



# THE PRE-WAR MG REGISTER OF AUSTRALIA

Established 1965

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*This M-type, owned by Mr Jim Cuming, with rego number 110 is one of the first to be registered in Victoria. It is seen here during the 1933 LCCA Star Rally. Read the story of early M-types on p 5...  
Photo from Andrew Fock*

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## HISTORY – Early M.G.s in Australia

Andrew Fock has been delving into the archives and has identified Australia's first M-type M.G. ...



The front cover of the March 2011 edition of our Newsletter featured an M type with the Victorian registration 110. Due to some further research more information has come to light.

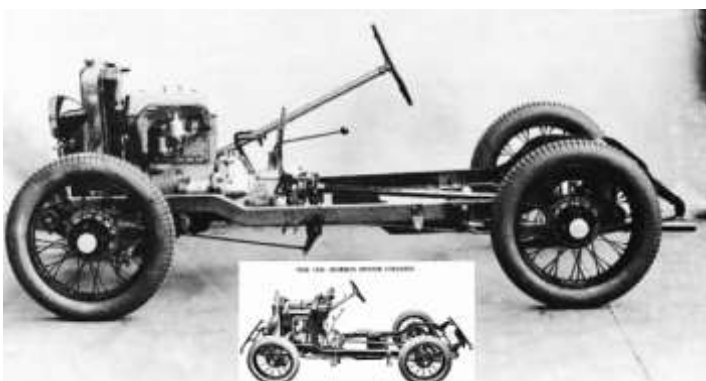
2019 was celebrated at the MGCC UK as the 90th anniversary of the M type midget, the car that started the MG small sports car line. The M type is often overlooked as just a re-bodied Morris Minor, less glamorous than the later more bespoke and better performing products of the MG Car Co Ltd. However, the true significance of the M type was outlined in the 2018 Triple-M Yearbook. Mike Allison described how the M type's production was almost by accident and how, had the MG Car Company continued on its then trajectory with the 18/80 series, it may well have disappeared during the Great Depression along with so many other small UK car manufacturers.

Cecil Kimber, like many UK car manufacturers in the 1920s concentrated his efforts on the middle class market. As Morris products took 45% of the UK market in 1926 and their products were built for this market, his efforts in this area are not totally unexpected. However, in the post WW1 Britain there were more than 100 motor car manufacturers all vying for the same buyers. This highly competitive environment had already seen Herbert Austin's company go into receivership in 1921 only to be saved at the 11th hour when he and his 18yr old apprentice Stanley Edge came up with the Austin 7 using his own private funds. This car was aimed at the working-class market which had previously only been served by "cyclecars". The "7" saved Austin and the company, eventually selling almost 250,000 units.

Morris, whose sales were strong, was not initially interested in the small car market but when Wolseley went into receivership in 1927 (a company that originally been founded by Austin), Morris bought the company with £750,000 of his private funds and suddenly Morris had excess capacity and a neat little 8HP (847cc) engine with which to take Austin on.

It has often been miss-stated that this engine was developed from the Hispano-Suiza aero engine (the Viper) that Wolseley made under licence during WW1. While Wolseley gained considerable experience in engineering from this relationship, apart from sharing the arrangement of an overhead camshaft driven by shaft and gears, the engines are quite different.

In the late 1920s, MG was concentrating on getting the new 18/80 model built and had hired Reginald Jackson to do some of the chassis detailing. This was done at the Cowley Drawing Office and it was during one of his visits there that he saw the prototype chassis for the new Morris Minor which utilised the 8HP Wolseley engine. Austin had made quite a name racing the 7 and so the idea formed in discussion with Cec Cousins of a small MG to take on this class. This was initially knocked back by Kimber who wanted to concentrate on the "Six", as he hoped to produce a "poor man's Bentley". However, after Jackson and Cousins got H N Charles on board, Kimber relented, and a chassis was ordered from Cowley. Jackson and team quickly knocked up a prototype which Kimber liked, so two bodies were ordered from Car Bodies and cars were made up for the 1928 Olympia Motor show (only one with an engine due to shortages!).



After taking more than 250 orders at the Motor Show, it was clear that they were on a winner and the rest is history.

The M type went on to be one of the bestselling pre-war MGs with 3225 produced.



Research on early MG imports into Australia has largely been based on the "Lanes list". Lanes were the Morris agent from 1931. In the 1960s Alan Bail, the then Pre War MG Registrar, managed to acquire from Lanes a listing of all the cars they had sold pre-war. While this captured most of the Triple-M (Midget, Magna and Magnette) cars, many of the T and SVW cars do not appear on the list as other agents such as PR Williams in Sydney began importing cars in the mid to late 30s. It also missed cars imported in the "pre Lanes" period.

S.A. Cheney (left) had started off in Adelaide importing Chevrolets. However, with the improvements in Morris cars and the "Empire preferred trading Scheme" in place, it became profitable to focus on English cars. By 1926, Cheney Motors had dealerships in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney and boasted of having imported more than £3,000,000 worth of Morris and Austin products. However, by 1931, with the onset of the Great Depression, the dealership was in trouble and the Morris dealerships was sold to Lanes



Motors of Melbourne. The records for Cheney's are not known to exist but we do know that several early MGs were imported both new and as second-hand private imports before 1931.

We know of at least four and probably six M types imported new in this period with the majority of these seeming to have been in NSW or Queensland. At least two appear to have been imported into Victoria, 2M1770 (engine 1566A) and 2M0945 (engine 742A). 2M0945 was built on the 6th February 1930 as a blue roadster. It was exported by Morris Motors Limited to Cheney Motors Ltd Melbourne for Mr J. Cuming. We don't know a lot about Jim Cuming. Photos of the car were found by accident when Jennie Jackson was baby-sitting for Jim's daughter and the interest in MGs was mentioned. As reported in the 2011 Newsletter, Shirley, Jim's daughter, told Tim Jackson that her father always said his little car was the "first MG in Australia" and she believed that he also competed in some of the "Alpine Rallies" that were conducted around that time.



He also participated in the 1933 LCCA (Light Car Club of Australia) Star Rally that was held on 28th October of that year. This was a promotional event to publicise the new "Star Newspaper". 31 LCCA entrants carried souvenir copies of the Newspaper to 80 regional towns via nine routes from Melbourne totalling 2069 miles.

The exact identity of Jim's car remained unknown until recently when I was analysing a search of the AOMC (Association Of Motoring Clubs) registration records and came across an 8HP MG with the engine number 0742A (The registration unique identifier in the pre-war period was the engine number not the chassis number). This number was initially thought to be a misprint for a P type (0742AP belongs to PA 0437) but further analysis of the subsequent registration numbers and dates indicated that this was not the case. A quick email to Mike Dalby the Triple-M M type Registrar provided the chassis number and export details.

2M0945 was first registered with the Victorian number 110 (now worth several M types!) on the 5th October 1930 to J. Cuming. It was subsequently registered CT723 in 1941, EL717 in 1942 and PK189 in 1944. No records after this exist. The car does not appear on the current Register. So Jim's M type may not have been the "first MG" into Australia, but it was almost certainly the first M-type.

If anyone has any further information on this car please contact me via the Car Club or the Pre-War Register's Facebook page.

