

TRADES

MG didn't make pick-ups, but if they had, they'd probably have been the best pick-up trucks in the world. Perhaps something like this unique creation on a Y-Type theme. Simon Goldsworthy brings you the story.

THE MG badge has been proudly worn by all manner of vehicles over the years, from the first warmed-over Morris saloons to the very last SV-R supercars. In between, there have been sports cars and scorching hatchbacks, rally monsters and ponderous saloons, record-breaking specials and endurance racers. There have been estate cars and four-seat tourers, diesel motors and turbochargers – and there's even been a van. But through all this variety, MG has never sold a pick-up with the famous octagon on its nose.

Which, given that the vehicle pictured on these pages is very clearly a Y-Type pick-up, means that we have a bit of explaining to do. Common sense tells us that the Y-Type saloon would have been an unlikely candidate for any kind of factory experiment along these lines. It was aimed squarely at upper middle-class buyers and was far too expensive to sell as a builder's hack.

In fact, this story really begins in the 1990s,



MG fan Andrew Coulson is proud to own what is almost certainly a unique vehicle.

when the MG was owned by Mervyn Davis, of Shrewsbury. Mervyn used it as a donor vehicle for some of his other restoration projects, as a result of which most of the rear panels were missing. That still left a sound chassis and panels from the cabin forwards. No doubt you can see the way that this is developing, and it was just as obvious to Mervyn. He extended the chassis some 15in rearwards to ensure the finished article remained visually balanced and then set about building an MG pick-up.

The first step was to make up an ash frame behind the front seats, creating an abrupt cut-off to the Abingdon cabin. Two scrap rear doors were sliced down the middle and welded in place to fill the gaps on either side between the new rear panel and the front doors, with simple mudguards covering the rear wheels. The sills were cut and blanked off just ahead of these mudguards to complete the sheet metal changes.

BOX SECTION

To support the front of the pick-up bed, a 5in box section of steel was bolted on top of the chassis, followed by a 5in U-section running across the vehicle. Further back, 4 x 2in wooden beams run above the main chassis rails, themselves topped by 3 x 2in beams across the car. Right at the back, upright angle irons rise from the chassis extension, the whole lot being crowned with a shallow wooden bed and a neat drop-down tailgate.

The original XPAG engine had long-since been cannibalised for other projects, so Mervyn installed an A-series engine from a Marina to get his creation mobile, through the MoT and on the road. Tragedy struck soon afterwards when both Mervyn and his wife, Mary, were killed in a coach crash while on holiday in Thailand. The pick-up subsequently passed through a number



of short-stay owners before disappearing from the MG Car Club's Y Register. It finally reappeared in November, 2004 on the website of a car dealer in Northamptonshire, advertised as a Magnette pick-up.

And this is where the current owner, Andrew Coulson, enters the story. Andrew owns not only a YB saloon, but also a YA and one of the very rare Tourers. From the picture on the website, he immediately recognised the car for what it was and had to take a look. The Y was in a bit of a state, back to rusty metal in places, but still clinging on to a current MoT. While he was checking it out, a trimmer arrived to put a vinyl roof over the sorry original. This would have

AN'S TAIL



been totally inappropriate for the vehicle and Andrew was desperate not to let it happen. So while the glue pot was bubbling on the forecourt, he was hurriedly negotiating its purchase.

Thankfully, it was a race that Andrew won. When he declared his intention of driving it the 160 miles home to Yorkshire there and then, the dealer called down to the workshop and got them to put an extra gallon of both water and oil in the back, not exactly inspiring Andrew with confidence in the process. But with his wife, Arlene, following behind, they made it back to base at a steady 65mph, the only scary moment being when another driver pulled out in front

of the Y, necessitating an emergency stop – old cars might not go as fast as new ones, but few drivers seem to appreciate that they don't stop as quickly, either.

Back at base, Andrew was able to take better stock of the project he'd just gotten into. Lots of Y-type bits had gone missing as the vehicle was passed from one owner to the next, so the first job was to make up a shopping list of parts to source. Fortunately, being a long-term Y owner meant that many of these were lurking in his garage and he knew where to go for most of the rest. And there were some real bonuses with the acquisition, such as the radiator surround, which is quite possibly the best that Andrew

has seen.

He put a great deal of work into the project. As well as taking the whole vehicle back to bare metal, he decided to make a more professional-looking job of those rear quarter panels to the cabin. Originally, the glass quarterlights ended in an abrupt right angle where the rear doors had been simply chopped to fit. Andrew had these panels replaced with ones made from the front and rear edges of scrap doors welded together. This gives the glass a curved corner both front and rear, and a much more polished profile.

As well as a thorough mechanical overhaul, Andrew had to replace the side-exit exhaust, ▶▶

which was so close to the mudguard that it was burning a hole in the panel. The YB now sports a straight-through pipe that lends an almost straight-eight burble to the engine. Ah yes, that engine ... power is still supplied by the ex-Marina 1.3 A-series lump and transmitted through its four-synchro gearbox. So many XPAG engines have been snapped up by the T-type boys that there are no longer enough to go round, at least not ones that are circulating in the marketplace. He's not in a tearing hurry, but eventually Andrew, would like to revert to MG power, so if anybody has a suitable XPAG motor for sale, he would love to hear from you.

POWER PLANT

Despite the interloping power plant, the rest of the running gear is largely standard YB equipment. That includes Lockheed twin-leading shoe front brakes – a worthwhile improvement on the YA's single leaders – and the adoption of Nuffield's new hypoid back axle that was both stronger and quieter than the outgoing version.

MG achieved a near 50-50 weight distribution between front and rear with the Y and, looking at the amount of wood and metal that has gone into the rear bed, we don't think this has been altered too much by the conversion, especially since the engine is probably a shade lighter than the original.

Entry into the cabin is easy through the

front-opening doors, with the large steering wheel still leaving enough space for all but the chunkiest of legs to slide underneath. Once in position, it is strange how normal the view is when looking forwards. The dash is relatively plain in typical MG style, there is plenty of elbow room, but the sides taper in rapidly to push the knees towards the centre.

The 1275cc motor gives 57bhp and acceleration is noticeably sharper than with a standard XPAG (47bhp). There's more flexibility in top gear, too – step on the accelerator when doing 60mph and you are not exactly pinned into your seat, but you can at least feel it pick up the tempo. The twin-leading shoes are adequate, but it pays to have a few trial stabs on the middle pedal so you know what to expect from them (and more importantly, what not to expect) before having to call them into emergency action.

Andrew says: "It gets so much attention.



Yes, it's a good old A-Series 1275cc engine from a Marina. It provides a bit more zip than the standard XPAG unit.

I know of one car in Holland with a crane in the back, but I've never seen another Y-Type pick-up, even from Australia. Enthusiasts know that MG never made pick-ups, so they all stop to comment and that makes it special."

We couldn't agree more. ■



MG always offered a dash that was a cut above most of the opposition.



The front end of the loadbed is extremely well supported.



Life at the wheel is a mixture of utilitarian convenience and luxury.



No, we can't work out how Goldsworthy managed to get this shot, either. Clever, eh?



This view gives you an idea of the strength of the conversion – and the ingenuity involved.