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Many enthusiasts are aware of the history of particular cars that interest them, but often they are not so familiar with the story of the companies that conceived and produced those models. What follows from the pen of Graham Robson is a series of histories of the marques now gathered together under the BL banner. In some cases the direct line of ancestry of a make has become clouded by takeovers and badge engineering but the story here remains faithful to the badge on the front. Long-dead names that have a connection with past or present BL companies have not been neglected

Albion (1900 to 1913)

Built: Glasgow, Scotland

MOST people remember Albions as commercial vehicles, but the Scottish company was actually founded to make cars in Glasgow. Original cars were 'dog-carts', but the most popular model was a 24hp side-valve, chain-driven four-cylinder car, produced for seven years from 1906. From 1913, Albion began to concentrate on commercial vehicles, and the company was eventually taken over by Leyland Motors.

Alvis (1920-1967)

Built: Coventry, Warwicks

ALVIS was founded in Coventry in 1919 by T G John and GPH de Freville, specifically to build cars. John had already been connected with Siddeley-Deasy of Coventry, and de Freville with the import of DFP cars, and with his own aluminium piston company. De Freville designed the first Alvis engine (and, incidentally, invented the company's name), but had no connection after the first years. In all major respects, T G John was Alvis for the first quarter century.

The Coventry company's first product was the 1460cc side-valve 10/30 model, but this soon evolved into the 1598cc 12/40, and then Capt G T Smith-Clarke, Alvis's chief engineer until the Forties, produced the overhead-valve 12/50, Alvis's most famous Vintage sports car, which helped raise production to nearly 1000 cars a year by the end of the Vintage era.



From 1932 onwards, the Speed Twenty and Twenty Five models were the mainstay of pre-war Alvis product

An interesting, if short-lived, Alvis venture in the Twenties was the front-wheel drive cars. The first type were supercharged 1.5-litre eight-cylinder cars for circuit and track racing, but these were followed by the F-Series four-cylinder production cars of 1928-1931 which were costly and therefore unsuccessful.

Though small, and somewhat undercapitalised, Alvis survived the depression of the early Thirties remarkably well and managed to introduce a whole series of attractive six-cylinder cars, their model names including Silver Eagle, Speed Twenty, Crested Eagle, Twenty-five and 4.3-litre. Features like independent front suspension, Wilson pre-selector gearboxes and synchromesh gearboxes all helped make the cars into true Grand Tourers — the 4.3-litre being one of only a very few British cars with a top

speed of 100mph in the late Thirties. It was not only the engineering but also the rakish styling of the cars (particularly when bodied by Vanden Plas) which caused such a stir.

A major change, however, had been made in 1935, when John decided that Alvis should diversify into aero engines and built a large new factory, a few hundred yards away from the car factory, for that purpose.

During the second world war Alvis's original car factory in Coventry was destroyed, and after the war the company concentrated more and more on aero engines (for, among other machines, helicopters), and on building military vehicles. It was the military vehicle business which followed Alvis to prosper under the new managing director, J J Parkes, though private cars continued to be made, more or

less as an indulgence.

The first post-war Alvis was the 1.9-litre TA14 (a development of the 12/70 model of 1937-1939), but in 1950 it was displaced by the TA21, which had a new chassis design with independent front suspension and a smooth six-cylinder 3.0-litre engine. No other new chassis were ever developed (though there was, of course, the mysterious, never-seen, V8 project designed by Alec Issigonis in the mid-Fifties), for the 1950 design was continued, in improved form, until the last Alvis car was built in 1967. Almost every post-war Alvis was a saloon, or a drophead coupé, but a few sports tourers (TB14 and TB21) were built on the basis of the TA14/TA21 models of the Forties and Fifties.

The TA21 had a smart, though basically traditional, saloon style by Mulliners, or a drophead style by Tickford, and was built until 1955; the final TC21/100 model, also called the Grey Lady, was a genuine 100mph sports saloon.

Alvis first showed a modern body style, by the Swiss coachbuilder Graber, in 1955 (TC108/G), and had a few cars coachbuilt by Graber and by Willowbrook Bodies of Loughborough, before engaging Park Ward of London to put the two-door coupés and convertibles properly into series production in 1958.

Successor to famous vintage four-cylinder Alvis 12/50 was the 1931 12/60





The Park Ward Alvis models progressed through the TD21, TE21 and TF21 series, with more power, more options and detail refinements until the mid-Sixties. Automatic transmission was optional throughout the Sixties, front disc brakes optional from 1960, and a five-speed gearbox option was also added. By the time the TF21 was announced in 1966 the engine developed 150bhp, giving the car a top speed of 120mph.

In the meantime, Alvis merged with Rover in 1965, and considered building the new mid-engined Rover P6BS coupé at Coventry, but nothing came of this once Leyland bought Rover-Alvis and founded British Leyland in 1968. The last TF21 of all was built in the summer of 1967. There were 14,463 pre-war Alvis cars, and 7072 of the post-war variety, of which 3630 were of the definitive TC21-TF21 chassis type.

Once car production had been suspended no further thought was given to a new model, and Alvis came to concentrate totally on building advanced military vehicles, including the Seventies models such as light tanks powered by the Jaguar XK engine. At the beginning

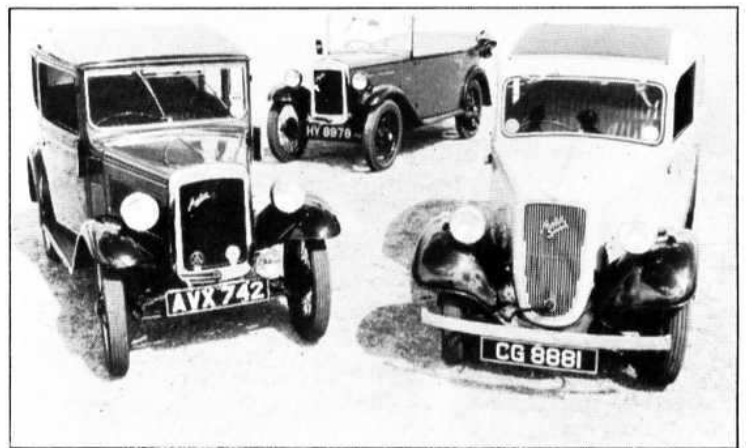
of the Eighties, however, BL management began a policy of selling off parts of the financially troubled empire, and Alvis was bought by United Scientific Holdings in 1981. Although its heritage is BMC and BL, it is no longer 'in the family'.

Austin (1906 to date)

Built: Longbridge, Warwicks

ALTHOUGH the cars built at Longbridge from 1906 were not the first to have been designed by Herbert Austin (see Wolseley section), they were the very first to carry his name on the badge. Austin himself had enjoyed a decade of success with Wolseley before quarrelling with his co-directors, leaving, and founding his own business. Longbridge was an empty factory when Austin discovered it in 1905. The very first prototype was a 25-30hp model, and ran in April 1906, with deliveries to customers beginning later that year.

In the beginning Herbert Austin was tycoon, manager, finance director and designer and, although



Thirties equivalent of the Metro was the Austin Seven, shown in tourer, saloon and later Ruby forms

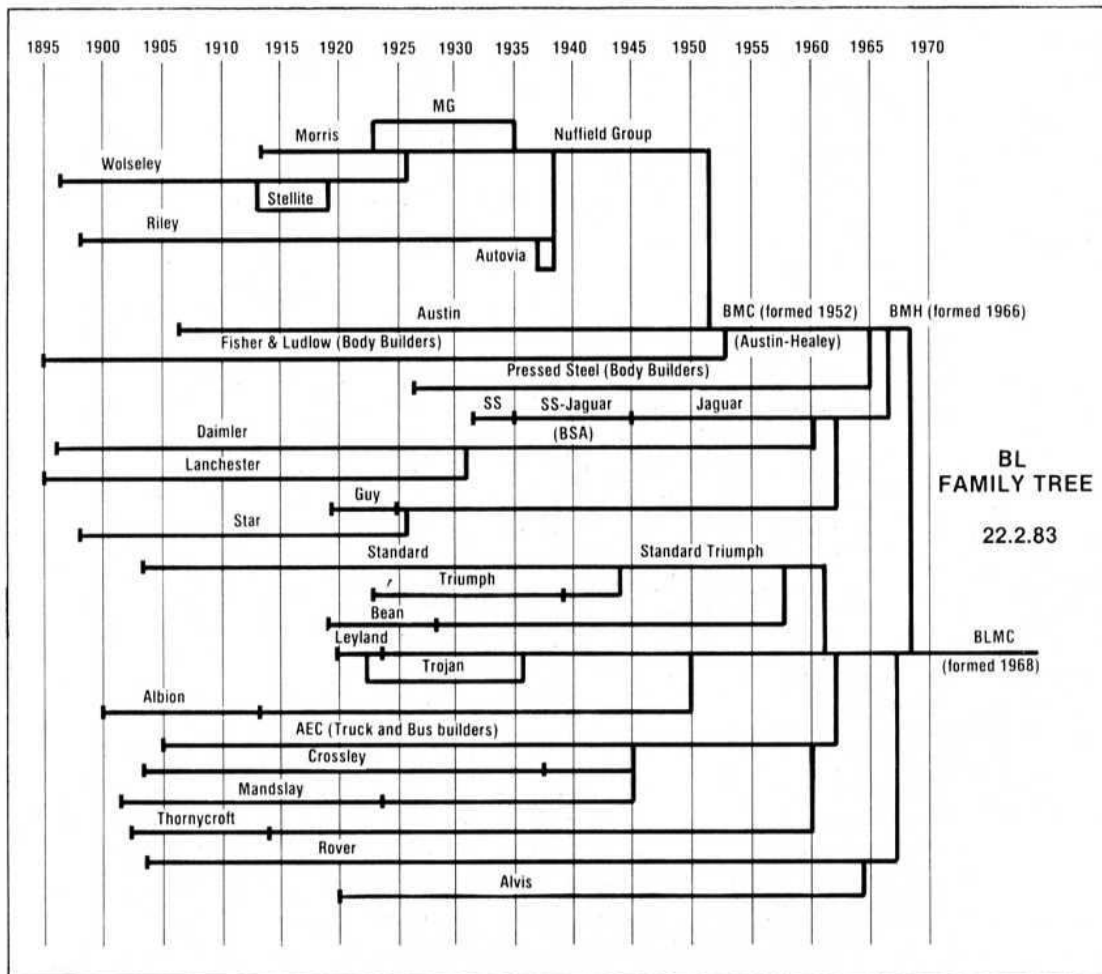
he soon hived off many of these functions, he still retained an active interest in design, and styling, until the end of his life. The company, under Austin, was to go through three distinct phases — adolescent growth up to the outbreak of the first world war (by which time production was up to about 1000 cars a year), financial crisis in the early Twenties, followed by massive stabilisation and expansion in the late Twenties and Thirties.

Up to the first war, most Austins were large, conventionally-engineered and costly, and it was the decision to concentrate on the 20hp model in 1920 which led to large losses when the market for that size of car stagnated. The receiver was called in for a time, and Austin even lost his post at the head of the concern, but he used spare energies in 1921 and 1922 to design the tiny, and cheap, Austin Seven. In Austin's own words, this was meant to 'knock the motor cycle and sidecar into a cocked hat . . .', which it duly did.

In 1922, before the Seven had been launched, Austin production was a mere 2500 cars a year; by 1926, when the Seven, and the equally popular 12/4 dominated the scene at Longbridge, it had rocketed to 25,000. However, there was more to come. By the early Thirties, when no fewer than seven different model lines were on sale and the factory had been expanded again and again, sales had redoubled, but this was not the end. Lord Austin (he was ennobled in 1936), read the British market very carefully (exports were not so important 50 years ago), such that in 1937 Austin production reached a pre-war peak of 89,000 cars a year.

In the Thirties most Austins were small or medium sized, with the Seven being joined by extremely successful Tens and 12/4s. Even so, Austin had no sports cars to match the Nuffield-owned MGs, though some sporting Sevens even found time to approve a racing programme which culminated in the building of three exciting 750cc supercharged twin-cam racing single-seaters.

By the late Thirties Lord Austin was more than 70 years old and had no obvious business successor, but in 1938 he appointed Leonard Lord as his works director (Lord had previously been managing director of





the Nuffield Group — see the Morris section), and heir apparent. In the event, Lord Austin died in 1941, and Leonard Lord became the company's chairman in 1945.

Lord's first task in 1938, as *de facto* technical chief as well as works director, was to lay down the design of a completely new range of cars, for the Seven was dying on its feet and the medium-sized cars were old fashioned. In the space of under two years he masterminded the introduction of the new 8hp, 10hp and 12hp saloons, all with more modern styling and updated mechanical fittings, even though there was no independent front suspension, nor overhead valve engine in any of them.

Austin's next big leap forward came during the second world war, not only because the company managed large 'shadow' factories to build aero-engines and other important components, but because it took on more and more workers, and used part of its vast site as an aerodrome.

In the immediate post-war years Leonard Lord determined to capitalise on this expansion by building more cars and trucks than ever, and by producing yet another rationalised range of cars to sell to export markets all over the world. To the 8hp, 10hp and 12hp models (the 10hp having been built throughout the war years for military staff car use), he added the 16hp, which had the company's first-ever overhead-valve car engine, but from 1947 the

new models began to appear.

In 1946, Austin had taken control of Vanden Plas (see later), so it was not surprising to see two entirely different models in 1947 — the new A40, a 1.2-litre saloon, and the massive 4-litre Sheerlines and Princesses, the latter were bodied by Vanden Plas in London. A year later the closely related A70 and A90 models were also introduced — and Austin's new range was seen to embrace separate chassis frames, independent front suspension by coil springs, and overhead valve engines, covering a large price and engine-size bracket.

Even though there were commercial failures (the A90 Atlantic's styling, for instance, was not at all popular in the market place in its day), Austin was clearly making the right sort of cars for the market and production shot up to 143,000 in 1950. Leonard Lord, however, had even more ambitious things in mind. Not only did he want to produce a new small car (looked upon as a latter-day Austin Seven), but also he dearly wanted to merge with, and absorb, the Nuffield empire.

Tentative discussions in 1948 came to nothing, but they did come to fruition over the winter of 1951-52. The new corporate giant was the British Motor Corporation (BMC), with Austin soon seen to be the dominant partner, and Leonard Lord the chief executive. Not only did Austin survive, but Austin designs (particularly of engines — the legendary A-Series, B-Series and C-Series units) began to appear in many other cars carrying different badges.

Sir Leonard Lord (knighted in 1954) went into semi-retirement in 1956, and was succeeded by George Harriman, and it was in the next few years that another new wave of cars helped push sales to

Bottom, ritzy little Swallow-bodied Austin Sevens were fun

record heights. The little A30 became the A35, the Farina-styled A40 squareback followed in 1958, and a year later was joined by two new Farina-styled ranges — the Austin A55 and the A99, both of which gave rise to many other derivatives 'badged' as Rileys, MGs, Morris and Wolseley models.

Undoubtedly the big event of 1959 was the release of the transverse-engined, front-drive, Austin Seven and Morris Mini-Minors. These had been conceived by Alec Issigonis at Longbridge, and were really tiny Austins, but in a production life of nearly 25 years they have been labelled in many different ways, have had different noses, tails and badges, and been produced as 'hot' Mini-Cooper versions. The Mini is expected to disappear from production in the mid-Eighties, overtaken by the Metro, by which time about five million will have been built.

This was the start of the Austin (and BMC) front-wheel drive revolution, for the Minis were soon followed by the 1100s in 1962, and by the 1800s in 1964. It was in this period that BMC fortunes were at their height, and when Longbridge's much-expanded factories seemed to be bursting at the seams, but before the formation of BMH, and British Leyland, the impetus seemed to slow. The new 3-litre saloon, with the centre structure of the 1800, but with conventional front engine/rear drive layout, was slow to get into production, and the Austin Maxi (actually announced in 1969, after the merger) was not a sales success.

Once the new management team had been installed at British Leyland, Austin was no longer as dominant a company, or marque, as before, and the first important new BL car, the Marina, was badged as a Morris and built at Cowley. The decision was taken, however, that the Austin badge, henceforth, would be applied to the more technically advanced, front-wheel drive BL models, and the result was that the new car replacing the 1100/1300 models was called the Austin Allegro and assembled at Longbridge.

The old 'Austin' design team was also largely responsible for the new front-wheel drive 18-22 Series of 1975 which had such distinctive wedge-nosed styling, though the exigencies of market planning saw the car badged as a Morris and as a Wolseley as well as an Austin at first, while it was soon rationalised as a Princess for the next six years; and it was always assembled at Cowley!

Investment in new models lapsed for a time after government



Roly-poly Austin Atlantic 1949-1952 proved unsuccessful export material to America

aid, and influence, came to Longbridge in 1975, and there was no new Austin car until 1980. By this time, however, it seemed that the Morris name was eventually to disappear altogether and that all the important volume-production cars would carry Austin badging. The result was that when the new 'supermini' model, eventually given the model name of Metro, was developed, it was firmly badged as an Austin and built at Longbridge, and more than two years later the new LM10 project, although built at Cowley, was called the Austin Maestro. In the Eighties, therefore, as in the Fifties and Sixties, the majority of the corporation's cars will continue to carry the Austin name, first seen on cars from Longbridge in 1906.

Vanden Plas

ORIGINALLY Vanden Plas was a Belgian coachbuilding business: the British branch was opened in 1913 but it became independent in 1923 and prospered (under the Fox brothers, Edwin and Roland) until the mid-Forties. In 1946, however, Vanden Plas was approached by Leonard Lord of Austin, and soon agreed to become one of that company's subsidiaries.

In the beginning, the Kingsbury works in north-west London built bodies for A120/A135 Princess saloons and limousines, but from 1958 attention gradually turned to modifying mass-production Austins. First there was the A105 Vanden Plas and then, from 1959, the 3-litre Princess (which was effectively a refurbished A99 saloon). In 1964, however, Austin's technical agreement with Rolls-Royce made a light-alloy 4-litre Rolls-Royce engine available, this being slotted into a modified Princess, and named the 4-litre Princess R, the 'R' being widely thought of as 'Royal', and such cars were built until 1968.

In the meantime, Vanden Plas had started to produce large numbers of Princess 1100s, which were

Typical mid-Fifties Austin was the A40/A50 Cambridge series





extensively refurbished versions of the transverse-engine front-drive BMC 1100 saloon, and these cars eventually inherited the larger 1.3-litre engine.

In the Seventies the Kingsbury works not only turned out large numbers of Vanden Plas 1500s and 1750s (which were modified front-drive Austin Allegros), and completed the upmarket retrimming of Jaguar XJ-Type 'Daimler' saloons, but they were also entrusted with the completion of the Jaguar-designed Daimler (DS420) limousines from bodyshell structures supplied by Motor Panels of Coventry.

By the end of the Seventies, however, Sir Michael Edwardes' management team had decided to close down the Kingsbury works, and final assembly of the various models was dispersed; Allegro types went to Abingdon, and Daimlers back to the Jaguar works in Coventry. In the early Eighties, the Vanden Plas name began to be applied to the most luxuriously trimmed versions of many conventional BL cars, including the Metros, Maestros, Ambassadors and Rovers.



Austin-Healey (1953-1970)

Built: Longbridge, Warwicks
Cowley, and Abingdon, Oxon

DONALD Healey had already enjoyed a distinguished career as a rally driver and engineer, notably with Triumph in the Thirties, before starting to build his own Healey cars in Warwick in 1946. At first these used Riley engines but later models also used Alvis and USA Nash units. His business was small, his equipment very simple, but the cars were always fast and sporting. The new Austin A90-engined Healey 100 prototype of 1952 (originally planned for the same rather limited production) was so promising that BMC's chairman, Leonard Lord, proposed an immediate alliance. Thus it was that the Austin-Healey marque was born, as a BMC 'invention'. The new car became the Austin-Healey 100 (Type BN1) and was initially assembled at Longbridge from body/chassis units built by Jensen at West Bromwich.

Like all subsequent Austin-Healeys the original model used standard BMC running gear in a structure designed by the Healey family (Donald and his son Geoffrey) at Warwick. Lord loved the 100/4, not only for its looks but because it used redundant A90 Atlantic engines, transmissions and suspension parts, made available because that saloon model had been a commercial failure.

Left, smaller Austin-Healey 'Frog-eye' Sprite launched in 1958 was popular choice for the young impecunious enthusiast who would eventually aspire to more powerful transport

Bottom, rare view of prototype 4-litre Rolls-Royce engined Austin-Healey might-have-been. The car's extra width is just discernible in this shot



Austin-Healey 3000s were rugged, and fast sports cars mourned by many when dropped in 1967. Although an unlikely candidate by present-day standards, the Healey became a successful rally car



The 'big Healey' fitted perfectly into the BMC scheme of things, as it was a fast 2.6-litre machine in direct competition with the rival Triumph TR2, and it complemented the smaller, and cheaper, MGA sports car to perfection. Its idiosyncrasies, however, included a very limited ground clearance, and a three-speed plus overdrive transmission, giving five forward speeds in all.

As soon as it was on sale, BMC and Healey started a programme of improvements. By 1954 they were racing the cars in major events, and in 1955 they marketed a 50-off model called 100S, which was lighter, faster (with 132bhp), and with four-wheel disc brakes. The original BN1 gave way to the four-speed BN2 in 1955 and, at the same time, there was also the 100M model, a modified standard car with more power (110bhp), better suspension, and other extras.

From the autumn of 1956, however, the longer-wheelbase, 2+2, six-cylinder 100 Six took over from the four-cylinder car, the styling being virtually the same. This was the BN4 model (there was no BN3 ever put on sale), and for the next decade this design was progressively improved. The first major change was more power (the 117bhp BN6 of late 1957), an optional reversion to two-seater bodywork followed (BN6); the engine was enlarged to produce the disc-braked BN7/BT7 3000 of 1959. The 3000 then carried on to the beginning of 1968, with the Mk II in 1961, a convertible with folding hood and wind-up windows in 1962, and the Mk III (with wooden fascia) in 1964. Most Mk IIIs had radius arm rear axle location. The model was run down during 1967, to make way for the six-cylinder MGC which competed with it, and

more than 72,000 big Healeys were eventually built.

Final assembly of big Healeys was transferred to MG's Abingdon factory in the autumn of 1957, for BMC were planning to build all its sports cars at that plant. From mid-1958, the new Austin-Healey Sprite was added to the range, this effectively being an 'A35 Sports' with a Healey-designed monocoque having a lift-up 'frog eye' nose, and cantilever quarter-elliptic rear springs.

The arrival of the Sprite eventually led to great events at Abingdon, for BMC liked it so much that when it was eventually re-styled in mid-1961 (with a conventional nose, and an external bootlid which the original car had lacked), it was also 'badge-engineered' and put into production as the MG Midget, the two types being built together on the same production lines. During the Sixties the 'Spridgets' (as the duo affectionately became known), were persistently updated, and the chassis number typechanged from AN5 (original 1958 'frog eye') to HAN10 by 1970, though the basic 1961 bodystyle was never changed again.

A long-stroke 1098cc engine was fitted from the autumn of 1962 (along with front-wheel disc brakes), while the 'chassis' was converted to conventional half-elliptic leaf springs in mid-1964, at the same time as the doors were given winding windows. The more robust 1275cc engine was added for the



start-up of the 1967 model-year cars, and there were decorative changes for 1970, plus Rostyle wheels and rounded rear wheel arches. Every Sprite change was matched by an identical Midget change, and prices were always almost identical.

After the formation of British Leyland in 1968 it became clear that Lord Stokes wanted to terminate old consultancy agreements, like those between BMC and Healey, so the marque (and the well-deserved fees paid to Healey) died at the end of 1970. There were still Sprites in 1971, though these were badged simply as Austins. The design carried on, however, as the MG Midget until the autumn of 1979. Nearly 130,000 Sprites of all types were built in just over 12 years.

With the death of the Sprite, no Austin-Healeys were being built, and the marque name has never been revived by BL.

Autovia (1937-1938)

Built: Coventry, Warwicks

THIS was a shortlived attempt by Riley to establish themselves in the luxury market. The Autovia was powered by a V8 engine of 100bhp using 1.5-litre four-cylinder parts and was very expensive at £975. The project was lost in Riley's financial traumas of 1938. Very few were built.

Bean (1919-1929)

Built: Tipton, Staffs

THE Bean was a remodelled Perry at first, an 11.9hp machine made at up to 4000 cars a year. Later a 14hp car was introduced, and from 1927 (after the company had been taken over by Hadfields of Sheffield) there were 2.7-litre and 3.8-litre six-cylinder cars. Cost-cutting always detracted from the cars' specification, and they did not progress with the times. Bean does take credit, however, for the introduction of moving production lines into the UK. The last Bean car was built in 1929, after which the company concentrated on general engineering. Beans Industries became a part of the Standard-Triumph Group in the 1950s.

Crossley (1904 to 1937)

Built: Gorton, Manchester, Lancs

CROSSLEY built the first four-stroke Otto-cycle engines in Britain, well before they started building cars. Early Crossley cars were large and costly, and the middle-class market was not attacked until 1923, with the 12/14hp model. Until the early 1930s the company expanded its range, to include cars as small as 10hp, some with Coventry-Climax engines. Apart from the short-lived rear-engined Crossley-Burney, which was a commercial failure, the last products were the 'Regis' models. Crossley abandoned private car manufacture in favour of commercial vehicles in 1937, and were eventually absorbed by AEC, and finally by Leyland.

Daimler (1896 to date)

Built: Coventry, Warwicks

A PART from one or two 'one-off' examples, the Daimler motor car was the first British-built machine. At first it was no more than a licence-built version of the German marque, and was under company promoter Harry Lawson's control, but by the beginning of this century it was developing on independent lines. Daimler holds the honour of being the first Royal car, for the future King Edward VII (when still Prince of Wales) took delivery of one in 1900.

Well before 1910, Daimler was making some of the biggest, and best, British cars, and in 1908 it astonished British motorists by adopting the Knight sleeve-valve type of engine construction. Until



Above, Daimler chassis in the Thirties were fitted with a variety of styles. This 4-litre Straight-Eight has a Vanden Plas Pillarless Saloon body

the early Thirties, when the first fruits of the merger with Lanchester were made public, all new Daimlers had four-, six-, or even V12-cylinder sleeve-valve engines.

Daimler's prestige was unrivalled, even by Rolls-Royce, because it enjoyed Royal patronage, and it was this which encouraged it to announce the fabulous Double-Six, complete with a 7136cc engine, in 1926. In later years there were also to be small-engined V12s, and the engine type was to be built into the mid-Thirties.

Daimler had been owned by the BSA Group since 1910 and, after this group had taken over Lanchester in 1931 (see separate section), an integrated and altogether cheaper range of BSAs (small), Lanchesters (medium) and Daimlers (large cars) came on stream.

A most important innovation, eventually to be found on most Daimlers, was that a Wilson-type pre-selector gearbox was allied to Daimler's own fluid-flywheel (instead of a conventional clutch), and this easy-to-use transmission was standard on all Daimlers until the Fifties.



Above, announced as the Daimler Dart in 1959, this V8-engined sports car was later called SP250, thanks to Dodge!

Production increased, conventional poppet-valve engines were gradually adopted, and the straight-eight type of engine was introduced. By 1939 Daimler had virtually slipped out of the Rolls-Royce market for ultra-costly cars but commercially the company had become much more significant.

Daimler also made excellent buses, and during the second world war it speedily converted to building technically-advanced armoured vehicles and scout cars. For the armoured car there was a brand-new 4.1-litre six-cylinder engine, which was to be used in the post-war cars.

After the war Daimler carried on with one Thirties-style model, the 15hp DB18, and introduced very large and expensive 27hp and Straight Eight 36hp limousines with engines developed from those of the armoured car. In addition, of course, bus and coach production was also resumed, along with some Lanchester assembly.

In the early Fifties, Daimler's private car activities were coloured by the preferences of the company chairman, Sir Bernard Docker, who not only saw a 2.5-litre Consort replace the DB18, but also a Conquest replace the Consort. Once the vast limousines were dropped, they were followed by a wide variety of six-cylinder

Below, the Daimler 2½-litre V8 appeared at the 1962 Motor Show, the first new model from the company after the Jaguar takeover. Jaguar's stylish Mark II saloon body was fitted with the 2.5-litre V8 engine of Daimler's own SP250





Regency, Sportsman, Empress and 104 models, plus new limousines, and there was even time for a short and adequately successful racing and rallying programme with Conquest Centuries.

There was a management upheaval in 1956, when Sir Bernard left the company. The new chief executive was Edward Turner, a noted motorcycle engine designer, who not only saw the car range rationalised (and the improved Majestic taking over from the 104, on which it was based), but designed two new V8 engines, a 2.5-litre for a new glassfibre-bodied SP250 sports car, and a 4.5-litre for the large saloons and limousines.

In 1960, however, the BSA Group sold off Daimler-Lanchester to Sir William Lyons at Jaguar, and eventually was merged into that company. Existing models were built until the mid-Sixties and from 1963 the 2.5-litre V8 engine (with automatic transmission at first) was fitted to the Jaguar Mk II saloon structure to produce the Daimler 2.5-litre model.

Jaguar-Daimler merged with BMC in 1966 and became a part of British Leyland, therefore, in 1968. Jaguar's own rationalisation, however, had begun already, and was not affected by this. First, in 1966, a 'badge-engineered' Jaguar 420, called a Daimler Sovereign, was introduced, and to this day there are Sovereigns in production which are mechanically identical to the Jaguar XJ models (the V12 engined versions, appropriately enough, being called Double Six models!). In 1968, also, a car called a Daimler Limousine was produced. This actually used the lengthened floorpan of a Jaguar 420G saloon and a Vanden Plas bodyshell completed in London. Latterly final assembly of this model reverted to the Jaguar factory in Coventry.

It must also be noted that Daimler bus and coach production

continued into the early Seventies, when it was progressively merged with, and run down by, the Leyland truck division.

There have been no new Daimler-Daimler private car designs since the merger with Jaguar in 1960, and the former assembly plant at Radford, Coventry, is now entirely given over to engine and other component production for the main Jaguar factory at Browns Lane, Allesley. The famous Daimler fluted radiator grille, which originally was introduced to maximise the cooling surface of the radiator itself, lives on, however, on the most expensive and best-trimmed versions of the Jaguar models.

Guy (1919-1925)

Built: Wolverhampton, Staffs

GUY was a truck builder who was tempted into the luxury car market after the first world war. About 150 V8-engined cars were built at first, and a few four-cylinder cars followed, but neither achieved success. Guy carried on building commercial vehicles to the end of the Seventies, Jaguar taking it over in 1961.

Jaguar (1931 to date)

Built: Coventry, Warwicks

STRICTLY speaking, the Jaguar marque, on its own, did not come into existence until 1945, for the original cars of 1931 were called 'SS', and a new range of car introduced in 1935 was badged as 'SS-Jaguar', but there was always strict continuity of design, and for more than 50 years



The beautiful Jaguar XJ13 which was very fast in testing but never made it to Le Mans

the guiding genius behind the company, and its designs was Mr (later Sir) William Lyons.

Sir William joined forces with William Walmsley in Blackpool to build sidecars for motorcycles in 1922. The young Lyons, however, had a real flair for styling, and one result was that the little company began building special bodies for Austin Sevens in 1927. In 1928 the company was moved down to Foleshill, Coventry, and several other cars, from Wolseley, Standard, and Fiat, were given special coachwork before Lyons took the plunge and announced the SS1 in 1931.

Like other early SS models, the SS1 used a special chassis frame, side-valve six-cylinder Standard engines, transmissions and suspension components, and coachwork styled personally by William Lyons himself. There were 16hp and 20hp models, and the



The C-Type however, did make it to Le Mans and an example scored Jaguar's first success there in '51

cars gave remarkable value for money. In due course, the SSII, with smaller four-cylinder Standard engines and running gear, was announced.

The first major change came in 1935 when the company took a major step towards becoming a complete maker of cars. William Heynes was hired to design a new chassis frame and suspensions, while Harry Weslake produced an overhead-valve conversion of the

2½-litre SS Jaguar saloons in both closed and open forms. These two pristine examples entered the JDC's annual concours in '81 — 75th anniversary year



E-Types galore at a meeting of the Jaguar Driver Club at Woburn Abbey an annual event which often sees over 1000 examples of the marque





six-cylinder Standard engine. The whole was clothed in a truly elegant, four-door saloon body style, and sold at the remarkable price of £385. There was also a slightly cheaper side-valve 1.5-litre model. All were badged as SS-Jaguars.

In the next four years many improvements were made to the range. In 1937 the company produced an overhead valve 1.5-litre engine (four-cylinder) and a larger 3.5-litre overhead-valve 'six', while at the same time converting the saloon car's coachwork to all-steel construction. Much more exciting, however, was the short-chassis car, with a two-seater sports body. This was the SS100, available with 2.5-litre or 3.5-litre six-cylinder engines. The prices of all SS-Jaguars were right, and the looks attractive, so it was no wonder that sales rushed up to more than 5000 cars a year in 1939.

After the war, in which the factories produced important items like aircraft wings and fuselages, the company dropped the 'SS' part of its title, and became, simply, Jaguar cars. At first, only the pre-war models (except for the SS100, which was never revived) were available, and there were no new models until 1948. In the meantime Jaguar, still with Heynes as its

technical chief, was working on a brand-new series of twin-cam engines, one of which remained in production until the Eighties.

In 1948, Jaguar astonished the world by showing its new XK120 sports car which not only had the new engines (a 3.5-litre 'six', and a 2-litre 'four' (which never went into production), but a new independent-suspension chassis, and startlingly attractive body lines. The same basic chassis design, but in long-wheelbase form, was also to be found under the skin of the new Mk V saloons and drophead coupés.

It was not until 1950 that Jaguar revealed the Mk VII saloon, for which the new chassis and engine had originally been intended, and it was these saloons, and the XK family of super-sports cars, which were the company's mainstay until the mid-Fifties. In the meantime, Jaguar found that demand for its cars outstripped its production capacity, so in 1951 it acquired an ex-government 'shadow' factory in Allesley, just a few miles from Foleshill, and rapidly transferred all its plant and machinery, making the Browns Lane premises its permanent home.

Jaguar's post-war successes were even more obvious in export rather than in home-market territories, for the XK-engined cars soon built up a formidable reputation. It was not only the sheer performance of the cars which was so remarkable, but the amazingly low prices at which the



Jaguar XK150, one of the all-time great classic Jaguar sports cars powered by a 3.4-litre version of the immortal XK engine

Right, before they became known as Jaguars, William Lyons called his cars SSs. This is an SS11



cars could be sold profitably. The company's spectacular rise upset the balance of the specialist car market and hastened the demise of several such concerns.

During the Fifties Jaguar became involved in world-class sports car endurance racing, building limited numbers of C-Type, D-Type and XKSS two-seater models, and the factory team was victorious at Le Mans on no fewer than five occasions (1951-53-55-56-57).

The company's most momentous development of the Fifties came in 1955 when it introduced its first unit construction body/chassis saloon car, the 2.5 model. This was just the first of an amazingly diverse and successful series of four-door saloons which, by 1966, embraced three engines (2.4, 3.4 and 3.8-litre versions of the XK unit), three visually different styles (Mk II, S-Type, and 420), and even a couple of badge-engineered Daimler offshoots. In this period not only did top speeds of more than 120mph become available but the cars were given four-wheel disc brakes and, in some cases, all-independent suspension.

Jaguar caused a real sensation in 1961, however, after several years of rumours appearing in the motoring press, when the E-Type sports car was announced. At a stroke, it seemed, this not only made all other Jaguars look old-fashioned but it set completely new styling, performance, and value standards. The E-Type, available right from the start in open or fastback coupé guise, was a lineal

descendant of the racing D-Type model and, in 3.8-litre form, was capable of about 150mph — all for an original British price of £2200! Even though it was less spacious than the XK150S which it replaced, the E-Type was such a remarkable car that demand outpaced anything achieved by the XKs, and it was to stay in production until 1974.

The other new Jaguar of 1961 was the big Mk X saloon, the first Jaguar saloon to have four-wheel independent suspension and still the largest car that the company has ever built. At any other time it would have been the star of the year but in 1961 the E-Type put paid to that.

In the early Sixties Jaguar was not only making headlines with its new cars, but Sir William Lyons was also expanding his corporate empire. In 1960 he took over Daimler from the BSA group, a year later he bought Guy Motors (the Wolverhampton truck builders) and, in 1963, he also took control of the Coventry-Climax business which not only built some of the best motor racing engines in the world but was also prominent in the fork-lift truck and industrial engines field.

In the next few years there was a period of consolidation at Jaguar, not only because the new acquisitions were being shaken into a corporate structure, but because Sir William was planning ahead for the company's next major new model. In 1966, however, he agreed to merge his business with



Left, Mk9 saloon giving some smaller opposition a run for its money in a Classic Saloon race. Despite its bulk the Mk9 is surprisingly rapid thanks to the twin-cam engine

Below, the Mk7 was the first saloon to use the XK twin-overhead camshaft engine in 1951





The XK120 of 1948, followed by XK140 and 150 before E-Type came in 1961. They were always fast and exceptional value for money

badges, and additional models with Vanden Plas furnishings. In addition, the long-running E-Type was to be dropped and (in the autumn of 1975, as it happened) replaced by a new short-wheelbase XJS coupé, the last car to have been styled by Sir William and using the same 'chassis' and modified floor-pan of the XJ saloons.

It was at this point that financial disaster struck British Leyland, when government finance, and the Ryder team of investigators, arrived, and it all caused great upheavals at Jaguar. Geoffrey Robinson left the company, and for the next few years it became increasingly submerged in the corporate whole. In 1976 and 1977, however, approval was given to a very costly racing programme in which Broadspeed (of Southam,

Warwick) prepared two 5.3-litre two-door coupés for the European Touring Car Championships. As it happened these blisteringly fast and complex racing cars never won a race but certainly gathered in a great deal of publicity for the marque.

By the end of the 1970s, Jaguar (and Daimler, for such cars were being assembled alongside the Jaguars at the Browns Lane factory) had survived shock after shock. Not only had there been two oil price shocks, which tipped the balance against thirsty, large-engined cars, but the market for large cars in North America (one of Jaguar's traditionally strong sales territories) had also dropped alarmingly.

Fortunately, a revolution in BL management had led to the

appointment of Michael Edwardes as the company's chief executive, and from the spring of 1980 Jaguar once again took on the aura of a separate company, with John Egan as its chairman. Even though there had been no all-new Jaguar models in recent years (the Series III XJ saloons were basically only re-touched Series IIs), the fuel-efficient HE derivative of the V12s helped improve economy prospects significantly; more important was the way that the company's quality image was transformed in the next two years.

By 1983, Jaguar was not only building and selling more cars in a year than for the past decade but demand in North America was at a new peak. In spite of all the predictions, the V12 engine was still in production as one of the most refined, technically advanced, and powerful engines in the world, and the company's morale had completely been restored. With new models and new engines known to be on the way the mid-Eighties looked like being an exciting period for Jaguar.

Lanchester (1895 to 1956)

Built: Birmingham and Coventry, Warwicks

UNLIKE Daimler, Lanchester was an all-British car right from the start, but the first production model was not sold until 1900. Lanchesters were designed, and the company supervised, by Frederick and George Lanchester, and the designs were always remarkably modern. The original car

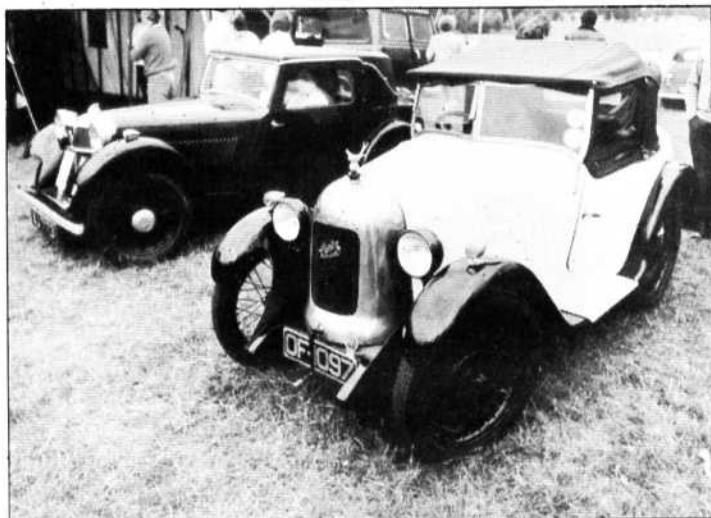
the mighty BMC (Austin-Morris) empire, the result being that the British Motor Holdings concern was founded. This company, however, was short-lived, for in January 1968, it also merged with the Leyland Group and British Leyland came into existence. In eight years, therefore, Jaguar had moved from being an independent company to being just one part (but a very important part) of the country's largest motor vehicle manufacturing business.

Even before the merger with BMC, however, Sir William had seen the design of a new car, and a completely different engine, finalised. The car was the XJ6 saloon, introduced at the end of 1968, and still successfully being built in the early Eighties, while the engine was a technically advanced V12 unit of 5.3-litres. Originally it had been hoped to have the engine ready for launch with the new car (and there might, also, have been a V8 version of it), but this was not possible.

The V12 engine was first offered in the Series III E-Type of 1971 and became available in the saloon, which was called XJ12, a year later. Sir William retired from the chairman's post in 1972 and was succeeded by 'Lofty' England, once Jaguar's famous racing team manager. In 1974 he in turn handed over to Geoffrey Robinson who set the company on a massive expansion scheme designed to double production capacity by the mid-Seventies.

This was to be done by widening the range of XJ saloons, not only by offering six-cylinder and V12 engines, but by making long-wheelbase versions, two-door coupé versions, cars with Daimler

William Lyons started not with Jaguar but as a coachbuilder called Swallow. Shown are Swallow Austin with SS11 (Standard Swallow) behind



A handsome Lanchester Forty tourer (1919-1928) pre-dates the company's take-over by the BSA/Daimler combine





had a mid-mounted, flat-twin air-cooled engine, and a most advanced-looking frame, not at all like the 'horseless-carriage' which was then considered normal. The first water-cooled Lanchester engines were on sale from 1902, and vertical four-cylinder engines from 1904, with a 28hp six-cylinder model coming on the scene just two years later.

Frederick had designed the original cars but it was George who was responsible for the more conventional models of the Edwardian and Vintage days. The Sporting Forty of 1914 was his (the first Lanchester with an engine up front, under a conventional bonnet), as were all the six-cylinder models of the 1920s. Lanchester's *tour de force*, however, was the 1929 Thirty, complete with overhead-cam straight-eight engine, but this was barely established before financial disaster struck.

Lanchester was making losses, and eventually was forced to merge with Daimler (actually owned by BSA). In the Thirties, therefore, all old Lanchester models were speedily dropped in favour of new four-cylinder and six-cylinder Lanchesters which were really small Daimlers, all with overhead valve engines, and most with fluid-fly-wheel transmissions. Before the end of that decade there was also the Roadrider de Luxe, which had independent front suspension, and the smallest Lanchesters of all, the Tens, were almost duplicated by the specially-badged BSAs.

After the second world war, Lanchester gained a new lease of life.

Its first new car was the Ten, with a 1.3-litre engine which had been designed before the war, but in 1952 it was replaced by the 14hp, which was the styling forerunner of the Daimler Conquest but fitted with a 2-litre, four-cylinder engine. To add to the confusion for historians, some versions had coachbuilt bodies, and some all-steel bodies, but both looked exactly the same.

The Dauphin of 1953 was a Daimler Conquest Century with sharp-edged Hooper coupé coachwork, and did not go into production. Neither did the Lanchester Sprite, though it was a very serious project, inspired by Sir Bernard Docker's management. The Sprite was a spiritual successor to the post-war Ten, having a unit-construction body/chassis unit which, in final form, looked like that of the Daimler Conquest. Its engine was a four-cylinder derivative of the Conquest's six-cylinder overhead valve unit and it featured Hobbs automatic transmission as standard. Pressed Steel was to have supplied

bodies but, before production could properly begin in Coventry in 1956, Daimler management changed and the project was cancelled. No other Lanchester cars were ever produced, and the marque is therefore dead, though it became Jaguar's property when it took over Daimler in 1960.

Leyland (1920-1923)

Built: Leyland, Lancs

Leyland was already famous as a commercial vehicle builder when Parry Thomas designed the magnificent Leyland Eight after the first world war. It was indeed magnificent, very costly, and had modern engineering. Commercially it failed, for only 18 were built. As far as is known, only one Leyland (built from parts in 1929) still exists, and is visually not at all like the originals. Leyland was not in the car business again until it bought Standard-Triumph in 1961.

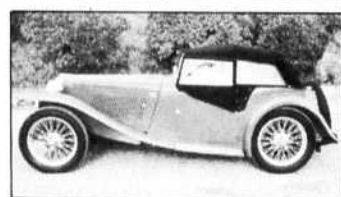
MG (1923 to date)

Built: Cowley and Oxford, and Abingdon, Oxon, and Longbridge, Warwicks

As William Morris built up his car-making business at Cowley, he also expanded his original motor trade activities in the city itself. In the Twenties, Morris



Above, perfect classic pair — TC (1945-'49) and MGB V8 (1973-'78) using Rover's ex-Buick engine. Right, no enthusiast should drive with the hood up, but it's notably snug for Grandma with sidescreens in place



Garages was managed by Cecil Kimber and it was in 1923 that he inspired the design of modified and special-bodied Morris Cowleys, which were soon given MG badges, the MG standing for Morris Garages, of course. It was not until 1935 that Lord Nuffield's business affairs (the tycoon had been ennobled in 1934) were rationalised, such that MG, which had previously been his personal possession, was moved into the Nuffield Organisation.

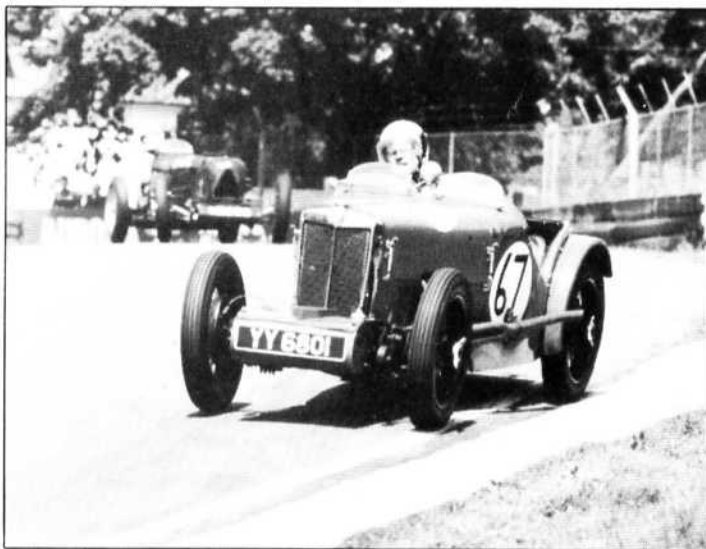
The original 'modified Morris Cowley' design became more spe-

cialised as the Twenties progressed and soon began to merit its own special badge and separate marque title. Then, in 1928, Morris Motors announced the tiny new Morris Minor, completed with overhead-cam Wolseley-designed engine, and it was a modified version of this car, called the M-Series MG Midget, which really set MG on the road to fame. Up to then a few cars had been built in a variety of temporary homes in and around Oxford, but the business settled on the Pavlova works at Abingdon during 1929 and all subsequent MG sports cars were built there until the last of the line, the MGB, died off in 1980.

Having put the M-Series Midget on sale, Cecil Kimber was given his head by Morris and in the next seven years any number of new and different Midgets, Magnas and Magnettes were introduced, all of them having progressively more special versions of the four-cylinder and six-cylinder overhead-cam engines, which were always built by Wolseley. There was an active (and costly) racing programme which brought great success and publicity to MG and led directly to limited production competition cars like the Monthléry Midget, the J3 and J4 models, the K3 Magnette, and even the single-seater R-Type.

In this period, series production concentrated on the four-cylinder M-Types, J1s and J2s, PAs and PBs, while there were six-cylinder F-Type and L-Type Magnas, K-Type

MGs made their name on the world's racing circuits. Here a VSCC member takes his Magnette racer around Oulton Park to prove they can still do it





and N-Series Magnettes. Not only the usual types of two-seater tourers, but also four-seaters, coupés and even a few saloons were produced.

The crunch came in 1935, not only because of the corporate upheaval which led to MG being absorbed by the Nuffield Group, but because the company's sales were dropping and financial losses were mounting. Leonard Lord (who later became chairman of BMC) was then managing director, Morris Motors and two of his immediate actions were to close down MG's own design and racing departments, and to order the Cowley (Morris) designers to start producing new Morris-based MG models.

The first result was that the SA '2-litre' saloon (which eventually became a 2.3-litre car!) was launched for 1936. It was soon followed by the 1.5-litre VA and the 2.6-litre WA

Below, announced in 1950 the MG TD was based on the Y Model saloon's running gear, with ifs and rack and pinion steering. The pressed steel wheels were controversial and with the 1250cc XPAG engine it was slightly faster than the TC



types, all with four-door saloon or tourer coachwork, and all with overhead valve engines based on 'corporate' Morris chassis and running gear. These cars, however, were all assembled at Abingdon, alongside the sports cars.

To replace the PBs and N-Series Magnettes, there was the new TA sports car from June 1936, a traditionally-styled two-seater also with Morris-based engineering. This car sold very well and was supplanted by the re-engined TB of 1939; a few Tickford-bodied coupés were also built. By this time MG was profitable again, even though the cars were not so specialised as before.

After a six-year lay-off during the second world war, when Abingdon's factories built military equipment, MG returned to making TCs in 1945, cars that were really lightly-modified TBs. In 1941, however, Cecil Kimber had been sacked after having a blazing row with Nuffield's new vice-chairman, Miles Thomas (and, in 1945, Kimber tragically had been killed in a railway accident), though most familiar Abingdon personnel were still in evidence.

The first post-war MG was the YA saloon which had actually been designed in 1938 and 1939, partly by Alec Issigonis, and was a neat amalgam of Morris 8 Series E coachwork, a de-tuned TC engine, and a new chassis frame with coil spring independent front suspension. The YA was also built at Abingdon but was most notable for being the inspiration for the TD sports car of 1950, whose chassis and front suspension had evolved from that of the YA.

Below, introduced in 1936, the MG TA was the first Cowley-designed MG sports car. It was followed by the similar TB in 1939 and the post-war TC



Above, the MG M-Type Midget was introduced at the end of the Vintage era, based on the original Morris Minor. This example is equipped for racing

Right, favourites at Classic Car shows, the post-war MG TC was a very attractive car



Above, built and designed in Abingdon. Magnettes, and Magnas, in this style in the Thirties were powered by ohc straight sixes

In 1952, however, the BMC merger (between Austin and Nuffield) took place and one early result was that the first 'BMC' MG, the ZA Magnette saloon, was launched in the autumn of 1953, quite overshadowing the TF sports car which was a slightly-improved TD. The Magnette, designed by Gerald Palmer at Cowley, was similar to the new Wolseley 4/44, but whereas the Wolseley had MG running gear borrowed and updated from the YA/YB saloons, the Magnette used modified BMC B-Series engine and transmission components, which were originally of Austin design.

In 1955 the transformation of MG, from what was in effect a 'Nuffield' sports car to a 'BMC' sports car, was made complete, with the launch of the MG MGA. This was a sleekly-styled machine with an all-new box-section chassis frame using YA/TD/TF type front suspension, which MG's chief designer Syd Enever had wanted to introduce two years earlier with TD-type running gear.

MG 'traditionalists' may have been horrified but from that point MG sales soared dramatically. The MGA not only looked good but was the first-ever 100mph MG road car into the bargain. At the end of the day, more than 100,000 MGAs

were to be built, compared with nearly 30,000 TDs, and a mere 10,000 TCs.

Although the MGA was strictly conventional in engineering terms (its engine eventually was increased in size from 1489cc to the 1622cc of the 1600 Mk II which made it useless for international competition) it eventually spawned off the exciting, if not always reliable, Twin-Cam model, with a dohc engine based very loosely on the B-Series pushrod unit. This car was rare, and only in production for two years, but its four-disc-braked chassis was later made available in pushrod-engined form as the 1600 de luxe.

In the summer of 1962 the MGA finally gave way to the MGB, which was a smart new monocoque



sports car destined to remain in production for more than 18 years with more than half a million examples sold. Although much detail attention was applied to the MGB over the years (the most important change of which was to fit an all-synchromesh gearbox — and even an automatic transmission option — for 1968), the basic design or the style was never changed. A fast-back MGB GT derivative arrived in 1965, this *almost* producing a tightly-packaged 2+2 saloon version of the well-loved sports car.

In the meantime, Abingdon had also become the host for the assembly of Austin-Healey sports cars, which meant that when the last of the Magnettes had been built in 1958 there was no longer any space for MG-badged saloons to be built alongside the sports cars. The Austin-Healey Sprite (see the appropriate section) was re-styled for a mid-1961 announcement and, at the same time, a near-identical MG Midget version was also introduced. The Midget was updated and improved alongside the Sprite, and took over completely in 1971 when that car was dropped. For 1975, the Midget was inflicted with heavy black rubberised plastic bumpers to meet new USA regulations, and MG enthusiasts were also stunned to see that British Leyland rationalisation had also endowed it with a 1493cc Triumph Spitfire engine and gearbox as well.

In the meantime, the MG badge had been applied to several saloon cars by the inventive, if sometimes misguided, BMC market planners. There was a new range of medium-sized BMC saloons for 1959, styled



The 1955-1962 MGA was the first departure from MG's traditional shape. Shown here is the somewhat unsuccessful Twin-Cam model '58-'60

by Pininfarina, and one of the five derivatives was a be-finned MG Magnette Series III, with 1.6-litre B-Series engine. In spite of controversy over its looks it sold well, and was built for nine years at Cowley.

Another, rather better, MG saloon, was the MG1100/1300 family of 1962-1971. This was based on the transverse-engined front-wheel-drive 1100/1300 saloons built at Cowley and Longbridge so successfully, for so many years, and originally had a 1098cc engine and 55bhp, with an MG grille and special trim and fittings. Later, from 1967, not only did the MG become a 1300 (with 1275cc), but there was eventually a two-door body, and an automatic transmission option. Surprisingly enough, however, the

'MG' badge was never applied to the Mini (the 'Cooper' nomenclature was reserved for that body shell instead), and when the last MG1300 was built there was a considerable gap before a new saloon was born.

We must certainly not omit to mention two rather special types of MG sports car built at Abingdon in the Sixties and Seventies. First, announced in 1967, there was the six-cylinder MGC, which looked almost exactly like the MGB Mk II but had torsion bar front suspension and a much-modified version of the Austin-Healey 3000's C-Series engine. Sold in Tourer and GT form, it was built for only two years, and about 9000 examples were sold. Second was the Rover V8-engined MGB GT V8 of 1973-

1976, whose chassis engineering was closer to that of the MGB.

Throughout the Seventies it was clear that the Triumph marque received more attention, and investment finance, than MG, so Abingdon and its products gradually began to look old-fashioned and even neglected. The last Midget was built in 1979 (more than 226,000 were sold), and the last MGB of all followed in the autumn of 1980. It was feared that this meant the end for the MG marque, especially as BL then cleared the Abingdon factory site, sold it off and, from a distance, saw the buildings demolished. The planners, however, had decided to use the MG name for their new sporting products, and two new MG saloons were launched in 1982 and 1983. Not only was there an MG Metro and an MG Maestro but also a specialised version of the Metro was the fast and sporting Metro Turbo, the first-ever BL and MG turbocharged private car.

Times have changed and motor-ing fashions with them. A look at worldwide markets confirms that there is no longer a huge demand for open sports cars and BL has clearly decided to make its most sporting saloons into MGs in the 1980s. The fact that the Metros are built at Longbridge, and the Maestros at Cowley, should not dismay anyone. All the signs are that the marque will be retained permanently by the revitalised BL management and that the performance of the cars will match that badge. This, after all the humiliations of the Seventies, should make MG enthusiasts very happy.

The 1500cc MG Magnette '53-'58 revived a pre-war name and proved a popular model. It was the first BMC car to use the new B-series engine in its original 60bhp form. When the Magnette ZB replaced the original ZA model in 1956 power was increased to 68bhp. Body design was by Gerald Palmer and certain versions, called 'Varitone', were available in a duotone colour scheme



The first real Abingdon-built monocoque sports car was the MGB. It ran from 1962 to 1980 spawning GT, six-cylinder 'C' and V8 derivatives. It was the last MG sports car to be built and the last BMC/BL car to use the B-series engine. The 'C' derivative used a much-modified Austin-Healey 3000 unit and the V8 the light-alloy 3.5-litre Rover unit

