

HMG-333



MGA 1600 MARK II DE LUXE - 1962

Restored by Nicholas Langford and David Hutchings 2006 - 07



The 1600 MKII deLuxe was built using the last of the unused Twin Cam chassis. Like the Twin Cam, it has four wheel Dunlop disc brakes and disc wheels, but it has the 1622cc pushrod engine. This car is one of only 290 1600 MKII deLuxes built.

HMG 333 was one of the last MGAs built and was originally left hand drive. It was exported to the USA in May/June 1962 and came to Australia via the UK in the 1980's.

The restoration was completed over a period of 18 months and entailed a ground up "nuts & bolts" re-build.

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The de Luxe

The untimely end of Twin Cam production left the Abingdon factory with an overstock of the parts that made the car distinctive - the engine, Dunlop disc brakes and wheels. Many of the engines were witnessed being broken up and the remaining brakes, wheels and chassis were used in an uncatalogued model that had the standard MGA 1588cc pushrod engine and was known unofficially as the de Luxe: It was known even more unofficially as the Competition MGA and sometimes even the MGA 1600 Mk IIb.

Sales brochures published after the Twin Cam had gone out of production offered these brakes and wheels as optional extras to the pushrod model. The Twin Cam chassis, which although superficially the same as the MGA 1600, had among other differences an alteration in brake and clutch pedals. Altogether there were some 190 parts changes compared with the standard model. Several owners who opted for the disc brakes and Dunlop wheels on a MGA 1600 ended up, probably unknowingly, with a Twin Cam chassis.

Using up the left-overs, the first car, 91240, a works demonstrator, was finished on June 9, 1960 and, between the end of June and July of that year, another 21 were completed, 12 of them for the home market.

Coupé and roadster versions were built over the next two years, spanning the change from the 1600 to the 1600 Mark II. The first de Luxe cars using up the Twin Cam bodyshells had the removable panels in the front wheelarches which allowed access to the engine. Once the Twin Cam shells were used up, however, the model reverted to a standard bodyshell.

Some cars were built to quite high specification. The factory records show, for instance, that a Mr J W Keller had a white coupe, car 102042, built in June 1961 with Road Speed tyres, radio, oil cooler, anti-roll bar and badge bar.

Production continued in small batches of 20 or so - a typical example was a run of 19 for the North American market in July 1961 from car number 102557 to 102575. The disc brake option there cost \$500 extra. 63 per cent of all de Luxe production crossed the Atlantic. The last run was a batch of some 70 roadsters to North American specification - some with close ratio gearboxes - which were completed between May and June 1962, ending with car 108652.

One of these US cars, with close ratio gearbox and high compression head, originally sold by Morris Garage of Oneota, New York State, was resold in 1994 with only 13,011 miles recorded. It still had its original Michelin X 165/15 tyres.

De Luxe production ended the same month as the MGA finally went out of production and in total 395 were built in the UK - according to Anders Clausager, archivist of the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust. Just over 80 were the MGA 1600 version and the rest the Mark II version. Thirty-five or the total number built were coupés which makes them the rarest of all MGA models.

There's been speculation that this total production figure of 395 was probably governed by the original order for Twin Cam chassis parts, which could have been around 2,500 sets. Thus, after 2111 Twin Cams had been built, some 400 sets were still left.

Those chary of the Twin Cam's reputation for engine problems regard the de Luxe as the most desirable of all MGAs - the most powerful of the pushrod engines combined with disc brakes and the attractive Dunlop wheels.

Sports Car Graphic, which called it the Competition, remarked "While more expensive than the standard version, it provides a means by which the purchaser can end up with a competitive car at considerably less cost than that of converting the MGA and bringing it up to a similar state of preparation. For those interested in Class F production competition this latest offering from Abingdon is well worth the price of admission".

With a readily-available kit for the 1600 engine, the de Luxe could be tuned almost to Twin Cam performance levels. Alas, all too few have survived...















