

# MG TC



Pre-war design that won the hearts of America and ramped up Abingdon production

**B**ritain's dominance in the post-WW2 car industry can be attributed to a handful of key models. Just think of the impact the Jaguar XK120 and Triumph's TRs made across the Atlantic. Our motoring heritage would read very differently if it hadn't been for cars such as those and, of course, the T-series MGs. This was the model that endeared British sports cars to America and the rest of the world, as thousands of returning GIs spread the word after falling for their pretty lines and nimble road manners while on tours of duty during the war. And with some 10,000 examples rolling out of Abingdon in just five years, the TC was a veritable blockbuster compared to MG's three- and four-figure production runs prior to the hostilities. It may have been little more than a warmed-over pre-war TA, but the TC's success inspired the famous octagon brand's rise to becoming a near dictionary definition of the sports car.

Get behind the wheel of one today and you'll quickly understand why those GIs were hooked: TCs are as captivating to drive as they are to look at. With a low, firm ride from its underslung chassis, delightfully frank road manners and a willing engine, a TC enthralled with the simple,

predictable pleasures of pre-war motoring. It's those attributes that Abingdon relied upon when it restarted car production. With little opportunity for research and development during the war, MG dusted off the design for the XPAG-engined TB that had abruptly ceased in 1939 after a mere 379 were built. Gambling on the pre-war Midgets having made enough of a mark for the TB's styling and mechanics to still be successful, the only changes were a revised design for the rear spring hanger and a slightly wider body to improve cockpit space.

Nonetheless, the TC was still a breath of fresh air in a sea of automotive austerity and it became the wheels of choice for young blades in search of the fairer sex. A raft of tuning accessories emerged to make them quicker and many a cut-down TC gave its owner their first taste of the track. TCs were also coveted as student wheels in the 1950s and '60s, which is how Australian Michael Card was introduced to the model in early-'60s Melbourne. Three decades later – and by then in the UK – he decided to rekindle those memories by treating himself to this fine 1949 example, which turned out not to be as good as it looked: "It was complete and running, but was full of plastic filler underneath." Seven years on,

Card finally completed a total restoration over 18 months, doing everything himself bar the upholstery and paintwork. The result is exceptionally impressive, with his TC boasting perfect panel gaps and exquisite paintwork.

TC values have always been strong and they remain one of the best post-war MGs to opt for as an investment. "A year and a half ago few TCs made £20k," says model specialist Peter Edney, "but now most are selling for over that. Scruffy originals in need of restoration are still around from £14k, but you'll have to pay double that for a concours, nut-and-bolt restored example." Compromised styling makes the TD – the TC's successor – around 25% cheaper, but the more mechanically capable TF commands the same money for its improved drivability.

As a pre-war design, a TC is never going to be a practical daily driver or the classic of choice for a cross-continental jaunt. The later T-series derivatives tick those boxes, but what a TC will do instead is remind you of the character and sheer fun that's intrinsic to a true sports car and that made the first post-war MGs so fantastic to drive. As Card points out: "It doesn't matter that it's not a fast car, because it's the pleasure of driving it that you most appreciate." **GH**

'A TC ENTHRALS WITH ITS SIMPLE, PREDICTABLE PLEASURES'



Left to right: cockpit is wider than that of TA/TB, but still tight; XPAG motor was first Nuffield unit in an MG; post-WW2 MG TC retains pre-war looks

## FACTFILE

**Sold/number built** 1945-'49/c.10,000

**Construction** steel chassis, steel body over ash frame

**Engine** 1250cc ohv four, twin SU carbs

**Max power** 54bhp @ 5200rpm

**Max torque** 64lb ft @ 2600rpm

**Transmission** four-speed manual, no synchro on first, driving rear wheels

**Suspension: front** beam axle

**rear** live axle, semi-elliptic leaf springs and hydraulic lever-arm dampers 5/7

**Steering** cam gear

**Brakes** hydraulic drums

**0-60mph** 27.3 secs **Top speed** 75mph **Mpg** 27

**Price new** £527 16s 8d **Now** £20-27,000

## TROUBLE SPOTS

**Ash frame condition** is crucial, particularly where it extends past the chassis and behind the dash. Look for bad scuttle shake and movement in the A-posts

**Chassis** are prone to cracking near the master cylinder mounting point and previous corrosion can weaken the chassis rails

**Crank oil seals leak** – check for this and listen for knocking from the engine. Parts are pricey and a full rebuild will cost £3500

**Look for play** in the steering box

## DID YOU KNOW?

● Le Mans legend and Cobra creator Carroll Shelby started his racing career in an MG TC

● A special-bodied TC was entered at Le Mans four times by privateer George Phillips, but he finished only once, in 1950, when he came 18th overall

● The TC was Abingdon's last beam-axle car

● The XPAG engine has metric threads, allegedly because the tooling was from a Hotchkiss machine gun procured from the French during the Great War

● More than 180,000 XPAG engines were built to power everything from generators to aeroplane starters

● Much of the TC's design was attributed to HN Charles, who went to an aircraft propeller firm during WW2 and never returned to MG

● The TC's claimed 4in extra width over the TB was a marketing mishap: it's actually only 2in wider than its predecessor

● All TCs were right-hand drive

● After TA, TB, TC and TD, MG skipped the TE model designation in favour of TF following concerns that it could become a laughing stock and labelled the 'tee hee'

## EVOLUTION

**TA/TB (1936-'39, 3382 built)**

First of the post-Mom's takeover pushrod T-series cars got the TC's XPAG motor in '39 TB form



**TD (1949-'53, 29,664 built)**

First MG with ifs. Rack-and-pinion steering and steel disc wheels, but same 1250cc motor



**TF (1953-'55, 9600 built)**

Updated TD with slightly more modern look, and 63bhp 1500 (Nuffield, not B-series) from 54



## The verdict

Driving	5
Everyday?	3
Looks	9
Parts availability	8
Ease of maintenance	8
Rust resistance	6
Running costs	9
Value for money	5
Investment potential	8
Rarity	9

**OUR RATING** 70/100