

The Cadbury MGA

A year on from my first sighting of the Cadbury MGA in a Washington lockup on a rainy February day, it is just as rainy here in Ireland, and I just found the note that Elizabeth and Steve left me under the carpet on drivers side.



'I hope you like the car as much as we have, happy travels from Elizabeth and Steve'

Last night in my own garage was one of those of frustration and elation. On the few winter days I have been able to drive the Cadbury MGA since finally getting the UK plates in November, my drives have been limited to 10 minutes at full power and then a gentle coast to a halt. She always helped me out by restarting in a few minutes but always before I could diagnose the cause of the issue. My neighbours, father and son Sam and Chris Bailie run a small car Sales and Repair shop, and when I called round with the car for some advice, Sam suggested that Chris 'stick the car onto his diagnostic computer', before he and his Spark steered me towards replacing the coil, and then one part of the ignition at a time, until I fixed the fault. Perhaps modern car diagnostics are not so bad! The 'Fireball 700' electronic ignition came out last weekend, and with points reinstalled and set (opening at 10 degrees before Top Dead Centre thanks to U Tube) I still could not get the engine running on more than 2 cylinders – that was until I switched the leads on those two errant cylinders, whereupon she starting running perfectly! I can confirm now that 1, 3, 4, 2 is the best order to fire the cylinders!

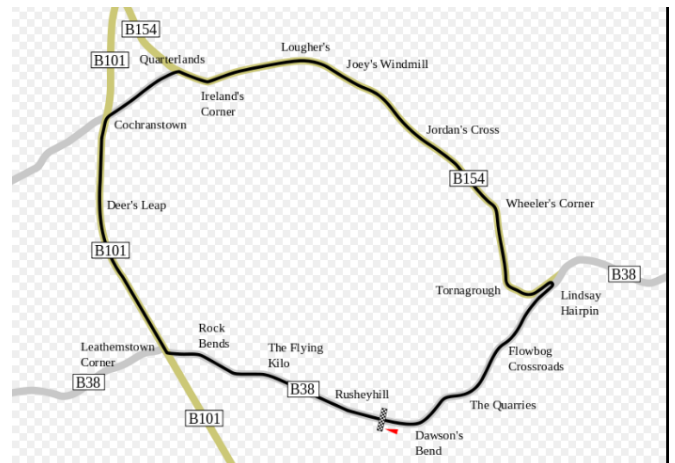
I met the Cadbury MGA through my friend and now retired Colleague at Hyster, Roger Penfound, and Chad Cansler at British Motor Care in NE Portland, Oregon. I was looking for a West Coast MGA, as 90% of the MGA's built between 1955 and 1962 went for export, and the salt on the English roads impacted many of the rest. Chad had been looking after the Cadbury MGA since Elizabeth and Steve took her over from Elizabeth's father, who I understand had driven her all over the Americas, from Canada to Mexico. Chad had shown me the meticulous maintenance records, and given me Steve and Elizabeth's phone number having heard they were thinking of selling, and when Roger and I met Steve at that rainy garage we were pretty sure of the outcome. For all of us, it was about the car, and I think I was being assessed as a suitable owner as much as I was assessing the chassis condition! Changing the ownership over was more challenging than expected, and Roger played a blinder, with an all day expedition around Washington licensing offices to register the car in my name, which we knew was essential for the import/export documents. Tax is another story!

Chad Cansler at Britch Motor Care did a beautiful LHD conversion for me, with LHD parts I purchased in England, and in July, with great support from Steve Feeny at CFR Rinkens the car travelled in a closed truck to Oakland, then by container to Felixstowe to the East of London. My dream of picking up the car there and driving home across England on a sunny Autumn day with Spitfire trails hanging

over the Downs was scotched by customs clearance of the car inside the London 'low emission' zone where the Felixstow repair shop I had arranged to help me licence it, could not collect. With only days to remove the car before penalty storage costs started to apply, I urgently had to find an emissions compliant truck to pick it up. Once on a truck and paying by the mile, it made sense to carry her North West rather than East, so I had the car delivered to Liverpool for the ferry to Belfast. Chris helped me out with the Sam Bailey Motors truck, and he and I found it looking lonely in a rainy yard full of nearly new cars, one rainy October morning.

The paperwork and inspections necessary to register the car and gain a licence plate (IG4388 is a 1959 County Antrim, registration plate) required a further trip to Belfast on Chris's truck, and took well into the winter so it will be this Spring before the roads are salt free here, and weather suitable for open air motoring.

The MGA is for me the perfect roadster, classic 1950's lines but able to keep up with modern traffic. Parts easily available, easy to work on, a wealth of information and tips on the web and a lovely sound from the twin SU Carburettors. Also an historic car in Ulster with MGA s racing in 1955 on the Dundrod circuit, just 15 miles from my house in the 5th round of the World Sports Car Championship. Mercedes were dominant, with Stirling Moss (1st) and Juan Manuel Fangio (2nd) in works 300SLR's in one of the last road races before such races (for cars) were moved to safer purpose built circuits. That year the dominance of Ferrari was being challenged by D Type Jaguars, Porsches and Mercedes with smaller engine Triumph TR2, Aston Martin DB4's and MG's competing through a Handicap system. This course on beautiful sweeping curves on hills to the West of Belfast, can still be driven today, and remains in use for the Ulster Motor Cycle Grand Prix each year.



Above an MG EX in a publicity shot from Le Mans, earlier in the 1955 International Sports Car series that would bring MG's to Le Mans, Mille Miglie in Italy and then the Dundrod circuit in Sept 1955. Developed in an intensely competitive period of European sports car design and racing, these races brought 'Gentlemen Drivers' into competition with the Formula 1 elite, too often with fatal results!

The MGA launched shortly after the Dundrod race at the 1955 Frankfurt Motor show.

There is an invite of course for Elizabeth and Steve, or Roger and Anne to come over and drive those roads, hopefully for more than 10 minutes, any time they can get over here, in the Cadbury MGA.

Thanks guys for making this possible

Matthew Allen, March 19th 2017

