

the MG Owners Club. *Enjoying MG* is the official journal of the MG Owners Club.

# THE YB SALOON

Malcolm Green

Although whenever the name MG is mentioned one immediately thinks of open sports models, the badge has actually been attached to far greater number of saloons, especially since the Abingdon factory closed in 1980. Indeed, now that the TF is no longer produced, the current Chinese MGs are currently all closed cars. However, looking at the MGs produced in

pre-war styling and more up-to-date mechanical specification. Easy to drive and maintain, they are ideal for those looking for something a little different, but still capable of providing space for the family.

The last saloons built by the MG Car Company prior to cessation of production in 1939 were the SA, VA and WA models. These were comfortable cars and, with the SA and WA, very much larger than the MG KN saloons that had preceded them. The need for a smaller, and probably cheaper to build, saloon was realised and by 1938 work on a new model was already under way at Cowley. All the small OHC models built between the launch of the C-type in 1931 and 1936, when the PB and N-type production ceased, used a basically similar chassis. This was relatively flexible and stiffly sprung. The models that followed had stiffer chassis frames and softer springs, controlled by hydraulic dampers. However, they still retained beam axles at a time when the motor industry was beginning to realise the benefit of having the wheels independently sprung.


The MG Car Company had explored all-independent suspension with the R-type racing car and may have developed this for road use had not the responsibility for the development of new models then



Brochure

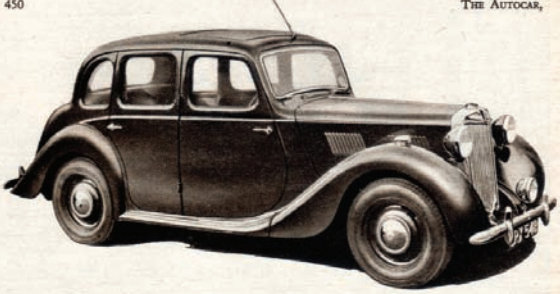
the 1920s and 1930s, the survival rate of saloons and coupés has traditionally been lower than equivalent open versions, partly because they are a lot more expensive and difficult to restore and partly because for purely pleasure motoring many prefer the wind in their hair. This is a pity because numbers remaining of some closed models have dwindled to a mere handful and they are rarely seen at events.

However, one MG saloon that has remained popular with club members is the Y-type. One reason may be that because they share many mechanical components with the more numerous T-type sports models spares have always been available. Of course, with the exception of relatively few YT export only tourers, all the Y-types were saloons, 7,459 in all. On the other hand, the main reason for the survival of probably well over 1,000 cars may just be because of their undoubted appeal. A Y-type is a happy combination of



The M.G. saloon is one of the few small cars that retains a traditional four-door six-light body style. It also is fitted with a sunshie roof. Features such as separate head lamps and running boards are still retained.

450



THE AUTOCAR,

**DATA**

**PRICE** (basic, with saloon body, £635. British purchase tax, £354 5s 6d. Total (in Great Britain), £989 5s 6d. Extras: Radio £24 13s 2d. Heater £10 17s 10d.

**ENGINE:** Capacity 1,250 c.c. (76.28 cu. in.). Number of cylinders: 4. Bore and stroke: 66.5 x 90 mm. (2.62 x 3.54 in.). Valve gear: o.h.v., push rods and rockers. Compression ratio: 7.2 to 1. B.H.P.: 46 at 4,800 r.p.m. (37.5 B.H.P. per ton laden). Torque: 38.5 lb ft at 2,400 r.p.m. M.P.H. per 1,000 r.p.m. on top gear, 14.42.

**WEIGHT** (with 5 galls fuel), 21 cwt (2,341 lb). Weight distribution (per cent): 49 F; 51 R. Laden at tested: 241 cwt (2,755 lb). Lb per c.c. (laden) 2.2.

**TYRES:** 5.50-15in. Pressures (lb per sq in): 23 F; 25 R.

**TANK CAPACITY:** 8 Imperial gallons. Oil sump, 9 pints. Cooling system, 13½ pints.

**TURNING CIRCLE:** 33ft 6in (L and R). Steering wheel turns (lock to lock): 2½.

**DIMENSIONS:** Wheelbase 8ft 3in. Track: 3ft 11in (F); 4ft 2in (R). Length (overall): 13ft 8in. Height: 4ft 9in. Width: 4ft 11in. Ground clearance: 5½in. Frontal area: 18.7 sq ft (approx).

**ELECTRICAL SYSTEM:** 12-volt 52 ampere-hour battery. Head lights: Double dip, 42-36 watt.

**SUSPENSION:** Front, independent with wishbones and coil springs. Rear, half-elliptic springs.

**No. 1461: 1¼-LITRE M.G. SALOON**

**F**OR many years the two letters M.G. have been dear to the hearts of a large number of enthusiasts. Through the years the company has produced a wide variety of models, ranging from a multiplicity of Midgets (Magic or otherwise) to saloons of up to 2.6 litres. At the moment production is concentrated on two models, the open two-seater known as the TD Midget and a four-seater saloon mechanically similar to the open car, known in its latest version as the YB. The saloon is one of the very few examples available in this country of a modern 1,250 c.c. engine and chassis fitted with traditional quality coachwork. It is of a size and performance that would suit the requirements of large numbers of motorists, yet it is compact and economical and very handy in congested areas, and can be housed in a quite small garage.

Few modifications have been made to this model since it was introduced about five years ago. However, two detail changes to the chassis have recently been made. A hypoid rear axle unit has replaced its spiral bevel counterpart, and an anti-roll bar is now fitted to the front suspension. It might be thought that an engine of only 1,250 c.c. in a fully equipped saloon body would produce only a very ordinary performance. But this is not the case. In part, perhaps, because of its sporting background, coupled with plenty of common sense on the part of its designers, the car does not protest at being driven hard. On the other hand, it is not in any way rough. In fact, it has in addition a number of qualities desirable in a small, smart town carriage.

On the open road some 40 miles can be put into an hour without working the willing horses unduly, while under favourable conditions a decidedly better average is possible if the driver is really trying. Although it is a quite flexible



**PERFORMANCE**

**ACCELERATION:** from constant speeds. Speed, Gear Ratios and time in sec.

M.P.H.	5.125	7.098	10.609	17.938
10-30	to 1	to 1	to 1	to 1
20-40	15.4	10.5	7.1	—
30-50	15.3	10.4	8.4	—
40-50	16.0	11.8	—	—
40-60	22.0	—	—	—

From rest through gears to:

M.P.H.	30	50	60
sec.	6.9	18.4	30.4

Standing quarter mile, 24.5 sec.

**SPEED ON GEARS:**

Gear	M.P.H. (normal and max.)	K.P.H. (normal and max.)
Top	(mean) 71 (best) 75	114 121
3rd	54-59	87-95
2nd	30-40	48-64
1st	14-22	23-35

**TRACTIVE RESISTANCE:** 18 lb per ton at 10 M.P.H.

**SPEEDOMETER CORRECTION: M.P.H.**

Car speedometer	10	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	85
True speed	10	19	28	37	46	56	63	70	75

**TRACTIVE EFFORT:**

Pull (lb per ton)	Equivalent Gradient
Top	154 1 in 15
Third	233 1 in 8.8
Second	320 1 in 6.5

**BRAKES**

Efficiency	Pedal Pressure (lb)
85 per cent	146
84 per cent	100
49 per cent	50

**FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 26.5 m.p.g. overall for 265 miles (10.66 litres per 100 km). Approximate normal range 24-28 m.p.g. (11.8-10.1 litres per 100 km). Fuel: British Pool.

**WEATHER:** Dry surface, wind fresh. Air temperature 52 degrees F. Acceleration figures are the means of several runs in opposite directions. Tractive effort and resistance obtained by Tapley meter.

Model described in *The Autocar* of September 9, 1949, and January 4, 1952.



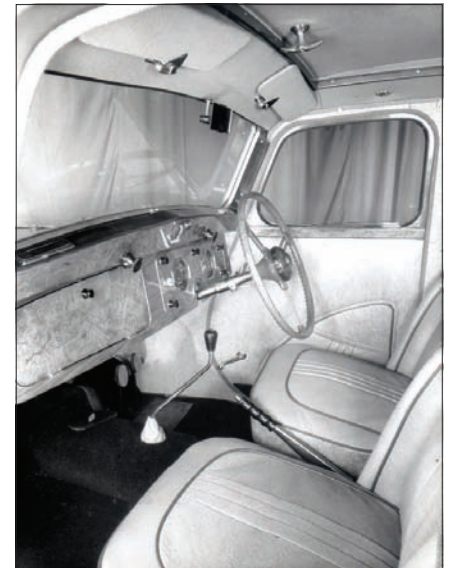
been transferred away from Abingdon. In the Cowley design office the talented Alec Issigonis and ex-MG man, Jack Daniels worked on an independent front suspension layout for the Morris 10, which was not used on that car on the grounds of cost. At the same time a prototype of a new MG Ten saloon was built based around a new chassis with the Issigonis independent front suspension and fitted with the body from the Morris Eight and engine from the Morris Ten. It was this model that after the war was launched as the one-and-a-quarter litre, or Y-type, saloon.

The Y-type chassis comprises welded, closed box section side rails and tubular cross members. At the back the side rails pass under the rear axle, which is suspended on leaf springs and has a Panhard rod to give lateral location. At the front a cross member houses coil springs and provides a mounting for the rack and pinion steering gear. The shock absorbers provide the upper and lower mounting points for the swivel pin. This front suspension in

modified form was to give service right up to the end of MGB production.

As already mentioned, the body was closely based on the then current Morris Eight, but the addition of a longer bonnet, elegant front wings and the Abingdon radiator gave it a much-improved appearance. The cabin, too, was much better equipped than was the case with the Morris. An innovation for MG were the pressed steel wheels, rather than the wires fitted to almost all previous models, but no doubt the average motorist at the time would have blessed the ease with which they could be kept clean.

The Y-type was powered by a single carburettor variant of the XPAG engine fitted to the TC sports model that was being assembled alongside the new saloon. Developed pre-war from the 1,100cc Morris Ten unit for use in the short lived TB Midget, the engine had earned a reputation for strength and reliability, as well as being able to stand a considerable degree of tuning to improve the power output for racing. Reversion to a single carburettor reduced the power



The interior of the Y-type was attractively finished, as shown in this factory picture

output from 54.4bhp in twin carburettor form to just 46bhp for the Y-type. The saloon weighed over a ton so performance is adequate rather than sprightly. However, compare this power to weight ratio to that of the average British saloon car of the period and one can see why one magazine reported of the new car that it is lively, *it is fast, but it is also genuinely quiet running, most comfortably suspended and light as a feather to drive.*

In addition to the chassis improvements, the Y-type was also more modern in its bodywork construction. Previous MG saloons had been fitted with traditionally constructed wooden framed bodies clad in separate steel or aluminium panels. Although not following the most up to date practice of the time in using a unitary body/chassis unit, the car was of all-steel construction. As the basic structure was shared with a volume car, there were obvious economies that allowed this method of construction for what was in factory terms a model produced in small numbers. Even by the standards of 1947, the overall styling employed was still conservative, indeed the Morris Eight itself was soon to be replaced by the new and now familiar post-war, Issigonis-designed Morris Minor. The Y-type, however, satisfied those who favoured the traditional styling made popular by the pre-war MGs models.

The main appeal of the Y-type, then and now, comes from both its upright, 1930s styling and from the standard of trim and interior appointments. There is something very appealing about leather-covered seats finished in the most tasteful of colours and polished walnut woodwork. Anyone brought up in a period when leather interiors were the rule rather than the exception, will recognise the smell inside any Y-type. That mixture of leather, wood varnish and musty carpets is very evocative of an earlier era. A dashboard layout that used octagonal surrounds for standard round instruments

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engine, it does not like to be allowed to slog, and to get the best out of it the gears should be freely used. Top gear will cope with normal main road gradients, yet third is often kinder if the car is well laden. On second gear it will climb most steeper hills, including a 1 in 5 test gradient.

Unlike the other cars produced by the Nuffield Organization, which use torsion bars for the front suspension, the M.G. employs coil springs at the front, in conjunction with half-elliptic springs for the rear suspension. This arrangement results in a very stable car and the firm, controlled ride inspires confidence. There is no marked pitching, nor is the suspension sufficiently hard to cause the ride to be rough or jerky when traversing bad surfaces. Cornering in the M.G. is particularly pleasant and the effect of the anti-roll bar is distinctly beneficial, there being very little roll on corners; also this addition appears to have eliminated the slight oversteer tendency mentioned when the car was last tested. Under normal conditions, with two up, the car now has a slight tendency to understeer, although in the fully laden condition a slight amount of oversteer was experienced. As it happened, the car was handled on snow-

covered roads for an appreciable distance during the test. Under these conditions it inspired exceptional confidence and by its precise response made them almost enjoyable.

The rack and pinion steering, with 24 turns from lock to lock, is very positive, with no lost motion or any suspicion of "rubber rods" in the mechanism. It has a nice feel and a good self-centring action; it is reasonably light, yet quick and very responsive steering. A slight amount of road shock is transmitted back through the wheel at times, but this is not in any way excessive.

The gear change mechanism has a lever which can best be described as midway between the earlier conventional central lever and a remote control mechanism of the kind fitted to the M.G. Midget open two-seater. It is very rigid and positive in operation. The synchromesh has a nice feel and is sufficiently effective to prevent the mechanism being crashed or beaten unless particularly snappy changes are made. The clutch has a light and smooth action and is pleasant to operate.

Hydraulically operated brakes working on the two-leading-shoe principle at the front are well up to their job. Pedal pressure required for maximum efficiency is fairly high, yet for normal road conditions very good results are obtained without pressing particularly hard. At all times the car stops in no uncertain manner and the brakes maintain perfect balance. Under the severe conditions imposed during performance testing no brake fade or judder was experienced, nor was there any noticeable increase in free pedal travel subsequently. The hand brake lever, located between the separate front seats, is in a very convenient position and one which enables a good leverage to be applied to it when necessary.

A folding central arm rest is fitted in the rear seat, and holding straps are attached to the rear pillars. The rear window winders are placed above the door pockets. There is a narrow shelf at the top of the rear seat backs.

Measurements in these 1/16 inch scale body diagrams are taken with the driving seat in the central position of fore and aft adjustment and with the rear cushions uncompressed.

The luggage locker has a platform type of lid which provides a useful addition to the carrying capacity. A separate lower compartment with detachable lid houses the spare wheel and tools.

Both front seats are adjustable for leg length by means of catches placed half way along the outer seat runners. Pockets are provided on the front doors, and the window winders are placed low down and to the front.

WHEELBASE 8' 5"  
 FRONT TRACK 3' 11/16"  
 REAR TRACK 4' 2"  
 OVERALL LENGTH 10' 8"  
 OVERALL WIDTH 4' 11"  
 OVERALL HEIGHT 4' 6"

SEAT ADJUSTMENT REAR AXLE





The smaller wheels and deeper wings of the YB are evident in this side view



Anyone familiar with the Morris Eight will identify the body as coming from that model, but when used for the Y-type the bigger boot and longer bonnet transform the looks

was an obvious attempt to give the car a definite identity, although the badges on the boot lid and on the traditional radiator certainly gave sufficient clues. The windscreen could be wound open on hot days and for the small rear window a remotely operated blind was fitted to

avoid dazzle at night from the lights of following cars. Inside, the roof had twin sun visors and a central reading light, as well as a metal sliding sunroof.

The exterior paintwork was both traditional and attractive, with some cars being finished in two-tone colour

schemes where wings and running boards were painted in one of the other standard colours. When launched, the basic colours were: Black, Almond (light) Green, Shires (dark) Green, Autumn Red, Sequoia Cream and Grey. Sun Bronze was later added to the list. The duo-tone cars were





There is adequate room in a YB for four reasonable-sized adults

usually supplied with the lighter colour for the body and darker for the wings.

As we have already intimated, the motoring press received the car well. The initial announcements were followed up by full road tests where *The Autocar* reached 50mph in 16.9 seconds and 60mph in 28.2 whilst *The Motor* took 16.7 and 27.3 seconds to reach the same speeds. *The Motor* reached a top speed of 69mph and both magazines reported that around 60mph was available in third gear. Of course, pool petrol in 1947 was of low quality and modern Y-type owners should easily manage to match these figures.

At Abingdon the production lines had started rolling, streams of fully painted bodies arrived daily on transporters and in time batches of completed cars were readied for delivery to their new owners around the world. By 1947 the Nuffield Export Organisation had recovered from the wartime interruptions and a dealer network was well established. This was the dawn of a real boom in British car exports with much of the rest of the industrial world, outside of the U.S.A., still building up capacity after the destruction of the previous years. It was the time when British cars were exported in greater numbers than ever before and sold on all continents. Unfortunately, the quality of many of these was poor and



YBs in standard tune are probably best suited for use on A & B roads - rather than on high speed motorways

not really suited to the conditions they were to encounter. This was not true of most MGs, although there were still some difficulties with quality, especially of electrical components, but the small Y-type saloon soon found friends around the world. Initially all the Y-types were right-hand drive, but when the open YT version was introduced for export markets the saloon was also modified under the bonnet to make fitting left-hand-drive steering easier.

The battery box was moved and the oil pump altered to allow room to accommodate the steering column.

By the end of 1951 the Y-type had been in production for over four years and the mechanical specification was inferior to that of the TD then being built alongside it at Abingdon. To remedy this, a number of changes were introduced for the 1952 model year that improved the car, which was renamed the YB.













The registration number, UML for University Motors Limited, was transferred by the first owner from his previous MG, a YA



The large spot lamp was a standard fitting on the YB

Alterations made were extensive, but not that apparent to the casual observer. The most important of these were to the braking system and running gear. The Lockheed brakes fitted to the YA had changed little from the first hydraulic system introduced to MG sports cars when the TA was announced in 1936. Basically the same design was used for the post-war TC and when the YA was introduced a similar, but not interchangeable, system using just one hydraulic cylinder for each front brake drum was fitted. The YB, however had a twin leading shoe system, i.e. two cylinders for each front brake drum. This was markedly more efficient and the front brake drums were now integral with the hubs, rather than separate as on the YA.

In common with most other cars of the period in the Nuffield Group, the YB benefited by being fitted with a the more modern hypoid back axle which was potentially much quieter in use. The road wheels were at the same time changed from 16inch to 15inch diameter and the tyres increased in width from 5.00/5.25 to 5.50 to improve the roadholding, helped by a front anti-roll bar and heavier duty rear shock absorbers. These mechanical changes forced a couple of body modifications. The smaller sized wheels took up rather less of the space under the wings so to improve the appearance of the car these were made slightly deeper, something that is quite apparent when viewed from the side of the car. The smaller wheels and wider tyres would not fit in the YA spare wheel stowage compartment so on the YB this was made an inch taller.

Much improved as was the YB, it still could not be seen as a truly modern car. Even press reports at the time spoke of it as being traditional, which was another way of saying it was outdated, and the sales figures for the revised car bear this out with only 1,301 being built before production ended towards the



The boot can carry a reasonable amount of luggage and any extra could have been tied to the lowered lid



The rear window was provided with an internal blind that could be operated by the driver to reduce dazzle from following headlights





YBs were the last MG saloons with separate headlamps



Bronze finish applied when the car was built in 1952. The car was very original and drove well, but the engine was burning oil owing to seized piston rings. As part of the deal, the engine was rebuilt and the car given a new MOT certificate and overhauled brakes, wipers and radiator.

The history of the car throughout its life has been carefully recorded. H.W. Styles of Lewis, Sussex bought it new from University Motors and the registration number was transferred from his previous car, a YA saloon. By 1961 it was getting a little tired so very unusually he sent it back to the Abingdon factory where it was completely rebuilt, re-sprayed and fitted with a reconditioned engine at a total cost of over £500. In 1965 the car was passed to an employee and later from him to the Kent garage. Over the twenty-one years they have owned the YB it has proved very reliable. The mileage recorded when they bought the car was 37,000 and this is thought to be the distance covered since the Abingdon rebuild. The mileage is now over 120,000 and the only major work needed was fitting an unleaded cylinder head after a valve failure and some small areas of paintwork repairs.

Being very keen on the model, Peter served as Chairman of the Y Register for ten years and the couple have used the YB for trips as far afield as Germany, France, Ireland and Luxembourg. The car still goes very well and the good roadholding and handling compensates for any lack of outright speed when travelling on the hilly, country roads around its current Shropshire countryside home.

Next Month:  
*An MGA 1600 MK II with a story to tell*

Excellent proportions are a feature of the Y-type saloon

end of 1953. In due course it was to be replaced by the superb ZA Magnette, which was in all departments a more modern car, but in the meanwhile the owners of the few YBs built could enjoy the benefits of driving an attractive and much improved car still boasting the pre-war style luxuries of an opening windscreen and a sunroof, becoming something of a rarity on 1950s cars.

The YB featured in the photographs shares garage space with Peter and Suzie Arnell's MG NB four-seater, MGB GT, Morris Minor Traveller and AC Greyhound, not to mention the MG ZR saloon that provides everyday transport. Real enthusiasts, all these cars regularly appear at classic car events. They purchased the YB in 1995 from a village garage in Matfield, near Tonbridge, Kent where it had been on display, unused, for some time. The bodywork had been re-sprayed in a slightly lighter version of the Sun



The owner of this nice car is Peter Arnell