AD034/50 to debut at NEC

A new sports car from MG might be some way off, but an enthusiast from Scotland is set to unveil a vision of how the Midget could have been developed in 1964 - and this exciting new car will be on show at the NEC Classic Motor Show in November.

Douglas Anderson is a motorsport enthusiast with a vision to build the Midget that MG could have done in 1964, but rather than simply dream, he is making it a reality! The idea behind the AD034/50 project, he explains, is to design and build what could have been an economical replacement for the Midget in 1964. The project takes the Midget to the next level. There were plans to replace the Midget in 1964 with a car based on a Mini platform, but the car was scrapped and the new Midget for 1964 never happened.

Project AD034/50 marks the 50th anniversary of the Midget that might have been, but not quite as BMCHad envisaged it. Douglas’s project retains the basic Midget configuration and uses only components and developments that would have been available to BMC in the mid-1960s. This means that instead of adopting the Mini platform with its high frontal area and small wheels, AD034/50 has retained the Midget tub, with some modifications (see below). And why not? After all, the Midget monocoque is light and strong and is a proven basis for a sports car. The tub itself appears to take its design cues from the 1950s D-Type Jaguar, so in many ways it may be considered a mini D-Type in structure. The Midget’s in-line mechanical layout also lends itself to a low frontal area, with the consequent potential for a more shapely traditional sports car than if it were based on a Mini. Think Mini Marcos and you’ll know what we mean.

Douglas has planned for two versions of his new car. For the standard car, the front suspension set up will be retained for economic reasons, and because it works well, but for a serious competition car - which is what he wants to build - Douglas and his team have designed a fully adjustable double wishbone arrangement worthy of the Abingdon Competition Department. This uses the same locating points as the standard car, and has been developed by Jonathan Heap of J L H Minor Restorations in Naptgon.

The rear suspension of both the envisaged standard car and the competition version have been modified with the aim of creating a better located back axle, an arrangement that has required modification to the rear tub. ‘We have created turrets in the rear tub to house a coil/damper arrangement,’ explains Douglas. ‘The original cart springs have been replaced with radius arms and an A-bracket. By redesigning the rear suspension with these simple modifications, we believe that the shortcomings of the original set up have been addressed to improve handling, power delivery and comfort. The rear suspension was built by Craig Chapman of CC Coachwork at Cannich near Beauly, Inverness.’

However, it’s the modifications to the engine that are the most radical in the project, even though they are all modifications that could have been accomplished in 1964. As well as increasing the engine capacity to 1275cc, the new Midget will feature an eight-port head. ‘It is not widely known,’ says Douglas, ‘but Weslake designed and built a prototype eight port head for the A-series engine in the mid-1950s. For a variety of reasons, this design was never taken up by BMC. The AD034/50 project will use this cylinder head, which is currently on test at Weslake. This should give our Midget a new lease of life in terms of performance, torque and smoothness. It also has great potential for competition use. The gearbox will use the stronger internals of the later Midgets and the axle will be higher geared with strengthened halfshafts and bearings. We are looking into the possibility of a five speed box, similar to that used in the Le Mans Sprites in the 1960s.’

The body shape takes its cues from the styles of the 1960s and to keep the costs within sensible boundaries, it will retain the doors, sills and scuttle of the Midget. However the roof, rear and front of the car have been completely re-designed as a fastback, the aim being to make it more aerodynamic and attractive. Richard Oakes designed the body,’ says Douglas, ‘and I think that you will agree it looks fantastic. It is period perfect. Craig Chapman has been responsible not only for building the rear suspension, but he has also modified the tub and built the body. The version of the car which will be displayed on the MG Car Club’s Midget Register stand at the NEC in November 2014 will be the lightweight competition model which BMW could have developed for racing or rallying. It will be made of aluminium, have Perspex windows and its weight will be taken down to the bare minimum. The engine will be a competition version of the eight port head and it should develop over 120bhp.

‘This is an exciting project’ concludes Douglas, which could have been produced by BMC in the mid-1960s and would not have incurred huge development costs. It would have transformed an already excellent design. I think it could have been BMC’s Stratos.’

Douglas’ car will be at the NEC show on 14-16 November - don’t miss it!