of smoke from which I repaired switch and new with relays for the I am considering a a modern wiring future as I would like to drive the car regularly without worry. But so far, no more problems.



drop out and the carburetor. coil was going engine to stop at the time, but, great learning that time I've switch fry (lots under the dash) with a new electrical lines headlight circuit. total rewire with system in the

At purchase, the primrose yellow paint looked nice, but there were two nasty rust pops on the hatch and the passenger door. Also, the lip of one front fender had a ding, but no paint break. I just thought this was going to go nowhere good, but I really liked the car. So by the fall of 2008 I had the car in at a recommended shop for old car body work. They stripped things down and applied several new coats of primrose yellow followed by 4 coats of clear. At that time I had them put in a replacement windshield, as the old one after 40 years was pitted and difficult to see through at night. All of the trim was repaired or replaced as needed. So upon its return, the outside really looked like a new car.

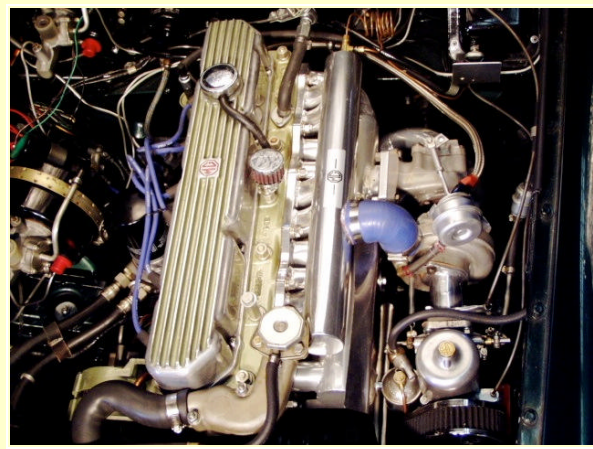
Since that time it has been more basic maintenance and limited driving fun. My life has been a lot busier than I had hoped. Current plans include some basic touching up of past restoration (under coating and a few more exterior details). I did want to convert it back to servos, so I have found and purchased a C pedal box and master cylinder. Now, I am not so sure. I actually like the hard (when going very slow) steering and the pedal pressure. I think I will look into getting "crisper" brakes with more bite by going to steel lines, different pads and maybe some caliper/rotor changes. What I really miss is the perfect heel and toe alignment of my Porsche's brake and



accelerator pedals. I need to stick my head down there and see if I can bend or weld something up to get the same alignment.

Perhaps of greater importance, I really want more air flow in the interior that would be available from a newer MGB dash with center vents. I think I will move this up on the list and consider the rewire at that time since the dash will be removed. Eventually, I would like to get the carpet and leather looking new, like the exterior.

I was going to do a Downton conversion on the car. However, an opportunity to add a turbocharger was presented, and I got side tracked and now own about all the parts to turbo charge the C except the new exhaust system. I was asked, "why not just drop in a V8?" Well, without the six, it really would not be the lovely historical MGC that it is. The 6, while putting a bit more weight on the front than would be liked, is not that much different than a Healy. If you make a few changes, anti-sway bar on the front



and rear axle wind up, it motors through the curves nicely. The engine is quite stout internally. Therefore, the turbocharger with mild boost becomes a bit of a simpler bolt on deal as opposed to the total rebuild required for an accurate Downton conversion. I am not looking for "ultimate" horsepower, just a bit more squirt (say 225 HP) to go down the road. At that, some chassis changes will be required for the 225 HP, I really do not want to build an entirely new car under the MGC body; I like what is there now. Also, I think it tripped my weird meter, there are a few Downton conversions out there, but turbocharged C's are pretty rare.

I sort of thought of it as if Abingdon continued to produce the car, what would they do to fix some of the design mistakes? Replacing the "pillow" dash with the rather nice B dash of 73 or 74 is a no-brainer. Redesigning the 6 would be atypical of the industry and too costly. So we could hope for an aluminum head from the racing program and a turbocharger to really make a difference from the B. Probably they should have





upgraded the interior a bit and added some wheel flairs with more rubber underneath. Ah, I think I see some more “project – dream” plans forming. But, for the moment I still enjoy the nice burble of the 6 and the abundant torque. The car is still a great modern-day cruiser. (Tim Dunham)

