

FEATURES UNIQUE TO AUSTRALIA

THE MGB Mk 1.5 (unofficial)

The changeover of production from Enfield to Zetland occurred just before the introduction in Australia of the Mk II model. Some partly completed Mk I cars and some Mk I body shells were transported from the old site to the new. These cars were finished off for selling to the dealers. Many of these vehicles possessed Mk II parts, due to the delay in introduction in Australia. A few cars had yet to be fitted with their engines and transmissions. By this time, however, the imported transmissions available were the later full synchromesh gearbox/overdrive units. Never a company to waste money, BMC set about modifying the off-side foot well and transmission tunnels to accommodate the later transmission and starter motor. An unknown number of cars were even sold with the now redundant vacuum inhibitor switch (relay and harness of the earlier D-Type overdrive, still fitted to the firewall and heater shelf). The manifold vacuum port was simply blanked off. Other changes, such as radial ply tyres, a stronger anti-sway bar, laminated windscreens, reversing lights, headlight flashers and the Salisbury differential, all made these vehicles (approx. 500) slightly different.

Note: these vehicles, even though they were carrying a different engine (18GB/RU/H) were still designated as YGHN3

Mk II Reversed Indicator/Side (parking) Lights:



As reference to the Mk II production line photos will confirm, the Australian MGB Mk II had the indicator/side (parking) light units reversed compared to the Mk I (and to all the Abingdon built MGB models), with the amber indicator segment outboard of the clear lens. This practice reverted to the original orientation with the introduction in 1969 of the revised front mudguard where this light unit was moved in closer to the grille.

Badges: 'Overdrive', 'Automatic' and 'Mk II'



BMC (Australia) always felt the overdrive, Automatic and Mk II features were worth advertising, and appropriate badges denoting these enhancements were fitted to the Australian cars. The 'Automatic' and 'Mk II' badges were shared with other local BMC vehicles, such as the Austin 1800. The 'Overdrive' badge however was unique to the MGB. It remains uncertain whether some Mk I overdrive cars were fitted with the 'Overdrive' badge at the factory (those Mk 1.5



vehicles). More likely is that they were fitted subsequently by dealers caught with old stock, and by owners wanting to appear to drive the latest model.

Series confusion:

The Archive of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust preserves the surviving records of some of the most famous names in British motoring history. They offer MGB owners the ability to purchase a heritage certificate which verifies the appropriate features for a particular vehicle. This certificate, as valuable as it is to most owners, is of very limited value to Australian owners with an Australian-assembled MGB. This is due to a number of factors; no records being held of Australian-assembled vehicles in the UK, the unique Australian numbering system, to mention but two. An attempt to mirror this service in Australia has also shown to have limitations.

Series designation:

One gets very confused when reading the Australian Leyland Workshop manual (including the Parts Manual), where it is using series designations from the UK system of vehicle identification (eg GHN4, GHD4, GHN5 and GHD5). These designations have almost no relevance to the Australian system; a cause of great confusion.

NB a graphic comparative explanation will be found here: ([COMPARISON – UK & AUST](#)) Australian MGBs were given the following designations:

(Series I) YGHN3

(Series II) YGHN4, YGHN5, YGHN6, YHN6, YGHN7, YHN7 YHN9, YHN10

Note the dropping of the 'G' after the Leyland takeover.

Add to that, the subsequent numbering of each vehicle was continuous from 101 onwards. In Australia, each series (with the exception of YGHN5) started at 501. So it is easy to see how difficult it becomes to compare or try to match with our overseas cousins.

It also seems that the introduction of the MGB in Australia didn't get off to a good start. The first series was designated YGHN3. What seemed to have slipped management's memory is that the final series of the MGA had already been assigned this nomenclature. So, now there were two distinctly different vehicles with the same coding.

Notes: What each letter stands for is described in the section – 'How to ID your car'. In addition, note that the 'G' was dropped from the descriptor. The 'G', which stood for 'MG' was said to have been dropped after Leyland took control of the company.

There was no official YGHN8 assigned.

All these markings could be found on the ID plate, riveted on to driver's side front valance, near the radiator diaphragm. Step forward to mid-1969, when all ID plates disappeared from vehicles (as with all Australian BMC vehicles) for a period of six months. The only body identification found now was stamped into the scuttle near the heater. This was followed by compliance plates (1 January, 1970) of two different sizes, attached near the oil cooler.





Components

To comply with the government imposed quota system for 'local content', Australian assembly was carried out with as much 'local content' as was feasible and economical. Even though engines and gearboxes were sent out CBU, they were stripped of vital parts that were provided by Australian companies. This is why Australian Lucas components were painted black, as opposed to the UK ones which were engine colour.



Colouring found on UK models (engine colour) c/f Australian colouring

Painting

Along with the superior rotodip method used on all Mk II bodies assembled at Zetland, another unique feature on Australian-assembled MGB Mk II (Facelift) was the painting of the area forward of the radiator – matte black. The thinking behind this:

“By painting the engine bay panels directly behind the grille black on Australian MGBs it avoided seeing body-coloured panels in the engine bay when viewed from the front and meant that the front of the car looked more open like the mouth of a cow since the black adds to the perception of depth.” John Clarke, 'Opposite Lock', Feb, 2019

The paint was GMH black and was simply sprayed (unmasked) after the car was painted in the spray shop. It is a personal opinion that the reason not too many of these vehicles have this feature today is that subsequent buyers have thought that the painting (it did look a little rough) was an after-purchase addition and have returned their vehicles to the body colour in this area.



MkII Door Cards

With the introduction of the Mk II, Australian mgbs had their own unique door card pattern. This had a 'ladder' pattern going horizontally through the card midway. This was also continued through to the rear quarter panel.



Mk II Door card with 'ladder' pattern

Options

There was a difference between Australia and UK/US market offerings for parts considered as optional

Trim: Australia had but two choices: black seats with white piping or red seats with white piping. This later changed to just black and finally, near the end of production to a blue.

Wheels: Australia had little choice on wheels. All vehicles were fitted with grey painted wire wheels (an option in UK/US), with the only option being chromed wire wheels.

An oil cooler was fitted as standard on Australian vehicles (considered an option overseas).

Front anti-roll bar was standard in Australia, as opposed to it being an option overseas.

Australians were not offered the option of a fold-down hood (Michelotti) until very late in the production run.

Overdrive was similarly a delayed option, not offered until June, 1967.





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