

One of the top names in the conversion business here is that of Daniel Richmond and Downton Engineering, whose Wiltshire-based company has for years been the backroom laboratory of B.M.C., producing the power behind all those works-entered competition Mini-Coopers and carrying out much of the advanced engine research under the British Leyland flag.

Now Downton is branching out into broader markets, through an exclusive alliance with University Motors, who become the first leading distributor in Britain to take up the marketing of performance conversions. Downton kits and Downtonized cars will be promoted and sold through University Motors' six London area garages, while conversion work will be carried out at the main depot in Boston Road, Hanwell, W., by Downton-trained mechanics.

For Daniel Richmond, whose engine-tuning mastery is renowned, the move amounts to a valuable coup, conferring an extra aura of respectability on his work and introducing improved-performance products to a much wider range of customers.

As Mr. Richmond puts it: "The great manufacturers can offer splendid ranges of vehicles which give remarkable value for money, whereas the specialist hand-built car is far beyond the reach of most people and perhaps has less to offer than it had in the past.

"A little hand work in the right places, an intelligent appraisal of the features which are susceptible to improvement and quite a modest expenditure on the mass-produced car will produce a vehicle which is outstandingly better than its fellows and which will be a lasting source of pride and pleasure to its owner."

University Motors MGC Specials

University Motors bought up the remaining stock of MGCs (around 200 cars), when the model was dropped from the range by the MG Factory, which were sold off as University Motors Specials. There were many variations in the specials' specification - some had bodywork changes, some had grille changes and some were fitted with Downton engine tuning parts. The conversion work was carried out at UM Hanwell by Downton trained mechanics.

There was no "official" tie up between Downton Engineering and University Motors, it was simply a case of UM buying and fitting pre-tested Downton Tuning Kits to the MGCs they produced as University Motors Specials.

Credit: press clipping posted by "mk1" on the "mk-1 forum.net" website, an "international forum for people interested in the tuning & modification of classic BMC vehicles".

Credit: information from Peter Beadle, former Parts Manager at UM Epsom and a founder member of the V8 Register.

Press clipping continued . .

Downton policy is that flexibility, economy and refinement are much more important objectives than mere performance. Thus, the modified Morris 1800 is significantly faster in acceleration through the gears than the standard saloon, its fuel consumption is better, and flexibility in top and third gear is vastly improved.