**MGCCSE Chairman’s Report 2024/5**

2024 was an exceptional year for the South East Centre begin focussed around the MG Centenary celebrations. The main event was over one weekend in May and it was an ambitious event taking in the “Where’s Cecil” MG Cavalcade on the Friday at local MG dealers Ancaster in Dartford. A series of five local road runs from around the region converging on The Fairmile in Cobham for an afternoon “Summer party” complete with magic and jazz. The Sunday was a full show day at Broolkands Museum and was focussed on competition cars from the last 100 years of MG – very appropriate for the location. The Cavalcade moved on the next day leaving from Mercede-Benz World and finishing at the Beaulieu National Motor Museum and from there onwards to Lands End.

It was a great weekend , two years in the planning, and the committee and helpers all did a sterling job getting it to a successful completion. The reward was as runners up for “Club of the Year” at the International Historic Motoring Awards in London and the new “Significant Contribution for the Centre Trophy” went to the entire organising team. Above all there were over 500 MGs and several thousand people who all enjoyed this special celebration.

That was not the only benefit of the celebration as a surplus in sponsorship meant that a sizeable donation could be made to our charity, Prostate Cancer UK, which resulted in nearly £3000 being raised this year – a record for the Centre. The Cavalcade was also raising funds for two charities – Lupus and Dementia UK which resulted in a further charitable donation.

A new charity will be announced for 2025 at this AGM.

Whilst 2024 was dominated by MG100SE there were plenty of other events and gatherings taking place. The Summer Gathering at a new venue of West Horsley Place was notable for its connection with the Ghosts TV series but there was an Autumn Gathering at Borde Hill Gardens as well and shows to attend at Hever Castle and more locally.

Competition has suffered a little bit and we had to cancel the Autumn Naviscat again due to lack of entries, which is a shame as these are good fun events and take a lot of effort to organise. The Autosolo went well again at Filching Manor but without the Sevenoaks & District Motor Club it could not be done. That will be repeated for a third time this year and there will be a new evening Autotest in a field in Newdigate in the Summer to see if we can attract more members back into some light competition.

The Pride of Ownerships have been doing well and we had a record number in 2024 but that beggars a question – are there too many, is it what members want?

Questions like this have been subject to a day long review of the Centre and its activities/procedures so hopefully we have been able to recognise what we have done well and what might need some tweaking.

Overall the committee and natter leaders do fantastic jobs and all credit to them.

However, despite all the effort the overall membership of the Centre and the Club has gone down in 2024. We are now just below 1300 memberships and we need to reflect how to get that number to increase rather than decrease.

After all there are plenty of MG activities on offer to encourage new members to join.

Addressing new members from the new breed of MG is also an issue. Now that MG Motor UK have entered the top ten of motor sales in this country you might think there would be an upswing in membership as when the MGF was introduced in 1995. Most of the modern MGs have been “family” cars and often sold through business use however the Cyberster is now on offer as a purely fun car. We do liaise with local MG dealers but and attended the launch of the Cyberster at Wilsons and Richmonds – you’ll find our leaflets there and other MG dealerships in the region. There may be more work to do on encouraging this new breed of MG sports car owner to the club.

The end of year awards lunch at Hartsfield Manor showed the best of the Membership with numerous awards being presented and an interesting talk by motoring and aviation artist Richard Wheatland. Well done to our Club Members of the Year Ron & Joan Kemp and the “Carrisma” Cup winner Gareth Evans plus the MGF100SE organising team who were the major trophy winners along with all the others of course.

So, overall 2024 was a highlight year for the Centre and we now look ahead to 2025 and beyond. This year marks the 95th Anniversary of the MG Car Club and our new “South East Run” will mark that occasion with a run across the North and South Downs to Herstmonceaux Castle in East Sussex. I hope that you can support the Centre in this return to full single day runs on 18th May.

Our Summer Gathering at Chiddingstone Castle will feature short road runs in a concours and Pride of Ownership in the tradition of such events. Looking even further forward our Autumn Gathering will be at Newhaven Fort which has been newly refurbished. Also look out for what seems to be becoming an annual event – a trip on a train – this time in miniature on the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway on 29th June.

Plenty to be getting on with and if you know any MG owners who are not members of the MG Car Club then please encourage them to join or they could be missing out!