

Albert Sydney (Syd) Enever (1906-1993)

Compiled and edited by Steve Finch



Syd Enever will be remembered as the inspiration behind two of Britain's greatest sports cars, the MGA and the MGB, and for the experimental cars of record breaking fame. Syd Enever was involved with MG all his working life.

Albert Sydney Enever was born in Colden Common, near Winchester, Hampshire on March 25, 1906. When he was only

three years old, his parents separated, and he went with his mother, and seven brothers and sisters, to live in Oxford. In South Oxford School, at the age of fifteen, the young Enever's practical bent soon came to the attention of his headmaster, who helped him secure a job as an errand boy at Morris Garages in 1920. This was even before Cecil Kimber arrived and several years before MG evolved.

About a year later he was promoted and moved to another of the firm's local garages. While at the Clarendon Yard, he built his own three-wheeled car, and no doubt it was this, coupled with his enthusiasm and outstanding intuitive mechanical abilities, that brought him to the attention of Cecil Kimber, the M.G. Car Company's managing director. Accordingly in 1927, Kimber told George "Pop" Propert, the general manager, to employ Enever at the new Abingdon factory, where he was placed under the wing of Cecil "Cec" Cousins, the works manager and MG's first employee, in the experimental department. It was not long before Enever was spearheading some of the bolder projects in this department and, in due course, he would lead it, remaining at Abingdon as liaison man when the rest of the design team left for Cowley in 1935.

Alongside the production cars, Enever (working closely with Reg Jackson) developed a whole series of MG record cars in the 1,100cc Class F and 1,500cc Class E categories both before and after WWII. And for all his outstanding achievements with MG production cars, those, justifiably, were always the cars that Enever was most proud of.

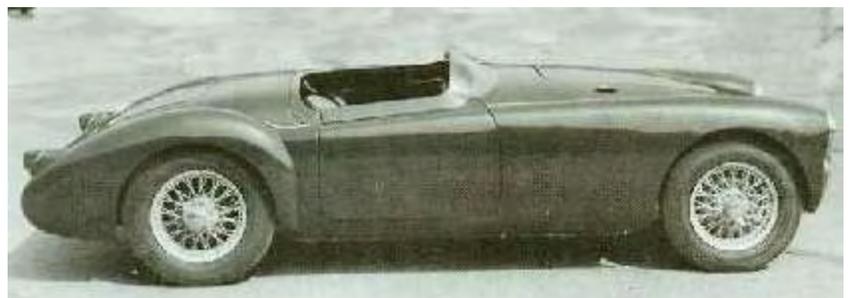
In 1938, Enever was appointed chief planning engineer at Abingdon. He was deeply involved in the company's war effort, working on the development of the Crusader tank. After the war, he went on to even greater things, helping to shape a future for MG that would lead to a radical departure from its traditional heritage. Throughout, he

never lost the edge of his keen mind and earned the respect of his colleagues.

The semi-independence of MG at Abingdon came seriously under threat in 1949 when the board of the Nuffield Group pondered moving MG production to the Riley factory at Coventry and turning Abingdon into a minor satellite of the Morris works at Cowley. At the same time various concepts were being hatched at Cowley for possible new MG products that owed little to John Thornley's (MG's managing director) or Enever's thinking. These threats to their existence galvanized the Abingdon stalwarts, who not only began to plan their own product but to lobby for their continued existence.

In 1954 Syd Enever was promoted to Chief Engineer. In later years, he would be responsible for fathering some memorable cars, notably the MGA, MGB and the post-war record breakers.

Thornley and Enever realized that the future lay in more modern coachwork and prototypes eventually led to the creation of EX182, a Le Mans racer for 1955. It was a thinly disguised replica of their new generation sports car. The revolution occurred soon after the Le Mans race when, with the sleekly styled MGA, MG broke with thirty years of traditional styling and abandoned the Nuffield Group's XPAG engine family in favor of the new generation Austin-designed B-series unit. Over 100,000 MGAs were sold.



*The prototype MGA at the factory in Abingdon
EX-182 - Built for Le Mans 1955 - Redesign from EX175.*

In the summer of 1955, with MGA in production, thoughts at the MG factory at Abingdon inevitably turned to the car that would succeed it. According to David Knowles, "Perhaps more than anyone else it was MG's Chief Engineer, Syd Enever, who determined the basic parameters that shaped the MGB." As Enever himself once said, "The MGB shape, though you might not realize it, was basically borrowed from EX181."

EX181 was a mid-engine, streamlined, record breaker from 1957, designed by Syd Enever. It was taken to Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats in 1959 where, driven first by Phil Hill and then officially by Sterling Moss, it broke five



MG EX 181 on the salt in 1959 at Bonneville

International Class F records with a top speed of 245.64 mph, two-way average.

When MG launched into the project in 1959 that would become the MGB, there was a lot more to the job than yet another revamping of the theme. This time, there was to be a major change in engineering direction too, as MG extended the monocoque construction layout that they had first adopted in 1953 on the ZA Magnette saloon, to their first monocoque sports car. Building a unit construction saloon car (with the inherent strength of a closed structure) is one thing, building a unit construction open car is quite another. In addition, the new B had to be at least as quick as the A, preferably quicker. It had to have all of the A's desirable road-holding qualities while losing some of the harsher edges. It had to have better accommodation and trim levels for a new level of customer (especially in the USA). It had to look good and sell profitably – which meant very big production numbers to offset the initially much higher tooling cost of unit construction. And most importantly, it had to be a real MG... .

That is what chief engineer Syd Enever, chief chassis draughtsman Roy Brocklehurst, chief body draughtsman Don Hayter, managing director John Thornley and their

teams set out to achieve. And that, in the end, is what they did achieve.

Syd Enever retired in 1971, just a couple of years after John Thornley. Syd's retirement came after 50 years of working with the cars he loved, and seeing his second major project, the MGB, sell more than half a million cars. Syd Enever died in Oxfordshire in 1993 at the age of 87.

Beyond Cecil Kimber, Syd Enever 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 Syd Enever.

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

Barry Ennever, by his permission and from his website article
Ennever / Enever Family History and Ancestry

found at <http://www.ennever.com/histories/history17858.php>

"MG, The Untold Story" by David Knowles

"MGB, A Celebration of Britain's Best Loved Sports Car", by David Knowles

"MGB, The Complete Story", by Brian Laban

Picture of Syd Enever courtesy of Barry Ennever

Pictures of EX 181 and EX 182 from www.MGAquru.com