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MG
Kevin Wise recalls the
background and
production of the Y-type

Ugly Duckling blossoms in middle age

THE MG Y-TYPE SALOON STORY SHIFTS into its sixth decade shortly. After 50 years even the die-hards know that Cinderella did, after all, come to the ball. Proud owners are certainly having one now.

But the Y-type's lot has never been a happy one. Starting life as an uneasy, though nevertheless sound, mixture of Nuffield Group components and placed on the market seven years late by the catastrophe of World War Two, the first rationalised MG saloon came at a time of petrol rationing and general deprivation. Now, it seems, the Forties feel appeals to many who seek a coachbuilt car of character that allows a stylish stand against conformity.

The last MG saloon to be chassis built went on sale in 1947 and introduced independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering as big strides forward for such a retiring car.

It would hardly be fair to say buyers were purchasing performance so just what do they see in the one-and-a-quarter-litre? A pocket-Bentley perhaps with the emphasis on pocket and the low purchase price and running costs of

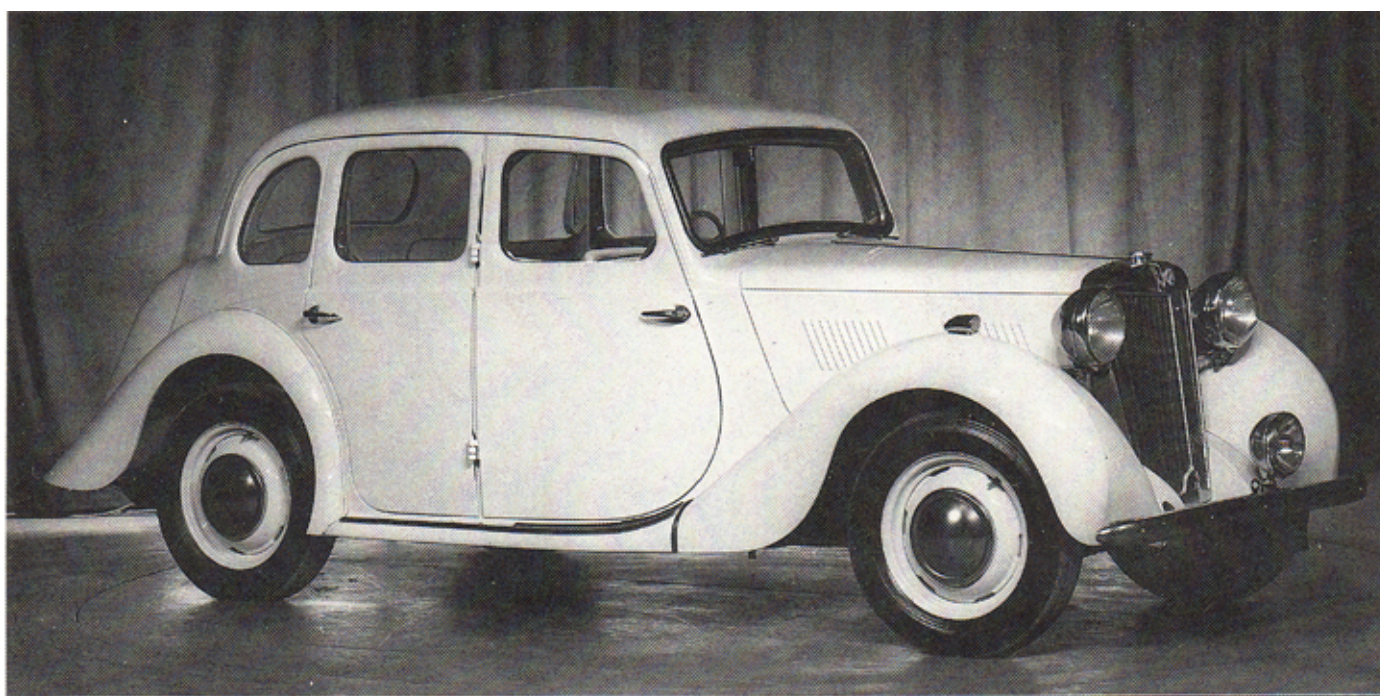
**'This fine
old Y-type
at 50 offers
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and
practicality
for
anyone!'**

MG's last coachbuilt four-seater.

Starting with a substantial, traditional, platform chassis with box sectioned main members that now included a forward transverse suspension-holding cross member, progressing to the built-up pressed steel body and ending with an accommodating and tastefully finished interior the Y-type was an honest package. Its 47bhp motor delivered 70mph and 27mpg, its suspension a smooth ride and its cloth, chrome, leather and wood interior luxurious accommodation.

Last MG four-seater to be offered as an open tourer, the YT was produced late in 1948 as an export number with the 34bhp TC engine. Perhaps post-War austerity had polarised the home market: sports cars or saloons, perhaps the man going for four seats now wanted saloon comfort also. Maybe Morris feared inter-marque competition for there's no denying the closeness of the YT to the TC and more so the 1949 TD.

Many thought of the YT as something of a "Noddy Car" but let them ponder the TD's



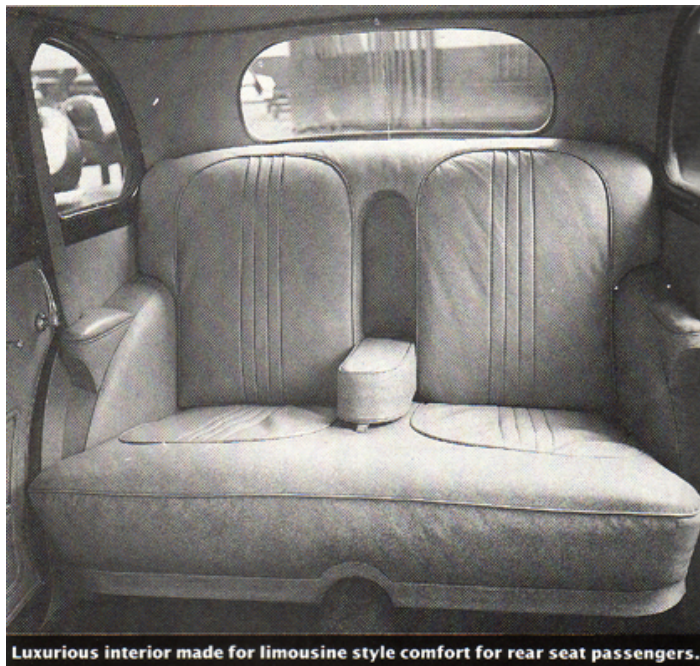
Stately looking Y-type saloon was mould-breaking model for MG offering independent front suspension and rack and pinion steering.

chassis, suspension, wheels and general appearance or the YT's fold-flat screen, bowed dashboard and cut-away doors. Let them weigh the lighter and more powerful sports car against the tourer's ample accommodation.

Just 877 examples of the very useful YT were produced before it was dropped from the range in 1931; the year MG offered their third Y-type. The YB went into production towards the end of the year from which point the earlier saloons became known as YAs.

Smaller 15-inch wheels are the visible difference on YBs with brake, suspension and final drive changes that translated marginal performance gains for weight had increased also.

For those with whetted appetites, let us say the more sorted YB suspension and drive package - front anti-roll bar and stronger shock absorbers allied with an hypoid rear axle - together with a beefed up - two leading shoe at the front - brake system should be the better bet dynamically. Reduced weight and a lower centre of gravity will also play their part for the YT.



Luxurious interior made for limousine style comfort for rear seat passengers.

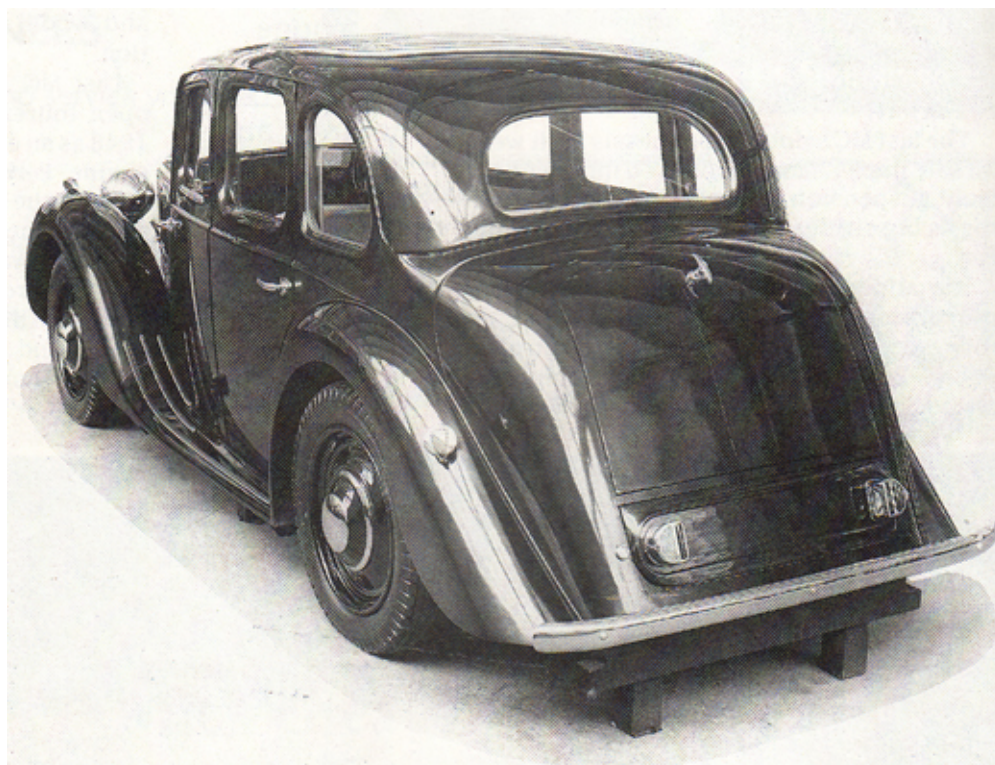
'MG Ten' paved way for mould-breaking Y-type

THE STORY OF THE development of the post-war Y-type one-and-a-quarter litre saloon has its roots in the rationalisation that took place after The MG Car Company was sold by Lord Nuffield and it was taken under the wing of the parent Nuffield Organisation.

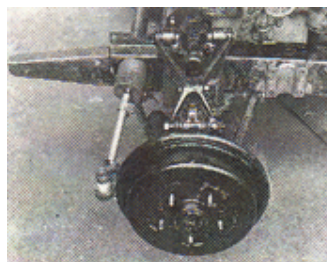
Following the sale, the Abingdon design office was closed and all work on new models was transferred to Cowley. The result of this, and of the decision to use as many standard components from within the organisation as possible, was that the TA replaced the P-type OHC Midget, and the SA, VA and, later, the WA provided the public with the sort of touring car not previously available from Abingdon.

To compete with similar products from other manufacturers, the decision was taken in 1938 to build a new small sports saloon. That year the Series E Morris Eight had appeared, its all-steel body was an appropriate size for an MG sports saloon, and the engine from the new Morris Ten was already destined to find a home in a revised TA, to be called the TB Midget.

Alec Issigonis and Jack Daniels worked on a new chassis, which carried the Experimental Department code EX 166, and this was fitted with Issigonis-designed independent front suspension, this was to be a first for an MG production car. Another first was the adoption of rack and pinion



This rear view (above) of the mock-up of the MG Ten shows that although it was similar to the Ytype that eventually appeared there were quite a number of differences, particularly noticeable around the boot area. Trim, instruments, hub caps and many other small details were also destined to be changed. The front suspension (right) of a prototype chassis.



steering - probably the greatest single advance made in terms of handling. A complete car was built using the Morris body fitted with revised wings, tail, bonnet and, of

course, an MG radiator. The new model was to have been launched in 1940, but the Second World War intervened and the design was moth-balled until peace returned.

The Y-type was eventually to go into production in 1947 - just seven years late - after a number of changes had been made to the original design.

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All models are endowed with a strong chassis, though even box sections rust. Look for corrosion on areas adjacent to the rear leaf-sprung rear axle and the bolt-on running boards and wings. Regular greasing, particularly at the king pins, will be beneficial.

Straked running boards, opening windscreen and contrary front doors are all features that have snared many enthusiasts who are prey for the pre-War look. But open one of the doors and behold the luxury interior. Leather, wood and fine fabric in all the right places even a sliding sunroof.

Definitely a plus point, but bringing a sadly neglected or even damaged interior to a fitting standard costs time and money a plenty. Effectively sealing from the elements the ten opening areas - doors, windows, screen and sunroof - is another consideration before embarking on a labour of love.

But behold that big brash MG radiator and the long piano-hinged bonnet behind it - side louvres and all. Undeniably interesting - MG's Y-type even had the Jackall hydraulic lifting system - this is a quality car that carried forward pre-War values to the modern method. So there's hydraulic drum brakes, and over-head valve engine, pin sharp rack and pinion steering and smoother-riding independent front suspension.

In fact, the steering and suspension package was a first for the marque and subsequently adopted for all MG sports cars from TD to RV8.

Still no SA swan, it's ugly duckling neither: this fine old Y-type at 50 offers a huge amount of interest and practicality for anyone taking the time and trouble to take it all in. **MG**

40 years on and Len is still keen owner of bespoke RAC rally car

FEW PEOPLE KEEP THEIR CARS for over 43 years, and even fewer own and still drive cars that earned them success in international events over forty years ago.

However, Len Shaw is still the enthusiastic owner of the work's team YB that was built for him to drive in the 1953 RAC Rally. Three identical cars were built by the factory to be driven by Len Shaw (HMO 909), Reg Holt (HMO 908) and Geoff Holt (HMO 910).

To make them competitive, the engines were tuned using the factory tuning booklets, this kept them within the regulations. Compression ratios were raised to 9.3:1, larger valves were fitted, cylinder heads polished and larger twin SU carburettors from the TD Mk II were used - fed by twin fuel pumps.

The result was 66bhp at the rear wheels. A competition clutch coped with the extra power. To identify the otherwise identical cars from each other, lance-corporal, corporal and sergeant stripes were painted on the front wings.

In the RAC Rally Len Shaw was placed sixth overall and the Y-types were first, second and third in class - a great success. They also took the team award. Once the Y-type was replaced by the ZA as the current production MG saloon, the team cars were sold and Len bought his car, and has kept it ever since. He went on to drive a work's team ZA.

Luckily we have seen him and his car at many MG



Len with some of the many trophies he won during his rallying career.

events over the intervening years and now he has written of his rallying experiences, driving this and other cars, and these will be published shortly by Magna Press in the form of a limited edition book. Long may he continue to enjoy this unique Y-type. **MG**



Len with his YB in 1997 - note the bracket for the removable rally plate. Both he and the car remain in fine fettle.



At Goodwood on the RAC Rally in 1953, Len Shaw has the rear wheels spinning in reverse whilst the car is still being brought to a halt.