

THE MGB HERITAGE PORTFOLIO

1962 – MGB 30TH ANNIVERSARY – 1992

The MGB was launched on 20 September 1962, replacing the seven-year-old MGA. Compared to its predecessor, the new model boasted unitary body construction and a larger 1798cc version of the BMC B-series engine. The styling was the work of Abingdon's own design staff under chief engineer Syd Enever. The chassis specification of the new model was based on well-established MG practice, including rack-and-pinion steering, independent front suspension with coil springs, and front disc brakes.

The MGB was extremely well received both at home and abroad, including the vital US export market. During the first year of production, desirable extras such as overdrive and a hard top became available, and in 1964 the engine was given a five-bearing crankshaft.

The original roadster was supplemented by the GT model, which was introduced at the 1965 Motor Show. This was an attractive and practical fastback with a rear hatch and a folding occasional rear seat. Abingdon was again responsible for the basic styling, but with advice from Italian designer Pininfarina.

A 'Mark II' MGB followed at the 1967 Motor Show, featuring a new all-synchromesh gearbox, and automatic transmission was now optional. For the North American market the new model received more drastic alterations, incorporating the first safety and emissions features which were necessary to cope with new legislation being introduced in the USA.

Also new in 1967 was the MGC, in roadster and GT forms. This was based on the MGB bodyshell but was fitted with the 2912cc BMC C-series engine, torsion bar front suspension and larger wheels. It was seen as a replacement for the Austin-Healey 3000 but attracted a controversial reputation, and only some 9000 MGC cars were made over the next two years.

The merger between BMC and Leyland did not immediately affect the MGB, but in late 1969 the car received a facelift, with a new recessed radiator grille, Rostyle wheels and vinyl upholstery. Although the new grille was not greatly liked and this version is now less sought-after than earlier models, it did not affect the MGB's popularity and 1972 would see the highest ever annual production figure of almost 40,000 cars. The 1973 models reverted to a more traditional radiator grille, with a matt black cross-hatch design.

In August 1973, MG launched the MGB GT V8, fitted with the Rover V8 engine of 3528cc, offering a top speed of 125mph. Unfortunately this exciting car was denied its full potential, as its introduction coincided with the first oil crisis, and BL did

not introduce the car in North America. Just under 2600 V8 models were made up to 1976.

The later V8s, as well as the four-cylinder cars from the 1974 Motor Show onwards, featured the rubber bumpers which had been developed in response to ever-more stringent American legislation. Opinions were and are divided about the looks of these later cars! American export models were now fitted with a de-toxed single carburettor engine and their performance suffered accordingly.

MG celebrated their 50th anniversary in 1975 – a couple of years late – with a limited edition four-cylinder GT model, finished in a special racing green and gold colour scheme, with the cast-alloy wheels of the V8. Only 750 of these cars were produced.

The last important modifications occurred in 1976, when the MGB was fitted with a revised facia design, new steering wheel and striped nylon cloth trim, while overdrive became standard on home market cars. The ageing car still had a faithful following both in the UK and in North America but had been withdrawn from all other export markets.

The decision to discontinue the MG sports car range and close the Abingdon factory was made public in 1979, causing great dismay among enthusiasts. A plan for Aston Martin to make a revised MGB came to nothing, and a scheme to fit the new BL O-series engine in the car was also abandoned. To mark the demise of the MG sports car, limited edition models were made for both the American and UK markets. The very last car came off the line at Abingdon on 22 October 1980. Total production of the MGB amounted to some 512,000 cars, apart from the MGC and V8 models.

With the MGB being the most popular classic British sports car, and with large numbers being preserved, the demand for replacement parts was big enough to justify a complete MGB bodyshell being brought back into production by British Motor Heritage in 1988. This pioneering effort was a direct cause of the Rover Group bringing back the MG sports car in 1992 to mark the 30th anniversary of the MGB with the launch of the dramatic MG RV8, featuring the Range Rover 3.9-litre V8 engine with 188bhp in a modernised MGB roadster body, and offering luxurious equipment and a top speed of almost 135mph.

From original MGB to MG RV8 – nothing else in the world comes close.

Anders Ditlev Clausager

This portfolio, which has been produced to mark the 30th anniversary of the original MGB and the introduction of the MG RV8, contains reproductions of six selected classic sales brochures for MGB and related models.



PUBLICATION N° 6242

The original 16-page launch brochure for the 'Superlative MGB'. This was the most detailed and luxurious of the early MGB brochures.



PUBLICATION N° 6593

This brochure marked the introduction of the MGB GT in 1965, 'For the man with the Octagon Spirit – magic in a new shape'.



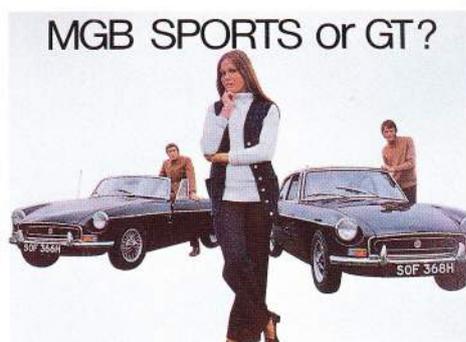
PUBLICATION N° 2373

The smaller 8-page version of the original MGB brochure, this particular edition dates from 1967 and was the first brochure for the MGB Roadster Mark II model.



PUBLICATION N° 2468

Also dating from 1967, this was the first MGC brochure and described both the Roadster and GT versions of this model.



PUBLICATION N° 2652

Marking the introduction of the facelifted models in 1969, and unusual in that both Roadster and GT models were featured in the same brochure.



PUBLICATION N° 2962

There was never much brochure material for the MGB GT V8: apart from a simple one-sheet leaflet it was only featured in the MGB GT brochure, this 1973 publication featuring the original chrome-bumper V8.