

The MG model featured this month is unusual in that it was produced primarily for the overseas market. There was a perceived demand for an open tourer as before production ceased when war was declared in 1939 there were a number of MG open four-seater models on offer, in addition to the standard saloons. These ranged from the 1.5-litre VA tourer and Tickford DHC to the larger SA and WA models, again available in open tourer and Tickford versions. These open models had sold in reasonable numbers and were popular with buyers.

When car production resumed in a small way at the Abingdon factory towards the end of 1945, the only model in the catalogue was the two-seater TC sports car. This was joined in 1947 by the one-and-a-quarter-litre Y-type four-door saloon, but initially the only concession to open-top motoring was a sunroof. Although this model proved a hit with buyers at home and overseas, the company, and the overseas dealers, felt there was a demand for an open version which would give rather more passenger room than was available in the strictly two-seater TC. The Swiss main dealers had already imported a few Y-types in rolling chassis form and local coachbuilders, Reinbolt & Christé S.A. of Basle, had fitted these with tourer bodywork. The results looked good and perhaps provided the inspiration for those at Abingdon to produce their own version.

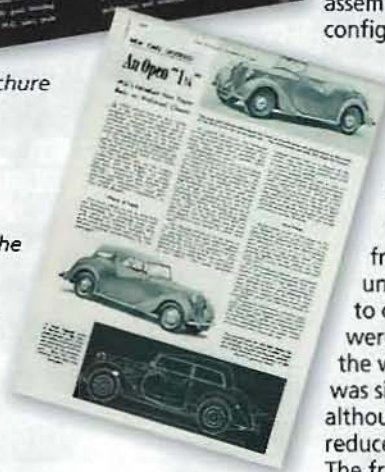
# THE ONE-AND-A-QUARTER Y-TOURER

Malcolm Green



Brochure

The first mention of the new model appeared in *The Autocar* on 8th October 1948



Because the Y-type was built using a separate, and quite rigid, chassis frame it was practical to remove sections of the pressed steel bodywork, like the roof, without compromising too much the structural rigidity of the car. The design work for the open Y-type was carried out in the Cowley Drawing Office under the direction of Gerald Palmer, who later designed the ZA saloon as a replacement for the Y-saloon. The main structure of the body comprised pressed steel sections, but the wide doors used a traditional ash framework panelled in steel, like the TC and all the earlier models. As the export market was the objective, the YT was made so that it could be assembled in either right-hand or left-hand drive configuration. To accommodate the steering column and pedals being fitted on either side of the engine bay, the toolbox mounted on the scuttle was placed centrally, rather than offset, and the oil pump was modified for the same reason. Like the TC, the whole body was made by Morris Bodies Branch in Coventry and arrived at Abingdon fully painted and trimmed.

The tourer used the wings and front and rear body sections from the saloon which meant that the boot was virtually unchanged, giving adequate luggage capacity and the ability to carry additional suitcases on the lowered boot lid. The doors were cut away at the top, in the accepted sporting fashion, and the windscreen could be lowered if required. The interior trim was similar to the saloon, as was the available interior space, although rear seat passengers had their elbowroom slightly reduced by the pockets each side necessary to store the hood irons. The front passenger seat tipped up to ease access to the rear.





The cockpit is large enough to accommodate four people. The dashboard resembles that fitted to the TC, rather than the Y-type saloon

The rear section of the YT body is almost the same as that on the saloon. The spare wheel fits in the compartment behind the number plate

Generous glazed areas in the hood and side-screens make travelling with the car closed a pleasure. There is a loyal following for all Y-types and to mark seventy years since the first cars were built a round Britain rally was staged in June/July 2017



# LITRE



*Enjoying*



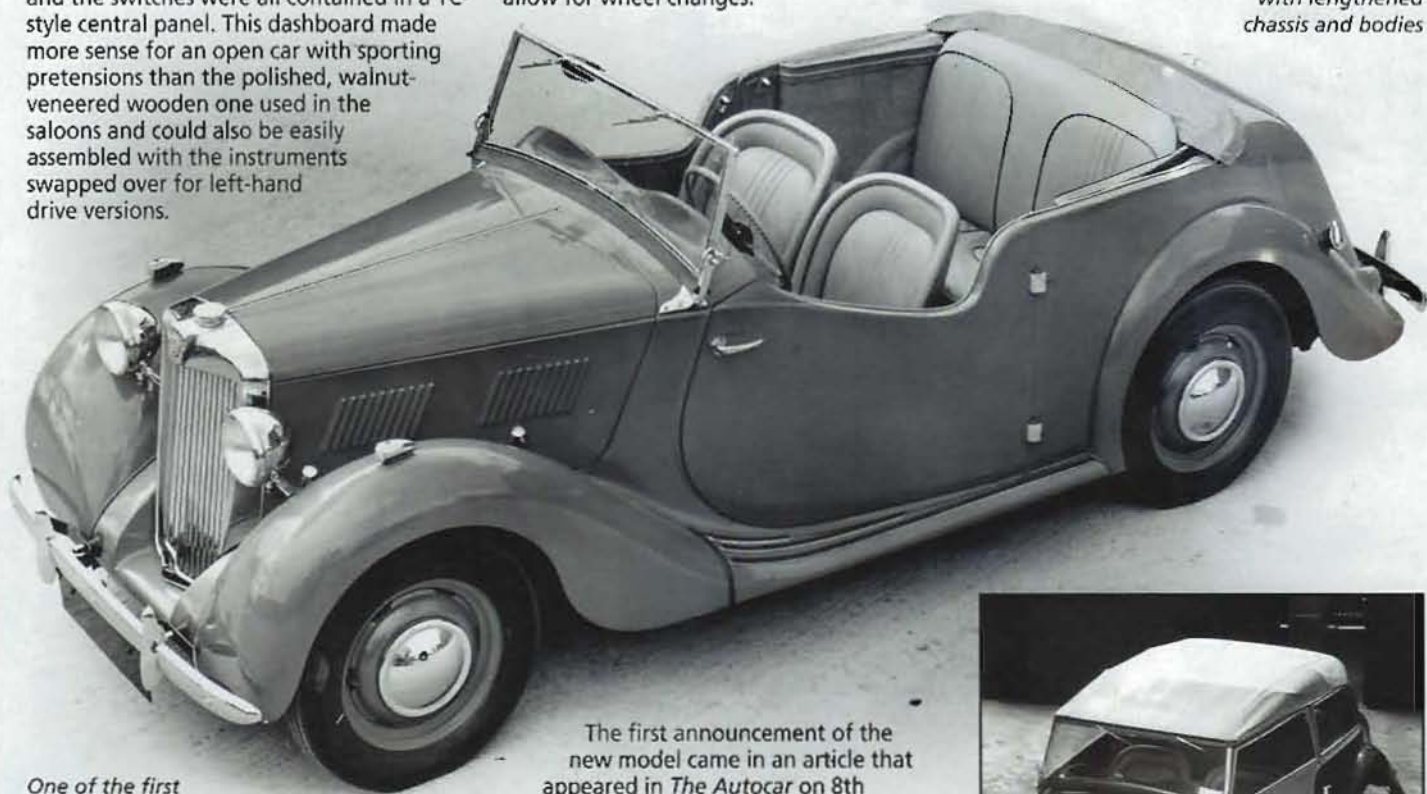


Although the standard saloon had to make do with a single carburettor version of the 1,250cc XPAG engine, the open tourer was deemed to require something a bit more sporting and was fitted with a TC specification engine, complete with twin carburettors and modified camshaft. Producing 54bhp, this was usefully more than the 46bhp available from the single-carburettor unit in the saloon. Another feature transferred from the sports car was the dashboard. Although not identical to the TC, essentially it looked the same, using a similar fabric-covered board with a large tachometer in front of the driver and matching speedometer placed ahead of the passenger. The minor dials and the switches were all contained in a TC-style central panel. This dashboard made more sense for an open car with sporting pretensions than the polished, walnut-veneered wooden one used in the saloons and could also be easily assembled with the instruments swapped over for left-hand drive versions.

The hood stowage was particularly neat. When lowered, the hood and frame stowed in a compartment that extended behind and round each side of the rear seat and could be concealed by zip-fastened flaps. The rear window in the erected hood could be lowered to provide additional ventilation. Apart from the more powerful engine, the mechanical specification remained unchanged, but the bodywork modifications reduced the overall weight by nearly 90lb, which helped to improve the performance. Like the saloon, the tourer had the very useful 'Jackall' system, where hydraulically operated rams raised the car off the ground to allow for wheel changes.

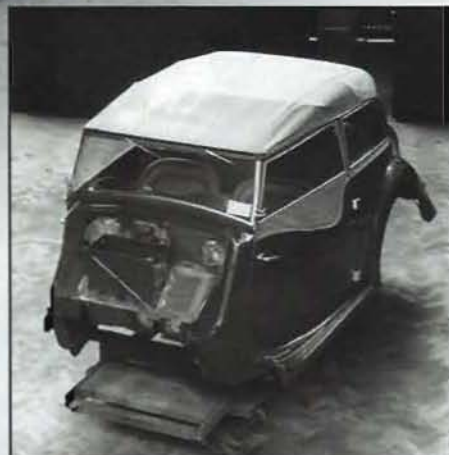


American East Coast importers and dealers, J.S. Inskip sold the chrome strips fitted to the featured YT. They also produced and sold a number of these four-seater TD Midgets with lengthened chassis and bodies



One of the first left-hand drive tourers was used for publicity pictures

The first announcement of the new model came in an article that appeared in *The Autocar* on 8th October 1948. This erroneously indicated that the model was to be built solely in left-hand drive form for export to North America, whereas quite a large number of right-hand drive cars were produced for sale in countries like Australia. Another piece about the tourer that appeared a few days later in the rival *The Motor* magazine actually quoted a home market price for the tourer of £525, plus £146 11s 8d purchase tax, thus contradicting the assertion in the earlier article. As we shall see, some cars with the steering wheel in the right place also went to North America. It seems that just short of 900 tourers were built with all but a few going to the export market. From the point of view of sales, therefore, the YT could hardly be called a huge success. What isn't clear is whether this was because there was not the same demand for open tourers as existed pre-war, or because there was a shortage of cars available for sale. As almost all production went abroad, perhaps more examples would have sold had they been freely available on the home market.



The body for the YT was built, painted and trimmed by Morris Bodies Branch and then delivered to Abingdon to be mounted on the rolling chassis assembled there. This would seem to be the prototype as the battery box on the scuttle has been moved to a central position after painting



*YA rolling chassis were imported into Switzerland and fitted with two and four-seater open coachwork by local coachbuilder, Reinbolt & Christé S.A. of Basle*

In common with the rest of the British motor industry, overseas sales had increasingly become the focus of attention at the MG Car Company. The government began restricting the supplies of steel and other essential raw materials for car production when Sir Stafford Cripps, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced a rationing system with the majority of supplies being available for production destined for overseas markets. It was vital for the country to earn foreign currency, especially American dollars, to help pay off the crippling overseas debts accumulated during the war. This meant that in Britain potential buyers saw hundreds of new British cars on their way to the docks, whilst they had either to join long waiting lists for a new car or pay an inflated price for a worn-out pre-war model.

The Nuffield Group issued separate catalogue for the new car that gave potential buyers full details of the specification. The colour schemes on offer differed from those used for the YA saloon and listed the choice of exterior cellulose paintwork as Shires Green, Regency Red, Black, Sequoia Cream and Clipper Blue, the same as the current TC. Upholstery could be green, red or beige and the hood and side-screens in all cases were made of a fawn coloured material. The steel disc wheels on all tourers were painted Sequoia Cream, not in body colour as happened with the saloons. Wire wheels were never an option.

The car featured here has an interesting and well-documented history. It was built in early 1950 with right-hand drive and was imported into New York State via Canada in June that year. A couple of years later the first owner sold the car to a dealer, having at some time changed its colour from the original black to red. Raymond Baldwin, who lived some thirty miles south of Buffalo, purchased the YT from the dealer and it served as the sole form of transport for him and his family of four children until 1957, when it was relegated to summer use only. In 1961 the YT went into dry storage where it stayed for the next twenty-four years.



Body plate

The chrome strips on the bonnet and doors are not standard, but MG importers and dealers, J.S. Inskip of New York and Providence, Rhode Island sold these as accessories. These strips were also fitted to the unusual TD they marketed as a separate model that had an extended chassis frame and body to turn it into four-seater open tourer. Quite a few of these were produced. The second owner was obviously very fond of his MG as after the long period of storage he arranged for his son, Bill to restore the car over a four-year period, retaining as much originality as he could. Having used it for a while he then gave it to Bill for him and his wife to enjoy.



The neat engine compartment. The unit to the right of the scuttle operates the built-in jacking system



The zippered pockets each side of the rear seat conceal the lowered hood frame



The XPAG engine in the YT is to TC specification with twin SU carburetors and an oil-bath air filter



The lowered boot lid can be used to extend carrying capacity



Four removable side-screens provide protection for the occupants, even with the hood lowered

In due course the YT was sold to Bill Burnham and it was from him that the current owner purchased it in 2009. Jerry Birkbeck had seen advertisements for a couple of YTs for sale in America, one LHD and the other RHD. Having exchanged e-mails and spoken on the telephone to Bill, a price was agreed and all that was needed was to find a way of transporting it to England. Luckily, he was given details of reputable shippers and the car duly arrived at a British port on a roll-on roll-off ferry and proved to be in exactly the condition that had been described in the exchanges with the vendor. Since buying the car it has had an engine rebuild, a partial re-spray and a complete re-trim and replacement of the hood and side-screen material. However, it has also had considerable use, including many trips to Europe.

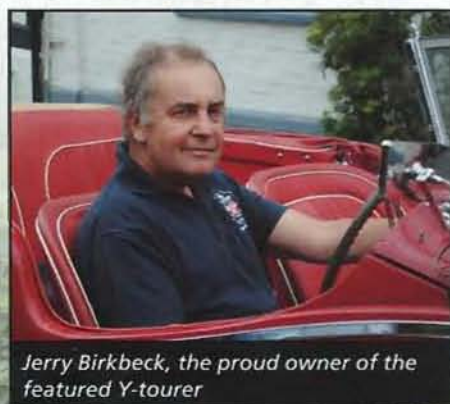
Jerry's first MG was a non-running PB two-seater purchased for £50 in 1965 when he was just nineteen. Having very little money or expertise he never restored this, but sold the engine and gearbox to

someone needing them for their car. After he had owned the P-type for three years, whilst he was away his mother sold the remaining parts. From a young age he had been attracted to both T-types and Y-types so it isn't surprising that later, when he saw an *Exchange and Mart* advertisement for a Y-type saloon for sale in Dulwich for £165, he bought this, aided by a £95 loan from a friend. The car was not in the best of health and working on this during the seven years he owned it taught him a lot about car maintenance and restoration. It was eventually sold to a Belgian for £1,250, with the deal done on the docks at Felixstowe. That car still survives.

Now married to Jo and having three daughters, driving an MG for daily trips was impractical so it was not until 1992 that he was able to justify owning another. He purchased a Y-type that was advertised for sale in Leicestershire and after three years work this was on the road. Jerry also became involved with the Y-type Register as both he and Jo enjoy the social side of MG ownership, taking the car to events and on trips in company with other owners. However, the itch to have a T-type was still present so after a while the Y-type was sold and he bought a TA fitted with an XPAW engine, cycle wings and finished in cream and brown, like the trials cars.

An unfortunate accident meant the TA had to be rebuilt, but the chance was taken to fit a set of TA swept wings and to have the car finished in one colour, as it would have been originally. The TA was then used extensively, covering over 35,000 miles, before being swapped in 2011 for an MGA 1600. This proved to be a mistake as Jerry and Jo found that although it was good to look at and nice to drive it was difficult to find the space in which to stow luggage for longer trips.

Still involved with the Y-Register, but running the TA, in 2009 he started looking around for a more appropriate car, settling on the idea of having a YT. As we have seen, he managed to find the superb example pictured here and it has proved to be ideal for trips to France, Germany and Spain. The rear seat and boot provide ample space for luggage and the weather equipment has proved to be capable of keeping even the heaviest rain at bay. Now joined in their garage by a very nice TC and an MGF, this comparatively rare MG is in good hands. 🍷



Jerry Birkbeck, the proud owner of the featured Y-tourer

