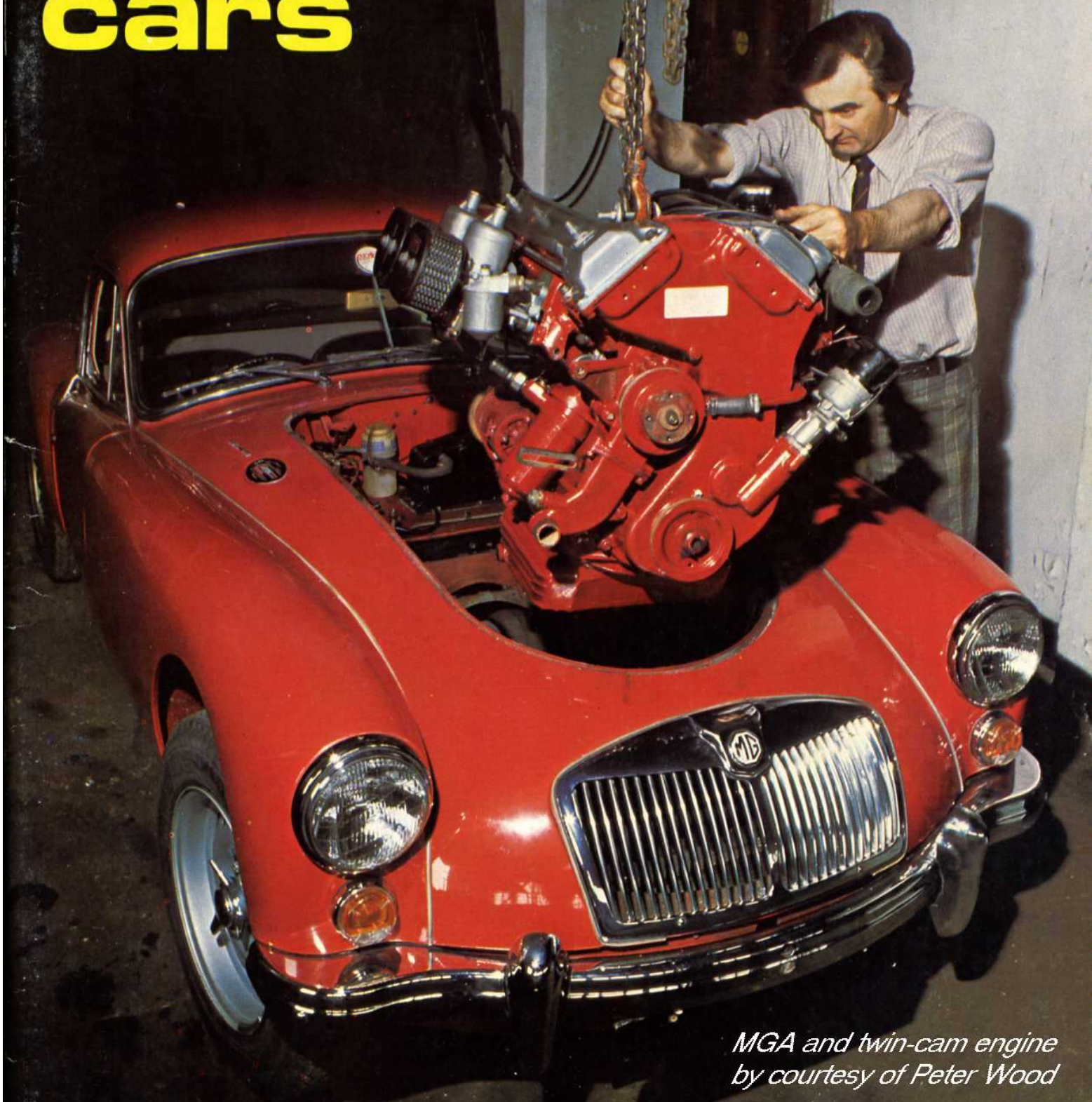


OCTOBER 1979

60p

U.S. \$2.00

# THOROUGHbred & **classic** cars



*MGA and twin-cam engine  
by courtesy of Peter Wood*

**FREE** Directory of Specialist  
Firms & Services **Part 1**

## The Specialists

# Motobuild

Simon Moore visits Grahame and Rae Davis of Motobuild, the MG specialists

I BOUGHT my light blue MGA (chassis No 102796 — for details of the different MGAs see *Thoroughbred and Classic Cars*, March 1976) from Parade Motors in Mitcham, run by that great pre-war MG driver, J. H. T. Smith, in October 1965.

Although my name is the third in the log book, I subsequently learned that the car had been driven up to then by a garage owner and his lady. It was first registered on 1st January, 1962 and had done 36,000 miles when I got it.

I first met Grahame and Rae Davis in early 1973 when a gentleman (?) parked his Cortina (with a faulty handbrake) on a quiet, hilly, residential street in Hampstead. Unfortunately he did not put it in gear nor turn the wheels in to the kerb, two actions I had taken when parking the 'A' 50 yards further down the hill. Half an hour after he left his car, the faulty handbrake let itself off and the Cortina ran downhill until it contacted my 'A'. It rode up over the boot and finished up with the grille against the windscreen. The 'A' was rather a mess at the back end as can be imagined. After many fruitless telephone calls to BMC dealers who didn't want to know about repairing the car, one finally gave me Motobuild's telephone number. They were dubious if it was worth repairing as it was an awful mess in those far off days when 'A's were worth very little and no metal wings were being made although you could obtain fibreglass ones. When the job was finally completed, Grahame decided to take the car home to see if it was really as good mechanically as I'd said it was. His pronouncement — the best push rod car he had driven up to then. So it was worth it! The car has now done 165,000 miles (although none in the last two years) and it is back with Grahame and Rae for a complete restoration.

Grahame has been involved with old MG's for about 14 years; he and his brother, Rae, started up the present business in 1971 (called Motobuild since January 1974). Since 1972 they have been in the current premises near London Airport. At first the business was mainly repair and servicing work, mostly on MG's, but restoration of T types started when they embarked on the manufacture of the wooden body parts, then running boards and finally whole bodies.

As the business grew and the size of the premises with it, so more craftsmen were employed and the range of work undertaken grew. Currently they make their own body panels, do all their own painting, upholstery and electrical work leaving only a few specialist jobs for sub-contracting (for example, chrome plating). They started making steel body panels for MGA's in late 1974, for

Healeys in 1976 and are now making some "frog-eye" Sprite ones. More recently they have added a full range of seat and trim kits and hoods, all made on the premises.

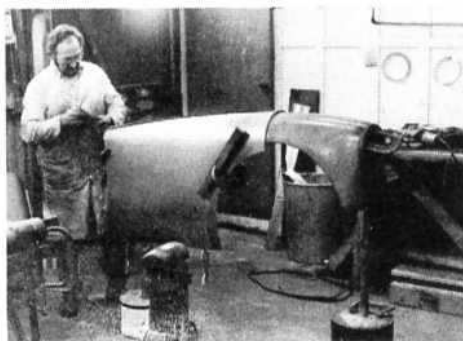
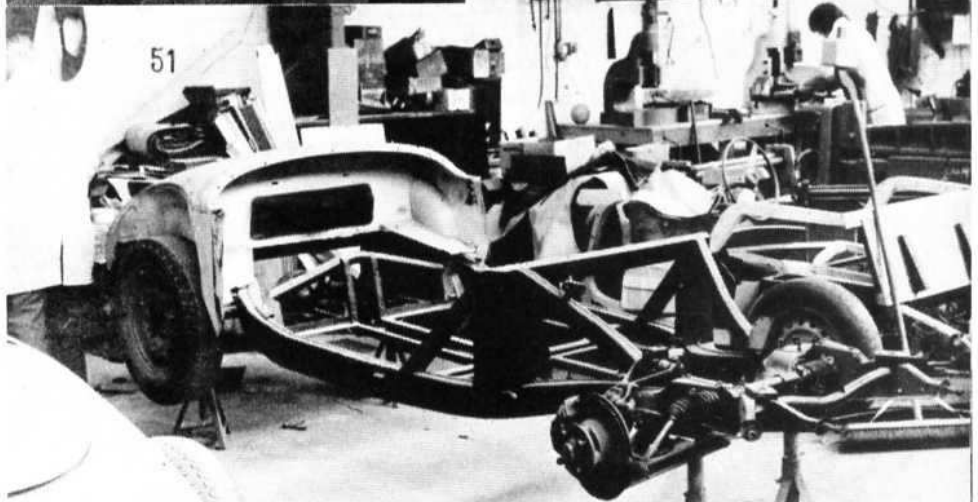
They keep these body panels in stock together with a very extensive range of spares for all MG's and Healeys. About 60% of their spares business is overseas and many MG centres around the world rely on them for supplies as well as individuals ordering through their mail order service.

Restoration work has developed from T types on to MGA's, big Healeys and now increasingly "frog-eyes" although other cars are not turned away. For example, Grahame's father's Tojeiro has recently emerged from the paint shop to add even more interest to the already fascinating collection of classic cars to be

seen on Motobuild's premises. About half their restoration work comes from overseas. The jobs are meticulous and thorough and the cars being restored will not emerge for some time — never expect a quick job from anyone who does such work to top standards. Nor will cars be taken in from storage until a space exists in the restoration shop as otherwise overcrowded chaos would result. In other words one car is not started before another has been completely finished and left the shop.

Motobuild will also service all the aforementioned types (plus more modern British Leyland sports cars) and naturally buys and sells them too. The author arrived to do this interview on a Friday afternoon. Grahame wasn't there but Rae expected him soon. Sure enough, the truck pulled in a little later with an incredibly dirty 'A' — with an MG registration — just purchased "sight unseen". It had been stored in a cattle barn for two years and had rats nesting next to the master cylinder when collected!

In summary, although Motobuild derive eighty per cent of their business from MG's and are known throughout the world for parts and metal body panels for 'A's, the interest in Healeys (both "big" and "frog-eye") is growing and they are catering for these too. Motobuild are at 128 High Street, Hounslow, Middlesex. (telephone 01-570 5342 and 01-572 5437).



MGAs all round. Recent acquisition, left. Chassis work, below, with T-type behind. Bottom, making up new steel panels and the start of finishing.