

# The MGTD

## PART THREE

In articles over the last couple of months I have catalogued the development of the TD and listed changes made during production. MGs have always been used in competition and to cater for those owners needing extra performance the factory issued special tuning booklets detailing different stages of tune for the engine. To ensure that tuned TDs could enter competitions as standard production cars the factory catalogued a 'TD Mk II' as a separate model, issuing a leaflet for the car in May 1950. Previously cars could be ordered with any or all of the tuning modifications but now most were produced as a complete package.

Over the years confusion has arisen about the Mark II and many standard cars fitted with the TD2 engine have been wrongly stated to be Mark IIs. The only reliable indication of a genuine car is the chassis number – which carries the prefix TD/c. The matter is further complicated as, externally, there was little to distinguish the car from the standard model until late in the production run. When sales of TDs in general were slowing down, badges to identify the Mark II were fitted to both sides of the bonnet and on a plinth on the rear bumper. At the same time TF style black and white octagons were fitted to the radiator and the spare wheel hub cap.

The chassis for the Mark II was modified by the inclusion of brackets at the rear, and holes in the front suspension arms, for additional shock absorbers. These Andrex adjustable friction type shock absorbers are a sort of left-over from prewar technology. Adjustment of the internal friction discs is achieved by screwing a bolt, in to tighten them up and out to loosen them. The front pair are mounted on the suspension arms which both increases the unsprung weight and makes adding an anti-roll bar difficult, if not impossible. Actually their use in competition seems to have been to stiffen the car against roll but at the same time they also made the ride hard.

Going back to that sales brochure let us look at the full changes to the standard model listed for the Mark II.

\* Modified cylinder head with larger valves and raised com-



# 4



the leading sports car as a two seater  
now in a new four passenger model,  
produced in answer to public demand...  
converted from a two passenger TD by  
J. S. Inskip, Inc.

The four passenger MG is available in a full  
range of colors: red, ivory, green, silver,  
and black with a choice of either red or green  
interior upholstery.

Only 10 inches longer and 180 pounds heavier than  
the regular MG TD, the new four passenger has the same  
chassis as the two seater MG.

**SPECIFICATIONS**

Engine, Fuel and Electrical  
Systems, Transmission, Tires,  
Brakes, Steering and Instru-  
ments all are the same as in  
the two passenger TD.

**BODY DETAILS**

New frame members added to the  
rear of the car are interlocked,  
bolted and welded to existing  
front end of car.

Open four passenger steel panel  
body work.

All leather upholstery.

Folding window screen.

Flush folding hood.

Individual seats in front,  
bench seat in rear.

Easy-to-move side curtains.

Large lock window.



Price: \$2925 FOB, New York City.  
See this new sensation in sports-cars at:  
J. S. Inskip, Inc., 24 East 54th St., New York 22, N. Y. — Plaza 9-4664  
J. S. Inskip, Inc., 304 East 64th St., New York 21, N. Y. — TEmpleton 8-6100  
J. S. Inskip, Inc., 355 Broad St., Providence, Rhode Island — Union 1-3883

pression.

\* Larger 1 1/2 inch H4 carburetors – same size as later used on the TF but with a different body casting.

\* Twin SU fuel pumps with duplicated fuel lines going right back to the tank.

\* Lucas Sports coil.

\* Higher ratio rear axle (4.875 : 1) with 4.55 and 5.125 as options.

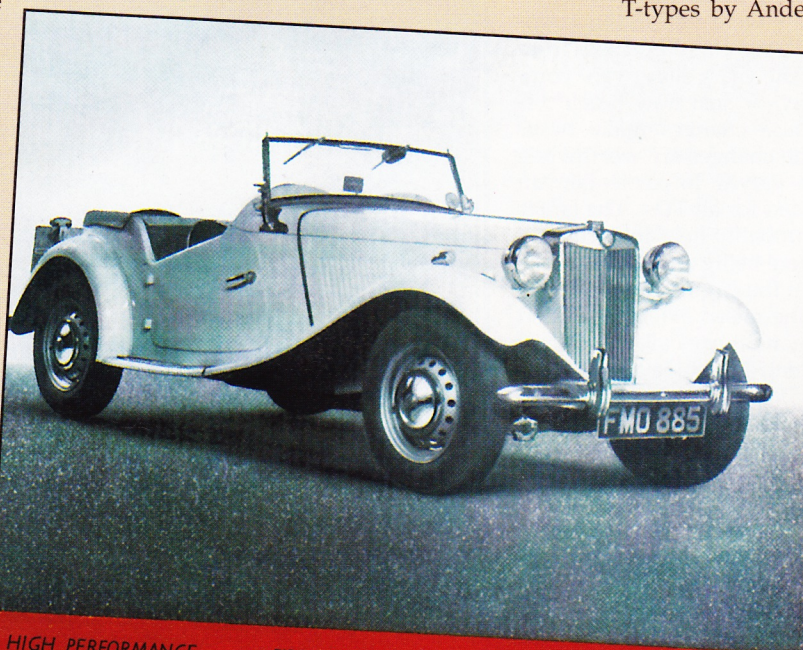
\* The extra shock absorbers mentioned earlier.

These changes raised the power output from 54 to around 60 b.h.p. This extra power, combined with the raised axle ratio and stiffer damping, made this the fastest of the T-series cars – until the TF 1500 was introduced.

The Mark II was built throughout the production run of the TD. Mark IIs can have engines prefixed TD, TD2 or TD3. However, the TD3 engine was only fitted to this model. Externally the bonnet side panel on the right hand side of the car sports a bulge to clear the larger carburetors. These carburetors are also fitted with a larger inlet pipe and a different air cleaner. However, some of the first Mark IIs had no air cleaner.

Inside the car all was standard TD. Bucket seats were not fitted except as a special order for competition use. Serious competitors would also order a higher state of tune and the XPAG engine could be modified to give up to 50% more power – especially when supercharged – and many of these engines were used in racing specials of the period.

A study of that excellent book on the T-types by Anders Clausager



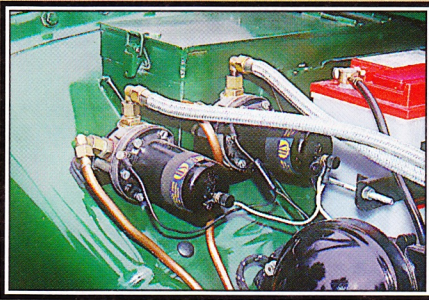
THE  
**NEW**  
  
**MIDGET**  
**SERIES "TD"**  
**MARK II**



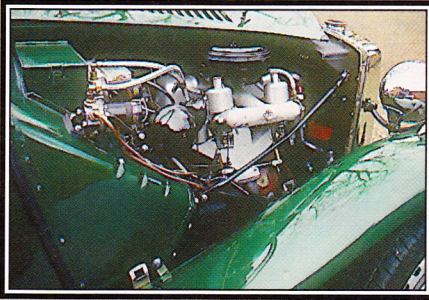
• HIGH PERFORMANCE • FIRM SUSPENSION • PRECISION STEERING • SUPERLATIVE BRAKES

The rare TD Mark II catalogue printed in 1950. Only 250 copies were produced so that the company could show that the modified cars were available to the public.

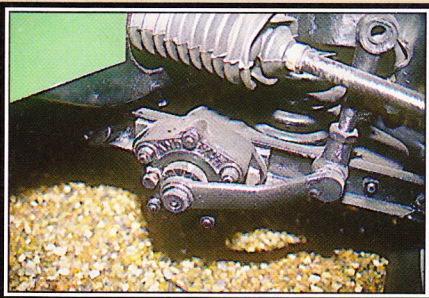




Twin S.U. fuel pumps were fitted to the scuttle of the Mark II with duplicated fuel lines. As the pumps are interconnected the car will run on either pump should one fail.



The larger carburetors and bigger air cleaner fill the under bonnet space and the radiator stay has to have a kink in it to clear the inlet pipe. The bonnet side also has a bulge to accommodate this pipe.



Additional Andrex adjustable friction shock absorbers are fitted front and rear. At the back the Mark II chassis has mounting plates for these welded in place.

shows that 1,710 Mark IIs were built. Only 51 of these were sold in this country, so until some cars returned from abroad in recent years they were comparatively rare. So just how much difference do these changes make now? Well the engine changes are worthwhile and the larger valves, in particular, can be recommended for all TDs. The larger carburetors probably help too but they do result in there being almost too much fuel at idle, but the engine is willing and responsive. The raised axle ratios fitted to most, but by no means all, Mark IIs is an improvement, but for everyday use perhaps the 4.55 or even 4.3 is preferable.

Like all T-types the Mark II can suffer from fuel starvation when hot. This occurs when the fuel in the float chambers boils and the pressure created within the chambers closes off the fuel supply. This happens much less on cars fitted with the original all metal needle valves in the float chambers, or where the modern "Gross Jet" valves are fitted. Keeping the float chambers as far away as possible from the exhaust manifold helps, as does fitting a heat shield. The

problem is certainly worse on the Mark II where the larger carbs and air cleaner restricts the air flow. The TF is similarly afflicted.

The superb TD chassis and engine attracted the attentions of the coachbuilders who were always looking out for suitable cars on which to mount their special designs. There have been many attempts at re-bodying MGs over the years and some have been more successful than others. Prewar there were quite a number of different designs of bodywork available on almost all MG models and some of these were even offered in MG Car Company sales brochures as an alternative to the standard products. Postwar the practice was rather less prevalent but, nevertheless, quite a number of different models were built. One special bodied MG, the Arnolt, stands out above all the others, not only for its completely different design, but also because of the relatively large number produced.

The Arnolt TD was only ever offered in the American market but in that country it has become a much sought after car and many of the hundred odd cars built survive. The background to this timeless design began during a very bad period for the Italian motor car industry. After a poor attendance at the 1951 Turin Motor Show the 1952 show was cancelled. However, an energetic press campaign got the show reinstated with many of the



- The pretty TD bodied by Ghia-Aigle photographed in 1984. This car is still in Switzerland, as is a sister car which is nearing the end of a long restoration.

exhibits coming from the United States and Britain. Bertone, in collaboration with Franco Scaglione, obtained two TD chassis and designed a somewhat slab sided, but nonetheless very elegant, body in both coupe and convertible styles. These cars were prepared and



A delivery photograph of the Vignale bodied car. Only the pierced wheels identify this as a TD! Photograph courtesy of Walter Guertler.





*Motto built on a TD chassis seen here at Monterey in 1991.*

displayed on the stand of Nuffield distributors Fattori and Mantani of Rome.

On the morning of the opening day Bertone was approached by an American, Stanley Harold Arnolt II, who said he would like to order a number of the cars for sale through his dealership in the United States. Arnolt went into the distribution of British cars for the American midwest from his Chicago headquarters after buying a TC in 1949. He took the two cars back to the United States and they were first shown to an American public at the Elkhart Lake Road Races in September 1952. One of the main selling points at that stage was the ease with which the hood of the convertible was raised and the snug fit of the windows. Also the fact that due to a combination of steel and aluminium in the body construction the cars weighed very little more than the standard TD. A mere 40 lbs extra for the coupe and 20 lbs for the roadster.

It appears that chassis were delivered from MG in batches of three to five. As they were supplied as rolling chassis the MG guarantee plate was bolted to the toeboard support box. All cars carry an

Arnolt number and Bertone body number as well as the MG chassis number. As the bodies were hand made, and varied to quite a degree, each item of trim was also marked with the body number to ensure that it was fitted to the correct body. To add to the individuality the standard TD dash panel was mounted upside down. Borrani wire wheels, radio and heater were options.

Building the body onto the TD chassis was not a simple affair. Unlike the standard body, it isn't removable as the main steel body frames are welded to the chassis. The doors are large and hinge directly onto the steel body frames. Most of the body is made from hand shaped steel but the doors, bonnet and boot are aluminium covered. Under the bonnet the engine installation was unchanged, as was the radiator mounting. The standard bracing bars for the radiator and toeboards remained but the engine compartment was lined with side panels ventilated by louvres, and an entirely different scuttle was installed.

The body shape produced less drag than the standard car, which helped to offset the higher weight. The interior was expensively trimmed - one of the most appealing features of an Arnolt. The higher door line on the convertible, together with the winding side windows, gave the occupants less wind buffeting at speed.

At the rear, the boot lid was released by pulling a knob behind the front passenger seat and opened to reveal a good sized locker, certainly ample enough for weekend luggage. The rear hinged bonnet was also released by a cable pull - this was mounted under the dashboard. Many of the cars were fitted with the optional Italian Borrani wire wheels, with either steel or alloy rims, but towards the end of production some cars

were fitted with Dunlop wire wheels.

The Arnolt appealed to a different type of purchaser to those buying the standard TD. The greater comfort, together with the ease of raising and lowering the soft top, brought the potential market for the car closer to that held by the Jaguar XK140 drop head and the American convertibles. Unfortunately the small 1,250cc engine didn't really give sufficient power to compete with these cars and fewer were built than originally envisaged. The final production numbers have been variously quoted as 65 coupes and 35 convertibles or 67 coupes and 33 convertibles, not including the two prototypes. In an advertisement of January 1956 the coupe was quoted as \$2995 and the convertible \$3145, the last cars not being sold until 1958/9.

Bertone was not the only coachbuilder to design special bodywork for the TD. In Switzerland the MG distributors, J.H. Keller, ordered three cars, two open and one closed, from Ghia-Aigle. Like the Arnolt, they had all enveloping bodywork, with a modified MG radiator grill at the front, and were designed to afford greater creature comforts than the standard cars could offer.

At the Vienna show in March 1954 G & H Perl, who were the Nuffield Distributors in Austria, showed a TD chassis clad in a streamlined, light alloy body. This was fitted with a curved radiator and had the headlights inset low in the front wings. The windscreen was V-shaped rather than curved. Another car, similar in shape but with an 'Allard' shaped grill, was later also built.

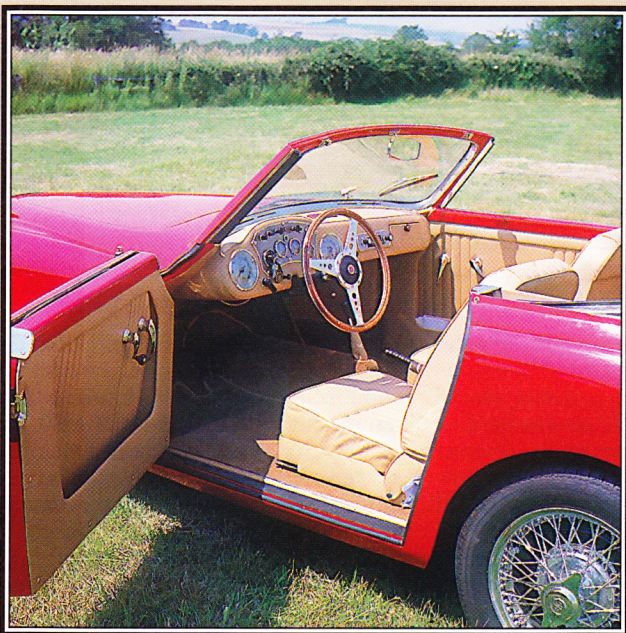
Karosserie Wendler of Reutlingen, Germany built both open and closed versions of the TD. Three of the cars they constructed were ordered by Heinz Moelders. A drop-head coupe, of slab sided appearance, utilised the MG radia-







The Arnolt TD, designed by Bertone, was available in both roadster and coupe.



The Arnolt TD boasted expensive leather trim - a major selling point.

tor; a roadster had similar, but more flowing lines but the coupe was the nicest of the three and much more elegant. Wendler also built a very neat coupe which had the headlights set into a wide grille. The only identification on this car was an MG badge on the bonnet.

At the end of 1952 B. Veth and Sons of Arnhem, Holland built a two seater with generous luggage space. Priced at £900, the 'knife edge' style of bodywork, constructed in steel over a wooden framework, was, perhaps, not to everyone's taste.

to the chassis frame, the prop shaft lengthened to suit, and the body cut in half in front of the rear door pillars. The body sides were replaced and new, longer doors fitted. The running boards were also modified.

Inside the bench seat was discarded and separate front tilting bucket seats fitted, together with a fully upholstered rear seat. Both the hood and sidescreens were modified to fit the longer car. Quite a number were sold and some survive.

Dave Ash of Inskip Motors was also involved in another version of the TD -

The coachbuilder, Vignale, made just one coupe on the TD chassis. The design of this closely followed their 'house style' and was similar to bodies they fitted on other makes of chassis. This car survives and is currently being restored in Italy.

There has always been a demand for more space in MG sports cars. The MGB GT was created to capitalise on the family car market and in the States one importer, J. S. Inskip Inc., New York, had the same idea for the TD. Standard TDs had ten inches added

the Motto MG. Three cars were built, one on a TD chassis and two more on tubular chassis with TD engines. The bodywork was by Carozzeria Motto of Turin. The car with the TD chassis and one of the others are known to have survived.

Not strictly special bodied but none the less very interesting are a number of TDs built by Hennfirth of Stuttgart and sold through German MG dealers as standard TDs. These cars appear to have been built on MG chassis without any drawings or patterns being supplied by Abingdon. As a consequence, although they look like TDs, all the body parts differ slightly from the factory items. These cars were purchased mainly by American G.I.s, many of whom took them back to the United States. The different construction has caused problems for subsequent owners when they tried to fit replacement TD parts to their cars. The shape of all the exterior panels differs slightly and the car is over two inches wider! The wiring and electrics come from German sources; the interior trim and exterior colours differed from the Abingdon cars. Imagine trying to restore one of these to original now.

Although I have mentioned some of the special bodies fitted to TDs I have not covered all of them. In addition to these there were a number of racing specials and even now you can buy a 'high-tech' kit of parts to construct a TD Airline coupe - now that would be a nice project!

**Malcolm Green**