

# CARS WORTH KEEPING

## MG YB

His friends thought he was living up to his name when Philip Reckless bought the remains of this MG



There was no obligation to buy the car, but the previous owner wanted to get it out of *hp* way by the following weekend. I made a bid for it, but once I had handed over the money I began to doubt my sanity. Buying scrap car was one thing, but why this one? Instead of sitting back and wondering why I had saddled myself with an apparently hopeless task of restoration I started work; and work I did, like a beaver.

First I tried turning the starting handle to ascertain if the pistons were free or had rusted in the cylinder bores. I was right out of luck so I removed the sparking plugs and squirted some Redex in, hoping to ease the rings. It was left until the next day so the Redex could work itself well in. Sure enough, the engine moved when I turned the handle — but only a fraction: any further effort to turn it would have resulted in scoring.

I knew that the engine was otherwise in a good state mechanically, so off came the cylinder head and the sump. At the bottom end I found that, with the car having stood untouched for such a long time, the

connecting rods and the inner cylinder block had acquired film of rust; but this was a very minor problem. Next I removed the big end bolts and had a look at the bearing shells. These were slightly scored so all were replaced.

One piston was drawn out through the bottom of the block — not out of the top as can be done with modern cars. I found that the base of the bore was tapered, so enabling me to push the piston back up inside without recourse to a ring compressor. Incidentally, the rings were okay, so I put them back. After checking the oil pump I replaced the sump, having given them both a good clean with paraffin.

The next job — the brakes — was the big one. I found they were of a type one could truthfully refer to as air-brakes — not to be confused with those on lorries; they were full of air! Time and rust had taken their toll and it was obvious that the pipes and hoses would have, to be replaced. For help I turned to Brian Poole, a motor factor in Kidderminster, who has been of the greatest assistance to me and who made up a set of

metal pipes so pattern and ordered the correct flexible hoses from Lockheed for delivery the following Friday. Another weekend was spent fitting all the pipes and overhauling the master cylinder, sited under the floor, similar to the Morris 1000. Apart from it requiring new seals, I found that the brake light switch was broken.

As I found with this car, when undertaking a major overhaul one develops new skills, particularly in repairing old parts and making new ones. But unlike the enthusiast with a veteran car, many spares are still available.

The broken switch was similar to that for the hand-brake light on the Commer van, but as the component was not available ex-

stock I set about repairing it. A metal tipped Bakelite lever is attached to a metal shaft which rotates when the brake pedal is pressed, thus bringing the metal tip between two normally open contacts and completing the brake light circuit. In this case the metal wedge was missing. The application of a little Araldite to the offending parts soon effected a repair.

### brake problems

Incidentally, when using this two-mix strength adhesive it is worth remembering that it some of source of low benefit is available, drying time is reduced from approximately 72 hours to 3 hours.

Turning to the brake drums, both the shoes and the wheel Cylinders had been replaced with new parts at some time, so I left them alone and concentrated on bleeding the system. With the replacement of the brake pipes the only fluid in the system was in the master cylinder. Air was my enemy and I had to get rid of it.

I recruited an assistant and when he pressed the brake pedal I opened the bleed nipple on the near side rear wheel. Air was certainly forced out but was also sucked in again when the pedal was released. It was suggested that I should beg, borrow or otherwise obtain a tool used by the trade to force fluid through the pipes, rather like a giant syringe. Few people seemed to know of this special tool and those who had one seemed loath to lend it or hire.

An alternative method was to press the brake pedal, open the bleed nipple, hold the pedal down, close the nipple and release the pedal: then repeat the sequence of operations. I went through the drill about thirty or forty times until fluid came through. The whole job occupied an entire week of spare time to complete.

Having got the car into running order it was ready for its

### TECHNICAL HISTORY OF THE Y' TYPE.

The story starts in May 1947, when MG announced a four seater YA saloon conceived during the latter part of the last war. It featured many pre-war designs such as sun-roof, opening windscreen, rear window blind, separate headlights, running board and, best of all, a built-in hydraulic jacking system operated by a manual pump in the engine compartment.

The car is powered by a 11hp (1250cc) engine with a single SU carburettor. All the sports car's had the same engine but were twin carburettored SUs and had a 56 as opposed to 46 brake horse power in the saloon. The rear axle was a modified Morris 10 bevel type with a lateral control link fixed to the rear suspension. Wheels were 16 inch and the brakes were also modified Morris 10.

In October 1948, a twin carb touring version of the saloon called the YT became available. Sadly, eighteen months later, it was discontinued.

The YB of 1952 was a very much improved version of the YA saloon, with stronger dampers and jacks, better brakes, front anti-roll bar and smaller 15 inch wheels, but the biggest improvement was the new hypoid axle. The only noticeable difference visually was the deeper valancing on the rear wings. After nearly six and a half years production the YB saloon was discontinued to make way for the Z type Magnette in September 1953.

Of the total production of 8,336, — 6,158 were YAs. 877 were YTs and 1,301 were YBs.

When the 'T' type sports cars started to increase in value during the late 1960s, many owners bought YAs and YBs for spares, sharing most mechanical items, but now the Y types are gaining in popularity so the price of these is rising rapidly. The YTs are most sought after followed by the YBs, last but not least the YAs coming up behind.



One advantage of older vehicles is that there is plenty of room to work — note the clear layout of the wiring



first MoT and was duly booked in to a local test centre. In its first test it failed, on account of a poor handbrake response on the offside wheel. I checked the handbrake adjustment again and found that it was the source of the trouble, although it was previously in order. I only know that prior to the MoT it was working perfectly when I left home I have yet to find the home at the Gremlins who cause these petty but aggravating faults!

When the car was submitted for test again I collected it and a Pass Certificate along with it. I had reached the end of Stage 1, getting it on the road.

### MY CAR'S HISTORY

In June 1952, Nuffield Products body number Y410 met chassis YB 0601 to form a 1½ litre saloon at the MG car company in Abingdon-on-Thames, Berkshire. It was to complete an order placed by an MG dealer in Birmingham All MG chassis numbers begin at 0251 with every new model series because that was the telephone line of the factory.

On the 6th September 1952 the vehicle was registered. MOL 848, in the name of Dr G.P.G. Rowe. 'Cornhill', Whetby Lane, Rubery, Birmingham. The car was listed at £635 basic price with Purchase Tax an extra £354 5s 6d. total price £989 5s 6d.

Two extras were optional, but not fitted to my car, were radio £24 13s 2d and heater £10 17s 10d.

### TECHNICAL DATA

#### ENGINE

1250cc. (11hp) XPAG Series. Bore and stroke: 66.5x90mm, overhead valves, push rods and rockers, 4 cylinders. Compression ratio 7.2 to 1. 46bhp at 4,800rpm. (MG TD: 54.4bhp at 5,200rpm). 14.42mph per 1,000rpm in top.

#### CAPACITY

Fuel tank: 8 gallons. Oil Sump: 10½ pts. Cooling System: 13½ pts.

#### WEIGHT

20cwt 3qrs, Front: 10cwt. Rear: 10cwt 3qrs.

#### DIMENSIONS

Wheelbase: 8ft 3in. Track, front: 3ft 11in: rear: 4ft 2in. Length: 13ft 8in (overall). Width: 4ft 11in (overall). Height: 4ft 9in. Ground Clearance: 6in. Turning circle: 33ft 8in. Steering wheel turns: 2¾.

#### STEERING

Rack and pinion.

#### FRONT SUSPENSION

Independent with wishbones and coil, springs, anti-rol bar

On the first of October I started the second stage of the restoration, the vehicle having been in use from the beginning of June until the end of September. During this period I covered two thousand miles.

I was particularly astonished with the Popularity of the car — people were offering me various sums of money to part with it and every time I had to say no, because I too, had been bitten by the nostalgia bug.

Having run the car, I had a good idea of which parts were needed and ordered in good time, so that when the restoration started, hold-ups

Road Tax was £10 for 12 months and £2 15s for 3 months. It was increased in January 1953 to £12 10s Annual and £3 8s 9d Quarterly.

The next owner was Mr John E. Jeffery of Ludlow, Shropshire who in December 1958 was employed by the Austin motor company in the experimental department. He was also a racing enthusiast. Having stripped the engine down and rebuilt to MG TD specification, this is in the car now, the original being replaced in January 1959. The mileage recorded when I bought the car was 70,204, which is believed genuine.

Incidentally, if Dr Rowe or any of his dependents wish to contact me they are most welcome.

#### REAR SUSPENSION

Half elliptical springs.

#### GEARBOX AND CLUTCH

Four speed, 2nd, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4th gears synchromesh. Oil capacity: 1¼ pts. Clutch type: Single dry plate. Borg and Beck. Diameter 8in.

#### REAR AXLE

Semi-floating hypoid type. OH capacity: 2¼ pts.

#### ELECTRICAL

12 volt system 52 amp hour battery. Trafficator signals.

#### PERFORMANCE

Top speed: 77mph (single carb). 88mph (twin carbs). Mile per gallon: overall 27, touring 34, single carb. Overall 24, touring 28.5 (twin carbs). Standing quarter mile: 24.8 seconds.

#### TYRE SIZE

5.90x15. 155x15.

#### JACKS

Hydraulically operated, built-in. Oil capacity: 1.65 pts.

should not be a problem. These take up time which is valuable and up-sets the rhythm. One has got to minimise the risks.

I am a member of the MG Car Club — joining the organisation is a must. The MG fraternity is indeed lucky in having a choice of three clubs and numerous firms do MG spares.

Restoration takes a lot of planning and thought, it is no good just pulling a car to bits because how are the parts going to go together three months later unless sketches are made, bolts and parts put in boxes with labels? I started by taking the Wing, off, not an easy job because the bolts, especially the rear ones, had rusted solid. Hammer and chisel prove handy tools. Next came the running boards with the same results. Having checked the wings and running boards for dents, which were knocked out carefully. I put them in the shed for safe keeping.

### spares supply

The doors were attended to next. They were held by two bolt-pins each side. I proceeded to strip down to the bare shells, glass, window channelling, doorlocks, winding mechanism, because the bottoms had all rusted.

All four doors had rusted parts welded with new metal, hand made to pattern. An effective job. When the doors were finished I used a good paint stripper to get down to the bare metal, treated the rust and painted. I then reassembled with new window channels, weatherstrips, locks and reconditioned winding mechanisms. The doors were then put away until final assembly, complete.

Inner Wings, boot lid, spare wheel cover, bonnet, front apron, radiator grille, windscreen, sunroof, all came off gradually during October and November to be checked for dents, rust and distortion.

In early November I received the club magazine Safety Fast and, looking through the spares for sale section. I found that someone wanted to dispose of YB parts cheaply. So I contacted him and took a trip down the South Coast, a distance of about four hundred miles round journey.

The parts required were two front seats (original type): one front bumper with brackets: one

trafficator ring switch: various bits for the standard engine manifold and a heater. The heater was optional to the price in 1952. I also tried to purchase an interior light switch, but this has proved elusive so far.

The only parts needed were three overriders, as fitted to the Austin models just after the war. They are very similar to those on the Morris 1000.

On my return, I started removing the plywood floor, to enable me to get to the chassis bolts and make new sills, which had rotted away. As I did not have a pattern for the sills I had to make them from memory but, before I welded them on, I spotted a 'YA' at Churchstoke, near Montgomery, Powys. This I used as a reference and so get as near to the original as possible.

Over the next few weeks I made rapid progress, welding new metal — 18g steel sheet — cut, hand beaten and shaped along the inner wings. One thing I had to remember was where the captive nuts ran, drill and weld these to new metal from pattern.

As the chassis would obviously need more than a 3½oz bottle of Jenolite and the 5 litre size was not available locally, I ordered some from outside. The chassis being well exposed I could work on it while waiting for the Jenolite, so off came the rust and grease with a wire brush and paraffin. It is ideal for this job as it is only necessary to brush on, activate with steel wool, and leave for five minutes. It can then be wiped off and painted after twenty minutes. I must praise this product made by Duckhams, as no other rust remover comes up to my standards.

Now I could get on with putting everything back together again, in a fully profited and prepared state, as told in the concluding article.

Originally published in Practical Motorist, June 1979  
With the original article, there were a number of "Useful Names and Address", however, most have either since moved or ceased trading so it was not considered worth reproducing them here.