

FAMILY TIME



Some Overlooked, Family-Friendly Classics

By David S. Wallens
Photography by the author



Sports cars might be the greatest things since sliced bread, but they're not ideal for every driving situation. These machines aren't quite suited to extended trips or inclement weather, and comfortably carrying more than two people is rarely their forte.

Why not opt for a quirky, vintage British family car as a practical alternative? Anyone can have an MGB or TR6, so how about rolling up to the next show in something a little more unorthodox, like a Humber Super Snipe?

These sedans and upright coupes feature all of that great British charm in a more practical package. As an added bonus, they're not terribly expensive to own or operate.

They can also be a little more comfortable. "You have to fold your leg three different ways to get in a sports car," notes Kip Lankenau, founder of Kip Motor Company. Create your own order rather than following what the marketing department dictates, he adds.

Kip's company is dedicated to keeping these orphaned and unusual British cars on the road. His catalogs don't feature pages of parts for MG Midgets and Jaguar E-types. However, if you need a bonnet badge for a Hillman Minx or a Ford Anglia brake pedal cover, they can help.

"There is no N/A in our catalog," he says, referring to the popular abbreviation for no longer available. "When something goes out of stock, we start making it."

In addition to in-house manufacturing facilities, their Texas shop is also stuffed full of new old stock parts and quality reproductions: chrome trim, glass lenses, suspension hardware, electrical harnesses, rubber gaskets, interior upholstery, body patch panels and more. They can even source replacement windshields.

While they can't recreate the cars themselves, they can help match people to prospective purchases. They don't buy and sell cars, but through word of mouth they often work as a matchmaker. While supply is low, so is demand, Kip notes.

Clubs are also viable ways to find a car. While there's no North American group dedicated to the Super Snipe, for example, the British Saloon Car Club of Canada and the North American English & European Ford Registry are worth a look—don't forget, many North American-bound imports from England entered Canada, not the U.S.

When looking at a prospective purchase, Kip has some sound advice: Buy a complete car. While his company supplies just about all of the required restoration parts, buying all of those needed clips and moldings can get expensive. "Spend a hundred bucks more and get a car that has all of the trim on it," he advises.

While most of us have covered some miles in the popular sports cars from MG, Triumph and Jaguar, these British sedans are a different flavor of our favorite drink. And as we recently experienced during a test day, they can be a great way to share the hobby with the rest of the family.





1953-'59 Ford Anglia

Cute, Cuddly, But Not Very Fast



Through the middle part of the 20th century, the Anglia was Ford of England's basic family car. While the original 1939-'53 models featured upright, prewar styling, the car received an entire redo for 1953. Suddenly the Anglia was fresh and contemporary.

Not only was the design appropriate for the '50s, but so was the color palate. So long black and gray, hello bright yellow, mint green and baby blue. The sales literature made it clear that this was a car for the modern family: pipe-smoking dads and pearl-wearing moms were shown happily shopping, traveling and commuting, all while saving money.

The car was no rocket ship, but its 36-horsepower engine was acceptable for the times. Top speed was right at 70 mph, and Ford promised up to 40 mpg. The transmission left a little more to be desired, though, as there was a big gap between second and third gears. Think of it as a four-speed that's missing third, Kip says.

Two doors not enough? The four-door Ford Prefect was nearly identical under the skin.

Test Drive

Visibility in all directions is great, and the floor-mounted shift lever and nice compliment of gauges add a sporting touch. Everyone has their own take on style, but we'd say that this 100E-chassis Anglia almost has a hint of '55 Chevy. While probably not the original designer's intent, this one could very well slip through the gates at any hotrod show.

Unfortunately, the Anglia isn't going to win any speed contests. Thirty-six horsepower might have been fine for postwar England, but the car is woefully underpowered by today's standards. The big gap between second and third doesn't help. On the other hand, it's about as quick as its contemporaries, including the Triumph 10, Fiat 500 and Morris Minor.

Parting Words

Consider the Anglia a neat family car for local use and you'll be happy.



1958 Ford Anglia

Drivetrain layout:	Front engine, rear-wheel drive
Engine:	1172cc inline 4-cylinder
Horsepower:	36 @ 4500 rpm
Torque:	53 lb.-ft. @ 2500 rpm
Transmission:	3-speed manual
Brakes:	Drum front and rear
Zero-to-60:	29 sec.
Weight:	1618 lbs.
Units built:	Approx. 345,000
Values today	
Unrestored:	Approx. \$1500
Restored:	Approx. \$8500

Pluses

Cheap to own & operate.
Cute colors.
Floor-mounted shifter.
Excellent visibility.

Minuses

A new kind of slow.
Poor gear spacing.
Vacuum-powered wipers.
Did we mention it's slow?

1956-'62 Ford Zephyr

British Tea Meets American Beer



For the family who wanted a little more space—or the businessman who needed a little more status—Ford had an answer: the Zephyr. This machine represented Ford of England's full-size family car from 1950 though 1962.

Ford released the second-generation Zephyr for 1956, and the styling was right in line with the times, from the full-width chrome grille to the little tail fins. In fact, some Brits found the look to be too American.

Where the Anglia could carry four passengers, a pair of bench seats gave the Zephyr room for six. It also featured a big trunk that could carry everyone's stuff. And for those who wanted to arrive in style, there was the Zephyr Zodiac.

The cars in the Zephyr line weren't just bigger, as they also offered six-cylinder performance—a nice touch for today's driving conditions. A 2.5-liter, 86-horsepower engine backed by a three-speed manual transmission was standard, and top speed was close to 90 mph. An overdrive for the manual transmission and automatic gearboxes was optional.

Test Drive

As soon as the clutch is released, the extra torque offered by the inline-six is realized. Despite being half a century old, this car can run with modern traffic—up to a point. Our three-speed-equipped car was excellent around town, but the engine felt strong enough to tackle a fourth gear for more relaxed cruising.

As is typical with '50s and '60s sedans, the Zephyr also offers plenty of seating: The two bench seats don't offer a ton of lateral support, but there's definitely room for the entire crew.

Parting Words

The Zephyr offers a great mix of practicality, price and performance.



1959 Ford Zephyr

Drivetrain layout:	Front engine, rear-wheel drive
Engine:	2553cc inline 6-cylinder
Horsepower:	86 @ 4400 rpm
Torque:	133 lb.-ft. @ 2000 rpm
Transmission:	3-speed manual or automatic
Brakes:	Drum front and rear
Zero-to-60:	17 sec.
Weight:	2576 lbs.
Units built:	Approx. 295,000
Values today	
Unrestored:	Approx. \$2500
Restored:	\$10,000-\$12,000

Pluses

Good performance.
Roomy interior.
Four-door practicality.
Big trunk.

Minuses

Needs the overdrive.
Non-synchro first gear.
Can be a little bland.
Styling too American?

1960 Humber Super Snipe Series III

Great Name, Great Presence



Where the two Fords we tested were aimed a bit more at the masses, the Humber Super Snipe was marketed more as an executive vehicle. Period advertisements featured gentlemen wearing tuxedos and women in party gowns. Think of this car as an alternative to a Jaguar Mark II.

Humber was part of the Rootes Group, the same organization that gave the world the Sunbeam Tiger and Raymond Loewy-designed Hillman Minx. The Super Snipe first appeared for the 1938 model year and combined strong performance with a reasonable price tag.

The original prewar design was replaced by a contemporary, all-new Super Snipe in 1958. The design was very up to date, featuring jet age-inspired lines, small tail fins and a healthy dose of brightwork.

This new Super Snipe originally featured a 2.6-liter inline-six, but displacement grew to 3.0 liters by the 1959 model year. Front disc brakes were also new for that year.

Humber continually updated the car during the model run, using series numbers to chart the changes. One of the biggest modifications occurred for 1960. This Series III car gained contemporary quad headlamps, a feature largely adopted by Detroit two years earlier. Like the related Sunbeam Tiger, the Super Snipe also disappeared in 1967.

Test Drive

Right off the bat, the Super Snipe wins the exhaust note comparison test. It emits a nice, deep note at idle—it's not a loud wail or the sound of a car that needs a muffler. In an understated manner, it simply lets everyone know that this car means business.

Once underway, the ride is comfortable yet quiet. It's the right mix of performance and luxury, a precursor to the formula since perfected by BMW.

Parting Words

Easily our favorite, the Super Snipe is quick yet nicely appointed.



1960 Humber Super Snipe Series III

Drivetrain layout:	Front engine, rear-wheel drive
Engine:	2965cc inline 6-cylinder
Horsepower:	124 @ 5000 rpm
Torque:	133 lb.-ft. @ 2600 rpm
Transmission:	3-speed manual or automatic
Brakes:	Disc front; drum rear
Zero-to-60:	16.5 seconds
Weight:	3320 lbs.
Units built:	Approx. 30,000
Values today	
Unrestored:	Approx. \$3500
Restored:	\$15,000-\$20,000

Pluses

Can cruise at 100 mph.
Upmarket interior.
Room for six.
Coolest car name ever.

Minuses

Little to no club support.
Few built.
Little demand.
Most wore dark colors.

Other Candidates

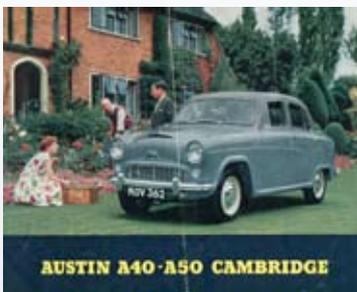
England's once-mighty auto industry turned out several other family-friendly machines during the '50s and '60s. Here are a few more that are worthy of a look.



Austin Cambridge and Morris Oxford

Not Quick, but Inexpensive and Different

The Austin Cambridge and nearly identical Morris Oxford lasted from 1954 through 1971. While none are particularly fast—they run out of steam around 60 mph—these BMC twins offer a lot of room for the price. A new Pininfarina-penned body appeared for 1959; tail fins and crisp lines replaced the earlier rounded profile.



Unrestored: Approx. \$2500
Restored: Approx. \$10,000

BMC 1100 and 1300

Like a Big Mini

Think of this one as a big Mini and you're halfway there. BMC sold their AD016 chassis under several nameplates during its 1962-'74 run, including the Morris 1100, MG 1100, Vanden Plas, Wolseley 1100, Riley Kestrel, MG 1300 and Austin America. All feature BMC's then-revolutionary and smooth-riding hydroelastic suspension.



Unrestored: Approx. \$1500
Restored: Approx. \$10,000

Triumph 2000

Classy but Rare

We know that the Vitesse and Herald have fans, but the 1963-'69 Triumph 2000 might be the brand's best family car. On paper, it was hard to beat: inline-six power, independent rear suspension, automatic or manual transmissions, and even wood door cappings. Unfortunately, the 2000 cost nearly as much as a new Cadillac, so U.S. sales were weak.



Unrestored: Approx. \$2000
Restored: Approx. \$10,000

Hillman Minx and variants

Badge Engineering by Rootes Group

The Rootes Group got a lot of mileage out of this mid-sized chassis, as it also formed the basis for other 1956-'67 models like the Singer Gazelle and Sunbeam Rapier. All of the available body styles, including the sedans and convertibles, seat four people. Performance is good, and neat details separate this one from some of its contemporaries.



Unrestored: \$1500-\$2000
Restored: Approx. \$15,000

Hillman Husky

A Smart Little Wagon

For those who like the practicality of a station wagon, we present the 1958-'65 Hillman Husky. Rear lever shock absorbers give this small wagon's cargo hold a flat floor. It was perfect for farming implements half a century ago; today, it's great for holding bicycles and camping gear. With the back seat folded up, four passengers can fit inside.



Unrestored: \$1500-\$2000
Restored: Approx. \$10,000

Sunbeam-Talbot 90

Classic Motoring, Opened or Closed

Even though this one was all-new for 1948, the design channeled the prewar Sunbeam-Talbot Ten. The classic look definitely recalled an earlier age of motoring, as the 1948-'54 Sunbeam-Talbot 90 featured an art deco interior and suicide-style rear doors. Two body styles were also available, as a drophead coupe joined the more traditional four-door sedan.



Unrestored: Approx. \$3500
Restored: \$20,000-\$25,000

Sources

British Saloon Car Club of Canada
www.bsccoc.ca
Cars and camaraderie

Kip Motor Company
(888) 243-0440
www.kipmotor.com
Parts and moral support

North American English & European Ford Registry
clubs.hemmings.com/clubsites/NAEFR
Cars and camaraderie

Post Vintage Humber Car Club
www.humber.org.uk
Information