

# MGB GT Police Car and Joy Parks

In 1966 the then Chief Constable of Sussex, George Terry initiated the plan to include two of the elegant and dashing MG BGTs into the fleet of Traffic vehicles, arguably all done to enhance public awareness and create positive publicity.

From a young age Joy says she always had a sense of authority and of right and wrong, coupled with an empathy for victims of crime and wrong-doing. Aged 18 she went into the Police Force as a Special Constable in Battle. Joy enjoyed the disciplined work and thrived on thinking on her feet and dealing with issues as they arose.

Joy enjoyed her part time role so much that in November 1965 she joined the Police on probation as a full-time officer. Coincidentally, it was on that day in November that she was to meet up with Hazel Lane, who later become her crew mate in the MGB. During the Probation period of two years, they both attended training courses in Coventry and Yorkshire. The Probation period involved working with various divisions including CID, the control room and a period on the Traffic Division.

In 1967 the Chief Constable decided to deploy two WPCs on Traffic, Joy saw it as a great opportunity and applied. Before being accepted, Joy had to drive the MG with a Traffic Sergeant to see how she was able to handle the car. Once it was agreed Joy and Hazel, were each crewed with a male colleague and worked as part of the Traffic Division T6 based at Lewes, until early in 1968 when they were posted as a crew together on Traffic Division (T6) based at Police HQ in Lewes.

This was followed by a month's Intermediate driving course at the Kent Police Driving School in Maidstone. Both Hazel and Joy achieved a class 3 level pass, the highest possible on that course.

Joy's first MG BGT was a 1966 model, registration HPM 921D. Once they settled into the job, they realized just how lucky they were, not many young girls of that age got to drive an MGB. They carried out the full range of traffic duties and shifts the same as their male colleagues, which included a course at Maidstone to qualify as Vehicle Examiners allowing them to give expert evidence in Court.

The Police MGB GT had to carry a full complement of Traffic 'tools', which included two Bardic Lamps, a fire extinguisher, two flashing warning lamps and casualty blankets, six road cones and various signs and other equipment as well as the original breathalyser unit. All had to be specially stored to fit into the B's restricted rear deck area. What's more, with the exception of the shallow rear back rest there was no barrier to stop the load from tumbling forward under heavy braking. During those early days with the MG they were sent to photoshoots for the Force and local media as publicity. They were also sent to various Traffic sections to show their faces,

remembers Joy. Those days were a little difficult with Court appearances but once they had joined T6 at Lewes things improved.

In mid-1968 Joy and her colleague attended the Advanced Driving course at Maidstone and passed to Class 1 Standard, the first female drivers to achieve this result in England. That same year HPM 921D was replaced with the brand-new MGB SPM 465G.

Joy's duties involved any kind of call, which apart from road accidents and other motoring issues, it could also involve attending crime scenes. Traffic vehicles then were also, when necessary, used as Response Vehicles. Following motorists being booked for speeding, a stop watch was then used to calibrate the speed of the MG on the measured mile near Lewes, the prosecution could then go ahead.

Like their male colleagues, Joy's shift pattern ran from 6am to 2pm, 2pm to 10pm, and the last extending from 6pm to 2am. On one occasion Joy and Hazel were sent following a report that a man was waiving a knife at motorists in the Plumpton area. They found him standing in the middle of the road with the knife behind his back and had to force the knife from him. There wasn't the kind of mass back up by other cars as there is now.

At one of the RTA's Joy attended she was confronted with, 'Blimey, it's a woman' reaction. There were legal guns in the boot of one of the cars which had to be retrieved and taken back to the station.

Other duties Joy and her colleague performed was to escort wide loads which were popular with drivers from the HGV companies, they often requested 'the girls!' when requesting escort.

During Joy's time on Traffic the initial Breath Test Kit came into use, this kit involved a glass tube containing crystals which turned green when positive.

Apart from the normal WPC's uniform Joy's role on Traffic allowed them to be issued with three quarter driving coats, three quarter black leather boots, white arm bands and at one time were asked to paint their caps with white emulsion!! That didn't last, they got badly chipped and required re-coating!

Included in their duties were washing and polishing, and de-greasing the engine bay along with checking and maintaining tyres, and treating battery corrosion.

A few years after they had set up as a crew working out of Lewes, they were split up in order to mentor other WPC's.

Joy will say that looking back she would have preferred not to have worked wearing the WPC uniform as wearing a skirt was quite difficult when dealing with some RTA's, especially those involving ditches! Also, they did not have the equipment to check on drivers and their documents such as ANPR as they do now. SUSCRO records

were available on the end of radio, who would then check details of cars and names from a card index, SUSCRO was based in Brighton. They could only issue HORT1's (producers) which was then followed up by admin teams.

Typical equipment carried in the MG:

Pye Whitehall radiotelephone  
Handcuffs in glove pocket  
Breathalyser kit  
Cut down Broom  
6 Traffic cones  
Police Accident, Stop, and Slow signs  
2 Spacesaver sign frames  
2 Bardic signalling lamps  
2 flashing road lamps (blue or amber)  
Yellow wax chalk for road marking  
Tape measure for measuring accident scenes  
35mm Kodak camera  
First Aid equipment  
2 Blankets  
Rescue line and quoit.  
Fire extinguisher  
Also, when required:  
Marconi radar set when deployed on speed management duty.  
Wide load sign when escorting abnormal loads

### **Jam Sandwich history**

Both West and East Sussex forces had BGTs before amalgamation in 1968. West Sussex favouring reflective "Police" door panels and a Marchal rotating beacon (mounted below the legal minimum height), whereas East Sussex equipped their BGTs with a roof box and a Lucas "acorn" beacon. In 1966 Traffic Sergeant Frank Wren-Hanley took one of the cars into a lockup and with the addition of two-tone reflective door panels added reflective orange tape and thus the jam sandwich was born. . These additions were given the go ahead by CC (Sir) George Terry and became standard wear for most of the Sussex fleet. Fifty MG BGTs were deployed across Sussex during production, as their popularity grew. Traffic Bases were supplied with additional cars to allow for supervision use by Traffic Sergeants and Inspectors, as well as by PCs and WPCs.

### **BAP 886K**

Assembled and sprayed in police white in April 1971, the MG Special Tuning Department made upgrades, such as extra leaves in the rear springs, dim-dip lighting in addition to the normal side lights, an ammeter where an overdrive switch was normally fitted, and a calibrated speedometer. Economies were made by the excluding headrests, heated rear window and carpeting. Delivered on 17<sup>th</sup> June to Astley House workshops and assigned fleet number "111". All Sussex vehicles had fleet number oval black on white discs, fixed to the glove box, or thereabouts, another under the bonnet, and a red one for the keyring. First taxed on 1<sup>st</sup> October having been run-in running in prior to the fitting of a Geering Signs roof box (manufactured in Lewes for most of the Sussex fleet), Marchal beacon, Lucas Pathfinder driving lamps, rear "STOP" sign, accessory switch panel, Pyrene fire

extinguisher and two-tone horns. Sent to Astley House for radiotelephone fitting prior to being commissioned to Horsham (T2) Traffic Base as "Tango 230".

For John, life in 1999 provided the freedom and funding to create a replica of a Sussex MGB GT police car, thinking that there were no originals to be found. The purchase of a white '74 model with ROstyle wheels started the search for the period equipment. This car was shown all over the country until Brian Seamons, a serving Sussex Traffic Officer called in 2003 to say that he had found an original ex-Police MG BGT for sale in Brighton. Despite being pleased with the replica which had an over-bored engine, overdrive, and black leather seats; after a little negotiation, John bought the real one. Driving the car back to Hull the difference was very noticeable as the performance was sadly lacking in comparison and the oil pressure dropped to about 12psi on a warm tick-over. The previous owner had fitted a veneer dashboard so the first thing John did was to remove the panel from the glove box to check that it had two fixing holes to take the fleet number plate. John worked on a basis that if the car doesn't have holes, then it didn't have the kit he was tempted to fit. A small disc of body filler was tweaked out of the roofbox hole, but the wing mirror and aerial holes had been welded and lead loaded. The air filter trumpets had been marked "F" and "R" by Force fitters, once re-orientated it was clear where the two-tone compressor was mounted; very surprisingly the relay for this was still attached to the inner wing. A work colleague helped remove the engine and fit an overdrive gearbox and a fortnight before Eastbourne 999 Johns mechanic and he stripped, resprayed, refitted and restriped the car. Few people realised that it wasn't the replica that he had brought to previous shows.

This model has a rather odd headcloth which meant that fitters just cut a 2-inch square out to fit and wire the roof box. John watched and listened to several members of the public looking for the usual zip checking it was a real police car. In the end he fitted a zip to save the inevitable "Was it rrrreally a police car?"

Whether it was with the replica, or the real thing, the various police car stands always welcomed John and the MG BGT, initially with his daughter Kate, and then with Phil, his son. Although they both grew to enjoy other things, John attended many events afterwards alone but still greatly enjoyed our hobby.

In 2011, John was given permission by the Sussex Police Chief Constable to provide BAP as a wedding car, which is where he met Joy, but they didn't meet again until 2015. John said "It's brilliant hearing Joy's memories of policing and of the incidents she attended". They married in Joy's parish church in 2017. John's Best Man, and chauffeur, was Wayne Parkhouse who some may remember from our hobby. Joy has been brilliant and has brought a whole new dimension into showing BAP, it's a shame Covid-19 has denied us meeting up with such good friends, and an appreciative public, for two years. Our Facebook page "Sussex Police MG BGT" has initiated a number of MG on patrol tales and photos, including one just down the road when three BGTs attending an accident scene were written off by the driver of a speeding Jaguar.





