



# Everyday Y

By Ian Hopkins

I had always liked the look of pre-war cars, but did not have the bottle to actually purchase one. I had owned a MGB GT and after that a small VW Golf. When that became life expired I had to find a replacement (yes I know that there are a few differences between a Golf and a Y Type but I wanted a change). I looked at several makes of post-war cars that were produced with '30s' styling. The Citroen Light Fifteen had a certain appeal but was too expensive even in the '80s'. The Rovers were nice but I couldn't afford the petrol to run them. The same applied to the Triumph razor-edged saloons. I did, I have to admit, briefly look into owning a Triumph Mayflower. I was still a member of the MG Car Club when I saw a piece in *Safety Fast!* on the Y Type. Here was a post-war car with the looks that I liked and it had an engine small enough for me to afford to run it. I looked up the prices in 'Practical Classics' magazine and the prices were affordable as well. In August 1988 I contacted David Washbourne who owned one and he offered a test drive. Whilst he was full of enthusiasm for the car his wife explained the other side of owning one.

Despite this I was hooked. David phoned some weeks later to see if I was still interested, as he had been contacted by someone with a car for sale. I drove over to Merrow, near Guildford to view the car. The lady who was selling the car explained that her husband had inherited several tea-chests of Austin Sevens and there wasn't any room for the YB. Her 8-year-old son couldn't understand why I would want to buy it!

I had the car AA checked and bought it the following week. It was very nearly the shortest time I owned a car. The drive from the estate went down a steep hill at the bottom of which there was a T-junction. In theory you are supposed to stop at the white lines. Indeed the Ford Sierra coming from the right expected me to. I am not quite sure how I missed it because I came to a halt on the grass verge opposite. The car was carefully driven round to a friend's house, where we found that it had managed to put almost the entire oil in the back axle into the rear brake drums. Once that was sorted and a few other little problems were solved, the car was then used for a daily commute between Kingston and Acton in London.

The car performed very well, keeping up with the London traffic. I did have a few entertaining moments, such as when the car filled with smoke one morning during the rush-hour. The slip-ring had disintegrated on the A316 as I approached Richmond. Having pulled over I knocked the remaining pieces of bakelite off the steering column and rejoined the queue of cars into work. The indicators were connected to a switch on the dashboard and a button installed as well. This little bonfire put paid to the horn button and the indicator operating ring. This was the start of a series of small modifications that have been undertaken over the years. When I bought the car it already had flashing indicators, the front ones being a pair of yellow spotlights as 1950s Bentleys. The rear ones being round Morris Minor ones. I restored the trafficators, but be warned they are not that visible to modern drivers, except at night when they glow nicely. If you can, have flashing indicators fitted for safety (I would also get your classic re-wired to prevent the worry of any future bonfires).

EVERYDAY Y



seeing of course, but being seen is just as important. I fitted a narrow high visibility brakelight in the rear window (one of the long thin ones with lots of bulbs). In wet weather, with the spray thrown up by cars, a Y Type can become almost invisible on fast roads. These alterations should not detract from the car too much, but I have found it made it safer and easier to use. That is after all what the car is intended for.

The XPAG engine is very strong for its size and surprisingly reliable. Most people are astonished at how small it is, hiding under the air filter. When new or recently rebuilt the car is very sprightly and quite fleet of foot. The YB, with its smaller wheels climbs hills very well. The YA tends to be a little slower at this but its 16-inch wheels can give the edge on the level. However, with increased wear and tear as the mileage grows the performance will eventually drop off. The engine needs a rebuild every 80,000 miles or so. This will not be cheap. Mine has now covered 60,000 and has lost that edge. On long journeys it will lose most of the oil as well.

I have found that the YB is still reasonably economical to drive. (Yes, I am one of those sad people who record their petrol and mileage every time they fill up!)

I have been putting in £10 of fuel, about 10 litres, and am getting a return of 37 miles in heavy traffic to 84 miles bumbling about at 30-40 mph. The car was running well when purchased for £2,200 in 1988. It briefly looked quite smart after a quick re-spray 15 years ago. However parking outside soon takes its toll on the paintwork. A rough idea of the work done is given here:-

**1988 – 94,775 miles.** New regulator box and dynamo.

**1990 – 5,533 miles.** Replacement speedometer cable. Two more since then.

**1992 – 13,277 miles.** Re-spray and rewire.

**1993 – 22,904 miles.** New clutch and rear springs (it didn't like speed humps).

**1996 – 50,670 miles.** Engine rebuild for unleaded fuel.

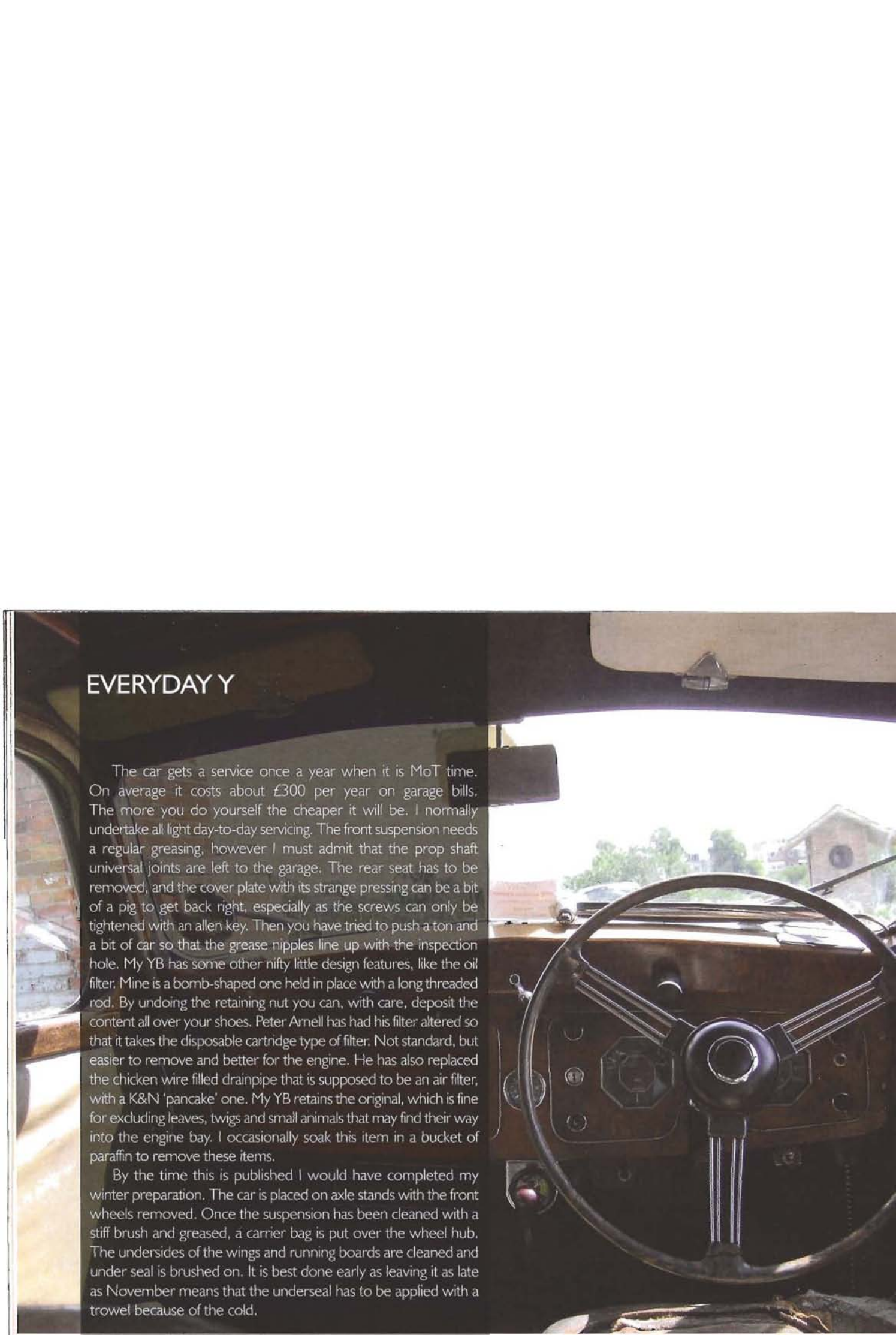
**2004 – 84,747 miles.** Electronic ignition fitted and carburettor rebuilt. Back end of car rebuilt and replacement rear axle.

**2005 – 88,749 miles.** New water pump and starter motor.

**2006 – 89,475 miles.** Replacement radiator as original furred up and overheated.

**2007 –** Anybody's guess!



A black and white photograph showing the interior of a vintage car. The view is from the driver's perspective, looking out through the windshield. The steering wheel is prominent in the foreground, featuring a three-spoke design with a central hub. The dashboard and instrument cluster are visible behind the wheel. The windshield shows a glimpse of the exterior, including a building and trees. The overall lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

## EVERYDAY Y

The car gets a service once a year when it is MoT time. On average it costs about £300 per year on garage bills. The more you do yourself the cheaper it will be. I normally undertake all light day-to-day servicing. The front suspension needs a regular greasing, however I must admit that the prop shaft universal joints are left to the garage. The rear seat has to be removed, and the cover plate with its strange pressing can be a bit of a pig to get back right, especially as the screws can only be tightened with an allen key. Then you have tried to push a ton and a bit of car so that the grease nipples line up with the inspection hole. My YB has some other nifty little design features, like the oil filter. Mine is a bomb-shaped one held in place with a long threaded rod. By undoing the retaining nut you can, with care, deposit the content all over your shoes. Peter Arnell has had his filter altered so that it takes the disposable cartridge type of filter. Not standard, but easier to remove and better for the engine. He has also replaced the chicken wire filled drainpipe that is supposed to be an air filter, with a K&N 'pancake' one. My YB retains the original, which is fine for excluding leaves, twigs and small animals that may find their way into the engine bay. I occasionally soak this item in a bucket of paraffin to remove these items.

By the time this is published I would have completed my winter preparation. The car is placed on axle stands with the front wheels removed. Once the suspension has been cleaned with a stiff brush and greased, a carrier bag is put over the wheel hub. The undersides of the wings and running boards are cleaned and under seal is brushed on. It is best done early as leaving it as late as November means that the underseal has to be applied with a trowel because of the cold.