

# Simple Stuff

## The Story Behind the MG Slogan, 'Safety Fast!'

by Bob Vitrikas



The MG slogan 'Safety Fast!' has been associated with the MG marque for 94 years and the MG Car Club for 64 years. Where did the idea come from? Glad you asked! In fact this story comes to us courtesy of Pat Ewing, my South African MG friend Norm Ewing's wife. In 1975 Norm and Pat were visiting George and Susan Tuck, MG Publicity Manager who settled in South Africa during his retirement. Pat asked George that same question, "Where did 'Safety Fast!' come from?" George replied, "That's an interesting story." And so it was! In Norm's words, here's how George told the story...

"He told us how one rainy day in 1929, his boss Ted Colegrove was driving behind one of the new Oxford busses. To warn those behind that it was fitted with brakes all round, and not just at the front so it could stop much quicker, painted on the back was a large Dewandre Triangle with 'Safety First!' emblazoned on it. Ted thought if it was altered to read 'Safety Fast!' it would be a wonderful slogan. When he went back to Kimber with his idea, he (Kimber) was at his desk steaming about a newspaper ad someone had sent him of the present MG ad, "*Faster than most!*" to which was added "*bicycles*". Seeing it could not be messed with, Colegrove was immediately instructed to use 'Safety Fast!'. If Pat had not asked that question, none of us, no matter how long we researched, would ever have found the answer. I would never have asked the question! AND Pat fell in love with and bought the Tuck Coupe!"



Here's what the Dewandre-Servo-Brake triangle looks like. Bosch introduced the vacuum powered four-wheel brake system on trucks (and buses?) in January 1927 and on passenger cars in 1928. Stopping distance was reduced by nearly 40% compared to non-servo two-wheel braking systems.

During an interview in 1979, MG General Manager in the '50s and '60s, John Thornley told me his interpretation of 'Safety Fast!'

“I have always done my best to persuade people that if they want a motor car to go faster, the first thing they look at is its stability, the second is the ability to stop it and the third to increase its power. In that order.”

I believe most race car designers would agree with that statement.

As so it has been since April 1959, the slogan 'Safety Fast!' continues to be used to this day as the name of the MG Car Club's magazine. Ah, but there's more to the story. For reasons unknown to me, initially the Club magazine's masthead was 'Safety Fast' sans the exclamation point. That omission was corrected in 1982 at the first MG Car Club European "summit" at Hausach, Germany. The late and then MG Car Club Chairman Bill Wallis was fielding comments and suggestions from MG Car Club European delegates. After going 'round the room, Bill asked the South African delegate, my South African friend, Norm Ewing, if he had any complaints. Norm pointed out that years earlier George Tuck, MG Publicity Manager, told Norm that the Club masthead should have an exclamation point after Safety Fast. Norm added that the correct logo type should be used as well. Wallis said, "I'll see to it." And so he did. Shortly thereafter the mast head had the exclamation point and the correct type face and so it remains to this day.

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Before...



and after!

I came across a wonderful 9 minute Pathe movie, 'Safety Fast,' shot in 1948. It captures the essence of motoring in England and Europe just after World War II from the driver's seat of an MG TD covering 700 miles in one day! Shots of the tach show it cruising at 5,000 to 5,500 rpm. Wow! Enjoy this nostalgic trip back 75 years in time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KBKgw5Cvz8>



Over the years, I've emphasized the international nature of the MG car and its associated clubs. Doing research for this article, I came across an interesting MG Motor Company India website. Coincidentally, they have a newsletter titled 'Safety Fast! India.' Their website is definitely worth a look to see what's going on in the MG world on the other side of the globe. The March issue has several very interesting MG history articles as well as some surprising updates on current MG doings in India. For instance, would you believe the MG Indian-made Hector car has passed the 50,000 production mark, all made by women! Here's the website address: <https://www.mgmotor.co.in/>



Check out the four NEW MGs, including the electric MG ZS EV, available in India.