

## From the Side Screens - 1953

From a Triumph sports car owner's perspective a new era started 60 years ago.

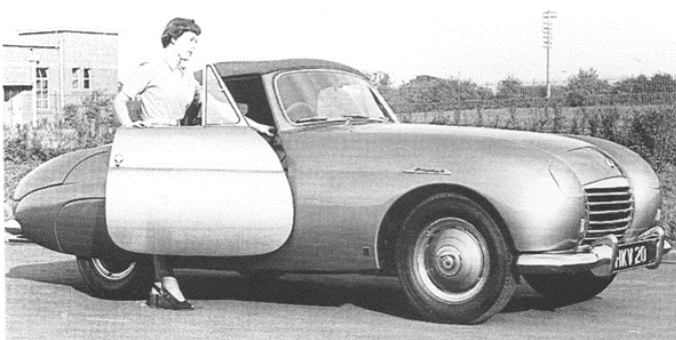
The year was 1953 AD. The Standard Motor Company released the TR series of Triumph sports cars, which lasted for 28 years until 1981 when the last TR7/8s were built.

Previous efforts of the Standard Motor Company were the Triumph Roadster 1946-1948. This was a roadster version of the saloon model, known as the Triumph Renown. This is not considered to be part of the TR range.

(Postage stamp of the Roadster)



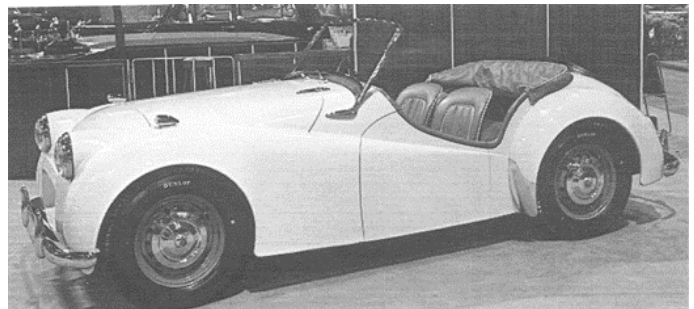
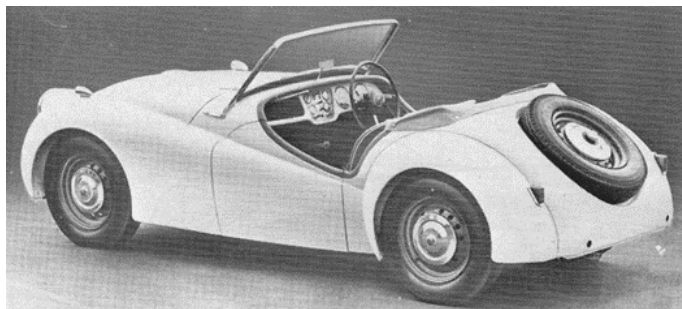
After a total of 4501 units of the 1800/2000 Triumph Roadster were produced, Triumph designer, Walter Belgrove set out to produce a "New Roadster". There were only 3 prototypes produced for the 1950 Earls Motor Show. The car was based on a Vanguard chassis and included flip-up head lamps. (... as later used on the TR7). The TRX was apparently not what the public wanted.



### ← Triumph Roadster "TRX"

Triumph's next effort to become known for its sports cars was the predecessors of the TR2 (later referred to as the TR1). The prototype Coded 20TS was on show at the 1952 Earls Court Motor Show. It was merely called a Triumph Sports Car. This appeared to be a promising effort. The main shortcomings of the prototype that needed to be sorted out was the 1936 based "9" style chassis, which was too flexible; the borrowed mayflower front suspension and the 75 bhp Standard Vanguard engine.

Pictures of the TR1





In 1953 Triumph released the TR2 using a tuned version of the 1991cc Standard Vanguard engine producing 90 HP.



Harry Fairley's TR2 (Jhb Club)

**"53"** was a revolutionary /innovative / exciting year in the motor industry. (Maybe never to be equalled?) There was plenty of competition in the industry as various other motor manufacturers also produced revolutionary "first of series " cars during this year. Many of these cars became icons, of which some still have an impact on society to this day.

What is notable is that Triumph's TR range became successful under rather competitive circumstances. The TR2 was well priced at a release price of £555 with performance to match cars a few times the cost of a TR2!

### Other marquee cars released in 1953



The **Alvis TC 21** was a British sporting car made by Alvis Cars between 1953 and 1955. The car was available in four-door saloon and drop head versions. The saloon bodies were made for Alvis by Mulliners in Birmingham and the drop heads by Tickford. The 2,993 cc engine produced 100 bhp (75 kW). The suspension consisted of independent coil springs in the front with leaf springs at the rear. 11 in (279 mm) Drum brakes using a Lockheed system



The **Austin-Healey 100** is a sports car built from 1953 until 1956. The "100" name comes from the designer, Donald Healey, who selected the name from the car's ability to reach 100 mph (160 km/h). The first 100s (series "BN1") were equipped with the same 90 bhp (67 kW) engine as the stock A90 Austen, but the transmission was modified to be a three-speed unit with overdrive on second and top. A BN1 tested by *The Motor Magazine* in 1953 had a top speed of 106 mph (171 km/h) and could accelerate from 0–60 mph (97 km/h) in 11.2 seconds. Fuel consumption figure was 22.5 miles per imperial gallon (12.6 L/100 km). The test car cost £1063 including taxes. A total of 14643 BN1s were built from May 1953 until replaced by the BN2 model in August 1955.



Beginning of a new series of cars



**Aston Martin DB2/4** is a grand tourer sold from 1953 through 1957. The Lagonda dual overhead cam straight-6 engine, designed by W. O. Bentley was used. In September 1953 a 2,6 L 125 HP motor (later upgraded to a 2,9L 140 bhp) was fitted to the car. Top speed with the 2,9L engine was 120 mph (193 km/h) was achievable with acceleration of 0-60 mph (97 km/h) in 10.5 seconds. Fuel consumption of 23.0 miles per imperial gallon (12.3 L/100 km). Three works cars were prepared for the 1955 Monte Carlo Rally and two for the Mille Miglia. The test cars cost £2621. A total of 764 DB2/4s were produced. A drop head coupé (DHC) appeared in the Alfred Hitchcock film "*The Birds*".

Magnette ZA was launched in 1953 at the London Motor Show, with the series continuing through to 1968. Power came from the then new four cylinder 1.5 L (1489 cc) B-Series engine with twin 1¼ inch SU carburettors delivering 60 bhp (45 kW) Gearbox consisted of a four speed manual gearbox with synchromesh on the top three ratios . The Motor magazine tested a Magnette and recorded a top speed of 79.7 mph (128.3 km/h) acceleration from 0-60 mph (97 km/h) in 23.1 seconds and a fuel consumption of 24.9 miles per imperial gallon (11.3 L/100 km) was recorded. The test car cost £914 including taxes.



Beginning of a new series of cars



Beginning of a new series of cars

The Sunbeam Alpine Mark I was hand-built from 1953 to 1955, and remained in production for only two years, with 1582 mark 1s were produced. The series continued up the the mark V ending in in 1967. The car powered by a four-cylinder 2267 cc engine from the saloon, but with a raised compression ratio produced 80HP. In the 1953 Alpine Rally was won by Sheila van Damm in the "the Coupe Des Dames" and Stirling Moss finished 6<sup>th</sup> overall in the same rally. A sapphire blue Alpine featured prominently in the 1955 Alfred Hitchcock film "To Catch a Thief" starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly.



The **DKW 3=6 Sonderklasse** F91 model (34 bhp at 4000 rpm) was premiered in 1953 at the Frankfurt Motor Show. With its three-cylinder two-stroke engine, the newcomer proved tremendously popular in Germany, 72,600 F91 being built in a variety of body types between 1953 and 1955. Models F92/F93 and the 1000s followed the original F91. Top speed of the first F91s was 114km/h and fuel figure was given as 8L/100km.



Beginning of a new series of cars



Beginning of a new series of cars

**The Metropolitan**, styled for Nash vehicles was a design from Pininfarina of Italy and the in-house Nash design team. The new Metropolitan was assembled by BMC in two body designs: convertible and hardtop and released in 1953 and sold up to 1961. The Metropolitan was the first American car that was marketed specifically to women with spokesperson for the car, Miss America 1954, Evelyn Ay Sempier. The car was powered by 1,200 cc BMC 1200cc engine.

The **Cadillac Eldorado** was a two-door personal luxury car manufactured and marketed by the Cadillac Division of General Motors. First release was 1953 (series continued up to 2002). The car was powered by a 5,4 L V8 engine using a 4 speed *Hydra-matic* transmission.



Beginning of a new series of cars



Beginning of a new series of cars

The **Chevrolet Corvette**, by the Chevrolet division of General Motors. The first model, a convertible, was designed by Harley Earl. The car is named after the type of small, manoeuvrable warship called a corvette. First production was on June 30, 1953 with 300 hand-built polo white Corvette convertibles. The engine used on the first models was the same inline six that powered all other Chevrolet models, but with a higher-compression ratio, three Carter side-draft carburetors and a more aggressive cam was used to produce 150 horsepower.

The Buick Roadmaster Skylark was introduced in 1953 to mark Buick's 50th anniversary. There was a limited-production of vehicles promoting General Motors' design leadership with 1,690 units produced. This was considered an amazing sales feat, since the car had a list price in 1953 of slightly in excess of US\$5,000. The car was powered by a 322 cu in (5.3 L) "Nailhead" V8



In 1953 Studebaker Starlight/Starliner was introduced. This car was redesigned by Raymond Loewy's design studio. The two-door coupe was called the "Starlight." while the more expensive hardtop coupe was called the "Starliner." The front end of the new Studebaker was lower than that of contemporaries. Power was from the existing Studebaker L-head inline-six delivering 85 hp (63 kW).





Inspired by the Porsche 356 the model Porsche 550 Spyder was introduced at the 1953 Paris Auto Show. The 550 was very low to the ground, in order to be efficient for racing. In fact, former German Formula One racer Hans Herrmann drove it under closed railroad crossing gates during the 1954 Mille Miglia. The 550 / 1500RS or Spyder became known as the "Giant Killer". Perhaps the most famous of the first 90 Porsche 550's built was James Dean's "Little Bastard"

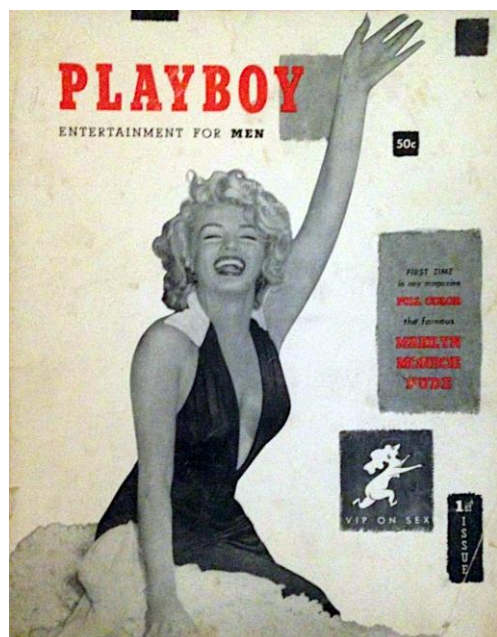
The **Mercedes-Benz 180** ( W120 and W121) "Ponton" cars were produced from 1953 through 1962. The four-cylinder 180 and 190 were the mainstay of Mercedes' line-up during this period. Together with the more luxurious and somewhat larger 220 they constituted 80% of Mercedes-Benz' production between 1953 and 1961. The form and body of the car changed little during its production run. A roadster variant, the R121, better known as the 190SL, was produced from 1955 to 1963. The first 4 cylinder engine for the 180 was an 1800cc petrol delivering 51HP (38kW).



Beginning of a new series of cars

To put the arrival of the TR2 into perspective, what else happened in the great year of 1953?

- Queen Elizabeth II was crowned (See OXO tin →)
- End of the Korean war
- First colour TVs for sale
- First all transistor radio displayed at Düsseldorf Radio Fair
- Sir Edmond Hillary and Tenzing Norgay conquered Everest
- Polio vaccine tested and confirmed by Jonas Salk at Pittsburgh University
- DF Malan re-elected as Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa
- Marilyn Monroe made four movies, embodying the stereotypical persona of the "dumb blonde". (She also made it into Playboy→)
- Most popular music artist was Percy Faith with "Song from Moulin Rouge"
- Best movie: "From Here to Eternity" starring Burt Lancaster and Montgomery Clift



AND

- Yours truly was born in 1953!

1953 surely was a great year!

Until next time

**Albert de Vos** House captain Side Screens