

Following on from our article
on Arnolt TDs, we report
on a rare Italian Y-type



John Thornley and M. Mazzuchelli, an MG dealer in Lugano, discuss the details of the engine of the Zagato bodied one-and-a-quarter litre.

Zagato MGs

IN THE OCTOBER ISSUE LAST YEAR WE covered the story of the Arnolt bodied TDs and the efforts of one American importer to widen the market for MGs by selling a car with a distinctive, hand built Italian body on the standard chassis.

As we saw this effort was fairly successful and around one hundred cars were built and sold. However the joint venture by the Arnolt Corporation with Bertone was not the only example of a collaboration between an American dealer and an Italian coachbuilder.

Back in the 1940s and 1950s, when many cars were built on separate chassis, and there was a restriction on the use of steel in this country, the continental countries had import penalties to protect their own motor industries. In many cases, however, cars could be imported into those countries in chassis form with fewer restrictions. Consequently, there was much more incentive for coachbuilders to put a flamboyant body onto any chassis that could be obtained.

This trade in hand built cars was a carry-over from earlier years when it was very common for customers to order their car in chassis form, having their favourite coachbuilder construct a body for them to incorporate their own ideas. Despite the large numbers of different designs of cars still

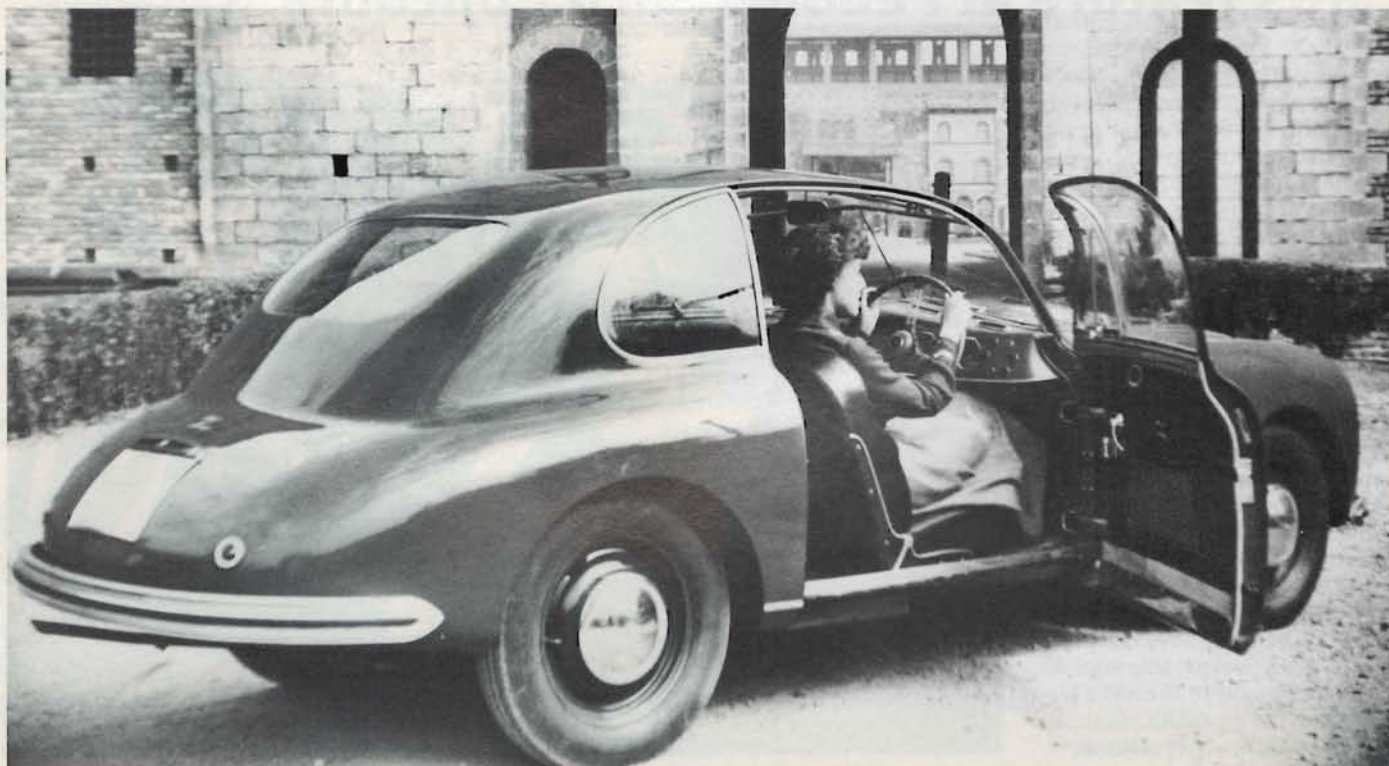
available in the early post war years, no Eurocars then, there were still individualists who wanted something different.

One such was Roger Barlow of International Motors Los Angeles. In 1948 he not only wanted a car that was out of the ordinary but had plans for a small production run for sale in the United States. One of his requests was for more performance to be obtained from the then current Y-type saloon. Roger Barlow not only dealt in cars, he raced them as well. Later in the 1950s he successfully ran a team of three Simca specials, thus promoting the Simca road car. One of these specials was later fitted with an MG engine and used in the capable hands of Ed Freutel.

Early in 1948, therefore, Roger Barlow made a journey to Europe and visited both the MG Factory and Italian coachbuilders. At Abingdon he discussed with Syd Enever the modifications that were needed for the American market. These included lowering and lengthening the steering column, additional instruments, changing the inlet and exhaust manifolds and fitting a remote gear lever, as the TC, and a Shorrock supercharger.

The next step was to consult the designers and builders of the bodywork. The Italians had flair so after discussions it was antici-

The curved doors are clearly seen here, as is the unusual rear shape. The design must have caused difficulties in retrieving small parcels.





From the front the car had a very sleek modern look. The MG origins were retained with the grille but Zagato placed their badge prominently on the bonnet.

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pated that a range of open two-seaters and drop-head two and four-seaters would be built by Zagato, Farina and Castagna, about seventy cars in all. The prices were fixed and delivery dates anticipated.

But there, it would seem, the dream came to an end. The factory records show that of the eleven “chassis only” exports nine were in 1948, three of which went to Switzerland, and one each in 1952 and 1953. So, unless second hand or standard cars were used, there are but six chassis unaccounted for. Castagna did put a body on an MG but this was on a lengthened TD chassis.

Zagato, of Milan, did eventually put a body onto a Y chassis but not the two-seater sports

zerland, also took a good look, but he had ideas of his own and used his own excellent Swiss coachbuilders.

This would appear to be the end of the story. To date, this is the only Y-type known to have been bodied by Zagato; it would be nice to know if it still exists. It would appear that Zagato came back to MGs at a later date. Earlier this year a picture appeared in an Italian magazine of an MGA with a possible Zagato pedigree.

So if anyone on holiday finds the proud owner of an MGA with different front end treatment, don't pass by - it could be quite interesting! Our thanks go to a Swiss MG Car Club member for the two press photographs of the car. **MG**

The car on show at the Lugano Salon 1949. From left to right are John Thornley, M. Mazzuchelli, Heinz Keller, and Marcel Fleury.

Zagato Y-type

car that Roger Barlow envisaged. The car was a two-door, four-seater coupe. The doors curved at the top effectively giving extra interior light by way of “roof” windows. A cut down MG radiator grille was retained with a large “Z” badge on the bonnet.

The headlights were modernised by incorporating them into the wings. All in all a very neat car viewed from head on and three quarter front. Somehow the rear of the car is not quite “right”. There was no way into the “boot” from the outside and - as owners of Frogeye Sprites will agree - this does not appear to have been too practical.

However, the car was taken to the 1949 Salon at Lugano and shown to the motoring world. John Thornley was present and took an interest in the changes made to the Abingdon product. Heinz Keller, from Swit-

