

MG SPORTS AND RACING

Competition has been in MG's genes from the start. Cecil Kimber became General Manager of Morris Garages in 1922, and in 1923 drove a Morris Chummy Sports to win a gold medal in the Motor Cycling Club's Land's End Trial. Enthused by this success, he had a dedicated trials car built late in 1924, which he later referred to as his "first MG". Now known as 'Old Number One', this MG used a special 1.5 litre OHV Hotchkiss engine on a modified Morris Cowley with a slim lightweight special body. It took Kimber to another gold medal in the 1925 Land's End Trial.

From this singular beginning stemmed a rich and colourful history of MG in motorsport of every kind. For the next ten years to 1935 then again through the nineteen fifties and sixties the company supported its own works and privateer programmes. Throughout this entire time, thousands of enthusiastic owners world wide rolled up to the start lines of races, rallies, hillclimbs and trials, along with speed record attempts, adding enormously to the tally of MG successes, and continue to do so. Lets pick out a few highlights

MG's first outright race success came in 1927 from a privately-entered 14/40 which won a 100 km race at San Martin in Argentina.

Three years later Kimber's "cheap and cheerful" overhead cam M-type Midget really started to write the MG sporting legends. M-types took a class win and the team prize in the 1930 Brooklands Double-Twelve Race, a success that made this little two seater (priced at 175 pounds) the car for enthusiasts on a slim budget.

With some encouragement from Captain George Eyston MG soon had the first of its record breakers EX120 ready to start MG's phenomenal speed record career. Based on the M type but with a modified chassis, the engine sleeved to 750cc, a large supercharger and a skinny special body including a radiator cowl beaten out of an oil drum, EX120, became the world's first 750 cc car to set records of over 100 mph. This was done in February, mid winter, in 1931 at Montlhéry the banked racing circuit just outside Paris.

EX120 led to the 'C'-type Montlhéry Midget, a production racer that swept the board in the 1931 Brooklands Double Twelve race, taking the first five places in an unprecedented debut victory. Amongst other C-type victories was the 1931 Ulster TT race, won at a higher overall speed than the existing lap record.

The most charismatic of all MG racers, the supercharged 1100 cc, six cylinder K3 Magnette, with pre-selector gearbox, appeared in late 1932. Like the C type it made a major impact from the start. In the 1933 Mille Miglia the MG Team of three cars won there class and the overall team prize becoming the first non-Italian marque ever to win the team prize. Other important victories included the 1933 Ulster TT and the Coppa Aberco where the K3 again trounced the Italian opposition, mainly Maserati and Alfa Romeo, on their home ground. Tazio Nuvolari, the greatest driver of the era, won the 1933 Ulster TT in a K3, breaking the class lap record seven times, but had he not gambled by omitting a late fuelling stop, he might well have been beaten on handicap by an MG salesman one Hugh Hamilton driving a 750cc MG J4 Midget !

A C-type Midget achieved MG's first finish at Le Mans in 1933, winning its class and coming 6th overall. A K3 won the 1100cc class at Le Mans in 1935, the year in which Eyston's so-called 'Dancing Daughters' – a team of six women in three P-type Midgets - successfully brought their cars to a group finish in 24th, 25th and 26th places. MG came close to Grand Prix-style engineering with the remarkable backbone chassis, all-independent suspension R-type racer in 1935, but 'official' MG motorsport was curtailed

in the Nuffield re-organisation of that year. Nevertheless, privateers, assisted covertly by the MG Service department, kept the wins coming. Trials events were dominated by the ostensibly private 'Cream Crackers' and 'Three Musketeers' teams of MGs.

From 1931 to 1939 drivers like George Eyston Goldie Gardner, Bobby Karlush and others using a variety of MGs, held all the international speed records for the 750cc and 1100cc classes, and set all the 'milestone' figures from 120 mph to 200mph. Then in 1939 Gardner, running on a German autobahn at Dessau, not only pushed the 1100cc record to 203.5 mph, but rebored the engine overnight to 1106cc so that he could push the 1500cc class record to 204.2 mph !

After the war MG set about raising its flag in motorsport once again initially privateers used their pre war cars and a few of the 'new' TCs Then MG found its way into the USA. Returning service men took these strange sporty cars back to the states or purchased them new as they began to trickle across the Atlantic . TCs soon appeared at race tracks around the states from Sebring to Watkins Glen, they were out in force and once more picking up class and outright wins in local and national race meetings

Back in the UK John Thornley was now in charge and factory backed privateers like George Phillips and Dick Jacobs were appearing in races like the Le Mans 24 hours and the Ulster TT, using TCs and TDs. In 1955 the MGA made its first public appearance as a team of three EX182 production prototypes in the 1955 Le Mans event managing 12th and 17th places and a team prize Production MGAs went on to take the team prize at Sebring in 1956 and 1957.

After the 1955 Le Mans tragedy, and with racing cars becoming more specialised and less production-based, MG concentrated on rallying. Nancy Mitchell used MGA and Magnette cars to win the European Ladies Rally Championships in 1956 and 1957. While many other class placings were achieved in international rallies during this period. The MGA Twin Cam achieved a 9th place on its first International Rally, the 1958 Liège-Rome-Liège, and a special Twin Cam Coupe won the 2-litre class at Le Mans in 1960.

MG record-breaking continued in the 1950s, culminating in EX181 that used a mid-mounted supercharged Twin Cam engine. As a 1500 cc class car it achieved 245.64 mph in 1957 with Stirling Moss at the wheel. Two years later, bored out to 1506 cc to bring it into the 2 litre class, and driven by Phil Hill, it set that record at 254.91 mph. It was to be another 38 years before a special 1433 cc MGF (MG EX253) again took up the MG record-breaking trail managing 217.4 mph at Bonneville.

In the Sixties, the rugged and reliable MGB flew the flag, supported by the Midget. Although near-standard apart from a low-drag nose, the works MGB achieved worthy results at Le Mans over three years. In 1963 Hopkirk and Hutcheson reached 12th place after losing 85 minutes stuck in the sand at the end of the Mulsanne Straight. In 1964 Hopkirk and Hedges managed 19th and in 1965, 11th ,always against far more specialised and expensive rivals. MGBs won the 1965 Brands Hatch 1000-mile race, outright and a class 1-2-3 against now powerful and expensive rivals such as E-type Jaguars. But the major victory for the MGB came in the 1966 Marathon de la Route an 84 hour race, at the Nürburgring, when Vernaeve and Hedges outran the entire field at 5260 miles.

The MGC also had a few moments of glory, the special MGC GTS winning its class at Sebring in 1968.

With the end of the Sixties came British Leyland and firstly the demise of any kind of competitions programme then the demise of Abingdon and almost of MG entirely. Some how the marque survived those dark years albeit in the shape of a trio of cooking cars'

the Metro Maestro and Montego. And it was the former that provided the foundation for the next MG to be introduced to the motor sport world, the 6R4. This appeared in 1984, with a mid-mounted 3 litre quad-cam V6 and four-wheel drive. This was a 400 bhp Group B rally car, a concept from Williams Grand Prix Engineering.

First up was the 1985 RAC Rally where, driven by Tony Pond it took third place. Pond was 6th in the 1986 RAC Rally, followed by three other 6R4s who combined to take the team prize. It won the UK National Rally Championship in 1987 and the 1986/87 National and European Rallycross titles. However Group B cars were banned from International Rallying in 1987.

MG has been associated with all types of motorsport since its inception. Record breaking in particular has been an area of notable achievement for the marque, with records being broken as long as ago as 1931, when Captain George Edward Thomas Eyston drove EX120 to 101.13mph in the little 743cc supercharger. Only eight years later Major Goldie Gardner was galloping along the salt flats in EX135 to top 200mph. Enthusiasm for the Record Breaking game continued all through the '40s and '50s, culminating in Phil Hill's 254mph record at Bonneville in 1959. No less than 43 international class records were established by MG between 1930 and 1959, proving the Factory's determination that MG was a world beater in every sphere.

Record-breaker George Eyston saw the EX120 prototype chassis for the M-type replacement and chose it to start MG's phenomenal speed record career.

In February 1931, EX120, fitted with a supercharger, became the world's first 750 cc car to set records of over 100 mph, at Montlhéry.

From 1931 to 1939 George Eyston and others, including Goldie Gardner, using a variety of MG cars, held all the international speed records for the 750cc and 1100cc classes, and set all the 'milestone' figures from 120 mph to 200mph. Gardner, running on a German autobahn at Dessau four months before the outbreak of war in 1939, not only pushed the 1100cc record to 203.5 mph, but rebored the engine overnight to 1106cc so that he could cheekily push the 1500cc class record to 204.2 mph !

MG record-breaking continued apace in the 1950s, culminating in the extraordinary EX181 with a mid-mounted supercharged Twin Cam engine. As a 1500cc class car it achieved 245.64 mph in 1957 with Stirling Moss at the wheel. Two years later, bored out to 1506cc to bring it into the 2 litre class, and driven by Phil Hill, it set that record at 254.91 mph. It was to be another 38 years before a special 1433cc MGF (MG EX253) again took up the MG record-breaking trail of 217.4mph

Famous MG Record Breakers

Date	Place	Driver	MG Class	Car	Records Attained
Dec 1930	Montlhery	Eyston	EX120 u/s	750cc	3 up to 87.3mph
Feb 1931	Montlhery	Eyston	EX120 s/c	750cc	5 up to 97.07mph
Feb 1931	Montlhery	Eyston	EX120 s/c	750cc	4 up to 103.13mph
March 1931	Brooklands	Eyston	EX120s/c	750cc	2 up to 97.09mph
Sept 1931	Montlhery	Eyston	EX120 s/c	750cc	1 at 101.1mph
Oct 1931	Montlhery	Eldridge	EX127 s/c	750cc	1 at 110.28mph
Feb 1932	Pendine	Eyston	EX127 s/c	750cc	1 at 118.39mph
Nov 1932	Brooklands	Hall	Midget s/c	750cc	2 up to

					74.74mph
Dec 1932	Montlhery	Eyston	EX127 s/c	750cc	2 up to 120.56mph
Dec 1932	Montlhery	Eyston	EX127 and	750cc	All remaining
		Denly & Wisdom	J3 s/c		'H' records
Sept 1933	Brooklands	Eyston	EX127 s/c	750cc	3 up to 106.72mph
Oct 1933	Montlhery	Eyston, Denly	L2 Magna u/s	750cc	Various at 80.49mph
		Wisdom & Yallop			
Oct/Nov 1933	Montlhery	Denly	EX127 s/c	750cc	11 up to 128.63mph
Mar 1934	Brooklands	Horton	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	6 in 117.03mph/1hr
Mar 1934	Brooklands	Horton	s/c C-type ss	750cc	6 up to 111.74mph
July 1934	Brooklands	Horton	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	I at 83.2mph
Aug 1934	Brooklands	Everitt	s/c Q-type	750cc	2 up to 79.88mph
Oct 1934	Brooklands	Everitt	s/c Q-type	750cc	2 up to 85.59mph
Oct 1934	Montlhery	Eyston	EX135 s/c	1100cc	12 up to 128.69mph
Dec 1934	Montlhery	Maillard,	s/c Q-type	750cc	Various up to
		Brune & Druck			24hrs at 76.30mph
May 1935	Gyon	Kohlrausch	EX127 s/c	750cc	4 up to 130.51mph
May 1935	Frankfurt	Kohlrausch	EX127 s/c	750cc	3 up to 140.60mph
Dec 1936	Montlhery	Hertzberger	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	3 up to 109.74mph
June 1937	Frankfurt	Gardner	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	2 up to 142.63mph
June 1937	Montlhery	Gardner	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	5 up to 130.52mph
Oct 1937	Frankfurt	Gardner	s/c K3 ss	1100cc	4 up to 148.80mph
Nov 1938	Frankfurt	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	1100cc	2 up to 187.62mph
May 1939	Dessau	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	1100cc	3 up to 203.50mph

June 1939	Dessau	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	1500cc	3 up to 204.20mph
Oct 1946	Jabbeke	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	750cc	3 up to159.151mph
July 1947	Jabbeke	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	500cc	4 up to118.061mph
Sept 1949	Jabbeke	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	500cc	3 up to154.86mph
July 1950	Jabbeke	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	350cc	3 up to121.09mph
Aug 1951	Utah	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c	TD 1500cc	6 up to137.40mph
Aug 1952	Utah	Gardner	Gardner-MG s/c TD	1500cc	2 up to189.50mph
Aug 1954	Utah	Eyston/Mills	EX179 u/s TF engine	1500cc	8 up to153.69mph
Aug 1956	Utah	Miles/Lockett	EX179 u/s	Twincam 1500cc	16 up to170.15mph
Aug 1957	Utah	Ash/Wisdom	EX179 u/s	1100cc	3 inc. 12hrs
			Sprite/Midget engine		at 118.13mph
Aug 1957	Utah	Ash/ Hill	EX179 s/c	1100cc	6 up to143.47mph
			Sprite/Midget engine		
Aug 1957	Utah	Moss	EX181 s/c Twincam	1500cc	5 up to 245.64mph
Sept 1959	Utah	Wisdom	EX219 s/c	1100cc	15 up to 146.96mph
		Ehrman Leavens &	Sprite/Midget engine		
Oct 1959	Utah	Hill	EX181 s/c Twincam	2000cc	6 up to 254.91mph

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