

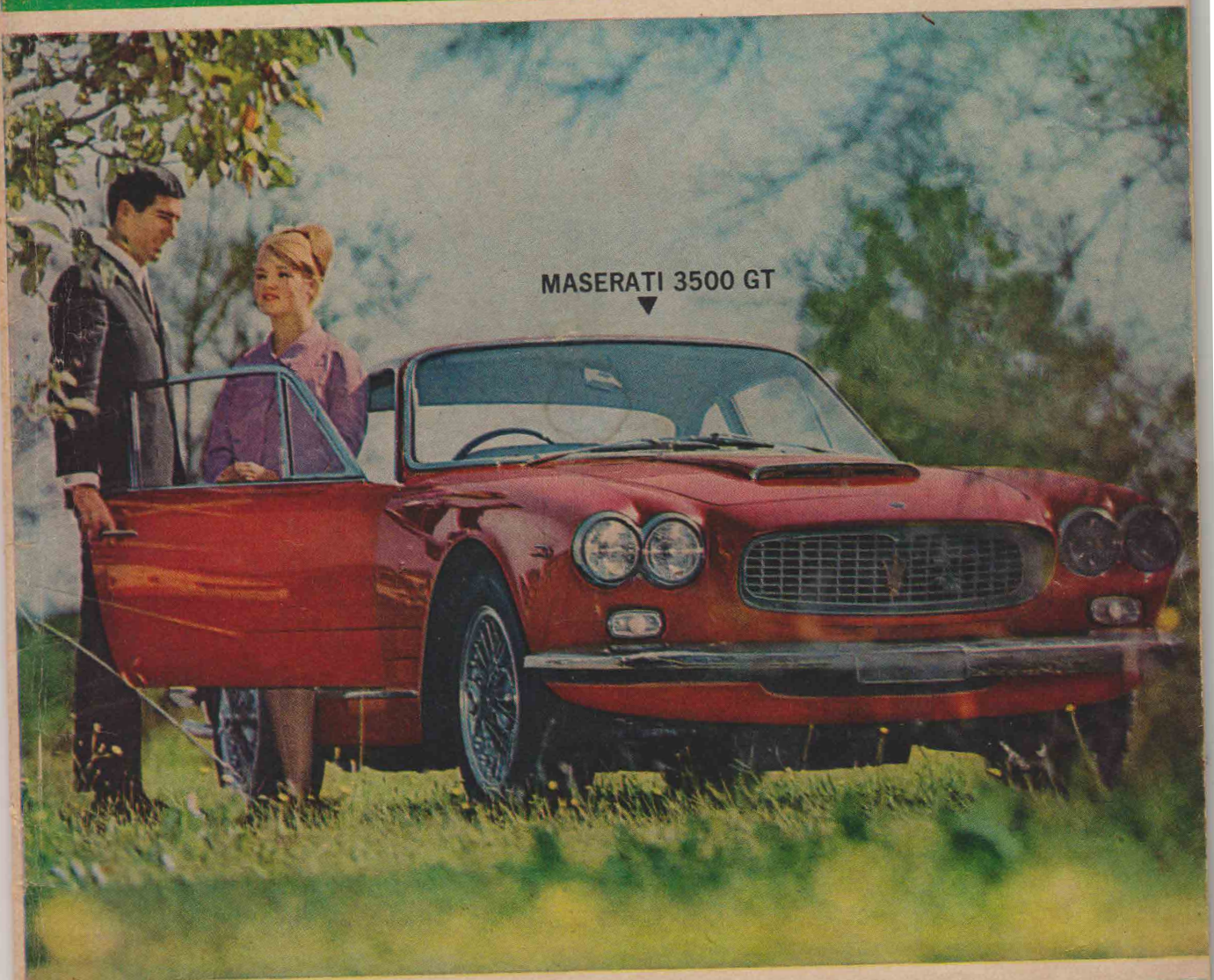
SCOOP TRACK TEST—THE INCREDIBLE LOTUS 19

2/6

SPORTS CAR WORLD

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JUNE, 1964



FULL ROAD TEST: MGB • NEW FI CARS • GENEVA SHOW
• AMPOL TRIAL PREVIEW • FOWLER'S FARM SKETCHBOOK



Wind-up windows, a well proven 1800 cc motor, a detachable hardtop all go to make up a sensible, fast, sports tourer.

THE term sports car over the last half decade has become bastardised to such an extent that today the average man on the street—why are they always the average man on the street?—is befuddled as to what really constitutes a sports car. The term is applied to everything with two seats and sometimes to quite a few vehicles with four. We are not saying that this definition is wrong, only misguided. For we undyingly believe that 90 percent of the two seaters running around this country at the moment would not fully qualify as a sports car if everything was properly equated.

Maybe the phrases *sporty car* or *sports tourer* would more adequately describe these marvelous, mainly Anglo-Saxon-based chariots, which are wonderfully refreshing to drive when compared with some of the sedan mundanities inflicted on the car buying public. We, at SCW, will undoubtedly be called stuffed-shirts, over-zealous purists and pagans worshipping some by-gone god, but the truth of the matter is that the type of car under discussion is not really what it purports to be.

To establish a better argument perhaps it would be ideal to illustrate this rather fine-line definition. It is hard to think an MGB could be driven off the showroom floor to a race track and driven to take the checker first. It would be soundly whipped by at least six small production sports cars of equal or smaller capacity. The Lotus Seven, Turner, Elva Courier and TVR are all a lot quicker in a straight line and around corners and in standard condition can be taken to the track and raced with some hope of success. Against such high-performing opposition the MGB would have no chance and BMC, the manufacturers, have not produced it with a competition view in mind.

The MGB has been designed as a moderately accelerative, 100 mph-plus, well-outfitted two seater with all the comforts of a modern sedan. It is not to be sneered at. In fact it is a great boon to the enthusiast; no more leaky, unslidable side curtains, no more cramped cockpits and no more colds from draughts whistling up from the floor boards. Indeed as a sports tourer the MGB is exceptional.



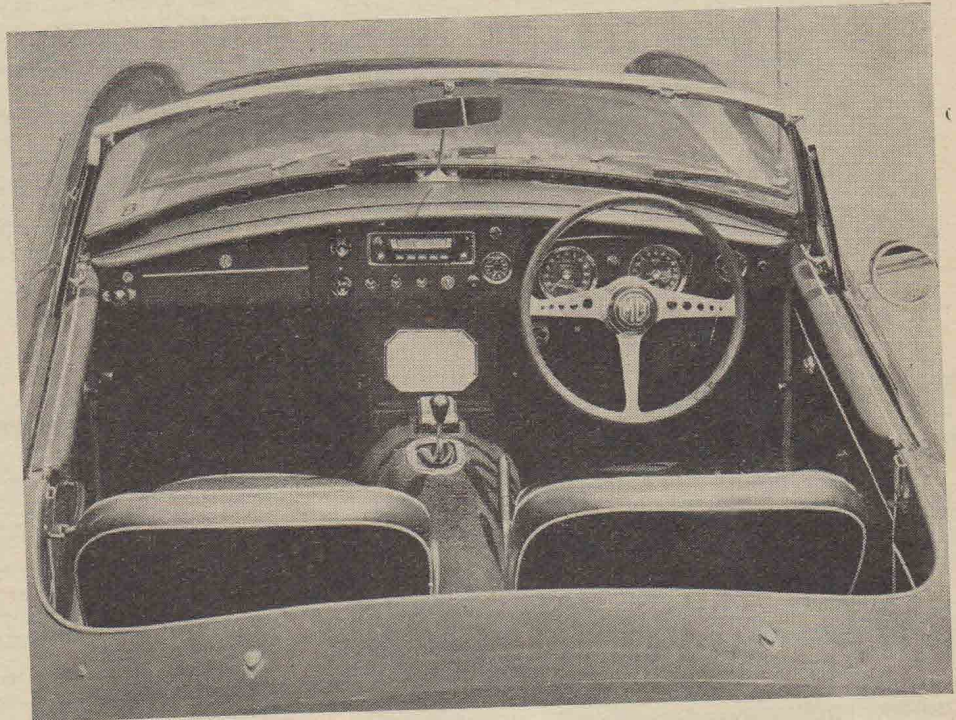
CHRIS BECK DRIVES . . .

A B WITH A

The Pirelli Cinturatos fitted to the test car seemed to increase the understeer.



Out of tight hairpins there is plenty of axle tramp and rear wheel movement.



The cockpit is exceptionally roomy and well laid out. Wooden wheel is optional

DIFFERENCE

In body styling the B owes nothing to anyone, or so it seems. The frontal treatment is most handsome and pleasing and the full width bumper is supplemented by two large and what would seem to be most effective overriders. Headlamps, in the fashion of the Renault Caravelle, are recessed. This type of styling falls in naturally with the car and it would possibly be unfair to say that the BMC design office had stolen something from France. The bonnet is a one piece panel which is not counter-sprung, but hinged from the rear edge. A metal prop-stay is provided.

The line along the top of the front mudguard runs unhindered right through to the rear tail-light cluster on each side. The door-sills are just a little below shoulder height, when sitting in the car, with a perfectly straight, level upper edge. A metal embellishment strip runs from the headlight surround down each side, below the door handle but above the lock, to the rear lights.

The rear of the MGB is almost identical to that of the current Austin Healey Sprite, except it appears to be slightly larger. Indeed, until one becomes accustomed to the B it is quite easy to mistake one from the rear for a Sprite. There is a full width bumper bar with two overriders and the filler cap, not lockable, is situated on the right hand side. Turn indicator lights and braking and parking lights all are housed in a slanted, vertical group on the extreme edge of each rear fender.

In the United Kingdom the standard MGB is fitted with pressed steel wheels and spokes are offered as an optional extra. In Australia, however, BMC only supply the car with triple-laced wire wheels. Normally these are sprayed with a silver paint, but those on the test car had been bright chromed and looked particularly effective. The test car was also fitted with non-standard tyres, Pirelli Cinturatos.

One of the great improvements has been in the doors. For the first time MG has produced a soft-top car which has wind-up windows, quarter panes and decent interior door handles instead of tatty wire door pulls. The window winder is easy to reach and actuate, but with the windows wound right up there is a small gap between the pane and the fibreglass hardtop. On



The J & S fibreglass hardtop really

each door there is a small metal door pull. On the outside the door-handles are of the pull type and there is a recessed knuckle-niche pressed into the panel.

MG badges are to be found on the vertical slatted grille and the familiar octagon on the boot lid. When looking straight ahead the occupants peer through a one piece curved glass windscreen held in place by alloy pillars.

As well as being very functional and practical the interior layout of the MGB is extremely comfortable. The amount of room for the driver and passenger is unusually high for a car of this sort and allows great freedom of movement. Fore and aft adjustment of the seats is particularly good and with the seats fully back a 6 ft 6 in. member of our staff found that he could not reach the clutch, brake and accelerator pedals.

A B with a difference

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS AND BODY DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase	7 ft 7 in.
Track, front	4 ft 1 1/2 in.
Track, rear	4 ft 1 1/4 in.
Ground clearance	5 in.
Headroom	3 ft 1 in.
Turning circle	32 ft 0 in.
Turns, lock to lock	2.93
Overall length	12 ft 9 3/8 in.
Overall width	4 ft 11 5/8 in.
Overall height	4 ft 1 3/8 in.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Steering type	rack and pinion
Brake type	disc front, drums rear
Swept area	310 sq ins.
Lbs/sq in. swept area	6.5
Weight	1920 cwt
Tyre size	560 x 14
Make of tyre on test vehicle	Pirelli Cinturato
Fuel tank capacity	10 gals
Cruising range	280-300 miles
Fuel requirement	95 octane
Oil system capacity	8 1/2 pints

SUSPENSION:

Front	independent, coil springs
Rear	live axle, semi-elliptic spring
Shock absorbers	hydraulic telescopic

ENGINE:

Cylinders	four in line
Bore and stroke	80.26 mm by 88.9 mm
Cubic capacity	1798 cc
Compression ratio	8.8 to 1
Valve operation	pushrod overhead
Piston speed at maximum rpm	3210 ft/min
Maximum power	94 bhp at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque	110 ft/lb at 3000
Power to weight ratio	20.5 lb/bhp

TRANSMISSION:

Overall ratios—	
First	14.214
Second (synchro)	8.655
Third (synchro)	5.369
Fourth (synchro)	3.909
Reverse	18.588
Final drive	1 to 1

PERFORMANCE

All figures checked to 0.5 percent by Smiths tachometer.	
Top speed average	106 mph



sets the MGB off. It was reasonably weatherproof.

Although the seats can claim some descendance from buckets the lateral support under hard cornering is not particularly good. The squab and backrest are well padded and offer good support and on the several long trips we did none of the staff felt at all tired. The optional diagonal seat belts helped locate the test crew during cornering and this is possibly the best way to stop being thrown around the car — as well as being a safety measure.

In front of the driver sit the two main instruments, a 7000 rpm tachometer and 120 mph speedometer which also incorporates an odometer and a trip meter with tenths drum. Placed centrally between the instruments is a knob which when turned brightens or dims all the dials. To the far right is a fuel gauge graduated rather vaguely and plagued with a constant flicker. On the left there is a combination oil pressure and

water temperature gauge. In the centre of the facia there are the toggle switches, ignition switch and choke mechanism. Immediately above these was a BMC radio, an optional extra. To the right on the passenger's side there is a navigation lamp. The controls for the heater and fresh air system — also an optional extra — are situated within easy reach of the passenger, but a little difficult for the driver to operate. At night the instruments are well lit, but if there is any complaint to be made it should be directed at the size of the figures on the main dials. Although not so small as to be mistaken they are a little difficult to glance at when motor-ing quickly.

The floor is covered by a utilitarian rubber matting while the transmission tunnel and rear parcels shelf cum short range occasional seat are carpeted. This is ideal, as the test crew learnt. For a good part of the time we had the car it rained and consequently muddy, clay-laden shoes were dragged into the vehicle. It was no trouble, however, to clean out the dirt when it had dried out later. Carpet would undoubtedly be nicer, and more soundproof, but would be a so-and-so to clean.

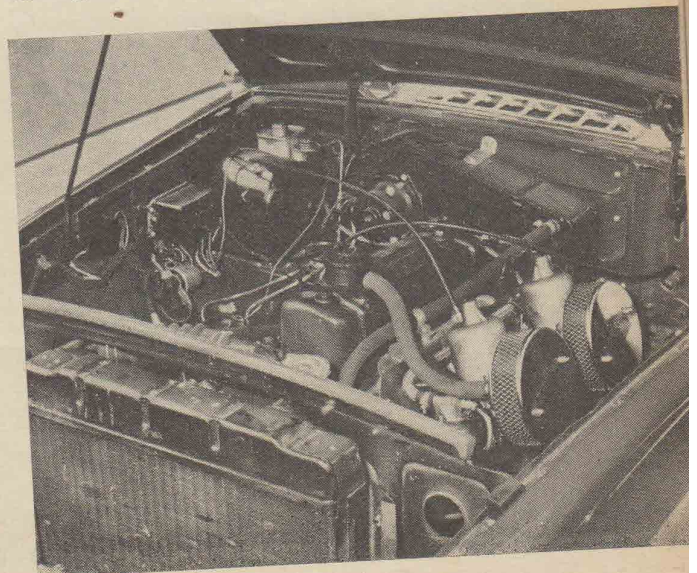
One of the things BMC seems to have missed is provision for the driver's left leg on a long trip. There is very little room down by the pedals and there is nowhere to rest it except against the clutch pedal or bend at the knee and *scrunch* the foot up against the dimmer switch. Well placed, the clutch and brake pedals are light in operation and after some small time our testers found it fairly easy to heel-and-toe with a little ankle twisting.

It would be very difficult to complain about the hard-top fitted to the test car. It offered better weather-protection during the rainy weather than the rag-top. Or could this be an illusion. It did let a little water in, but not enough to worry about; so we didn't. At speed the flutter associated with rag tops was gone and at top speed the car felt snug and cosy. Rear vision was excellent except for a small blind spot where the sides met the big back window. Another advantage of the top was that it only took about two minutes to fit into place and uses the normal

(Continued on page 60)

The motor on the test was fitted with pancake-type air cleaners instead of normal units.

Fastest Run	107 mph	
Maximum, first (6000 rpm limit)	31 mph	
Maximum second (6000 rpm limit)	50 mph	
Maximum, third (6000 rpm limit)	82 mph	
Maximum, fourth (5900 rpm limit)	106.2 mph	
Standing quarter mile average	18.35 sec	
Fastest run	3.75 sec	
0-30 mph	6.1 sec	
0-40 mph	8.5 sec	
0-50 mph	12.55 sec	
0-60 mph	17.0 sec	
0-70 mph	24.6 sec	
0-80 mph	33.5 sec	
0-90 mph	14.7 sec	
0-60 mph-0		
	Top	Third
40-60 mph	8.0 sec	5.8 sec
50-70 mph	8.0 sec	6.0 sec
60-80 mph	8.9 sec	7.2 sec
70-90 mph	9.7 sec	— sec
Fuel consumption, cruising		28 mpg
Fuel consumption, overall		24 mpg



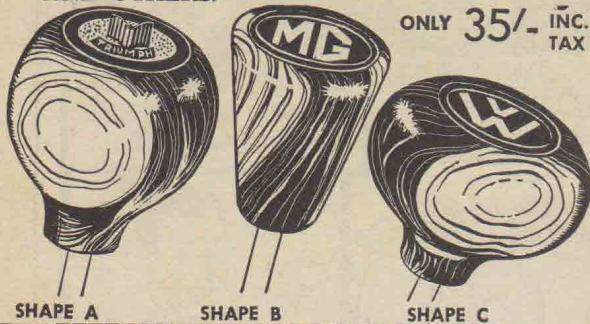
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A B WITH A DIFFERENCE

(Continued from page 35)

clip latches at the front to hitch it to the top of the windscreen. It is held at the rear by two hooks with screw-nuts. Fully trimmed and painted the same color as the car, the unit is a first class job.

Now down to the mechanicals. The motor is the same unit as used in the MG, stretched a little further to 1789 cc. Everyone thought the BMC A-series motor had come to the end of the line when it was enlarged to 1622 cc for the Mk 2 A-type, but apparently there was enough metal left to skim 3.8 mm from the bores. Modifications were made to the siamesed port head and the camshaft was also treated. Peak power of 94 bhp is developed at 5500 rpm, quite high in the rev range for such a conventional engine. It develops maximum torque of 110 ft/lb at 3000 rpm, lower in the rev range than its predecessor.

A willing worker, the motor pulls well with any snatches from 800 rpm and really gets into action around 2500 rpm. Power seems good all the way through to about 5800 rpm. Several times on test we extended the car as far as we thought safe in the gears. There was just nothing left after 6300 rpm.

The tachometer is redlined at 6000 rpm and when we exceeded this it pricked our conscience, which set us back on the path of rev righteousness. After quite a lot of experimentation it became apparent that 5800 rpm was the optimum change point. At no time, even when we pushed the engine over the red line did the valves complain. Engine and mechanical noise was quite high, but this is only to be expected.

Around town second and third gears seemed about all that was needed with the occasional change back to first — which has no synchromesh — for standing starts. In traffic the motor would dwindle down to 1000 rpm in top and the indirects then pick up without hesitation.

During the performance runs the torqueness of the motor became apparent. It was quite easy to provoke wheelspin at the start of a run and produce a loud chirp from first to second and occasionally when third was picked up.

To stop all this go there is a disc/drum brake combination which, when commanded, hauls the car down to the required speed quickly and evenly. The pedal pressures needed are not heavy and the sponginess usually associated with disc brakes is only mild. In a series of panic stops from 60 mph fade could not be induced, but the discs and drums got extremely hot.

The gearbox and differential are basically the same units as used in the MGA. The ratios seem to be well spaced, except for second which I personally, felt could be a little higher. Top gear does 17.9 mph per 1000 rpm and this allows the car to be cruised at speeds around the 80 mph mark for hours on end.

The synchromesh, now of the baulk ring type is excellent. Fast, positive changes can be made without any fear of clashing gears or making expensive noises. The crooked stick-shift is a little stiff in action, but the gate is precise and there is little slack movement. In Great Britain BMC offer the Laycock de Normanville electric overdrive as an option on the MGB. One thing quite apparent in the test car was a whine from the differential which has not been noticeable in all the other MGBs we have driven. The noise did not come in at any particular range, but was a little irritating.

Roadholding and handling is definitely better than any other mass production MG to come from Abingdon and is commensurate with this type of car. At the front there is an independent set-up using wishbones, coil springs with telescopic shock absorbers and an anti-sway bar. At the rear the rigid, live axle is kept in place by the semi-elliptic springs and damping is again taken care of by telescopic shock absorbers.

On good bitumen surfaces the car rode stiffly

wheels

Reader research tells us that most enthusiasts who buy **SPORTS CAR WORLD** also buy at least one popular-car magazine. Like **WHEELS**, for instance. While **SPORTS CAR WORLD** takes care of all things motor racing, sports car, and enthusiast-wise, **WHEELS** can be a good supplementary diet. The June issue, for instance, carries such interesting exclusives as a test of the rapid, trials-winning VW1500-S that is soon to be released in Australia. There is a six-page special road research report on the new Vauxhall Viva, a full test of the Lotus Elan 1600, and a most controversial test of the Holden 179 manual, with the emphasis on its lack of brakes. Why read **WHEELS** as well? For one thing, if it's in **WHEELS**, you can be sure it's right . . . Just 2/6 at your newsagent.



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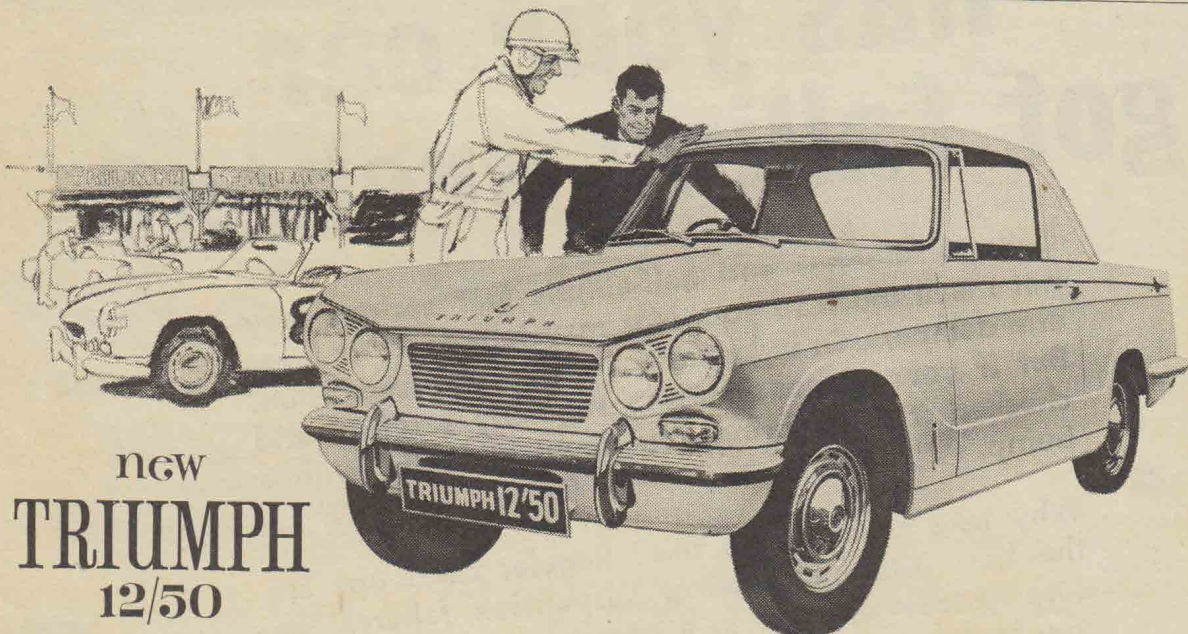
without any trace of float, but on rough surfaces the ride became choppy. The choppiness was not unpleasant and the ride is a vast improvement on the MGA. On hot-mix the car just seemed to sit and go, but on tar aggregate roads there was just a faint longitudinal pitch probably created by the harmonics of the suspension. The test car was fitted with Pirelli Cinturato tyres which considerably lightened the steering of the car, which on normal tyres is very heavy. Also, on tar aggregate the car picked up a lot of road noise.

Undoubtedly the tyres contributed to the car's roadholding and perhaps showed up a few of the faults in the suspension. For instance, under hard acceleration in first gear the wheels would break adhesion and spin, provoking axle tramp. Also, going through tight hairpin bends the inside wheel would hop. On normally shod Bs clear wheelspin without a trace of tramp is possible and through similar corners the car just lifts a wheel and does not hop. We felt the cause for the tramp was the stickability of the tyres.

Handling in the English tradition is understeer. Understeer it is all the way and we found it hard to throw the tail out and again blamed the good qualities of the tyres. Setting the car up for a corner is no trouble. The line must be selected then just a little more lock than normal and you're through. The handling is really well above average.

In this particular test car we did some 850 miles and in previous and subsequent MGBs the staff of **SPORTS CAR WORLD** has covered a total of 2500 miles. We approached it with mixed feelings. Several of us left in the same way. But one staff member has decided he'll be buying one as his next car. After putting it to the vote we found: We like it very much.

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