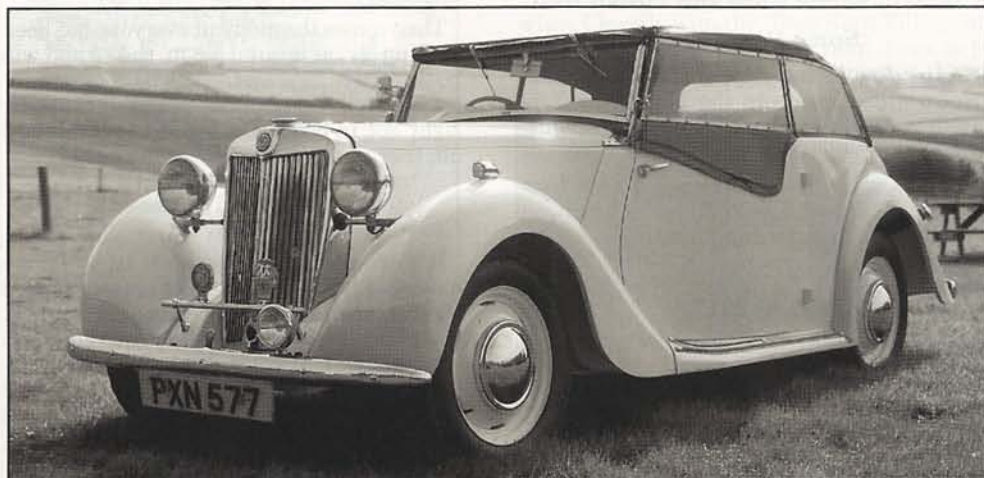


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READY FOR A NEW LIFE IN CYPRUS – The 1950 MG fully restored by Richard Willoughby at his Hollacombe workshop.
(Photo: Kris Tooke)

The life-story of a car – and its restoration

A project to bring a sixty-year old car back to its former glory has been undertaken at the Hollacombe workshop of Richard Willoughby. Here, Alison Hutton, who has lived in Welcombe for the past ten years, recalls the history of the car which has for all its life been a one family car.

The Family MG – it's history

My father worked in Malaysia and my first memory of the car is in 1950 in Singapore. I was always told that this model of MG was made mainly for export overseas. I remember very clearly waiting on a pavement with my mother, and my father driving up in this lovely powder blue car – pale blue being absolutely my favourite colour, at the time. I did wonder if I had imagined the colour, because in all my other memories of the car, it has been, as it is today, cream, but Richard has found traces of pale blue paint on the bodywork.

After working in Singapore my father became the British Advisor in Kuala Lipis and as it was the time of the Chinese communist insurgency in Malaysia, I remember being driven around in very grand armoured cars and I have no idea where the MG was at that time.

Subsequently the car was shipped back to the United Kingdom. My mother lived in this country while my father stayed on in Malaysia. My sister learned to drive in her and I was driven to boarding school with my trunk in the boot. My brothers and sisters and I were all sent off to boarding schools and stayed with different families in the holidays – the MG was, probably, the most constant factor in any of our lives.

In the early 1960's my parents retired to Stevenstone, near Torrington and the car came with them. All the grandchildren loved the car and would sit in the garage pretending to drive her. There was one accident when a lorry that was cornering tipped a load of wooden pallets onto my mother and the car. The car suffered quite a lot of damage to the bodywork and



NEARING COMPLETION! – Richard Willoughby (left) and Phil Gould put the finishing touches to the new soft-top cover of the MG.

my mother broke a couple of ribs. She went on driving the car into her early eighties, needing more and more cushions to lift her to a height where she could see over the steering wheel.

My second brother, Bill, inherited the MG and had great plans for it. Largely because of the lorry incident, the car was in bad shape and was shipped over to Guernsey where a meticulous job was done on the bodywork. It then sat in my sister's barn in multiple pieces for several years. Sadly, my brother died two years ago and so the car was passed on to his eldest son, my nephew Allen. Allen wanted to restore the car, and this is where Richard came into the picture. I knew that he loved MGs and he agreed to go over to Guernsey and pick up the pieces and put the car together. He is very modest about what he has achieved, but as a family, we are incredibly grateful to him. It has been a long, complicated and at times, frustrating job, to re-assemble the car from a collection of loose screws, bolts and sundry body parts. He has been meticulous, ingenious and very patient.

My nephew has moved to Cyprus and is thrilled with the finished item which was shipped out in October. My father loved the car, and always kept meticulous records of work carried out and all the original manuals and handbooks. I know that he, sitting on his celestial cloud, will be very happy to see the car restored to its old self.

Alison Hutton

Its restoration – by Richard Willoughby

I was invited by Allen Harvey to fly to Guernsey to look at the 'Y' type MG and found that a lot of the welding and painting had already been done – the shell of the car was very roughly bolted together and the rest was in boxes. Allen and I visited the harbour and organised for a company to bring the car to Welcombe. I carefully packed the boxes and bits into the car, tied the gearbox inside the engine bay and the engine was roped to a sack truck ready to load on the car trailer.

The car arrived in Welcombe in late April this year and I started to unpack the items, laying the bits on two sheets of ply and started to wander round the car, trying to work out where everything fitted. The car was a bare shell, no floors, dash or interior; the doors were held closed with bungee straps. A new wiring loom had been fitted, but the colours of the wires didn't match the drawings in the manual – it took me three days to work out where the wires went.

I think I must have spent as much time on the phone organising replacement parts as I did working on the car and I stretched Allen's budget somewhat, to gain a better result. I felt so much had already been done to re-establish the car to a high standard and Allen was very kind in agreeing to my suggestions. Anyway, after five months of head-scratching, the car was finished. My thanks go to Phil Gould of Concept Trimming at Parkham who reupholstered the seat, trim panels, carpets and roof. The car passed its MOT test and was then taken by trailer to Southampton to be put in a container bound for Cyprus, where, in a warm climate, it should survive another sixty years of happy motoring – I hope!

The MG arrives

The MG arrived in Cyprus on 19th October, and with great excitement I went to Limasol to collect her the following day. I hadn't seen her for some time and the last time I looked at her she had no upholstery or soft top and she was still in a bit of an organised mess in Richard's garage.

So, when I picked her up from Limasol port it was the first time I had actually seen her in her fully restored state. She was sitting on the pavement outside the carriers' store area and I was even more excited when I saw the car in her full glory.

We quickly stored the soft top and cleared the port. I had decided to drive her some 50 kilometres back to Paphos where I now live. The drive was quite a thrill to me and I wish I could report that it was without any excitement, but I had to stop some 20 kilometres outside Paphos as I had run out of petrol. A quick phone call to my wife, Alexis, and she was able to bring me a can of petrol and I was then able to resume my journey with her comments about reading petrol gauges still ringing in my ears.

The MG is used on a daily basis and she starts first time (well, usually on the second attempt when she is cold) and I would like to thank Richard for all his hard work and also the research he did to make sure the work he carried out on the MG was authentic.

The car herself is, by modern day standards, slow and noisy, but she is great to drive and great to look at. It is not unusual for people to follow me and pass comments on how beautiful she looks.

I was one of the grandchildren who sat in her in Grandad's garage pretending to drive her. She is now mine and I can now drive her. The excitement and pleasure she gives me defies description.

Allen Harvey