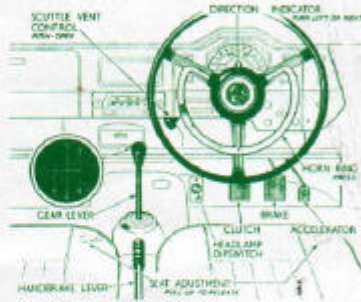


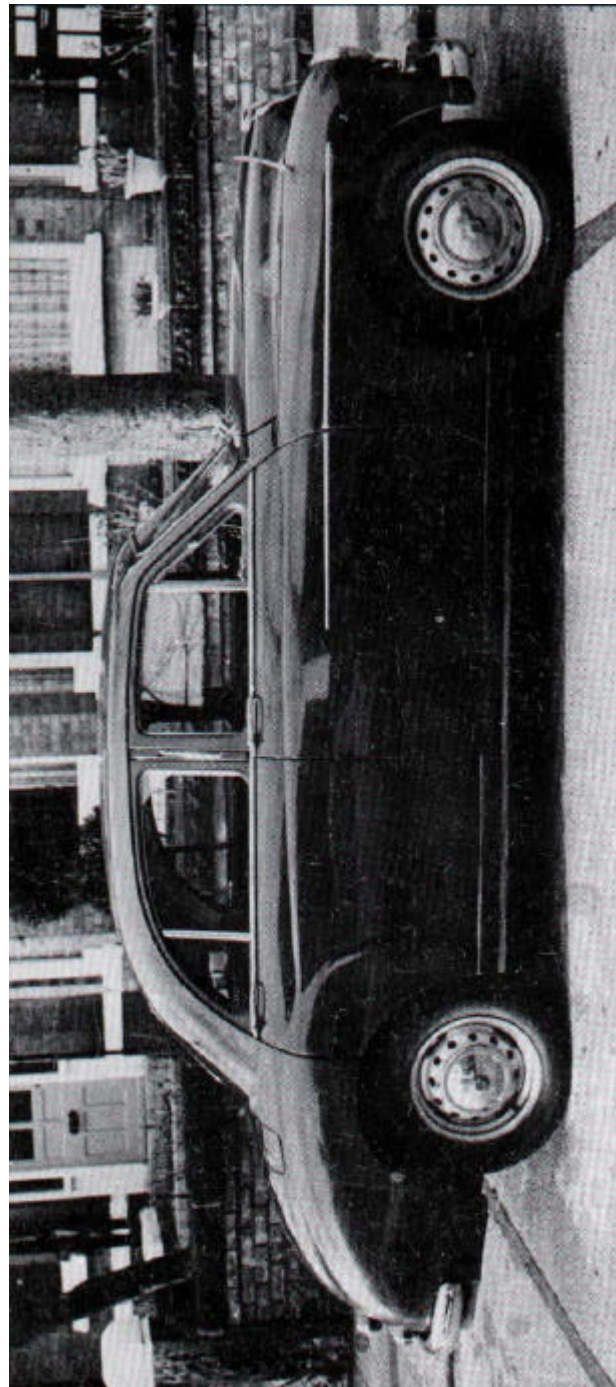
The handbook shows us that the Magnette owner is always unhurried



The dashboard explained by the owners' manual



This interior photograph shows the luxurious standard to which this car was fitted. A style and standard not to be repeated — can't you sense the wood and leather!



Magnette Z-series



The last MG saloon
built at the Abingdon
works
1953-58

Style of Yesteryear

This marvellous car is a relic of a motoring era with different values, a time when petrol was cheap, and as standard most cars had leather seats. The back seat has its folding arm (hours of amusement for a child!), a warm looking wooden dashboard and solid steering wheel all add to the more relaxed pace and overriding importance of quality this period expected. Solid as a tank, and even the indicators flash slowly! Class differences were pronounced however, and the MG Midget was definitely a middle class car. Autocar magazine in its review of the ZA in 1953, described the car as a perfect choice for the young married man who finally must sell his sports MG for the sake of a growing family. Even the current chairman of the MG Car Club ZB register has done just that.

My reason for producing this leaflet is owning the ZB featured on the cover. The enjoyment to be had can best be found by experiencing the comfort of the seats, and the sensation of being pushed back in them as the car accelerates. When making some research into its history, I found this particular car was built in 1958. Its body number looked up in the B.M.C. manual tells us the car's original colours were meant to be cream and red, and was left hand drive, intended for export. Its quaint semaphore indicators (trafficators) were never connected, and were probably too hard to see!

The first entry in the log book is a garage in Sunderland. And it's possibly there that the car was converted to right hand drive. The next owner had her until 1982, when she was sold to the fellow we bought her from. He replaced a number of parts, the most striking being the engine! The worn B series engine going for a 1970's MGB 1798 c.c. one. Even though the car was fast enough in its day at over 80 m.p.h.. she'll now top 100! The dashboard top was swapped for one of another ZB, and servo assisted brakes added to compensate for the extra power under the hood. A period radio quite completes the interior feel, although Radio One never sounds quite right! Luckily, the only work we've had, was to replace the end of the exhaust, lost on the M6!

A prize winning rally car in its heyday, and the most popular model of its kind through the late 1950's. the MG Midget Z-series still remains a practical car to run and maintain, with many parts available and enthusiasts all over the country. But its winning way is that, as you sit back into the seat and find a satisfying smell of leather and wood, solid construction and thoroughbred feel, you'll want one too



ZB Varitone



ZA Midget



Wolsely 4/44

Origins and Development

In 1952, the British Motor Corporation (BMC), the post war amalgamation of British car manufacturers, decided a new saloon was necessary to replace the YB model MG saloon car. Ex Jowett designer Gerald Palmer (responsible for MG. Wolsely and Riley, whilst Alex Issigonis, designer of the Mini, worked on Morris) proposed that the same body should be used for both an MG and Wolsely version. When you consider that Palmer was an ex MG designer and during his spell at Jowett he designed the Monte Carlo Rally class winning Javelin, you must concede a bias towards the MG version of the car. Although this dual version method is just what "badge engineering" was about, differences were not only the radiator and badges, but the engine, gearbox and chassis. From the beginning, the differences between the luxury (Wolsely) and sporting (MG) models were emphasised.

At the 1952 motor show the Wolsely 4/44 was unveiled. The new body was considered to be in "Italian style", but it was heavy for the 12 b.h.p. of its 1250 cc. engine of the old MG YB it was fitted with. At this point, the car had steering column gear change.

One year later, the MG Midget ZA came on the market with the same body, steering and suspension (relying on previous MG designs) but a new engine, gearbox, and floor mounted gearlever. This was the first car to have the B.M.C. "B" series engine, the start of a line which even powered the last MG! It was a 4 cylinder pushrod overhead valve engine of 1489 c.c.. developing 60 b.h.p. A sturdy workhorse and very reliable. In 1956, when the ZB was introduced, price £915 with tax, the power was increased to 68 b.h.p., and the suspension settings were revised to make the handling better.

With the introduction of the ZB came the ZB Varitone, an attempt at contemporary fashion, with the car having a chrome strip along the bonnet, separating the upper and lower halves in two colours. This car also had a larger curved rear window, more practical than the small window with large stanchions on the ZA. This modification was not tooled up for at Pressed Steel's Cowley factory, where the body was made, but simply cut out of the body on the production line at MG Abingdon. A small number of ZBs had "Manumatic" gear change, an early attempt to provide at least semi-automatic transmission for small capacity cars.

By 1958, when the car ceased production, there were only the MGA and Midget being made at the Abingdon MG works, with the two production lines running alongside one another.