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*Below:* this 1952 Lea-Francis London Motor Show car is a 2½-litre sports, which uses a 2496 cc, four-cylinder engine. It could reach a top speed of 102 mph, by courtesy of its 125 bhp power unit

*Bottom:* three famous MGs. They are Y-type 1½-litre saloons of 1953

This was odd, because the public was clamouring for new cars: in fact, if you believed a somewhat equivocal comment by *The Times*, they would buy anything on wheels that was offered to them.

'In most countries today,' reported the paper, 'the shortage of motorcars is so acute that motorists exercise very little discrimination in buying a car. They consider themselves fortunate if they can acquire any new car, of any make, nationality and engine power. This partly accounts for the present demand for British small cars in the United States, where motorists normally prefer cars of high power and large body size.'

In fact, it didn't account for it at all, for the 'small British cars' which were making such an impact on the American market were cars which didn't compete with existing US models at all, and attracted an entirely different kind of customer. One British model which particularly enshrined itself in American automotive mythology was the MG TC Midget, a sports car of pre-war character which offered lively handling and quick acceleration, and could consequently run away from any large American gin-palace on a twisting road, although the larger car was very likely faster in a straight line.

