M.G. MGC 2,912 c.c.


MANUFACTURER
MG Car Co. Ltd., MG Division, British Motor Corporation, Abingdon-on-Thames, Berkshire.

PRICES
Basic .................................. £905 0s 0d
Purchase Tax ........................................ 60s 6d
Seat belts (pair) ........................... £6 0s 0d
Total (in GB) ................................ £1,111 16s 6d

EXTRAS (inc. P.T.)
Overdrive .................................. £61 9s 2d
Wire wheels .................................. £30 14s 7d
Heater .................................. £15 1s 2d
Radio .................................. £20 0s 0d

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY
Mean maximum speed 120 mph
Standing start 4-mile 17-7 sec
0-60 mph 10-0 sec
30-70 mph (through gears) 9-8 sec
Fuel consumption 19 mpg
Miles per tankful 228

HERE has been talk of a new big sports car from BMC now for a couple of years. Rumours of a new big Austin-Healey with this or that kind of new engine, and of various coupes from the Abingdon stable have all been doing the rounds. After all these exciting stories, the new MGC must have come as a disappointment to many, because it looks just like the MGB and only a keen car spotter would notice the bulging bonnet hiding the six-cylinder engine. Inside there have been a few changes; all these also apply to the four-cylinder "B". Squeezing the bigger engine into the MGB shell has called for quite a number of engineering changes, so what in effect is much more than just the engine option it seems, adds £154 to the total price.

For the moment the Austin-Healey 3000 continues as a parallel model priced at £24 more than the MGC. In effect it shares the same engine, although that in the "C" has three extra main bearings and a revised cylinder block. Our issue of the 19 October described the new car in some detail, so we will run over only the essential statistics again here.

Basically the 3-litre engine has not changed its layout; it still uses pushrods and rockers for its valve gear, but the block has been redesigned to make it shorter and a little lighter. Somewhere along the line a few horsepower have been lost (either in extra bearing friction or as windage losses from the reduced crank web clearances) and the MGC engine develops 145 bhp net compared with the Healey's 150. Maximum torque is about the same with 170 lb. ft. at 3,500 rpm.

To match the revised engine the gearbox has been brought up to date by adding synchromesh to first, and without overdrive the ratios are much the same as those of the MGB, with an appropriate raising of the final drive ratio from 3-91 to 3-07 to 1. With overdrive a 3-307 axle is used, and for a reason BMC have not explained to us, a much higher first gear is fitted as well, with only slightly raised other indirects. Our test car had the latter arrangement, and while the long-legged, easy cruising at 27 mph per 1,000 rpm in overdrive top was appreciated on the continent, the gap between second and third spoilt an otherwise excellent set of ratios. Even without overdrive the MGC revs at only 4,200 rpm at 100 mph, so
Test conditions
Weather: Sunny. Wind: 8 mph
Temperature: 11 deg. C. (53 deg. F.)
Humidity: 55 per cent
Surfaces: Dry concrete and asphalt

Figures taken at 2,900 miles by our own staff at the Motor Industry Research Association proving ground at Nuneaton.

Maximum speeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gear</th>
<th>mph</th>
<th>kph</th>
<th>rpm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OD Top (mean)</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>4,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD Top (best)</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>4,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OD 3rd</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>5,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>5,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standing 1-Mile 17.7 sec 79 mph
Standing Kilometre 32 sec 103 mph

Fuel consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KPH</th>
<th>MPH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>62.1</td>
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(At constant speeds—mpg)
OD Top | Top
---|---
30 mph | 23.5 |
40 mph | 31.1 |
50 mph | 38.6 |
60 mph | 46.1 |
70 mph | 53.6 |
80 mph | 61.1 |
90 mph | 68.6 |
100 mph | 76.1 |

Typical mpg 19 (14.9 litres/100km)
Calculated (DIN) mpg 20.8 (13.6 litres/100km)
Overall mpg 17.5 (16.1 litres/100km)
Grade of fuel, Premium, 4-star (min. 97RPM)

Oil consumption
Miles per pint (SAE 20W/40)...1,000

Brakes (from 30 mph in neutral)
Load | g | Distance |
---|---|---|
25 lb | 0.25 | 100 ft |
50 | 0.58 | 52 |
75 | 0.98 | 30.7 |
100 | 1.03 | 29.2 |
Handbrake | 0.36 | 84 |
Max. Gradient, 1 in 3
Clutch Pedal: 35lb and 5in.

Turning circles
Between kerbs L, 35ft 9in.; R, 35ft 9in.
Between walls L, 36ft 9in.; R, 36ft 9in.
Steering wheel turns, lock to lock...3

How the car compares
Maximum speed (mean) MPH
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<tr>
<th>MPH</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>130</td>
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</table>

MPG overall
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
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Price
MG MGC £1,102
Austin-Healey 3000 Mk III £1,126
MG MGB £948
Reliant Scimitar 3-litre £1,516
Triumph GT 6 £985
M.G. MGC...

it is hard to see why this option is listed. For the first time there is the alternative of Borg-Warner automatic transmission.

The engine is something of an enigma. It is smooth and flexible, but completely lacking in sporty characteristics. Whilst it pulls evenly from very low revs (below 500 rpm in top), there is very little low speed torque and the engine seems reluctant to rev or develop much top end power. This impression is borne out by the top gear acceleration figures, which are less good than those of MGB for every 20 mph increment up to 70 mph (20-40 mph: 9.5 sec MGC; 30-50 mph: 8.7 sec MGB, 9.1 sec MGC; 40-60 mph: 9.1 sec MGB, 10.0 sec MGC). Overall through the gears, however, the new car is appreciably quicker with a 0 to 60 mph time of 10.0 sec (MGB: 12.9), and a fast standing quarter-mile in 17.7 sec (MGB: 18.9).

Usually the engine is sweet and docile, but once or twice we experienced slight plug fouling after fairly long spells in heavy traffic. For the first few minutes after a cold start it was particularly difficult to keep the engine from dying, and when accelerating hard oil surge caused clouds of blue smoke from the exhaust. A new moulded plastic cooling fan in a metal cowl whines and whirs all the time very loudly, and at high revs the driver hears a loud noise like a supercharged vacuum cleaner. 9.6 sec to avoid the fuss and bother of making the engine rev, one never goes much above 3,000 rpm for everyday driving, except for the occasional burn-up away from the lights.

Getting the car away from rest quickly was hindered by clutch slip when we tried over 3,500 rpm for take-offs, and by a definite lack of torque below these revs. Even so, a 0 to 100 mph time of under 30 sec is pretty brisk, and might even be faster on an overdrive car with better gearbox ratios... Our in-the-gears maxima of 4.2, 62 and 97 mph at an indicated 5,500 rpm (5,750 actual) show up the odd spacing mentioned earlier. Overdrive third takes the car on to 115 mph, and in both direct top and overdrive top we recorded mean maxima of 120 mph. The Laycock overdrive is operated by a little cranked toggle switch on the facia under the wheel rim on the right; it engaged and disengaged very smoothly, but with a definite delay on the upward shift.

The gearbox has a firm and robust-feeling remote control with a nice large ball-shaped knob rather spoilt by a sharp-edged nut underneath it. Movements are very positive and the powerful synchronmesh stood up perfectly to all the punishment we could give it during acceleration runs. The gate is very narrow and there is spring loading towards the first and second gear plane; this makes it harder to be sure one is in neutral, and initially the change from second to third feels strange. All the indirect gears are very quiet, except for a slight whine on the over-run.

For maximum speed runs we took the MGC to Belgium and found it cruised very well at 100 mph with arrow-like stability. Wind roar round the hood drowns out all conversation and the radio, and anyone preferring to tour over long distances rather than have the option of fresh air would be better off with the alternative GT version.

Compared with the Austin-Healey 3000, the new MG is slightly slower in both top speed (121 mph for the Healey) and acceleration (0 to 100 mph: 25.7 sec for the Healey). Fuel consumption is also not as good as that of the Healey and much heavier than the MGB’s. Overall we managed only 17.5 mpg with the MGC, although at a steady 70 mph, for example, it covers nearly 23 mpg in direct top and 26.8 mpg in overdrive; overall figures for comparison are 22.4 mpg for the MGB (with overdrive) and 20.3 mpg for the Healey (again with overdrive).

Of course, the new car is not as heavy as the Healey, but it weighs a full 350 lb more than the MGB. The six-cylinder engine is 210 lb heavier than the B-series unit, and the new gearbox is larger. Considering all this amounts to 16-4 per cent extra on the weight of the MGB, it must have been very hard for the manufacturers to keep the weight distribution reasonably balanced. The front-end weight is up from 52.6 to only 55.7 per cent of the total, and a corresponding increase in the recommended tyre pressure differential (from equal front and rear to a 4 psi front bias) restores handling. To lighten the steering load a lower geared rack is used and the king-pins have been de-castedored.

The boot holds a remarkable amount of soft luggage, but there is no trimming. With the hood down the cover and irons take up a good deal of room. A strut has to be used to hold the lid open
Even so, the steering is heavy and it is by no means a delicate car to drive. For a start the steering wheel feels huge (it has a 16-5/8 in. dia.) and there are now 3.5 turns needed for a 35ft 9in. turning circle instead of 2.9 turns for a 32ft 4in. one. It was no help that our car pulled strongly to the left and the steering wheel was not straight on its splines. It now has a stitched on leather glove over its rim.

Apart from the low-geard steering there is strong understeer which makes the front end slow to respond. In the low gears there is enough torque to help the back round, but on wet surfaces we found it very hard indeed to catch the tail if it got out of line, so we settled for a slow-in, fast-out (once it was straight) technique. The MGC lacks the "chuckability" of both the MGB and the Austin-Healey 3000; it is better suited to Routes Nationales than mountain cols.

MGC wheels are an inch bigger in diameter and an inch wider than those of the MGB, and Dunlop SP 41 radial-ply tyres are standard. Grip is good and it is virtually impossible to spin the rear wheels on wet roads. Once or twice, however, we locked a front wheel when braking hard. There is little thump from the tyres on ridges and catseyes, but they are prone to squeal during hard cornering, even in the wet.

To get the new engine in the MGB frame the front cross-member has been discarded, and to transfer the suspension loads back to the stiff scuttle area, longitudinal torsion bars replace the coil springs used on the "B". For a sports car the ride is quite soft and almost in the saloon car class for comfort. Firm damping retains something of the traditional taut feel, and there is no pitch and very little roll at any time. Only on very rough roads does the vertical motion become harsh, but even then there is surprisingly little body shake and no scuttle flexing.

Braking has been revised to suit the new weight distribution and there is a vacuum servo. Pedal loads are light and progressive up to a maximum of over 1.0g at 80mph. Surprisingly for a sports car we measured a lot of fade during ten stops from 70 mph at 4-mile intervals, and the front discs got very hot and smoked. The hand-brake is powerful and held the car on a 1-in-3 facing either way; the cranked brake lever, fitted in between the driving seat and the tunnel, is convenient to use and well placed.

Unlike most two-seater sports cars, the MGC is built for big people. Even our 6ft testers did not need the seat right back; there is an abundance of legroom and enough foot room in spite of the wider tunnel. On the other hand, our shorter staff found that they sat too low in the car and therefore had difficulty in seeing enough of the bonnet to locate themselves on the road. By the latest standards, the windscreen seems shallow, especially on a dark, wet night, and the wiper blades park on the screen obscuring some of the driver's view of the left-hand kerb. At last the wipers have two speeds.

Some features of the revised interior have been dictated by the new American safety requirements. The door handles are neat and practical, but the rubber knobs on the window winders repeatedly came off. The glove locker lid can be held shut only by locking it with its key, which also locks the boot. There is another key for the ignition and doors.

The heater is a £15 extra, and it is controlled by two rotary knobs on the left of the facia. The top one works a simple water valve, which seems to have no intermediate temperature between hot and cold, and the lower one directs the air to screen or footwells. There is no ram effect at all, so the single-speed fan must be used all the time heat or demisting is

Reversing lamps are built into the tail panel. From the rear, only the small MGC sign above the octagon badge shows which model this is.
required. A separate cold-air intake is worked by a lever under the left of the facia.

The hood is still one of those detachable pvc and tubular frame affairs which must be taken off and folded up before stowing it in the boot, or in settled climates leaving it at home. Putting it up in a hurry is quite quick, but experience helps a lot in reducing the frequent trips from side to side when doing this alone. Sealing round

the doors is not completely stormproof.

We were amazed to find the boot has no self-propelling strut for its lid, and this is a real nuisance when loading or unloading an armful of odds and ends. With the optional wire wheels one really needs several soft bags for luggage as the hub of the spare pokes up in the way of a normal suitcase.

Probably our impressions of the

MGC would have been more favourable if we had taken it for a holiday to the south of Spain and back. As it is, we were able to use it only around England and for a brief day trip to the Jabekke road in Belgium. The MGC is the latest example from a very famous factory which has regularly produced classic sports cars in the past; somewhere in the large BMC complex it has lost the "Abingdon touch."

SPECIFICATION: M.G. MGC (FRONT ENGINE, REAR-WHEEL DRIVE)

ENGINE
Cylinders
6, in line
Cooling system
Water; pump, fan and thermostatic
Bore
83-4mm (3-26in.)
Stroke
88-9mm (3-50in.)
Displacement
2,912 c.c. (177.7 cu. in.)
Valve gear
Overhead; pushrods and rockers
Compression ratio
9-1:1
Min. octane rating:
98 R.M.
Carburettor
SU HS6
Fuel pump
SU electric
Oil filter
Full flow, renewable element
Max. power
145 bhp (net) at 5,250 rpm
Max. torque
170 lb. ft. (net) at 3,400 rpm

TRANSMISSION
Clutch
Borg and Beck diaphragm spring, 9in. dia.
Gearbox
Four-speed, all-synchronized; overdrive on third and top.
Gear ratios
Top 1:0; OD Top 0.82; OD 1:31; Second 2:06; First 2:98; Reverse 2:67
Final drive
Hypoid bevel, 3:31-to-1

CHASSIS and BODY
Construction
Integral with steel body
SUSPENSION
Front
Independent, torsion bars, wishbones, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar

REAR
Live axle, half-elliptic leaf springs, lever arm dampers

STEERING
Rack and pinion
Wheel dia. 16.5in.

BRAKES
Make and type
Girling disc front, drum rear
Servo
Girling vacuum type
Dimensions
F, 11-06in. dia.; R, 9in. dia. 2-5in. wide shoes
Swept area
226-2sq. in.; R, 127-2sq. in. Total 353-4sq. in. (277-3sq. in. (ton laden)

WHEELS
Type
Pressed steel disc standard—optional 72-spoke wire wheels on test car
Tyre—make
Dunlop
—size
165—15 mm.

EQUIPMENT
Battery
12-volt 58-amp. "hr. (2 x 6-volt)
Alternator
Lucas 16AC 33-amp
Headlamps
Lucas sealed filament 100-180-watt (total)
Reversing lamp
2 standard
Electrical fuses
2-speed, self-parking
Screen washers
Standard, manual plungers
Interior heater
Extra, water valve type
Heated backlight
Not applicable on roadster

SAFETY BELTS Extra, anchorage built in
INTERIOR TRIM Leather and pvc seats
FLOOR COVERING Carpet and rubber mats
STARTING HANDLE No provision
JACK Screw plug
JACKING POINTS One each side under sills
WINDSCREEN Laminated
UNDERBODY PROTECTION Phosphate treatment prior to painting

MAINTENANCE
Fuel tank
12 Imp. gallons (no reserve)
COOLING SYSTEM 15-6 pints (including heater)
ENGINE SUMP 12-5 pints (7-2 litres) SAE 20W/40; Change oil every 6,000 miles; Change filter element every 6,000 miles
GEARBOX and OVERDRIVE 14-5 pints SAE 20W/40; Change oil every 6,000 miles
FINAL DRIVE 1.75 pints SAE 90EP; No oil change needed, check level every 6,000 miles
GREASE 6 points every 3,000 miles
TYRE PRESSURES F, 28; R, 32 p.s.i. (normal driving), F, 26; R, 32 p.s.i. (fast driving)

PERFORMANCE DATA
Top speed mph per 1,000 rpm
22-12
Overdrive top mph per 1,000 rpm
26-95
Mean piston speed at max power
3,060ft./min
Bhp per ton laden
113-7