

Symphony in Y major and T minor

At the time of writing this article it's more than a year since I parted with my once so dearly loved MG Y Tourer. For more than 20 years it was more than an accepted member of my family: my children grew up with it and even my wife, who normally has little interest in cars, would now and then in the summertime, sit in the passenger seat of this older car.

With its lime green bodywork my YT resembled an older member of the family similar to a spinster aunt, but in any case a real 'Lady'. My interest in the YT goes back a long way: In March 1949, whilst leafing through the latest "Automobil Revue-Katalog" which I had bought, I came upon (quite by accident) the page showing the YT. Despite its old fashioned appearance, which it typified, I found it extremely appealing. At that time I was still studying and did not have a driving licence and financially, was not in a position to even think about owning a car. However, I was permitted to dream.

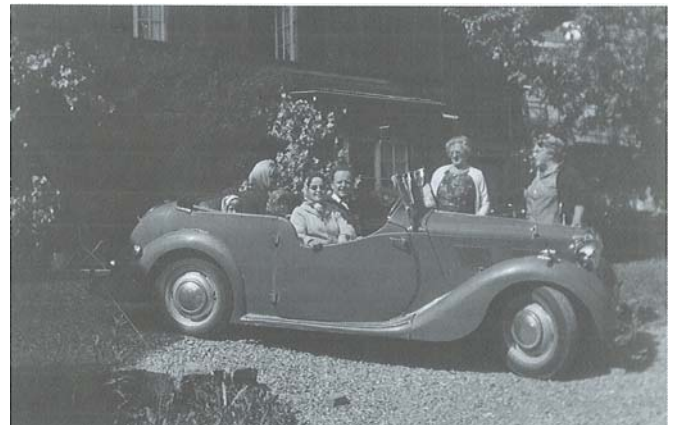
With the passing of years my platonic love for the MG YT diminished. However Cupid's arrow finds its target, sometimes without warning, even when it's to do with cars.

In my particular case it was so: In the spring of 1975 I read an advertisement for a MG Y Saloon for sale in the Basle area. I hadn't seen such a car for years and I sensed an opportunity. "Shall we drive over next weekend to have a look?" I asked my two older sons, 12 and 18 years of age. A loud "Ja" was the expected answer and so off we went. A test drive of the little saloon calmed my admiration, but on the way home my two children kept asking "chaufed mer en?" (Are we buying it?)

"I really don't know, I want to talk to Mami first" was my answer but secretly I was toying with the idea of, one day owning such a charming saloon or even a Tourer which could be driven open. "Mami" wasn't against the idea with the proviso that a suitable garage could be found locally. Both an affordable garage and believe it or not, a Y Tourer.

Now that I have the necessary detachment from the subject I would like to record the history as far as I know it, of this vehicle with chassis number YT4619.

The right hand drive YT4619 came to Switzerland in 1950 through J.H. Keller, the importer of that time. I don't know who the first owner was but it was never a secret that the Chemist Hans Senften, owned it from 1962-66. Hans kept a very accurate record/log book – for then his everyday car – in that period it covered some 65,000 kilometres. He drove the Tourer in summer and winter even using it, as a "dyed in the wool" Berner Oberländer, to travel the ski regions. It's therefore no surprise that during this time rust was not foreign to this little car. He repaired everything possible



Hans Senften with YT4619 and family in the 1960s.

himself and the original paintwork, light metallic green, was covered with a sea green. However Hans Seften had the motor overhauled by an expert and over the years, he accumulated a lot of spare parts.

After the Senften era YT4619 had at least two other owners before I acquired it in 1975 when it was in a relatively dilapidated condition. A test drive showed it to be quite good but the body work showed all the signs of "Wilden Blättern" (metal moth) not good news. However I had now 'tasted blood' and saw everything through 'rose tinted spectacles' (it won't be so bad etc, etc) and a deal was struck, the price was reasonable.

Checks carried out by a bodywork expert confirmed my worst fears. My acquisition stayed in the workshop for a 'ground up' restoration followed by a respray in very nearly the original lime-green metallic colour. Luckily all this work was carried out as 'fill up work' so that I avoided having to pay the full hourly rate. This was followed by preparation for its MOT by a car mechanic.



"Starting point" photograph of a YA which I looked at in 1975. On the right was my everyday car, which was also a 'classic' and was the VW K70, an adaption of the NSU design.

It passed the approval test by the 'Straßenverkehrsamt' (MOT Testing station) at first attempt. I was ecstatic! Then followed numerous family outings and its first big Event in 1978 the 'Rickenplausch' of the MGCC Switzerland. I was in 'seventh heaven'. However, over the years my enthusiasm waned – mainly during my young adult years. Of course I was still proud of my YT but driving around on my own in such a car wasn't much fun.

By roundabout means the owner of the sixties, Dr Hans Senften, found out the present owner who was looking after his old car. One fine day I was wildly greeted, by the driver of a Fiat Ritmo, coming from the opposite direction. I turned around at the next opportunity and the Fiat driver did likewise. Anyway we met in the middle: Hans Senften had recognised his car at a glance and even though I'd had it repainted in almost its original light green metallic colour when restoring it. That's how we came to know each other and which lead to a very friendly relationship thanks to YT4619.



New metal used mainly in the area of the doorsills and rear end.

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I saw Hans for the last time on his 60th birthday. He'd changed his Ritmo for an equally green coloured Peugeot 205 Cabrio. – He still preferred compact open cars in his favourite green colour.. and on this occasion I mentioned to him that I was seriously considering parting with the YT. In addition to much pleasure I'd also had all sorts of troubles with the car in the latter years. The hydraulic brakes were the cause of repeated problems and a complete rewiring was slowly becoming necessary. Also the paintwork was no longer acceptable to critical eyes (but if the paintwork and chrome were to shine again then restoration of the upholstery and door fittings would also become a 'must'). It kept jumping out of third gear when lifting off the accelerator. This however I got used to and just kept my hand on the gearstick when in third and it stayed in.

I felt like a traitor when I finally advertised the car for sale in "SignPost". Several interested parties contacted me but one didn't have enough money, the second one didn't like the look of it, (he'd expected something more like a the TD.) and the third one, the third gear kept jumping out during the test drive made by this critical prospective purchaser (I swore that I would never again allow an inexperienced person, with the whims of an oldtimer, behind the wheel of an old car!)



First outing with the newly restored and re-sprayed YT in the spring of 1977 after successfully passing the Swiss MOT.

Indeed I thought that I might have to keep my YT (or 'may' keep, as you will), when a – as he would turn out to be – an MG expert called me, one Victor Rodrigues from Lindau near Zurich. He had a friend from England staying with him who would like to see the car. That was in the summer of 1998, at the time of the 50 years celebration of the MGCC Switzerland. The next day was a Saturday and the two of them wanted anyway to go to Interlaken to the celebrations, and so called in on the way past. David Pelham, that was the Englishman's name, told me that he already had a YT but a wreck, and he was looking for a better one. I sensed that he was very interested. After all the YTs were built for export and therefore rare in England.

Indeed: Two weeks later David stood on the doorstep and had brought his entire family with him to see the car. Once again with the help of Victor Rodrigues we reached agreement. Then followed various telephone calls and letters regarding the customs and transport formalities.

On the 7th October 1998 it all happened: David arrives with a friend in a Ford Transit, for all the boxes of spare parts and other bits and pieces, plus a special trailer for the car. It is a frosty morning as I get YT4619 out of the garage for the last time, drive it round the block and, like a faithful horse, give it a farewell pat on its rear end. My eldest son, who had experienced the 'saga of the MG' from the beginning and, in the meantime himself professionally in the car business, helped us to load up. Soon David and his English Transit driver were disappearing round the corner with "my" MG on the trailer. I followed them in my car to the next motorway bridge and moments later saw the little 'train' drive past. Direction Basle, direction border, direction England. Irrevocable.

Taking leave of a friend, even when it's only a "classic" car is painful. With my MG I had covered 12,833 kilometres in the years 1977- 1998. Which once again goes to show how little some of the oldtimers are used and, despite having no catalytic convertors, do not present

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an air pollution problem.

Naturally I would have preferred the MG to stay in Switzerland. A four seat Tourer is obviously not 'sporty' enough for the Swiss (which has its effect on the price barometer). They prefer to see themselves in a TC, TD or a TF, if it has to be an old square MG. With David I felt it had come to the right person – a dealer wouldn't have touched YT4619...

By December 1998 "my beloved car" had passed the UK MOT and had a quite suitable number – TSJ 946. David had partially rewired the car, fitted a stainless steel exhaust system, replaced the slipping clutch and changed the gearbox with a similar one but which would stay in third gear. Amongst other things he took part in the Regency Run to Brighton and seems to use the car often and with pleasure. What more could I wish for! Maybe to see YT4619 on a future visit to England... Something else should be mentioned: After selling the MG my wife and I went for a short autumn walking holiday in the mountains. Before I had a chance to tell the former YT owner, Hans Senften, that "our" car was now in England and in good hands, I got the sad news

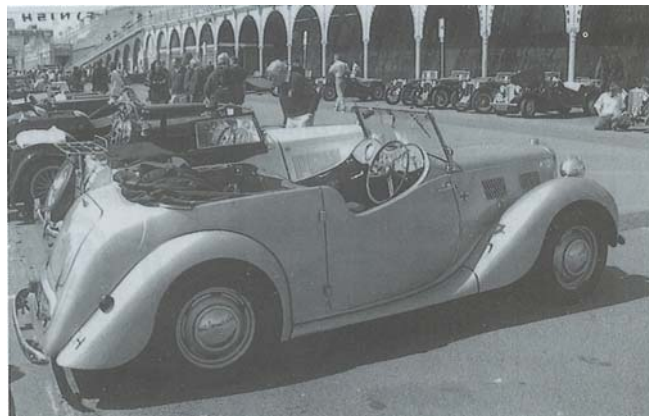


Half the Stoop family during an Oldtimer Weekend on the Veltheim track at the beginning of the 1980s.

from Hinschied of the sudden death of my MG friend. At only 61 years of age Hans had passed away on the 11th October 1998. That really made me sad.

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David Pelham drove my old YT to Brighton. The old Lady poses here with other MG models on the well known Madeira Drive of the SE Resort. At last YT4619, which had only been driven around Switzerland, could breathe English sea breeze.

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