

Dates: 1967-69

Numbers Built: Roadster: 4,544 GT: 4,458

Body/Chassis: Steel unitary, 2-seater open sports (GT: rear-hatch fixed-head coupé).

Engine: 2912cc, 6-cyl in-line, ohv, 150bhp (gross)/145bhp (net).

Layout: Front engine, rear wheel drive, 4-speed manual gearbox (optional overdrive) or 3-speed automatic gearbox.

Performance: Top speed c.120mph, 0-60mph in c.10sec.

Prices Today: Roadster: ££+ GT: ££

The MGC was not an MGB replacement, but intended to supersede the Austin-Healey 3000 – though the Healeys distanced themselves from the project and it was never sold as an Austin-Healey. The MGC looked identical to the MGB except for a prominent bonnet bulge, 15-inch wheels rather than 14-inch, and it stood about 1-inch higher than a standard “B”.

The MGC GT was launched at the same time as the mechanically identical Roadster. The main difference between them and the MGBs was that they used the C-Series six-cylinder engine. The earlier “Big Healey” had also used a C-Series engine with the same capacity (2912cc), but the one used in the MGCs was different due to a major redesign of the engine. The new version had seven rather than four main bearings and a new cylinder block which made the engine shorter by about 1.75 inches, and lighter by about 44lb (20kg), but it still weighed over 200lb (90kg) more than the MGB’s four-cylinder B-Series engine. Overall, an MGC weighed about one sixth more than an equivalent MGB and its weight distribution was very slightly more nose-heavy.

Because the C-Series engine was much bigger than the B-Series engine, many changes were required to accommodate it. The radiator was moved as far forward as possible, a new welded-in crossmember was required and the front suspension was altered to incorporate torsion bars and telescopic dampers. The car had larger front disc brakes than the then current MGB and they were servo-assisted (which was not the case with the “B” at that time). The rear suspension was altered, having seven rather than five leaf springs. There was also a new all-synchromesh gearbox and stronger rear axle. From late 1967 the MGC was available with an automatic gearbox, using the Borg-Warner Type 35 unit.

As for the bodywork, apart from the bonnet, inner wings and internally strengthened areas such as the bulkhead and the floor panels, the body panels for the “C” were the same as the “B”. The interior trim and equipment was initially identical, except the “C” had its speedo calibrated to 140mph (rather than 120mph) and there were other minor differences. From late 1968, there were improvements including lever-adjustable seat backs and different ratios in the gearbox and rear axle.

Almost half the cars produced were exported to America. These cars had thick safety padding on the passenger side of the dashboard, dual-circuit brakes and



Above: An MGC Roadster with optional wire wheels.

the Roadsters were fitted with triple wipers to comply with safety regulations regarding the swept area of the windscreen (the taller screen of the GT was not affected). Later, the cars also had head restraints and side reflectors (changed later still to side marker lights).

Though it was a fast, stable and effortless cruiser, the MGC was not well received by the motoring press, in part due to a tendency to understeer. The criticism was not entirely justified as it was subsequently found that the demo cars were fitted with incorrect tyres and with tyre pressures that were too low. Interestingly, the automatic version impressed many of the journalists.

Production of the MGC was discontinued in August 1969. At the end, University Motors in London bought the last 141 cars, comprising 23 Roadsters and 118 GTs. They specially modified about 20 and these are quite valuable today but note there are some standard cars that have been modified by owners to look like one of the University Motors’ Specials. Continued....

Below: From this angle, only the larger wheels and rear badge indicate that this is an MGC rather than an MGB.

