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When I started to think about this month's 4-page spread, I had absolutely nothing; nothing except Jim's Chairman's Jottings! However, with a bit of reflection and looking at posts on our Facebook group and MGSVW whilst banished into isolation with a bad cold, it all came together. Before I was laid low, I was working on replacing the exhaust manifold on my VA Tourer, which I can now report on. In this auspicious year, we have many events to look forward to and I shall be attending more than usual in my VA to the detriment of those events organised for my other classics. It's also a good time to look back, so we reflect on what the SVW community was doing some 40+ years ago. However, the most important news is about a new membership scheme for overseas members – see below.

Details of the annual SVW Event (July 11-13 in Yorkshire) can be found on the website, on our Facebook group and the flyer in the February edition of Safety Fast!

Steve Simmons in the USA started an excellent email chat on MGSVW regarding tyre selection for his SA (1392). It included such details as styling (as close as possible to the Dunlop tyres originally fitted to our cars), tread style and width, ride quality, ease of steering, tyre pressures, etc. It makes an interesting read with all the comments from other owners. Log on to MGSVW and search for 'New Tyres / Old Tyres'. For those who don't know, go to the website home page, scroll down and click on SVW E-group.

Jim mentions in his Jottings that he has completed the unenviable task of updating the Index of Articles, which is now on the website. Over the years, this has grown into a very useful and comprehensive document that enables the user to find where articles have been published on a particular subject, model or specific car. When opened on the website, it does not have a search facility. Useful tip - if you download it and open it with Adobe Acrobat, you should find the text is searchable. You may like to try this out and see if your car is featured based on its registration number.

New overseas membership

The SVW Register is pleased to advise our overseas members that a reduced MGCC subscription is now available for those who wish to be a 'Digital Member' who do not receive a printed version of Safety Fast! Details can be found on the Club's Website under Membership / Join the MG Car Club.

The SVW Register has been the prime instigator in getting this new class of membership established for the benefit overseas owners of MG cars. Hopefully many of our lapsed overseas members will now re-join the MGCC as well as new members.

Although not officially announced at the time of writing in January, our overseas friends got wind of it and there were already six new joiners under this scheme by the end of January.

VA Manifold Replacement

I've had a slight blow from the exhaust manifold and another at the flange for some time, so decided to make this my main winter activity on the VA. This had been forced by my trying to get a better seal at the flange, which resulted in what I thought was a snapped stud, so it was only held in place by the two remaining studs. I knew the manifold face needed work, so I checked with Piotr at AllMetalPolishing and he had one that he'd refurbished, so I decided to grab it. When it arrived I was pleased with the finish, the machined face and the fact that the three studs had been replaced with new, larger ones. It also came with both gaskets and new nuts and washers. I stripped it down and found that the old manifold stud was not broken but the thread was badly damaged and a standard nut would not hold. The metal flange on the front pipe was not sitting well, resulting in the pipe protruding slightly above the flange. This meant that, once the big metal sealing washer was in place, there would be an excessive gap between the mating surfaces. I

was unable to find a good position for the flange to reduce this gap despite cleaning components with a wire brush, etc. so I ended up filing down the top lip of the exhaust pipe.



Nice new larger studs



Old worn 1938 studs



Exhaust protruded above flange

Turning to the manifold-to-head faces, the top of the centre port on the old manifold is slightly rounded off despite having been refaced a few years ago. The same port on the head is similarly rounded but that would be a bigger job. The new manifold made a better connection to the head and I felt a little exhaust paste at that spot would solve any problem on assembly. I also decided to fit two gaskets between head and manifold. While dismantled, I took the opportunity to touch up the engine and block and head with red engine paint where necessary. Newly assembled, everything seems to be leak free.

Looking Back At *Safety Fast!*

This is nothing to do the 'Looking Back' section of *Safety Fast!*, but rather looking back at *Safety Fast!* itself. My own copies date back as far as 1979 when I first joined the MGCC. At that time, the magazine was edited by Trish and John Lodge and the SVW Notes were written by Frances Adam, who as many will know used to own VA Tourer ELL 148. Here are a few snippets:

July, 1980 – Another special car has turned up. It appears that the first production VA, a saloon, is still in existence! Someone who was thinking of buying this car, and wanted to verify that it really was the first production chassis as he had been told, telephoned me. On being asked the number, he replied VA 0251; my prompt reaction was to say “go out and buy it”, which I hope he did. Now all we want is the first SA, as WA 0251 is of course that D/H belonging to Nigel Hough. The lowest chassis on the SA list is 0266, body style unknown, location “somewhere in Germany”.



Buckler's Hard, 2000

That would have been when our late friend, Bas de Voogd, first encountered VA 0251. The photo was taken in 2000 at Buckler's Hard during the New Forest SVW event that year. It shows VA 0251, WA 0251 and their respective owners at the time, Bas and Gary Wall, together with the late Jean Kimber-Cook, who often joined us at our annual events. It was good to see VA 0251 with current owner Ian Burton at our local New Year's Day VSCC gathering this year.



Ian Burton with VA0251, Jan 1st 2023

SA RESURRECTION

— FRED HALE —

"Fred Still Singing the SA Blues," but for those of you who do not read SVW Review, Frances Adam put that title to Fred Hale's report on his SA Saloon last year.

A quick recap (if you are still reading this), a couple of years ago I had a look into the darkness of my old garage and decided the **old girl** should see the light of day once more.

I will put **old girl** in bold when I refer to the SA so you are not confused, as I usually address the other old girl as the **battleaxe**.

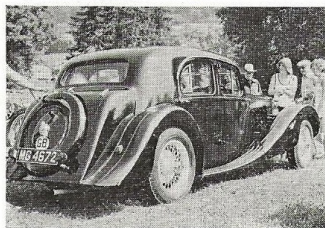
Like I said, I fetched it out, looked at it, shuddered and pushed it back, until a new neighbour arrived with a beautiful 29/9 (Riley 1929 to you young lads and lassies), who saw my poor **old girl** and said join a club and have some fun.

I need hardly say I picked the best and the first Safety Fast I received had the Winterthur preliminary notice. That's it, we will have the car ready by that day (or the day before) (how close it was going to be I did not realise then).

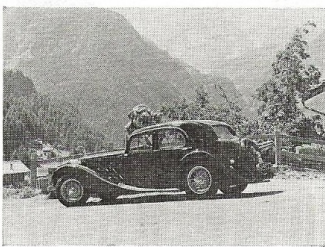
"You are bloody mad," chorused all the kids (4 children, 4 grandchildren), (car is nearly 45, Liz and I nearly 65), but anyone who restores a pram or bike these days just goes on the same old trip, Lands End to John O' Groats, let's be a bit more ambitious, take it to Switzerland.

Not only was the car going to be ready but the old battleaxe herself was raring to go; Hell! I thought, no little dolly bird for you, mate (perhaps next time).

Luxembourg here we come, yes we thought we might as well do the Ton Mathuis weekend at Luxembourg on our way to Switzerland, good job too, because we only did 10 miles to the boil (blocked rad.). "Get to Ton's house somehow," said Ronnie Williams and we did (14 hours to Dover, 12 hours Calais to Fourhren) arrived around midnight to see Ton's lovely wife waiting on the roadside to direct us to Camp Romantique, (heard you were on the way, said she). My son Doug and his wife Diane were worn out trying to keep us in sight doing about 15 to 20 mph for two days



Winterthur 1978



Arolla 1979

Hausach" was the farewell cry from every nationality at every parting.

Safety Fast!, December 1980

nalists than I, Holland was a must, we decided, and Papendall was the ultimate in every way, 5 star accommodation, train journey across Holland, everything from the minute we arrived (the first M.G. meeting we were not late).

"See you at Monchen Gladbach." No! Luxembourg first, the obvious for M.G. owners is **Ton's house** for anyone going across the Channel.

Dare I go to Camp Romantique after my experience in 1978, tell you about this later on, I dared, had a wonderful time, castles, kart track, conrods and pistons; hold it mate, you are jumping the gun, it was **pistons** and **conrods** after Luxembourg.

Yes! I had pushed my luck too far, a gudgeon pin had broken in two sometime in the past but I hadn't stripped the engine down after Hausach so don't know when it went. We were heading for Moselle Valley, no! I hadn't tasted the wine and still got my wellies on, I was going along quite gently, but enough? you say, we don't want gory details we have all had a smashed up piston at some time or other.

The answer was, get to Munchen Gladbach on 5 pistons and then put a piston and conrod in. But to get same I had to ring Ton Mathuis, Ronnie Williams and Rolf Mobius, yes a 40 thou piston and conrod right size? No! but Pat Williams solved that problem, bless her cotton socks and anything else she wears.

Get to Munchen Gladbach on 5, like a damn fool I hadn't sense enough to do a Goldie Gardner and take out No. 2 piston as well as the broken No. 5. The vibration shattered the exhaust system from manifold to tail. Yes! nearly 15 feet. Liz finished the journey with half on her lap, not room for anything in the boot or anywhere else. Gear box mounts and engine mounts were also shattered (found

December, 1980 – contained a full page article entitled SA Resurrection by Fred Hale. Apparently, Frances Adam had reported on Fred's SA Saloon (417) the previous year when he recounted the following: 'A couple of years ago I had a look into the darkness of my old garage and decided the old girl should see the light of day once more. I fetched it out, looked at it, shuddered and pushed it back, until a new neighbour arrived with a beautiful 29/9 (Riley 1929 to you young lads and lassies), who saw my poor old girl and said join a club and have some fun. I need hardly say I picked the best and first Safety Fast (note the exclamation mark was not used in those days – Ed) I received had the Winterthur preliminary notice. That's it, we will have the car ready by that day (or the day before) ...how close it was going to be I did not realise then'.

The article went on to say how the recommissioning was achieved in time and their decision was made to take in the Ton Mathuis weekend in Luxembourg on their way to Switzerland. They took in the Schlumph Collection too before heading up to Paris then taking the ferry from Le Havre back to Southampton. That was 1978 and it all went so well that in 1979 they went to the event in Hausach in Germany and on to Arolla in the Swiss Alps. Fred then sold the family business and settled into retirement but still took part the Tour of Britain and various other European adventures. They pushed their luck a little too far resulting in a broken gudgeon pin, but managed to get to Munchen Gladbach on five pistons. "Like a damn fool, I hadn't sense enough to do a Goldie Gardner and take out No. 2 piston as well as the broken No. 5. The vibration shattered the exhaust system from manifold to tail. Liz finished the journey with half on her lap, not room for anything else in the boot or anywhere else. Gearbox mounts and engine mounts were also shattered".

Fred's son John inherited the SA twenty-eight years ago at the age of forty. The SVW Register archive suggests this SA was supplied by Skurray's Ltd of Swindon and has 'abnormal acceleration from its specially equipped engine', although John has no knowledge of this. As it happens, he is selling the SA and you can read the advert at <http://svwregister.co.uk/classified/cars-for-sale-wanted>.



Recent photo of John Hale's SA0417

December, 1979 – reported on the process for coating the VA/SA dash panel. ‘Eventually the Morris Motor chief chemist unearthed the original chemical formula for the coating process and, having the necessary ingredients on hand, proved that it worked well. The chemicals are lead acetate, sodium thiosulphate and acetic acid added to one gallon of water. When the immersed panel is heated to 180 degrees, the metal turns a metallic blue-grey. Unfortunately, there was an intermediate process. The brass base was coated with some form of primary nickelling or silvering, the nature of which the lab could not establish. The final process would only “take” on the silvering, most of which had worn away on my panel’. **June, 1980** went on to report on the process adopted by Ruedi Spycher. ‘The method was as follows, carried out by a plating firm whose senior plater says he knows the “old recipe”. The brass panel is cleaned and well polished. It is then copper plated, then silver plated to a certain thickness, then it is polished again. The silver surface is then oxidated in a sulphur solution with the addition of oxygen. It is then polished again and the strips rubbed down and finally varnished’. The question was posed “why should the factory go to such a bother”?

The two accounts above differ from each other of course. I imagine M.G. outsourced this and simply bought in the finished panels ready for fitting. My VA Tourer was already showing mainly the brass under layer and in my innocence when I bought it in 1968 I polished this thinking it was how it should look. In 2010, the VA went to Peter Ratcliffe for substantial work and the dash panel was coated to achieve a pleasing metallic blue finish, probably simply by using an appropriate metallic paint then rubbing down the brass strips. Quite adequate in my view.

Register Chairman's Jottings

As you are aware we are celebrating 100 years of MGs this year and hopefully many of you will be participating in the various events marking this significant milestone.

One of the major events will be MG100 at Silverstone on 10th & 11th June, this is the rebranded MG Live event. There is to be a timeline display of MG cars and this will be an excellent opportunity for the SVW Register to display one of each SVW model produced in addition to our register parking area. If you are planning to attend, please email me so that I can hopefully include you when I submit our list of display cars for the time line.

The Register's annual event will be based in York with road runs planned for the 12th and 13th July, full details are on the Register website. To celebrate the 100 years of MG I encourage you all to attend and enjoy a very friendly and sociable event. It would be a double celebration if we can break our SVW cars attendance record.

I have completed my annual task to update the list of SVW articles of interest on our website. Whilst many of you use our Facebook or E-Group sites to get answers to your queries, we still maintain the Index of Articles where you will find the list of detailed articles relating to many of your questions. Many of you keep copies of the SVW Review, Safety Fast, and MG Enthusiast; the index is very useful in locating the actual magazine page containing hopefully the answer to your question. I like most of you can recall seeing an article but remembering its exact location is a problem. For those of you who do not keep the magazines we can supply copies of the relevant articles.

Enjoy your SVW Motoring
Jim