

# MG - A Brief History (Part 1 - 1890 to 1945)

***"MG Sports cars are always regarded with affection by those that drive them. They built the company's reputation for stylish models that promised and delivered Safety Fast"***



William Morris, later Lord Nuffield (1877-1963) was one of the founding fathers of the British motor industry. He began his career in Oxford in the 1890's as a cycle mechanic, he later branched out into the new motor trade and by 1910 had established himself as proprietor of The Morris Garages. By 1913 he would fulfil his ambition to become a motor manufacturer when the first Morris car was produced at Cowley near Oxford, England.

When the First World War finished, Morris cars quickly became Britains best selling vehicle. Two models were offered: the 1.5 litre 12hp Cowley and the 1.8 litre 14hp Oxford. With Morris devoting himself to car manufacture, his original garage business was entrusted to a general manager. In 1922, Cecil Kimber was appointed to this post. Kimber was an ardent car enthusiast who had already worked for several motor companies. He was particularly keen on sports cars, and had a considerable design flair, able to produce eye-catching body styles.

It was Kimbers idea to produce special bodied cars on Morris chassis. In 1923 he fitted a distinctive, light, open topped 2 seater to a morris chassis, later that year he commissioned Carbodies of Coventry to produce 'sports two & four seater' bodies for Morris chassis. These cars were sold as MG's with the famous octagonal badge.



The four seater, fitted with the Morris 1.4 litre engine sold for £395. In contrast, the four seater standard Morris Oxford sold for £285 and the 12hp Cowley as little as £195.

1925 and Kimber enters a much modified car into the Land's End Trial and won gold medal. The car sold for £300, but was bought back by MG some years later and has since been known as "Old Number One", the first proper MG sports car ever made. The MG name was given as a compliment to Lord Nuffield, being the initials of his first business - Morris Garages.

In 1926, bullnose Morris's were replaced by the flatnose type, and MG's followed suit. In 1927, MG production was moved into a new purpose built factory at Edmund road, Cowley. In 1928, the MG Car Company was formally set up, and separate from the Morris Garages. Two new MG models were also introduced. The 18/80 2.5 litre and the first MG Midget, the M type. This was based on the recently introduced Morris Minor with 874cc engine. The bodywork was a fabric covered two seater with a pointed tail. At £175 'The Autocar' declared that "The MG Midget will make sports history". The Midget went into full production in

March 1929 and resulted in the Company moving to a bigger factory, at Abingdon on Thames, this was MG's home for the next fifty years.



1930 - 1934 saw the MG brand develop to become one of the most famous sports cars in the world. The EX.120 car built in 1930 and driven by George Eyston set the path to a career in record breaking which would last until 1960.

1931 saw the supercharged racing C type, while later that year the MG - F type Magna was introduced. There was also the D type four seater midget, but this and the M type were replaced by the J type in 1932. With the J type, Kimber established the typical look of MG: double humped scuttle, fold flat windscreen, elbow cut-outs in the doors, and the petrol tank and spare wheel strapped to the back of the car.

In 1933 came the K type Magnette with a small 1.1 litre engine. A supercharged K3 model became the most famous Magnette, taking a class win and team prize in its debut outing in the Italian Mille Miglia road race. A new EX.127 (Magic Midget) built for George Eyston to win further records in the 750cc class, was later sold to German driver Kohlrusch and ended up in the experimental department of Mercedes-Benz.



Further developments of the cars followed through 1933, 1934 and 1935, when the MG Company then passed from private ownership of Lord Nuffield to the Morris Motors Company. Almost immediately, MG announced that it was withdrawing from motor racing and ceased building racing cars.

New models from 1935 - 1939 were closely based on components from the Morris-Wolesey range. However, record breaking wasn't forgotten, and in 1939 an EX.135 set new 1100cc and 1500cc records at speeds over 200mph.



During war time, in 1941, MG's founder Cecil Kimber, was dismissed by the Nuffield Organisation for failing to fit into the wartime pattern of the company. In 1945, Kimber was killed in a railway accident.

Next Issue, part two. 1945 to early 2002.

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# MG - A Brief History (Part 2 - 1945 to early 2002)

***"MG Sports cars are always regarded with affection by those that drive them".***

After Cecil Kimber was killed in a railway accident in 1945, the MG Company faced the postwar years without its original leader. However, production soon resumed at Abingdon with the TC, a developed version of the 1939 TB.



In 1947 this was followed by the new, smaller Y type, using MG's first independent front suspension, which had been designed before the war by the young Alec Issigonis. The TC was the first car to be shipped in quantity to the USA, where MG would become established as the most popular sports car maker.



In 1950, the TD model combined the chassis and suspension of the Y type with a TC like body. Whilst 10,000 TC's were made, the TD reached almost 30,000 with the majority being sold in North America.

1953 and MG had a new general manager, John Thornley. With his chief designer Syd Enver, Thornley wanted an all new sports car for the vital American market. MG was, by now, part of the BMC Group and the idea was rebuffed by Leonard Lord, BMC's boss, who had agreed to produce the Austin Healey sports car. A face lifted TD was however put on the market in 1953 as the TF.

In 1955, Leonard Lord relented and the MGA was introduced. It featured an all new chassis, all enveloping bodywork and a 1.5 ltr engine. This became MG's biggest success to date, with more than 100,000 being built up to 1962. MG also returned to motor racing, at Le Mans and also the 12 hour race at Sebring in USA. A new MG car, the EX179 was built for George Eyston, and the EX181 of 1957 was driven by Stirling Moss and Phil Hill and set class records at speeds over 250 mph.



1959 saw a new MG Magnette saloon, which was a badge engineered version of BMC's Farina. This trend continued with the 1961 MG Midget being based on the Austin Healey Sprite, whilst the MG1100 of 1962 was a tuned version of the Issigonis designed Morris 1100.

1962 also saw the introduction of the MGB with 1.8 litre engine. In 1965 it became available with the GT body, a hatchback style coupe. The MGB & Midget sports went on to set new production records, and whilst both were used in motor sports, the MGB achieved particularly good results in long distance races such as Le Mans, Sebring and the 84 hour Marathon de la Route at the Nurburgring, which was won in 1966 by an MGB.

The short lived six cylinder MGC of 1967-1969 (based on the MGB) was not a popular model and only some 9000

were made. Although MG's last competition car before BL pulled out of racing was the very fast MGC GT derivative.

From 1968 (the BMC-Leyland merger) until 1973 MG was comparatively quiet. Then in 1973 another MGB model was introduced, the MGB GT V8, with the 3.5 litre V8 Rover engine. This, again, was destined for a short career, and only 2600 cars were made.

In 1974, all MG models were face lifted with new impact resistant rubber bumpers, to meet new US legislation.

The Midget finally ceased being produced in 1979, after 225,000 cars were produced.

The MGB finished production in 1980 after 512,000 were made. At the same time, the Abingdon factory closed and the MG brand disappeared from the North American market.



It was not until 1982 that the name re-appeared on a sporting version of the parent company's Metro small car. Over the next few years MG versions also appeared on the Maestro and Montego models. All three versions eventually became available with turbo-chargers as well. The MG Metro & Turbo version combined reached a total production of 142,000 cars. There was also the short lived MG 6R4 rally car of 1984 with centre mounted V6 engine.

MG enthusiasts longed for days similar to a bygone era, behind the scenes Rover Group was planning the same. A taster of things to come was the MG EX-E concept car revealed in 1985. Under the ownership of British Aerospace from 1988, plans for a new MG sports car were accelerated. The MG saloon range was discontinued in 1991 and the MG RV8 was released in 1992, fitted with the 3.9 litre engine from the Range Rover. 2000 cars were produced, most being exported to Japan.

Several sports car proposals were under consideration, finally Project PR3 was chosen, a mid-engined two seater using a developed version of the 1.8 litre K series engine with variable valve control.

Much of the development work was completed as Rover group were taken over by BMW, and the new MGF was introduced in march 1995. This vehicle was to be produced up to 2002 and then replaced by the new MG-TF.

The well documented sell off of Rover and Range Rover, in 2000, returned the company back as an independent. The name was changed to MG Rover Group which was left with the Rover 25, 45, 75 and the MGF. MG versions of the Rover range were introduced to high critical acclaim both for bold design and power/handling, with many ultra-high power versions being exhibited. The company are now working towards replacements for their current cars with the MG-TF leading the way. The story continues....

