

CKD (Completely Knocked Down)

The term 'CKD' is a much misunderstood one. The term "CKD" stands for 'Completely Knocked Down'. – 'Completely' is stretching the truth a little bit, but in Australia it was a close approximation to the actual situation.

'CKD' is used to describe the type of supply of a vehicle, in this case, from the BMC (UK) company. It stands for a method of production employed by a car company to sell vehicles. Rather than a vehicle, bound for a foreign country, being taken off the assembly line in the UK, the foreign country could import the vehicles in what could be described as a 'kit' form. This comprised of a vehicle in its raw material components, packed into the smallest possible wooden crate, ready for shipment to the foreign country. The buyer specifies in what condition (the breakdown of parts) to be supplied and the car company then 'crates' up the vehicle and dispatches it. Once arrived, the vehicle is assembled, painted and finished locally.

The main reasons for this choice of process by the importing country:

1. Ability for local dealerships to compete with vehicles of similar specifications on price.
2. Containment of import price; all imported cars were hit with hefty import duties. By importing the vehicles in an unassembled format, the vehicles would avoid the imposition of certain custom/import duties. However, this was a very complex set of duties to apply. Depending on the level of local 'cost of production' (ie materials & labour), the duties that applied would vary; (greater local content – more duty relief)
3. An effort to support local vehicle production (at the time we are mainly talking about GMH and Ford as the only competition), as Australia was still in a post-WW2 national industrial expansion programme, wanting to expand its manufacturing capability.

Of the half million MGBs produced, approximately ten thousand were not assembled at Abingdon. These vehicles were sent in CKD form to either Belgium, Eire or Australia. Australia imported 9 090 of these vehicles; by far the largest importer.

It is important to understand that there was no 'standard' kit between countries and in fact, years of supply. The kit was made up according to the buyer's requirements. This collection of panels and parts, would vary in their make-up between countries, and were dependant on the ability (facilities more than skill) of the receiving country to complete the construction (jigs, presses, production lines, but to mention a few).

Most people are surprised when they see how far this 'breakdown' went (for a good appreciation of the Mk II kit received in Australia, <http://mgbsmadeinaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MG-CKD-parts.compressed.pdf> has a detailed group of original photos used by Zetland in preparing for assembly). With the exception of the door skins and a few other panels, the vehicle was broken down to its most basic of parts, unpainted, requiring a large input of not only labour and welding, but ancillary parts to complete the

assembly. At this time, the Australian government requirement was 45% local content to enjoy certain tariff exemptions, so BMC easily met the requirement.

One could easily question why, given the Australian Plant's capability to produce the whole vehicle, they would not do so. It is suggested that it wasn't so much capability but capacity at that time. Much was happening with other vehicles produced at Zetland, placing unnecessary stress on the output capacity.

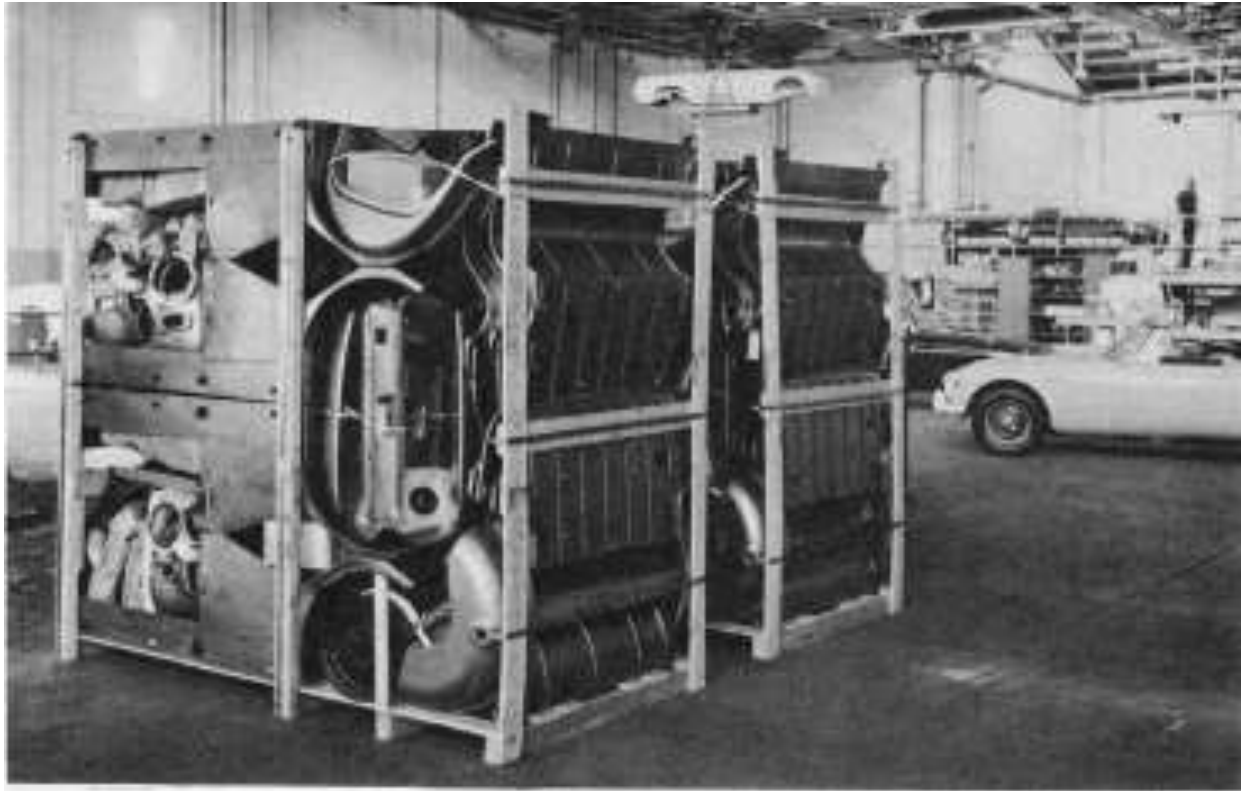


Crates arrived (photo: BMC/LHG)

“CKD components were shipped in what was called a pack, usually the components for six vehicles. Components were in three separate crates, one with engines, one with mechanical parts, and one with the body and sheet metal components. There was a special area of the Plant known as the CKD Unboxing Area where the boxes were received and opened and checked for shipping damage and shortages. Engines and gearboxes sent to the Unit Factory for fitment of local supply items such as distributors and alternators, and the engine Hot Run before transfer to CAB3.” Roger Foy Anecdotaly, it is said that of the damaged crates, most arrived at the factory minus SU carburettors – a valuable commodity at the time! Other items that were locally supplied were: starter motors, hood, trim and paint.



Crate about to be opened (Photo: BMC/LHG)



Unboxing of a crate (photo: J. Lindsay)

The CKD method added to the confusion today in establishing not only a vehicle's provenance but a clear appreciation of the whole production process. In the UK, a certain range of numbers were pre-allocated to the CKD operation, which would have obviously affected the sequencing of vehicles coming into commission (one only has to consider delays experienced by Australia to appreciate this). A further example of added confusion was with the release of the Mk II in UK/USA. There were still many Mk I kits to be despatched, leaving Australia (plus Eire and Belgium) to 'use up' all of these kits before they could start offering the new model. It was also felt that the UK parent company was clearing out all of their old stock to the overseas subsidiaries.



Crate contents (Photo: BMC/LHG)

Another point of confusion occurred due to the low production volume in Australia. This meant that many cars had a mixture of components, further exacerbating the subsequent identification confusion.

All Australian MGB CKD vehicles were distinguishable by the use of the alpha character 'Y'. This stood for 'Australian assembled' (the other identification characters are explained elsewhere on this website). The early Mk I kits had the UK production number listed up until 1965.

The Australian vehicles were assembled at two locations: YGHN3 vehicles being assembled at PMC, Enfield and all others at Zetland.