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Y-Type Revival

Driving around the M25 the other day, in the normal 70mph traffic jam, I was surprised to see ahead of me a classic vehicle shape, keeping up with the Mondeos, Cavaliers and Sierras.

What was even more surprising was that it was moving close to the actual 70mph limit and, as I drew closer, I realised that it was a Swiss registered Y-type with wire wheels. Obviously its owners were on holiday in England, and far from being non-plussed by the M25, were taking it in their stride and showing a clean pair of heels to much more modern machinery.

As I continued on my way, I recalled that Naylor Brothers Restorations had told me they had been commissioned to completely rebuild a 1950 one-owner YA for an American-domiciled Englishman, while also taking its place in the restoration queue was a YT Tourer.

With increasing numbers of these cars being seen at various MG events, together with Frank Vautier's regular competition appearances in his Y-type, the model now probably enjoys a higher profile than at any time since the 1950s.

Why is this so? I would dismiss thoughts that, as has been suggested, it is a cheap way to quasi-T-type ownership, but I rather incline to the view that the Y-type represents the early 1950s in a way that few other cars can. Those of us who grew up then will remember that the UK was still shaking off the effects of the war, and the period of austerity that followed.

The Y-type, based on a pre-war design as it was, was very much one of the better kind of motor cars to aim for as it graced many a Nuffield showroom. Perhaps too, it represented solid

traditional British values, and it was, of course, the last MG saloon to be built with a separate chassis.

Personally, I always think of the Y-type as being typical of the cars to be found in a Miss Marple film - it seems to exude a timeless, period charm. For its day, its performance was good, and the Y-type is now getting the appreciation it deserves. Our American cousins have long held both the saloon and the Tourer in higher regard than we do - it is good to see a revival of interest in a very worthy car.

Unsafe at Any Speed?

Those with long memories, particularly our American friends, will remember this title as that of a treatise by Ralph Nader which effectively changed the entire US, and European, perspective on vehicle safety.

Indirectly, the Nader stance was to prioritise low speed safety which, ironically, led to many cars having their roadholding and suspension compromised to achieve this goal. Few need reminding of the effects of the rubber bumpers, and consequent raised suspension height, on both the MGB and Midget, which transformed good handling cars to poor ones, at a single stroke.

Today, the world's motor industry seems to be not so much obsessed with primary safety, i.e. how a car brakes and handles in extreme conditions, than in secondary safety, which is probably best highlighted by crumple zones, passenger safety cells, air bags and side impact bars.

So having seemingly done everything possible to keep the occupants of a vehicle safe, the powers that be are now turning to controlling precisely how a vehicle is driven. This is being done by an even greater use of

restrictive speed limits than ever before - anyone who has driven the A420 between Oxford and Swindon for example, will know what a nightmare of speed restrictions have been put in place, and the tremendous number of GATSO cameras that have been installed. This is happening on a country-wide basis.

Now the latest moves from the Department of Transport are the fashionable ones of traffic calming. These can include everything from a rash of mini roundabouts, pinching a road to reduce it to a single carriageway - with consequent build up of traffic - and the use of large scale speed ramps which frequently prove damaging to a silencer system, even when negotiated at five miles per hour.

While for one moment I do not condone unthinking driving in urban situations, I do question whether the DOT approach is the right one. In my own village, the traffic calming measures have been such that everyone avoids the routes on which they are situated and drives through an adjoining housing estate - surely the last thing the planners intended?

No, we are not all high speed hooligans joyriding a stolen hot hatch. The vast majority of us drive carefully in urban traffic situations, particularly in areas where children are involved. We don't need to be treated like complete idiots, or worse, as menaces to society.

For that is what we are talking about here. What we are seeing is only the first shot in a campaign to portray car usage and ownership as socially unacceptable. Far fetched? Ask any smoker about the social acceptability of what was once perfectly normal.

See what I mean?

The approach to Brooklands at Silverstone has seen many famous cars from howling Ferraris to thundering Bentleys, and much else besides. But a Mustang?

It really happened, back in May at the preview of the Coy's International Historic Festival to be held the last weekend in July.

To help publicise the event, Robs Lamplough flew in the Mustang and taxied down the main straight for the photo call. No, I didn't believe it either, at first. **MG**

