

MG Car Club SE Centre - CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT - JANUARY 2021

Who amongst us could have predicted how events would unfold at the time of our last AGM on 16th November 2019? Even at the time of our last General Meeting on 16th March 2020 we had only just received notification of our first ever 'National Lockdown'.

It is with great sadness that I have to remind you of the loss of two very valued members of our community since our last AGM. Piers Hubbard originated our first ever Wanderer Group in Surrey, he was a keen photographer, MGA Register Historian, Author, Treasurer to our Abingdon Headquarters at a very crucial time and a keen supporter of the South East Centre, he passed away shortly before Christmas. Peter Wallace on the other hand was a more recent recruit having joined us less than three years ago after the death of his wife and but his friendly face became a regular feature at our events in his beautiful grey VA until shortly before his death. Peter is, we believe, the very first of our members to die of Covid-19.

You may remember back to our last AGM - My stated aims for this year included reducing the age of the Committee, providing the Centre with a more modern approach to communications and increasing female representation. I am pleased to inform you that these things are now happening and that the SE Centre is now much better equipped to meet the demands of the changes that the future will bring beyond the next ten years

As soon as it was appropriate your Secretary and Acting Chairman met up with Derek Edwards for a discussion about the Centre's future. I am pleased to inform you that Derek was very happy to take on the new role of Centre President with the continued help of his wife Anne.

Unlike many other Centres, our Secretary Austin Banner quickly invested in the commercial version of Zoom which has enabled us to co-opt extra members to the Committee without the difficulty of meeting physically, continue with Committee Meetings and working parties on a very regular basis and to hold extremely successful meetings of all of our Natter and Wanderer Leaders.

As we celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the MGCC (which makes us the largest Centre of the oldest single-marque car club in the world), let us also remember that the average age of our members remains stubbornly high.

In common with the whole of the MG Car Club, the South East Centre's membership is heavily weighted in terms of septuagenarians and octogenarians and sadly we have to expect some quite normal age-related attrition in annual membership numbers. Despite this, your Committee is keen to expand our membership and at the same time make the South East Centre more future-proof. No, this doesn't mean that we will **all** have to drive electric cars but it does mean that we must welcome the new electric MGs that are selling like hot cakes all over the world including here in the South East of England. These new MGs are selling extremely well and we are preparing a strong initiative to promote our Centre via these new Chinese MG Motor franchises which have sprung up around us. This is a unique not-to-be-missed opportunity!

In a similar way your Committee recognised that an extra effort was needed to reach out to younger members. I am pleased to advise you that John Gallop, Vice Chairman of the MGCC Young Members Branch has been co-opted onto our meetings with the specific aim of liaising with younger members and safely dealing with our social media communications – this is another important link for the future! We now also have the prospect of incorporating three female Committee members.

I would like to finish my report with one very positive thought – Despite all of the problems encountered in 2020, the South East Centre is in a really good position as we start 2021.

Your Committee has given a great deal of time to planning a fantastic 2021 programme of events and they have more experience of organising and running Covid-19 compliant events than any other Centre in the country, thanks largely to the influence of our Comps Secretary, John Morgan. We are now told that before long the roll-out of the new Covid-19 vaccines will also result in an increasing ability to enjoy our MGs in the way that we have always been accustomed.

We give 2021 a heartfelt welcome!!

I strongly commend your hard-working Committee to you!

Chris Leigh
(Temporary) Chairman MGCC SE Centre
December 2020

One further thought – *There are a few different ways that you can all promote our MGs in the spirit of “The Marque of Friendship”. Our future as a club beyond the next ten years will be in the hands of our very active “Young Members Branch” or even younger people who have not yet joined.*

My challenge to you all this year is: *(These are things that I make a habit of doing myself!)*

- 1 When you meet any of the new Chinese MG owners give them an enthusiastic MGCC welcome!
- 2 Give a younger person the experience of a drive in an old MG because enthusiasm rubs off!
- 3 Adopt one of our less IT literate colleagues, help them to navigate our websites and print some information off for them – they will appreciate it (30% of them have no email address)!

Enjoy driving your MG!
Chris