

Press Release
03 January 2020

BMW Group Classic presents: anniversary stories for 2020.

Historic events and the special stories associated with them: 100 years of Boxer engines, the launch of the roadster tradition for BMW in 1930, the victory in the Mille Miglia 80 years ago and the model diversity of the MINI brand for the past 60 years.

Munich. Legendary model premieres, trailblazing innovations, top sporting performances and pioneering decisions – the history of the BMW Group is full of milestones that have shaped the development of the company for the past 104 years. And behind each historic event, there are fascinating stories of people, technologies and products. They are all about the courage to dare to do something new, creativity in the search for unique solutions and the willingness to compete with the very best. In 2020, a host of anniversaries offer opportunities to narrate these stories. As a taster for the many different historic events that are worthy of attention in 2020, BMW Group Classic presents four very special anniversary stories below.

The Boxer engine – unsurpassed for 100 years: How the young engineer Martin Stolle brought BMW to the motorcycle.

Martin Stolle was a talented young engineer in the development department of BMW and he was having great fun riding his motorcycle from the British marque Douglas. After the First World War, his employer – like all German companies – was prohibited from producing aero-engines. They kept their heads above water with large-displacement four-cylinder inline engines for trucks, tractors and boats. A new product needed to be created in order to secure a permanent future. Martin Stolle had the brilliant idea. Inspired by the engine powering his Douglas machine, he designed a 500 cc, air-cooled twin-cylinder engine with horizontally opposed combustion chambers. This type of engine arrangement was already known as a Boxer engine, in which the pistons always operated “one against one” similar to boxing competitors in a fight. The power unit impressed aficionados with its outstanding smooth-running performance right from the start – a quality that continues to excite fans of BMW motorcycles powered by Boxer engines to this day.

In 1920, production of the new engine was launched. At that time, Stolle was just 34 years old and his design of the Boxer engine was based on smooth-running and reliability. In his initial design, he settled for generating 6.5 hp at 4 500 rpm. The new power unit was supplied to various motorcycle manufacturers under the sales designation “Bayern-Kleinmotor” (Bavaria Small Engine). And soon Stolle’s development was installed in motorcycles of the brands Helios, Bison, SMW (Stockdorfer Motoren Werke), Corona and

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Hoco. The most successful motorcycles were manufactured by Nürnberg Victoria-Werke, whose KR 1 model powered by the “Bayern-Kleinmotor” from BMW attracted a large number of purchasers. More than 1 000 examples of the first Boxer engine from BMW were installed in this model alone.

Two years after the launch of sales for the new BMW bestseller, Martin Stolle followed in the footsteps of “his” engine. He switched companies and moved to Victoria-Werke where he was involved in other successful motorcycle developments. In Munich, his legacy was not only a groundbreaking engine concept but also a pioneering inspiration for the future of BMW. The company was destined to move forward on two wheels. The development of a complete motorcycle had already begun. In September 1923, the BMW R 32 was presented – naturally powered by a Boxer engine.

First in every respect: “Bobby” Kohlrausch and his victories in the BMW 3/15 PS DA 3 “Type Wartburg” 90 years ago.

Motorcycle races were quite simply too dangerous. For this reason alone, the young engineer Robert Kohlrausch was given a sports car by his father in 1930. From that point onwards, his son enjoyed a sensational career of speed on four wheels. In his first race on 15 June 1930, Kohlrausch took victory in the Kesselberg Race competing in the sports-car class up to 750 cubic centimetres.

The vehicle that assisted the rookie in achieving success from a standing start came from Eisenach like the driver himself. This was where BMW produced its first roadster on wheels just one year after its debut as an automobile manufacturer. The BMW 3/15 PS DA 3 “Type Wartburg” – named after the city’s landmark castle – was ideal for driving fast laps with engine performance enhanced to 18 hp and a weight of just 400 kilograms. “Bobby” Kohlrausch was the first driver to understand how to make the most of these qualities. He accelerated from one victory to another, winning a total of 27 national and international races with the first BMW roadster up until 1933. This string of wins enabled him to lay the foundation stone for the reputation of the brand in motor sport.

Simultaneously, the “Type Wartburg” laid the tradition of BMW roadsters 90

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years ago. Its successors, the BMW 315/1 and the BMW 319/1, also continued the successful racing heritage, along with the BMW 328, which went on to become the most successful German sports car of all time. The BMW 507 was presented in 1955 and also raced in a number of competitions but the car's primary fascination to this day has been its aesthetic appeal and legendary flair as a dream automobile. Sheer driving pleasure defines the story of the BMW roadster in all its facets to the present day. It ranges from the BMW Z1 designed as a technology platform, through the BMW Z3 produced for the first time in the USA and the BMW Z8 which swiftly took on the mantle of a classic, to the BMW Z4 that is now continuing the tradition of open-top sports cars at BMW meanwhile in the third generation.

80 years ago: victory at the Mille Miglia, a spontaneous driver change and an eternal record.

The first competition also happened to be the first victory for the BMW 328. At the Eifel Race in 1936 held on the Nürburgring, it was the fastest vehicle in the two-litre class. Four years later, the car competed in a race that transformed the BMW 328 into a motor-sport legend. Two men raced to a spectacular triumph. The duo of Fritz Huschke von Hanstein and Walter Bäumer drove in the Mille Miglia held in 1940, a race which entered the annals of motor sport and the company BMW – and this only had a really perfect ending as a result of a surprising stopover shortly before the finishing line.

In 1938, the BMW 328 had already made its mark with a class victory in the Mille Miglia. Two years later, BMW set its sights on overall victory. Three roadsters and two closed versions of the BMW 328 were entered in the race. The BMW 328 coupé had been styled with an aerodynamically streamlined body by Italian specialist coachbuilder Touring. The young drivers von Hanstein and Bäumer were nominated as drivers. Both of them had started their racing careers on motorcycles and at the beginning of the 1930s they had both achieved initial successes with BMW models in automobile racing. Bäumer had already been successful driving the BMW 3/15 PS DA 3 "Type Wartburg", and in 1938 von Hanstein became the German Sports Car Hillclimb Champion in the BMW 328. They were the dream team for the Mille Miglia in 1940.

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When the race started on 28 April 1940, the two closed BMW 328 cars lived up to expectations and took the lead right from the start. But after just seven laps, the BMW 328 Kamm coupé had to retire from the race with technical problems. Now it was up to von Hanstein and Bäumer to secure success for BMW. Their Touring coupé unerringly ate up the miles and continued to expand its lead over the Italian competitors who had achieved many racing victories. Only the constellation in the cockpit gave the team management a real headache. Fritz Huschke von Hanstein was so fixated on victory that he continuously pushed forward the change in drivers that had actually been agreed. And Bäumer soon found it extremely difficult to suppress his impatience. The team management ordered him to remain in the passenger seat. Shortly before the finishing line, the drivers undertook a manoeuvre that took spectators' breath away. Von Hanstein brought the BMW 328 to a stop on the open road and Bäumer took over the steering wheel. There was undoubtedly ample time for the late change in driver. When Bäumer crossed the finishing line, the BMW 328 Touring coupé had a lead of a quarter of an hour over the second-placed Alfa Romeo. Von Hanstein and Bäumer also set up a speed record with an average speed of 166.7 km/h that went down as an eternal record never to be equalled in the history of the Mille Miglia. The three BMW 328 roadsters that had lined up at the start took third, fifth and sixth places to earn the team award for the team from Munich alongside overall victory.

60 years of MINI model diversity – and the special by American Nicholas Upton.

The classic Mini has always been a source of inspiration for Nicholas Upton from the US. He has restored a wide range of examples of the British original small car. And Upton has been dreaming of a Morris Mini Traveller for a very long time. A very special type of restoration project has been coming to fruition at his workshop in California. Upton has combined the engineering of a classic Mini Cooper S with the body of a Morris Mini Traveller and created an estate car that never even existed. The little runabout from the West Coast of the US is not going to win any prizes for authentic restoration, but it will be a genuine eyecatcher at any meeting of classic cars. Upton's custom special is one of the topics in the video-clip series "Work in Progress" in which BMW Group Classic presents unusual classic fans and their vehicles – you can watch it on the YouTube channel of BMW Group Classic.



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A wealth of different versions is a constituent element of the tradition of the MINI brand. 60 years have now elapsed since it was launched. Even then, it was obvious that the revolutionary concept of the classic Mini was good for more than one model. The inventive genius of the engineers and the brand diversity of the British Motor Corporation (BMC) paved the way for this. As early as 1960, BMW presented a Mini Van alongside the classic Mini. The closed delivery van was the ideal company vehicle for workmen and tradespeople. An estate car with all-round glazing followed and this was marketed as the Morris Mini Traveller and the Austin Seven Countryman. A Mini Pick-up completed the line-up of small commercial vehicles in the following year. And the desire for more finesse was soon satisfied. The Wolseley Hornet and the Riley Elf provided an individual profile with distinctively upmarket radiator grilles, an extended luggage compartment and swallow-tail wings at the rear.

In addition, a version was created in 1961 that would contribute to the legendary status of the classic Mini like no other. The Mini Cooper met the desire for enhanced driving fun with output increased from 34 to 55 hp and appropriate chassis modifications. The sports-car designer John Cooper had identified the sporting talent of the classic Mini at an early stage. Ultimately, power was further enhanced with the Mini Cooper S packing 70 hp. It formed the platform for those racing vehicles that enabled the classic Mini to take three victories at the Monte Carlo Rally – and delivered the inspiration for Nicholas Upton's unique version of the Morris Mini Traveller.

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The BMW Group

With its four brands BMW, MINI, Rolls-Royce and BMW Motorrad, the BMW Group is the world's leading premium manufacturer of automobiles and motorcycles and also provides premium financial and mobility services. The BMW Group production network comprises 30 production and assembly facilities in 14 countries; the company has a global sales network in more than 140 countries.

In 2018, the BMW Group sold over 2,490,000 passenger vehicles and more than 165,000 motorcycles worldwide. The profit before tax in the financial year 2017 was € 10.655 billion on revenues amounting to € 98.678 billion. As of 31 December 2017, the BMW Group had a workforce of 129,932 employees.

The success of the BMW Group has always been based on long-term thinking and responsible action. The company has therefore established ecological and social sustainability throughout the value chain, comprehensive product responsibility and a clear commitment to conserving resources as an integral part of its strategy.

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