



# MG Y/A 1947:

## *The cicada and the ant*

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**W**hen we went to Belgium to discover this MG Y/A it was not a good time of year to take an English car outside. However, the brave, little lady that is the centre of attention of this story says: "For the last 50 years I have driven around in all kinds of weather, a bit of drizzle won't stop me!" It is all of that: discreet, but hard-working and faithful to the task, it continues to take up all the challenges. Did you know that the "recovery" of MG after the war owes a lot to this one?

It's really the fable of the cicada and the ant, but this time for cars. While the worker, (the Y Type), filled cases, the cicada (namely the TC series), could walk quietly and sing in the sun. Had the MG marque relied solely on the TC, it would have had a much worse time recovering again after the war. Before the war, the MG marque had been covered with laurels, the T Type had a most remarkable development, and the range, though complete, was not without some omissions here and there. Cecil Kimber, the brilliant creator of the marque, had taken up the challenge of the war, after a fashion. But he been ousted in a bad way, having lost his morale and his health, and died in 1945, in a train accident. Thus he would not see, in his lifetime, how his marque would manage to double production, and became one of most popular during the '50s – '60s. In fact, hardly had the war finished, than the faithful of the marque immediately decided to start producing the TB again, the famous

small roadster already well-known to our readers. The leaders of the Nuffield Group controlling MG, did not want to be involved with sports cars. They were after something utilitarian and not something frivolous. However, the TC, the direct evolution of the TB, was the first MG to be reengineered, and immediately it made an enormous impact on Americans still posted to Britain. They had the dollars, and moreover they wanted to have fun, to finally put behind them the times of war. They were struck on the TC, thus making it possible for the people in charge of MG to justify their choices at Nuffield. But something was still missing, a true small saloon, full of character, serious and hard-working, to support the sales of the sporting models, and to definitely outshine the non-sporting ones. Thus, in 1947, the Y Type was born. The only requirement was for it to sell, and bring in 'new money'. Even though the T Type was in full swing, it was not enough to make the

factory run efficiently. However the Y Type did not go unnoticed.

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### WITH ISSIGONIS!

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The MG Y picked up a leftover project which had been abandoned in the immediate pre-war period, and had initially been intended to be a Morris, - a small saloon with independent front suspension, which was rare at this time. This front suspension layout had been studied in 1937 by one Alec Issigonis, who went on to become a celebrity two decades later... Also attributed to him was the rack-and-pinion steering, another interesting innovation. Thus, when Y was presented, in 1947, it was one of the first cars after the war to assert a certain modernism. With respect to the engine, it was to receive the block of the TC, 1250cc, but with only one carburettor, and a power output of 46 HP. Lastly, in the area of the style, it was non-controversial. In 1947, it did not court a new style, it simply avoided



*Its design is very Thirties, but it fitted the post-war period well*

the headlines. Thus, the lines of MG Y/A (A denoting the mark I), was still very "Thirties", rather impersonal, but all are very balanced, with beautiful round-offs, and especially being led by the MG grille, already a recognised feature. The sales took off immediately, because it met a demand, and its excellent road holding meant it was appreciated. The bet was won. While the Y Type was able to be the workhorse, MG could better devote itself to the T Type, which, year after year, ended up really exploding and with the result we all know. Don't forget that the T Type roadsters, are riding the crest of a wave again today?

As for the "brave little lady" Y, it too would be known as a T version, T for Tourer, in other words a convertible, launched in 1948. Then after further evolution it turned into a Y/B, with some small differences in 1951. When Magnette appeared, the Y Type would quite logically disappear, without ever having to upset anyone, but while having perfectly filled its role of springboard, and by permitting the managers at MG to

get those at Nuffield "to swallow the sporting tablet". Truly, a smart move!



*Note the remarkable Redex additional apparatus in front of the dials*

## NEVER RESTORED

*The specimen you are looking at now enjoys happy days driving in Belgium, not far from Liege. Its*



*It was renowned for its excellent handling*

owner, George Ribauville, bought it here from its first owner 10 years ago. Thus it has only had one previous owner! "He had bought it new, and used it for his job with the daily newspaper, until 1959. After replacing it with a Magnette, he nevertheless kept his Y/A, which he used spasmodically, but always with great care. When I took possession of it, it was in its current state. It is an original car, with some small improvements, it shows small signs of tiredness, but it has never been restored. A small anecdote from the previous owner: when he bought it, the car was only available in right hand drive, which is a little inconvenient in Belgium. But he was so accustomed to it, that when he ordered his Magnette, he also asked for a right hand drive, so as not to become disorientated".

Initially, George Ribauville wanted this MG for its collectable appeal and for outings. But little by little, he discovered the appeal of its control, its flexibility, its excellent behaviour, and its agility. And, at the same time, he discovered regularity rallies, he joined both together, by entering his MG in certain tests, like the recent Coupe des Sources, which runs from Spa to Dôle (in the Jura mountains) and back, a cartographic test totally without a route-book, in which it is necessary to go from A to B within a time limit. A titanic task for the co-driver, all the more titanic when one notes the intimacy of the cockpit of a Y Type! It is the best means of putting a friendship to the test! This can also be an excellent means of getting together if you wish to attract a charming person of the female sex. But they still need to be receptive to the charms of an old MG... And with respect to women, obviously don't forget how to open the door for her if she is



No doubt about it, it is a MG alright!

wearing a skirt, if you see what I mean...

To return to our car, note that it had had the claim to fame on the poster

for Coupe des Sources, since it was oldest car at the start. The only mechanical problem that she experienced happened a little before arriving: namely brake failure! It was thus necessary to finish the course on the hand brake, which was not elegant, but one does what one can. Moreover, on the day we arrived, the brake master-cylinder fell off, and we manoeuvred the car for the photographs with the assistance of the hand brake, therefore, no tests today. It did not put me off, especially as a passenger, from appreciating the flexibility of the engine, which picks up again easily in fourth, and from appreciating the environment on board: the wood looks good, the leather is still there too, and the dash board has a whole series of additional equipment, tripmaster and others, including an astonishing period accessory made by Redex\*, which

makes it possible to see the oil circulation, and, with the assistance of a serrated roller, to add an additive at will to enable better lubrication. Small signs of competition are amusing on a car of this type. It will be also noted that the engine received the second carburettor and a TC camshaft, which must give it easily about fifty horse power. It appears that it can drive at 110 kph (70 mph) without tiring!

You will note that the obsolete charm of MG Y/A hides its many "modern" aspects, and reminds us that an MG is a car unlike any other. The reputation of the marque is not usurped, and even in such a traditional model, one notes the many similarities with the roadsters that one likes so much...●



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\*This appears to be a Redex Lubrocharger that injects upper cylinder lubricant into the carburettor airway.