

Braking News!

As some of you know, I have been working on MG Archaeology and have recently looked at the MG brake drums that I have lying around. The MGA 1500 and 1600 and MKII had brake drums on the rear axles (MGA 1500 with steel wheels had the same brake drum ATB 7075 with different style for front wire wheel cars). This brake drum part was often cast by a company called QualCast. This company started out in 1801 as Derwent Iron Foundry in Derby, England and in 1928 changed the name to Qualcast LTD (short for Quality Castings). They remained in business until 1991 through several ownerships. This company also acquired the Crane Foundry in 1945 which had gone through several ownerships up until that time. I have not seen any brake drums with the Crane trademark though. I have seen another trademark with a Circle with a B or F inside but not enough detail to identify it as well as another with a logo inside a diamond shape, again, not enough detail to identify. The only brake drum of the ATB 7075 that had a date code was the one with the diamond logo. The more important thing is that all these brake drums also had MOWOG cast on them. Originally the brake drums had a small hole drilled in them in which to insert a screw driver to adjust the brakes without taking the wheels off (assuming when the wheels were put on the hole in the wheel aligned with the hole in the brake drum!) At some point (It may be when the MGA 1600 was introduced) the hole was enlarged to make it a bit easier to locate the adjuster.

Most of the brake drums do not have a date on them for the MGA, but I did find one with a BMC date code of 3 7 60 which would be July 3, 1960. This follows the same date castings as seen on many MGA engine heads as well as stamped into the bottom flange of the engine casting.

The early MGB brake drum (BTB338) is similar in casting with the larger hole drilled in it (although I don't know why as there is no adjuster accessible through the drum!), but perhaps to use as replacements on MGAs? The main difference here is that the small hole that is used to see the head of the axle securing screw is on the opposite side of the brake drum from the access hole for the adjuster whereas the ATB 7075 drum has the small hole on the same side as the adjuster hole.

This brings us up to the DANA (Tube Type) rear end used in late 1967 through the end of MGB production. This brake drum looks completely different than the banjo style rear end brake drums. These have a part number of BTB 706. So far I have only seen QualCast parts, but there may be others. These use a different date stamp as a result of the US mandated National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act adopted in September 1966 and put into effect in March 1967 for 1968 and later production automobiles. As a result British Leyland (Austin-Morris) standards were created for ferrous castings with a numeric day, alphabet letter for month and a single digit for year starting with 0 for 1970 and starting over in 1980! I don't have enough data yet to determine if they used 8 and 9 for 1968 and 1969, but it makes sense that the numbers were re-used. So, my example for a 1974 rear axle brake drums are 11 M 3 for December 11, 1973 and the other one is 23 A 4 for January 23, 1974. I don't have the specific information about the particular car but we can assume it was built sometime in January 1974 or a bit later. Notice that the two brake drums don't match exactly in date probably because they pulled parts from a bin as the axles were assembled.

I have written before how BMC used date codes on many castings long before the US required them and these followed the simpler day-month-year standard but still only two digits for the year, so, it can be confusing to determine when a part was produced unless one knows that certain changes took place and thus the year can only be in one decade. And, many of you may recall the date stamps on SU carbs where the year was designated by a letter and it is important to note that since the model of the carb changed (such as from H to HS to HIF) the letter could only be during the production of that particular model.

If you happen to be working on your brakes and have some examples of dates, please send them along to me. Also note that if there are dates and they do not correspond with what you know about your car then someone may have swapped out parts on your car sometime in its lifetime.

Date Code on ATB 7075 drum



QualCast Logo



Another logo with small adjuster hole



Early MGB Drum



Late MGB drum



Late drum date code

