

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Slippery when wet - This is MG's most powerful race car](#)

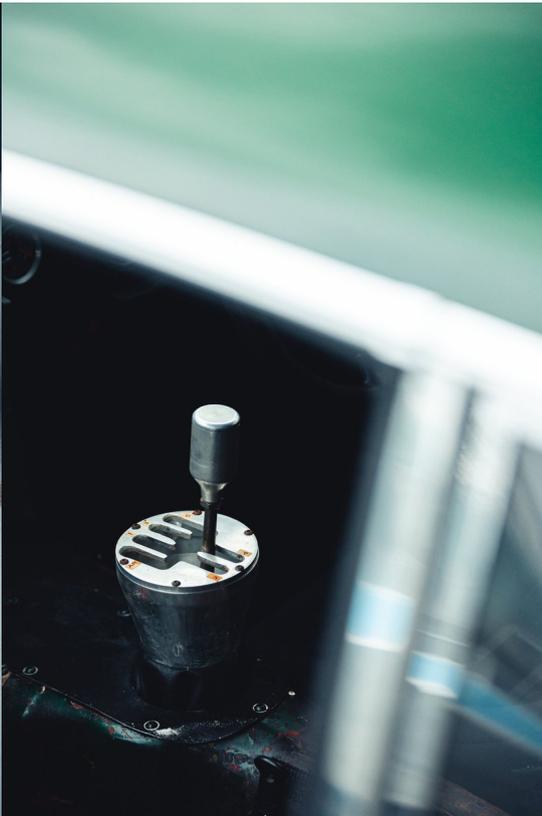
Lead

Heading to Aguttes on Wheels' upcoming Endurance Legends sale on the 27th April, this mighty MGC GTS is ready and waiting to see some of the world's finest race tracks. The question is, can you handle it?



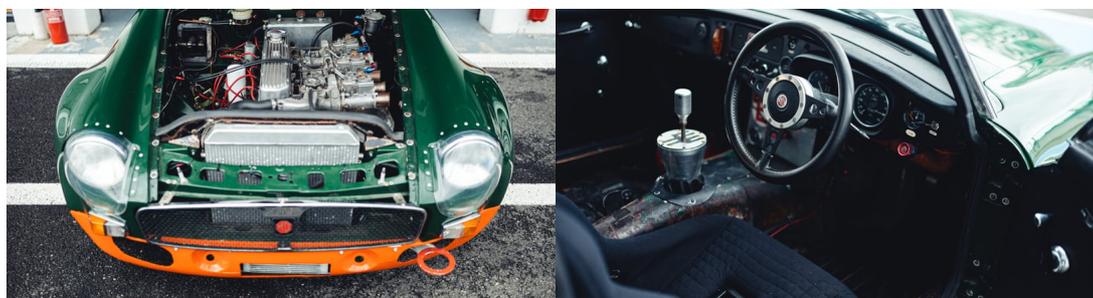
If the likes of Mini, Triumph or any other Great British sixties race icon doesn't quite cut the mustard, we've found something that might be up your alley. In November 1966, the competition committee of the British Motor Corporation gave the green light to develop a new racing car intended for endurance events and rallies, to replace everybody's favourite micro machine, the Mini.

They committee landed on their then all-new coupé, the MGC, the same stylish cruiser as the MGB, now sporting Austin's punchy 3-litre inline six, giving the plucky coupé plenty of poke if tickled.



The secretive project would see the construction of six MGC GTS examples, built inside BMC's Abingdon workshops, and had multi-discipline glory well and truly on their mind. Initially, the plan was for the MGC to replace the Mini's off-road prowess, despite the MGB already being a hugely competitive car out on the rally stages.

Out of the planned six, only two cars would ever be completely assembled, lovingly named "Mable" and "Romeo", derived from their number plates MBL 546E and RMO 699F. The first named car made its debut at the 1968 Sebring 12 Hours in the hands of the legendary Paddy Hopkirk and Andrew Hedges, who won the prototype class and finished a promising 10th place overall, the best result ever obtained by an MG in Sebring history.



The second car would then join in on the fun, and both cars were entered in the 1968 Road Marathon, a gruelling 84-hour event held at the Nürburgring. While "Romeo" quickly retired due to overheating, "Mable" put on an impressive performance, putting enormous pressure on the leading Porsche. This initial joy later turned to dismay, after a brake problem caused the remaining MGC to lose ground and eventually end up in sixth place.

Just as the success of the British outfit starts to build, the programme is abruptly halted at the request of the American importers, and the two cars built were sent to the 1969 12 Hours of Sebring for one last hurrah. It was then decided that the cars would not return to the UK, and would be sold on the spot. This time, "Romeo" finished a disappointing 15th overall with Hopkirk/Hedges, while "Mable" was only 34th with a local crew.



In the aftermath, BMC's racing department was closed and the four unfinished MGC GTs, along with their spare parts, were sold to the driver-preparer John Chatham, which is where this fine example derived from. Believed to be the only truly original example left, this is a rare opportunity to get behind the wheel of one of Britain's most promising upcomers, which sadly never got the recognition or limelight it deserved. This striking green example is set to head under the hammer at Aguttes on Wheels' upcoming Endurance Legends sale on the 27th April, and is a must for any avid British car collector.

Photos: Mathieu Bonnevie

Gallery

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