



MGB – a popular classic sportscar

Launched in September 1962 the new 1798cc MGB Roadster caused a sensation when the car first appeared. The MGB had a shorter wheelbase than the MGA which it replaced and an altogether more squat appearance which produced a sportscar which was immediately attractive to the eye - and many decades later it has remained a timeless design. As the first monocoque MG sportscar it was also a wonderful example of neat packaging - even with the shorter length it was a spacious car giving more legroom, wider seats and cockpit width, luggage space in both the boot and behind the seats and an engine bay which provided extraordinary access. With the upright grille the generous space in front of the radiator anticipated larger future engine options. In those early days many features we think of as standard today were extras - a fresh-air heater, oil cooler, front anti-roll bar and even a folding hood! There was a choice of wheels with 14 inch steel disc bolt-ons or optional wire wheels. In Britain the basic price of an MGB was £950 with tax which compared very favourably with the Sunbeam Alpine at £695, the Triumph TR4 at £750 and the Healey 3000 MkII at £865.

As the MGB had been in production from June 1962, good stock levels meant deliveries got underway following the public launch so the pipeline to the important North American markets was well stocked. All but two of the first 500 cars were earmarked for North America to maintain their position in that important market. With its familiar MG independent front suspension arrangement and a live rear axle on inclined cart springs, the handling and ride were well received by the press. Any disappointment it did not have an independent rear suspension set up was understandable as it could have achieved significant improvements in handling and ride quality. In fact Abingdon had intended the MGB to have IRS but the additional costs of resolving problems at a late stage during testing of an IRS set up meant they reverted to the conventional live axle.

In 1965 a coupe or GT version was launched and described with the licence common with marketing departments as a "two plus two" but in reality only agile and trim ladies could limbo dance into the "rear seat"! But the MGBGT with its tailgate was an immediate success - again it looked just right. The model was given the more robust Salisbury rear axle and a front anti-roll bar as standard.

Shortly after the launch of the MGB in 1962 a hardtop was available as an option. Many detailed changes followed over the next decade the change from a 3 to 5 bearing engine in 1964, the upgrade to the MkII in 1967, the loss of the attractive grille surround and its replacement with the controversial recessed matt grille in September 1969 and later the welcome revival of the polished alloy surround. A major change in 1974 was the introduction of the "black bumpers" for the 1975 model year to meet US federal impact regulations. Finally the sad announcement in September 1979 of the end of MG manufacture at Abingdon came and then the gates finally closed in October 1980.

Two MGBs with more muscle were built as it was clear to the design team at Abingdon the monocoque structure could handle more performance - the MGC in both Roadster and GT forms (1967-69) and later the MGBGT V8 (1973-76). Later in the 1990s the "MGB Roadster shell" reappeared as the MG RV8 using bodysells produced by the BMH bodyplant, then located at Faringdon.

Today the MGB is still generally seen as the most practical classic sportscar you can buy with its perennial good looks, driver appeal and ease of maintenance for the enthusiast. Roadsters are much sought after by MGB enthusiasts and prices for good examples are significantly higher than for GTs.

MGB & MGBGT facts

Produced: 1962 to 1980

Bodywork: Two door open sports Roadster and GT.

Engine: Four cylinder in line pushrod OHV "B" series 1798cc engine with twin SU HS4 to 1973 and then SU HIF4 carburetors producing 98bhp.

0-60 mph: 12.1 to 12.9 secs (Roadster) and 12.9 to 14.0 secs (GT)

Top speed: 103 - 105 mph.

Fuel consumption: 26-28 mpg

Production: Produced from 1962 to 1980.

Specification: Discs brakes at the front and drums at the back, 14 inch steel disc bolt-on or wire wheels, a four speed gearbox and an optional overdrive (standardised June 1975). A Borg Warner 35 automatic gearbox was available as an option from 1967 to 1973.

Number produced: A total of 512,112 cars were produced.

	UK	%	Export	%	Overall	%
MGB Roadster	49,810	10%	336,979	66%	386,789	76%
MGBGT	64,907	13%	60,416	12%	125,323	24%
Total	114,717	22%	397,395	78%	512,112	100%

Spares availability: The spares suppliers are very active so the majority of parts are replaceable but in some cases quality is a concern. Heritage replacement bodysells and panels with improved corrosion resistance are available from BMH Witney.

Garage fit: L 12ft 9" (3.89m) x W 5ft 0" (1.52m) x H 4ft 1" (1.27m).

Prices

Roadsters CB: £5,000 to £15,000

GTs CB: £3,000 to £13,000

Roadsters RB: £2,000 to £6,000

GTs RB: £1,000 to £4,000

Exceptional cars:

Roadsters: £26,000 (CB) & £10,000 (RB)

GTs: £18,000 (CB) & £6,000 (RB)

So you want to buy an MGB or MGBGT?

Definitive buying guide published in the July 2007 issue of Safety Fast! This article includes an authoritative account of the development and production of the MGB at Abingdon by Don Hayter. www.buyinganmg.com/articles/Buying%20guide%20MGB.pdf