

# FEB 2023 THE SIMPLE STUFF - The Story Behind the MG Octagon

by Bob Vitrikas

The MG logo is instantly recognizable and has remained true to its original form since 1923. It first appeared in an advertisement in the March 2, 1923 Oxford Times. The octagon was used in advertisements for the MG car to distinguish it from the Morris line from which it was derived. An accountant working for Cecil Kimber at the Morris Garages, Ted Lee, is credited with the design. Simple, easily recognized, and timeless.



In an interview with Jonathan Wood in *Thoroughbred and Classic Car*, Lee recalled that he took the initiative to design the octagonal logo using a small ruler he had from high school. He showed it to Kimber who exclaimed, “That’s just the thing!” In turn, it was shown to Sir William Morris who remarked, “The best thing to come out of the company...and it will never go out of it.” No truer words were ever spoken! Surprisingly, it wasn’t until April 1928, one month after the factory moved to Abingdon, that the trademark application was submitted.

Beginning in 1927, MG badges, first with German silver letters without the octagon, gradually began to appear on MG conversion radiators. In 1928, the enameled badge we are so familiar with began to appear on MG grilles. Soon Kimber was overcome with ‘octagon fever’ and the MG octagon began appearing all over the cars; door handles, dash knobs, instrument bezels, shift knobs, valve covers and even the oil dipstick! Kimber had a set of octagonal dishes at his home in Abingdon, “Boundary House”, and used them for special occasions. Note: Today “Boundary House” is a popular Abingdon pub. My South African friend Norm Ewing had an octagonal toilet seat made for his home in Johannesburg. Now, that’s the mark of a true MG enthusiast!