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RAC Cars ‘Memorable Models Test of Time’ Top Ten: only 17 Austin Ambassadors left on the road

Britain’s love affair with cars is clear to see with 30m of them now being driven up and down the country, but newly published figures show that some of the most memorable models from years gone by are now fast disappearing from our roads.

According to analysis of [DVLA vehicle data](#) for the RAC Cars ‘Memorable Models Test of Time’ Top Ten,* the distinctive ‘wedge-shaped’ Austin Ambassador has become one of the scarcest vehicles in the UK with just 17 still licensed for road use, compared to 5,515 two decades ago.

While this may in part be explained by the fact only 43,427** Ambassadors were sold in the UK during its production run from 1982-1984, its predecessor the Princess, made by British Leyland, has not fared much better as there are just 45 of those remaining from the 225,000** made.

Taking third spot in the Top Ten of models no longer produced, the Russian-made Lada Riva, which was a familiar sight in Britain between 1983 and 1997, has suffered a more prolific fate with its numbers falling to just 60 from 56,898 in 1995. In fact, there are only 188 Lada’s left on UK roads from nearly 109,732.

In fourth position, the Datsun or Nissan Cherry – made from 1970 to 1986 – is also a rarity as only 93 remain on the road with some 65,410 making their way to the great scrapyard in the sky over the last 20 years – that is, of course, if they are not quietly resting ‘off-road’ in a garage somewhere being lovingly cherished by their owners.

Vauxhall's luxury Senator (5th) and supermini Chevette (6th) have also experienced sharp declines with just 167 and 238 still being driven today. While only 289 Morris Marinas (7th) are still licensed for road use, they have held their own a little better with the passing of time as there were only 9,331 in 1995, probably as a result of having been produced from 1971-1980.

In eighth place, the Maestro – in its various guises – Austin, Rover and MG – has seen the sharpest decline in numbers in the top ten, plummeting from 75,674 in 1995 to a measly 325 in 2015. With 440 still registered for driving, the Talbot Sunbeam was ninth, and the RAC Cars 'Memorable Models Test of Time' Top Ten is completed by the Citroen BX – made from 1982 to 1994 – with 495 on the road, down from 171,478 20 years ago.

Fewest remaining memorable models by volume

Rank	Make	Model	2015	2005	1995	2015-1995 difference
1	Austin	Ambassador	17	59	5,532	5,515
2	Austin	Princess	45	99	3,235	3,190
3	Lada	Riva	60	905	56,898	56,838
4	Datsun	Cherry	93	1,313	66,723	66,630
5	Vauxhall	Senator	167	2,660	25,799	25,632
6	Vauxhall	Chevette	238	764	37,798	37,560
7	Morris	Marina	289	540	9,331	9,042
8	Austin MG Rover	Maestro	324	5,322	75,674	75,350
9	Talbot	Sunbeam	440	496	5,261	4,821
10	Citroen	BX	495	10,148	17,147 8	17,0983

Biggest decline in numbers of 'once common' cars

Looking at the statistics in terms of the greatest reduction in numbers of individual vehicle models that were once common on our roads, the famous battle for dominance between the Vauxhall Cavalier and the Ford Sierra rages

on. And, no doubt influenced by the fact the Cavalier was in production for 20 years compared to the Sierra's 12 – it is the Cavalier that has suffered the biggest decline in numbers from 1,201,833 in 1995 to 4,871 (1,196,962 decrease). The Sierra has dropped from just over a million (1,052,418) to 4,147 today (969,835 decrease).

Despite only ceasing production in 1997 after 17 years, numbers of the Metro – made under the badges of Austin, Rover and MG – have plunged by 926,393 to 2,487 showing the third biggest decline in the 'once common' cars selected for analysis by RAC Cars. The Ford Orion, which was only made for 10 years from 1983-1993, has experienced the fourth greatest drop – falling 428,509 to a paltry 626 cars in 2015.

In fifth, the popular Peugeot 205, however, suffered a 353,381 decline in numbers but, interestingly, 7,258 are still on the road, considerably more than any vehicle in the RAC Cars 'Memorable Models Test of Time' Top Ten analysis, and recognition of its place as one of the UK's favourite hot-hatches.

Greatest decrease in memorable models by volume

Rank	Make	Model	2015	2005	1995	2015-1995 difference
1	Vauxhall	Cavalier	4,871	209,175	1,201,833	1,196,962
2	Ford	Sierra	4,147	67,767	973,982	969,835
3	Austin MG Rover	Metro	2,487	87,853	928,880	926,393
4	Ford	Orion	626	29,378	429,135	428,509
5	Peugeot	205	7,258	104,508	360,639	353,381
6	Renault	5	1,456	27,717	184,475	183,019
7	Vauxhall	Carlton	496	16,594	177,137	176,641
8	Citroen	BX	495	10,148	171,478	170,983
9	Austin MG Rover	Maestro	324	5,322	75,674	75,350
10	Ford	Cortina	3,749	4,947	75,216	71,467

RAC Cars spokesman Pete Williams said: “Each generation of drivers has fond memories of the cars that were on the road when they were growing up and when they began their lives behind the wheel. While it is obviously inevitable that numbers of many old favourites – both loved and ridiculed – dwindle over time, it is sad too to realise they may soon become extinct from road use. We hope that there are plenty being kept by collectors and museums so that these vehicles can still be appreciated in person rather than just via images on the internet.”

“At RAC Cars we love cars in all shapes and forms which is why we let people advertise them for free. This formula has been so successful that we now have more than 250,000 cars on sale on the raccars.co.uk website.”

Ends

* The RAC Cars ‘Memorable Models Test of Time’ Top Ten is a selection of memorable cars no longer in production chosen by RAC Cars and is not meant to be a definitive list of cars in order of their remaining models still on the road / decline in numbers. We chose to exclude models such as the Mini and the VW Beetle which, while ceasing production for a time, are still being made today. We also did not include more niche cars like MGs and Triumph sports cars as they tend to command a high degree of ‘classic car’ ownership.

The following models were assessed: Austin Ambassador; Austin/MG/Rover – Maestro; Austin/MG/Rover – Metro; Citroen 2CV; Citroen BX; Datsun/Nissan Cherry; Ford Capri; Ford Cortina; Ford Orion; Ford Sierra; Lada Riva; Morris Marina; Peugeot 205; Princess; Reliant Robin; Renault 5; Saab 9000; Talbot Sunbeam; Vauxhall Carlton; Vauxhall Cavalier; Vauxhall Chevette; Vauxhall Senator; Vauxhall Viva; Volkswagen Corrado

** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_Ambassador

Notes to Editors

About RAC Cars

RAC Cars is the RAC’s ‘free to advertise’ online marketplace for new and used cars. The motorist’s champion waived the fees for both private sellers and

dealers in response to demands for an alternative to existing used car websites that charge high advertising rates and currently has more than 250,000 used cars for sale.

Research from the RAC shows that buyers, too, don't want to be stung by purchasing a dud – something the new RAC Cars website has been specifically designed to address. More than 7.4 million used cars sold in the UK every year, with around 2.8 million sold privately.

RAC Cars provides easy access to a range of products that can give buyers confidence that their next car won't turn out to be a 'lemon' – from an [RAC car data check](#), the UK's most comprehensive vehicle check that is delivered to a user in seconds, to booking a full [vehicle inspection](#) by an experienced RAC engineer. The site also highlights the RAC's own [Approved Dealer](#) network giving total reassurance with a full history check, a thorough preparation to the RAC's 82-point [BuySure](#) standard, three months' [RAC Warranty](#) and a minimum of three months' Breakdown Cover.

RAC Cars has also partnered with [carwow](#) to give new car buyers absolute peace-of-mind removing the need for haggling or hassling phone calls. Buyers simply specify their car – including any options on the carwow portal – and it will liaise with approved dealers nationwide to get the best price on that car.

The site has also been refreshed with the 'We Love Cars' marketing campaign giving raccars.co.uk a compelling new look with 'retro-style' bright orange neon signs and an eye-catching orange sports car and the call to action: 'Find your perfect match and sell your car for FREE'.

About the RAC

With more than eight million members, the RAC is one of the UK's most progressive motoring organisations, providing services for both private and business motorists. Whether it's roadside assistance, insurance, buying a used car, vehicle inspections and checks, legal services or up-to-the-minute traffic and travel information – the RAC offers a solution for all motoring needs. The RAC is committed to making motoring easier, safer, more affordable and more enjoyable for drivers and road users.

The RAC is the motorist's champion and campaigns to support the interests of its members and UK motorists at a national level, including advancing levels of road safety, supporting the needs of young drivers and voicing concerns about the increasing cost of motoring. The RAC's annual [Report on Motoring](#) – first published in 1989 – provides a clear insight into the concerns and issues facing today's motorists.

For the very latest news on UK fuel prices, check [RAC Fuel Watch](#) or follow [#racfuelwatch on Twitter](#). This is a comprehensive guide to the latest UK unleaded petrol and diesel prices – both at the wholesale level and at the pump. RAC Fuel Watch analyses how prices changed through the previous month and compares the most recent prices with those from three, six and 12 months before.

The RAC supports and is a founding member of [FairFuelUK](#) which campaigns for fairer taxes on petrol and diesel.

Key facts:

- RAC patrols fix four out of five vehicles at the roadside and on average within 34 minutes
- RAC vans carry more than 500 parts and tools to get members' vehicles going again
- 98% of members would recommend RAC Rescue to their friends and family

Contacts



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