

## A Tale of Two Y Types - Part I

It's November 1968 and I've just turned 16. We are living in Cardiff and my dad returns home from work and informs me that I am now the proud owner of a 1947 MG Y (Y0631, Registration JDE100). It turns out that he'd bought it unseen from a trader for £16 complete with a 12 month MoT. If it needs a few bits sorting, it's not a problem; dad is a fully qualified mechanic and tool maker. And growing up in a garage environment means I'm already fairly knowledgeable about cars too.



**JDE100. The twin horns were from a six-volt Graham-Paige!**

We drive to the workshop and my heart sinks. The bottoms of all four doors are a mass of giant bubbles, the running boards will fall off if I touch them and the rear end south of the spare wheel aperture is completely rotten. But the best bit....in place of the offside D light is a child's red translucent building block, opened up and screwed to the base of the absent D light so it covers the bulb. And this car has an MoT!

There is a void where the oil pressure gauge should be, but there is a newish looking aftermarket gauge poking through the aperture where the glove box and door used to be. It reads a little off zero at tick over and with a bit of rev I can get it up to close on 20 psi. But when hot? Mmm, it's not good!

There are some good points. The chassis seems solid. The roof opens smoothly, the trafficators work faultlessly -and the Pembrokeshire registration number is quite nice.

I try and hide my disappointment. My ambition has always been to have an MG, but not this one. I'd long since fallen in love with the TF and I've read everything I can about them. I realise it was essentially a stop-gap model and not really the car MG wanted to build. But what a stop-gap! The TF is surely one of the most beautiful cars ever built.

Clearly, owning a TF is way in the future, but I was really hoping to start my driving career with something a little more up to date than a Y Type. I really wanted a Mini. JDE is not a Mini. What's worse, it's falling apart!

For the next 12 months, every Sunday, and many Saturdays, we're in the workshop. Most of the time is spent working on JDE, but not all. Quite a few weekends are spent resurrecting dad's friends' cars; cars that really belong in a scrapyard.

Parts were not always easy to come by. Remember, back then specialist parts companies didn't exist. Occasionally you'd see a Y Type in a scrapyard, always with one or more cars balancing on top of it. I had to buy another one (JOK445) for spares. I recall very little about it other than someone had hand-painted it bright pink, and it caught fire the first time my dad drove it. I was in the passenger seat and as the cabin filled with thick grey smoke, my dad yelled, 'Get out, and disconnect

the battery.' He couldn't see. He thought we'd stopped but we hadn't. I defy anyone to get out of a Y type in one piece while it's still moving! By the time my 17th birthday arrived, we'd finished the body, now resplendent in Rover Arden Green; in fact we'd finished everything apart from the engine and some bits of the interior. The engine would have to wait. For the greater part of my time in the sixth form JDE became a much-appreciated alternative to the hour-long bus ride to school. In fact, I virtually lived in the car and I actually became very fond of her. And I'd like to say that she was pretty reliable; she wasn't! But it wasn't necessarily her fault.

At one point, I'm about 5 miles from home on the other side of town and the already frayed clutch cable snaps. I phone my dad.

'Just drive it home and we'll fix it.'

'Dad, there's no clutch!'

'You don't need the clutch; it'll be fine. Just don't wreck the gearbox!'

On another occasion, on my way to school in slow moving traffic, the pipe from the oil pump to the filter fractured. I couldn't stop immediately and had to continue for about 200 metres. The noise was painful, but engine didn't seize. It was totally my fault. The oil filter clamp was missing when we got the car. Now, courtesy of JOK, I had one, but I hadn't got round to fitting it. Having replaced the pipe, complete with clamp, JDE continued to serve me faithfully. It was only sometime later it dawned on me that I'd deposited a significant volume of oil on the main road Newport Road.

As university beckoned, I finally acquired an 850cc Mini (FCY677C) and I loved that car. Close on 100 cars later, I think it's still my favourite. Anyway, we were now finally able to rebuild the MG's engine. It had lasted well and even with the most brutal treatment, it had stayed in one piece.

Sadly, having finally finished the car, I just didn't use it anymore. My uncle said I could park it in his garage and that's where JDE

stayed. Now I had the Mini. In 1947 the MG was a Sports Saloon, but not in the late sixties. The Mini wasn't quick but it could out-corner anything on the road. And it was just so much easier to drive.

In the late 1970s my parents decided to return home to Jersey. I was now living in South East London with limited parking space, so I decided to ship JDE (still in uncle's garage) back home, although that didn't go without incident. We left Cardiff, heading for the Portsmouth Ferry Terminal. Dad driving JDE and I'm back up in a Renault 4. Just past Bristol the brakes on the Renault fail. JDE carried on serenely not missing a beat.

Re-registered as J2931; the MG just sat in my parents' car park. I washed it every time I went home, but I never actually used it. One evening in the mid 1980s my dad rang me, 'This chap keeps calling, asking if you are willing to sell the MG.' Eventually, I said yes and my first car; a car we had spent countless hours working on, was gone. Almost immediately, I regretted selling it.



**I still have the original rear number plate.**

Fast forward to January 2024. I have recently restored two Morganesque three wheelers (two wheels at the front) and I'm on the look out for another. I find one about an hour down the road and I rope in a friend (a



Triumph man) to come and look at it with me. We find the place, but the car isn't what I really want. Disappointed, we stop for some lunch on the way back. I'm aimlessly scanning the pages of Car and Classics on my phone and I spot this car, no more than 30 minutes from where we're sitting. 'But'...my friend says, 'It's got too many wheels. And it's older than you are!'

I call up the owner, a delightful chap, and we go and see it. The first thing my friend says, 'This is a real time warp car. It's obviously had many repairs, but has it actually ever been restored?'

A deal is agreed and UMG399, a 1951 Black MG Y (Y7028) is mine.

The first thing I did was to have a look at the D lights. They were both there...and not a translucent building block in sight!

I still think the TF is a staggeringly beautiful car, but I'll never own one. My wife won't let me buy one and in Part 2 I explain why, and why unfortunately, she's right.



**UMG399 having just arrived.**

**The photo is very flattering.**

But UMG399 will take centre stage. My application for entry to the Lullingstone Castle Patina Show this summer has been accepted and I outline my quest to make sure she's ready. It'll be the first time I've entered a car in a show.

**Lyndon Cabot**

**Membership No. 12550**

**Below:- Y Type fans are starting young!**

