

Half a century of MG cars

MG, the Abingdon sports car firm, celebrates 50 years of car production in the town this year. And to help the party along, they have turned to MG — Morris Garages.

MG Abingdon took its name from William Morris's original garage in Oxford. Since the early 1920s the two operations have gone their separate ways.

But the two are to work in harness again to mark the 50th anniversary.

There is to be a week of celebrations, beginning on September 2, and ending with a huge carnival procession through Abingdon.

There should be examples of every type of car MG ever made and mock-ups of the company's war machinery. "They have to be mock-ups as the real thing does not seem to have survived," company spokesman Mr Tony Day said.

"I don't know why this should be. Perhaps it was the type of work we were doing such as the water-proofing of tanks for the D Day landings. A lot of it must have got destroyed."

MG hope that during the celebrations the 500,000th MGB will be rolling off the assembly line.



This grand old lady came home to Abingdon last week after travelling half-way round the world, braving earthquakes, monsoons and all the other hazards of foreign motoring.

Thirty years old but far from finished, this MG YT tourer has just completed an overland trip to India. And anyone with a word of criticism about the famous MG name shouldn't utter it within earshot of 60-year-old Sid Beer, who took the YT to India last year with a couple of friends.

For Sid has an enviable collection of vintage MGs among the 50 cars at his Huntingdon home, and the way the YT handled on the marathon trip has

increased his affection.

The YT was bought in Bangkok by American journalist S. J. Perelman in 1949; and when he decided last year to travel from Paris back to Bangkok, he approached Sid for help, and eventually companionship, on the trip.

"The car went superbly, the only thing which needed replacing was the petrol pump. It went so well in fact that we were pinched for speeding at 70

mph in Hungary," said Sid.

This was just one of hundreds of offbeat incidents which made the trip unforgettable. The Hungarian traffic cop who stopped them was obviously intent on retiring early with the pickings he made on that stretch of road.

But Sid managed to persuade him that the £800 speeding fine was a little excessive, and that £8 was nearer the mark.

They travelled across

France and the rest of Europe through the Iron Curtain countries to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and into India. The journey was only halted by massive flooding.

Sid and his fellow travellers had some incredible experiences, but his lasting memory is that they were carriers of doom.

"Everywhere we went we seemed to take trouble. As we drove into the black forest in Germany an earthquake broke out."

The same thing happened in Iran, along with the start of the civil unrest. And when they finally got to India they were stopped by impassable floods.

Return of a grand old lady