

LETTER OF THE MONTH



## Two cars, one identity

Peter Browning's article on the works cars in the September issue of *MGE* was both candid and courageous, and Peter has added much needed clarity to many of the cars that seemed to have been there, but previously were not. This, however, is my rebuttal to Ron Gammon's version of the facts in October's Postbag surrounding the two LBL 591E cars.

In March 2006, I received the following words from no less an authority than Don Hayter: "I have discussed the history and records of LBL

591E ex-competitions' MGB GTs with Peter Browning, Bill Price, Bob Neville and Ron Gammons. The recorded available history of Sebring MGBs 1967 & 1968:

- 1) Original Tartan Red GT – North American spec. Wire wheels, built 6/7/66 and transferred to Competitions. Chassis No GHD 3/114190. Confirmed from production records at Gaydon. Registered 01/01/67 as LBL 591E and entered Sebring 1967.
- 2) Recorded by Bill Price as damaged on return to Liverpool Docks – front chassis members bent, rebuild not

- considered.
  - 3) Sold as a rolling body shell only, with no engine, paperwork or numbers to Robin Vokins. The chassis plate, engine and original registration documents were all retained by Competitions.
  - 4) A new green GT body shell obtained by Comps and built into a complete car using the original retained engine and chassis plate and UK registration numbers. Entered Sebring 1968.
  - 5) Sold in USA – Leonia – after some time.
- Conclusion: there are two MGB GTs both with the same

**Left: the final MG Team drivers, standing beside LBL 591E in the orange groves Sebring, Florida in March 1969. All but Craig Hill (shades) were drivers of LBL 591E in '68/'9. (L-R: Peter Browning, Jerry Truitt, Logan Blackburn, Bill Brack, Craig Hill, Paddy Hopkirk, Andrew Hedges) PHOTO COURTESY LOGAN BLACKBURN**

chassis number – both genuine Sebring cars of 1967 & 1968, respectively. When Bob Neville and Charles Dawkins rebuilt the 1967 Robin Vokins car, they produced UK evidence to convince the DVLA to re-issue LBL 591E and chassis No GHD3/114190. This was supported by original photographic and written evidence from Den Green, Competitions mechanic and Andrew Hedges. This car is now the property of Mike Darcey. Since the 1968 USA car was no longer on UK records, this would not have affected DVLA release or re-use of numbers. (Probably!)

Three continuous team races followed for LBL 591E Green in 1968 and 1969; twice at Sebring and once in the 1968 Targa Florio, Sicily with Hopkirk and Hedges as recorded in *The Works MGs* by Peter Browning. Each time

in 1968 LBL 591E was re-imported to Abingdon for prep work before for the next international race.

Curiously, in January 1969 a four page colour feature in *Cars and Car Conversions* tells of Alan Zafer (competition press officer) handing off LBL 591E to a few motoring journalists for "a week's drive on the Berkshire lanes, M4, streaking across Sussex, and snorting through the London snarl-ups". It would appear that LBL 591E was indeed registered and run in the UK.

After the '69 Sebring Races LBL 591E was off to Leonia, New Jersey with RMO 6099F and MBL 546E to be sold (not in 1968 as written earlier). It was raced in the USA 41 times in SCCA thereafter and was retired in 1989 until I found her in 2005. She was as white as a ghost to conceal her identity all these years, but underneath the black scuttle cover her green bones shone through. I am aware of the situation this creates. However, the facts as I have presented them are known and cannot be disputed. My LBL 591E was built in 1967 and is the very last four cylinder MGB Team car in the world.

**Tony Giordano, USA**

## Advance warning

It would be extremely useful if you could publish your intended tests a few months in advance. I have an unlucky habit of buying the leadlight, Allen keys, spanners, whatever (usually the wrong ones) just a month or so before it turns up in a product test! The tests are very useful, but a 'tests coming up' (not just the next month) would be much appreciated.

**Mark Way**

*Goodness, you do give us a lot of credit for forward planning, Mark! But I can tell you that next month we will be looking at MIG welders, and reactive welding masks the following issue. Ed.*

## It's snow fun

While reading the November issue of *MG Enthusiast*, my attention was drawn to the article on p44, *Peak Performance*. Reading it brought back memories of our own summer holiday in 1970, when my wife and I drove our 1967 MGB Roadster to Yugoslavia to have 14 days of



sun and fun. Starting in Belgium, we had to drive through Germany, Austria and Italy. In Austria, I decided a drive over the Grossglockner Pass would add to the fun of driving the MGB in the mountains. But about here, the similarity with Mr and Mrs Müller-Neuhaus' story ends.

That morning in July, the weather was bad. It had been raining all morning and by the time we reached the ticket station, fog was coming in. The temperature had dropped, the hood had to stay up and the heating and demisting had to work hard to keep us

comfortable. So no beautiful scenery to watch! As we progressed higher up the mountain, the fog turned into wet snow, then the wet snow into a snowstorm.

When we reached the top, the road was blocked by a small avalanche (above) and we had to wait two hours before we could drive on. That evening we arrived at our hotel in Villach around 10pm, meaning the restaurant was closed and our room nearly got rented to another couple.

And what about the cobblestones? Well, they were soaking wet of course and I

gave the oncoming traffic and my wife the fright of their lives by exposing too much oversteer in one of the tight bends. Luckily the MGB is an easy-to-handle car.

The rest of the trip went faultlessly (except for a snapped tacho cable) and we covered more than 6000km in a fortnight and enjoyed a lot of open-top motoring in sunny Yugoslavia. I kept the MGB for 11 years on the road and for another ten years in my garage, and then I traded him in for a 1952 MG TD, which I still own and enjoy today.

**Guy Das, Beringen, Belgium**

## Send your letters to:

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