





by Thomas Aczel

Production in Australia

| | |
|---------------|------|
| MKI Roadster | 5064 |
| MKII Roadster | 4026 |

Production in Belgium

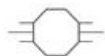
| | |
|---------------|-----|
| MKI Roadster | 876 |
| MKI GT | 104 |
| MKII Roadster | 24 |

Production in Eire

| | |
|---------------|-----|
| MKI Roadster | 96 |
| MKI GT | 104 |
| MKII Roadster | 92 |
| MKII GT | 112 |

CKD KITS

(completely knocked down)



Images: BMC (Australia) factory at Zetland, Sydney



Between 1962 and 1972, nearly 10,500 MGBs left Abingdon as kits for local assembly. Of those, 9,090 went to Australia, with the remainder going to Eire and Belgium.

BMC in Australia

Successive Australian Federal Governments from the early 1900s pursued protectionist tariff policies to encourage the development of local industries and infrastructure. These policies were accelerated in the post-second world war period, where major overseas vehicle manufacturers were actively encouraged to establish local manufacturing facilities in Australia. General Motors and BMC were the first to proceed. BMC's Australian factory was completed at Zetland, Sydney in 1952.

Most people outside of Australia were and remain quite unaware of just how large a venture BMC (Australia) was. The factory was equipped with their own foundry facilities, panel pressing facilities, body shop, trim and paint shops, research laboratories, and an experimental department. However, despite these significant local facilities, in the case of the Australian-assembled MG models, most mechanical components and the body panels were imported from the UK.

The MGB was assembled in Australia from 1963 to 1972. Over 9,000 examples were built during this period, with progressively increasing local content.

The MGB Mk I

The Mk I MGB cars were assembled at the "Pressed Metal Corporation" factory in Enfield in Sydney where production of the MGB followed on naturally from the MGA, of which about 2,500 had been built. Pressed Metal Corporation was a joint venture, partly owned by Larke Hoskins, a large local BMC distributor, and Rover. Many BMC products were assembled here under contract to BMC (Australia).

For the MGB, the engines were imported fully assembled, mated to their gearboxes and hot-run tested at the BMC Zetland works, where suspensions were painted and assembled then transported to Pressed Metal.

Image above: Event to mark the last Australian-built MGB



Springs, electrical components, paint and progressively larger proportions of the trim were locally sourced. Body colours, though similar to their UK counterparts, were unique to Australia. Early models included colours such as Sky Blue (similar to but lighter than Iris Blue), 'Monza Red', 'Nurburg White' (similar to Old English White, but less creamy), Katoomba Grey (a little darker than Grampian Grey) and, of course, British Racing Green.

Because of the relatively small numbers being built, all Australian MGB cars were similarly specified. Only roadsters were ever built locally. All cars had wire wheels, an oil cooler and the "pack-away" style tops as standard fittings. Interior trim was, both for cost reasons and because of the harsh local climate, always in vinyl. Contrasting piping disappeared after 1964 and by 1966 'black' was the only available trim colour. The only options were a heater (initially rarely fitted), and a dealer-fitted radio. Overdrive was not available, even as an option, until the last 200 or so Mk I vehicles.

The MGB Mk II

Production of the MGB was transferred in 1968 from the Pressed Metal factory to the BMC (Australia) Zetland plant where the MGB Mk II was assembled in a dedicated production facility. Bodies were more elaborately rust-proofed, going through the "Roto-dip" process whereby the entire bodyshell was mounted on a skewer, then immersed and rotated in a bath of primer.

Again, options were limited to simplify production.

As with the Mk I, wire wheels and an oil cooler were supplied as standard. However, overdrive now also became a standard fitting. The "pack-away" style hood survived until the advent of the revised "Michelotti" top in 1970, at the time of the introduction of the recessed "fish mouth" black grille model.

Australian assembly of the MGB was discontinued late in 1972. The Federal Government had announced a restructuring of the tariff arrangements, whereby an 85% local content was to be required for a favourable import duty. The buying public's interest in small, responsive but relatively low-powered sports cars was waning by this time in any case, with the growing interest in high-powered sedans such as the Holden Monaro and Torana XU1.



As part of the 2012 celebrations of the MGB's 50th anniversary, the MGB50 Committee (comprising representatives of the MG Car Club and MG Owners' Club) is producing its own collector's book on everyone's favourite sports car. Professionally designed and printed on quality paper, it highlights the more fascinating aspects of the car's development and history, and its competition exploits, past and present. It also features the B's various derivatives, plus the original Autocar road test.

The MGB50 book will be available in March from the MG Car Club, the MG Owners' Club or direct from MotoringClassics.co.uk at £15.00 plus p&p.

Published by British Motor Heritage Ltd in association with MGCC and MGOC.

As part of the celebrations during 2012 of the 50th anniversary of the launch of the MGB a professionally designed book has been produced highlighting the development and history of a sportscar few will fail to recognise at the essence of the British sportscar. The book also features the competition history.

The book features the MGB derivatives too including the MGV8s. The MGB50 book is available now from the MG Car Club or direct from the Motoring Classics at **£15** plus post and packaging.

MG Car Club

www.kimberstores.co.uk/mgb50-official-celebration-book-p-417.html?zenid=59dec97b196ef26ca54d1ef82f43e2d5

Motoring Classics

www.MotoringClassics.co.uk

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