

## Motor

Promoted by the T Register to celebrate 50 years of the MG T type

# The Last Weekends in June 86

LONDON - INVERNESS - LONDON

### ENDURANCE RUN

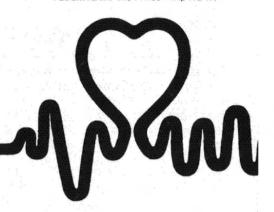
JUNE 26th to 29th 1986

£1

a portion of the proceeds from this programme will aid the

BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION APPEAL

# BRITISH HEART FOUNDATION APPEAL



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#### INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago, in 1936, production began of the T series MG Midget which, in its early post-war form as the TC, became famous for starting the great British sports car boom in America and around the world, which lasted

throughout the Fifties and Sixties.

To mark this special anniversary, various unique events are being organised by MG Car Club T type owners worldwide, the most ambitious project being in Ameriaca where the New England T Register is staging the Ocean to Ocean T Tourist Trophy endurance run. Starting from two east coast points, New York and Florida, the cars will head west, meeting at the Grand Canyon and then continue on as one group to Santa Barbara on the west coast. They will then head back east to Toronto, a total of 7,000 miles in 20 days! Henry Stone, a former Abingdon development engineer who worked on these cars commented, "I am confident that these cars will make it – the drivers I'm not so sure about! In places it will 110 degrees in the shade, but no shade!" Fifty T types are booked in for this event which begins on June 21st and ends on July 10th.

While these cars are trekking across America, here in Britain our own T Register is running a similar endurance run, not on such an ambitious scale but nevertheless an event of no mean achievement. In 1946 'Motor' magazine published a road test it had undertaken entitled 'The Last Weekend in June', whereby an MG TC (the factory test car) was driven from London to Inverness and back in less than three days. The T Register, as its

own tribute to prove the continuing durability of the best little sports car ever made, will retrace the route of this road test, stopping at the same hotels en route, but this time at a slightly more leisurely pace (to conserve the drivers rather than the cars!) with four days in which to complete the trip.

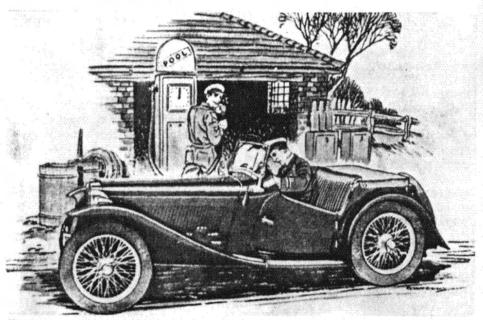
Ten cars in all plan to undertake this journey representing the various versions of the T series Midget produced by Abingdon between 1936 and 1955. Special interest will be centered around two cars coming all the way from Switzerland to participate while a third, from Scotland, is the original Pat Moss TF rally car. Special guests on the run will be Ron Embling from America representing the New England T Register and Henry Stone. Motor magazine are taking a personal interest in the restaging of their 1946 road test, with John Simister from their editorial staff plus a photographer undertaking the journey from behind the wheel of a Naylor TF, a full report of which will subsequently appear in their magazine.

Our endurance run begins from Belgrave Square in London at 7.00 am on Thursday, June 26th, exactly 40 years to the day when the original road test was staged and ends on Sunday, June 29th in Battersea Park about 4.00 pm. A full timetable, route guide and entry list appears in the centre pages of the programme.

Finally, a sobering thought. In 1946 the late Christopher Jennings and his wife had to endure rain for the entire journey with the necessity for the hood to be up. We can only hope and pray that in 1986 the weatherman will

be a little kinder to us!

**DAVID SAUNDERS Event Organiser** 



The famous MG artist, Harold Connally, depicted the most famous of all Ttype owners, Prince Philip, getting some post-war pool petrol for his new TC, presumably on his way to court the future Queen Elizabeth!



MOUNTAINS IN THE MIST.—A view from the top of Trinafour looking towards the roads to Tummell Bridge and Kinloch, Rannoch. This road is rather rough for the few miles from Dalnacardoch to Trinafour, but improves from there on and is well worth trying.

T all started with a telephone call from the M.G. car

The new "TC" Midget which was announced last October is now in steady production, and it occurred to the executives of the Company that some hard driving of the current model by a member of the technical Press might give them the private owner's point of view. In pre-war days such test runs were pretty general, but what with the petrol shortage and the lack of cars very few organizations have been able to plan much of this sort of research since the war ended.

It so happened that a typical example of the TC Midget could be spared for a long week-end, and it was felt that something in the nature of 1,000 miles of fairly constant driving would supply the factory with some valuable data. From the point of view of "The Motor" this also seemed to be a wonderful chance to survey the Great North Road and the Highlands once again, so that on the afternoon of Thursday, June 27, preparations were made for the sort of journey that any motorist would regard as a heaven-sent opportunity.

An editor finds it difficult to avoid being chairborne. In common with almost everyone else, neither my wife nor I have covered any great mileage in a good civilian car for several years. Our interest in the whole event was heightened by the fact that my wife had a trouble-free run with a P-type Midget in George Eyston's team at Le Mans in 1935. Consequently, her

reactions to 10 years of development could be considered interesting.

We set out from London on the Thursday at 5.30 p.m. and motored steadily north for a distance of 63 miles, when a halt was made at "The George" at Buckden for dinner. This preliminary drive was valuable from the point of view of getting to know the car. Unfortunately, the weather deteriorated rapidly and both hood and side screens were brought into use in due course. In connection with this important matter of weather protection, quite a lot should be said about the new Midget. As always one sits very much in and not on the car, and as the body width has been increased by 4 ins. in the post-war model, the driver's right arm can be used either with the elbow over the door or brought inside with equal facility. The mudguarding is first class in its efficiency, so that the Midget can be driven through pretty bad weather with the hood down. However, with the prospect of an all-night run and another two-days' motoring after that, plus occasional stops for food, discretion seemed the better part of valour, and it was thus that we discovered that the new hood and side screens do their job in a very satisfactory way.

It would be difficult to think of a better form of small-

#### London to Inverness and Back in a "TC" Midget

#### By Christopher Jennings

car transport for two people on this sort of journey than the M.G. The luggage container held two suitcases and an assortment of coats, camera and picnic basket. Even so, the elastic-tensioned waterproof cover fitted neatly into place and as the side screens have a separate locker they can be stowed without the risk of finding them damaged beyond repair by the luggage at the end of a fast run over bad roads.

Performance of the car itself showed great promise. The four-speed gearbox produces about the fastest normal change in existence. A maximum of 64 and 45 m.p.h. on third and second ratios, respectively, plus the 1,250 c.c. engine delivering 55 b.h.p., means that the Midget can produce, when required, a degree of acceleration which is quite outstanding. As to maximum speed, this is about 80 m.p.h., and the adjustable steering wheel requires less than two turns from lock to lock. All these characteristics, and many lesser but, nevertheless, satisfactory ones, were observed and appreciated during the opening 63 miles.

#### Driving in Shifts

After dinner, it was decided to drive through the night in three-hour shifts. The North Road seemed comparatively deserted and a surprising sight was a tandem tricycle going great guns down Alconbury Hill. A little farther on, two solemn-looking members of the R.A.F. on bicycles pointed dramatically at the front end of the Midget as we swept past them. Thinking that the number plate must have fallen off or the fog lamp had come on, we carried out an investigation, but found nothing wrong and were left to suppose that this might be a new form of practical joke which certainly, in our case, achieved the desired results. While we were thus engaged a limousine Rolls-Royce, chauffeur driven and full of opulent-looking passengers, shot by at what we estimated must be a cool 80. Very little sound other than the swish of the tyres on the wet road and the positive blast of air denoted its passage.

It was getting dark as we reached Doncaster and nothing worth recording occurred until we reached Carlisle at 2.30 a.m. By this time the speedometer recorded 306 miles, and we had taken the trouble to ascertain that there was an all-night filling station available at this point. The M.G.'s petrol tank holds 13½ gallons, and this is a feature which should be praised from the house tops and copied by as many manufacturers of sporting cars as possible. It means that night journeys of great duration can be made with an easy mind. There may be several enterprising garages who remain open all night between London and Inverness, but we saw no sign of anything of the sort once it

BORDER OIL CO., LTD. LOWTHER STREET CARLISLE Petrol and oil all night. Pumps under cover, and courtesy, even at 2.30 a.m. THE GEORGE HOTEL Well-cooked food, BUCKDEN old furniture. Plenty of HUNTS flowers and magazines. Covered parking space. magazines. Highland hospitality at its BALLACHULISH HOTEL best. Lovely position and most comfortable. ARGYLL NETHY BRIDGE HOTEL Large; very well run and designed for people who are prepared to pay a little extra in return for the INVERNESS-SHIRE best of everything. They take their food seri-ously and the cooking is superb. No smoking in the FORTINGALL HOTEL

NOTEWORTHY =

grew dark, and the problem of refuelling on this and similar journeys will become a very great one when the petrol rationing is removed.

dining

good ideas.

room, and

**GLENLYON** 

point read 415 miles and the

weather began to deterior-

ate even more. By the time

we reached the pass of Glencoe great gusts were

PERTHSHIRE

A breakfast halt was made at dawn near Abington. The Scotch Express toiling up the main-line gradient near there was the only other sign of life, and we certainly would not have exchanged the rows of first-class sleepers for our all-night journey in the M.G. intention being to proceed up the west side of Scotland, we then made our way towards Erskine Ferry. This method of crossing the Clyde is a popular one, but at 6 a.m. we were the first and only passengers of the day. The speedometer at this



After an all-night run in appalling weather the Ballachulish Hotel provided an excellent breakfast in the true Scottish manner. The ferry across the loch is quite close to the hotel and operates fairly continuously.

#### Last Week-end in June-Contd.

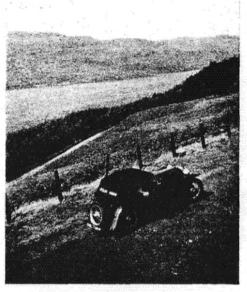
screaming down at gale force and the rain hosepiped over the car, while all forms of life and livestock seemed to have gone for shelter rather than face such abnormal summer conditions It was, therefore, doubly pleasant to pull up at the hotel at Ballachulish. Unexpected and slightly bedraggled, we inquired about breakfast and were not only told with great politeness that a hot meal was ready there and then, but, best of all, we were advised that bathrooms and boiling water were at our disposal if we felt the need of them. This, in fact, was one of the things we had gone north to find out, quite apart from the technical requirements of the M.G. Co. There is a lot of criticism of British hotels, some of it, unfortunately, fully justified. On this journey, however, no meals were booked in advance, and at every stop, save one, the service and food provided were quite astonishingly good. The one exception was an English hotel which we called upon when returning south and which, from a lofty pre-war standard, has degenerated into a noisy and even noisome pot house not suitable for the traveller, nor desirable to a nation bent on developing its tourist industry.

#### Time to Spare

Once across the Ballachulish ferry (7s. for the M.G. and two passengers) we digressed considerably, calling on hospitable friends for lunch and hill hunting extensively in the Caledonian canal area during the afternoon. However, we arrived at Inverness in time for tea, and struck south again to the large and comfortable Nethy Bridge Hotel for the night. The speedometer had recorded, by this time, 615 miles. Half an hour was spent compiling an answer to a technical questionnaire prepared before leaving London. Sufficient to say that at this point it was not possible to add any oil at all to the engine nor, despite some appalling at all to the engine nor, despite some appalling

roads in the afternoon and a consistent main-road cruising speed in the neighbourhood of 65 m.p.h., were there any discernible rattles, squeaks or mechanical maladies. Occasional bursts of sunshine during the afternoon gave promise of a fine evening and at 7 o'clock the sun was beating down on the hotel verandah so that people sat about in the Continental manner and drank their predinner cocktails out of doors. Unfortunately, the following morning produced more driving rain, but it was still possible to enjoy leaving the main road at Dalnacardoch and striking out over the mountain tracks to see what the war had done to once familiar moors and villages.

We had very little right to expect lunch from the hotel at Fortingall because we arrived late and without any warning, but they, nevertheless, took us in and fed us in a manner which did the greatest credit to the proprietor, who is a member of the Wine and Food Society. From this remote and attractive spot we pressed south after lunch, driving now really hard and using the gearbox to get the utmost out of the car. At Carlisle the friendly petrol attendant inquired about our adventures since he had seen us the previous day. The M.G. tank was filled up to the brim and the miles flew by as we pressed through bad weather towards the south. A stop for a brief meal and then on again, with the average rising all the time due to the absence of



Looking across Loch Ness from Glendoe Hill. The road on this side of the Loch is picturesque but in rather a poor state. The main road on the opposite side leading to Inverness is, however, in very good shape and allows excellent averages to be achieved.

lorry traffic on a Saturday night and generally deserted roads. Near London a building blazing at the side of the road caused police to divert all traffic round a loopway, but in other respects the journey was uneventful and soon after midnight, the speedometer recording 1,161 miles, we drove into London well satisfied with the 1946 M.G.

Looking back, one was impressed by the fact that it was possible to enjoy so greatly a journey which might sound strenuous and could have been uncomfortable in such bad weather. From the touring point of view, the general excellence of the main roads, despite the war, and the splendid hospitality of the Scotch hotels are things to record with great pleasure. From the driver's point of view the road-holding, steering, braking and vivid performance of this latest addition to the long line of M.G.s means that in every way the car is right for fast touring. There was a time when a man who needed high performance and fresh air at the same time was catered for by a fairly wide choice of vehicles. To-day their number is narrowing, and such practical fitments as the external radiator filler, knock-off hub caps, revolution counter, folding screen, and really adequate petrol tank are almost things of the past. How thankful I am that a great tradition in small highperformance cars remains in such thoroughly sound hands as those of the M.G. Car Co.

#### TIMETABLE

#### DAY ONE

Start from Belgrave Square at 7.00am

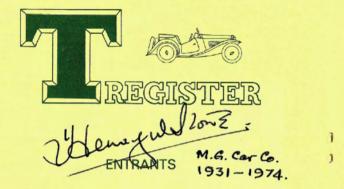
Marble Arch, Lords Cricket Ground, Finchley Road,
Hendon Way

A1 to The George Hotel, Buckden (breakfast stop)

A1 to Scotch Corner with an informal lunch stop en route
A66 to Penrith
A6 to Carlisle
A74 to The Kings Arms Hotel, Lockerbie (overnight stop)

#### **DAY TWO**

A74 to Blackwood
A726 to Glasgow M8
M8 to M898 Erskine Bridge
A82 to The Ballachulish Hotel (lunch stop)
A82 to Inverness
A9 to Carrbridge
A938 to Dulnain Bridge
A95 to The Nethy Bridge Hotel (overnight stop)



#### CAR No.

- 1 TA Tickford (1939)
  Owner: Simon Gibbard, Oxfordshire
  Totally rebuilt by the owner over 4 years of experience the body
  of the car when it was or to former appoint searching for its original chassis! This is the first year back on the road.
- 2 TC (1947)
  Owner: David Peebles, Lincolnshire
  Acquires from a local garget in 1976 as a dismantled wreck. Totally require by the owner over 4 years "with a little help from his friends". An MGCC Silverstone concours winner.
- Owner: Mike Lugg, Surrey
  One owner since 1959 and used daily for the first 19 lears. Just returned to the road after being rebuilt by the daily with only a few hundred miles yet on the Algebra.
- 4 TC (1948)
  Owner: David Saunders, Cambridgeshire
  Purchased in 1969 for use as everyday transport. Totally rebuilt
  by the owner over 5 years mined deservations. An MGCC
  Beaulieu concours winner.

- Owner: Roger Righini, Switzerland
  Imported new Bought by Tresent Owner in 1979 partly restored.
  The rebuild was completed by Imported next eighteen months.
  Has been driver from Softzerland on five past occasions for MGCC meetings in this country and awarded a 1st, two 2nds and a 3rd in the Silverstone concours. In regular use back home.
- Owner: Baymond Sunier, Switzerland
  Purchased by present owner in 1977, after being stored for several years competed by strenged down in boxes and crates.
  Originally on Irish plates but no knowledge of how or when it arrived in Switzerland! Restored in every detail by the owner.
- 7 TF 1250 (1954)
  Owner: Marian Best, Essex
  Originally a dealer demonstration car. Pessent owner since 1974.
  Some restoration work but mainly brigled. Her husband has just completed the restoration on the factory prototype TF but unfortunately this ear is too new for today's event.
- Owner: Ian Lloyd, Oxfordshire
  Export model first registered in Phodesia, manufactured in the last two weeks of Thoroduction. Supercharged and raced in South Africa. Re-imported 196. Present owner since 1971 and totally restored over 5 years. An MGCC Silverstone concours winner.

9

10

- TE 1500 (1955)
  Owner: Robert McGillivray, Scotland
  Arguably the most interesting car on the run as this is the ex-Pat
  Moss works/rally car. The only TF entered by the Abingdon Competitions Dept who, at the time, were much more concerned with
  the development of the MGA and in particular the three EX182
  prototypes being prepared for Le Mans. The car's only success
  was a fin in the hands of Pat Moss at Goodwood in the Spring
  of 1955. Both this car and the private entry of lan Appleyard (twice
  a winner for Jaguar) failed to achieve any success in the wintry
  conditions of the RAC Rally, following which this car was sold to
  Mr MacGillivray who still owns it today.
- Naylor TF-7700 (1982)
  Driver: John Signisters of Motor
  On loan from the factor Motor magazine to report on this
  event. Describly the subject of a road test as well during the four
  days.

#### **DAY THREE**

A95 to Boat of Garten
A9 to Dalnacardoch
B847 to Coshieville
Coshieville to The Fortingall Hotel (lunch stop)
Fortingall to Fearnan
A827 to Aberfeldy
A826 to Kinloch
A822 to Westerton
A823 to Forth Road Bridge
to Edinburgh – ring road
A68 to A1

A1 to Scotch Corner

A6108 to The Kings Head Hotel, Richmond (overnight stop)

#### **DAY FOUR**

Richmond to A1
A1 to Doncaster By Pass
M18 to M1
M1 to Junction 24
to Castle Donington (parade lap and lunch stop)
A453(A447) to Hinckley
A5 to London
Marble Arch to Battersea Park via Trafalgar Square and
Westminster

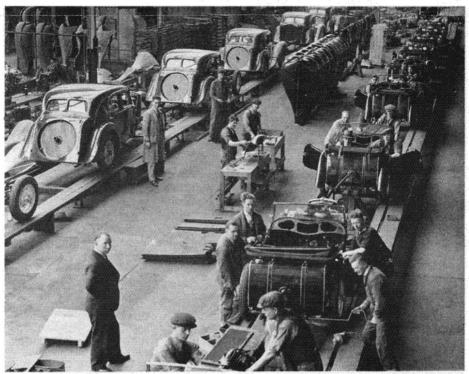
Henry Stone worked for MG at Abingdon continuously for 43 years until his retirement in 1974. From the first time he saw a boat-tailed Midget buzzing around the streets of Abingdon he instinctively knew that he had to work there. Subsequently his life was spent on the shop floor at Abingdon on development and testing, being involved in all the exciting moments of MG history. Today we can be thankful not only for his wealth of knowledge and experience that he is quite willing to pass on for the benefit of others, but also for his quite extraordinary memory for recounting minute details from the factory's past which reflects his sheer enthusiasm and love for the product he helped to make. If you only ever read one book on MGs that book should be 'MG Mania - The Insomnia Crew' by Henry W Stone, told with the wit and charm which is this man and explains so vividly what makes MGs special, why the men who made MGs were special and why, when the Abingdon factory finally closed its doors in 1980 the spirit died too, even though the name continues. This weekend will be a memorable occasion for many reasons, not least of which is the fact that Henry Stone will be with us for the entire journey as our guest. Enjoy now, however, a few magic moments as Henry recounts for us how the T series MG Midget evolved.

DAVID SAUNDERS

#### MG DONE TO A 'T' by Henry Stone

From 1932 up until 1935, when the MG workforce suffered the unexpected blow of what amounted to a take-over by Morris Motors, we at the factory were justified in our pride concerning the Midget sports car with its neat Wolseley-built engine that powered the 'J' series models up to the J4. Then came the improved 'P' series cars with the three bearing crankshaft which, in the 'Q' and 'R' types produced quite staggering brake horse power and performance. Even the much-maligned vertical drive through the dynamo had a purpose, which was to provide a damping effect on camshaft 'flutter' (for want of a better word) caused by the cam compression springs then receiving a kick from the recovering spring. Try to imagine, therefore, our feelings on seeing this large (by our standards) heap of ironmongery which was the 1292cc push rod unit to power the new T series MG in 1936. "What the hell", we thought "are we doing with a post office van engine?" Billy Morris in his infinite wisdom, as we discovered later, by selling the assets of MG to Morris Motors, had saved us from the fate of many other light car manufacturers between the wars. Although Cecil Kimber was a brilliant man in his field he was too nice to be a hardheaded businessman.

However, our spirits soon rocketed. Kimber, although forbidden to participate in any further motor racing adventures by his new boss, no doubt with tongue in cheek formed two trials teams known as the 'Cream Crackers' (TA and TB Midgets) and the 'Musketeers' (N types) which were highly successful; thus MG were back in business doing what they knew best, how to steal quarts from pint pots and keep on doing it for long periods! We soon realised the advantages of the larger bodies which one



The early days of T type production in 1937 with SA 2 litre saloons alongside.

sat in rather than half out of and the increased torque of the larger engines. Of course, the TA power unit with its large flywheel and oil/cork insert clutch was not to us as lively as we would have liked, but when the TB was introduced shortly before the outbreak of war its new 1250cc short stroke unit and lighter flywheel/clutch assembly enabled the 'elastic to be wound up a bit more'. Alas, only 379 were built before Herr Hitler halted production.

HN Charles and his design staff were now based at Cowley but they still managed to keep the distinctive two-seater format which MG were renowned for of folding windscreen, flaired wings and vertically-mounted slab fuel tank with a spare wheel chassis-mounted carrier behind. At the outbreak of war we turned our energies to other things to help the war effort, cars being all but forgotten. However, with the cessation of hostilities service complaints on the TA and TB were examined, the result of which was the legendary TC Midget which went into production in 1945. The main deviation from all previous MG models was the introduction of rubber spring shackles in place of sliding trunnions, but four inches more passenger room was also added across the width of the body which makes the car instantly identifiable from its pre-war counterparts by having only two running board tread strips instead of three. The TC remained in production until the end of the Forties, some 10,000 being produced, the bulk of which went for export. It was with this model that the Abingdon workforce built up its production output to 100 cars per week, although this target was sometimes hampered by the non-availability of parts! 17

Like with virtually all the cars which appeared in the showrooms immediately after the war, the TC was only intended as a stop-gap until a new model could be developed and it soon became evident that something a bit more comfortable was needed to appeal to the large American market whose drivers were used to everything the TC was not. Most important amongst the features which heralded the introduction of the TD in 1950 was the combination of wishbone and coil independent front suspension, a major turning point in MG chassis design. The beam axle was finally given the push. With its completely redesigned body along traditional lines the TD offered new standards in sports car comfort but was frowned upon by purists who were particularly dismayed at seeing bolt-on disc wheels replace the splined-hub wire wheels. It was also the first sports car to come out of Abingdon in both left and right hand drive versions, emphasizing the importance placed on the export markets. In all some 30,000 were built in the following three years, including a rare MkII version which had a high compression engine as raced in the 11/2 litre class at Silverstone (where it achieved 2nd, 3rd and 4th) and the Ulster TT at Dundrod (1st, 2nd and 3rd) – MG do it again!



The long arm of the law in 1946! Derbyshire Constabulary collect their new MG TC patrol cars from Abingdon

The Fortingall Hotel

GLENLYON, PERTHSHIRE

Around this time we already had an all-enveloping bodied car with which to compete against the more modern looking sports car which our major rivals were producing, namely the Austin Healey, the Triumph TR2 and the higher priced Jaguar XK120. Later this would in fact become the MGA series development car but in 1953 it was not to be and so to maintain interest and sales figures the TF series Midget was thought of (the TE suffix being by-passed for obvious reasons!). This car did not evolve from the design office at Cowley "but kind of grew like it in our development shop!" The two men who come to mind as being the brains behind the TF were Bert Wildman, the production foreman and Billy Wilkins who was our number one panel-beater. At that time most of the new cars were having their headlamps faired into the wings of an all-enveloping body and this meant that Lucas were loathe to produce headlamp shells solely for us. Hence, our headlamps also had to be faired into the wings, even though the rest of the car remained traditional in its body styling! This meant that the wing body line was high into the the engine compartment which necessitated fixed bonnet sides. The radiator grille was sloped back to improve the cosmetic looks of the front end and the instrument panel was recessed under the scuttle to reduce sun glare. To everyone's pleasure the car presented the prettiest looking square rigger we had ever built. One could almost say that it grew from seeds sown among the MG workforce. It was a great pity that BMC did not let us have a power unit to suit the car. However, the T series MG Midgets spanning some 19 years of production, war apart, gave a lot of pleasure to a great many people, for that matter they still do and will continue to do so until the oil wells finally run dry.



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