

1949



Y TYPE





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Daisy Chain



MG equals sports cars! Sports cars equal MG! Horse and carriage! Cup and saucer! Top hat and tails! They all go together and if you own a MG, surely you own a sports car.

Not at all!

Throughout its pre-WWII history, MG produced a number of models that were fitted with both open sports, as well as sedan bodies by outside coachbuilders. The practice continued following the hostilities, with MG making complete sedans in-house that were derived from the more sporting models. MG sedans were made up through the company's receivership in 2005, and today under the management of the Nanjing Automobile Group you can still buy a MG, providing you want a sedan.

We quickly cut forward to Australia in 2012 and Heather Woodall of Sydney tells her classic-car-loving husband Michael, that she wants to be more involved, so much so that she wants an older car of her own. It's also occurred to Heather that a classic car would go perfectly with her scrapbooking business and that she could drive it from event to event to sell her hand-made greeting cards.

Early Sedans

The story of how, in 1923, the first MG grew from the Bullnose Morris car is well known and, while an open car, it was just two years later when the closed M.G. Sporting Saloonette was made available. While a depar-





ture from earlier models, the Sporting Saloonette provided its owner with everything expected of a MG over the standard Morris—performance and handling.

The new MG 14/40 Mk. IV Sporting Saloonette was released in September 1927. Fitted with a 1,802-cc, side-valve, four-cylinder engine it provided the car with the sporting characteristics expected from cars of the marque. The closed bodywork was available in either pressed metal or fabric. Curiously there was no Mk. I, II or III!

The late 1920s brought the introduction of the first six-cylinder MG in the form of the 18/80. While the majority of the 2,468-cc, SOHC-powered models were available in open form, saloon versions in both two- and

four-door Saloon de Luxe configurations were available. During the same period MG released its first Midget, a name that was to personify the marque to such an extent that it became the world's leading manufacturer of sports cars. Those first MG M Type Midgets could also be found in closed form, direct from the factory, as the Sportsman Coupe.

With the MG F Type of the early 1930s came a new 1,272-cc, SOHC, six-cylinder engine along with a longer underslung chassis. All of which gave rise to a number of very sporting closed body styles in the form of the F1, F2 and F3 Magnas, which were replaced by the L1 Type Magna in 1933.

The MG SA of 1937 was the largest car the marque ever produced. Fitted with an OHV straight-six of first 2,288-cc, and later 2,322-cc, the

model came with a 10-foot, 3-inch chassis and bodywork designed by Cecil Kimber himself. It proved to be a very successful model especially with its typical MG performance and handling combined with a luxurious interior of ample leather and walnut. At the same time MG enthusiasts who wanted a smaller car could opt for the 1,548-cc VA that was available in tourer, drop-head coupe and sedan body styles. With the MG WA of 1938, while the wheelbase stayed the same, engine capacity was increased to 2,561-cc along with increases to the track front and rear. Just 369 WAs were built in the same three bodystyles when MG's attentions were turned elsewhere due to WWII.

Post-War MG Sedans

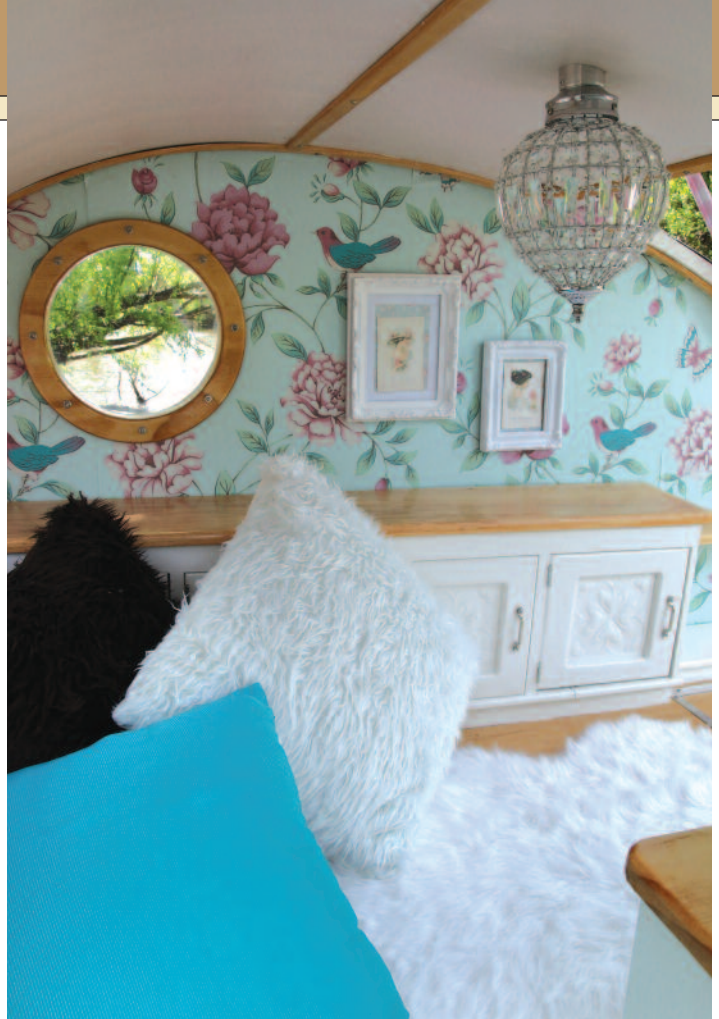
With the war ending in Europe in May 1945, MG was quick off the mark with the release of the TC in September. However, it must be said that the TC was a slightly modified pre-war MG TB. For a closed vehicle, the MG enthusiast had to wait until early 1947 and the release of the YA sedan, although if truth be known its prototype first saw light of day before WWII.

Known as the MG 1 ¼ Liter Saloon, the YA used a modified TC chassis along with a suitably altered Morris Eight four-door bodysell. In MG form it developed a swept tail and fenders along with the traditional MG upright grille and separately mounted headlights. Power came from MG's 1,250-cc, XPAG, four-cylinder as fitted to the TC, but fitted with a single SU carburetor. The YA was the first MG to be fitted with independent front suspension, and was one of the first British cars so equipped. The YA was also fitted with the Jackall System that consisted of hydraulic rams at each corner that allowed one, two or four rams to be elongated for servicing or wheel changing.

In 1951, the YA gave way to the YB, which itself stayed in production until 1953 when MG released the ZA Magnette, based on the Wolseley 4/44 Saloon. While sales were initially slow, a total of 36,600 were sold in ZA and ZB configurations.

Last True MG Sedan

Unfortunately, while the MG Y Magnette proved to be highly successful, it also proved to be the last true MG sedan. Early 1952 brought the merger of Austin and Morris into what was known as the British Motor





Corporation, with MG becoming part of it all.

It quickly became apparent to someone within BMC that if a car carried a MG badge it meant something and therefore sales would follow. The famous octagon-shaped badge soon adorned the less than exciting Morris Oxford saloon. While that was no doubt hard to swallow for die-hard MG enthusiasts, the MG 1100 and later 1300 was indeed a bitter pill. While the Mini derived 1100/1300 became Britain's top selling motor car, this classic case of BMC badge engineering—at least to this writer—is very hard to accept.

To many, the last true MG—sedan or otherwise—was built at Abingdon, but the name continues on. During the late 1980s and early '90s, the MG Maestro and Montego were made under the British Leyland banner, and then in 2001 the MG ZT was released by MG Rover with engines ranging from a 1.8-liter, four-cylinder through to the Ford Mustang derived 4.6-liter V8.

In 2005, MG Rover was sold to the Nanjing Automobile Group, and is now part of the SAIC Motor. Today's MGs are designed/made in Longbridge (UK), Thailand and China.

Piece of It

Michael and Heather Woodall have both been involved with older cars since they first met. Frankly it would be a bit hard not to be, as Michael's father Andrew and his father before him have been involved in historic motorsport for quite some years. Michael bought his first car, a Triumph Spitfire when just 13, restored it and still has it. Heather quickly came to really enjoy driving classic cars and everything to do with them, and one day told her husband she wanted to have a piece of it and become more involved. As we could all imagine, this led to a deep and meaningful marital discussion.

"I suggested that she have a look around and find something that she would like," Michael said. "She did just that, and not long after decided on a Jaguar MkIV. We talked about that, especially thinking about the cost of them today, so she agreed to look around again. Not long after she said that a MG Y Type would be just perfect, and thinking about it at the time I couldn't disagree with her as looking at the car it's sort of like a downsized Jaguar MkIV.

"Heather said it was cute looking and knowing that she is a very aes-



thetically inclined person I could see where she was coming from. I tried to talk her into buying dad's Sunbeam Rapier, but clearly it just wasn't cute enough."

"So we settled on a MG Y Type saloon," Michael added. "The way I look at the car is that it's basically a MG TC with a sedan body. There are no doubt many, many differences between the two models, but I see it as a TC from the firewall forward. The car we settled on was built at Abingdon in 1949 and shipped to Australia, arriving early the following year. It was originally finished in a burgundy color and sometime between then and now it turned into a cream-colored car.

"I prefer the MG over our everyday car as it's very comfortable to drive, especially around 75 to 80 kph. I do know of people that manage to get their Y Types to run faster than that, but I rather like the more relaxed driving that comes with the car. Anything above that and you do feel it as the car is rattling, vibrating and straining to maintain a higher speed.

Bodywork

"The bodywork now is like it was when we bought it," Michael continued. "About all I've done inside is to replace the carpets. Mechanically something was terribly wrong as it was way down on power plus missing terribly. I even had it run on a dynamometer where it was putting out all

of 18 horsepower at the wheels, and that started a search for the problem. First, we changed the single SU carburetor for twins, which really just opened a can of worms as it was firing fuel back through the carburetors. After some time we tracked the problem to someone having done a terrible grind to the camshaft, so that the valves were closed for most of its turn duration. It took some time before we found out what was happening, but it was put right with a new camshaft and rebuild of the top end of the engine. Now it produces 48 horses, which is about where it should be.

"We have had the gearbox out and rebuilt, new brakes throughout and quite a bit of stuff underneath, but almost nothing up top. I am concerned at how much the engine has to rev for any usable speed, so I am considering fitting a five-speed. While it's the same XPAG, 1,250-cc, four-cylinder engine that's fitted to the TC, the car weighs around 2,240 pounds compared to the TC's 1,840 pounds.

"Once the car was going properly, Heather was really pleased with it. I had to teach her how to double-shuffle through the gears, but she soon got the hang of that and now drives it everywhere. The synchros on the top three gears are a little slow, but I imagine that the gearbox would have been excellent for the road conditions of 1949.



Crafty

"Heather is very much into crafty things like scrapbooking and card making," Michael let on. "That led to a business selling cards and the like at various shows and markets using the MG, which by that time had been christened 'Daisy.' Setting up her wares next to Daisy would be a great drawcard as many people would come to look at the car and then would buy a card or two. However, just by looking at the car you can tell that Daisy is not endowed with the largest trunk, which meant that I had to go along with our Honda.

"As with most involved in scrapbooking, Heather wanted more room for her material, so not only are two bedrooms of our house full of things, but we also decided that something else was needed for shows. The idea of a trailer came to my mind, but I was keen on one that was in keeping with the Y-type. Then it occurred to me to build a period looking teardrop trailer to tow behind the MG.

"I have a friend who is a hot-rodder and he built a teardrop trailer to tow behind his car. I liked the shape of that so I thought about building one that was more suited to being towed by the MG. So I made a large wooden template of his trailer and he very kindly gave me a couple of rear guards that had come off a Morris Minor. My main thought, through-



out the whole process was that if MG had built a teardrop caravan, ours would have to look like that.

“As far as I know MG didn’t build a caravan, but I had that on my mind all the time. So I taught myself how to steam-bend timber, how to work with aluminum and many other crafts that I had not done before. I’m a jeweller so I am very used to working with my hands, albeit on a slightly smaller scale.

Box Trailer

“The caravan actually started life as a box trailer,” Michael admitted. “Its platform formed the base of the caravan that I cut about to suit the shape I wanted. Plus the towing A-frame also came from the box trailer. After the base was finished, I built most of what is now inside from plywood covered with insulation and clad in aluminium. Bluey, my hot-rodding friend also gave me a rear axle from a Subaru utility and that was used with coil-over shocks. It’s far more subtle than the normal trailer solid axle and semi-elliptics so that nothing is shaken about during a journey.

“To that stage I would say was the easy bit. It took about six-months to reach a rolling chassis stage, but I did enjoy working with the aluminium. The real difficult part was learning how to bend and carve the timber. For instance, the stone guards in front of the guards are made from timber that I laminated and then carved to shape with a grinder, all of which took about two day’s work each with the grinder.”

“There’s nothing special about the timber! I decided to use pine, but then a lot of people said I couldn’t do it. How I loathe when people say that! So I made up the bucks along with the clamps and the initial steam bending got me close, but it still wouldn’t bend as far as I wanted. So I waited for a day when it was above 30° C which heated the timber and



with lots of water managed to get it close to the shape needed. The final shape came when it was fixed to the caravan, which gave it the correct shape. The most difficult part with the timber was the front window as that opens from the bottom, like the front screen of the MG. I think that took me close to a month to get right, but being a jeweller teaches you to concentrate on one thing so that it holds your attention span for a long time.

Heather’s Wishes

“It’s all trimmed inside to Heather’s wishes,” Michael added. “Of course, it’s quite feminine so that it also appeals to her customers. She said that she wanted ‘shabby chic’ and I had no idea what that meant. So I just went along with what she wanted. She also goes to a few night markets so I had to make sure that it had its own battery power and as the MG is still using its original generator we couldn’t rely on that. So the battery is recharged through a solar panel that’s placed on the roof rack



when needed. I designed the roof rack, had it laser cut and then made the timber inserts.

“Heather just loves the end result, and at events and shows it’s been highly successful. It’s handy not only for carrying around the cards and the like, but it also draws in the husbands who look at the car and trailer. At car shows, it’s been quite an attention getter as well, with many die-hard MG enthusiasts coming up and asking when caravans were made at Abingdon!

“It’s been a real pleasure building the caravan, but I wouldn’t have been able to do it without my dad’s assistance, while of course the two of us were being closely overseen by Heather.

“Apart from going to craft shows we do use the MG, but perhaps not as much as we should because of the Honda being a modern ‘get in and drive’ style of car. The Y-type would be used at least twice a week without the caravan, and I must admit that it’s a bit spritelier without 600 pounds of caravan to tow around.”

Michael finished by saying that both he and Heather look forward to using the MG into the future, both with and without the caravan. There are a few changes he wants to do with the car, like fitting an inconspicuous brake booster and perhaps the five-speed. He doesn’t want to do too much, so that it can be converted back whenever he wishes.

Driving

There is something about using wood in the cockpit of cars. Wood, British cars and the late ’40s just seem to go together, especially if the car is anything like a little special. Of course, the use of wood continues in a select number of cars today, but it’s purely a veneer of its former self. The cockpits of British marques such as Wolseley, MG, Riley, Jaguar and Alvis were positively festooned with wood—and not just door cappings either.

I jumped into the driver’s seat of Heather and Michael Woodall’s 1949 MG Y-type and immediately felt comforted by all that wood, not only all around me, but right across the dash. How many carpenters were needed to make a MG Y-type?...and I don’t just mean the wood used in the body.

As usual with MGs of the period, the instruments were housed in hexagon shaped openings, but strangely the Y-type was not fitted with a tachometer. I found the seats to be very comfortable, but then again the car was quite upmarket for its time.

I was looking forward to getting it out on the road, but at over 2,200-pounds didn’t expect the Y-type to be high-performance, and even less so with an additional weight towing along behind. I’ve had the pleasure of driving many an MG, and have found them all to strike above their weight. The Y-type was no different, and even with all that weight it felt as if it could be stirred along. Yes, the engine was working with some enthusiasm and the four-speed gearbox had to be stirred a bit to gain the engine’s best performance.

Yes it was satisfying, well at least on the flat, as for ascending the hills its performance could be best called pedestrian. Michael was in the car

Specifications

Body:	Steel body over steel frame
Chassis:	Steel box section
Wheelbase:	8 feet 3 inches
Track:	4 feet 2 inches
Length:	13 feet 5 inches
Width:	4 feet 11 inches
Weight:	2,240 pounds
Suspension:	Front: Independent by coil springs and lever-arm shock absorbers
	Rear: Semi-elliptic springs and lever-arm shock absorbers
Engine:	Four-cylinder Overhead Valve
Displacement:	1,250-cc (66.5mm x 90mm)
Induction:	Single SU Carburetor
Power:	46 bhp at 4,800 rpm
Transmission:	Four-speed synchro (not on 1st) and reverse
Brakes:	Hydraulic-operated drum brakes on all four wheels



with me, and while it was grins all round we did talk about how much better it is without the caravan.

Of course the MG Y-type was made for an age that was pre-freeway, and in a land of hedge-lined country lanes. It was perfect for that faraway time and despite the passage of 65 years or so it continues to be a most enjoyable car to drive for the classic car enthusiast.

That it’s also a workhorse makes the car so much the better and as for the caravan, it’s a delight. Very feminine that’s for sure, but it’s supposed to be. It’s highly functional and very much a drawcard for both the blokes and their wives. Michael’s explanation was spot-on, as while I was drawn by the car and the wonderful workmanship of the caravan, my wife Caroline was attracted to the cards, and yes she did spend some of our hard-earned cash on quite a number of Heather’s cards. 🚗

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