

MG YA-B

Jonathan Wood points out what to look for when contemplating a second hand example.

WHEN the Y type MG saloon was first announced in the Spring of 1947 it was the first production MG to feature independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering. It was also a nicely appointed four-door saloon (complete with sunshine roof) whose handling reflected something of the flavour in keeping with the MG tradition. By the time production ceased in 1953, 8,336 examples had been built.

But how have these cars stood up to the passage of time and what points should be looked for when contemplating a used example? To get answers to these questions, I journeyed to Ipswich to talk with Mike Green and Dick Bird of NTG Services, of 21 St Margaret's Green, Ipswich, Suffolk (Ipswich 211240), who offer a wide range of new and remanufactured parts for MGs from 1939 to 1962 including all T, Y, Z types together with the MGA. In addition both Mike and Dick have plenty of experience of Y types having owned and run examples. Consequently they were able to give me a first hand account of what to look for when purchasing and running one of these cars and were obviously well equipped to talk about spares availability!

But first a brief historical detour to see how the Y type fits into the overall MG picture. Abingdon's first post-war offering was the TC, a hastily modified version of the pre-war TB, but it wasn't long before this open two-seater was joined by a four-door saloon, the Y type, (whose origins were also to be found in pre-war days) and which was announced in May 1947. This new model used a single carburettored version of the TC engine (the SC prefix on the engine numbers denoting this) and as already mentioned, featured independent front suspension, rack and pinion steering and an underslung box section chassis. A novel feature of the specification was a built-in Jackall hydraulic jacking system actuated manually under the bonnet! October 1948 saw the appearance of a touring version of the saloon, being designated the YT, though this reverted to twin carburettors, a la TC. This slightly unhappy four-seater tourer was destined for short production life, being phased out early in 1950. In

fact it could be said that the TD (a two-seater) evolved from the Y type, having a shortened version of the Y's box section chassis, though being overslung at the rear. It retained the Y's IFS and rack and pinion steering and was fitted with the attendant disc wheels much to the horror of the MG *cognoscenti*! Nevertheless this didn't prevent the TD outselling the beam axled TC almost three to one (10,000 TCs and 29,664TD5).

The improved YB saloon of 1952 incorporated many TD components having 15in wheels (in place of the 16in ones of the YA), stronger shock absorbers and an anti-roll bar in place of the YA's rear mounted Panhard Rod. The TD's hypoid rear axle was another plus. The most obvious external difference was the deeper valancing on the YB's rear wing. YB production ceased in late 1953 by which time total production stood at 8,336 broken down as follows:

YA	6,158
YT	877
YB	1,301

Bodywork

But first let's take a look at the Y type's bodywork and the problems associated with it. Just for the record the body is made entirely of steel, which is worth recording at a time when aluminium panels were favoured in some sections of the industry. Rather in the same way that the Jowett Javelin tends to be rather vulnerable around the rear, the same goes for the Y type MG. At its most extreme, the trouble manifests itself as what Mike and Dick describe as the "dreaded boot banging", which is caused by the body's uneasy liaison with the chassis. What happens is that the body's mounting bolts tend to rust badly. This state of affairs can be ascertained by checking the spare wheel locker which is positioned under the boot. If the securing bolts are rusted through it means that only gravity is holding the body down. There is, incidentally, another pair of body mounting bolts in front of the rear seats inside the car, which may also give trouble. While you're at the rear of the vehicle also check around the inside of the rear wheel arch as this is where the drain holes rubber tubes from the sunroof appear. It is essential these are kept well clear and at their correct length otherwise

water can build up and cause rusting. And while on the subject of the sunroof it should be noted that it is remarkably trouble free which isn't always the case with such a device. Moving down the car, the bottom of the bulkhead tends to corrode so be on the lookout for tell tale signs of bubbling paint showing that trouble isn't very far away.

The Y's box section chassis is a fairly sturdy and trouble free unit and about the only part that does give trouble is the section directly beneath the rear axle. This is, nevertheless, a particularly important check as the vulnerable area is under some degree of stress.

Engine

The Y type uses the XPAG engine which first saw the light of day in an MG in the TB of 1939, and was a modified version of the Morris M 10 engine being an overhead valve four cylinder power unit of 66 x 90mm, giving 1250cc. As might be expected, the engine is a remarkably viceless unit, and one of its few drawbacks is that it doesn't keep terribly oil tight. The stuff tends to ooze out from such areas as the rocker box cover and engine side plate. Don't get the wrong idea though: 500 miles to the pint is about average.

One of the minor differences the present day enthusiast is likely to experience is that from engine number XPAG/SC 15405, the Puralator throw away oil filter type PTX 346 replaced the original Wilmot Breedon unit which featured a disposable canister. This modification also applied to the TD, incidentally as it basically shares the same engine as the Y type, though like the TC it was twin carburettored. However, you can obtain the correct appearance of the older unit through using a modern disposable filter, as NTG market this very practical conversion.

A point worth recording about the XPAG engine is the fact that the nuts and bolts have metric threads though they retain Whitworth flats! This is a reminder of the days in 1919 when William Morris had his engines made by the French firm of Hotchkiss and naturally enough the Coventry factory followed the continental practice of using metric taps and dies. If you are stuck for a nut, NTG can supply new or second-hand examples, though it should be noted that the thread is not the same as the present ISO metric specification.

And if you find you're able to go for a run in a Y type, an oil pressure reading of anything between 40 and 70psi at 40 miles an hour is quite acceptable.

As far as the gearbox is concerned, the internals are same as the TD and TF MGs which is a plus when it

comes to spare parts. The box is pretty reliable, however, though second gear can be a likely noise maker.

Moving back down the drive line we come to the rear axle. The YA used a Morris 10 series M unit and can be regarded as something of an Achilles Heel because it has a slight tendency to consume half shafts. Similarly differentials are not too easy to come by, so if you have a drive in your prospective purchase, you've an ear cocked for a noisy rear end. By contrast, the YB used the TD's hypoid unit and is remarkably trouble free.

Steering, suspension and brakes

The independent front suspension system that first appeared on the Y type and later on the TD, TF and MGA was designed by no less a personage than Alec Issigonis and is substantially the same as that used on the current MGB. One of the features of this unit is that it does require fairly regular maintenance. Provided this is adhered to (greasing is recommended every 3000 miles), you shouldn't experience much trouble from this particular quarter, but if the car has been neglected for any reason you may well be in for a suspension rebuild.

This trouble is most likely to manifest itself by the distance pieces seizing on the suspension bolt which has the effect of elongating the holes at the end of the suspension arms which is a hardly desirable state of affairs. Swivel pins and links also wear, but fortunately parts of this coil and wishbone unit are still available. The shock absorber forms an integral part of the unit, however, and again those fitted to the YA do present something of a problem when they wear out. The brakes on the YA model are again Morris 10 and although repair kits are available replacement wheel cylinders and master cylinders are rather more elusive. By contrast, the YB used the TD's twin leading shoe brakes, which is a plus on the parts front.

The rack and pinion steering gear fitted to the Y type give remarkably little trouble though checks should be made to ensure that the rubber gaiters are free from splits, thus keeping the elements at bay.

Interior

The Y type's interior is nicely finished, with leather featuring on the wearing surfaces of the seats. There is also plenty of wood in evidence, the dashboard and door surrounds showing grain to advantage. Obviously the condition of the aforementioned leather is a particularly important consideration when contemplating the interior, bearing in mind just how expensive re-trimming can be these days. The



Above, contemporary photographs of YA; right, rear interior; far right, NTG Services rubber replacements parts.

Below, left, driving compartment; below, XPAG ohv engine; right, a rear view of the same car, looking very pre-war!



condition of the front seat frames is another important check point as it is particularly susceptible to breakage where the back rest meets the bottom frame. The interior colour schemes were green, beige or red, incidentally, while the carpeting was black throughout.

The Y type's floor boards are made of wood so if you are examining the interior always lift the carpets to check its condition. And if the boards become rotten or not properly secured, the support bracket can flex in the region of the front propeller shaft and chum up with the grease nipple attached thereto.

As the windscreen is of the opening variety, check that the rubber seal is in a good state of repair and not letting the weather in, otherwise the dashboard would suffer accordingly.

Spares

The MG fraternity is lucky in that many mechanical spares are readily obtainable for the model. This is largely because most of the parts are interchangeable with the TD and to a lesser extent, the TC. Therefore engine and gearbox spares present no real problem and as I have mentioned the same goes for the hard working independent front suspension parts.

In addition to this NTG Services have taken the initiative in having a number of rubber parts re-manufactured which relate specifically to the model. These include the front valance rubbers, bonnet rest buffer, windscreen wiper grommets and the petrol filler cap rubber.

Among the other companies who also supply parts for the Y type are Toulmin Motors Ltd, of 103—105 Windmill Road, Brentford, Middlesex, and Moto-Build Ltd of 128 High Street, Hounslow, Middlesex. The latter company also manufactures replacement Y type running boards which is good news.

Best Buy

After conversion with Messrs Green and Bird, there was no doubt in my

mind that the YB saloon was a better running proposition than the YA. This is because of its smaller wheels (and therefore cheaper tyres), the YA's potential half shaft problems and the difficulty in obtaining replacement shock absorbers on the earlier model. Consequently YAs tend to be rather cheaper than YB's which is a rather unusual state of affairs as with many models it's the earlier versions which tend to be pricier. I am assured that YA prices start around the £300 mark for a good running example with B's fetching rather more.

So there you have it. If the sacred octagon has you in its grip and you can't quite rise to a TC/D or F, then why not contemplate their first cousin and enjoy some essentially pre-war motoring in this pleasant and well mannered saloon.

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