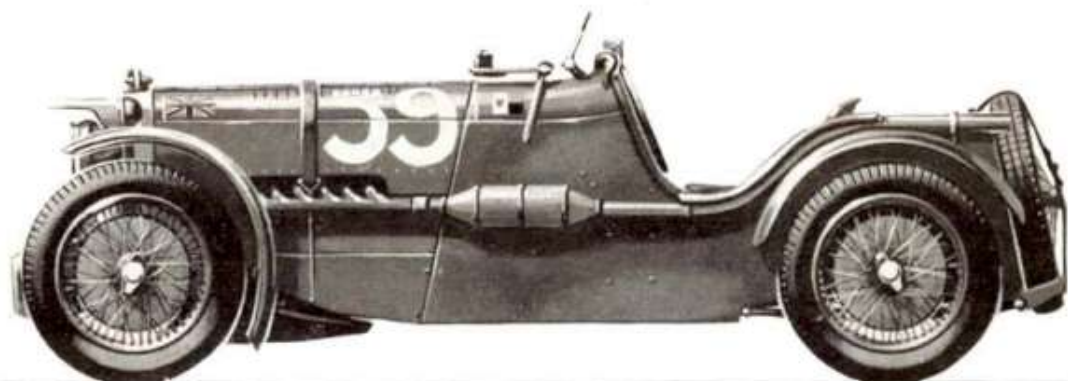


The M.G. Magnette K.3



NUMBER 15

TWO SHILLINGS

PROFILE PUBLICATIONS



1933 MILLE MIGLIA M.G. MAGNETTE 'K3' which won the 1100 c.c. class at 56.90 m.p.h., driven by Capt. G. E. T. Eyston and Count Giovanni Lurani.





The M.G. Magnette K.3

by F. Wilson McComb

'Hammy' Hamilton cuts it fine when cornering in the 1933 Mannin Beg race. Fortunately the 'K3' was tough enough to stand up to kerb-bouncing. (Photo: Montagu Motor Museum)

At this time, when British-built cars are virtually invincible both in Grand Prix racing and in international rallies, one tends to forget how insignificant a position they held in the early nineteen-thirties. Alfa Romeo, Maserati and Bugatti ruled the roost, and it was taken for granted that the first car past the chequered flag in almost any form of motor race would wear either the blue of France or—more probably—the stirring blood-red of Italy.

The only British machine to make any real impact on motor sport at international level was the M.G., product of a very small company in rural Berkshire. During 1931 and 1932 alone, the successes of the M.G. Midget included outright victory in the Brooklands Double-Twelve, the Irish Grand Prix, the Ulster Tourist Trophy, and the Brooklands 500 Miles Race—not to mention the first 100 m.p.h. and the first 120 m.p.h. in International Class 'H' (750 c.c.), plus a number of significant class successes in Continental races. It was at this stage that the M.G. chief, Cecil Kimber, decided to carry the battle into International Class 'G' (1100 c.c.) with a new six-cylinder model dubbed the 'Magnette'. Following the usual M.G. practice of relating the racing cars closely to the standard production models, Kimber introduced the Magnette range with a saloon known as the 'K1', first seen at Olympia Motor Show in October 1932. This had a 9 ft. 0 in. wheelbase, 4 ft. 0 in. track, and a surprising innovation in the form of a Wilson pre-selector gearbox.

That the racing version was still little more than a pipe-dream is proved by the catalogue of that date. Reference is made to the 'K2' two-seater (which did not come into production until the following February) and the 'K3' racing model, but the latter is shown as a curious long-tailed device with staggered seats and twin head-rests which never, in fact, saw the light of day. Moreover, there is mention of an un-

supercharged 'K3', though no such model was ever built, and different 'K3' prices are quoted on different pages of the same catalogue! Yet in less than six months two 'K3' prototypes were built and tested, a team of three cars also built and tested, and some of the major awards triumphantly carried off in the world's most important long-distance event, the 1,000-mile race held each year in the very Mecca of motor-racing, Italy.

The driving force behind this remarkable achievement was the late Earl Howe, who usually raced a Bugatti but had long cherished the idea of taking part in the Mille Miglia with a British car. He suggested to Sir William Morris, Bart., the man who owned the M.G. Car Company, that if Abingdon built a team of three racing Magnettes, he would personally bear the cost of transporting them to Italy and taking part in the race. Morris, always a practical man where hard cash was concerned, accepted this generous and businesslike offer. Cecil Kimber, far less practical, but a dyed-in-the-wool racing enthusiast, was delighted to be given the go-ahead, and commenced his preparations without a moment's delay.

Two prototypes were hurriedly assembled, the first of them closely resembling the contemporary Midgets except that it was four inches longer in the wheelbase at 7 ft. 6 in., had larger brakes, and was of course fitted with an experimental six-cylinder 1100 c.c. engine with supercharger mounted between the front dumb-irons. I cannot be sure if it used the 3 ft. 6 in. axles of the Midget or the 4 ft. 0 in. Magnette ones, but the generally unbalanced air of the car suggests the latter. Kimber, who took justifiable pride in the appearance of his M.G.s, must have winced when they wheeled this one out of the experimental shop. And few competition cars have been less suited to their first event. This short-chassis fire-eater disposing of some 100 b.h.p., with the most rudimentary of weather

The original short-chassis 'K3' prototype driven in the 1933 Monte Carlo Rally by James Wright. It set up a new class record in the Mont des Mules hillclimb after the rally. (Photo: Autocar)



protection, a pair of spare wheels strapped on the tail and two minute foglamps flanking the supercharger cowling, was promptly entered for the Monte Carlo Rally!

THE 1933 SEASON

A brave soul named James Wright fought his way through the snow in this car to finish 64th out of 69 survivors, but his subsequent performance revealed more of the Magnette's true potential. In the acceleration and braking test he made equal fastest time with an Essex Terraplane, showed up less well in the braking, and in all took second place behind the rally-winning Hotchkiss of Vasselle. In the Mont des Mules hill-climb which followed, he made comfortably the fastest climb of the day, more than 12 seconds better than the Frazer-Nash which took second place. The Magnette's time constituted a new class record.

Meanwhile the second 'K3' prototype was completed on 4th January 1933, just two weeks before the Monte started. Longer in the wheelbase at 7 ft. 10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in., which curious figure was arrived at accidentally but retained for the entire 'K3' range, this car had better-looking bodywork apart from an ugly sloping front cowling which was banged out of sheet metal at the last possible moment. Since the straight-through exhaust pipe incorporated no silencing device whatsoever, it doubtless sounded as purposeful as it looked when Reg Jackson, head racing mechanic of M.G., drove it down from Abingdon to Newhaven. There he was met by Earl Howe and his personal mechanic,

'Tommy' Thomas, in an Alfa Romeo and a Mercedes. From Dieppe the three cars ran in company through France, stopping at the Bugatti factory to pay their respects. As a Bugatti owner Earl Howe was, of course, known at Molsheim, and the British visitors arrived

at a propitious time; they found everything *en fête* because it was the twenty-first birthday of Ettore Bugatti's son, Jean. Nevertheless, Jackson was somewhat dashed when Le Patron examined the Magnette prototype and firmly announced that the front axle was not strong enough. As John Thornley remarks in his M.G. racing history, *Maintaining the Breed*, 'The great Ettore . . . was not likely to say such a thing for fun'. In any case, Abingdon was not too proud to learn from Molsheim. The great man's opinion was relayed to Abingdon, the M.G. designers reconsidered the axle dimensions, and a batch of stronger ones was ordered at once.

Only one 'K3' owner, Ronnie Horton, refused to have his car fitted with the stronger axle. More than a year later, Ettore Bugatti's doubts were justified when Horton's front axle broke after practice for the 1934 Mannin Beg.

At Milan, Earl Howe met the other team drivers: Count 'Johnny' Lurani, whose status in Italy and knowledge of the language were to prove of great value to the team; Captain George Eyston, already famous for his record-breaking exploits with M.G.s and other cars; the brilliant Sir Henry ('Tim') Birkin, whose tragic death occurred not long after the Mille Miglia; and Bernard Rubin, wealthy industrialist and former member of the Bentley team. Howe's own co-driver, the mercurial Hugh ('Hammy') Hamilton, was unable to get away from his work as a salesman for the London M.G. distributors, University Motors. The drivers made a sort of triumphal tour through

The two leading 'K3's enter the Bologna control during the 1933 Mille Miglia. On the left is the Birkin/Rubin car, on the right that of Lurani and Eyston, the class-winner. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)



Italy, being received not only by the King, but also by Il Duce himself, Benito Mussolini (a much more important person at that time). The team met Enzo Ferrari, and had lunch with Tazio Nuvolari, Captain Eyston, a descendant of Sir Thomas More and a member of one of the oldest Roman Catholic families in England, was also received in audience by the Pope.

But apart from such junketings there was plenty of hard work to do, and in particularly unpleasant weather conditions. Despite rain, sleet, snow and ice, the drivers practised over as much of the course as they could and flogged the unfortunate prototype to the limit. As was the object of the exercise, various weaknesses were discovered and the information passed on to Abingdon. The gearboxes had to be largely redesigned because second gear was too low, and the gearbox oil consumption too high. Not only the road wheels, but the hubs themselves, had to be redesigned. The only component tested insufficiently (because of the weather) was the braking system. When the actual race practice allowed full braking power to be applied six weeks later, all the brakedrums split and new ones had to be sent out from the works.

In all, the long-suffering second prototype spent some five weeks in Italy, returning to Abingdon by mid-February. It was then refurbished to serve as a practice car, and work on the three team cars speeded up still further.

On 11th March at dead of night the four Midgets left Abingdon *en route* for the Cornish village of Fowey, where they were shipped aboard *S.S. Florentine* together with a cargo of china clay and wet fish. Twelve days later, after a crossing of the Bay so rough that part of the ship's funnel was carried away, the *Florentine* arrived at Genoa with its precious cargo—the faithful practice car and three racing machines, meticulously prepared and capable of 106 m.p.h. at 6,000 r.p.m. on a 4.89:1 final drive, two up and 27½ gallons of fuel in the slab tank. At Brescia, traditional starting-point for the Mille Miglia, the team moved into the Hotel Moderno Gallo and were delighted to find all the hotel equipment emblazoned with the initials 'M.G.'. It seemed like a good omen.

The story of the race itself has often been recorded. It was agreed that Birkin would set the pace in an endeavour to break up the opposition, and this he accomplished magnificently. Over the first 129 miles

Nuvolari in action with the 'K3' during the 1933 T.T., which he won at an average speed of 78.65 m.p.h. (Photo: Keystone Press Agency Ltd.)



Three 'K3's were again entered for the Mille Miglia in 1934, but this time only the Lurani/Penn-Hughes car finished, taking second place in its class. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)

to Bologna he averaged 87.95 m.p.h., overtaking 35 other cars on the way and breaking the class record by 13 minutes. Over the mountains to Florence he maintained his lead. On the run in to Siena, 228.5 miles from Brescia, the leading Midget slowed, and Birkin had to retire at the control because of a broken valve. But he had achieved his object. The most dangerous opponent of the M.G.s, Tuffanelli's Maserati, had smashed its gearbox on the Futa Pass, and the second Maserati was running slowly, nearly an hour behind schedule.

By Rome, after 365 miles, Eyston and Lurani were comfortably leading the class and had knocked 25 minutes off the 1100 c.c. record, with Howe and Hamilton not far behind. The two British cars were still leading when they clocked into Bologna again on the return leg, with three-quarters of the race completed, though Eyston had to have a new battery because his dynamo had stopped charging.

Both M.G.s were plagued by sparking-plug trouble because the Powerplus superchargers required a lot of lubrication. A plug 'hot' enough to take this without oiling up would burn out on full throttle, and a grade 'cold' enough to stand the heat would oil up on the over-run. It is on record that Eyston and Lurani fitted no less than 157 new sparking plugs in the course of the race. About 100 miles from the finish, Howe and



Hamilton had a puncture. Fifty miles further on, Eyston and Lurani had the same experience. But the two Magnettes were still leading the 1100 c.c. class when they reached the finish, averaging 56.90 and 56.82 m.p.h. respectively despite all the plug-sopping and wheel-changing. Better still, no nominated team had finished intact, but the Magnettes had put up the best performance, so they gained the coveted Team Prize, the Gran Premio Brescia, never before won by a foreign car.

The impact of this success may seem disproportionate nowadays, and yet it was a bold and impressive venture to invade the very home of motor racing and carry off this trophy with three brand-new British cars which had never raced before. Few new models have enjoyed such a resounding debut.

Back at Abingdon, three more 'K3's had been built by the time the conquering team returned. Two were entered for the International Trophy Race at Brooklands on 6th May, for E. R. Hall and Manby-Colegrave, together with two of the actual Mille Miglia cars—one of them Howe's car, the other Eyston's, to be driven by Mrs Elsie Wisdom; Birkin's machine was presumably still suffering from the damage caused by the broken valve. Of the entire entry only eight cars finished and they were led home by the Hon. Brian Lewis' Alfa Romeo, but Hall finished second, Elsie Wisdom third, and Earl Howe fourth. Manby-Colegrave became deeply involved with a marker barrel, but made up for this lapse in the British Empire Trophy a few weeks later, finishing third at a rousing 106.88 m.p.h. Fourth was Ron Horton with another 'K3' which set up a new Brooklands Outer Circuit lap record at no less than 115.55 m.p.h. during the race. This car had been supplied in chassis form and he had given it the same treatment as his extremely successful Montlhéry Midget, fitting an offset single-seater body which looked extraordinary but proved highly effective.

With so many successes in their first four events, the barometer seemed set fair for the 'K3' Magnettes when six were entered for the Mannin Beg 'round the houses' race in the Isle of Man—but what a nasty shock that event brought for Abingdon! All six Magnettes retired, three of them with rear-axle failure, because the punishing, stop-go nature of the event revealed a hitherto unsuspected weakness in the two-star differential. No time was lost in replacing it by a

stronger four-star design.

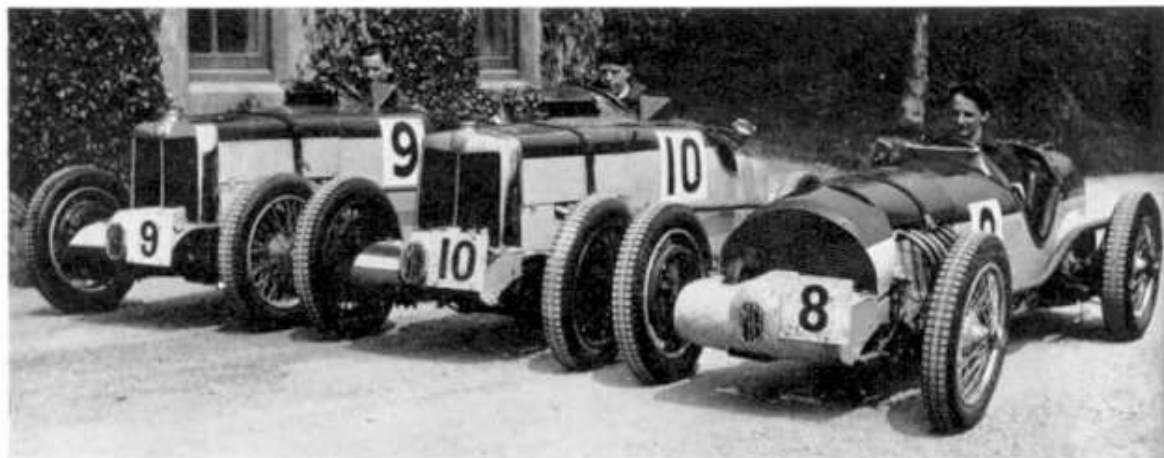


On the Brooklands banking during the 1934 International Trophy—Roy Eccles with a 1934 model 'K3', Earl Howe in his Bugatti, and Whitney Straight with his 3-litre Maserati. (Photo: The Light Car)



The second prototype, used as a Mille Miglia 'recce' car in January 1933. Behind are Siena, Earl Howe, Nuvolari, Enzo Ferrari, Count Lurani and Capt. George Eyston. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)

Consolation came in the form of another crushing defeat for the Italians on their own soil. On 15th August, Whitney Straight—then a Cambridge student—took his privately-owned 'K3' to Pescara and trounced a horde of single-seater Maseratis in the Coppa Acerbo Junior. This was more than Italian flesh and blood





Eyston in EX.135 leads 'Hammy' Hamilton's offset single-seater 'K3' in the 1934 Mannin Beg race. (Photo: Keystone Press Agency Ltd.)

could stand—a protest was lodged, and Straight's engine dismantled to check the dimensions. It merely revealed that the engine was of the correct capacity.

Not so surprising, then, that the greatest Italian of all, Tazio Nuvolari himself, let it be known that he would not be averse to driving a 'K3' Magnette in the



The start of Le Mans, 1934, with the Ford/Baumer 'K3' on the right. It was lying second when put out of the race by a spinning Tracta and the Martin/Eccles 'K3' finished fourth. (Photo: Motor)

The only foreign car ever to win the Italian 1100 c.c. Championship was Raffaele Cecchini's single-seater 'K3', seen here setting up a new record at the Stelvio Hillelimb. (Photo: Fumagalli)



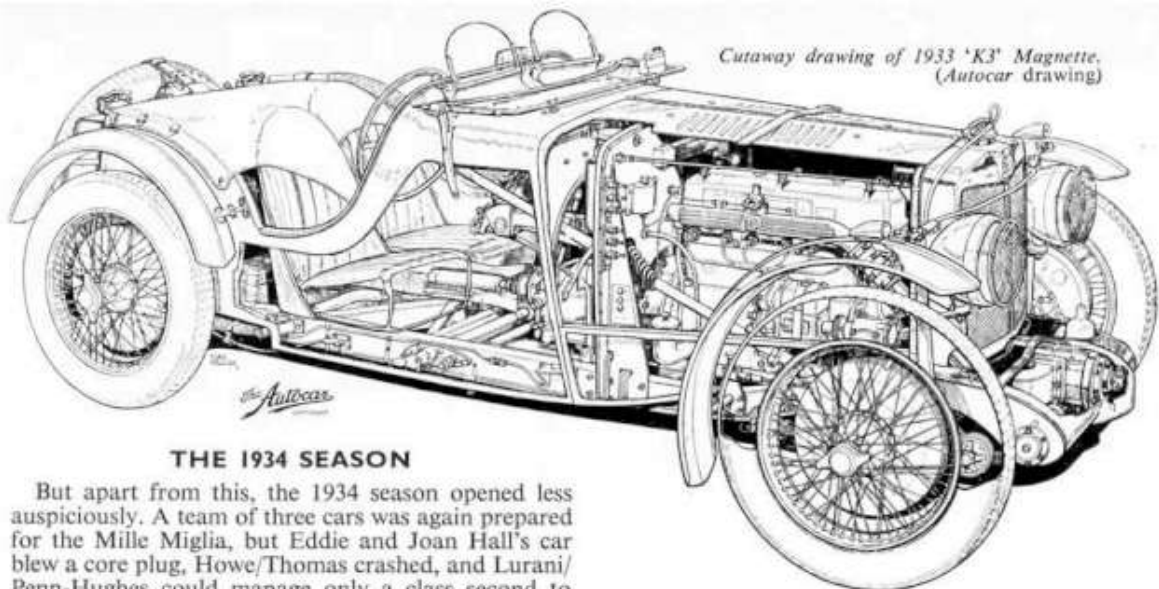
Ulster Tourist Trophy, just three weeks ahead. Fortunately Straight had an entry for the race which he was unable to take up, so Kimber managed to substitute a spare works car for *Il Maestro*. Only three other 'K3's were entered (for Hall, Yallop and Manby-Colegrave) but a total of eight Midgets, because it was reckoned that the T.T. handicap gave the advantage to the smaller-engined cars.

Arriving at the circuit in time for the second practice period (having driven straight from the Belfast docks), Nuvolari climbed into the Magnette, took a good look round, and asked for the driving seat to be raised on wooden blocks. This done, he set sail for his first lap, which proved a heart-stopping experience for his riding mechanic, Alec Hounslow of M.G. John Thornley, the present managing director of M.G.s, has suggested that Nuvolari's method was to start a little over the limit and then ease back from it—on that first practice lap he 'lost' the Magnette completely three times, and in eight laps wore out a full set of tyres. The same principle is followed by some of today's top rally drivers, who consider that they are not really trying if they do not wreck a couple of cars during reconnaissance runs.

In the race itself, the Italian champion's style was much smoother, though still very fast indeed; he broke the 1100 c.c. circuit record seven times, and cut his refuelling so fine that he needed to take on more before doing his *tour d'honneur*. The favoured Midgets were brilliantly led by 'Hammy' Hamilton's 'J4', but his mechanic made a nonsense of one pit-stop, costing a full seven minutes. Hammy regained the lead on handicap, then had to stop for more fuel, and Nuvolari won by a bare 40 seconds. Eddie Hall's 'K3' took fourth place, and Manby-Colegrave finished seventh.

And still the score of successes in that wonderful first season of the 'K3' was not complete. For the Brooklands 500 Miles Race two weeks later, Hall had his Magnette quickly rebodied as a single-seater with a very high final drive ratio, in which form it was capable of *lapping* the Outer Circuit at something like 118 m.p.h. Since the 'K3' proved completely reliable, he was able to drive quite gently to win at 106.53 m.p.h. average for the full distance, while Yallop's more normal 'K3' finished fifth. The following March, Horton maintained 117.03 m.p.h. for one hour in his offset 'K3' to set up a new Class 'G' Outer Circuit record at Brooklands.

Cutaway drawing of 1933 'K3' Magnette.
(Autocar drawing)



THE 1934 SEASON

But apart from this, the 1934 season opened less auspiciously. A team of three cars was again prepared for the Mille Miglia, but Eddie and Joan Hall's car blew a core plug, Howe/Thomas crashed, and Lurani/Penn-Hughes could manage only a class second to Taruffi's Maserati. A fourth 'K3' also ran—one of the old 1933 team cars driven by a German named Fork—and retired with rear axle trouble, but a month later Fork picked up a fifth place in the Avusrennen. Meanwhile the 'K3's suffered another disappointment in the International Trophy at Brooklands, where the handicapper made them pay for their brilliant reputation. Of no less than 13 entered, the highest-placed 'K3' was only eighth.

Most of these cars were the new, 1934 models, with Marshall supercharger, 'N' type cylinder head, improved brake actuation and long-tailed streamlined (though still two-seater) bodywork; the Mille Miglia cars carried slab-tank two-seater bodies, but incorporated the new Roots-type superchargers. The new model's first success came in the Mannin Beg, thus providing a highly satisfactory revenge for their failure at the Isle of Man the previous year. Only eight cars finished, seven of them were M.G.s, and 'K3' Magnettes filled the first five places, led home by Norman Black. Tragically and ironically, the Abingdon contingent were unable to enjoy this great success because

one of them, Frankie Tayler, had been killed in an accident to Kaye Don's car before the race. I believe this to be the only recorded fatality in a 'K3'.

No 'K3' had run at Le Mans in 1933, but this omission was now rectified when Ford and Baumer appeared with one and worked right up to second place, only to be forced off the road when a Tracta spun in front of the Magnette. But another 'K3', driven by Charlie Martin and Roy Eccles, finished fourth and won the 2-litre class.

The car that Eyston drove into third place in the Mannin Beg was built of 'K3' components but featured an offset transmission line, and could be fitted with road-racing or a track body as required. Known variously as EX.135, the Magic Magnette or the Humbug (because of the brown-and-cream striped track body), it was destined for a long and honourable career as a record-breaker and eventually formed the basis of the famous Goldie Gardner record car, which achieved more than 200 m.p.h.—still with a 'K3' engine—in 1938. But its first victory came in 1934, when Eyston won the British Empire Trophy at

80.81 m.p.h. Of the 10 finishers, five were 'K3's, and three of them won the team prize.

Two new names now appeared on the scene. One was Raffaele Cecchini, an Italian printer who acquired a 'K3' and neatly converted it to single-seater bodywork. The other was Dick Seaman, then a Cambridge undergraduate, who bought Whitney Straight's old



Bobbie Kohlrausch's mechanic, Artur Baldt, sits in the ex-Howe 1933 Mille Miglia car which was loaned to Kohlrausch for a very successful season of hillclimbs and sprints in Germany. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)

Magnette after competing in various events with an 'F' type Magna. These two entered for the Coppa Acerbo Junior together with 'Hammy' Hamilton, who had just established a new 1100 c.c. record in the Klausen hill-climb with his 'K3', which was fitted with offset single-seater bodywork. Hammy stalled on the starting-line, then, furious with himself, roared through the field in classic Hamilton fashion to win the race, with Cecchini second and Seaman third. Once again the single-seater Maseratis had been humbled in their native land by the heavy, vintage-looking M.G.s—and it is on record that, during that race, Hamilton's 'K3' was clocked at 122.25 m.p.h. through the measured kilometre.

Seaman and Hamilton then travelled in company to Switzerland, where the young undergraduate scored his first victory by winning the Swiss Light Car G. P. As for poor Hammy—brilliant, fearless driver that he was despite chronic lack of funds, and potentially one of the greatest that Britain has ever produced—he met his death in a borrowed 3-litre Maserati during the Swiss Grand Prix itself. Raffaele Cecchini went on to gain class wins in one hill-climb after another, often setting up new class records, and then beat the great Giuseppe Farina's Maserati in the Circuit of Modena to win not only the race, but the 1100 c.c. Championship of Italy. Never before had the Championship been won with a non-Italian car. Seaman also gained a notable success with his 'K3' in September, winning his class and establishing a new sports car record—regardless of capacity—at Mont Ventoux. At the end of the month he finished fifth behind Eyston in the Masaryk G. P. Junior in Czechoslovakia, and in October raised to 72.87 m.p.h. the Brooklands Mountain Circuit record which Straight had established with the same car. Also at Brooklands, 'K3's finished third, fourth, fifth and seventh in the 500 Miles. Other successes were gained by Manby-Colegrave in Ireland, by Thompson in Australia, and by Moritz in Hungary—the latter with the class-winning 1933 Mille Miglia car, which he bought from Fork. Miss Enid Riddell had her 'K3' fitted with large pannier bags to carry feminine fripperies and competed in the all-ladies Paris-Saint Raphael Rally, winning her class and finishing second overall.

A further series of Continental hill-climb successes was achieved in 1934 by a German driver, Bobby Kohlrusch, who had borrowed Earl Howe's old 1933 Mille Miglia 'K3' from Abingdon. He was later to make his name by returning 140.6 m.p.h. with the old Magic Midget 750 c.c. record car.

The start of the 1934 Coppa Acerbo Junior, in which the 'K3's finished 1-2-3. First home was Hamilton, whose car can be seen stalled on the starting-line. (Photo: Fumagalli)



Driven by Maillard-Brune and Druck, Jacques Menier's 'K3' scored many successes including the 2-litre class at Le Mans 1935. It was still being raced in France in 1947, and is now being restored by an English enthusiast. (Photo: A. Well)

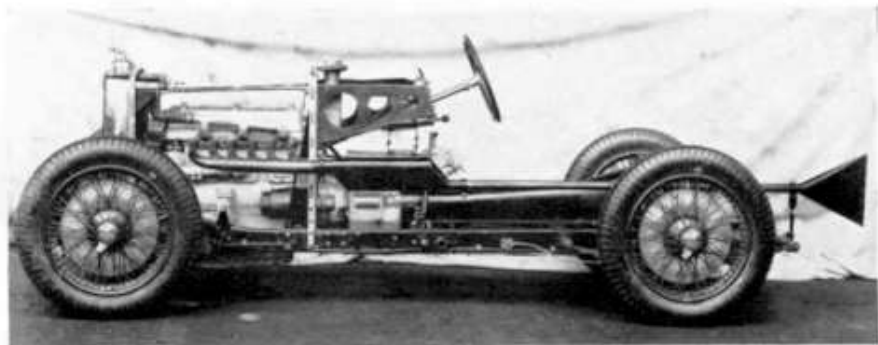
1935 AND AFTER

For various reasons the 'K3' Magnette began to take a back seat in 1935. Most of the M.G. Car Company's attention was focused on a brand-new design, the single-seater 'R' type Midget, with backbone frame and independent suspension all round. By comparison with this, the 'K3' design was old-hat indeed, though its engine remained a brilliant piece of engineering and the 'K3' had by no means scored its last racing success. Again, a dangerous rival had appeared on the scene in the slim, purposeful shape of the single-seater E.R.A. Finally, when Lord Nuffield (as Sir William Morris had now become) sold the M.G. Car Company to Morris Motors in the early summer, it was announced that M.G. racing activities were to cease. Thereafter, the private owners had to fend for themselves without the full resources of the M.G. racing department, which was closed down overnight.

However, on 6th May, at Brooklands—where the new 'R' made its debut in the International Trophy Race—Eddie Hall's 'K3' took third place, while, over in Ireland a week or two later, Manby-Colegrave set up no less than four new lap records in the Bray Round-the-Houses before succumbing to the old bugbear of the 'K3', plug trouble. Robin Jackson won a 50-mile Southport sand race with the very first 'K3' prototype, which still appeared on the circuits from time to time. Jacques Menier, the man who makes that delicious French chocolate, bought a 'K3' and in June entered it for Le Mans, where Maillard-Brune and Druck won the 2-litre class, finishing ninth overall.

Maillard-Brune followed up his Sarthe success by removing the mudguards and finishing second to a Bugatti in the G. P. d'Orleans. This, its ability to compete on equal terms either as a sports or as a racing car at will, was one of the most attractive features of the 'K3'. Third in that same race was a Dutchman, Edmond Hertzberger, in the very last 'K3' to be built (it was exhibited at Olympia in 1934 before being sold). Maillard-Brune went on to finish fourth at Albi, headed by two Bugattis and a Delage, but the Menier Magnette's racing career was far from over, as we shall see.

Even Cecchini managed to extract a further turn of speed from his old single-seater, repeating his class win at Stelvio in 1935, improving on his old record,



and beating the highest-placed Maserati by nearly a minute. Some time later, the Cecchini special turned up in Ireland, and with it Prestwich won the 1937

Cork Grand Prix. Another 'K3' appeared in Czechoslovakia, of all places, when Zdenek Pohl scored a win in the 1935 Jeneralka Hill-climb. That same car is still being raced today by Zdenek and his brother Jiri, though it now has a Skoda engine; spares for 30-year-old M.G.s are not too easy to find behind the Iron Curtain.

Back in Britain, in the British Empire Trophy Race, Donald Letts came 10th with EX.135—a far cry from Eyston's outright win of the previous year with the same car. The famous Siamese racing driver, Bira, took fifth place in the Nuffield Trophy at Donington with the last 'K3' but one. In a mid-August event at Donington, Reg Parnell came first in Hamilton's old 'K3', with J. H. T. Smith third in Lurani's old 1934 Mille Miglia car. Eddie Hall once again returned fastest time in the Craigtantlet Hill-climb, smashing the previous record. And the Marquis de Belleoche, driving Manby-Colegrave's venerable 1933 car, survived the Brooklands 500 Miles to finish fifth.

It is interesting to compare the performances of the Midgets and the Magnettes at this time. The average 'K3' engine could be relied upon to give something over 120 b.h.p. at 6,500 r.p.m., but the four-cylinder units used in the 'Q' and 'R' type Midgets had been subjected to such intensive development that they were capable of 113 b.h.p. at 7,200 r.p.m. with less than three-quarters of the six-cylinder unit's capacity—750 c.c. against 1100 c.c. Moreover, the all-independent 'R' type, once a few teething troubles had been sorted out, displayed better roadholding than the 'cart-sprung' Magnette, and was of course much lighter. Not surprising then, that there was little to

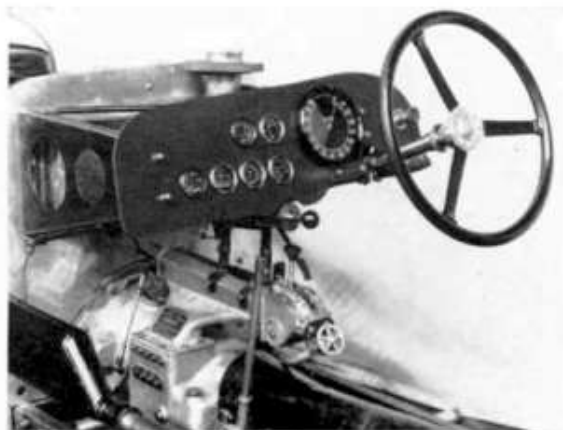
choose between Midget and Magnette towards the end of the 1935 season. At the August Donington meeting, indeed, Briault's 'R' had finished second between the 'K3's of Parnell and Smith.

In an effort to compete with mounting opposition from newer designs, many 'K3' owners in many parts of the world embarked on extensive modification of their cars. Often the result was merely to spoil the whole charm and character of the model, but such aesthetic considerations do not always occur to a man who is bent on winning some silverware.

For a long and full life, few could approach the record of the Menier 'K3' which won the Le Mans 2-litre class on its first outing in 1935. The following year, Maillard-Brune won the 1100 c.c. class and finished second overall (despite persistent ignition trouble) in that other 24-hour French classic, the Bol d'Or. In 1937 he again competed in the Bol d'Or with the same car, though he retired at half-distance. The car then passed to another Frenchman, de Burnay, who succeeded in winning the class and taking second place yet again in the 1938 event. Almost unbelievably, de Burnay reappeared at the Bol d'Or—still with the same 'K3'—in 1939, and covered enough distance to win the 1,100 c.c. class for the third time, though he retired after 21 hours. Heaven alone knows how the old Magnette survived the war, but it turned up in the hands of one Veuillet at the 1945 Bois de Boulogne meeting, taking second place to a 6C Maserati, and scored a similar success at the Bois in 1946. In 1947 Veuillet took it to Rheims, where he finished seventh behind Peter Monkhouse, who was driving a much-modified version of the car in which Frankie Tayler

Another view of the 1934 'K3' chassis showing the pre-selector gearbox. Behind the selector lever is the brake adjuster, and above it the pump for maintaining air pressure in the fuel tank. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)

The twin-lever brakes fitted to the 1934 model 'K3' Magnette. (Photo: M.G. Car Co. Ltd.)





1934 MODEL M.G. MAGNETTE 'K3' as driven by Norman Black to win the 1934 Mannin Beg race at 70.99 m.p.h.



was killed before the 1934 Mannin Beg. The two venerable Magnettes also appeared at the 1947 Lyons meeting, where Monkhouse finished fifth but Veuillet retired.

A few years ago I had a letter from a Frenchman named Bonnafous who wanted to sell an M.G. special. The supercharger was missing, the front axle had been broken and clumsily welded, the body was non-standard and altogether horrible, but the chassis number told me all I wanted to know. So the Menier 'K3' returned to Abingdon after 30 years, and I passed the word around among those who have a weakness for motoring history. The 'K3' is now being lovingly restored to original specification by a young M.G. Car Club member, and will soon be seen on the race-track once more.

In two years the M.G. company built two prototypes and 31 other 'K3's, if one includes the EX. 135 record-breaker. It has been possible to locate and identify 23 at the time of writing, their condition varying from immaculate original specification to a mere rusty chassis frame. The first prototype is in Tokyo, owned by a charming Japanese gentleman who bought it in 1937 and won my heart by telling me, 'When the packed box came to the port Kobe I was absolutely happy highest degree in my life'. The second prototype is in Australia, well cared for by a professional engineer. Sir Henry Birkin's 1933 Mille Miglia car is also in Australia, where it has been restored by an M.G. Car Club member who spared neither effort nor expense to achieve perfection. Hammy Hamilton's car, extensively modified by Reg Parnell, is in England, but its engine, alas, is on the wrong side of the Atlantic. The Straight/Seaman car went in 1938 to the U.S.A., where Howe's 1934 Mille Miglia car may also be seen; of its team-mates, one is in Australia and one, much modified, in England. Prince Bira's car is in Australia, Cecchini's appears to be in Ireland, and Charlie Martin's 1934 Le Mans car, completely restored, is exhibited on high days and holidays in California. The 1934 Mannin Beg winner recently turned up in Switzerland, apparently in perfect condition. As for EX. 135, the gallant old Humbug later rebodied for Lt.-Col. Goldie Gardner, it retired from record-breaking in 1952 and is now carefully maintained at Abingdon.

Over the years, the 'K3' Magnette earned a considerable name for itself. Is that reputation disproportionately high? I doubt it. The 'K3' in its heyday stood alone to defend Britain's racing reputation, both at home and abroad. Its victories in its first two years included the Mille Miglia team prize, the Ulster T.T., the Coppa Acerbo Junior (twice), the Mannin Beg, the British Empire Trophy, the Brooklands 500 Miles, the Circuit of Modena, the Swiss Light Car G. P. and the Italian 1,100 c.c. Championship. Those who drove 'K3's included Nuvolari, Birkin, Seaman, Eyston, Gardner, Straight, Hall, Don, Bira, Hamilton, Parnell and Dodson. It holds a secure and well-deserved place in the history of motor racing.

Essentially vintage in concept, the 'K3' looked heavy and old-fashioned beside many of its contemporaries, but in the words of John Thornley, '... it was designed to go fast, keep right way up, and keep on going'. If the essential sports car is (as many believe) epitomised by a mid-'thirties M.G., then surely the 'K3' Magnette is the epitome of the M.G.

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Chassis: Open channel side-members, tubular cross-members and cruciform centre bracing. Chassis underslung at rear. Remote lubrication by grouped nipples.

Suspension: Semi-elliptic leaf springs, front and rear, flat under load, taped and cord-bound. Main leaves sliding in phosphor-bronze split trunnions at trailing ends. Hartford duplex friction shock-absorbers, two mounted longitudinally at front, four mounted transversely at rear.

Wheels: Centre-lock Whitworth wire-spoked racing type, 3½ in. rim, 19 in. dia.

Brakes: Elektron shoes, backplates and drums, the latter finned and fitted with cast-iron liners. Brakedrum diameter, 13 in. Mechanical actuation by cased cable from central cross-shaft, with fly-off handbrake operating on all four brakes. Brakes adjustable under way by cockpit wheel. Torque reaction cables to front axle.

Steering: Cam-type box and transverse draglink to axle-mounted slave arm actuating wheels through divided trackrod.

Engine: Six-cylinder 57 × 71 mm. (1.086 c.c.). Four-bearing crankshaft. Gear-type oil pump. Finned elektron sump with float-chamber controlled feed from scuttle-mounted reserve tank. Total capacity, 20 galls + 2 res. Steel connecting-rods, three-ring aluminium pistons. Valves operated through adjustable rockers by single overhead camshaft, driven by vertical shaft forming dynamo armature. KE.965 valves. Triple valve springs. Opposed ports, six inlet, six exhaust. Compression ratio, 6.2 to 1. Valve timing: Inlet opens 15 deg. b.t.d.c., closes 55 deg. a.b.d.c. Exhaust opens 50 deg. b.b.d.c., closes 20 deg. a.b.d.c.

Transmission: Wilson preselector gearbox with central operating lever (oil capacity, 6 pts.). Top, 1 to 1; Third, 1.36 to 1; Second, 2.0 to 1; First 3.4 to 1; Reverse, 5.07 to 1. Open propeller shaft with Hardy-Spicer universal joints. Three-quarter floating rear axle with straight-cut bevel final drive, ratios 5.7, 4.89 or 4.33 to 1 (oil capacity, 2 pts.).

Cooling system: Thermo-siphon with engine-driven pump. Radiator fitted with stoneguard and quick-release filler cap. Capacity of system, 3½ galls.

Exhaust system: Six branches to outside exhaust incorporating regulation Brooklands expansion chamber, tailpipe and fish-tail. Additional internal silencing tube supplied for road use.

Induction and fuel system: 23½-gallon slab tank incorporating 3-gallon reserve, with twin quick-release fillers. Twin electric fuel pumps (one main, one reserve). 1½ in. bore S.U. carburettor mounted on Powerplus No. 9 eccentric-vane type supercharger running at approx. ½ engine speed, driven from crankshaft nose by splined coupling shaft with universal joints. Lubricated at low pressure from cylinder head. Ki-gass starting pump.

Ignition and electrical system: Polar-inductor magneto and 14 mm. sparking plugs. 12-volt dynamo and separate starter. Twin 6-volt batteries in series. Headlamps, sidelamps, dash-lamps, tail-lamps, twin horns and windscreen wiper. All circuits separately wired and fused.

Instruments: 6 in. Jaeger tachometer, oil-pressure gauge, oil and water thermometers, fuel gauge, oil-tank gauge, ammeter, boost gauge and supercharger oil-pressure gauge.

Bodywork: Doorless two-seater conforming to international road-racing regulations, with fold-flat windscreen, twin aero screens, and spare wheel mounted behind slab fuel tank. Bucket seats upholstered in leather. Standard colour, British Racing Green.

Dimensions: Wheelbase, 7 ft. 10 ½ in. Track, 4 ft. 0 in. Weight: chassis, 13½ cwt.; complete car, 18½ cwt. 20.04 m.p.h. per 1,000 r.p.m. with 4.33 to 1 final drive.

Price: Chassis only, £675. Complete car, £795.

1934 SPECIFICATION

As above with the following variations:—

Brakes: Shoes in rolled T-section mild steel. Steel liners. Twin cam-levers and roller cams.

Engine: New cylinder head with improved porting. Standard compression ratio 5.4 to 1, or higher if desired.

Induction and fuel system: 27½-gallon shaped fuel tank forming part of bodywork. Hand pump provided to maintain fuel supply by air pressure (so that batteries may be dispensed with). Roots-type Marshall No. 85 supercharger.

Electrical system: External contacts provided for use of slave starter batteries.

Instruments: Fuel supply air pressure gauge added. Fuel gauge and oil-tank gauge omitted.

Bodywork: Narrower streamlined design, still conforming with A.I.A.R.C. regulations. Tapered tail behind fuel tank. No full-width windscreen provided. Spare wheel mounted at side of scuttle.

Dimensions: Weight of complete car, 17½ cwt.

Price: Unchanged.