



Datsun 1600 Sports — Italianate glamor from the Orient.

VERSUS *SPORT*

caused the association. The cars were intended for totally different markets.

But in 1963 arrived from Japan the Datsun Fairlady, priced some £150 below the MGB, and atoning for its obvious lack of the sports car essentials—like brisk performance and good brakes—it featured a degree of finish previously unknown to the sports car buffs, and handling which at least matched its opposition's. Very few people saw the car as a legitimate rival to the MGB and in fact it wasn't. That was until this year, when the Fairlady was introduced in considerably rebuilt form as the 1600 Sports—the title it now carries officially.

Change of title brought change of character and the 1600 Sports now measures up as more than worthy opposition to the MGB. It has been improved to a degree where performance is above average, handling excellent, brakes fully efficient, steering almost perfect, and finish and comfort — still first class.

The overall standard of the car has been upped so much that the prospective buyer is faced with a really difficult decision between it and the Bee. If he does not make the consideration he is not worthy to own either.

The initial appeal of both cars is substantially similar. Above all the B has the magic attraction

of being an MG. Perhaps this has done more than anything else to maintain the car in its present strong position; we don't pretend to know. But for certain, the established is always a safer bet than the new-and-different. Looks must be a prime factor in influencing choice of this motor car.

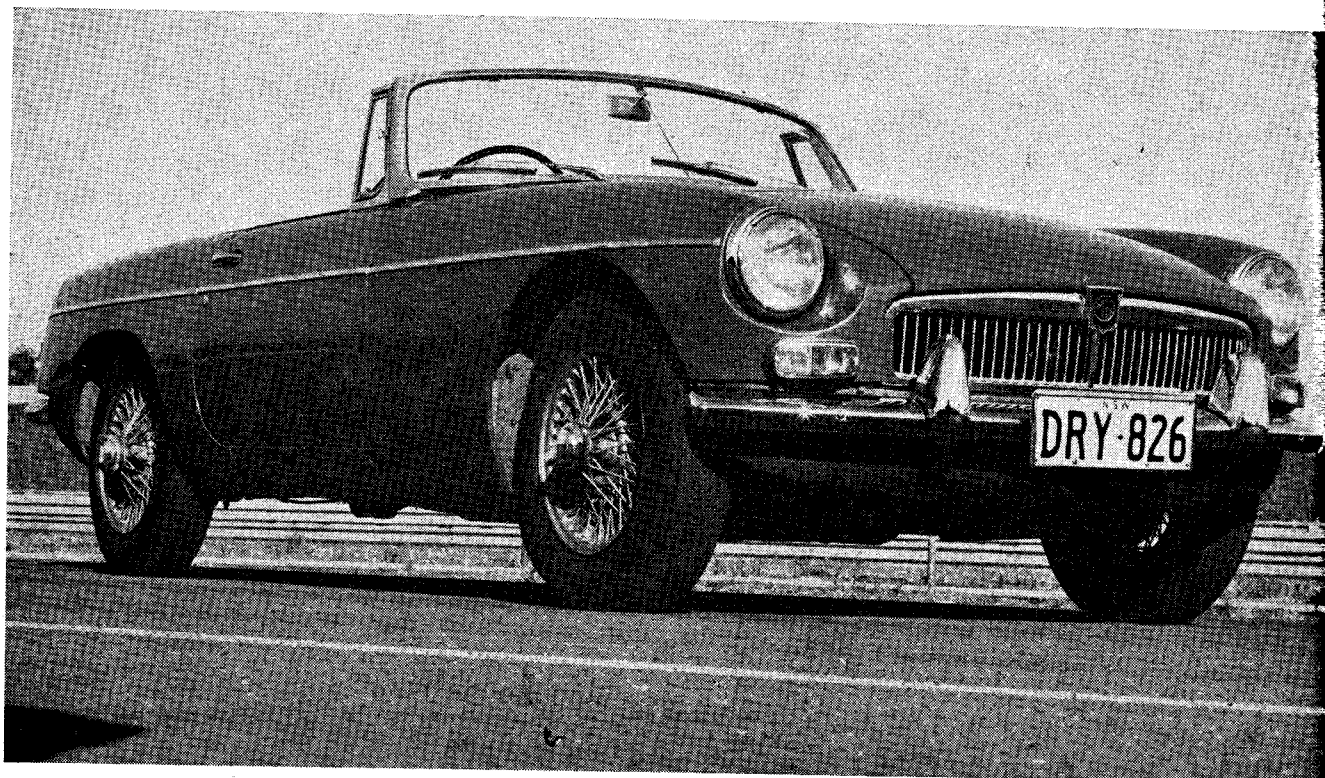
The Fairlady at first had a narrow market of sporting enthusiasts who saw the car as a real character vehicle with the basic sporting essentials. Now Italian-like good looks combining with all those extra features and fine finish and true sports car roadholding and performance will be its main points of appeal.

We suspect that although it will knock a considerable dent in the sales of MGBs it has little hope of overtaking their market in the next few years.

But what of the progress of the MGB, introduced initially in 1962 to replace the revamped, revamped-MGA? In three and a half years it has needed no improvement to maintain a world-leading sales position bar the introduction of a five-bearing version of the 1800cc motor. This was done very quietly this year, without public announcement, obviously to eliminate mass owner concern at the lasting qualities of the previous three bearing unit.

Both MGB and 1600 Sports are essentially boulevard sports tourers. They have identical top

We Put the Two Medium price Sports Cars through their paces



MGB — looks are traditional British.

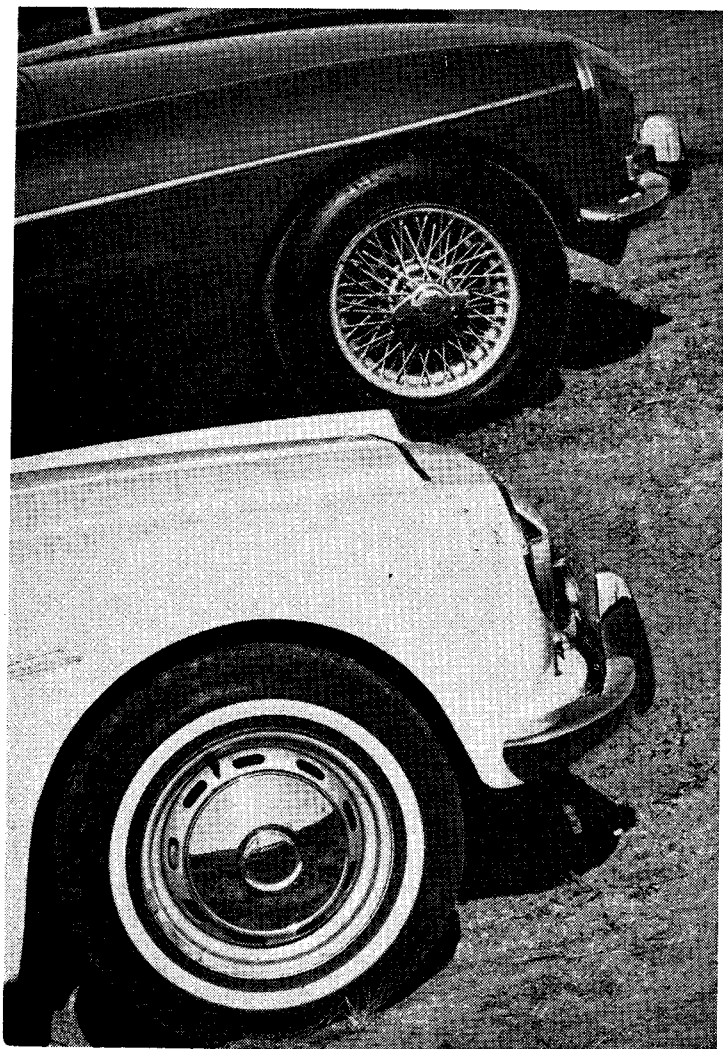
BEE

The Established and the Challenger meet for the first time on equal ground. BMC's MGB and Datsun's 1600 Sports (nee Fairlady) are indeed closely matched.

NOT very long ago (only a little over two and a half years, in fact) the would-be sports car buyer who wanted to go one better than the Sprite could have any car he liked provided it was an MGB. The under-£1500 field was so sparsely populated that to get any sort of comparative basis this limit had to be far exceeded to find a worthy contender.

Even then the TR4—which was so often (and wrongly, we feel) compared with the B—could have little hope of competing on a popular basis with a car priced some £400 below it. Apart from that the comparison was totally ill-conceived. In design concept, character and purpose they differ radically. It was mere coincidence that their performance happened to be similar and this

Wire or disc? Neither B nor 1600 has choice of wheels. You can find good arguments for both.



BEE VERSUS SPORT Continued



On Oran's hairpin B road, dips its nose quite heavily and sits in the transition to oversteer.

speeds, and performance indexes which must be hair-split and quibbled over to find significant differences on an overall basis. Neither is suitable for driving on to the track in the sense that Lotus Sevens are, although the 1600 would almost certainly fair better in stock trim.

There is but £40 between them—the B being the dearer.

The dimensions and specifications of the cars are so close as to be almost identical. The 1600 sports is almost three inches longer overall at 13 ft but both cars would go through the same sized gap in the traffic as there is only $\frac{1}{4}$ in. between them with the B widest at 4 ft 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Overall height is again minimally different with the 1600 standing slightly taller at 4 ft 2 in. However the actual body skins are different in depth and this accounts for the 1600 being only a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. higher than the B although it stands 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. further off the ground at the lowest point.

In terms of suspension measurements, the 1600 stretches almost a foot longer than the B in wheelbase (8 ft 6 in. against 7 ft 7 in.), is broader in the nose (front track 4 ft 2.2 in. to 4 ft 1 in.) and slimmer at the rear end (rear track, 3 ft 11 in. to 4 ft 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ in.). Turning circle is the same at 33 ft 6 in. and the turns at the wheel as close as may be—B, 2.8; 1600 2.75.

Both cars use 14 in. wheels shod with 5.60 tyres, though of course the MGB has wire wheels and 1600 disc wheels. The cars have similar capacity petrol tanks although the 1600 turns in a better cruising range at 290 miles than the B by virtue of its better fuel consumption (29 mpg — 24 mpg). Both require 95 octane petrol. The suspension set up (front—coils and wishbones; rear—semi-elliptics) is exactly the same on the two cars, as is the brake combination (front discs, rear drums) although the MGB

employs 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. discs to the 1600's 11 in. set. Fade could be induced on both cars under tortuous conditions, although there was little to choose between them. But the 1600 was certainly more stable under heavy braking while the B suffered weight transference and shift of attitude.

Both engines are, of course, overhead valve, pushrod operated, in-line fours. The MGB has all but 200 cc more capacity, and remains BMC undersquare at 80 mm by 81.5 mm, while the 1600 is decidedly oversquare at 87.2 mm by 66.8 mm. Handicapped by 200 cc, the 1600 motor is working harder to produce 96 bhp at 6000 rpm—1 bhp more than the B develops at its peak of 5400 rpm. The 1600 has far higher compression ratio (9.5 as to 8.8) and what amounts to a free flow exhaust system.

But the 1600 has almost a hundredweight kerb weight advantage over the MGB and this gives it the admirable power advantage of 106 bhp per ton, compared with the B's 100 bhp/ton. Not surprisingly the 1600 also has greater torque (103 lbs/ft at 4000 rpm) than the B (100 at 3000) although as can be seen the 1600 develops its torque at higher rpm. However the 1600 revs out further, pulling easily by 7000 rpm.

Top gear ratios on the cars are almost identical and the road speed per thousand rpm is 17.9 with both cars. As both cars have claimed top rpm maximums of 6000 they should, with proper tuning and under ideal conditions reach 107.4 mph. In fact both will rev slightly higher, and the 1600 would probably go highest with dynamometer tuning and record something in the vicinity of 6400–6500 rpm. This would mean the car could stretch to over 115 mph. But how will they both wear at such high piston speeds attainable? Although the B develops its maximum bhp at 6000 rpm lower in the scale, the oversquare



Same corner, same line, same speed. Sports 1600 points neutrally and sits almost flat.

construction of the 1600 engine more than offsets this disadvantage. In fact at maximum bhp point the B pistons are working at the rate of 3150 ft/min while the 1600 is coasting at a mere 2630 ft/min. This puts greater wear stresses, if any thing with the B although it enjoys the advantage of the five bearing crank which adds smoothness of operation.

All this of course reflects in performance figures. Basically the B is better low down and the 1600 takes over in the upper rpm ranges where it develops its torque and bhp. But the B is also more flexible in top gear, right through the range, while the 1600 shines in third gear pull in the upper (overtaking) ranges. Up to 50 mph the MGB is as much as a second quicker than the 1600 but here the oriental takes over and by the time 70 mph is reached it is almost two seconds ahead.

The 1600 is still accelerating strongly at 90 mph and we obtained a 0-90 mph figure of 32.3 secs. However above 80 mph the B does not pull hard and we found a 0-90 figure would be too far away to be realistic. The 1600 is helped in its upper acceleration ranges by better chosen ratios which run higher than the Bs. The motor also has a definite cammy feel at 3000 where it begins to pull hardest. First on the 1600 runs to 32 (B, 27), second to 57 (50) and third to 86 (76).

In the two original test cars the B proved to have longer legs than the 1600 and recorded just over the ton, while the 1600's best was 97 mph. However on previous 1600s and even on the first Fairlady we topped the ton fairly easily, so with better preparation than the test car had, there should be little to choose between the two on open road running. There was little between the two cars on the standing quarter although the 1600

got there slightly quicker. Whereas the speedometer on the B was wildly inaccurate (as much as 10 mph out) the 1600 speedo is fairly accurate, give or take a few decimal places.

There is little to choose between the two on the open road. On a 500 mile dash it would be quite conceivable (highly likely, in fact), for the two cars to finish in a dead heat. Neither is particularly happy cruising for mile on mile at near-the-ton speeds though both will do so if asked. Both cars create a lot of noise—engine, wind and road—and make a lot of fuss motoring at such high speeds. Possibly the B might have the edge in top speed while the Fairlady might make up a few split seconds on cornering and braking. Passengers in both would enjoy about equal amounts of comfort, and drivers would have to work in a little different manner.

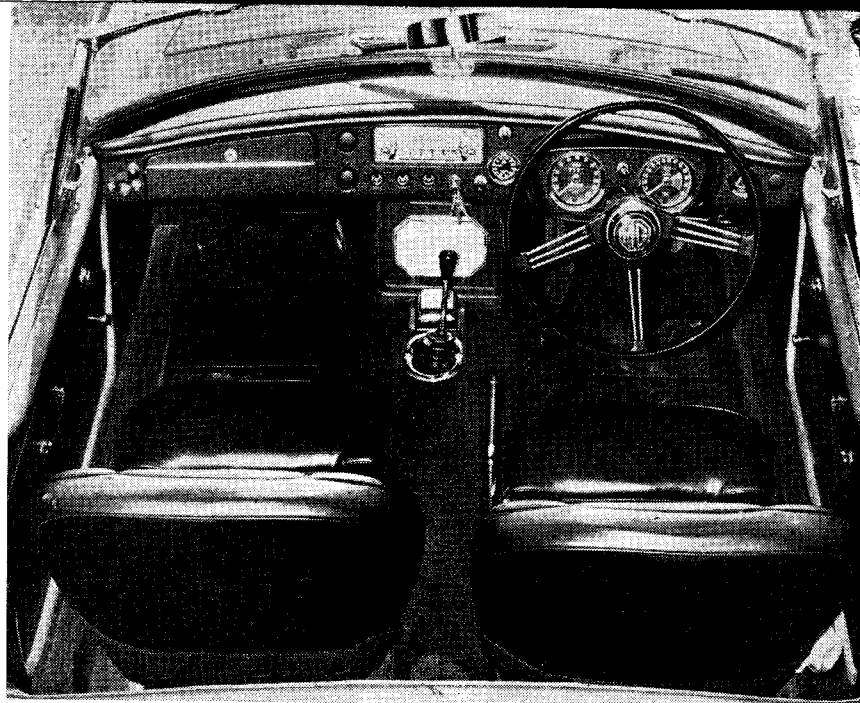
With the hood down, there is nothing to choose between the two in the way of cockpit turbulence. Neither hood flaps at high speed when erected, but the 1600's is better made and does not admit as many air leaks as the B's does. The B would be slightly ahead on boot luggage room, though both store their hoods and stays in this limited compartment. The B motor is probably more accessible than the 1600's.

Around town, the 1600 must be worked harder than the B, as it is not as flexible. However this is very pleasant due to the excellent all-synchromesh gearbox. The B is far more tractable down low in second and this offsets the lack of synchro first.

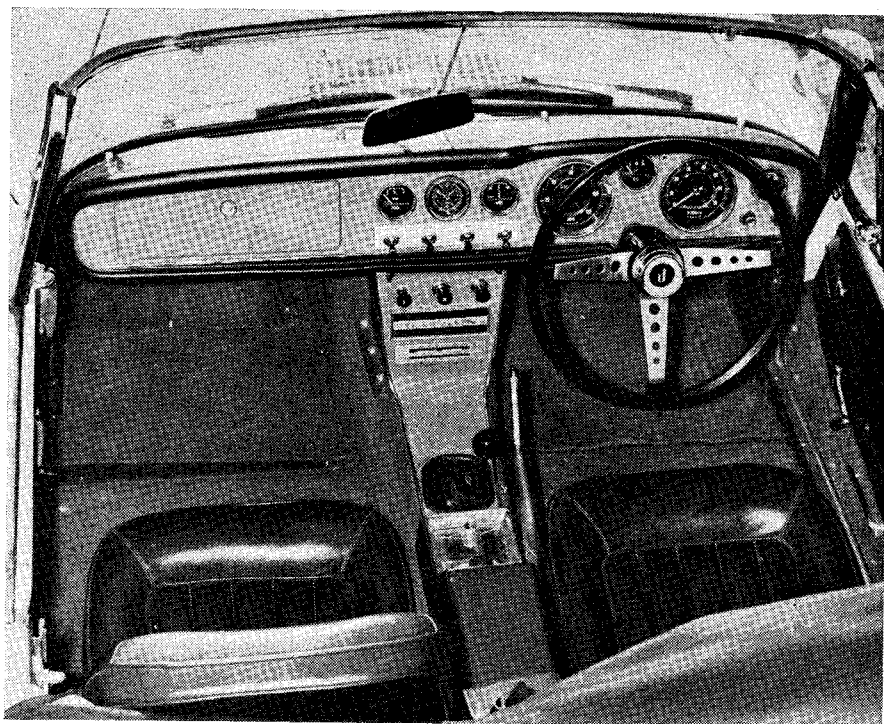
Obtaining two cars for track test proved more difficult than one could reasonably expect. Three weeks of solid negotiations with BMC and P and R Williams, Sydney's largest BMC retailers failed to produce a car and finally in desperation we

**BEE
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Continued

MGB has very comfortable buckets, canted steering wheel, all black trim and carpets.



Sports 1600 — equal comfort, better instrumentation, alloy spoked wheel with mixed-colored trim.



turned to Campbell Scott, Sydney sports car dealer who is beginning to make his name felt strongly in sports car circles. Sales Director John Swinfield instantly supplied us with an MGB, thoroughly serviced and beautifully prepared, ready to test. Meanwhile, Capitol Motors after the above-mentioned three weeks' notice produced the much-abused road test 1600 Sports which could have been in a much better state of tune. In all fairness to Capitols, though, the car has never run particularly well and had seen a hard life. We have driven several much better cars. But a better car would certainly have given a much better showing.

Thus equipped, we took the cars to Oran Park which we strongly defend as the ideal track for thorough testing of a car's merits in all fields—handling, acceleration, manoeuvrability and braking. Having recently given each car a week's

thorough testing, including performance figures, we did not repeat the process but merely confined the Oran Park exercise to strict track testing.

After a few laps' familiarisation the same driver mounted each car and we timed a series of flying laps. It should be mentioned here that the drivers who operated the cars on their fastest laps have had considerable experience with all types of sports cars and in particular had spent several thousand miles in each car, on the previous road tests.

The same driver consistently recorded 66 second laps for the MGB and 65.6 second laps for the 1600. The 1600 held the upper hand in the spheres of braking and handling; the MGB in acceleration out of the corners. Where the 1600 could be committed far deeper to a corner before braking, due to its more stable nature, the MGB tended to rock and snake. Spring rates enter the



picture strongly here. The B's softish ride means greater body movement than for the 1600 Sports with firmer spring rates but softer damping.

On cornering the B always displays roll movement and on Oran's two tightest curves this becomes excessive. The car at times almost reaches the point of wallow in tight situations.

The 1600 on the other side almost never rolls and then never to a great degree. It corners far flatter and is more neutral. Basically the B understeers and progresses rapidly (but predictably) to oversteer; the Fairlady changes if any from understeer to neutral with final oversteer a driver option in the tightest situations. Both cars hang the tail readily and both cars can easily be recovered.

Basically the MGB is a highly refined sports tourer while the 1600 sticks closer to the true sports car tradition. The B has a large safety margin built into the handling but this detracts slightly from its cornering limits. The 1600 can be pushed harder and committed further but still remains absolutely faithful in all circumstances.

While looks are purely personal and should not be brought into such a discussion as this, there is

Head on: 1600 has wider front track, better lighting equipment, flared wheel arches. Both headlight systems are mounted in mudguard fairings. Frontal area is little different though B has smoother shape.

undoubtedly little between them, though the B could be ranked as conventional in appearance and the 1600 slightly more interesting. While there are good arguments for disc wheels, and the new 1600 is certainly most handsome with its hub-capped and slotted set, the B will win friends with its spokes. The Fairlady has the upper edge on handling, possibly braking, comfort, finish, and equipment; there is little to choose between them in the way of mechanics; and the B shines in low-down flexibility, ride, ease and safety of driving, possibly in top speed, and off-the-line acceleration.

It all amounts to whether you want a well-established BMC sports tourer or a relatively new Oriental thoroughbred. But don't get confused, you won't be able to drive either on to the track and win races. ●