



&



FARINA
REGISTER

Newsletter

*For the enthusiast of the
BMC Farina Riley 4/68, 4/72,
MG Midget Mk 3 and Mk 4*

ISSUE 44

JUNE, 2004

CYPRIOT SURPRISE!



*Pictured is this striking jade green and white Riley 4/68 in
Limassol, Cyprus, owned by Mr Glykanissos.
See inside for more Cypriot Surprises.*

MG & RILEY FARINA REGISTER

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FINS AND THINGS

THE STYLING of cars in the 1950s was used to hide what was underneath. Many manufacturers changed body panels and trim annually to keep their cars up to date as far as 'styles' went. Whilst many 1950s models now used a chassisless construction, the actual running gear was very closely related to the bits fitted prior to WW2. It was ideal to be able to keep the hidden parts unchanged, keeping down costs. Things had improved as the majority of family cars now had overhead valve engines and the typical 1500cc four door saloon had 50bhp to propel it along. By 1958 the UK actually opened its first motorway, the Preston by-pass, in Lancashire. The M1 followed in 1959, but only ran for fifty miles north of London, ending at Crick in Northamptonshire. Nonetheless, it was imperative that the car makers kept well up with the current styling; and as usual, this country followed the USA. Even if the cars were no faster after each styling change they had to look as if they were.

Because of the success of the USA space programme (though Russia beat them into space with a manned rocket carrying Yuri Gargarin), people saw this as the signs of the future. In the UK a tentative foot in the styling water was Ford, with the bonnet motif of a small jet aircraft in chrome adorning the Ford Zephyr Six (EOTTA model) in 1951. To connect the model to the success of the new jet aircraft and space flight was to improve sales, they hoped. The flowing lines of the new Hawker Hunter fighter and the De Havilland Comet airliner were to be seen repeated in the flowing lines of cars' wings, again to give an impression of speed and modernity. Fins were nothing new, fish had had them since time immemorial, and aircraft found them useful to keep flying in a straight line. Fins were for stability. But whilst fish and aircraft actually used their fins, such things fitted to the average car were just for show. A little like the rear spoilers one sees on modern cars fitted to boot lids and rear engine covers. These are totally useless until they reach about 120mph, in a country with a blanket 70mph speed limit! But they are the current 'style'. By 1955 the Austin A40 Cambridge saloon had a very small suggestion of fins atop of its rear wings, a rather restrained copying of the by now flamboyant styles of cars in the USA. The 1956 Ford Consul, Zephyr and Zodiac Mk2 models had definite fins on each side of the boot lid, with the rear light cluster filling the rear end, but still very restrained. By 1957 the Austin A55 Cambridge had a duo-tone colour scheme that picked out the tiny rear fins, but the new Vauxhall Victor series F

WELCOME to the Summer issue. You should now be out and about enjoying your cars. This issue has a Cypriot flavour to it as you will see from the front cover.

The Cypriot surprise I received was when I got a letter from Christopher Sofroniou of Limassol in Cyprus a couple of months ago. He included photos and forms of numerous new MG and Riley Farinas in the south of the island (more inside). With Christopher in the south and Mehmet Necdet in the north, this means we are well up to date with the cars in Cyprus—thank you to you both!

I recently attended the COOC Yorkshire gathering where three Riley's, including my own, were in attendance, but alas no Magnettes.

My own fleet has altered with the reluctant sale of my 13000 miles from new 1971 Wolseley 16/60. The void was soon filled with a 'solid as a rock' 1961 Austin A55 Mk2 Cambridge project from e-bay of all places.

Enjoy the Summer,

Mick

went the whole way. It had a full set of rear fins, complete with an exhaust pipe that exited the rear via a round jet-pipe styled hole in the rear bumper.

But it was 1958 that saw the watershed in the arrival of the rear fin. The Rootes Group introduced their 1958 two-door Sunbeam Rapier series 2 with rolled-over fins from the 'C' post to the rear light units. The other Rootes models that used the same floorpan and body followed. The 1958 Vauxhall Velox PA also had large rear fins on its new USA styled body. The fin had arrived on the British saloon car! They had been adorning cars in the USA for a good four or five years, getting bigger and bolder each model year and often OTT.

In 1959 the BMC Corporation introduced its new corporate model that would cover all its marques. The Austin A55 Mk2, Morris Oxford Series 5, Wolseley 15/50, Riley 4/68 and the MG Magnette Mk3 were released to the public one at a time. The model used the floorpan of the current Austin A55 Cambridge, but with a completely restyled body by the Italian Pinin Farina. The model was dubbed the 'Farina' after its stylist, and its most outstanding styling features were its enormous rear fins. They towered cathedral-like at the rear, enclosing the rear light clusters and permitting an enormous boot. Each model has slight variations of rear lights, but the basic body-tubs were identical. The car was a mixture of Italian styling, American flair and English layout. This was really obvious in the two plush models at the top of the Farina range. The MG Magnette Mk3 and Riley 4/68 had leather seats, polished rosewood dash and woollen carpets, complete with a twin carburettor BMC 'B' series engine closely related to the MGA 1500 (though an earlier version of 68bhp, not the current 1959 72bhp model). The fins on the MG and Riley Farina were different to the other Farina models. They were cut short, giving a forward slant to the top half. This restraint actually improved the look over the tall versions on the Austin, Morris and Wolseley. This was so true that the update of the models in 1961 led to the MG and Riley continuing with their fins, but the others getting a severe chop, reducing their height by about three inches. The taller fins did have one very good use—they told you where the rear end of the car was through the rear window, unlike modern cars. Whilst the Mk3 and Mk4 Magnettes were the only MGs ever fitted with fins, the smaller Riley 1.5 did sport very tiny ones, similar to the earlier Austin A55 of 1957.

Those tail fins were to be a conversation point for years to come, and in 2004, some 45 years later, still draw comments at old car meetings. BMC had fitted the biggest fins of any UK model (but not including the huge ones fitted to a bespoke export Rolls Royce Silver Cloud by Freestone and Webb in 1958—the car looked almost like the Bat-Mobile). You either love them or hate them, but they suit the body style. BMC tried to reduce them on the bigger Vanden-Plas Princess 'R', but it looked odd, like a dog with a clipped tail. By 1961 the Farina models did have their fins lowered, but not the MG or Riley versions. The MG Magnette Mk4 flew its fins until 1968, and the Riley 4/72 until 1969.

NEIL CAIRNS



COOC AGM and AUTUMN RALLY

at the
British Commercial Vehicle Museum, Leyland

Sunday, 3rd October, 2004.

Contact: Mick Holehouse
Tel: 01282 605563

COOC BMC/BL SPARES DAY

at FERRY MEADOWS, PETERBOROUGH

on Sunday, 1st August, 2004

Contact
Les Williams
Tel: 01234 870372

STOLEN

The very sad news received in April was that *Newsletter* member Terry Brookes of Maidstone, Kent had his Mk4 Magnette stolen from a locked garage. It is believed to have been a theft for Banger Racing. This seems to be a particular problem in south-east England and vigilance is required while these sick disgusting low-life are at large! (swearing isn't allowed in the *Newsletter*).

Please keep a lookout for the car.

Registration plate: MHO 373F.

Chassis: 30748; Engine: 16GF-U-H-3461.

Colours: top half green; lower half white

Contact the Register with any information.

CYPRIOT SHOTS



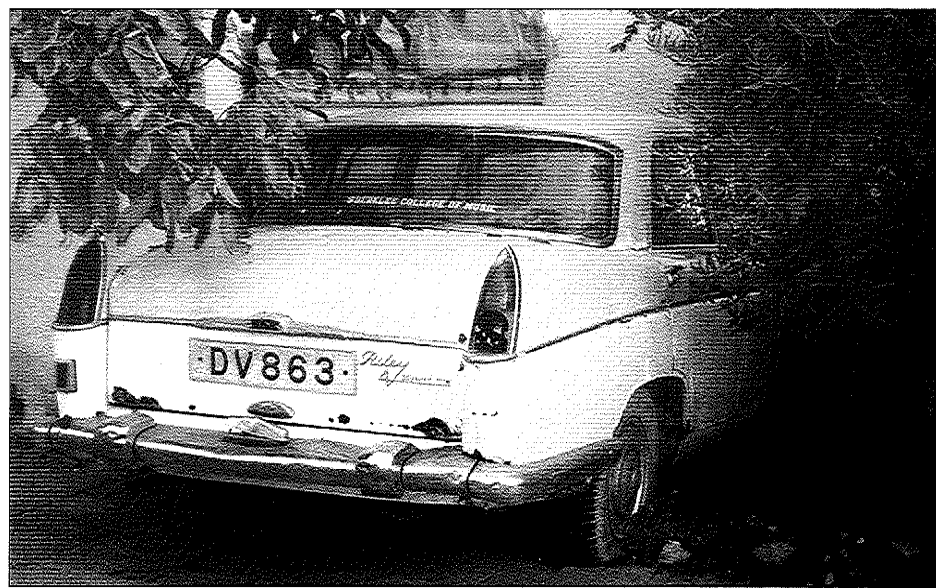
Spotted on the streets of Limassol, a grey Magnette Mk4 owned by C. Achilleos. — Chassis 30900, DM905.



Sheltering from the hot Cypriot sun is Riley 4/72, owned by D. Opphanides. Chassis 23168, DE606.



No. 23 — Mk4 Magnette, chassis 22361, TCT997, ready for some motorsport in Nicosia.



In need of some TLC and partly bidden by bushes, Riley 4/72, DV863, chassis 24308, awaits some enthusiastic inspiration!

NOSTALGIA

WHETHER WE LIKE IT or not, the performance of the MG and Riley Farina saloons is rather pedestrian today. It is true that they sold more on their intended image than their out and out performance and road-holding, and possibly to a more elderly type of owner than did perhaps other sports saloons of the day. Whilst the Morris, Wolseley and Austin versions of the models sold very well, often on their legendary reliability ticket as many went to taxi and hire-car firms, the MGs and Rileys were produced in very small numbers. The whole range of Farina cars were well beyond their 'sell-by' date when the Morris Oxford and Wolseley 16/60 finally ended production in 1971. The cars were, after all, based on the 1947 Austin A40 in their technical detail and construction, even the floorpan layout with its full length floor stiffeners followed exactly the chassis legs of that A40. But this was not unique to the BMC concern, as other British car makers were also getting as much as they could out of older designs. The engine in the 1967 Humber Hawk, that continued in the Commer van seen in use by the Post Office till the mid 1980s, could trace its ancestry back to a side-valve engine made for the Hillman 12hp back in 1923.

What other cars of a similar size and range were there about on our roads that the MG Magnette and Rileys ran alongside of back in the late 50s and early 60s? The MG and Riley Farina were the epitome of solid respectability.

Obviously there were the sister models of the Farina, the 1489cc and 1622cc versions of the Austin A55 Mk2 and A60, Morris Oxford s5 and s6, the Wolseley 15/60 and 16/60 along with the estate cars of the Cambridge and Oxford, the Austin Countryman and Morris Traveller. All these were so common they became part of the town street furniture.

Ford had their Consul Classic 315 and Capri in two sizes, with the early model having a 1340cc engine, the later one a 1498cc engine. Top speed of both of these models was almost identical to our 1489cc cars, at 78.5mph and 80.7mph. The Ford Consul Corsair was an elegant version on the same floorpan, but this used only the 1498cc engine, getting to 85mph with it. There was a 'GT' version that could reach 92.5mph. All these Fords were quite heavy, and they were replaced with

the famous Cortina in 1200, 1500 and 1500GT forms. The Cortina caused a lot of pain in the UK motor industry and affected the sales of Rootes, Vauxhall and BMC because it was so good. In design, it was years ahead of the poor Farina, only weighing 16cwt against the Farina's 22cwt. That alone gave it a good edge on performance. The Cortina could reach 77mph with a 1200cc engine and 85mph on a 1498cc engine; the same speed 1622cc managed to push the Farina to—and the Cortina got there much quicker!

The Rootes Group had a very similar line-up to BMC, also using its various marques to delineate the standard of luxury of each model. Hillman were still making their Minx in series, the s3, s5 and s6 being ones running alongside the Farina. They were heavy cars just like the Farina and used a 1494cc and 1594cc engine. The s4 and s5 cars ran up to 82mph with the s6 making 88mph. The s6 had a 1725cc version of the engine, as fitted to the new Super Minx that followed it. These engines were shared by the Singer Gazelle, Vogue and Sunbeam Rapier. All used the same body with differing badging, the Rapier having a two-door version; with twin carburettors and very good performance. Just like the A60 was supposed to be replaced by the Austin Maxi and 1800 but was kept in production; the s6 Minx was supposed to be replaced with the Super Minx, but Rootes built them alongside each other. The Super Minx in Mk1, 2 and 3 versions first arrived in 1961. It eventually had its body shell used for the Humber Sceptre and Singer Vogue, all being seen as estate cars as well. The Mk1 had the 1592cc engine and could reach 86mph; the 1725cc Mk2 and Mk3 could reach 87mph but got to 60 nearly five seconds sooner.

Vauxhall were selling the very flamboyant Victor series with its 'panoramic' windscreen when the first BMC Farinas arrived. Its 1508cc engine was very good, but the poor Victor's body was not—it rusted away at a terrible rate. The car could reach 78mph. In 1961 the Victor became the FB series using the same running gear as the F. This gave way to the Victor 101 series, but still with the same underpinnings. Performance of these two was the same as the F. Like BMC's production of the MG and Riley Farinas as sporting models, Vauxhall built the Victor FB VX 4/90. This had twin carburettors and reached 88mph, getting to 60mph in just 16.9 seconds. It took the Riley 4/72 twenty seconds.

Of all these models, only the Singer Gazelle, Vogue and Vauxhall's VX 4/90 really came anywhere near to the MG and Riley standard of luxury. The Humber Sceptre was in a different category all together. Fords were cheap and cheerful, but sold by the hundreds of thousands. Our cars struggled to reach 30,000 each in nine years.

NEIL CAIRNS

CHANGES TO CAR LISTS

MG

New car: Mk 3, chassis 8905, 251FTR. Owner: A. Casson, Doncaster, England.

New car: Mk 3, AV528. Location: Limassol, Cyprus. No more details known.

New car: Mk 4, chassis 30900. Owner: C. Achilleos, Limassol, Cyprus.

New car: Mk 4, chassis 22361. Owner: P. Katsiolondes, Nicosia, Cyprus.

New car: Mk 4, JPX515D. Location: Horsham, England. No more details known.

Mk 3, chassis 2728, VOU280. New owner: A. Barwick, North Walsham, Norfolk, England.

Mk 4, chassis 19174, 48KM. New registration: NSL934. This car appears twice on the list, also as NSL934 with no chassis number.

Mk 4, chassis 29243, JRC824D. New owner: M. Morris, Rawmarsh, South Yorkshire, England.

Car scrapped: Mk4, chassis 28116, MGK520D.

Car stolen: Mk4, chassis 30748, MHO373F

RILEY

New car: 4/68, chassis 4873. Owner: C. Glykanissos, Limassol, Cyprus.

New car: 4/68, 1968PU. Location: Romford, England. No more details known.

New car: 4/72, EF494. Location: Limassol, Cyprus. No more details known.

New car: 4/72, chassis 24308. Owner: I. Irodoton, Limassol, Cyprus.

New car: 4/72, chassis 23168. Owner: D. Opphanides, Limassol, Cyprus.

New car: 4/72, chassis 18519. Owner: R. Curtis, Wellington, New Zealand.

New car: 4/72, chassis 23373, KKK486E. Owner: J. Gallacher, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England.

4/68, chassis 994, HVS516. New owner: Soley, London, England.

4/72, chassis 16515, ONW498B. New owner: A. Cosans, Grays, Essex, England.

4/72, EYC135C. Chassis is 20421. Owner: B. Roadnight, Edmonton, London, England.

CLASSIFIEDS

CARS FOR SALE

Riley 4/68, 1961. Smoke grey with blue leather interior; MOT February, 2005. Later 1622cc engine fitted. Runs and drives extremely smoothly with plenty of power; twin carbs fitted; recent bodywork overhaul and nice new professional paint job to bring up to scratch; good chrome; very solid underneath. Offers invited.

Contact Mick Holehouse. Telephone 01282 605563, evenings and weekends.

MG Magnette Mk4, 1966. Rose taupe with terracotta interior; good very original condition. Offers considered.

Contact Chris Houghton, Windsor. Telephone 01753 866867.

E.mail: choughton@iclway.co.uk

PARTS FOR SALE

Roger Webb has what he describes as 'various parts' for Wolseley, Riley, Austin and Morris Farinas, such as doors, steering rods, shock absorbers, bonnet, front grille, bumper and seats available, so give him a call if you need anything.

Contact Roger Webb, Bishops Stortford, Hertfordshire.

Telephone: 01279 870928.

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by Neil Cairns

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3	Living with the MG Metro 1300 Articles on this nippy little hot-hatch. 85 pages.	£9.00
4	The Cinderella MG and Riley Farina A history of this now rare model. 110 pages.	£10.00
5	'Y' Type Information Lots of data and out of print information on this smart little MG saloon.	£9.00
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