

Readers' RESTORATIONS



A sad looking MG Y-Type in need of restoration.

'Basket case' MG

I will start by saying that the job was not a young man's fancy, as I am 30 years older than the car and bending and stretching is becoming increasingly difficult!

In May 1986 I purchased KZ 8088, a MG YB saloon from a garage located in the small market town of Omagh, County Tyrone. According to the green Registration Book which, strangely enough, still exists, the car was last driven in, or around 1967. The car had been abandoned in the open since its last drive and I bought it for £250.

So the 'original basket case' was taken home and stripped completely. The chassis was in reasonable condition, merely having several holes around the rear spring hanger area, but the body was exceptionally bad and only just worth restoring. To make it worse, it seemed that everyone having owned the car, had tried to restore it and had lost essential bits and pieces between them. I sincerely envied fellow restorers who took every piece off themselves and labelled them ready for the rebuild. All I had was a box of goodness knows what.

Being relatively methodical, I tried to separate the restoration into stages, the first of which would be to establish a running chassis.

The chassis was carefully blasted and the holes welded. It was given an undercoat of red oxide and a top coat of good quality paint and was supported on four axle stands. The

restoration really commenced from that point.

The front suspension was completely rebuilt, the radiator received a new core, the springs were taken down to the basics and everything was given a thorough clean. The rear axle was replaced, the propeller shaft was fitted with new universal joints and the clutch mechanism was overhauled.

The gearbox was found to be full of water, but after a good clean up, it seemed to work and has done so to this day. All the smaller ancillaries were overhauled and fitted with new brushes, bearings etc. where required.

Finally the great day came and the engine, after some fiddling, started. Surprisingly enough it ran very well indeed, although the oil pressure was not as high as I would have liked. The MGY is fitted with an XPAG engine, and a lot has been written about problems regarding oil pressure in these engines. During the restoration I came into contact with many people from whom I obtained either parts or advice (thank you all). It must be remembered that I was working in the dark as I had unlabelled bits, and many MG Ys have been cannibalised to provide parts for MG TDs.

Bodywork was next on the list. Due to lack of equipment, I had to consult an expert, John Kenny, who consented to do the work. It was a long business as he could only spare a couple of hours a week. The original car was painted dark green, but I

chose a factory option of Old English White. Eventually all the bodywork was complete, the body was bolted to the chassis and the paint applied. She was trailed back home by my faithful MGB for the next stage

Despite many warnings that veneering the interior was not a practice recommended for amateurs, I purchased the necessary wood, glue etc. and did all of the interior apart from the dashboard which I was lucky enough to buy. Over the years I managed to buy original instruments as mine had been broken or were missing. I purchased a wiring loom and spent a happy weekend fitting the thing with the aid of the instructions - not a job for the faint hearted.

The inside of the body was merely a shell as there were no floorboards, the seat frames were bent, the upholstery was a torn and sodden mess and the roof lining was non-existent. The only windows worth using were the side ones and many small pieces were missing from the winder mechanisms. The floorboards were cut from patterns from a chap in Bradford and the inside of the car slowly built up to its original condition. I managed to do everything myself apart from the upholstering of the seats and the roof lining.

All the rechroming was done by a firm in Liverpool. That done, I started the most satisfying job as far as I am concerned, the fitting of the lights, door handles, radiator shell and bumpers.

It passed the MOT first time, and a month later won the Best Newcomer Award at the Benson and Hedges Show in Northern Ireland. In spite of this success, I decided the car was not going to be a show vehicle, but a vehicle which my wife and I could use at weekends attending the odd rally and show.

Even though this reads as a straightforward restoration, I can assure you it was not. I would like to say that I will never do it again!

Miles Harris, Ballyclare, County Antrim

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Worth the hassle and four years of dedication. Miles resisted the temptation to advertise the car as "an uncompleted restoration".