

The Classic 'Y'



Issue No.145 August 1998

The Newsletter of The M.G. "Y" Type Register

L e T t e R S

Dear John,

A "wanted" advert for a "YA" master cylinder in the last issue of "TCY" prompted me to inform Mr.Austin of a company, here in Holland, who specialises in all brake parts. I have obtained wheel cylinders for my "YA" from them and they are superb! They are made from bronze castings machined to a high standard and are reasonably priced.

The company, C & C of Baarlo, are hoping to make an initial batch of 10 master cylinders shortly, if enough interest is shown. They will not be exact replicas, but the overall dimensions and mounting flange etc. will be the same. Also, the provision of a remote reservoir, if required, will be available. Anyone interested can contact me at: [REDACTED], The Netherlands.

Rob Silk.

Newsletter Editor/Registrar: J.G.Lawson, [REDACTED] Liverpool, [REDACTED]

U.K. Spares Secretary (New Spares): A.Brier, [REDACTED], York, [REDACTED]

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M.G. Y/B TOURER

The pundits will be very quick to point out that the factory never produced a tourer version of the YB saloon. However, the "B" in this case represents the MGB components used in what has become a very reliable highway cruiser and competition special. The car is very much a wolf in sheep's clothing, but I am sure Cecil Kimber would have built a similar car if he and the parts had been there at the time.

This story begins in the mid-seventies with two little children who found it increasingly difficult to squeeze into the back of our 1950 TD; so what better than a Y Tourer. A very dilapidated and dismantled YT was available with TD running gear, no engine and gearbox and, of course, standard options with "Y" Types, no spare wheel compartment, boot or sills.

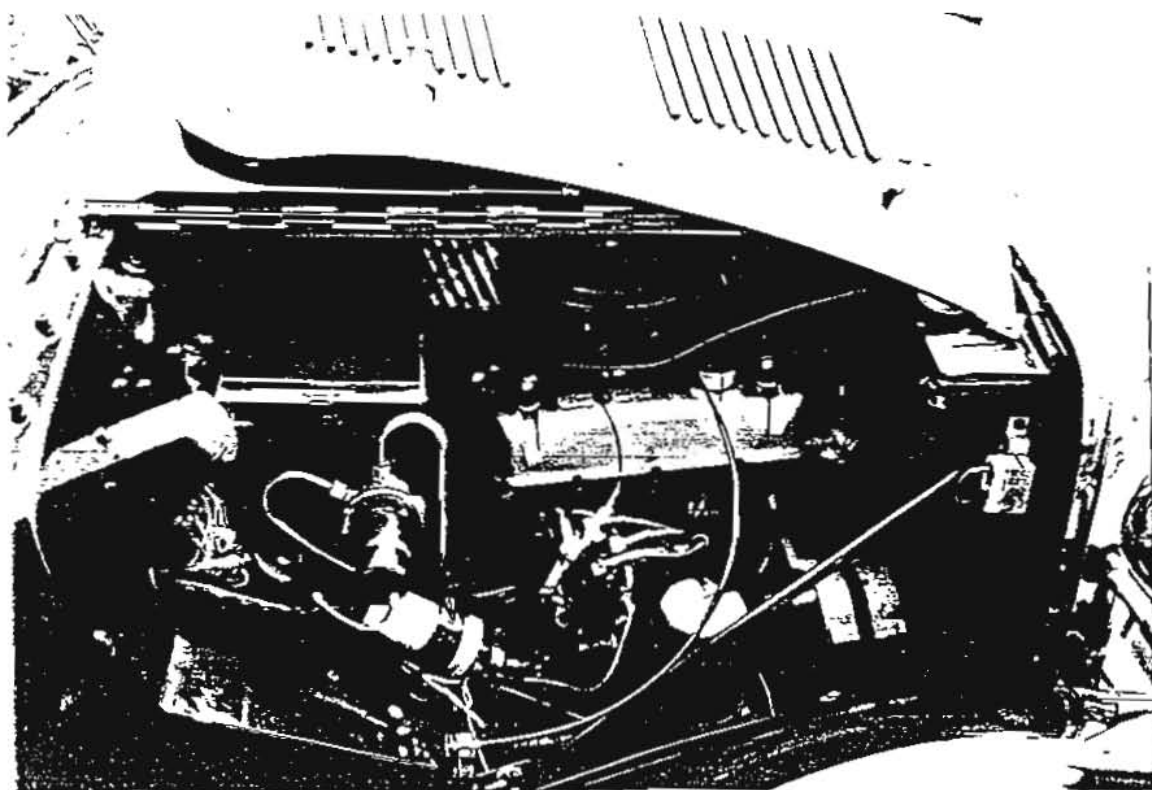
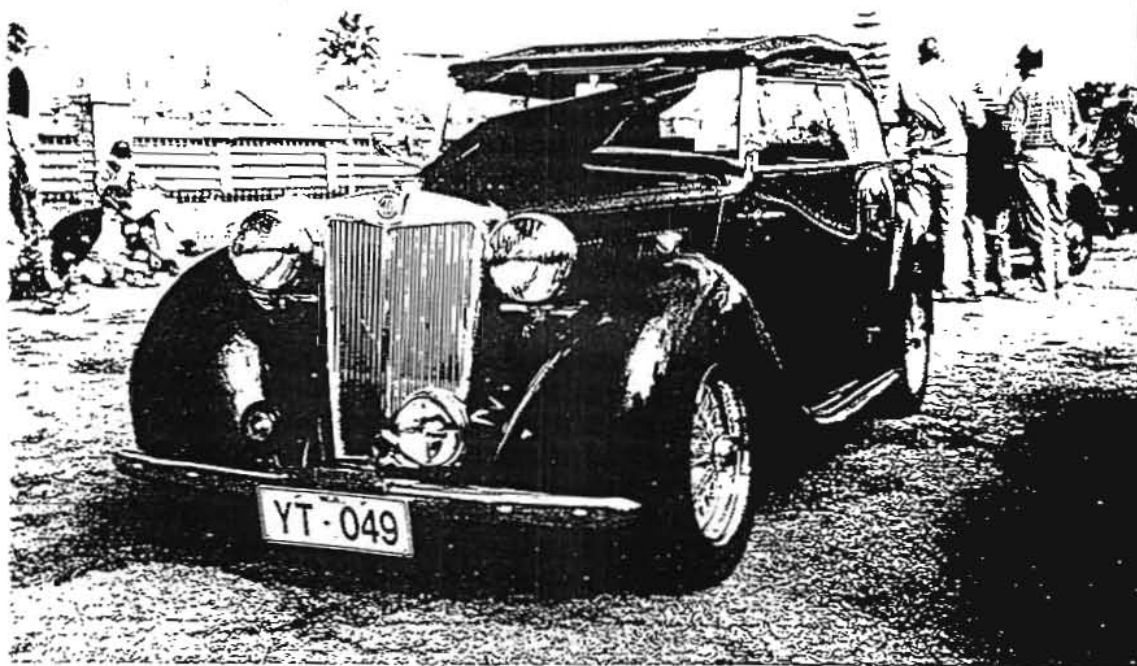
From the outset the car had to have the reliability of a modern M.G. and the capacity to cruise all day at 70 m.p.h. and not break a crankshaft. The extra performance was icing on the cake. The bottom line, it had to be all M.G., look like a YT, and structural changes had to be kept to a minimum and be capable of being restored to original.

An MGB 18V series engine with 4-synchro O.D. gearbox was fitted to the standard "Y" front engine mount by fabricating a new "U" shaped bracket. The engine was positioned as low as possible with only 15mm of clearance between the front corners of the engine and the front cross member, and similar between the back of the engine and firewall. A section of the tubular chassis member that supports the gearbox was removed and relocated a little lower, and a bracket was fabricated to support the "V" configuration of the gearbox mount. Lowering of the gearbox was necessary to give a direct line to the back axle. The overall location brings the gearstick slightly aft of below the dashboard - just right, and the only structural change required to the whole car including bodywork. However, a new gearbox cover, tailshaft cover and toeboard were fabricated to accommodate the larger gearbox and overdrive; this also means new floor board support rails and floor boards. A shortened Wolseley 4/44 tailshaft completed the drive train. The few original bits that came with the car were put aside.

The rear axle is standard MGB wire wheel banjo type, with standard "Y" springs. The axle tube spring mounts were removed and new ones were fabricated incorporating Jackall and Panhard rod mounting points; these were refitted 12mm further out each side to accommodate the wider "Y" spring spacing. 50mm spacer blocks are required to retain ride height. These could be built into the spring mounts but spacers enable adjustment. The backing plates were refitted to their opposite sides and rotated so that the handbrake levers line up in the original position for the "Y" Type. Lengthening the handbrake levers improves mechanical advantage. The original handbrake is retained and cables made to suit. Not having original rear dampers, Mini front gas telescopics were used and brackets fabricated which used the original chassis mount holes to locate them in the vertical position.

The front suspension employs standard "Y" bottom wishbones and spring pans with MGB lever dampers, king pin assemblies and disc brakes. The springs are shortened MGB units. The only work required to fit the MGB bits is to drill two new holes for the dampers. The outboard holes are further apart and also foul the top of the spring, therefore a 10mm plate is sandwiched between the top of the spring and the underside of the crossmember which itself is drilled and tapped with captive threads. M.G. Midget tie-rods fit directly to the "Y" rack and pinion and are the right length to pick up the "B" steering arm and ball joint. The other addition to the front end, to control that body roll, is a 24mm anti-sway bar. Mounting brackets and Nolahthane bushes are off the shelf from a good suspension shop.

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Brakes, as previously mentioned, are standard MGB, and because a clutch master cylinder was also required, the original and almost non-existent pedal box was removed and an MGB one welded into position upside down. A friendly machinist made a new and longer pedal shaft to suit the new pedal spacings, and a supporting bush was fitted at the inboard end. The clutch and brake pedals (standard "Y") are now further apart, operating MGB master cylinders. In hindsight, an MGA twin-cylinder unit would have been a better option, but they don't grow on trees.

Returning to under the bonnet, the original MGB twin S.U. carbies were initially used, with ZB Magnette air cleaner manifold and oil bath air cleaner - to give the engine bay a period appearance and confuse the experts. The front of the manifold required a large chamfer to fit inside the bonnet side, but it was thought this may have been restricting air flow to the front carburettor. Recently, long sweeping induction tubes were fabricated by son Luke (one of the kids who was supposed to occupy the back seat; but he was 20 before it was finished in 1992!). These accommodate a 45DCOE sidedraft Weber carburettor that is located over the rocker box. This configuration works extremely well, looks fantastic, and the "petrol heads" nod almost speechlessly in approval. The exhaust system is standard MGB.

The "petrol heads" continue to be amazed when the other side of the engine is exposed and they notice that the distributor is sitting up on top of a nicely curved metal stalk. You can hear their brains working overtime; "yes, it's driven with an 8mm flexible cable", I admit, and put them at ease. The cable runs in a spiral outer like a large speedo cable, which in turn is supported within the outer tube. This wonderful little duvalaky (invention) was required because, with the engine in its low position, the steering column passed straight through the distributor cap - not the ideal location. Because cable whip was anticipated with points ignition, this was replaced at the outset with an Allison pointless electronic ignition. This combination has been faultless for 35,000 miles. Yes, the cable becomes a little sloppy after about 10,000 miles, but the electronic ignition copes well with any variation and maximum advance is set at 32 deg. rather than worry about static or idle timing.

Because clearance for the steering column was still tight, the original was replaced with a solid rod splined at the bottom end, where an MGB universal joint made the connection to the "Y" rack. The top end, inside the car, passes through a nylon bushed outer and a TC spline to accept a Brooklands steering wheel.

Continuing under the bonnet, the standard "Y" radiator was used, but the large central opening in the header tank was blanked off and a smaller opening was fitted to the offside and the bottom outlet moved to the nearside. The water pump fan was removed (no room), and a small electric, thermostatically controlled fan was fitted in front of the radiator behind the grille, as was the oil cooler. This required making a new headlight support bar with a large semi-circular bend to support the electric fan. The cooling system is not pressurised, but the radiator cap is a positive seal and a small catch tank on the overflow keeps water loss negligible. The engine steady assembly is simply a bracket, very similar to the original, but not as high, with a thick rubber block through-bolted to the "U" shaped engine mounting bracket, and with rubber bushes under the bolt head and nut.

For the electrics, an internally-regulated alternator was used and the original regulator served as a junction box. A one-off wiring loom, complete with cotton braiding for a touch of originality, was made, with engine electrics on the offside; this included O.D. wiring, indicators, and an extra wire to the rear for a modern rotary gear fuel pump. The original S.U. pump remained just for show and emergencies. All-chrome 8-inch headlights (they look much better than 7s on a Tourer) with modern quartz bulbs were fitted, and at the rear for safety's sake, modern plastic lenses were cut-n'-shut and moulded into two extended "D" shape lamps to include stop/tail/reverse/indicator functions, using festoon bulbs. Not having the original column horn button or floor dip switch, a TC/D-type horn and dip switch was mounted under the dash on the R.H. side together with the O.D. switch. The indicator switch was also under the dash, immediately above the gearstick.

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The layout of the dash is original in appearance except that TD2 speedo' and tachometer are used together with a dual oil pressure/water temp' gauge. The tachometer has electronic innards and an in-line reduction box is fitted to the speedometer cable to correct cable turns, the result being two very accurate and serviceable instruments.

The colour scheme for the car was decided many years ago when two grey leather hides were acquired at the right price. The doors are in the original pattern with pockets; however the seats have 2-inch pleats all over, which is far more interesting than the original style. More recently the front seats, although comfortable in a straight line, were replaced with ergonomic seats with adjustable slides and rake that did not rock 'n' roll around every corner; these made a big difference to the drivability of the car. With a grey interior, the exterior had to be dark blue. The final selection was 1940s "Packard Blue Light", selected because it did not have the redness of a navy blue. The finishing touch was 15" x 5" 60-spoke centre-laced chrome wire wheels that were especially built for the car so that the wheels sat just inside the wings. The spare wheel was also designed to fit the very narrow space available by keeping the wheel centre in line with the 4-inch rim and fitting a 15 x 135 Michelin tyre used on Renaults; it easily fits into the original storage space.

The car was finally finished literally the night before heading off on a 4,500-mile round trip to Tasmania for the '92 National Meeting. Since then it has made the trip across the Nullarbor and back in '93 and '96 and has now completed 35,000 miles. It is now about to make the trip to Tassie again at Easter ('98). Top speed is just over 90 m.p.h. and standing quarter mile, loaded, takes 18 secs. As a package the car looks fantastic, is a real buzz to drive, and does everything it was hoped it would do and more - with the trophies to prove it!

This project has very much been a family affair and would not have been completed without the help and motivation from the two kids, Luke and Rachael, who were supposed to sit in the back but fortunately grew up with M.G.s in their blood and were of great assistance. Also, my wife Barbara, who rubbed her fingers to the bone sanding panels, made and fitted a lot of the interior trim, and kept us going with cups of coffee and meals at all hours. She also allowed me to use the holy of holies, the lounge room, to store the painted panels and as an assembly area for the windscreen, side curtains, bonnet and all the chrome goodies etc. Thanks gang.

Richard Prior,
[REDACTED]
Western Australia.

Editor's comments: The car described and illustrated in this excellent article is Y/T 3208 (Register No.528). At least seven more "Y" Types have been fitted with B.M.C. "B" Series engines at one time or another to our knowledge (not all of them MGB variants of that engine). To solve the problem of the steering column fouling the distributor, one owner re-routed the steering column by employing several sections universally-jointed together. This difficulty may explain the origin of the L.H.D. Y-Type which took part in last year's Peking to Paris Challenge (see Register News this issue for more details). In order to get around the problem of the distributor/steering column clash, the car may well have been converted to L.H.D.

REGISTER NEWS

Miles Harris recently told me of a "Y" Type which had apparently taken part in, and even finished, the Peking to Paris Challenge which took place in September last year. He kindly went out of his way to obtain for me two magazine articles which describe the car but, before I pass on all the "gen", a brief resumé of the "Y" Type M.G.'s past associations with this marathon route are in order, I think.

When I first met Paul and Maggie Graffham in High Wycombe back in 1977, after I'd just bought my YB, they were busy preparing one of their three "Y" Types for a proposed Peking to Paris (or the other way around) event. This must have been to mark the 70th anniversary of the original, I suppose, whereas last year's "successful" bash marked the 90th. For whatever reason, the 1977 effort did not go ahead. The following year we had Sidney Perelman's attempt to drive his YT from Paris to Peking (see TCY125, "The Sunday Times" of 3/9/78 and 23/12/79, "Safety Fast" of 11/92 and the book "S.J.Perelman - a life" by Dorothy Herrmann). Over the next 20 years or so there continued to be rumours of Peking to Paris (or vice versa) runs being organised but, as far as I am aware, it took until last year for all the pieces to fall into place and for an event actually to get off the ground. Which is where our (much-modified) "Y" Type comes in.

This yellow and black two-tone (black wings & running boards) car is described as a YB in the magazine articles I have seen. It has what appears to be a Dutch licence plate, "DM.94.95", carried competition No.49 for the rally, and was driven by Mrs. Lisa Klokgieters-Lankers with James Wheildon as co-driver. Known modifications were the fitting of a 1,622cc "B" Series engine from an MGA, in place of the XPAG, and MGA front disc brakes. The car broke down in Tibet and suffered rear axle oil seal leaks and a holed fuel tank during the rally. The most serious breakdown occurred in Iran, where Toyota Corolla big-end shells had to be fitted to see the car on its way again. Eventually, the "Y" finished in 40th place overall (out of 96 starters), and 7th in class.

As mentioned above, the car is described as a "YB Special", but photos show it to be L.H.D. Only one L.H.D. YB is known to have been built - YB/EXLNA/0794, thought to still exist in the U.S.A. More likely, then, perhaps this is one of the Dutch L.H.D. "YA"s or, because of difficulties rerouting the steering column around the distributor of the "B" Series engine (see Richard Prior's article on the previous pages), it was decided to convert the car to L.H.D. in order to solve the problem. Whatever, this car has been allocated No.1300 on our Register. Any hope of finding out its chassis number?

SPARES WANTED

020798 Two little ashtrays for back of front seats, complete.
Contact: K.H.Borchers, [REDACTED], Germany.
Tel: [REDACTED]

GUARANTEE PLATE ISSUE LEDGERS

THE YBs - Pt. XI.

Chassis No.	Engine No.	Completion Date	Chassis No.	Engine No.	Completion Date
YB/1178	SC2/18066	04/03/53	YB/1223	SC2/18102	19/03/53
YB/1179	SC2/18064 (see YB/1184)	04/03/53	YB/1224	SC2/18105	19/03/53
YB/1180	SC2/18063	04/03/53	YB/1225	SC2/18117	19/03/53
YB/1181	SC2/18062	05/03/53	YB/1226	SC2/18118	19/03/53
YB/1182	SC2/18069	05/03/53	YB/1227	SC2/18119	23/03/53
YB/1183	SC2/18071	05/03/53	YB/1228	SC2/18104	23/03/53
YB/1184	SC2/18064 (see YB/1179)	06/03/53	YB/1229	SC2/18108	23/03/53
YB/1185	SC2/18070	06/03/53	YB/1230	SC2/18107	24/03/53
YB/1186	SC2/18067	06/03/53	YB/1231	SC2/18101	24/03/53
YB/1187	SC2/18076	06/03/53	YB/1232	SC2/18120	24/03/53
YB/1188	SC2/18073	06/03/53	YB/1233	SC2/18121	24/03/53
YB/1189	SC2/18075	09/03/53	YB/1234	SC2/18127	24/03/53
YB/1190	SC2/18072	09/03/53	YB/1235	SC2/18128	25/03/53
YB/1191	SC2/18074	09/03/53	YB/1236	SC2/18131	25/03/53
YB/1192	SC2/18079	09/03/53	YB/1237	SC2/18124	25/03/53
YB/1193	SC2/18080	10/03/53	YB/1238	SC2/18122	25/03/53
YB/1194	SC2/18081	10/03/53	YB/1239	SC2/18129	25/03/53
YB/1195	SC2/18078	10/03/53	YB/1240	SC2/18134	26/03/53
YB/1196	SC2/18086	11/03/53	YB/EXR/1241	SC2/X18132	26/03/53
YB/1197	SC2/18082	11/03/53	YB/1242	SC2/18156	26/03/53
YB/1198	SC2/18083	11/03/53	YB/1243	SC2/18138	26/03/53
YB/1199	SC2/18084	11/03/53	YB/1244	SC2/18141	26/03/53
YB/1200	SC2/18087	11/03/53	YB/1245	SC2/18159	26/03/53
YB/1201	SC2/18090	11/03/53	YB/1246	SC2/18163	26/03/53
YB/1202	SC2/18091	11/03/53	YB/1247	SC2/18139	26/03/53
YB/1203	SC2/18085	11/03/53	YB/1248	SC2/18130	30/03/53
YB/1204	SC2/18089	13/03/53	YB/1249	SC2/18125	30/03/53
YB/1205	SC2/18093	13/03/53	YB/1250	SC2/18153	30/03/53
YB/1206	SC2/18094	13/03/53	YB/1251	SC2/18136	30/03/53
YB/1207	SC2/18095 engine changed to SC2/18100	13/03/53	YB/1252	SC2/18154	30/03/53
YB/1208	SC2/18092	13/03/53	YB/1253	SC2/18155	01/04/53
YB/1209	SC2/18031	16/03/53	YB/1254	SC2/18137	01/04/53
YB/1210	SC2/18109	16/03/53	YB/1255	SC2/18142	01/04/53
YB/1211	SC2/18111	16/03/53	YB/1256	SC2/18133	01/04/53
YB/1212	SC2/18110	16/03/53	YB/1257	SC2/18135	01/04/53
YB/1213	SC2/18088	16/03/53	YB/1258	SC2/18126	01/04/53
YB/1214	SC2/18106	16/03/53	YB/1259	SC2/18123	07/04/53
YB/1215	SC2/18103	17/03/53	YB/1260	SC2/18186	07/04/53
YB/1216	SC2/18099	17/03/53	YB/1261	SC2/18165	07/04/53
YB/1217	SC2/18096	17/03/53	YB/1262	SC2/18152	07/04/53
YB/1218	SC2/18097	17/03/53	YB/1263	SC2/18173	07/04/53
YB/1219	SC2/18116	17/03/53	YB/1264	SC2/18175	07/04/53
YB/1220	SC2/18115	19/03/53	YB/1265	SC2/18161	09/04/53
YB/1221	SC2/18112	19/03/53	YB/1266	SC2/18174	09/04/53
YB/1222	SC2/18098	19/03/53	YB/1267	SC2/18171	09/04/53

BOOK REVIEW

"Rallying in a Works M.G." by Len Shaw

published by Magna Press, 1997, ISBN 0 9519423 4 4, £19.95, limited run of 750 copies.

Way back in 1983 your editor received a letter from Len Shaw (*see TCY59, 10/83*) giving a brief resumé of his rallying exploits in "Y" Types. Had I not been, as they say in these parts, "too slow to catch cold", I would have taken up Len's invitation to go down and visit him in Bromsgrove, learn more, and see his collection of photographs and trophies etc. Alas, I did not follow up on this opportunity and soon afterwards the M.G. Car Club "rediscovered" Len and his exploits (*vide, for instance, "Safety Fast" of 09/94, which features Len's famous YB, "HMO909", in glorious colour on the front cover*).

Never judge a book by its cover, they say, and in this case one could justifiably add, "or by its thickness, size and price, either". The first impression I had when unpacking my copy was that there was precious little for my £20. A thin, hardbacked volume of just under 100 pages with a somewhat strange, quirky, painting of "HMO909" on its cover. Of course, I understand full well the economics involved here; the "Y" Type will always be a "minority subject" and this is probably the only way in which enthusiasts are ever likely to see this material in book form. Moreover, the book also contains the story of Len's exploits with the ZA Magnette and a Series II Morris Minor and the second "half" is "padded out" with short production histories of the three types. These, strangely, are written by anonymous contributors. M.G. Car Club influence shows throughout the book and it would be interesting to know who wrote the short "Y" Type production history - this contains several interesting factory photos, some of which do not even appear in "Let There Be Ys".

On the whole, grammar, spelling and punctuation are accurate throughout, a feature which is surprising in itself these days; but did we have to suffer that modern abomination, the adulteration of the noun "source" into a verb in the production history section? - this is something, I have no doubt, that Len himself would not have written.

To go back to the first part of the book, though, wherein Len describes his rallying exploits, we find a very nice selection of photos of "Y"s in action: "GJW665", "OWL543" (did Betty Haig and Barbara Marshall *always* wear those duffle coats?), "HNT720" and "HMO909". What makes the book even more attractive are the many varied "side illustrations" complementing the text - rally documentation, copies of correspondence, period advertisements etc. Len Shaw is very complimentary about the "Y" Type, stressing again and again its competitiveness and development potential, and especially when compared to the "Z" Type Magnette. This is heartwarming to read and should have been said many, many years ago. Dave Lawrence, I know, will be interested to read Len's recollections as to the colour of "OWL543", and Dave Mullen will be delighted to find his favourite word, "perforce", used on page 65!

This book would make a good companion to "An M.G. Experience" by Dick Jacobs on any "Y" enthusiast's shelf, though the two volumes are entirely dissimilar in size and shape. In short, the mix and variety of illustrations packed into these 90-odd pages is what makes this book a veritable jewel - one not to be missed by any "Y" devotee. In the end, I was even warming to the cover illustration!

JGL.