

The Motor Road Test No. 15/59

Make: M.G.

Type: Magnette Mark III.

Makers: M.G. Car Co., Ltd., Abingdon-on-Thames, Berks.

Test Data

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CONDITIONS: Weather: Hot, dry, light wind. (Temperature 69°-79° F., Barometer 29.7 in. Hg.) Surface: Dry tarmac and banked concrete track. Fuel: British premium grade pump fuel (approximately 95 Research Method Octane Rating.)

INSTRUMENTS

Speedometer at 30 m.p.h. 1 1/2% fast
 Speedometer at 60 m.p.h. 1 1/2% fast
 Distance recorder accurate

WEIGHT

Kerb weight (unladen, but with oil, coolant and fuel for approx. 50 miles) 22 cwt.
 Front/rear distribution of kerb weight 54 1/2/45 1/2
 Weight laden as tested 25 1/2 cwt.

MAXIMUM SPEEDS

Flying Quarter Mile.
 Mean of three runs on banked track 87.7 m.p.h.
 Best one-way time equals 90.0 m.p.h.

"Maximile" speed. (Timed quarter mile after one mile accelerating from rest.)
 Mean of three runs 85.5 m.p.h.
 Best one-way time equals 85.7 m.p.h.

Speed in Gears

Maximum speed in 3rd gear 71 m.p.h.
 Maximum speed in 2nd gear 44 m.p.h.

FUEL CONSUMPTION

42 m.p.g. at constant 30 m.p.h. on level.
 41 m.p.g. at constant 40 m.p.h. on level.
 37 1/2 m.p.g. at constant 50 m.p.h. on level.
 32 1/2 m.p.g. at constant 60 m.p.h. on level.
 26 m.p.g. at constant 70 m.p.h. on level.
 22 m.p.g. at constant 80 m.p.h. on level.

Overall Fuel Consumption for 1,026 miles, 38.3 gallons, equals 26.8 m.p.g. (10.5 litres/100 km.)

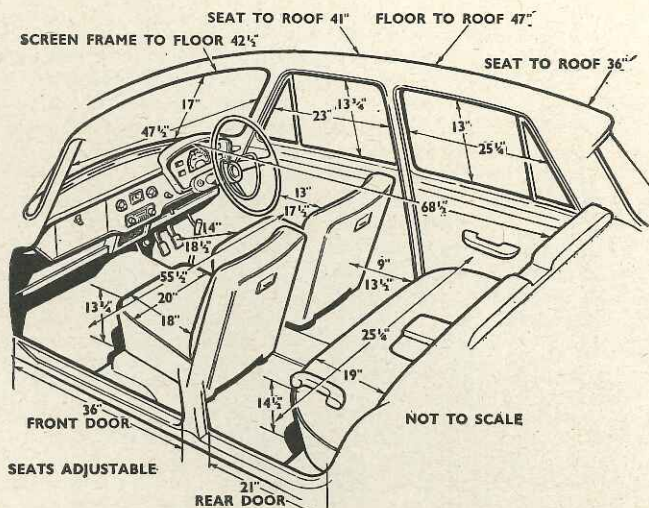
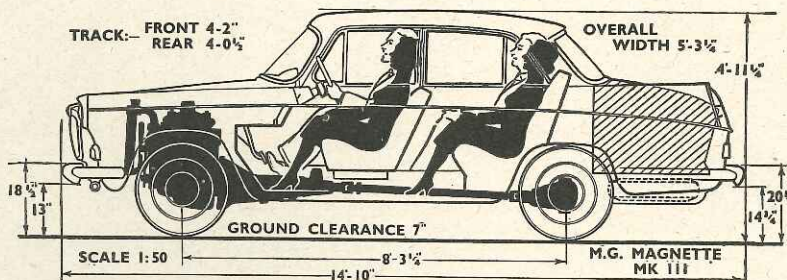
Touring Fuel Consumption (m.p.g. at steady speed midway between 30 m.p.h. and maximum, less 5% allowance for acceleration) 31.4
 Fuel tank capacity (maker's figure) 10 1/2 gallons

STEERING

Turning circle between kerbs:
 Left 34 1/2 feet
 Right 34 1/2 feet
 Turns of steering wheel from lock to lock 3

BRAKES from 30 m.p.h.

0.99 g retardation (equivalent to 30 1/2 ft. stopping distance) with 90 lb. pedal pressure.
 0.84 g retardation (equivalent to 36 ft. stopping distance) with 75 lb. pedal pressure.
 0.59 g retardation (equivalent to 51 ft. stopping distance) with 50 lb. pedal pressure.
 0.35 g retardation (equivalent to 86 ft. stopping distance) with 25 lb. pedal pressure.



ACCELERATION TIMES from standstill

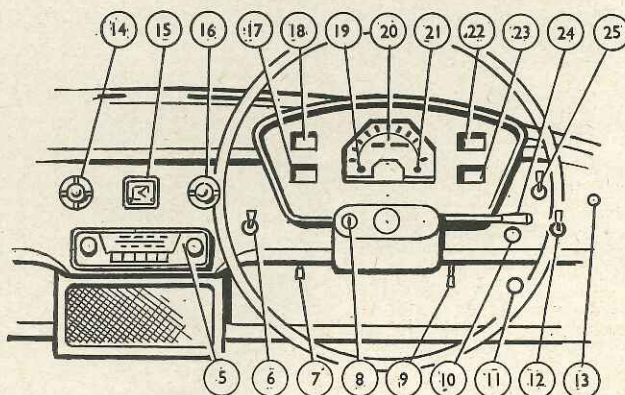
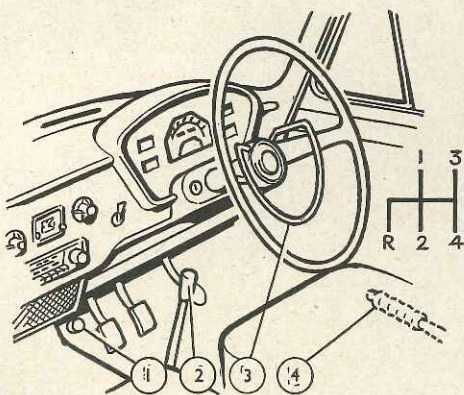
0-30 m.p.h.	5.8 sec.
0-40 m.p.h.	8.8 sec.
0-50 m.p.h.	13.5 sec.
0-60 m.p.h.	19.7 sec.
0-70 m.p.h.	29.8 sec.
0-80 m.p.h.	43.3 sec.
Standing quarter mile	22.0 sec.

ACCELERATION TIMES on Upper Ratios

10-30 m.p.h.	Top gear	3rd gear
20-40 m.p.h.	11.4 sec.	8.1 sec.
30-50 m.p.h.	10.9 sec.	7.9 sec.
40-60 m.p.h.	11.9 sec.	8.3 sec.
50-70 m.p.h.	14.3 sec.	10.4 sec.
60-80 m.p.h.	19.0 sec.	15.8 sec.
	24.6 sec.	

HILL CLIMBING at sustained steady speeds

Max. gradient on top gear	1 in 11.1 (Tapley 200 lb./ton)
Max. gradient on 3rd gear	1 in 7.6 (Tapley 290 lb./ton)
Max. gradient on 2nd gear	1 in 5.0 (Tapley 435 lb./ton)



1, Headlamp dipswitch. 2, Gear lever. 3, Horn ring. 4, Handbrake. 5, Radio controls. 6, Windscreen wipers switch. 7, Heater fan switch. 8, Ignition and starter switch. 9, Trip adjuster. 10, Choke control. 11, Bonnet release. 12, Lights

switch. 13, Screenwasher button. 14, Heater temperature control. 15, Clock. 16, Heater air distribution control. 17, Oil pressure gauge. 18, Ammeter. 19, Dynamo charge warning light.

20, Speedometer. 21, Main beam indicator light. 22, Fuel contents gauge. 23, Water thermometer. 24, Direction indicator warning light. 25, Panel light switch.

The M.G. Magnette Mark III

Lengthened by the forward-leaning but traditionally styled radiator grille, the M.G. retains the bumper arrangement and optional two-colour scheme of its B.M.C. stablemates.



Very Lively Performance with Economy from a Spacious Four-seat Saloon

RATIONALIZATION in the design of motorcars brings to the manufacturer both rewards and headaches, of which the most obvious symptoms are respectively lower production costs and louder voices of dissent from the watchdogs of tradition. Whether nameplates of sporting ancestry are best left to two-seaters alone or used also to distinguish the more powerful versions of a standard product is a question which can only be answered by balancing sentiment against commercial realism, and the British Motor Corporation has irrevocably chosen the latter solution.

To set out the terms of reference from the start, therefore, the Magnette is a comfortable saloon capable of transporting four people with really generous elbow room and all the luggage they could want; offering about 10 m.p.h. more in maximum speed and 2 m.p.g. less in fuel economy than others of comparable engine size; and costing approximately 25% more than the cheapest of its four sister cars, in which

extra price are included the interior heater, leather upholstery and similar appointments of luxury.

Performance notwithstanding, there is little doubt that comfort will be the virtue most appreciated by a new generation of Magnette owners. To enter and sit in and drive the car is comfortable. The outside impression of height, fostered partly by ground clearance, is reinforced by the view from quite high seats from which the driver can see well in all directions without craning his neck, only the steering wheel rim and badly parking windscreen wipers obstructing his vision at all. Raised wings at front and rear are visible from the driving position, but there is some distortion at the edges of the curved windscreen. The seats themselves are leather-covered over sponge rubber filling, rather more suited to the driver than to the passengers by their upright shape with very positive support for the shoulders and not much in the small of the back, but well curved to hold the hips on a corner. It is clear that a good deal of care and thought has gone into their design, paying off in a reduction of driver fatigue on a long journey, although passengers in the rear were less happy.

Liberal interior dimensions could be made effectively more liberal if greater scope for adjustment were given to the front seats to allow for a light load of long-legged occupants. Breadth is more than sufficient, including space on the floor without making the dip switch either obtrusive or inaccessible, while for rear-seat passengers (only) arm rests are provided on the doors as well as in the centre. Quality may be observed in window winders which are light and quick to operate, although placed rather far forward. "Zero-torque" door locks, on the other hand, fulfil their purpose but make an impression of shoddiness with a poorly-

fitting outside button. In the process of creating small differences to distinguish similar models, the inside front door handles on the M.G. have been placed at an unnecessarily awkward angle.

Designed to carry four people, plus an occasional fifth, the car makes reasonable provision for their small accoutrements with the usual shelf under the rear window, another occupying the full width beneath the fascia apart from space for the radio loudspeaker, and a lockable glove box. In spite of a modern Italianate exterior the furnishings belong to the polished walnut school, upon which is superimposed a hooded crackle-finish nacelle in front of the driver containing a full but oddly-framed set of instruments. A semi-octagonal space cut out of the instrument panel does less than justice to the legible and quite accurate semi-circular speedometer dial. The M.G. octagon motif is suggested also by the horn ring which is abbreviated so as not to obscure the instruments when the steering wheel is in the straight ahead position. Like the other electrical controls, including a finger tip indicator switch and toggles on the fascia for wipers and lights, the horn ring has the feel of well-made machinery. The same cannot be said of two knobs controlling the supply of cool, warm or hot air to feet and windscreen respectively, but the heating system itself is admirable and takes in relatively pure fresh air from unobtrusive slots on top of the scuttle. The ignition and starter key is placed a little awkwardly on the steering column. To the M.G.'s credit stands a large, tinted driving mirror hung from the top of the windscreen.

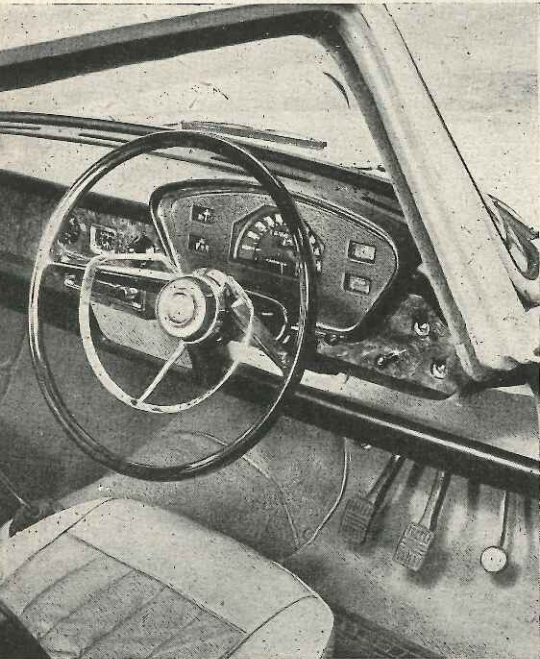
So much for showroom attributes. On the road the Magnette becomes more obviously a fast family saloon, offering ultimate performance considerably higher

In Brief

Price £714 plus purchase tax £298 12s. 6d. equals £1,012 12s. 6d.	
Capacity	1,489 c.c.
Unladen kerb weight ...	22 cwt.
Acceleration:	
20-40 m.p.h. in top gear ...	10.9 sec.
0-50 m.p.h. through gears	13.5 sec.
Maximum direct top gear gradient	1 in 11.1
Maximum speed	87.7 m.p.h.
"Maximile" speed	85.5 m.p.h.
Touring fuel consumption ...	31.4 m.p.g.
Gearing: 16.6 m.p.h. in top gear at 1,000 r.p.m.; 28.4 m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min. piston speed.	



Big door openings make the four seats easy to enter. The interior is upholstered in leather, shod with carpet and decorated with polished walnut. The instrument panel and scuttle are finished in matt black.



than will normally be used. Efficient sound deadening between engine and passenger compartments removes any suggestion of fussiness even when the engine is turning over at 5,000 r.p.m., corresponding to about 83 m.p.h. in top gear and well below the maximum. The nature of the car as a whole, however, does not really engender enthusiasm for fast driving, the more natural cruising pace of 65-70 m.p.h. being a function of the chassis rather than the engine. In spite of greater weight and higher gearing (resulting in slightly improved steady-speed economy) than the comparable B.M.C. saloons, the Magnette is distinctly lively in acceleration. Whether in the gears or during tests from standstill, it is well able to show its heels to most, if not all, 1½-litre saloons and does so with great flexibility and little or no tendency to pink on ordinary premium-grade fuels. The "choke" control, lighter in action on the latest, diaphragm-type S.U. carburetters, was needed scarcely at all in warm spring weather.

The performance of the engine is ideally

backed up by an excellent gear-change, a matter in which M.G., far from following family-car practice, has inspired it. Use of a remote-control mechanism brings the central lever so far aft that for short drivers it could with advantage be cranked slightly forward, as indeed it was at the time of the car's first announcement. The action of the lever is particularly smooth and the synchromesh effective at all times without obstructing rapid changes. It seems a pity not to have fitted an organ-type of accelerator pedal with a more smoothly-acting linkage to make heel-and-toe downward changes a practical possibility, nor to have strengthened the springs of a clutch which proved unable to tolerate snatched gear-changes during standing-start acceleration tests without slipping. Gear and final drive ratios have been well chosen, the peak engine speed of 5,400 r.p.m. corresponding very nearly to

maximum speed in top gear, and 65 m.p.h. and 40 m.p.h. in third and second respectively.

With such potentialities built into a perfectly roadworthy machine, the disincentive to a sporting style of driving is more psychological than real. Road-holding is up to modern standards and aided by stiffer damper settings than those employed on, for example, the Austin A55, without affecting adversely the bump-absorbing ride provided by perfectly orthodox suspension. The springs show up especially well on badly pot-holed roads. At the same time there is enough roll to discourage fast cornering if the comfort of the passengers is considered. Recent correspondence in *The Motor* concerning the rival merits of rack and pinion or cam steering gear might well be revived by this car, in which the once-traditional M.G. rack and pinion has been abandoned, and which surprisingly was less responsive to its helm than other cars of similar basic design. Possibly by intent the steering is better at high speeds than at low ones, when apparent friction at

A prominent tail houses very large luggage capacity, with the spare wheel in a separate tray underneath and lockable petrol filler at the top.



M.G. Magnette Mk. III

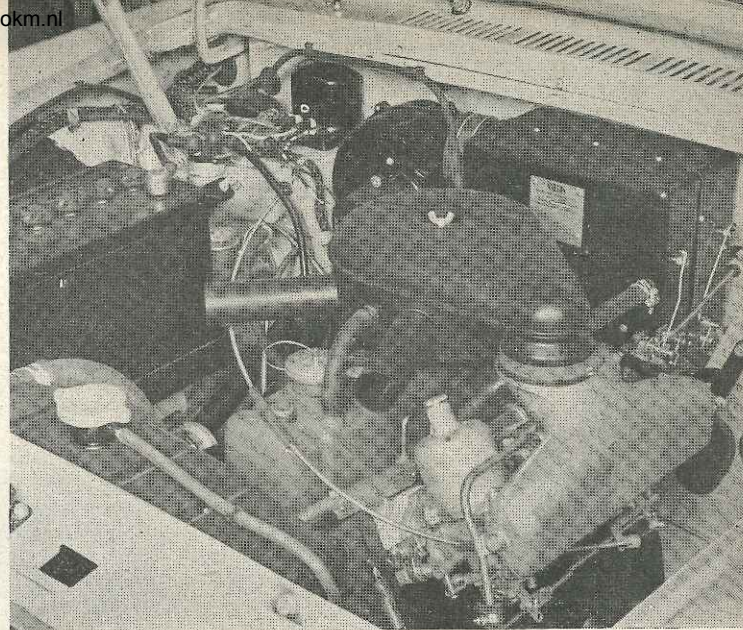
some point in the linkage makes it rather too heavy for easy parking and causes slight weaving at town speeds. There is, however, no lost motion and no reaction from a bad road surface.

Handling characteristics are poised between initial understeer and a subsequent degree of paying-off when the car is driven round a corner hard enough to cause pronounced roll, suggesting that a front anti-roll bar might be a worthwhile improvement. An advantage in both riding and steering was obtained by increasing the tyre pressures a few pounds beyond those recommended, reducing squeal and improving the sensitivity of control. More evident to passengers in the rear than in the front was a vibration at about 70 m.p.h., which might have come from an unbalanced propeller shaft.

A departure from previous habit is the use of small-diameter wide brake drums, by which means a friction lining area amounting to more than 130 sq. in. per unladen ton can be fitted into the space of 14-in. road wheels. Expectedly resistant to fade, the brakes are progressive and powerful for unusually low pedal pressures. The handbrake is a useful pull-up lever to the right of the driving seat.

The effects of styling upon car behaviour are not always predictable and often a mixture of good and bad. Excellent in the calculable department of visibility and fair to good at maintaining stability in a strong cross wind, the shape of the M.G. also lends itself to quiet progress without excessive wind roar. Furthermore, opening the front windows does not direct a fierce draught onto the rear passengers. A serious fault, which might be a difficult one to correct, is that partial opening of the left front window or ventilator induces an occasional backdraught of fumes, presumably from

The most commonly attended components—battery and windscreen washer included—are easily reached.



the exhaust tailpipe, which is sufficient to give a slight headache to sensitive passengers. Less important, but annoying because it is the result of insufficient study, is misplacing of the windscreen washers where the only parts of the glass reached by their jets at high car speeds are the curved extremities of the screen which are inaccessible to the wiper blades.

Styling which favours a bulky tail makes it an easy matter to accommodate quantities of luggage in the boot, which has a low loading level and is illuminated at night by the number plate lamp. A 10-gallon fuel tank (giving a useful range of about 250 miles) lives between the boot and the rear seat, making space for the spare wheel in an external bracket underneath. The boot lid is counterbalanced by neat torsion-bar springs which are strong enough to do their job without the violent movement sometimes encountered.

Owner maintenance is perhaps less a problem on a car of this class than for

cheaper vehicles, but the retention of 17 points requiring lubrication by grease gun at 1,000-mile intervals must soon be considered an anachronism on a modern design. With 6,000 miles on the recorder the M.G. consumed oil at a rate of about one pint for 200 miles when being driven hard. From an economic point of view, the vulnerability of prominent rear wings is to some extent offset by the exceptionally good protection of bumpers which wrap a long way round at both front and rear.

Economics are not likely to be a priority consideration for the Magnette buyer. Accepting the facts of standardized major components he will be prepared to spend (in purchase tax-paying Britain) a premium of about £200 in order to have, instead of a "popular" saloon, one which is a good deal faster, better furnished and in many people's eyes better looking.

Specification

Engine	
Cylinders	4
Bore	73.025 mm.
Stroke	88.9 mm.
Cubic capacity	1,489 c.c.
Piston area	25.97 sq.in.
Valves	Overhead (push rods)
Compression ratio	8.3/1
Carburettor	Twin S.U. HD4
Fuel pump	S.U. electric (PD type)
Ignition timing control	Centrifugal and vacuum
Oil filter	Full flow
Max. power (gross)	66.5 b.h.p.
at	5,200 r.p.m.
Piston speed at max b.h.p.	3,030 ft./min.
Transmission	
Clutch	Borg & Beck 8 in. s.d.p.
Top gear	4.3
3rd gear	5.91
2nd gear	9.52
1st gear	15.64
Reverse	20.45
Propeller shaft	Hardy Spicer open
Final drive	Hypoid bevel
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 r.p.m.	16.6
Top gear m.p.h. at 1,000 ft./min. piston speed	28.4
Chassis	
Brakes	Girling hydraulic (2 l.s. on front)
Brake drum internal diameter	9 in.
Friction lining area	146.65 sq.in.
Suspension:	
Front	Independent (coil and wishbone)
Rear	Semi-elliptic
Shock absorbers	Armstrong hydraulic lever type
Steering gear	Cam and lever
Tyres	5.90—14 (tubeless)

Coachwork and Equipment

Starting handle	Yes	beam and flashing indicators (on control lever).	
Battery mounting	Offside of engine	Locks:	
Jack	Screw pattern bipod type	With ignition key	Both front doors and petrol filler
Jacking points	One each side beneath front door	With other keys	Boot lid and glove box
Standard tool kit: Jack, wheelbrace, starting handle, ignition gauge and screwdriver, tyre valve tool, pump, plug spanner and tommy bar, plug and tappet gauge, screwdriver and grease gun.		Glove lockers	One (on passenger's side)
Exterior lights: 2 headlamps, 2 sidelamps and front amber flashers, 2 tail, stop and rear amber flashers, number plate lamp.		Map pockets	None
Number of electrical fuses	Two	Parcel shelves	Two (below fascia and behind rear squab)
Direction indicators	Flasher type, amber, self-cancelling	Ashtrays	Four (one in each front door and one in rear of each front seat squab)
Windscreen wipers	Twin electrical, self-parking	Cigar lighters	None
Windscreen washers	Twin, vacuum operated	Interior lights: Two (above door pillars with individual and courtesy switches).	
Sun visors	Two	Interior heater: Fresh-air type with de-misters	
Instruments: Speedometer (with mileage indicator and decimal trip), oil pressure gauge, ammeter, thermometer, fuel gauge, and electric clock.		Car radio	Optional extra
Warning lights: Ignition, headlamp main		Extras available: Radio, two-tone colour scheme	
		Upholstery material: Leather on wearing surfaces, vinyl leather cloth elsewhere.	
		Floor covering	Carpet
		Exterior colours standardized: Six single-colour schemes (six duotone schemes available as extra).	
		Alternative body styles	None

Maintenance

Sump	8 pints (including filter), S.A.E. 30	10 degrees A.T.D.C.	
Gearbox	4½ pints, S.A.E. 30	Tappet clearances (Hot): Inlet	0.015 in.
Rear axle	2 pints, S.A.E. 90	Exhaust	0.015 in.
Steering gear lubricant	S.A.E. 90	Front wheel toe-in	1/16—1/8 in.
Cooling system capacity 12½ pints (2 drain taps)		Camber angle	¾—1 degree
Chassis lubrication: By grease gun every 1,000 miles to 17 points.		Castor angle ¾-laden 1½ degrees, unladen 1 degree.	
Ignition timing	5 degrees B.T.D.C. (static)	Steering swivel pin inclination	6½ degrees
Contact-breaker gap	0.014—0.016 in.	Tyre pressures:	
Sparking plug type	Champion N5	Front	23 lb.
Sparking plug gap	0.025 in.	Rear	25 lb.
Valve timing: Inlet opens 5 degrees B.T.D.C. and closes 45 degrees A.B.D.C.; exhaust opens 40 degrees B.B.D.C. and closes		Brake fluid	Girling
		Battery type and capacity: Lucas 12-volt, 58 amp. hr.	