The Autocar ROAD TESTS

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THE NEW M.G.

ON THE ROAD

TO confound the critics who say that racing teaches no useful lessons comes the brand-new M.G. sports two-seater. Designated the model A—thus starting afresh after the long line of M, J, Q and R racing cars, and TA, TD and TF Midgets that rolled out of the Abingdon works—the new car is a very close development of the M.G.s that did so well in the 24-hours race at Le Mans this year.

There are naturally some differences between the racing car and the production model, but the road holding, braking and steering are unaffected and in these respects the M.G. A recalls very intimately the Le Mans car, road impressions of which were published in *The Autocar* of July 29, 1955.

The immediate impression on sitting in the driving seat was that the car had been tailored to fit, of which more later. Starting the 1½-litre B.M.C. engine presented no problems. A radiator blind, as fitted to the test car, is available as optional extra equipment and is easily operated by a control below the right-hand corner of the facia. This blind facilitates the warming-up in which any right-thinking enthusiast will indulge, although even without its use operating temperature was reached very quickly.

On opening the cable-operated throttle there came the familiar M.G. exhaust note. At no time did this become objectionable to others, and there was no annoying boom to be heard with the hood up. The car will drift along through residential areas on a whiff of throttle and with no unwelcome attention attracted.

There is immediate response to sudden pressure on the accelerator and the getaway from rest is very good, 70 m.p.h. being reached in just over 21 seconds. On wet roads, which were experienced during the taking of the acceleration figures, wheelspin was very apparent, and black lines can be left on a dry surface if the start is abrupt. At the end of the standing quarter mile the M.G. was travelling at very nearly 70 m.p.h., and this was very creditable with the load carried. Performance figures were taken with hood and sidescreens erected, except for some runs to determine maximum speed, when a small racing-type screen was fitted.

With this small screen and a tonneau cover over the passenger seat, the best speed reached was 96 m.p.h., as against 99 m.p.h. with the hood and sidescreens in position. At such high speeds the M.G. A is very stable and the driver is able to concentrate on the rev counter needle as it climbs to the orange 5,500 r.p.m. mark on the dial, and the road shooting past him and away under the nose of the car. On Continental roads it was possible to cruise for mile after mile with the speedometer needle between 90 and 100 m.p.h. The oil pressure and temperature gauge needles remained steady in spite of a considerable amount of high-speed driving.

The M.G. A is, in fact, one of those cars whose cruising speed is determined by road conditions, and this became very evident after driving fast over the French and Belgian roads. But there is no feeling at the end of a hard day that the driver has been doing most of the work. Long, winding hillside roads are a joy to traverse; the car rockets to the top in third gear, and this gear is also extremely useful for overtaking other traffic and for town use. Yet it is possible to accelerate smoothly from 12 m.p.h. using the 4.3 to 1 top gear, and the car can be very pleasant when used in a gentle fashion. The engine is no temperamental unit, liable to behave only when it thinks it will.

Fuel consumption benefits from the body shape; driving at 50 m.p.h., with short periods at 70, resulted in a figure of 30.8 m.p.g., which was achieved on a give-and-take main road in Great Britain where to maintain the predetermined average speed the available acceleration had to be used.

The road holding and steering are of a high order. Even with the tyre pressures set for fast driving, there was no feeling of discomfort or pattering when on *pavé* and other poor surfaces. Fast cornering was a joy, the driver being able to position the car exactly where he wanted, and exit from a corner is also very satisfactory. On roads just wet

after a sudden rainfall, the tail of the car would swing out slightly, but correction brought an immediate response and there was no lack of control. Suspension and damping is such that the whole car feels in one piece and the front end does not hop about.

The rack and pinion steering, with one of the æsthetically better types of present-day steering wheel, has a good, easy action with very little lost motion. There are two and three-quarter turns from lock to lock and the car proves to be guided by a slight motion of the hands rather than turning the wheel through a number of degrees.

Control is helped at all speeds by the excellent driving position previously mentioned. The seat is low down, below the level of the frame, and the driver's legs stretch comfortably to the pedals. The steering wheel (non-adjustable column) is at a good angle and there is plenty of room for the driver's elbows. The sight line of a tall driver is well below the top of the windscreen, and there is space for large feet in the neighbourhood of the pedals. The short remote control gear lever comes immediately to hand and the movements are precise and extremely satisfactory, the results being equally so! Occasional difficulty was encountered in engaging first gear from rest. The reverse stop spring on the car tested was also rather stiff, but experience of a similar gear box has shown that this stiffness wears off. The clutch is hydraulically operated and has a nice feel. It is capable of enabling very quick gear changes to be made without slip.

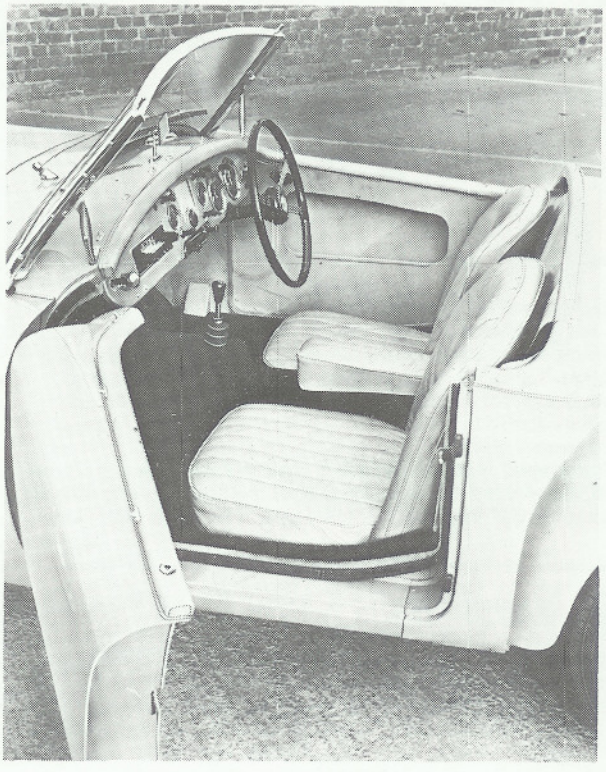
Racing experience shows in the M.G. A braking, which is all that could be required for very fast road work. Two-leading shoes in the front brakes, with leading and trailing shoes working in the rear, give the driver all the retarding power he is likely to need in normal circumstances. No fade was experienced during the test, and only when the brake performance figures were being obtained did any unevenness set in. The fitting of centre-lock wire wheels, an optional extra, would assist in cooling the drums as well as improving the already attractive appearance of the car. The hand-brake lever lies horizontally by the side of the propeller-shaft tunnel and has a fly-off action. It is easily reached and does not get in the way of the driver's leg.

Fast night driving is quite safe with the beam of the head lights, but the foot-operated dip-switch is placed rather high and is difficult to reach. It would be considerably better if it could be adjacent to the clutch pedal. There is a rheostat for the instrument lighting, and at one position of the switch the speedometer alone is illuminated. The only reflection in the windscreen comes from the tonneau cover studs immediately in front of the steering wheel. With the hood up and head lamp beams reaching away in front, the M.G. A is as comforting to drive at night as it is exhilarating by day.

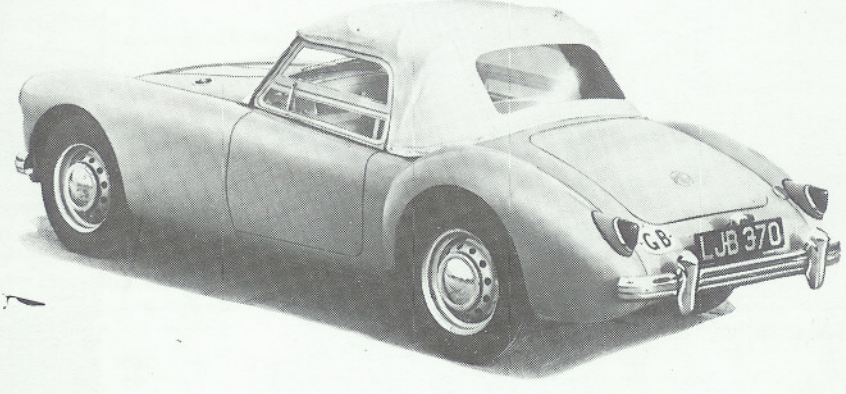
Both seats have adequate adjustment and the back rest is at a comfortable angle. Some drivers would prefer more support for the thighs. The passenger has a grab handle and this also forms the windscreen frame support. As is to be expected, it is easier for two persons to erect the hood from its stowed position behind the seats, but the driver alone can manage it. The sidescreens, which have a spring-loaded flap, are simple to put into position and remove; they are each locked by one turnbuckle. Some

A new slant on the familiar M.G. front, successfully adapted

wet came in between the windscreen and front edge of the sidescreens when travelling fast, and in extremely heavy rain water dripped on to the driver's right leg from a point under the scuttle. There is a very reasonable amount of head room with the hood erect, and there was no instance of the driver's head hitting the hoop sticks when going over a bump. At speeds between 70 and 80 m.p.h. the hood



Seats tip forward if required. Instruments confront the driver but the horn is in the centre of the facia



For a sports car, luggage space is reasonable. Hood up, the new model loses nothing in smartness; the rear window is flexible

material vibrated on the frame but this noise was not experienced at lower speeds.

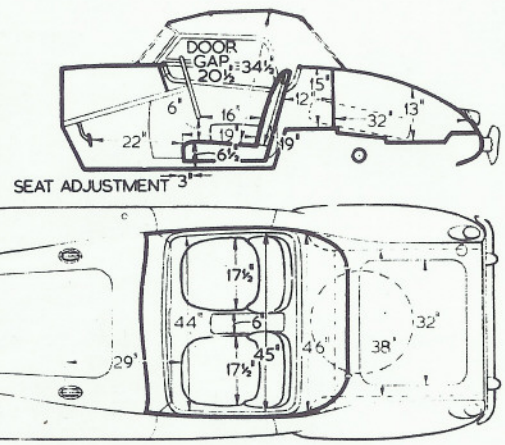
There is no cubby-hole in the facia; the space occupied by the radio fitted on the test car is blanked by a plate with an M.G. motif when there is no radio. A large pocket in each door is sufficient for maps, torch and the usual odds and ends crews require for a few days away from home. The pockets remain dry in rain when sidescreens are not fitted. The door handle cord is slung across the inside top of the pocket and can be reached by inserting a hand underneath the flap of the sidescreen. There are fitted envelopes behind the seats for the side curtains and these envelopes neatly conceal the hood when it is folded away.

The release handle for the luggage locker lid can be reached behind the passenger seat; there is room in the locker for a suitcase and small articles. Strapped on the rear bulkhead is the tool roll, containing the lifting jack and wheelbrace. The jack, surprisingly enough, is of the old-fashioned screw type. A starting handle is supplied and is clipped to the back of the locker. Nine points require attention with a grease gun every 1,000 miles and the twin six-volt batteries are housed beneath the luggage locker. They can be reached by removing the spare wheel.

A heating and demisting unit, available as an optional extra, was fitted to the test car. It worked well, and draws in fresh air via a long duct through the engine compartment. On the left side of the radiator, fresh air is ducted to the intakes of the twin S.U. carburettors. Hot air and fumes from the engine compartment are cleared by a vent on each side of the bonnet. As is usual with these B.M.C. engines, the oil filler is accessible, though it is difficult to see why the oil level dipstick could not be two inches longer, raising it clear of the sparking plug leads. Dynamo belt adjustment is not particularly easy with the standard tool kit.

M.G. TWO-SEATER (SERIES A)

WHEELBASE	7' 10"
FRONT TRACK	3' 11½"
REAR TRACK	4' 0¾"
OVERALL LENGTH	13' 0"
OVERALL WIDTH	4' 10"
OVERALL HEIGHT	4' 2"



Measurements in these ¼in to 1ft scale body diagrams are taken with the driving seat in the central position of fore and aft adjustment and with the seat cushions uncompressed

PERFORMANCE

ACCELERATION: from constant speeds.
Speed Range, Gear Ratios and Time in sec.

M.P.H.	4.3 to 1	5.908 to 1	9.520 to 1	15.652 to 1
10—30	—	8.2	5.0	—
20—40	12.2	8.0	4.8	—
30—50	12.3	8.4	—	—
40—60	13.1	9.1	—	—
50—70	15.0	10.7	—	—
60—80	18.1	—	—	—

From rest through gears to:

M.P.H.	sec.
30	4.9
50	11.0
60	15.6
70	21.4
80	32.1
90	50.1

Standing quarter mile, 20.2 sec.

SPEEDS ON GEARS:

Gear	M.P.H. (normal and max.)	K.P.H. (normal and max.)
Top (mean)	98.0	157.7
Top (best)	99.0	159.3
3rd	58—70	93—113
2nd	38—44	61—71
1st	20—26	32—42

TRACTIVE RESISTANCE: 20 lb per ton at 10 M.P.H.

TRACTIVE EFFORT:

	Pull (lb per ton)	Equivalent Gradient
Top	203	1 in 11.0
Third	303	1 in 7.3
Second	455	1 in 4.9

BRAKES:

Efficiency	Pedal Pressure (lb)
85 per cent	100
77 per cent	50
58 per cent	25

FUEL CONSUMPTION:
27 m.p.g. overall for 672 miles (10.46 litres per 100 km).
Approximate normal range 25–38 m.p.g. (11.3–7.4 litres per 100 km).
Fuel, First grade.

WEATHER: Overcast, wet surface.
Air temperature 68 deg F.
Acceleration figures are the means of several runs in opposite directions.
Tractive effort and resistance obtained by Tapley meter.
Model described in *The Autocar* of September 23, 1955.

SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION: M.P.H.

Car speedometer	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
True speed:	11	20	29	38	48	58	68	77	86	96

DATA

PRICE (basic), with two-seater body, £595.
British purchase tax, **£249 0s 10d.**
Total (in Great Britain), **£844 0s 10d.**

ENGINE: Capacity: 1,489 c.c. (90.88 cu in).
Number of cylinders: 4.
Bore and stroke: 73.025 × 89 mm. (2.875 × 3.5in).
Valve gear: o.h.v., push rods.
Compression ratio: 8.3 to 1.
B.H.P.: 68 at 5,500 r.p.m. (B.H.P. per ton laden 70.6).
Torque: 77.4 lb ft at 3,500 r.p.m.
M.P.H. per 1,000 r.p.m. on top gear, 17.0.

WEIGHT: (with 5 gals fuel), 17¾ cwt (1,904 lb).
Weight distribution (per cent): F, 51.5; R, 48.5.
Laden as tested: 21 cwt (2,254 lb).
Lb per c.c. (laden): 1.51.

BRAKES: Type: F, two-leading shoe; R, leading and trailing.
Method of operation: F, hydraulic; R, hydraulic.
Drum dimensions: F, 10in diameter; 1¾in wide. R, 10in diameter; 1¾in wide.
Lining area: F, 67.2 sq in. R, 67.2 sq in (112.6 sq in per ton laden).

TYRES: 5.60—15in.
Pressures (lb per sq in): F, 17; R, 20 (normal). F, 18; R, 23 (for fast driving).

TANK CAPACITY: 10 Imperial gallons.
Oil sump, 6½ pints.
Cooling system, 10 pints (plus 0.65 pints if heater is fitted).

TURNING CIRCLE: 28ft 0in (L and R).
Steering wheel turns (lock to lock): 2¾.

DIMENSIONS: Wheelbase: 7ft 10in.
Track: F, 3ft 11½in; R, 4ft 0¾in.
Length (overall): 13ft.
Height: 4ft 2in.
Width: 4ft 10in.
Ground clearance: 6in.
Frontal area: 13.77 sq ft (approximately) (with hood up).

ELECTRICAL SYSTEM: 12-volt; 51 ampère-hour battery.
Head lights: Double dip; 42–36 watt bulbs.

SUSPENSION: Front, independent, coil springs. Rear, half-elliptic leaf springs.