



Y indeed

Most people buy the car and then look for a personalised number plate. Australian, Pat Hand did it the other way round and ended up buying a 'Y'-type to suit his plate.

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Photographs – Tom Baker

Pat Hand – an ex-patriot and leading light in the British car movement in Australia – just knew he had to get himself an MG 'Y' Tourer when, on impulse, he bought the personalised registration number '49 MGY' from Queensland Transport. He had the registration plate, now he had to have the car to go with it.

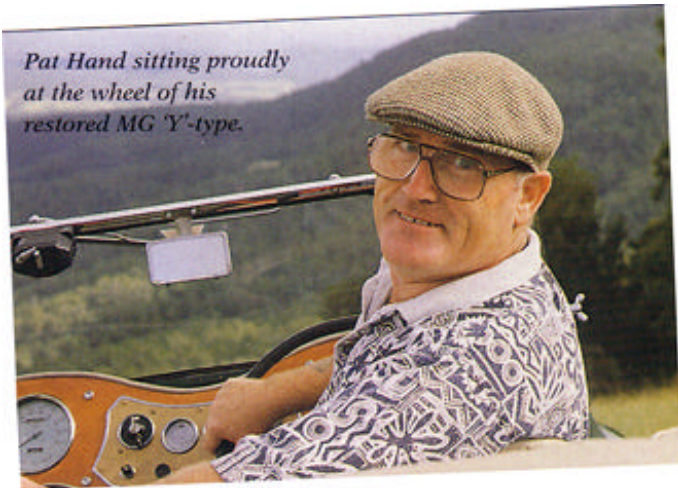
Now it may be true that MG 'Y'-type tourers are as rare as the proverbial hen's teeth – only 877 were ever made and a mere 171 are known to still exist worldwide – but Hand, who lives in Brisbane, knew exactly where he was going to get one.

The story really began when a friend was after a right-hand-drive MG Midget dashboard and enlisted Hand's help.

"I was given the address of Tony Slater, whose hobby it is to remanufacture dashboards," Hand explains. "When I went around to meet



Four seats makes the 'Y'-type a practical open-top MG.



Pat Hand sitting proudly at the wheel of his restored MG 'Y'-type.

him, I realised that I had known him from work over 20 years ago."

Hand also noticed that Slater had a few MG 'Y'-types at his place, and learn't that he is an active member of the MG 'Y' Register.

"We got chatting, and I mentioned that my wife, Brenda, and I had a couple of MGBs. And when I said that Brenda was now keen on a four-seater so that she could drive the grandchildren around, he told me that he knew of someone that had a 'Y'-type that was three-quarters restored."

The couple went to look at the car, a 1949 MG 'Y'-type Tourer, out of curiosity and were amazed to find it all in boxes.

"I was rather disappointed at what we had seen, but on the way home I decided to drop in at Queensland Transport to see whether I could get '49 MGY' as a personalised plate. You can imagine my surprise when I was told that it was still available! I bought the plates right away, and decided there and then to buy the car to go with them."

Hand transported all the boxes and other pieces to his home in the Brisbane suburb of Calamvale and immediately checked to see if everything was there. It all appeared to be. "I decided that the best course of action would be to strip everything down to the last nut and bolt, and then to start from scratch."

Hand was thankful for his apprenticeship as a mechanic and bodyworker in England as a youth. Working in the workshop of Motoplus, one of the first enthusiast shops in the Midlands, he gained a good understanding of MGs and their idiosyncrasies. This was to stand him in

good stead in later years, particularly after emigrating to Australia in 1975.

The chassis was in reasonable condition, having already been sandblasted and powder-coated by the previous owner. However, although all the bushes were obviously new, they had to be

discarded and renewed because so many years had past since the previous owner had started to restore the car, they had deteriorated terribly.

"I replaced all the bushes, cleaned up the chassis and gave it a thorough check before fitting the back axle that, thankfully, was in good nick," recalls



'Y'-types' dumpy lines do not suit everyone - one of the reasons that the car was not a sales success.

Hand.

Satisfied that he now had a good

rolling chassis, Hand turned his attention to the gearbox. "To my dismay, I discovered that it had seized solid. I pulled it apart and found that, although the previous owner had filled it with the correct quantity of gearbox oil, this had allowed it to sweat during the intervening years, resulting in seizure. Had he either filled it to capacity, or left it empty, it would have survived." All the bearings were replaced, the cogs wire-brushed and inspected, and then everything carefully reassembled.

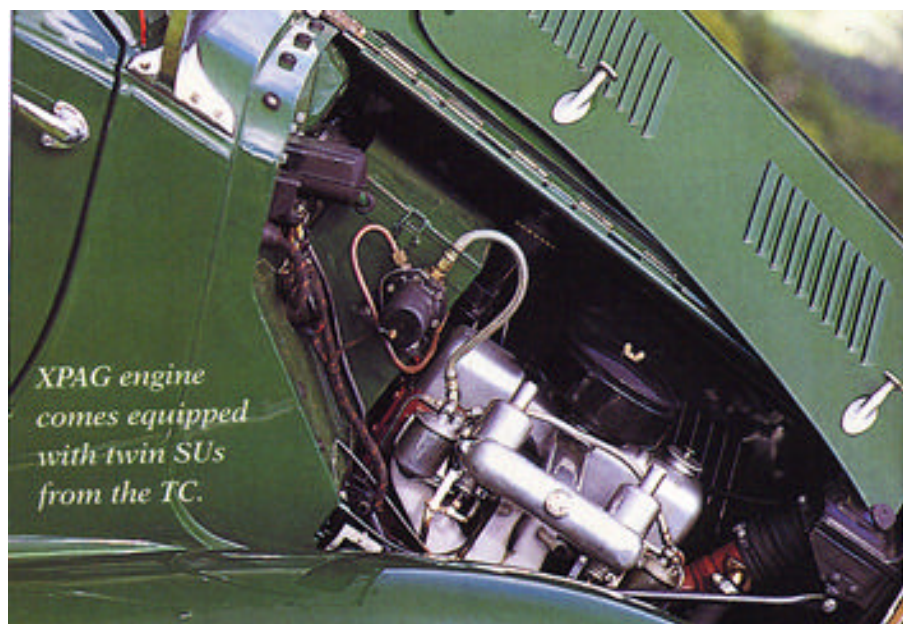
Hand then turned his attention to the braking system. "I renewed all the brake pipes as a matter of course because the originals showed signs of corrosion," he explains. "The brake pistons were OK, though, so I just replaced all the rubbers."

The 'Y'-type is powered by the XPAG engine, which began life as the 1140cc unit in the Morris 10 Series 'M' saloon back in 1938.

A year later, when bored out to 1250cc, it powered the MG TB and later, the MG TC. And apart from powering the 'Y'-series, it was also to be pressed into service in the later MG TD and MG TF models.

Hand had intended to strip the engine down to give it the usual rebuild. However, judging from the general condition of the rest of the car — and from the records he inherited with it — he was reasonably sure that all would be well inside. "I

decided to take a gamble, and poured a mixture of oil and petrol down the spark



XPAG engine comes equipped with twin SUs from the TC.



plug holes. On turning the engine over, I saw that the oil pressure was fine. I decided to leave the engine as is, and to fit it to the chassis after thoroughly cleaning and repainting it."

Now that Hand was satisfied that the car was mechanically sound, he looked at the bodywork. Even though the car had been stored in pieces for a very long time, the body panels were in excellent condition. Hand started this stage of the restoration process by laying out all the bodywork pieces on his lawn, dusting them off and inspecting them.

"The previous owner had, according to paperwork I have, sent the car to Victoria Body Works in Brisbane, and it stayed there for three years. During this period they treated the car to a two-pack respray job, and I must say, the result really is fabulous. They really did a marvellous job, considering that I only

had to clean it before reassembly some ten years later!

"I did, of course, replace all the colour-coded piping that goes between the wings and body panels. These I sourced from Moss Motors in America."

One area of restorations which often causes problems is the electrics. Luckily, Hand had no difficulties with the straightforward system on the 'Y'-type. As is the case with most complete rebuilds, he tore out all the wiring and started from scratch. He ordered a complete new cotton-coated wiring loom from the UK, and was surprised to find that this consisted of only 24 wires. "The entire job was too easy. It was more fidgety than difficult," he recalls happily.

Hand explains that he wanted a car that could be used every day and so he was not too worried about originality. "The car had no indicators at all. All the driver did was to use hand signals. Now, in modern traffic, that didn't really appeal to me at all, so I fitted twin filament bulbs to the sidelights, which now double as sidelights and indicators."

The gauges, or lack of them, are usually a stumbling block with many restoration projects, but here again, Pat was in luck.

The previous owner provided receipts showing that the instruments had been overhauled in the UK by Vintage Restorations in Tunbridge Wells. Even the clock was in perfect working order. All that he had to do was to fit them to the dash board, which he had restored using Australian silky oak instead of vinyl as originally specified. "I really wanted to give the car something of an Australian character." He says. The result is more than satisfactory.

The MG 'Y'-type Tourer, like all 'Y'-types, sports a quaint feature that is sure to make many modern-day motorists either envious, or disbelieving. And that is what Abingdon called the *Jackall System*.

Before Hand completed the reassembly of the car's bodywork, he pulled apart the hydraulic system,



determined to restore it to full working order. This, he knew, would invoke the envy of many an MG 'Y'-type enthusiast, as it remains a feature that many never get working on their cars.

Unable to source new seals, he contacted a local firm to make the seals for the pumps and rams from a pattern which he supplied. The jacks themselves he sent away for powder-coating. Everything was put back together again and tested. Hand was so pleased with the result that he made use of the car's own jacking system to support the chassis during the remainder of the restor-



ation. An imported reproduction jack oil sticker placed on the reservoir in the engine bay finished off the job nicely.

Back to the interior, Hand's work was half done when it came to the trim - the difficult half. The seats had been reupholstered, as had the door panels, and just needed a good clean. When it came to getting the rest of the trim made, it proved to be quite a challenge for A&G Auto Trimmers to make the two rear side panels," Hand Explains. "Each is hollow with a zip along the top so that the hood irons can be stowed inside the panel when folded down, The other difficulty we had was matching the material used on the front seats. They did a splendid job."

Much of the exterior trim had also been restored, although Hand found that some bits were missing, so he took a long shot and called on the previous owner. "To my surprise, he went out to his shed and emerged with most of the missing pieces!"

These were sent to Custom Chrome at Nerang, who did a great job at restoring them. The chrome strip for the window frames was ordered from NTG in the UK.

With the car finally back together again, Hand wasted no time in taking it out for a test run. The engine fired up easily enough and sounded good idling away in his driveway. Now for the moment of truth...

The engine ran beautifully around the quiet suburban streets, but when taken out on the open road, it wanted to die.

The valves were working perfectly at low revs, but as soon as the revs increased, they weren't able to close in time," Hand recalls. "I found that after putting some mileage on the clock, the

valves loosened up and suddenly I was relieved to find that everything was fine."

Back in the garage, he ran some rudimentary checks and discovered that the sump was filling with water. "I immediately suspected a cracked head or block, and began to wish I had stripped the engine right at the beginning instead of chancing it."

However, after some time spent reasoning and reflecting on the situation, he discovered that the previous engine rebuilder had used universal head studs instead of the correct — and very unusual — type specified by the factory. "The nuts and bolts used on the XPAG engine have metric threads and Whitworth flats," explains Hand. "This was a legacy from 1919 when all Morris engines were manufactured by the French firm of Hotchkiss at their Coventry factory. What this meant as far as my car was concerned was that the universal head bolts weren't sealing properly, allowing water to run up the studs into the rocker cover, mixing with oil, then draining back down into the sump."

The head, therefore, had to come off and the correct studs inserted, says Hand ruefully. "A friend had told me about the virtues of a product called Holden Sealing Compound. I bought a tin and sealed the new studs with it. The engine has been fine ever since."

Pat Hand now uses his MG as much as possible, and is a keen and very active member of the All British Classic Car Club. Since completing the restoration, he has clocked up over 2000 miles in the car. And he plans to do a darned sight more! **MGW**

1949 MG 'Y'- type Tourer

ENGINE

Straight four overhead valve with cast iron block and cylinder head. Twin SU H2 1.25in carburettors

Capacity

1250cc

Bore/Stroke

66.5/90mm

Compression ratio

7.2/7.4:1

Maximum power

54.4bhp at 5200rpm

Maximum torque

765 lb.in at 2600rpm

TRANSMISSION

Rear-wheel-drive from front-mounted engine. Four-speed gearbox with synchromesh on 2nd, 3rd and top gears. Borg & Beck 7.25 in dry plate clutch

SUSPENSION

Front: Independent with coil springs

Rear: Half-elliptic leaf springs

BRAKES

Lockheed hydraulic, 9in diameter drums.

One leading and one trailing shoe, front and rear

STEERING

Rack-and-pinion, 2.625 turns lock-to-lock.

Turning circle; 35 feet

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed; 76mph

Fuel consumption 32mpg

Y A ROADSTER?

The MG 'Y'-type saloon, launched in October 1948, was a hurried attempt by MG to produce a small saloon for the hungry postwar market and soon proved popular in many countries.

However, as today, there were people who wanted an open-top car such as the TC Midget, but needed the practicality of four seats. So the 'Y'-type's body was reengineered to create the rather Noddysque two-door Tourer, also known as the MG 'YT'. MG historian Wilson McComb described the car as 'about as sporting in appearance as the average bath tub.'

To give the car a more sporty appeal, the Tourer was fitted with the twin carburettor TC-spec engine. As a concession to the ravages of open-top motoring, the car did not have the wooden dash of the saloon, using instead a cheap-looking vinyl material.

In line with Britain's postwar export policy, the Tourer was designed primarily for overseas sales and the majority were left-hand-drive, making Pat Head's right-hand-drive example rare. In fact, only 877 Tourers were built in total: it was not a sales success and production ended in 1950.