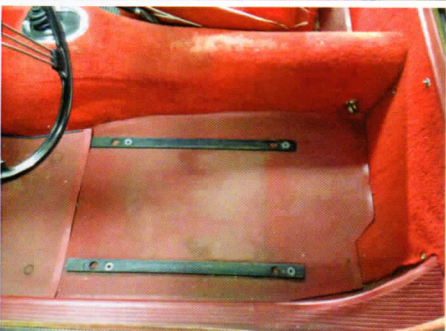


## MGB Musings - MGB Mk I and II Carpet & Speaker Console

In my opinion, one of the nicest looking car interiors of the 1960s is the MGB. With its black crackle finish dash, gold speaker mesh, and in the early cars, seats with contrasting piping, it is a very classic and elegant place to spend some time. When I was asked the question the other day about the original tunnel carpet and positioning of the speaker console on Mk I MGBs, I did some investigating on MGB carpets and this is what I found.

I will confine this article to MGBs sold new in Australia, i.e. Mk I and IIs as these are the majority of our cars. In these cars only the tunnel, kick boards, battery cover shelf, vertical panel at the front of this, and the rear wheel arches were carpeted on the roadster. On the GT the back of the rear seat, the rear floor and the wells at the back of the wheel arches were also carpeted. Sills, the starter motor cover and floors were always covered in textured rubber mats. Never carpet. There were separate rubber mats for the floor in the footwells and the floor under the seats.

Other than possibly a few very early cars, the carpet and rubber mats in Australian MGB roadsters were always black, unlike in the UK and elsewhere where they matched the trim colour\*. The first Australian cars came out as knock down kits from the UK for assembly at Pressed



Metal Corporation (PMC) at Enfield. I believe that the very first kits that came out from the UK for local assembly had no locally made components, in which case they may have had carpet and mats that matched the interior colour as with Abingdon assembled cars. I have not been able to confirm this, and even if this was the case, very soon a local supplier of carpet was found. But, because of the relatively small number of cars assembled in Australia the carpet was only ever offered in black, regardless of the colour of the trim. MGBGTs, which were always imported fully assembled, could be had with carpet that matched the trim colour.

The carpet was always loop pile and the underlay was originally jute of either 1/4 or 1/2 inch thickness depending upon where it was used. The carpet was not heavily backed so was flexible and could mold around the rear wheel arches and other areas. At the front in the footwells the kick-board carpet was glued to panels, as was the carpet on the sides of the tunnel in the footwell. These pieces of carpet were trimmed with a vinyl edge and the panels were held in place by screws.

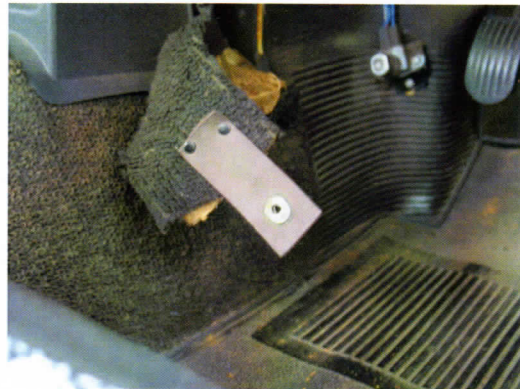
For the tunnel carpet, the jute underlay was shaped to fit around the tunnel and then glued to the carpet. The tunnel carpet was only ever one piece. You will often see Mk I cars with a separate piece of carpet for the step up hump on top of



the tunnel (see photo).

This looks okay, but it is not how the carpet was originally. (You will also note the incorrect gear stick cover for this model.) There were cut-outs in the tunnel carpet for the handbrake, speaker console and seat belt mounting points. To provide access to the gearbox dipstick behind the console the carpet was cut to provide a flap that can be pulled out of the way. On both Mk I and Mk II cars this flap was secured to the carpet

on the opposite side of the tunnel with a tan leather strap that was riveted to the carpet on one end and had either a press stud or "lift-the-dot" fastener on the other. (See photo. This is of a Mk II car.) Unfortunately, this strap was usually thrown away with the old carpet when it was replaced, and is rarely seen today.



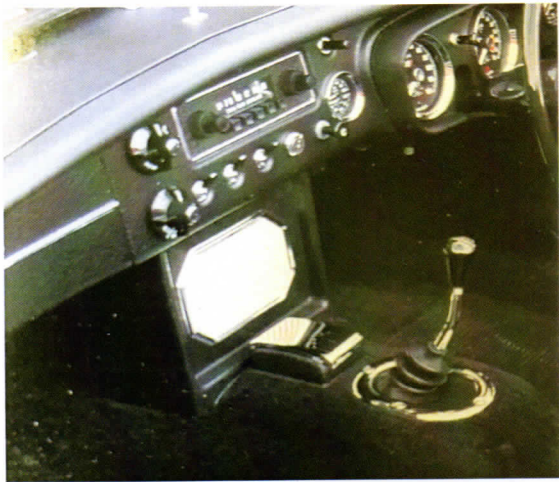
Now for the most controversial question, and the one that started this investigation. On Mk I MGBs does the plastic speaker console sit on top of the carpet or does it sit directly on the tunnel itself with the carpet trimmed to sit over the lip at the bottom and sides of the console? Having investigated this extensively, spoken to many knowledgeable people and looked at contemporary sales brochures and pictures from road tests, I can assure you that it is the latter - the console sits directly on the tunnel and the carpet sits over the lip at the base of the console. If you look closely you can see this in the photo from Sports Car World in 1965 where the carpet comes all the way to the front of the console.



You will probably also see it more clearly in the more recent photo at the top of the next page.

To prove that this was the way MG intended, you will also notice that the Mk I speaker console has cut outs in





in the photo, at the end of the article, taken from Sports Car World's road test in July 1970, as well as in the previous photo showing the leather strap. This is probably the reason for all of the confusion about the location of the console in the Mk I as people assume it is the same. Indeed, even Clausager (Original MGB, 1994) shows a Mk I MGBGT on p32 with the console on top of the carpet, although the roadster on p31 and p43 is correct.

the front lip for the heads of the bolts that hold the hump on top of the tunnel (see photo). If the console sat on top



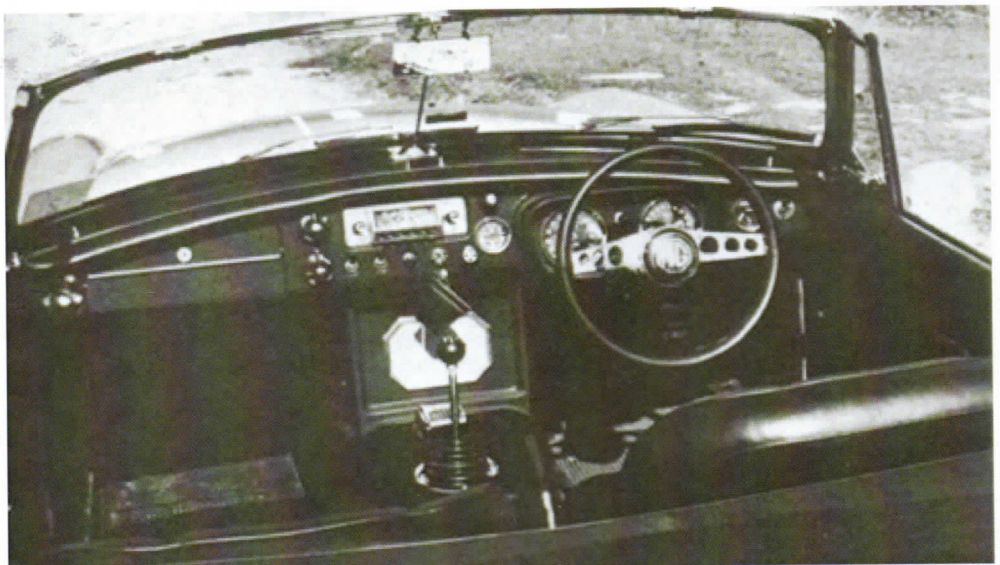
Well that was the "train spotters" guide to original carpet in the Mk I and Mk II MGB. In future articles I will look at some other aspects of originality in our favourite cars. In the mean time I wish you and your family a merry Christmas and hope you take every opportunity to get your MGB out of the garage and enjoy it this summer.

\* Even though they are red, whereas Australian carpet was always black, the best photos I could find that illustrate the early carpet and rubber mats in an MGB are of a very original 1964 US left hand drive MGB discussed and meticulously photographed in a blog by an upholsterer called Geoff Chrysler (<https://detailenthusiast.weebly.com/blog/archives/12-2015>). Other than the colour of the carpet and obvious differences for being left hand drive, the trim is identical to early Australian assembled MGB Mk 1 roadsters.

of carpet that is over these bolts it will never fit properly. Indeed in cars where the console has been incorrectly placed on top of the carpet you will often see elongated holes for the screws that hold it in place.

To achieve a neat finish of the carpet where it butts the speaker console on Mk I cars, the jute underlay was stopped an inch or so from the edge and the tunnel carpet was folded over and glued back on itself. It was not edged with vinyl as some replacement carpets are. You will see this folded over edging in the photo of the up-turned tunnel carpet. (See photograph at end of article)

On the Mk II however, the console sat on top of the carpet. You will see this



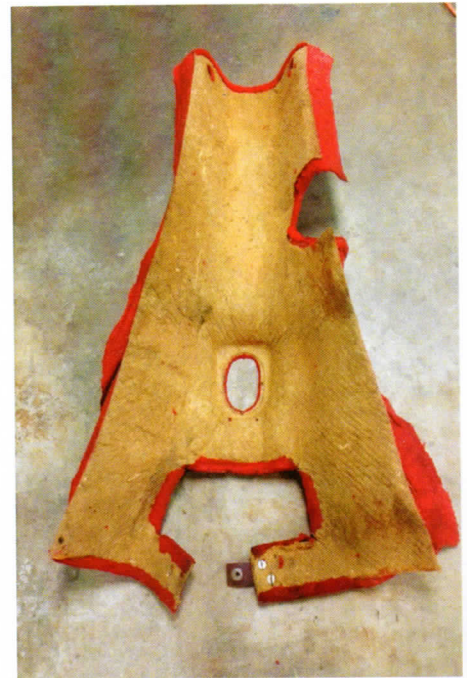
On the Mk II the console sat on top of the carpet

John Clarke

\* I would like to acknowledge the assistance, advice and recollections of Stuart Ratcliff, John Lindsay and, in particular, Tom Aczel in putting this article together.

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MGB Registrar



Upturned tunnel carpet with folded over edging