

The 70 Year History of an MG YT

I have owned a variety of MGs since I passed my driving test in the summer of 1965.

These included a non running PB, two Y Type saloons, Midget, TA and an MGA. I am fortunate enough to now own an MGF, a TC and a YT all of which are running and regularly used.

However this story is about how I became just the 4th keeper of a rare 1950 MG One and a Quarter Litre Tourer.

Background

The MG Car Company introduced the Y Series model in March 1947. Originally it was due to be launched at the 1939 Motor Show. However, that didn't happen because of hostilities with Germany and the commencement of the 2nd World War.

The Y was fitted with a single carburettor version of the 1250cc XPAG engine, which with twin carbs was found in the prewar TB and immediate post war TC. The engine continued in use through to the last TD in 1953.

The Y was a six light saloon using the Morris 8 Series E body but fitted on to a substantial separate chassis. It was the first production MG to be fitted with rack and pinion steering and used Independent Front Suspension. All Ys were fitted with an inbuilt hydraulic jacking system.

The Y was manufactured until 1951 with 6,158 models produced. It was replaced in 1951/2 with the YB. This had several upgrades including, a hypoid rear axle and smaller 15" diameter wheels. Just 1301 were manufactured.

In October 1948 the MG Car Company introduced a Tourer version of the Y. This was supposed to be solely for export as the UK's immediate post war strapline was 'export or die'. However, a number did remain in the country. The exact number is unknown although Clausager's research in his book 'MG Saloons & Tourers' (p105) mentions that although the MG production control statistics maintained that no home market cars were ever built this was not the case.

He adds: " That such cars (which have known to have been in the UK since new) were some of the direct sales or tax free Personal Export Export Deliveries recorded by Nuffield Exports for the model, which amounted to 46 cars. If such cars remained in the UK after their statutory twelve months grace, or if they were resold by their original owners in the UK, purchase tax had to be paid".

Research by both the MGCC Y Type Register and the International MG Y Register and the late David Pelham, in particular, shows that to date 915 YTs were built (rather than the often quoted 877). Most were exported to the Empire(!) and the USA. The battery box was centrally located in the engine bay so that right or left hand steering could be fitted. Not all US cars were left hand drive and some had flashing indicators fitted but not all. It seems that different States had different requirements. A few YTs were fitted with speedometers calibrated in KPH.

On reflection one might reasonably ask why the YT was ever produced. It lacked the style and grace of the larger 1.5 and 2 litre pre war tourers and the post war market was very different from the 1930s.

Nonetheless, they did and 234, around 25% of the production are still running. (These figures are for 2018 the latest to date)

I owned my first Y from 1972-79. (below)



This introduced me to the MGCC Y Register. However, in 1998 I sold the Y and bought a TA. This I kept for the next 13 years. During this time I was invited onto the Y Committee. I felt a bit of a fraud and thought that we really ought to own a Y. After an event in 2009 we began to search for one.

The YT we acquired.....

M.G. YT

Date of Manufacture: May/June (?) 1950

Chassis No YT EXR 4372

England No: XPAG/TR/14022W



By chance I came across a YT based in New Hampshire, USA. I contacted the owner and we agreed a sale price of \$16,000. There was a favourable exchange rate at the time and the cost was just under £10k.

I had a contact in the US to look over the car on my behalf. He said that other than a sticking brake cylinder and a tatty interior it was worth buying. So I made arrangements to have the car shipped to the UK and in November 2009 I went down to Southampton with a carrier to collect her. The guy with the trailer was very impressed with the condition. He commented that in comparison with some of the rubbish that he had had to collect that it looked an excellent buy.

We fitted new tyres, selling the white walls, replaced the front brake cylinders, flushed the oil

and replenished it with fresh and a new filter. It was then MOT'd, insured and then trailered to the local DVLA where it was checked over and a registration number issued.

Over the last eleven years, the interior has been replaced, a new hood and recovered side screens fitted, the engine has recently been rebuilt and electronic ignition fitted.

The History

A fascinating aspect of classic car ownership is discovering its history.

This YT is no exception. I was aware from Bill Burnham, the owner whom I bought the car from, that he was only the third owner. However, he had no details of the two former keepers.

I noticed on the dash panel a motif from an event that the car had been entered in. The Red River..and it was dated 1957.

I posted the details on the US MG T Register website asking if anyone knew of the Event and in particular had any details of any former owner of the YT that attended. I included a photograph of the car.

Not expecting any response I was delighted to receive the details of the owner and an email address. Bill Baldwin's father Raymond had purchased the YT in the summer of 1952 from the first keeper, who lived in New York State.

Delving into the car's background was not straightforward as the individual's name could not be recalled. I was in touch with the late David Pelham, who had developed some expertise in tracing the history, condition and whereabouts of all YT's . Sadly, the production records of the whole Y Type range were destroyed by the MG Car Company.

However, from David's hard work it appears that the YT was built at Abingdon between May and June 1950.

The YT arrives in New York

It was then exported to New York and into the Manhattan showrooms of J.S.Inskip. Inskip had built modified bodies on Packards in the 1930s

and had become a distributor for Rolls Royce.

Immediately postwar he extended his franchise to include Bentley, MG and Riley. He 'customised' his imported models and on the MG YT this included chrome strips either of the bonnet and doors. It is difficult to confirm how many YTs Inskip imported. Clausager's information notes that YTs were despatched to the US between 1948 and 1950. It may be of interest to note that on the International MG Y Type Register website 10 YTs are displayed with the distinctive chrome embellishment.

Inskip also marketed a 4 seater TD.

A key piece of information that Bill mentioned was that originally the YT was painted black but had been totally resprayed red by the time his Father collected it.

The First Owner 1950-52

The name of this individual is unknown other than he lived in New York State and sold the car to a dealer in Buffalo Springs. Whether it was repainted by him from black to red or by them is unknown.

The Second Owner 1952-99

Raymond and Bill Baldwin

The Baldwin family owned the YT for over 47 years and the story is best taken up by his son Bill. Raymond Baldwin acquired the car from a foreign car dealer in Buffalo, New York.

'Our family lived in the country about 30 miles south of Buffalo where Dad worked. He commuted to work and used the MG as our only family car all year round for about 5 years. He did all the maintenance and repairs on the car. It had a heater and a radio, but was never very warm in the winter with the wind blowing snow in through the gaps in the side curtains. He had 4 kids, each 2 years apart. I was eight or nine when he bought the car. About 1957, he stopped using it full time but continued to use it in the summer until about 1961 when it was put in storage. It stayed in storage until about 1985 when he started to look

for someone to restore it.'

Bill took on the job, with the agreement his father would supply parts and pay for services. The aim was to keep the car as original as possible. It took about four years to finish. Raymond purchased a set of white wall tyres which were still on the car when I acquired it fourteen years later. Bill refurbished the upholstery using as much of the original as he could. He knew it would not stand hard use but you can't get original back once it's gone. You never see MG-Ys in the US with original bumper guards. (over riders) Bill spent about fifty hours repairing the ones still on the YT. When Bill completed the restoration he returned it to his father who used it for a few years and then gave it back to Bill and he and his wife had fun with it. They attended an MG T Register meet where MG-Ys were featured. There were six or so YTs lined up in a row. Bill's was the best. They also attended to a vintage race at Watkins Glen where we filled the back seat with friends and did two laps of the old race course.

Bill continues: 'I sold the car in 1999, because I had too many cars, to Bill Burnham through an advertisement in the MG T Register journal. One item I included in the sale was a spare axle shaft (that I still have!) which my father always carried in the trunk. He broke a few of them. Bill Burnham who purchased the YT seemed like a good person. The event tags on the dash board were left because they had always been there. Bill's father and his uncle ran the Red Leaf Rally together in the YT three times. It was staged in Warren, Pennsylvania which was about 60 miles south of where we were living at the time. Each year they blamed each other for the outcome.

The Third Owner 1999-2009

Bill Burnham

New Hampshire, USA

Bill Burnham was well known in the New England MG T Type through his immaculate rebuild of a TC. A growing family resulted in a change of direction and he sold his TC and acquired the YT. He lived in New Hampshire. He

undertook a rebuild of the front suspension and ensured that the car was in good running order. It was mainly a high day and holiday car but had been well cared for during his tenure. Although, as he admitted the interior needed some work.

Bill and I had an extensive correspondence and phone calls about the YT from when I saw the car advertised on the International MG Y Type website in September 2009. He provided a detailed photographic assessment of the car and was quite happy for a contact to look over the car. The view was that it was excellent but needed a new interior, and the brake cylinders overhauling.

Neither of us had bought or sold a car from abroad, so we were virgins in this unknown world. Fortunately, David Pelham put me onto Kingston Shipping in Hull. They were excellent and took me through all the processes to enable a sale. When asked if I wanted the car crated or on board I sought some advice from them as to the most appropriate means of passage. The simple answer was 'Crates have been known to be dropped' decided me that on board would be acceptable and so it was.

US law means that the vendor has to be paid in full prior to the car being collected and this was arranged.

Bill said goodbye to the YT in October 2009 and seven weeks later it arrived in Southampton.

Bill now lives in Florida and has fully restored a really nice MGA. We still keep in touch on line.

The Fourth Owners 2009- Jerry and Jo Birkbeck Warwickshire, UK

We became keepers of this rather special car in November 2009. We still had and used the TA and she was stored with a friend as we gradually worked on the YT within the confines of our small standard 16' x 8' garage at home.

The replacement brake cylinders were a straightforward job and the necessary replacing the oil and filter an essential. We also had a new set of five tyres fitted to replace the white walls.

These we managed to sell to another Y owner in Lancashire. A general service and the car was checked over and tested and given a new MOT.

Despite having being tested and insurance cover the car had to be trailed over to the nearest DVLA centre, which was in Birmingham to be checked over and registered. This process has now changed. Anyhow all was well and the car was issued with the rather dull registration number: 828 XUV.



So with the correct plates fitted I was able to give the car a run.

Its first significant outing was to the MG Day at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire in January 2010 where it was located on the MG Octagon Car Club stand. It created a lot of interest and I had two separate offers of £16k to sell the car as it was essentially original.



I decided to keep the YT and in 2010 had the bonnet repainted. The rest is pretty good although a full respray would provide the finishing touch!

Through the MG Octagon CC I came across an ex Longbridge trimmer. He did an excellent job with all 4 seats recovered and trim panels reworked. These transformed the car.



So that's it - a YT that has been used in the US and by us within the UK and across Europe. Like so many we have been frustrated in not being able to use the car far more regularly.

Here's hoping that 2021 might be a better year!

Jerry Birkbeck

The hood and side screens were recovered in 2015 and in 2020 the engine was rebuilt and the capacity enlarged to 1350cc.

