

CHEQUERED FLAG

Andrew Roberts reflects on a month in the world of MG

Pre-war survivor

Y-Type MG was a surprising post-war saloon success

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MG is that of a sports car marque, post-war history tells us that much of the success was down to the saloon cars in the range. Under the MG Rover banner we had the ZR, ZS and ZT, all of which won a deserved reputation for driving excellence. Before that we had the Maestro and Montego, together with the MG version of the Metro that brought the octagon back into the mainstream after the closure of the Abingdon factory.

Further back, the 1950s had seen Gerald Palmer's MG Magnette, which in ZA and ZB form was a fine sporting car in the MG tradition. But it is easy to overlook the 1947 Y-Type MG which was not only the precursor of the models that succeeded it, but a singular success in its own right. In truth, it had little right to be such a success, for it was actually a pre-war design under the name of the MG Ten. Like the TC it would be easy to dismiss it as a design that was merely warmed over for peacetime production. But that would be a mistake, for one of the innovative design features of the Y-Type as it was now

remained in production until the end of MGB production.

That feature was the Cowley-designed independent front suspension that had originally been intended for the Morris Ten, but which had been deleted because of cost implications. This was the work of Alec Issigonis, assisted by Jack Daniels, who had previously been in the M.G. Car Company Drawing Office.

The Issigonis innovations continued with the adoption of his rack-and-pinion design, a vast improvement on the conventional steering box and a first for a British production car. Power came from the XPAG 1250cc engine, first seen in the TB and then used in the TC. For the Y-Type the twin carburettors would be replaced by a single SU, the engine giving a power output of 46bhp. Top speed was around the 70mph mark and petrol consumption averaged out at around 30mpg.

By the standards of the time, the Y-Type was by no means a cheap option, for at launch its price of £672 including purchase tax was way above the most expensive

would be to a reasonably affluent owner who was seeking a car with sporting credentials and during its production run from 1947 through to 1953, 8336 were produced, including 877 of the export-only YT. In competition terms, the Y-Type was successfully rallied and raced in touring car events.

In my early TC motoring days, the Y-Type was looked upon as something of a poor relation, partly because the survivors were not in the best of health, having become cheap and often neglected family cars. But the passing years allow a much fairer perspective and the opportunity to sample a Naylor Restorations' Y-Type dispelled any earlier prejudices. There is no doubt that this YA looked and was a little more urgent than when it left the MG dealership, for it was fitted with twin SUs that boosted its power to TC levels. It also sported wire wheels, but it was how well it drove and handled that was such an eye-opener. Fabulously accurate pin-sharp steering was miles away from a Bishop Cam steering box, the



MG's Y-Type proved to be a post-war success for the octagon and has found latter-day admirers who have discovered it to be a usable and affordable classic.

front independent suspension was a similar revelation while the levels of comfort still had overtones of 1930s luxury. In short, it was easy to see why the Y-Type was so successful.

Today the MG6 finds itself in a similar role. If it can mirror the quality and deliver the driving experience that has made MG unmistakable, it will be worthy of joining a select band.

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