

# WHAT I'VE DONE TO MY CAR

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Here are a few things I've done to my MGB over the years, some definitely worthwhile, others not advantageous, and one still being refined and my final conclusions are yet to be made.

## 1) Needle roller king pin thrust washers

These replace the bronze thrust washers at the top. There's a definite reduction in "stiction" with these fitted. A very real, palpable improvement. Like many subtle changes, you quickly become used to it, and don't think of it, at least not until you drive another MGB!

Here's one seller for example:

<https://britishclassicspareparts.com.au/british-vehicle-parts/suspension/kingpin-thrust-bearing-kit-x-2-replaces-old-brass-thrust-washer-mgb-mgb-gt>

## 2) Larger (3/4") diameter front anti-roll (sway) bar

The MGB was designed for cross ply tyres, capable of far less road adhesion to lateral cornering forces than with the radial tyres we all use today. Consequently the car is still experiencing road traction at far more extreme cornering than the original designers ever envisaged, and therefore, also much greater body lean.

The standard size front anti-roll bar is of 9/16" diameter. Because twisting forces in a steel rod rise exponentially with diameter, a 3/4" (19mm) anti-roll bar is, remarkably, 350% stiffer!

I had always thought a larger front anti-roll bar would make an MGB under-steer more. (A rear anti-roll bar makes them over-steer, sometimes very suddenly). Having fitted a 3/4" anti-roll bar to the front of my MGB, I can attest to the fact that nothing could be further from the truth; the car turns MUCH more flatly into corners, and surprisingly, with significantly LESS under-steer.

Also surprising to me is that the car does not ride more harshly with the larger anti-roll bar. If you do decide to explore this modification, do try to find a bar properly configured, like the original, well engineered bar, with proper steel sleeved rubber bushes in the end. The bar I purchased, manufactured by an Australian "suspension specialist", had a flattened plate with a simple hole at each end! The original MG engineers knew their craft well, and elements were well configured.

## 3) Replacement wire wheels

A few years ago I decided to purchase a set of chrome wire wheels to cosmetically enhance my faithful MGB. At the time, the Dunlop brand wire wheels allegedly had some manufacturing issues, including that the purchaser had to then have their new wheels "trued" prior to fitting them for them to run straight with no "run out"! Additionally there were stories of brittle chrome plated steel spokes, something I've unfortunately experienced repeatedly with my Dunlop chrome wire wheels on my MGA; I think I've replaced 16 spokes so far (with stainless steel spokes), a skill I would happily have had no need to acquire! In fairness, I believe the Dunlop wheels are better now, and that they now also use stainless steel spokes. Nonetheless at the time I chose a set of wheels from an eBay seller, manufactured in the USA by Dayton. These had stainless spokes. After fourteen years, these wheels are still perfect, with deeply applied outstanding quality chrome plating.

However, as the eBay seller was listing 72 spoke wheels (60 is standard for an MGB, and was also offered, for a slightly lesser price), and offered the wheels at 5" width ((4.5" is

standard), I simply chose the wheels as illustrated in the glossy ad, with the 72 spokes and 5" width.

If I had my time again, I would have chosen the 60 spoke option. These wheels, excellent though they are, are HEAVY. I believe you can readily sense this as you drive, especially if you then fit larger tyres (I even tried 195x14x70 for a while!)

Whatsmore I now think the 72 spokes look too "busy". They are also marginally more fiddly to clean.

I would also suggest you might want to seriously consider 15" wheels, to give a wider choice of tyres if a strictly original appearance is not important to you. 14" is becoming very uncommon. \

#### 4) Rear axle locator kit

As you may have noticed above, at one stage I fitted 195x14x70 tyres to my MGB, on the encouragement of a local very experienced and excellent mechanic. On this occasion his advice was very decidedly incorrect. Apart from the massive thumping from these huge and heavy tyres, they rubbed on the rear inner wheel arch lips with even moderate cornering forces. And despite their large contact area, these tyres (quality Michelin tyres) didn't stick particularly well. This size just doesn't "work" for an MGB!

For a while I considered a Panhard rod, but I didn't have the heart to drill my very original MGB. Additionally I'd read of the rod being torn out of the body end mount in some cars with this modification. The car of course was never designed to have such forces fed through it at this point, near the boot floor. Additionally I had read that the MGB development engineers were not happy with a Panhard rod anyway, as the car seemed to steer differently to the left and to the right!

I was advised to communicate with Dave Headley in the USA who does MGB racing developments. He had designed a "rear axle locator kit". I wound up purchasing this off Dave. It looked remarkably simple.

However in the end, I changed my tyres for 185x14x70 and this solved 95% of my rubbing issues, by virtue of just 5mm more clearance each side. They also hung on MUCH better (Michelin again), despite being narrower.

But under very vigorous cornering, with a load (passenger, luggage, full tank) I could still experience a bit of rubbing at times.

So I finally fitted this kit recently. I'm still fettling this a little, as a couple of items in the kit seemed not quite correctly dimensioned.

My conclusion? The difference is really surprising. The car steers MUCH better. I suddenly feel that I had to drag the car around corners before, and now the car is much more responsive.

And any downsides? Yes, as feared, there is a somewhat greater transmission of noise through the rear of the car. For racing applications this would not matter, but it does for a comfortable road car. A recent adjustment has considerably reduced this noise, so I'm still holding off on a final verdict. The modifications are easily reversed, but I'm enjoying the enhanced cornering so much, I'm going to be reluctant to change back.

<http://www.fast-mg.com>

#### 5) Front quarter windows

For some reason the driver side quarter window on my MGB has always tended to swing closed from even minor wind forces. Anything over 15-20mph it would swing partly closed. The passenger side was always fine. Tightening the nuts on the pivot to as tight as I dared unfortunately didn't help.

I had assumed that this was just an idiosyncrasy of my MGB. But then I saw advertised on

The MG Experience some extensions for the vent window handles to overcome this problem. Subsequently the seller also designed a set to suit the more awkward earlier curved style handle on my model MGB. This required a pair of elastic loops to help retain them in position which looks a little clumsy. But the solution certainly works well in practice.

<https://sites.google.com/view/moderntouring>



And finally, two photos taken yesterday of my MGB after a desperately needed wash, clay barring, buff and polish.



*Tom Aczel, November 2020*