

A Tale of Two Y Types - Part 2

At the conclusion of Part 1 (Bulletin August 2024 No 628) I introduced my latest acquisition; UMG399, a 1951 Y Type, No 7028. I also noted that despite having fallen in love with the TF when I was 16 years old, I've never owned one and I probably never will. That said, my enthusiasm for the TF has never really waned; in fact, I came very, very close to buying one in the late 1970s, before my wife, my three daughters, the dog and a mortgage came along.

On New Years Eve 1977 I left a mild and sunny Cardiff and headed for a freezing cold Birmingham to start my working life as a houseman in the Dental Hospital. The trip did not go well. As I approached Ross-on-Wye driving my rather rough 1275GT Mini, third and top vanished from the gearbox. Not belonging to any emergency service, I decided to carry on in second gear -foolishly! I made it to Birmingham but the gearbox was finished. As luck would have it, my cousin had a 5-year-old Moskvich 412. Originally red but now pink, he'd bought it for £50 and didn't want it. He just said, 'Take it; but if breaks down take the plates off and abandon it!' The 412 was a tank of a car and it handled like a boat, but it never missed a beat and it transported me safely to Birmingham and later to Plymouth when I changed jobs.

Now that I had reliable transport, this was my chance to get the car I really wanted. I saw this TF advertised, black with red interior. I fell in love with it. I'm 6ft 3in and just under 16 stone, but I managed to thread my legs under the steering wheel without too much effort and the test drive couldn't have gone better. Then on our way back it started to rain. With the hood up and side screens in place...slight problem! I just didn't fit. I tried to convince myself it'd be fine, but unusually, common sense prevailed and I didn't buy it.

Anyway, as luck would have it my best mate's brother was selling his 1962 Daimler SP250 (879 BJB). British Racing Green, wire wheels, grey leather interior and plenty of room, so I bought it. I retired the Moskvich and pressed the SP250 into

service straight away. The sound of that small V8 hemi-headed V8 was simply awesome, but it wasn't a pleasant car to drive and it was frighteningly unreliable. Each trip was an adventure into the unknown. So, as with my original Y type, I shipped it home to Jersey where it lived in a barn for the next ten years, providing a nice warm home for small rodents The Moskvich came out of its ultra short retirement and continued to motor faultlessly.

879 BJB (re-registered as J3369) providing a home for small rodents.

We are now well into the 21st century and the TF bug is still there. I'm convinced that I've shrunk



sufficiently over the years to fit in one and as a trial-run I have the inspired/crazy idea of buying a replica. Dimensionally similar, but a lot cheaper if I can't live with it.

I'm living in South East London and I see a very nice Gentry for sale in a place I've never heard of in the North West. It's January, it's cold and it's raining. I train to Preston; the owner picks me up and we head north for another 45 minutes to his home literally in the middle of nowhere! The car is stunning. British Racing Green, tan interior and the detailing is simply superb. Money changes hands and BUD321R is mine. Unusually, it's Ford based with a twin choke Webber fed 1600E engine.

I'm now faced with a very long drive home. I

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don't really know where I am; I'd forgotten to bring a map and of course there's no Sat Nav. 10 minute or so after I set off the skies open. I stop and get absolutely drenched trying to work out how to put the hood up; genuine TFs are not like this! When I finally succeed, I can only get in the car if my head is at 45 degrees to the rest of my body. I get hopelessly lost; I cross the Pennines and when I arrive home well over 6 hours later, it's still raining. As I pull into the drive my wife is there, but she doesn't say a word!

I point out that it's beautifully built; the history file is massive and there is a copy of, if I remember correctly, the MG Owners' Club magazine in which BUD featured. 'That's very impressive but you'll never use it! It'll just stay in the garage until you finally decide to get rid of it.' And yes, it stayed in the garage for three years only escaping to travel the mile and a half to the MoT station.

There was another problem too; one that couldn't be overcome by shrinking. It was quite a quick car, but the handling was bizarre. It seems that the inverted mounting of the Ford Escort steering rack had unforeseen consequences -it oversteered on one lock and understeered on the other. I finally sold it to a chap who came up from Cornwall. He wasn't bothered by the weird handling and seemed very happy with it, and I see it's still taxed and MoT'd.

The Gentry episode effectively ended any further TF aspirations, although a good mate of mine still can't see why there was a problem. He's had this really nice TR4A since the early 70s and still drives it as it was meant to be driven. He only puts the hood up if there is more water on the inside of the screen than the outside which is hardly ever. As he says, 'If it rains, put a coat on.'

I did have an MGB GT for a while -such a pretty car. But as the years went by, I found myself following the Y Type market without any real thought of buying one. Finally, as I mentioned in Part 1, having gone out with the intention of getting another three-wheeler, I bought UMG399 on the spur of the moment.

The year spent rebuilding Y0631 as a teenager

was not wasted; I remembered so much about the car. And there was a bonus. I'd forgotten that when my parents returned to Jersey in the late 1970s, they just packed everything into a massive shipping container -and a fair amount of that container was occupied by the remains of JOK 445 the Y type I'd bought for spares. These parts had remained hidden at the back of a large shed for the last 40 years!

Although in appearance UMG could best be described as tired, mechanically she's not bad, although the clutch release bearing is worn out and first gear is a little noisy. Fortunately, if I need it, there's a spare gearbox nestling in the back of the shed!

The previous owner had spent a considerable amount of money sorting the brakes and I have to say I was very impressed with the job. Unfortunately, the tyres were not so good. All five were ancient 5.25 x 16 Avon Tourists. I sourced new 5.00/5.25 x 16s from Longstone Tyres and the delightful manager of a local independent garage fitted them for me.

So, with brakes and tyres sorted, I power-washed years of mud and grime from the underside which revealed a remarkably sound car. I changed all the oils and I've bought, but have yet to fit, a spin on oil filter, the one that's meant to masquerade as the original. Although it doesn't do a very good job as it's green! The battery cables were about to part company with the terminals, so I replaced them with new fixed terminal power cables. Finding good quality solenoid terminal covers wasn't easy, but I finally found some I was happy with. New plugs, leads, cap, rotor arm and condenser followed and as a reward UMG now starts easily, perhaps a little too easily as no choke is necessary, but it runs very well indeed.

The black paintwork is, in the main, quite glossy but cracked and crazed over the entire car. The interior is quite good. There's a small tear in the leather of the rear backrest, but my wife reckons she can sort that with surgical sutures. My intention is to get the car mechanically A1 and use it as it is; it's not going to be restored.

I've replaced the trafficators, but as no one looks for them these days, I've also fitted discrete bumper mounted indicators. Hiding the additional wiring took hours of planning and execution, but I'm happy with the end result, even if the front indicators are a little inboard from where they ought to be



Rear indicators.



Front indicators.

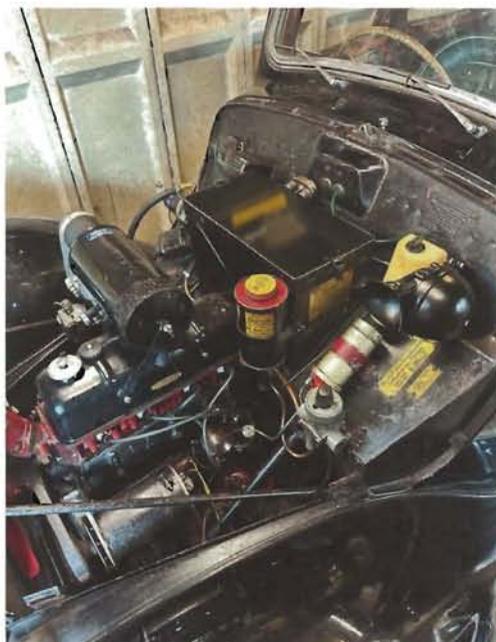
First time out of the garage, UMG is running very nicely, then about a mile from home and without warning, the engine cuts out. I sit there for a minute thinking, why did it stop so abruptly? Then it dawned; when I turned the ignition back on there was no tell-tale tick from the SU pump. I was instantly taken back to my time with the SP250 and the problems I had with its double ended, twin contact breaker SU pump, hidden high up in the boot. Having the pump stare at you when you open the bonnet as on UMG, is a delight!

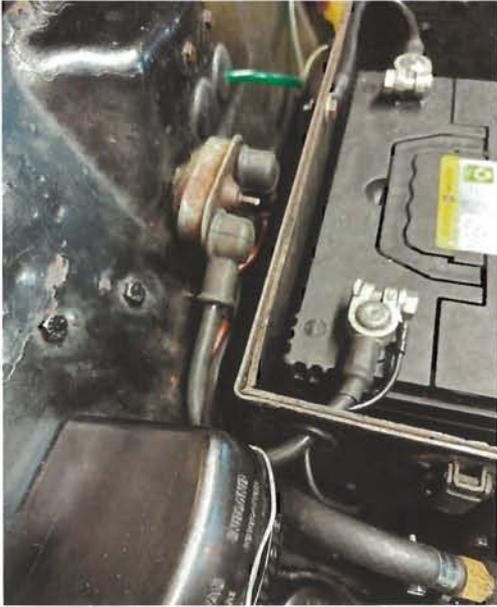
Five minutes and I was on my way again.



Offside view of the engine bay. Wonderful access to the fuel pump.

Nearside view of the engine bay. The screen washer was already in place and well engineered.





-:Battery cables and new power terminal covers.

The 75AH Exide battery is probably overkill.

I love the car and I'm really pleased I bought it. But there is just one small thing that I'm not particularly keen on. My original Y type from 1947 had a push button start. Clearly, later in the production run this was changed to a pull start which seems unnecessarily complex. There must have been a reason. Neil? (Caims)

Dr Lyndon Cabot (Cab)
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