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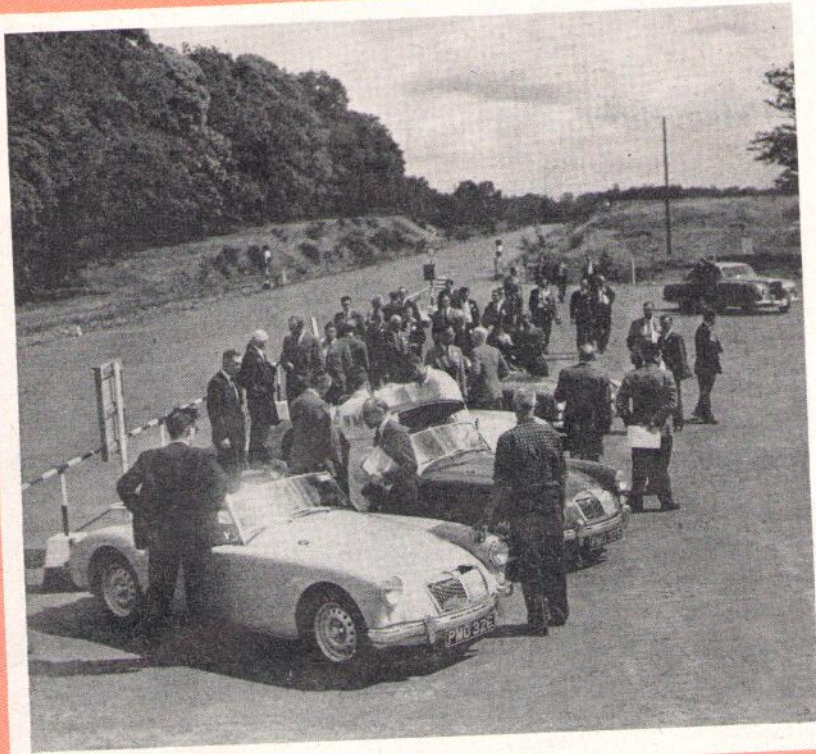


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Behind the press announcement of the Twin Cam 'MGA' were two months of detailed organization

BY
TONY LUCAS

DÉBUT BY DEMONSTRATION

TWO-MILE-A-MINUTE M.G. announced . . . "A" Type with twin O.H.C. Engine and Disc Brakes all round. . . . So ran the headlines in mid-July when the Nuffield Organization announced this high-performance, optional-extra version of a well-proved, well-loved sports car.

It sounds simple enough—after the car had been built, of course—to put a few words together, take some photographs, and mail copies to 1,100 journalists abroad, even more at home, and to Nuffield publicity offices throughout the world.

That might have been the end of it. But it was not!

The Nuffield Organization decided to hold a demonstration day at which many journalists (men and women) could sample the car themselves.

Where could we hold such a party? Whom should we invite? Catering? Insurance (very necessary)? Officials? Decorations? Refuelling? And so the questions came popping up. In all, 51 main headings were listed on our action chart and all the

detailed problems surrounding them had to be solved.

We wanted somewhere new and something new. It was suggested that the Ministry of Supply might hire us their Fighting Vehicles Research and Development Establishment courses near Chertsey, Surrey.

A visit was arranged and we took an 'MGA' Twin Cam along with us for the Establishment's Deputy Director to test for noise. He was satisfied and showed us the installations: a two-mile high-speed track, a 'snake' course, and some excellent test slopes.

Then began two months of detailed organization.

Such was the huge export shipping commitments that only three factory Twin Cams would be available. A fourth could be provided by University Motors Ltd., London. Four cars—and probably 100 people to try them out.

Then it clicked. Obviously the Twin Cam would be used in competition; why not gather all other Nuffield models which

already had been used in competition? So we mustered another 13 demonstrators—Morris Minors, M.G.s, and Rileys.

The Twin Cams, we decided, would use the high-speed track and the other cars would be divided between the snake circuit and the test slopes. Perfect!

The guests were divided into three parties—Red, Yellow, and White. Each party would try the Twin Cams on roster and the other cars in the meantime.

As the snake circuit and high-speed track overlapped in part, safety precautions were essential and had to be watertight. Poster-size notices were printed to keep the slower cars out of the way of the very fast Twin Cams. In support of these notices, and to back up the course's traffic-light systems, personnel had to be recruited and rostered for duty. As well, personnel were needed for the three car depots, mechanics' teams, refuelling teams, and, in case some guests preferred to be driven, a driving team.

Apart from two people on H.Q. duties, all car depot attendants and refuelling men

were put into area 'A', while flag and telephone officials went into area 'B', both areas with their controllers.

In all, 42 people had to be briefed for an hour-on, hour-off roster.

Then, good news. The M.G. EX181, in which Stirling Moss reached 245 m.p.h. at Utah last year, was available as a runner.

Two days before the demonstration day a team went to the F.V.R.D.E. and erected two marquees, put up all the traffic signs and decorative red and yellow 'M.G.' flags, while the caterer's contractors erected the main marquee.

The following day (remember Sunday, 13 July?) a gale tore down everything and threatened the 80 ft. by 40 ft. marquee.

It happened after lunch. The caterer appeared, shouting: 'My kitchen has collapsed', and the 24 5-cwt. bollards to which the marquee was anchored lifted in the wind. Over went the bollards, the canvas flapped inwards, followed by 'all hands' to clear everything outside—and the Big Top came down with a rush.

It was 5 p.m. on Sunday; the party was to begin the following morning. The wind was dying, said the Met. people, but the damage was done. Could we ever get back to schedule? We could always try.

Emergency calls went out, men arrived, the main marquee was prepared for possible re-erection on the following morning.

And the day dawned warm and still. At 6.30 a.m. there were a dozen people putting their backs into the (almost) impossible task of getting back to where we were two days before. The main marquee was up by nine o'clock, as were all the other tents. All traffic signs and decorations were made fast once more and the caterer went into action, producing welcome coffee at 10 o'clock. Somehow he also concocted a superb sit-down cold meat and salad lunch at midday.

The battle had been won.

By 10 a.m. all cars had been fuelled by the specially provided tender and were in position for the first guests at 11.15 a.m.

Eleven o'clock came, the guests were welcomed, Morris Motors Band trumpeters played a smart fanfare, EX181 rolled out for three laps. The Show was on.

Everyone had a smile on his face and the weather still smiled, too. By 4 p.m. the Press had tried out our new car and were leaving us declaring they had enjoyed it all—thoroughly.

'One of the most interesting days I have spent since becoming a motoring journalist', wrote one later. 'I believe that this was the best-organized and certainly the most practical way of introducing a new car', wrote another. A third kindly wrote: 'How you and your staff found it possible to be so nice to everybody and to make sure everything ran so smoothly, all at the same time, was incredible.'

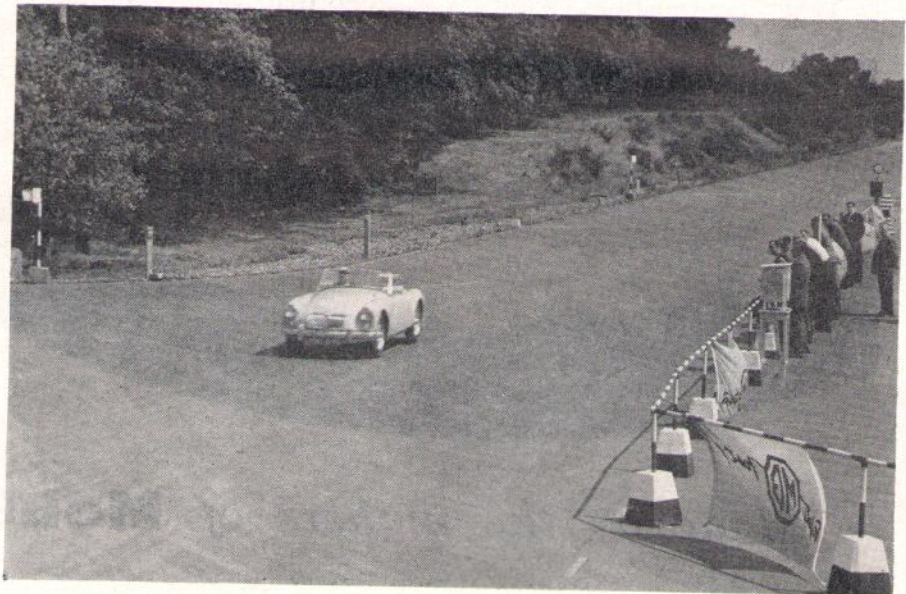
And that made it all worth while!



(Left) A Standard 'MGA' rides the crest of a 1 in 3½ test slope at the Fighting Vehicles Research and Development Establishment



(Centre) Unrivalled opportunities for thorough brake testing were presented by this steep incline of 1 in 3½



(Below) The Twin Cam 'MGA's were put through their paces over two miles of high-speed track