

AUTOMOBILIA

by Andrew Ralston

D.G. MODELS: a pioneer of MG models in white metal

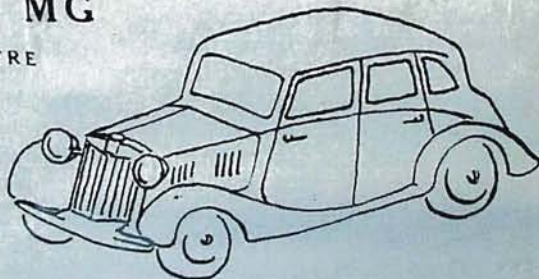
Y Type saloon by D.G. Models; the separate chassis, grille and crimped axles are all typical of pre- and early post-war Dinky construction methods. (Photo courtesy of Andrew Clark Models).



1948 MG

1 1/4 LITRE

DINKY
SCALE



N° 5

D G MODELS

The development of model car collecting as a hobby for adults can be traced back to the 1970s and 1980s. People started to look back nostalgically at the Dinky or Matchbox toys they played with in their childhood and, in many cases, tried to buy them again, or perhaps buy things they had wanted as children but could not afford. A popular topic of

conversation among collectors in that era was to speculate on models that could have been made but never were. "If only Dinky, or Corgi, had made a model of a such-such..."

In time, a cottage industry emerged to fill these gaps. Mass-produced diecast model cars required a high turnover to be economically viable but some enthusiasts, often working in small

workshops or in the cellar of the family house, devised a method of using rubber moulds to produce castings in white metal which proved ideal for small production runs.

One such pioneer was a man called Dave Gilbert who, as early as 1971, registered D. G. Models and started making white metal models in kit form. His models even impressed Meccano

Left to right:
ZA saloon,
Y Type saloon and
Y Type tourer.
(Photo courtesy of
Vectis Auctions).



“ HIS MODELS EVEN IMPRESSED MECCANO LIMITED, MAKERS OF DINKY TOYS... ”

Limited, makers of Dinky Toys, who gave him permission in 1975 to make a series of reproductions of pre-war Dinky delivery vans. He also marketed a series of Dinky-like models of his own design based on prototypes that Dinky never actually made, called the 'D.S. Series' (i.e. Dinky-style).

MG cars figured prominently in the D.S. Series. The 1948 1½ Litre MG saloon exactly mirrored the construction method of an early Dinky Toy, with a separate body casting attached to a chassis by the axles. This was a welcome choice of subject as the majority of toy and model MG replicas has been based on sports, rather than saloon, cars. There was also a Y-Type Tourer, a 1936 MG SA saloon, a TF, a 1937 1½ Litre Tourer, a 1938 TB Tickford drophead coupé, with the top in either open or closed positions, and a ZA saloon. All these were deliberately

made in the style of Dinky Toys, in their simplest form, before the advent of window glazing, interiors and opening features. However, as Dave Gilbert was occupied with much work supplying other model companies, the D. S. Series was only produced 'sporadically' (to use the word used on the company's website) up to the 1990s.

D.G. Models is still in business, based in Kinver, South Staffordshire, with many current products being marketed under the name 'Autocraft'. These include an extensive range of replicas of scooters and motorcycles as well as vehicles designed for OO-gauge railway layouts. In addition, Autocraft purchased the tooling for the Budgie diecast range and the printing plates for the Micromodels series of cardboard cut-out kits and production of these items has been recommenced.

Today, of course, the collecting hobby

has radically changed. With so many accurate models now coming from China, many of the subjects originally covered by hand-built white metal replicas have now appeared in mass-produced, diecast form at lower cost, such as Oxford Diecast's highly-rated 1/43-scale ZA and ZB Magnette models. Thus, some forty years on from when they were made, the simple white-metal D.G. models of MG cars themselves belong to the category of obsolete collectors' items, to be hunted down at toy fairs or auctions. ®

FURTHER INFORMATION:

D.G./Autocraft website: <http://www.autocraft.plus.com>

A History of White Metal Modelling by Ray Strutt and David Wright (2011)



Two more D.G. MG models: TF (left) and ZA in red (right), shown beside a Rolls Royce. (Photo courtesy of Vectis Auctions).