



# Seeing Double

Y-Type Tourers don't come along too often, yet here we have two superb examples together. Mike Brown has restored both, and the good news for those interested in joining this select band of owners is that one is now for sale.

**T**he YT is the rarest of the production Y-Types, a four-seat tourer of which only 904 were made from 1948-1950. They were built for export only, and although a handful stayed in the UK and a few more have made the return journey in the years since (including the two in our pictures – the green car being repatriated from Holland and the red one from Hong Kong), they are still a rare sight.

All of this makes it remarkable that Mike Brown owns not one, but two of them. Not that this was ever part of his plan, but let's start at the beginning and explain how events unfolded. That takes us to when Mike retired from a lifetime of work in the automotive industry and just fancied doing up a classic car. His first job had been at Rover in the design office in 1962, so he thought about a Rover P4, or maybe a P5. It soon became clear, however, that they were big cars and probably more than he was looking for as a first project. Then he drifted onto MGs, and saw the green YT on eBay. 'I didn't even know about the model at the time, but I liked the look of it and phoned the chap up,' he says.

MG had given the YT a little more pep in the engine department than the Y-Type saloon and its two doors were cut rakishly to give it more sporting lines, but it was very definitely a four-seat tourer rather than a sports car. Fortunately Mike was well aware of this, so he was not rushing into a purchase blind.

In the end there were no bids during the auction, but Mike subsequently went to view the car. It was running and superficially looked quite good, so they agreed a price and he drove it home. Back at base Mike had a chance to examine his new toy more closely, and as the list of jobs needing to be done grew, so did his doubts.

'I had wanted to do one up, but I was thinking of tinkering about, not a major restoration job,' he says. 'And the problem with me is that if I start a project, I can't do it by halves – it has to be all or nothing.'

Thankfully, as you will have guessed from the pictures, Mike chose 'all' rather than 'nothing,' enlisting professional help from experts along the way. The first of those was Alex at Body Beautiful Cars in Bridgnorth. He specialises in Jaguars, but was keen to add an MG to his portfolio. He inspected the YT, quoted £6000 for the paint, but explained that any sheet metal repairs would have to be charged for separately as and when needed.

With the basics agreed, Mike stripped the body, took it off the chassis with an engine crane and put it onto a wooden frame. He'd made this out of 4x2in timber, complete with all the body mounts correctly positioned by using data from the *Owner's Manual*. All the removable panels were packed inside the car, and it was shipped over to Alex for him to work his magic.

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• WORDS AND PICTURES: SIMON GOLDSWORTHY



Meanwhile, Mike set about the chassis. 'This was in pretty good condition,' he reports, 'but I think the car must have been crashed at some point because the nearside front wing was full of filler and the door on that side would not fit properly. However, the chassis measured up straight and true, so Alex repaired the wing and welded a bead onto the front of the door before dressing that back down to make it fit.'

The engine was also sent away for rebuilding, to a reasonably standard specification apart from the usual tweaks such as bigger valves and an unleaded head. There were bigger changes in the gearbox department, though. 'I had been speaking to a Y-Type owner in the Arden MG Car Club who

had fitted a Ford Type 9 five-speed gearbox to his car,' relates Mike. 'He said that if you had a car in bits, you shouldn't hesitate or worry about authenticity, but you should put in a five-speed box.'

So that's what Mike did. He fitted everything back into the chassis, along with new springs made to the original design by Owen Springs, and then took the rolling chassis over to Alex to have the body and panels fitted. They looked absolutely superb in their Almond Green paint, but when the YT returned home there was still plenty left to do.

'I wasn't sure what to do about the seats,' Mike tells us, 'but took them to a specialist. He was very good and advised me not to have them recovered,



but to let him clean and recolour the existing trim. That saved me a big lump of money, and they have come out very well – the finish is a little harder and shinier than new leather would have been, but they suit the age of the car.'

The instruments were refurbished at Speedograph Richfield, but they couldn't recalibrate the speedo for the Type 9 box because the drive ratios were just too different. Mike tried a number of speedo drive gearboxes, but they all failed so that's an issue which still needs to be addressed.

This project started in January 2013, and it was MoT'd in December of that year, so Mike clearly didn't hang around. 'It cost a lot of money, more than I had planned for because once I got underway, I couldn't start scrimping,' he says. 'But doing it right means that it runs faultlessly and has only required regular servicing and maintenance since.'

'And fortunately, I love it. The brakes could definitely be better – they are not as bad as people would have you believe, but they are not fantastic – but



the engine runs beautifully, and with the five-speed gearbox it really is a pleasure to drive. The handling is not bad; you can't push it too hard because it can pick a wheel up quite easily and the tyres are skinny crossplies, but I don't take it out in the wet (I can't bring myself to do that) and you just have to drive it with respect.

'All in all it is such a pleasure to drive, and very comfortable. I just use it for days out. I take it to local club events and it usually wins the Pride of Ownership, but I am not into concours – I'm not that interested in having somebody poke about it, and don't think it is truly to that standard anyway.'

So having got his first YT into such fine shape, why did Mike go and get another?

'After I finished the green car, my brother moved up here,' explains Mike. 'He had helped with a few of the jobs on this YT, and fancied tackling a project with me. I was inclined towards another MG because I'd got to know them, and a few months later I found the red car, once again on eBay. This was being sold as an unfinished restoration, with a great many of the bits having been stored in boxes scattered round a barn.'

'I went to look at it, taking along a clipboard with an inventory. I was there for ages! As far as I could ascertain, it was pretty complete but mixed up with parts from a YB. It took a long time to agree a price, but my brother and I were mad keen to do it and eventually we decided to take a chance.'

Once again, after getting everything home and examining them in the cold



light of day, Mike discovered that some of the bits were not brilliant and others were missing. One example of items that had gone AWOL were the sides to the hood stowage well. Fortunately Mike had the green car to use as a reference in cases such as this, and was able to make up his own panels in steel.

However, they also got some lucky breaks because all the painted panels were in bubble wrap, just as they had come back from the paint shop in the mid-1980s, and despite never having been opened since, they were in perfect condition. The re-chromed parts were also good, wrapped in newspapers dated 1987. Unfortunately the radiator shell hadn't been done at the same time, and that was a big cost.

The body tub and chassis were remarkably sound too, especially given



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that they had sat around in an apple barn for years. The only problem was that one of the bonnet panels had been scratched. A pot of paint came with the car, a very early two-part epoxy that hadn't been in production for 20 years. Alex used this to repaint the battery box cover because this had been finished in black and should be body coloured. He strained the paint thoroughly to get out the contaminants, but still couldn't get a good finish. In the end he had to flat it back and topcoat with lacquer.

That wouldn't work on the bonnet, so instead Alex offered to try polishing out the scratches. The problem was that he had not painted the car, so he didn't know how thick the paint was and had to go very slowly. He got the scratches out in the end though, and today you can't see a mark on it.

Not everything with the restoration worked out quite so well. Perhaps the biggest hitch was that soon after the start, Mike's brother decided he would move back south! From then on, Mike



was on his own. 'I set myself the goal of making it as close to original as possible,' he says. 'This one even has the Bakelite ashtrays in the backs of the front seats; they always break and replacements cost around £200. I did fit indicators though because you need them these days – originally the car didn't even have semaphores, you just relied on hand signals.'

Mechanical parts are generally easier to find than trim for the YT because so much of the running gear is shared with the T-Types. Some of the major parts such as the dynamo and starter had been refurbished in the 1980s and were still in the cardboard wrappers from the reconditioners, others like the distributor were locked solid and the engine was spread around several boxes.

Mike worked his way steadily through the components. One that proved a real headache was the windscreen surround. 'This was complete-ish, but in bits because it had been rechromed,' he says. 'In the process they had lost all the inserts that hold it together. Incredibly

the corner inserts are still available from NTG, and I was able to make up the other straight inserts. The glass is, believe it or not, the original screen made in the second quarter of 1949 and it cleaned up beautifully. But what a game that was to put everything back together, getting it lined up so that it is not lozenged. Everybody says the screen surrounds are really difficult, and they are right!'

So, having put so much effort into the red car and got it into such fine shape, why is Mike now putting it up for sale? 'Well, what am I going to do with two YTs?' he asks in reply. 'The intention was always to do this one as a project with my brother, then sell it. Not with a view to making money from it because I can assure you there is no profit in there at all, but simply for the fun! I want to run it in first – it only has 23 miles on it so far – and I will have it MoT'd as that is the easiest way to get somebody to run a rule over it, then it will be time to sell. I'm definitely keeping the green car, though. I have developed a real affinity with that.'



Mike is asking £39,000 for his YT. If you are interested, an additional detailed description of the car can be obtained by contacting him via 07815 944681.

Our thanks to Brian Rainbow of the MG Octagon Car Club for putting us in touch with Mike for this feature.