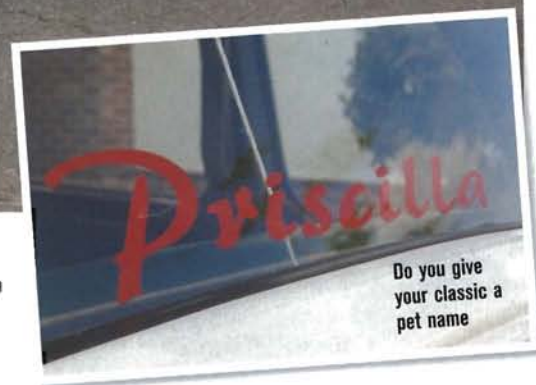


An MG YB called PRISCILLA

Serial MG collector Chris Adamson tells us why he's hooked on a YB. Why not?



Raffish looks give the YB real charm



Pre-war MGs such as the T Series are revered and much sought after while post-war the MG brand is noted for its modern innovation with the introduction of the Z Series Magnette, the sporting prowess of the MGA and subsequently the huge sales success of the MGB.

Often overlooked in this seismic switch from ladder chassis to monocoque construction is the Y Type one-and-a-quarter litre saloon

which appeared between 1947 and 1953. With its running boards, extended wheel arches, wind-out windscreen, suicide doors, centre split lift-up bonnet and exposed headlights, the Y Series looks almost 20 years older than it is and distinctly old fashioned when put alongside the 'modern' ZA which arrived in 1953.

The Y Type (originally called the MG Ten) was conceived in the late 30s and was based on the Morris 8

and Wolseley 4 with an engine from the Morris 10.

I must admit that I along with many others had completely overlooked the Y Type – that was until my partner Patricia and I decided, after cramming a week's worth of clothing into our MGB Roadster for trips overseas, that we needed something a little more capacious for classic outings to the Continent.

ATTRACTION OF A MAGNETTE

Our search in the MG catalogue initially centred on the Z Series which is just classic enough to qualify and has a generous boot plus an additional two seats.

A year long search proved fruitless as the available

Magnettes were either well past their best and requiring lots of TLC or fully restored and beyond our budget. Then on a visit to the Spring Autojumble at Beaulieu in 2005 we spotted this unusual 1930's looking Old English White 1.25-litre saloon wearing an MG badge being sold by well-known MG dealer Terry Bone.

It transpired the previous owners, who had spent a lot on having it refettled, had emigrated to Cyprus and didn't fancy the 300 per cent import duty they were being asked to pay to take it with them.

Pat immediately fell in love with Priscilla (that's the name which is written on the rear window but its origins are lost in the mist of time)



Chris has a tuned MGB but uses the YB on events due to its practicality and rarity

and we took the plunge and the 1952 YB soon settled in alongside our 1972 Roadster.

It was only later after some research that we discovered just how seemingly rare the YB is. While there were 6158 YAs built from 1947 to 1951, just 1301 YBs were constructed between 1951 and 1953 and of these the Y Register says just 180 are known to exist.

One of the reasons that so few survive is that many Y Types were scrapped for their running gear as it fits the more desirable MG TB,TC,TD and TF sports cars.

It takes a while to spot the difference between the YA and YB – the latter features fuller rear wings to accommodate the wider 15inch wheels and has hub cap medallions while underneath it gets an uprated braking system, improved rear axle and stiffer front shock absorbers plus a front anti-roll bar.

Portrayed in the advertising of the time as the sporting family saloon this seems to be wishful thinking on two counts – one the size and two the speed.

Although a four-door four-seater the Y Type is best described as snug especially with the huge steering wheel, solid upright seats and rear hinged front doors which makes getting in and out something of a challenge for the driver.

And, for me to get comfortable up front, leg room in the rear shrinks to nothing. However, we have gone four-up on occasion but unless they are small children I wouldn't recommend it for long journeys...

Surprise therefore to relate that I have used Priscilla as a wedding car for several friends – the solution is for the front passenger seat to be removed. This is a quick task as it is set on runners and simply slides and pulls out in a matter of moments – this leaves a space that even a bride in a mild meringue style dress can access, although Dad behind me might find life less comfortable.

STATELY RATHER THAN SPORTY

When it comes to performance, the statistics say 62mph should be reached in a dizzying 28 seconds! But it does pull away from the line to 30mph surprisingly quickly and I have caught more than my fair share of fellow drivers unaware at traffic-lights. Cruising is best done at about 50mph where the YB is

happiest although it can keep up with motorway traffic when it has to.

Originally the Y Type was installed with a four-speed gearbox, but one of the popular conversions is to fit a modern five-speeder to make higher-speeds more relaxing.

Priscilla arrived with the conversion but rather than the normal Ford Sierra unit the aluminium casing suggests that it is of Japanese origin, possibly Toyota, but no-one has yet been able to give me a definitive answer to this.

Originally supplied with a single carburettor the YT was fitted with twins and power was upped to 54bhp – ours is also fitted with twin carbs which gives it an extra kick.

While the lift-over bonnet can be a pain to unlock every time, it does have the advantage of giving all-round access to the engine and makes working on it relatively straightforward, not that I have had to do much as it has run without a murmur now for eight years.

If I could go back and redesign the YB one of the things I would do is relocate the battery. It sits in a box across the front bulkhead meaning the bonnet has to be removed to get it out. You also have to remember that it has positive earthing electrics, which limits the accessories which can be fitted.

An almost unique feature of the Y Type, one that put it ahead of its time and still hasn't been replicated, is the on-board jackall system. This is an internal hydraulic jacking set-up that allows the car to be raised at each corner.

It seems such a simple but effective idea I am surprised no one has copied it over the years.

Sadly, the jackall had been removed from our car before we acquired it but I suppose we should be grateful about this as the reduced weight does make my car a bit lighter and more nimble.



Drive shaft breakages are said to be common; needs a puller too



Detailing still remains such as this identification plaque

► FOUL PLAY

One of the times the jackall would be useful is when changing a wheel, which brings me onto one slight problem – the spare wheel.

This is housed behind the detachable rear number plate but, is impossible to remove fully inflated because it fouls on the rear bumper. The explanation appears to be that modern radial tyres have a broader shoulder than the original crossplys. There are two solutions: carry the spare deflated and take a foot pump with you or find a modern run flat that fits the wheel size – I have opted for the former to keep the originality.

Another popular enhancement is the installation of servo-assisted braking that wasn't available for the car originally – another feature we were lucky enough to discover already fitted. This is a very worthwhile mod as our friend, who has a similar aged YB, and who drove it was mightily impressed by its better stopping power and pedal pressure.

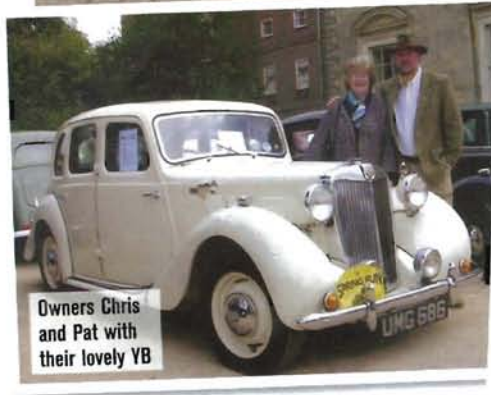
Spare parts are still in good supply and I have found specialist NTG Motor Services of Ipswich to be especially helpful with bits and pieces.

The reported Achilles heel of the Y Type, although I have yet to experience it myself thankfully, is the rear half-shafts which have a tendency to fail – some owners, I hear, carry a spare unit with them when travelling abroad.

Elsewhere the Y Type, which was the first all-steel bodied MG, uses independent coil springs at the front (designed by the great Alec Issigonis) when other cars at the time were still fitted with beam axles and cart springs.



Chris's YB is often used as a wedding car...



Owners Chris and Pat with their lovely YB



... so long as front passenger seat first removed

Steering is an unassisted standard rack and pinion layout (and who thinks adjustable steering columns are a new idea – the Y Type had it in 1947) which is light on the move but needs some muscle to manoeuvre at low speeds.

While it may not be the most sophisticated or glamorous of classic cars, the YB is functional

and so far has proved to be extremely reliable.

As well as being easy to look after, the added benefits of a 61 year old YB is zero rating for Vehicle Excise Duty and due to changes in the rules this year no requirement for an MoT, although I plan to have mine tested every other year.

Insurance, because of its modest performance and relatively strong construction, is very affordable and if you can perform the routine servicing yourself there is very little more to do apart from add fuel, making a Y Type one of the cheapest classics to own and run.

Although relatively scarce, prices for the Y Type are still very modest in MG terms; however, they have risen in recent years.

Most price guides give a range of £1500 for a basket case up to £7500 for one in excellent condition, but on an internet search I found several early YAs commanding prices as high as between £12,000 and £15,000, so you better buy one now while they are quite cheap.

The Y Type may have its limitations in terms of glamour and performance but since we have had Priscilla she has had more outings than our MGB Roadster, mainly because there are so few around and we are encouraged by our fellow club members to take it along to regional classic car shows to add variety to the MG display.

If you want more information or advice on buying and owning a Y Type, then the Y Register is a very active group and both the MG Owners' Clubs and MG Car Club are willing to assist as well.

Y not consider this MG?

USEFUL CONTACTS

- Y Register – website www.mgytypes.org
- MGOC – website www.mgownersclub.co.uk
- MG Car Club – website www.mgccyregister.com
- NTG Motor Services Ltd
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