

PROFILE

Paul Batho

Paul Batho enjoys MGs with his ZA Magnette, Midget and MGBGT V8 conversion and has participated in sprints and hillclimbs in an MGA and a series of Midgets. He is also an active volunteer in both the Z Magnette Register and earlier on the Abingdon Works Centre committee. So I was keen to learn more of a fellow Club member and his enthusiasm for MGs and our Club.

Paul began his association with a wide range of MGs as a student with a well worn Black ZA Magnette. After a year or so he was looking to replace this with a Triumph Herald Convertible when he came across another ZA Magnette in Birch Grey in much better condition which he still has today. He bought it from an elderly gentleman who had been given the car by his employer and its original owner, Sir Norman Frome, a former postmaster-general to India who had bought it new after returning to England. It has now covered nearly 250,000 miles, over 150,000 of which have been in Paul's ownership and remains in excellent, well-used condition. Paul likes the car a great deal, especially its excellent handling, the elegant lines from the drawing board of Gerald Palmer and its ability to cover long distances in comfort and style. In its day it was the quickest British 1500 production saloon and today he finds it an ideal classic car for touring in the UK and on mainland Europe – or even for local shopping trips to Tesco! He has replaced the original engine with a 3 –bearing 1800 from an early MGB and changed to a higher rear axle ratio for more relaxed high speed cruising but the original 4- speed gearbox soldiers on after a quarter of a million miles!

But Paul's association with MGs also covers Spridgets, in fact five of them including his first, an Austin Healey Sprite. It was followed by a 1973 Midget and then another, a 1275 in Teal Blue, in which he did club track days. Eventually he sold it and built a Caterham 1600 which he used for many club hillclimbs and sprints but after a couple of years he swapped it for an MGA and a bathroom! Sadly the MGA was destroyed in a mysterious fire whilst parked overnight, so he then bought a full race 1310 Midget from the well known MG Car Club racer, David Coulthard. This was later sold to Will Corry junior and is now actively campaigned around Ireland but after a couple of years Midgetless he is now preparing a 1972 car to run in the standard class in the MGCC Luffield Speed Championship in 2011.

Paul has been an active member of the Z Magnette Register since the mid 80s when he joined the committee to handle the role of liaising with overseas members. It was a role he enjoyed as shortly after qualifying as a chartered surveyor in 1981 he won an international travelling scholarship to research British property investment overseas and travelled extensively to many countries. Paul went on to be the register secretary, Safety Fast! scribe and since 2007 has been the register chairman. Living not far from

Photo: Paul Batho

Centre, the Abingdon Works Centre, and was vice chairman in the early 90s. So Paul has been a regular representative at the Club's six monthly Council meetings and provided useful professional advice as a member of the Club's building committee which was responsible for managing the successful extension at Club Office, the John Thornley Suite.

Paul qualified as a chartered surveyor following a geography degree at Oxford in the late 70s and after a brief spell with the CEGB, then moved to a leading firm in the City where he specialised in commercial property and advising international banks on major property finance deals. His company cars at that time included an MG Maestro Efi followed by the Turbo model. In 2000 he decided to leave the City and the daily commute from Didcot via Paddington to take up the post of Director of Studies at the College of Estate Management at Reading University. This meant MGs could be used to commute as well as compete! A 1973 MGBGT in Damask was later sold at the Club's annual Silverstone meeting to an enthusiast over from Denmark, but glancing around the other cars for sale there he spotted a white MGBGT V8 conversion offered by Nick Parrott. A brief test drive and he was hooked! Not quite the thing for the daily commute, though, so a "modern" MG TF, was acquired for the trip to Reading. Now a busy self-employed consultant working from home in Oxfordshire, Paul enjoys using the V8 as his company hack!

Paul has other interests including a share with four friends in a 48 foot traditional narrow boat which spends its life wandering the waterways of England. At the start of each year the owners decide where they want to end up by the close of the season and each person in turn then takes the boat over a section of the route. The red and blue eight berth boat was built 20 years ago and, with a wood burning stove amongst its traditional fittings, Paul describes it as rather like a floating holiday cottage. Paul is also a keen walker and is currently approaching Land's End in Cornwall on a twice-yearly trek with a group of friends along the popular South West Coastal Path route. Paul can also sometimes be found acting as the "roadie" for the concerts at which his wife Sarah Tenant-Flowers is the conductor.

Meeting Paul at the Barley Mow alongside the Thames at Clifton Hampden was a most enjoyable opportunity to learn more of a generous Club volunteer with a passion for such a wide range of MGs. A welcoming and most interesting Club personality.
Victor Smith

Photo: MG

Abingdon, he has also had an active involvement in his local