

was a market tester prior to the MGF, to see whether the press and public would support the return of MG sports cars. How better to do that than with a thorough modernisation of the MGB? Few panels were shared by the time the car was done – it had sprouted wider arches, a bonnet bulge, modified wings and new wheels, while the new bumpers were an attempt to modernise the look. To offset the cost of the project (one orchestrated by Rover Special Products) it was stuffed to the gunwales with burr elm and leather and marketed as an upmarket GT.

Unsurprisingly, sales were strong among diehard MG fans – and the RV8 never really depreciated. Japan was the biggest market, taking 1579 of the 1983 cars built – though it's believed that up to 700 have rejoined the 330 originally sold to UK customers. Good examples are still prized today.

### Middlebridge Scimitar

We'll get the awkward bit out of the way

first. Technically, Princess Anne has had two Middlebridges – a red one first, which was identified by the press and attracting attention, and subsequently a more subtle green example. Now that's out of the way, we can tell the Middlebridge story.

Reliant had been building SE6 Scimitars since 1975 – and when production ceased in 1986 the tooling was sold to Middlebridge Scimitar Ltd; a specialist based in Beeston, Nottingham. Middlebridge adapted the car to take the new 2.9EFI derivative of the Cologne V6, redesigned the rear lamp clusters, fitted new alloys and offered a greater choice of electronics and trim upgrades. The Middlebridge was pitched above the Reliant offering; a budget Aston Martin, for want of a better expression. Colour coded bumpers were fitted – a timely upgrade, but one forced by the lack of availability of the original rubber inserts. 79 Middlebridge Scimitars were built; the majority of which survive.

### Jaguar XKSS

The 1957 Browns Lane fire put paid to the XKSS project before it was finished. The original plan had been to use up the remaining short-nose D-type shells for a limited run of just 25 XKSS sports cars. But with the chassis numbers allocated, the fire gutted the factory after just sixteen had been made. The car could be argued to be the progenitor of the famous E-type – a development of the D-type for the road, though far more focused than the later car. The XKSS project came about following Jaguar's withdrawal from motorsport in 1956, and was the result of a plan to recoup the investment in these chassis. Changes were minor; a passenger door, the removal of the rear fin, the removal of the divider between the seats, a full screen, chrome bumpers and XK140 rear lights. A hood and sidescreens were added as weather protection.

Jaguar completed the planned 25 car run in 2016; producing a further nine to use up the previously allocated chassis numbers.

The Middlebridge cars moved the Scimitar upmarket from the Reliant era.

