



Right: Profile was supposedly inspired by the Aston Martin DB4GT.



Midget coupé

Yes, this is a works-built MG Midget, even if it does look more like an MGB. No, it's not one of the famous 'Jacobs Midgets'. In fact, it's the little-known third of just three coupés built by the factory in 1962, designed for racing and successful thanks to reduced weight and improved aerodynamics.

Former works MG driver and later private team entrant Dick Jacobs had been left without an MG model to campaign following the demise of the MGA. And then, the story goes, he was sat at his desk contemplating a side profile of the new MG Midget in the launch brochure, while also flicking through an issue of *The Motor*, which happened to include a similar side profile of the Aston Martin DB4GT. Jacobs superimposed one on top of the other, had his eureka moment and sped off to the BMC competitions department, where his enthusiasm clearly infected general manager John Thornley and chief engineer Syd Enever.

And so Jacobs got his two Midget coupés (the 'Jacobs Midgets' as they're now known), while a third, near-identical coupé – this car – was driven by John Milne, an MG works driver based in Scotland and well-connected in the Scottish motor sport scene. Milne later bought the car, and it's now campaigned by stepson James Willis and is a familiar sight at European circuits.

The three coupés were true giant-killers, with the Jacobs cars achieving great success in English club racing and Milne's car doing the same north of the border – but also in the famed Nürburgring 500km, where it raced in 1963, '64 and '65, achieving strong class results (third, fourth and fifth respectively).

The secret of these cars' many successes was their clever construction, using the steel chassis of the Sprite and Midget with a lightweight aluminium body attached by rivets and epoxy resin. This lowered weight to 1232lb, but it was the reduction in drag by adding the droop snoot and coupé roof that really made the difference – it was reckoned that at 100mph the coupé needed 13bhp less than the standard car.

Every additional horsepower counted, for the engine was a mere 995cc initially, derived from the maximum capacity overbore of the standard 948cc unit. In 1963, though, the Milne car ran with a supercharger, but this caused the engine to become so hot that it would overheat if it remained stationary for more than about 30 seconds. Torque was impressive, however, for it was Enever's intention that the car would be able to lap Brands Hatch almost exclusively in top gear.

Then came a normally aspirated 1293cc A-series, followed by an 1138cc in 1965, but things were moving on and the coupé's last gasp was in Modsports in the late 1960s, briefly sporting nasty wheelarch extensions. Then it sat around, making occasional appearances until a restoration and racing resurrection in the 1990s. James is planning a supercharger next, but this time with more efficient cooling. Now that will be impressive.

Below: Reinstating a supercharger is on the jobs-to-do list – bonnet already has a bulge to accommodate SU.
Bottom: Midget heritage is clear, but coupé weighed far less thanks to lightweight aluminium body panels.

