

# Family cars with an

**Intriguing four-door alternatives from the great Abingdon marque**

**T**he two-seater sports cars are not the only Octagon-badged classics worthy of your attention. If you're a long-time lover of MGs you'll know this already, but even seasoned fans might need their horizons expanded somewhat. After all, it's rare to find people who like both small family saloons from the 1940s and bodykitted road-burners from the 21st Century. Yet both, in their own way, flew the flag for MG's uniquely British combination of affordable performance and sporting appeal.

The strength of every MG was its close relationship to something more modest. They may have been tuned, facelifted, even re-engineered, but the Morris, BMC, British Leyland or Rover DNA was never far below the skin. Detractors would point this out as a weakness, but MG was never trying to beat expensive foreign marques at their own game (at least not until the 1990s) so the kudos that badge-engineered MG saloons offered was appealing because it was so affordable. It remains so today.

We'll start with a taste of sporting times past in the nimble Y-type saloon, move forward a generation to its replacement, the dashing ZA/ZB Midgette, then check out the first front-wheel drive MG in the form of the ADO16 1100/1300 models. Our 1980s sporting sedan is the somewhat unloved, but rare, Montego. And to round things off, we're calling attention to an oft-ignored BMW-baiter, the MG ZT.

For more advice, you know where to look: [www.mgcc.co.uk](http://www.mgcc.co.uk) and [www.mgownersclub.co.uk](http://www.mgownersclub.co.uk).



V8 version of the ZT got rear-wheel drive...

**What car?**



1947-53  
**YA/YB**  
Target Price **£13,000**

**What's so special about it?**

▶ It's an MG TC engine in a Morris 8-sized saloon. There's a four-speed floor change, lovely rack-and-pinion steering, independent front suspension and almost a Jaguar's worth of leather and wood inside. Instant kudos at any MG gathering.

**Is there a fun factor?**

▶ Yes, but to be honest it's more in the time-shift experience of 1940s motoring – string-back gloves, bottled Bass in the picnic hamper – than in sizzling performance. That 1250cc TC engine is detuned (only one carb) and 70mph is flat-out.

**Can I use it every day?**



▶ There are better choices for everyday motoring, not because reliability would be much of an issue, but because it would struggle in fast traffic and need a lot of TLC to keep it smart.

**What goes wrong?**

▶ Beware large or variable door gaps and rusty door bottoms, also dry, rusty-looking kingpins or a worn engine making continuous blue smoke. The chassis can rust at the rear – check the spare wheel area and rear spring hangers.

**Parts and clubs**

▶ The major clubs have their Y-type registers and the major MG suppliers carry some parts for these models. Also look at the International MG Y-type Register ([www.mgytypes.org](http://www.mgytypes.org)), which provides links to various specialists.

**How much will it set me back?**

▶ Restoration projects start about £2000. The best fetch up to £15,000, but anything over £10,000 should be presentable and pleasant to drive.



1953-58  
**Midgette ZA/ZB**  
Target Price **£8000**

▶ It's a giant leap from the pre-WWII origins of the Y-type, both in styling and also in engineering: the B-series engine makes its MG debut here and you also get full-width looks and unitary construction that make the most of the car's modest size.

▶ Midgettes have a well-deserved reputation as drivers' cars thanks to excellent roadholding, a close-ratio 'box and plenty of go for a 1500cc saloon (especially in ZB form). Still popular on classic rallies and the interiors are lovely.

▶ The Midgette makes a plausible option for daily use, but it's still a 60-year-old design and that shows through on any fast dual-carriageway or motorway. Winter salt will eat through a Midgette like moths on a wool suit – beware.

▶ Almost everything up to the waistline can rot away. Check especially the sills, wings behind each wheel, and the doors. Serious rust in the floorpan is your cue to walk away. As with the Y-type, rough interiors soak up funds.

▶ Start at [www.midgette.org](http://www.midgette.org), then look for specialists like NTG Motor Services ([www.mgbits.com](http://www.mgbits.com)), Moto-Build Ltd ([www.moto-build.co.uk](http://www.moto-build.co.uk)) and MG Specialists in Norfolk ([www.mgspecs.co.uk](http://www.mgspecs.co.uk)). Other suppliers are listed on the clubs' websites.

▶ The final Varitone models can fetch more than £15,000, but £12,000 is enough for a really good ZB, £10,000 for a ZA, and £7000-£9000ish the range for cars with no serious needs.





# MG twist

1100/1300 can be two- or four-door.



1962-73  
**MG 1100/1300**  
Target price £4000



1984-91  
**MG Montego**  
Target Price £1600



2001-05  
**MG ZT**  
Target Price £2250

► It's the most fun of an already entertaining range of cars. Just about every BMC badge you can think of appeared on the 1100/1300 range, but the MG variants offered the best combination of affordability, looks, performance and interior goodies.

► All BMC's ADO16 models offer a few grins for the driver, thanks to the feeling of an expanded Mini in their general perkiness and roadholding. Anything with a 1275cc engine, especially in twin-carb form, adds real fizz and brings 100mph within reach – just.

► They still make terrific city cars and will bounce through the potholes on a daily basis if you need them to. Two reservations – the same trouble with winter salt as the Magnette and the likely wear (and, therefore, need for repair) of the Hydrolastic suspension.

► That suspension is only a worry if the car is sitting down on one side. Rust is the real threat: check inner wings, front bulkhead, sills, floors and rear subframe.



► Mini specialists are a good source of the various common mechanical items, but also try [www.austin1100-1300.co.uk](http://www.austin1100-1300.co.uk), BL Transverse ([www.bltransverse-minimetro.co.uk](http://www.bltransverse-minimetro.co.uk)) and Bumper to Bumper in Suffolk (01502 740128).

► These are now pretty rare thanks to decades of rock-bottom values, and that's pushing up prices. The best 1300 two-doors exceed £6000, while £2500 is the least you should pay for a solid, useable four-door; £4000 will buy a nice 1100/1300 with room for improvement.

► We might have to resort to inverse snobbery here. No-one else will have one, it will make men aged 28 to 38 very nostalgic, and it's got, er... red seatbelts.



► There is fun to be had from the 2.0 fuel-injected O-series (0-60mph in nine seconds) but, for real thrills, seek out the Turbo. It shaved two seconds off the 0-60mph time and delivered its 150bhp with such lag that the unrefined FWD set-up got a little over-excited.

► Yes, there's nothing to stop you taking your Montego back to its daily-driver, family-hack roots. But be prepared for 1980s reliability quirks, amplified by the wear and tear of 25 years – few have been restored, as such. Be sure to keep on top of oil leaks and cambelt changes.

► Minor failures add up: cracked bumpers and facias, dead central locking, floppy rooflining... Check for rust around the windscreen, sill to rear wing join and cosmetic nasties like door bottoms and arches.

► Go directly to the Maestro and Montego Owners' Club ([www.maestro.org.uk](http://www.maestro.org.uk)), which will be more help for practical advice and parts-sourcing than the MG clubs. Secondhand parts are sold on the site and the club has stockpiled a great many genuine NOS parts.

► Think the MG 1100/1300 is rare? MG Montegos are becoming like hens' dentures. Many are projects, shifted for a few hundred; £1500-£2000 should buy an enthusiast-owned car with no structural rot.



► It's the best executive saloon Rover made since the P6. Sorry, SD1 and 800 fans, but the build quality, interior fittings and comprehensive range of drivetrains make this reworked Rover 75 a bit of a gem.

► Fun? You bet – there are some fast cars among this lot. The naturally aspirated 1.8 is a little underwhelming, but the rest, from the 160bhp 1.8 turbo via the two V6s to the rear-drive, Mustang-sourced 4.6 V8 are a hoot. Even the 2.0 CDTi is satisfying.

► Daily use is the reason to buy one. Only the V8 is likely to give you cause to keep the miles down, and even this rare, thirsty, modern classic will cope effortlessly should you need to hop into it for the commute or school run. There's also an estate – the ZT-T is a great load-lugger.

► Not much. Rustproofing and build quality mean most have survived more or less unscathed, but be a stickler for service history, exterior and interior condition and a smooth, rattle-free drive. Turbos can blow head gaskets, so check oil and water aren't mixing.

► Yes, Rover might have gone the way of the dodo (albeit with a Chinese rebirth) but the cars are new enough to get most things through your motor factor. Check out [www.the75andZTclub.co.uk](http://www.the75andZTclub.co.uk), a forum called [www.MG-rover.org](http://www.MG-rover.org) and a dedicated site for the V8s: [www.two-sixties.com](http://www.two-sixties.com).

► V6s or 1.8s start below £1000, but for our target of £2250 you'll find a low-mileage, history-clad 190bhp version. The best diesels start at £3000, the V8s at £5000.