

Roy Brocklehurst – 1932-1988

Compiled and edited by Steve Finch

Roy Brocklehurst, the man who designed so much of the MGB's mechanical layout, was born in 1932, the son of a miner. He joined MG straight from school in 1947, at the age of fifteen, going to work for Syd Enever as a design apprentice. Enever, characteristically, threw him in at the deep end, and he was set to drawing some new valvegear and a special crankshaft for Enever's beloved Gardner record breaker.

After the success of EX 172, young Roy's next job was to draw the chassis frame of the EX.175 record car. EX 175 was conceived quickly after the 1951 Le Mans as a prototype for the new production car that was to become the MGA. Thirty years later, after completing other major projects such as the MGB, he was still proud of the MGA chassis "probably the best separate chassis frame ever engineered" he told a motoring journalist (who presumably did not know who had designed it!). The design of the body had been completed quickly after Le Mans, a blueprint being produced in February 1952, followed by wind tunnel testing. In 1952 Roy left to complete two years National Service with the RAF, and returned to Abingdon in June 1954 (the year in which the design office re-opened) as a design draughtsman.

After the final go-ahead for the MGA was given in 1954, the aim to have production running in April 1955 was over optimistic, but even so it took only just over a year to go from drawing board to full scale production and export. Roy Brocklehurst and Terry Mitchell worked on the suspension, Harry White on chassis details and Jim O'Neal on the body.

In 1956 Brocklehurst became chief draughtsman, and it was in that capacity that he worked on the MGB. Roy Brocklehurst was chief chassis draughtsman for the MGB. There is a story about Roy crashing a prototype of an MGB that had an experimental independent rear suspension. Obviously independent rear suspension didn't make it to the final design, for "cost reasons".

When Enever retired in 1971, Brocklehurst became chief engineer. He once voiced his frustration on all the legislation that governed that job: 'Nowadays, you don't design a motor car anymore – you just throw up all the regulations and draw a line around them'.

As MG was wound down, Brocklehurst was snapped up by the main BL organization to head the Vehicle Engineering Division of Austin Morris. He went to Longbridge to help develop the Metro, Maestro and Montego. He became group chief engineer to a division known as New Vehicle Concept Engineering, and in 1978 became chief engineer of BL's Advanced Vehicles Division, a small group of men who spend their time gazing a very long way down the road. But it was NVCD and its successor, VE, which engineered the project known as ADO.88 up to running prototype stage and then turned its attention to ADO.99 turned into LM10, the Maestro.

In 1981 he became chief engineer of BL Technology Ltd at their huge new research facility in Gaydon. He took early retirement in 1988, but died, tragically and suddenly, in April that year.

Roy Brocklehurst worked on the A, on all the subsequent record breakers, on the B, GT, C, and the V8, plus all the prototypes that didn't make it. In "*MG by McComb*", the author commented about the cast-iron connection providing an almost unbroken line through the whole of M.G. history. He wrote:

'So the man who carried the can for all aspects of vehicle engineering up to and including Metro launch, and incidentally to within 18 months of the Maestro launch, was an M.G.-trained engineer [Roy Brocklehurst] who had spent the first 26 years of his working life at Abingdon, learning his trade from Syd Enever – who began his working life as a shop boy with the old Morris Garages of Oxford in 1920. At that time, even Cecil Kimber had yet to appear on the scene and the whole idea of M.G. was not so much as a twinkle in his eye.'

Beyond Cecil Kimber and Syd Enever, Roy Brocklehurst and many others at Abingdon should be remembered for their loving work on the cars that we enjoy and steward today. As we *Celebrate 50 years of the MGB*, our gratitude and appreciation should go to Roy Brocklehurst.

Reference and acknowledgement of material for this article is given to:

<http://www.mgcars.org.uk/mgccmga/history/history1.shtml>

"MG by McComb" by F.Wilson McComb

"MGB, *The complete Story*" by Bryan Laban