

TO:
JOHN & KATHIE WINTER
2029 GENRES
HARAHAN
LA
70123



LA. M.G.C.
P.O. BOX 641095
KENNER, LA 70064

M MORRIS



G AZETTE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FOR 1986

SEPTEMBER

SEPT 30 - - - - - GENERAL MEETING
OCT 24-26 - - - - - Camping in Ville Platte
OCT 28 - - - - - GENERAL MEETING
NOV 9 - - - - - E. REYNOLDS MEMORIAL RALLYE
NOV 25 - - - - - GENERAL MEETING
DEC UNK - - - - - Christmas Party

MG MG

OUR NEXT GENERAL MEETING WILL BE AT 8:00 PM AT :

SHONEY'S
3410 WILLIAMS BLVD.
KENNER

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE, SO PLEASE STOP BY.

MG MG

REMEMBER: Nominations begin with the September meeting and
Elections will be in November. Anyone can nominate
themselves if they would like. Let's have a good
turnout as next year will be an important one.

NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS ARE OPEN AND THE NOVEMBER MEETING IS ELECTION NIGHT.

PRESIDENT: The President shall preside at all meetings of the members and officers and shall perform the duties usually pertaining to this office. The president will serve as the Chief Executive officer of the Club and as Chairman of the Board of Directors. Special meetings may be called only by the President's authority.

VICE PRESIDENT: It shall be the duty of the Vice President to act as Activities Director and Chairman of all Club Committees.

RECORDING SECRETARY/NEWSLETTER EDITOR:
The Recording Secretary/Newsletter Editor shall attend all meetings of the membership and officers and keep records of all minutes and notes in a book kept for this purpose. Publishing the Clubs newsletter as required in the charter.

TREASURER/CORRESPONDING SECRETARY: The Treasurer/Corresponding Secretary shall, subject to such conditions and restrictions as may be made by the officers, have custody of all moneys, debts, and obligations belonging to the Club. All money of the Club shall be received and deposited into the Clubs account by the Treasurer. All debts of the Club shall be paid by the Treasurer. All contracts, shall be co-signed in the name of the Club by the President and the Treasurer. The Treasurer shall give a report on the financial status of the Club at every meeting. No obligations, debts, or other liability shall be incurred by the Treasurer without the specific prior approval of the majority of the officers. As Corresponding Secretary, all Club records and regalia shall be kept by the Treasurer/Corresponding Secretary. The Treasurer/Corresponding Secretary is to keep an up-to-date roll of all Club members and report new members to the General Secretary of the MG Car Club Limited upon their election into membership. The Treasurer/Corresponding Secretary shall be in charge of issuing regalia and membership numbers to members.

MEMBER AT LARGE: It shall be the duty of the Member at Large to represent the general club membership at all meetings. One Member at Large shall be chosen for every thirty members in good standing.

(The above discriptions include all changes to their stated duties by By-Laws Amendment No. 1 adopted Nov. 1978.)

T&CC Kimber has been described as a very complex personality. What was he really like as a boss? Or as a designer or administrator? Did Miles Thomas do wrong when he fired him in 1941?

THORNLEY Make no mistake, I admired Kimber for what he did. He had the imagination and drive to start it all. He was a visionary, and he had the ability to install his enthusiasm into others — take those two things together and that's enough, really. What Thomas did to him was shameful, the toffee-nosed bastard: I suppose he saw Kim as a chap who'd once had Nuffield's ear to a dangerous extent, so he couldn't go wrong by wiping him out. But it stank.

As a boss, Kim was demanding, but if you were straight with him, he was straight with you. I don't think he even began to be an engineer — he leaned on H.N. Charles for that. But he... Well, every morning all the heads of department assembled in his office at 8.45 and we went through the incoming mail. So if there was a hot, stinking complaint about a car, Charles was involved, I was involved, immediately. I had designed a special switch-panel for my Midget — three rows of three, so that you could use it without looking at it, like the keys of a piano — and I was showing it to somebody at one of these meetings. And Kim said: "Let me see that!" His enthusiasm bubbled over — he saw the point at once.

The fact that the MG design centre was shifted from Abingdon to Cowley in 1935, I think that upset him a lot. That was his main interest: overseeing the design, what's the next car going to look like, how's it going to behave? That was his life. It's very difficult to see where he could have gone, the R-Type design being cut off as it was. That was 20 years ahead of its time, in some ways, and I'm sure he saw it as the forerunner of a road car. I'm afraid it was an inevitable part of Kimber's approach that he kept on running out of money.

T&CC But you yourself believed in competitions?

THORNLEY Yes, certainly, but I had better control over it — though I suppose it was imposed on us from above. We couldn't go wild as he did, do things regardless of cost. Latterly I did have a great deal of latitude to lay on trips to the Utah Salt Flats, etc, and tell the hierarchy afterwards.

T&CC Wasn't that dangerous, with BMC?

THORNLEY Dangerous? If you knew the background! I lived *very* dangerously

sometimes, trying to ensure that M stayed on the map!

T&CC And you feel that Kimber's enthusiasm sometimes ran away with him?

THORNLEY I think so, yes. During 1936 we wanted a competitor specifically for the SS Jaguar 1½-litre saloon, and in prototype form the car that was produced — mostly from Nuffield parts — was very competitive, pricewise. This was the MG VA. Then Kimber hung *forty-seven* octagons on it — special door-handles, special bonnet handles, octagonal horn-push, octagonal instruments, monograms on this, that and the other. And octagons cost money. So we ended up as no competitor for the Jag, pricewise.

"I'm probably the only senior executive in BMC that never had a thick ear from Leonard Lord."

Oh yes, he was an odd bird, Kimber... But let me tell you something else as an insight into his character. When WW2 came in September 1939 and car manufacture ceased at Abingdon — when the war was about six weeks old, before he got the ill-fated aircraft contract that caused Thomas to fire him — Kimber had all of us into his office, one at a time. He said: "We don't know where we're going, we can't keep you all on indefinitely, so some can stay but some will have to go." When he saw me, he said he'd decided to keep me on, and I said: "Thanks very much." The following morning's post brought my calling-up papers — Army Officers' Emergency Reserve. So I went up to Kim and he said: "Get out — I don't want to see you!"

I thought: "What the hell's the matter with the old boy this morning?" Went back to Service Department, very bewildered. About an hour later, a special messenger brought a memo from him: "Further to our conversation of yesterday afternoon, I am very much afraid we shall have to dispense with your services. Herewith is a cheque representing one month's salary for each year of service." The Nuffield Group's policy was that if you were called up, you were going from one job to another, so there was no financial adjustment — but if they fired you, you got a handout. Kimber had worked things so that I got the money: it enabled me to pay off all my debts before I left Abingdon, go off to war without a stain on my character. This was Kim's essential kindness.

T&CC Presumably, MG pay was never exactly impressive?

THORNLEY Oh, it was ludicrous! At that time, as Service Manager, I had a salary of £500 a year. After the war, as Service Manager and Sales Manager, I got £700 a year.

T&CC You had a good war?

THORNLEY I had a very hard-working war but I wasn't exposed to danger, much — bombing, of course, but we all had that. And it taught me to think big. As a Lieutenant-Colonel, General Staff Officer Grade 1 at the War Office, I had the buying of *all* Signals equipment for the British Army — a bill of about £200 million. And although we worked to various rules, of course, it was entirely within my purview whether the final bill was £175 million or £225 million. For that, a grateful Government paid me £918 a year.

T&CC Your appointment as General Manager of MG in 1952 coincided with the formation of the British Motor Corporation under Leonard Lord. You must have really walked a tightrope to keep him satisfied — even to sell him the idea of a competitions department?

THORNLEY I think I'm probably the only senior executive in BMC that never had a thick ear from Lord. I never had any difficulty with Longbridge, never had any difficulty with Lord. It was a sad day for me when he went, because George Harriman was *nothing* of a man by comparison. A terrible dead loss. But Len Lord... I think it was like dealing with a dog, in a way — I wasn't afraid of him, so he wagged his tail. If I'd got myself on the wrong side of him, I reckon Abingdon would have been snuffed out very soon.

Nothing succeeds like success, of course — we were doing so well, and the big upturn in production coincided with my period of office. That was me life's work, mate!

Lord and Harriman both had the same delusion, that they were chief engineer as well as chairman of BMC. But Lord's philosophy was that if he was right 51% of the time he was scoring above the line. Harriman tried to do the same but he *didn't* get it right, ever, and BMC went steadily down the hill. So by the time of the negotiations with Tony Benn, BMC was virtually bust. Harriman was a menace: I blame him entirely for the whole debacle of BMC.

T&CC By that time, of course, your illness had put you on the sidelines?

THORNLEY That was strange, in a way. When I was 14 I very nearly died of peritonitis: six weeks in hospital, two bloody great drain-tubes coming out of me — in that period I consumed half-a-bottle of champagne by mouth, and was kept alive by saline solution squirted up my fundament. Weighed less than six stone.

In the Fifties, shortly after achieving the hot seat at MG, my guts started playing up

THE CONCLUSION NEXT MONTH