

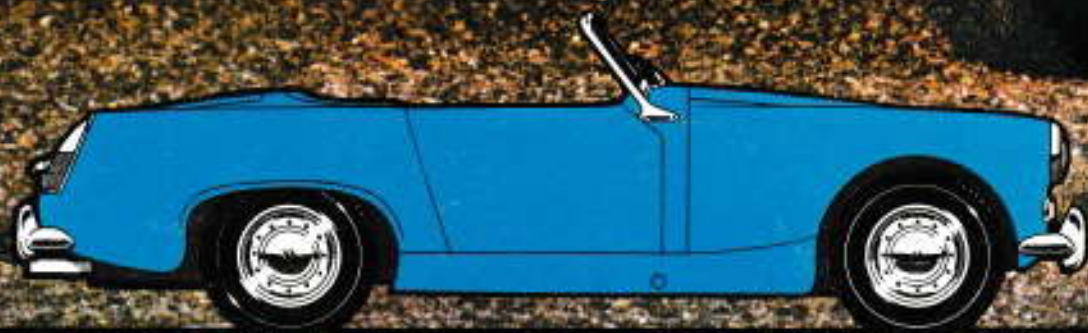
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# THOROUGHbred & CLASSIC CARS



Triumph TR6, MGA Le Mans,  
Aston Martin 212, Citroen, Austin Healey Sprite Mk II  
The Touring Car/2, Studebaker Avanti



## Le Mans MGA

However, in 1955 a team of three prototype MGAs (as they later became known) were entered by the company for that year's Le Mans, and Ted, although he had been invited to drive in the TR team, gladly accepted an invitation from MG to co-drive one of the new cars. F. Wilson McComb in his "Story of the MG Sports Car" (Dent) writes that it was originally intended to announce the new model at the beginning of June and then run three of them at Le Mans "a [John] Thornley inspiration, that for sheer boldness, rivalled the most audacious feats of the good old days". As it happened, problems with the supply of bodies meant that the cars were announced only a week or two before the race, though not as a production model. The new cars appeared as racing prototypes, being simply numbered EX 128; it was to be another three months before the production MGA emerged. It was perhaps appropriate that MG should return to the international circuits after a 20-years absence with a car of radically different full width bodywork, in complete contrast to the visually anachronistic TF that was phased out earlier the same year. However, the new car's body could be traced back to George Phillip's special bodied TD, which ran at Le

Man killing 81 people. Tragedy also struck the MG team when Dick Jacobs crashed at the White House and was gravely injured. Meanwhile the other two cars were still running well, and Ted Lund now takes up the story. "During the night a D-type Jaguar tried to pass me at Arnage and slid right into the sandbank, and remained there for the rest of the race. Then later, towards the morning, I tried to do the very same (trying to pass a Triumph TR2), at the same corner. Needless to say I shot into the back of the D-type in the same sandbank. I could have cried on the spot... to think through lack of concentration and probably tiredness after 12 to 14 hours of racing I had done the very thing I should have been aware of." Fortunately the car was still drivable. Lund crawled on to the pits where the front end was beaten out and a wheel changed. Nonetheless he managed to finish, being in fact the first car to cross the line. He was placed 17th overall and fifth in his class. The remaining MG was 12th overall. The Le Mans car used pushrod engines, but two of the three cars that the company ran at the Ulster TT at Dundrod in September were fitted with the then experimental twin-cam engine. In fact these two twin-cam cars retired, while the remaining pushrod car came in fourth. By cruel irony this race was also marred by a bad accident, and as a result the circuit was never used again, but at this juncture the company withdrew from the sport.

reaches of BMC at the time, the car was entered by the North Western centre of the MG Car Club, although the car was built and prepared at Abingdon. In view of the time factor, the two-seater open body was one that had been laying around in MG's development department. It is thought to have been one of the aluminium bodies used on one of the 1955 Le Mans cars that was subsequently acquired by Hans Keller (MG's Swiss distributor) and then returned to the factory. As even today certain parts of the body are painted red and others British Racing Green under the final green coat, it could be an amalgam of two bodies. Certainly the original aluminium front wings were not retained, steel ones being substituted to strengthen up the front end. The front of the car naturally looked completely standard, with the exception of a carburettor inlet duct on the offside, which later emerged on the back of the offside front wing. The car, at Ted's insistence, also retained its original flashing indicators. He used these to tell his pit that he had understood their instructions. A full-width competition windscreen was fitted and a 20-gallon petrol tank with quick-release filler was positioned at the rear of the car. It was finished in ash green with a British Racing Green flash down the side, just like Ted's own twin-cam (chassis 527) which no doubt caused some initial confusion! The completed car was tested at MIRA where the clutch disintegrated, so a German diaphragm Hausmann unit, à la Porsche, was fitted in place of the original. The car, which was given the chassis no. YD3623 S, was registered SRX 210.



A despondent Colin Escott stands by the damaged A after the car hit a dog during the 1959 Le Mans. It ran only that year in open form.



The A's present owner, Bob McElroy (left) chats to Ted Lund at the MG Car Club's 50 anniversary meeting at Silverstone in May.

Mans as a private entry in 1951, while the new model's engine was the 1489cc "B" series BMC pushrod four, which had already seen service in the ZA Magnette. Three aluminium-bodied cars, finished in British Racing Green, finally appeared at the race. Ted Lund shared the driving of his car (race number 64) with Hans Waefler, the other two being driven by Johnny Lockett and Ken Miles (41) and Dick Jacobs and Joe Flynn (42).

The 1955 Le Mans was marred by the terrible accident when a Mercedes Benz ran into the crowd,

During 1957 and 1958 Ted Lund agreed to drive for Triumph, Frazer Nash and Peerless, though for one reason and another the cars failed to materialise. However, in the meantime a secret and advanced project was underway at Abingdon: the car which Ted Lund hoped to race at Sarthe in 1959. He described the finished project, that was built in MG's Development Department, to me as "a beautiful twin-cam sports racing car looking like a smaller Mercedes 300SL". He reckoned the top speed would be in the region of 140/160mph, and the cost of the project at around £15,000. Although an MG twin-cam engine was used (the "A" with this new engine being announced in July 1958) the rear end differed radically, a de Dion rear axle being fitted. Unfortunately, the higher echelons of BMC deemed that the car should not run as a factory-sponsored MG, particularly as it was not a recognisable production vehicle and it would be in the hands of a driver who was not employed or even paid a retainer by the company. There has naturally been some speculation as to the fate of this fascinating machine. It was rumoured to have been sold to a wealthy American, but there seems some likelihood that it may have been broken up (as is the fate of most prototypes). Certainly a de Dion rear axle said to have been fitted to an MGA was recently seen at the factory, so this may or may not be the remains of the stillborn Le Mans car. If anyone could add anything to the fate of this very special twin-cam, I'd be most grateful.

Nonetheless, this edict left Ted Lund without a car to drive, so a standard twin-cam open two-seater was assembled. In view of the rather highly charged anti-racing faction in the upper

The economics of preparing this entry for Le Mans may be of interest. This particular car cost £10,000, while racing tyres and tubes were £132 per set, with two sets being required, plus a third to be on the safe side. Petrol for the race, and practice, cost £130. This was delivered to the pits via high-pressure hoses which delivered fuel at 26.3 gallons per minute.

Ted shared the driving of SRX 210 with Colin Escott, and the car was given race number 33. As Escott suffered from back trouble it was decided that each driver should have his own individual seat bottom, which was detachable, Ted's being coloured green, and Colin's red. During practice for the race Escott had the misfortune to hit a sandbank at the Mulsanne corner, denting the front end. However, the damage was beaten out and the front re-painted. The gearbox was also changed as pressure had built up in it to the extent that the filler plug had been blown out, and oil lost. Also it had started jumping out of gear under full load. The rear axle ratio was also changed from 3.9:1 to 4.1:1 the same night. The MG started well, and was running reliable enough, apart from trouble with a carburettor gasket. Then during the Sunday morning Escott hit an Alsatian dog that had somehow got on to the Mulsanne Straight. Team manager Major Andrew Pownall then had an agonising decision to make as the car's cooling ducts had been severely distorted by the collision, and the car was starting to overheat badly. Should the undertray be removed to allow as much air as possible to circulate, or should the car continue for another three or four laps until oil and water could be replenished? He opted for the latter course of action, and it was decided to let the car crawl round slowly for the required number of laps until oil and water supplies could be checked. Unfortunately, with about four miles to go, the engine seized solid and subsequent investigation showed that it was completely ruined. Also the gearbox that had been overheating badly was in a similar state. So ended SRX 210's first appearance at Sarthe, an initially promising one, though dogged, as it were, by ill-luck. After the race Ted acquired the car from the company although Abingdon continued to prepare it.

The following year the racing regulations were changed, requiring the use of a full height windscreen, so it was decided to fit a coupé top on the existing body work. Midland Sheet Metal of Chilvers Coton, Nuneaton, Worcs, carried out the conversion, and the car was sprayed metallic green (the very same paint used on EX 181, the Moss record-breaking twin-cam), as Midland had built that body. As the car had to run in the two-litre prototype class it was decided to bore the engine



*Left, the ex-Ted Lund Le Mans MG A, as it is today, being owned and actively campaigned by Robert McElroy, of Stockport*

*Right, the driving compartment is very original, although the driving seat has been slightly modified, as Mr McElroy's is rather taller than Ted Lund's*

*Below, the car pictured at the last round of the Spenkelley Championship. The small cowlings on the edges of the wheel arches are very much temporary appendages, a recent RAC racing requirement*

