

ME & MY MG
Malcolm Green meets Y-type
enthusiast Ian Hopkins

Grace not Pace



As an individualist, Ian enjoys the combination of pre-war styling and post-war handling and performance offered by his Y-type.

ATTRACTIVE CARS THOUGH THEY ARE, Y-types do not spring to mind as the first choice as a car for economy motoring in London traffic. However, for Ian Hopkins, when he decided to get rid of his 'boring' 1100cc Golf in 1980, it was the only car on his list.

Ian's first car was an 850cc Mini but this later gave way to an MGA Coupe which used to leak so badly that a reasonably good crop of mushrooms could be gathered from the carpets in damp weather. Later he purchased an MGB GT which he kept for six years. This car gave him enjoyable motoring but proved fairly expensive to run on the daily return journey from his home in Kingston to Acton.

The car was finally sold when it became apparent that fairly serious expenditure on the bodywork was necessary and it was replaced by the 1100cc Golf which was painted in a particularly nasty shade of lime green.

Although the Golf gave good service during the eighteen months Ian owned it, he had always hankered after a car with pre-war styling and considered at various times buying cars like a Traction Avant Citroen or a Rover 12, but always the price and running costs looked to be too high.

He had remained a member of the MG Car Club and had decided that he would really like his next car to be an MG and that a Y-type would fit the bill admirably. A drive in the car owned by David Washbourne, who also used his car as everyday transport and who was then secretary of the Club's Y-type Register, settled the matter. He was very impressed with how well the car drove and handled and how easily it coped with modern traffic conditions. As luck would have it a few weeks later, in August 1989, David heard about a car for sale in Guildford that was owned by a lady who also had a number of Austin 7s. Ian went to look at this car and bought it for £2,300.

The car ran well but, as he discovered on the way home,

did not stop as well as it went! Coming up to a road junction he put his foot on the brake with increasing pressure but with no discernible effect on the speed. As he puts it: I did stop eventually at the white line, but it was the white line in the middle of the main road and to this day I don't know how the Sierra travelling on this road managed to miss me."

Obviously the first job on the car was to look at the brakes and he discovered that both sets of rear shoes were soaked in oil from a leaking back axle and that the front brakes were not working efficiently. With the brakes sorted out, the Golf was sold and the Y-type took over the duties of daily transport and has covered 10,000 miles in each of the last four years.

Driven in traffic each day he soon realised he would have to do something about fuel vaporisation. As has been proved successful on many T-types, fitting a heat shield to reduce the transfer of heat from the exhaust manifold to the carburettors has improved matters enormously. The car does about 25 miles to the gallon and still uses very little oil.

Ian finds that other road users are very tolerant and tend to let him out into slow moving traffic but that sales reps. do not like to have to travel behind him on faster roads. The slower rate of acceleration sometimes proved a disadvantage when joining larger roundabouts and he is pleased to find that the most difficult on his daily route to work, the one at Chiswick, has now been fitted with traffic lights!

An unexpected advantage of owning an older car became apparent during the bad weather a couple of winters ago. When every main road on his route to work was blocked with stranded cars Ian took to back streets, one of which took him up a steep hill. A modern, front wheel drive, car was making no progress up the slope but the Y-type just sailed past without difficulty. The combination of good, low-down torque and fairly narrow tyres proved ideal in those conditions.

Ian is well able to cope with routine maintenance on the car

and greases it at regular intervals, much to the amusement of the neighbours in the quiet street he lives in. Actually he is grateful for the attention his neighbours give the car and feels that although it is parked outside in the street all the time it is no more vulnerable than most modern cars. Foreign visitors at a nearby guest house treat it as one of the tourist attractions and often take photographs of it.

Very little serious work has been needed on the car since he bought it apart from some re wiring and a new coat of paint prior to last year's 'Tour of the Dales'. He has also taken the car over to the Isle of Man, driving it to Heysham and going across on the ferry. It managed the TT course in about an hour, with four people on board, and also part of the trials course where the weight of the four occupants led to brake fade on some steep downhill descents.

Ian intends keeping the car indefinitely and it has been christened the 'Flying Brick' by his colleagues at work in view of its colour and aerodynamic properties. It must be a car that engenders affection because the previous owner also named it, calling it 'Bumble.' It is nice to see a car still being used for the purpose for which it was built, rather than just for show. Well done Ian!