

# MG - TF



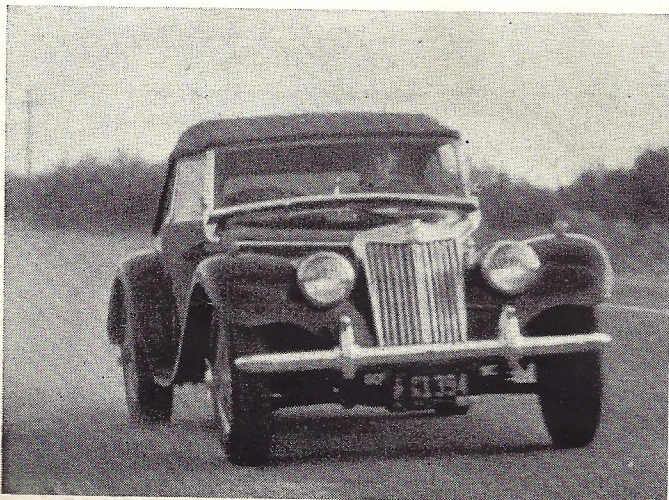
1954—Of the wide variety of cars we drive, there is one that, by its very nature, clearly exemplifies the term "sports car." Every time we drive an MG, whether it be the TC, TD or, as in this case, the new TF, the thought comes to mind—here is a car that embodies all of those elusive characteristics that make up the sports machine.

To drive an MG is sheer pleasure. This is no car for the man who is looking only for transportation. Only those who can recognize and appreciate the fun of driving a car that responds to skillful handling will ever grow to like the MG. To drive one like an old maid is sacrilege—the car demands fast skilled driving and, because the MG responds so well to such treatment, the MG owner is likely to find that it actually nudges him into being an improved driver. And if, in the more sporting situations, the MG owner maintains even the slightest shred of sanity in what he asks of the car, its impeccable handling qualities will see him through with greater safety than would be possible in a much less vigorously driven family sedan.

To those who have never owned an MG, the new TF is an anomaly. The revised styling, though lower and more rakish than before, is still far from being modern. The performance is well below the 1954 Detroit norm, and you do have to shift gears. Yet the fact remains that each member of the entire R&T staff strove mightily to produce his own best reason for being next to use the MG.

Aside from the styling change and the semi-return to wire wheels (opt. at \$135 extra), there is little difference between the TF and the Mk II TD model of the past two years. The car weighs the same, handles the same, and performs substantially the same as before. The TF's designers have adopted most of the Mk II engine features and also employ the "faster" axle ratio of the Mk II to enhance the cruising and top-speed performance. Acceleration is only slightly improved, the inevitable result of the lower rear axle ratio.

Though the car has a number of new features that we liked, there were a few items which we disliked. The new instrument panel, though good-looking and well lighted, can be criticized on several points. The new centrifugal-type tachometer is very legibly marked, but oscillates quite badly at times. Also less than perfect were the oil pressure gauge—which read only 0-50-100—and the rather unhandy pull-type starter control. Furthermore, there is still no fuel gauge, just a warning light.



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The one major control change since our TD test is that the dimmer switch was moved from the instrument panel to the floor, where it is now foot-operated in the normal manner. There is still not enough space around the foot controls, and the throttle pedal is the old familiar rattling iron bar with a roller on the end.

The clutch on this particular car (2800 miles on the odometer) was a trifle grabby on normal starts—and yet slipped when brutal snap shifts were attempted from first to second. Normal city driving was further encumbered by what we diagnosed as "over-carburetion." Below 2000 rpm the engine is flat and not until past 2500 rpm does the power really take hold. Corrective carburetor needles are now available, but we suspect that the old 1¼-in. SU carburetors might be more satisfactory than the 1½-in. units now supplied. There is also somewhat more of a power roar, due to the change from a large oil-bath air cleaner to a pair of small gravel-strainers.

Summed up, and despite our few carping remarks, the TF is still the greatest sports car for the money that is available today. It offers a good competition potential combined with the ability to stand up to very hard everyday driving, plus a modest initial price and, probably, reasonable yearly depreciation (this last based on experience with the popular TD).

Ken Miles said when he handed the car over to us, "There, see if you can break her up." We tried, and the car ran just as smoothly as ever after 400 hard miles of testing. Even the office girls hated to see the TF leave our premises.

## MG-TF 1500

Because the MG has for years been too large for class G racing, and a full 250 cc short of the class F limit, there has been a considerable amount of agitating on the part of MG fanciers for a "full" 1500 engine. Now these malcontents can be satisfied, for the 1955 TF has that 1.5 liters; well, almost—the actual displacement is 1466 cc, which allows for a couple of re-bores before going over the limit.

Proof that the extra capacity is well worthwhile can be neatly summarized in one sentence. The larger engine adds 5 mph to the top speed, and reduces the 0-60 time by 3 sec. There is an increase of 17% in both displacement and torque and the standing ¼-mile was 2 sec better than before—but the terminal velocity is only 2 mph higher. Unexpected but welcome bonuses were the elimination of the flat spot caused by over-carburetion and a slight increase in gas mileage.

Aside from the larger displacement (accomplished by simply increasing the bore size) there are no important revisions in the 1955 TF. There are two small plates (not yet added on our test car) that proclaim the TF to be a "1500," and the brass engine nameplate says XPEG, instead of XPAG as did the TD and 1250 TF engine plates.

One bitter disappointment during the test was that at no time did we encounter an unsuspecting 1250-cc TF, for purposes of impromptu competition. We did get one "customer" in an American car, but he was soon lost in a series of fast downhill bends.

After last year's test we were asked if the TF was "really that good." It is, and more. Even though the MG is the lowest-priced sports car on the market, it is the accepted standard of comparison. No one questions its right to the title, and if we seem to like the MG (and we do) then it's because the car is good. And, this year one can have wire wheels and the extra power (65 bhp @ 5500 rpm) for \$100 less than last year's car without wire wheels.

