

# 1 Is it the right car for you?

– marriage guidance



## Tall and short drivers

Standard seat adjustment is reasonable, and will accommodate all but exceptionally tall drivers – although drivers over 6 feet (1.85 metres) may find they have to look over the top of the windscreen/windshield frame in the Roadster.

Remembering that this is a sports car, the space within the cockpit is excellent.



## Controls

The gearlever and pedals are nicely placed. The steering wheel and clutch pedal are easy to use, but by modern standards the brake pedal may seem slightly on the heavy side. The gearlever can be slightly 'notchy', particularly in worn examples, but has a commendably short throw. Handling is predictable and easy to control.

## Will it fit the garage?

Length 3.89 metres/12ft 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in

Width 1.52 metres/4ft 11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>in

All the controls fall readily to hand: this car has a slightly smaller diameter, non-standard steering wheel for a quicker, but heavier, response.



## Interior space

The cabin interior is spacious and excellent for a sports car. There is an abundance of legroom. Early Roadsters had a 'pack-away' hood frame which was stowed in the boot/trunk, but Roadsters with a folding hood frame lose about half the rear shelf space.

The GT has excellent luggage capacity even with the rear seat available for use. I run my GT with the rear seat permanently folded, thus providing even more space.



## Luggage capacity

The standard spare wheel takes up much of the Roadster's otherwise large boot/trunk space and necessitates the use of soft bags. There is extra capacity on the rear shelf, accessed by fold-

forward seats. The GT enjoys excellent luggage capacity, enhanced when the occasional rear seat is folded flat.



The boot/trunk of the Roadster is spacious without a spare wheel, but the wheel takes up about 35% of the space when carried.

## Running costs

Modest. There is a comprehensive list of maintenance tasks at 6000 and 12,000 miles (10,000 and 20,000km) most of

## 3 Living with an MGB

– will you get along together?



One of the attractions of an MGB is that it is several cars in one – particularly the Roadster/open and Grand Turismo/Coupé variants. The Roadster is really only a two-seater, and much of the boot/trunk luggage space is taken up



**The ever-popular Minilite wheels are lighter than the original wheels and thus improve road holding.**

by a spare wheel. In contrast, the GT provides a (small) rear seat for two young children, and an impressive amount of



**The interior of an early car (about 1968-70 I would guess). The steering wheel is attractive, but non-original, as are the carpeted lower door trim panels.**



**Could you live with this beautifully restored 1965 Series I? So could I, although the rear shelf behind the front seats is as large as it gets. Later cars lost some of this space to a folding hood frame. Note the original leather seats.**



**The sunroof on the GT makes the car a practical daily drive. This one, on this 1972 GT, is probably an aftermarket Britax item rather than an original dealer-fitted (as an optional extra) Wabasto unit.**

luggage space (for a sports car) behind that. The load carrying capacity of both models can be increased. In the case of the Roadster you can substitute a 'space saver' spare wheel for the 5th

## 4 Relative values

– which model for you?



There is more detail on values in Chapter 12, but this chapter expresses, in percentages, the relative value of the individual models.

### Chrome bumper Roadsters 1967-1974

5-bearing engine, 4-synchro gearbox  
with overdrive - 100%  
Non-overdrive - 90%

### Chrome bumper Roadsters 1962-1967

Some with 3-bearing engines all with  
3-synchro gearbox with  
overdrive - 95%  
Non-overdrive - 85%

### Rubber bumper Roadsters 1974-1980

5-bearing engine, 4-synchro gearbox  
with overdrive - 85%  
Non-overdrive - 80%

### Chrome bumper GT 1967-1974

5-bearing engine, 4-synchro gearbox  
with overdrive - 60%  
Non-overdrive - 55%

### Chrome bumper GT 1965-1967

5-bearing engines, 3-synchro  
gearboxes, some with  
overdrive - 55%  
Non-overdrive - 50%

### Rubber bumper GT 1974-1980

5-bearing engine, 4-synchro gearbox  
with overdrive - 50%  
Non-overdrive - 45%

Furthermore –

- Many originally 3-bearing cars have been fitted with later 5-bearing engines. Some with non-original rear axles, door fittings and possibly seats – all in the name of improving the car. If you're



**An example of the most desirable of the MGB range – a 1969 Roadster.**



**The slightly earlier Series I Roadster – from 1965.**



**The last of the MGB models – a rubber bumper Roadster.**

• On start-up, does the car puff blue smoke? This would indicate general wear and ‘tiredness’.

### Engine noises – three checks

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

- MGB engines aren’t known for their quiet operation, so there will likely be some ‘tappet’ rattle. Excessive noise might signal that a replacement rocker shaft assembly is required. Does engine noise reduce when the engine is hot?
- Rocker shafts are easy and inexpensive to replace, but any ‘rumbling’ from the bottom end would indicate a completely different level of expense.
- Listen for a light ‘tinkling’ sound. This would suggest a stretched/tired timing chain and, possibly, worn sprockets. If all three noises are present, budget (and negotiate later) for a service-exchange engine – particularly if you note oil leaks later in your examination and/or puffs of blue smoke. If the engine is noisy or smoky, it may be time to walk away.

Still there? Then it’s time to check the structural integrity of the car.

### Checking under the car

Unless you’re exploring a very cheap restoration candidate, it’s worth pre-arranging a half hour session on the lift at a local garage. You can then check the following in safety, and without having to scabble around on the ground. If you’re forced to look under the car at home, do so with the car safely chocked and on a pair of service ramps, or properly supported on axle stands.

### Underside structure

Ex 4 Gd 3 Av 2 Po 1

Probe (with a small screwdriver) and look for corrosion and/or patching in the following ten places, each side of the car –

- The jacking points, roughly central to the sill/rocker.
- The jacking point to jacking point crossmember.
- The insides of the front and rear valances.
- The fixed rear spring hanger and surrounding metalwork.
- The chassis leg at the pivoting shackle rear spring mounting.
- The rear wheelarches.
- The boot/trunk floor.
- The fuel tank, particularly at the top and front, for streaks and/or other signs of escaping fuel.
- The battery cradles (chrome bumper cars have two).



The rocker shaft (across the top of the picture) and rockers wear and, subsequently, rattle.



The bottom end main and big end bearings require much work to rectify serious wear.



The timing chain can stretch with prolonged use.



This jacking point looks in good order after a recent repair but ...

# 13 Do you really want to restore?

– it'll take longer and cost more than you think



There is a lot going for any practical enthusiast who wants to restore an MGB. Firstly, the bodyshell is an integral unit, which means if yours is beyond your own refurbishment ability or economic restoration by specialists, you can simply buy a new one. This makes the restoration of an MGB little more than a re-assembly project if you so wish. Secondly, if you want to try restoring your original shell, the replacement panels are all available and the 'fit' of the replacement body panels is generally very good, which means you don't have to have years of body repair experience to tackle an MGB restoration. Furthermore, parts availability is excellent, and the car is basically a simple vehicle that enables many enthusiasts from all walks of life to carry out superb restorations.

So, restoring an MGB is not impractical by any means. Nevertheless, it is a sad but inescapable fact that all too frequently the owner fails to complete the restoration project. Often the incomplete car then forms the basis for 'abandoned project' entries in the 'For sale' columns, or the final stages are rushed so that the car can be sold. Furthermore, even in a well-executed complete restoration, the owner rarely recovers costs.

One reason many home restorations stop short of completion is that the owner underestimates the volume of work or the timescale involved. Sometimes the car appears to want nothing much more than a little care and attention – but things are ALWAYS worse, usually far worse than the unsuspecting owner ever imagined. He removes a wing/fender and finds tin-worm everywhere – whereupon things go from bad to worse. One MGB I bought in thousands of pieces had, about 5 years before, been suffering with



**It's a good idea to buy a Heritage bodysell pre-painted in the colour of your choice. After delivery it is then a matter of whether you transfer the parts as they are from the old to the new shell (and will likely be disappointed at the end of the exercise), or you refurbish everything along the way, in which case you should end up with a superb car like this with nothing more than assembly skills, patience and a cheque book!**



**The sills/rockers on any car are important to its structural integrity, but in an open sports car like an MGB they are vital to your safety ... and they are ALWAYS far worse than you expect!**