

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

MG Y-Type and MGC

As their anniversary year draws to a close – 70 years for the Y-Type and 50 years for the MGC – Ian Hobbs reflects on the models and introduces a wonderful example of each from Australia

Soon after I joined the MGCC of South Australia, I bought my first MG. It was a TC and I paid AUD\$510 for it – and yes, we haggled over that ten bucks. About the same time, Bob Schapel also joined the club. His dad bought a TC when he was 11 years old and they both worked on it for four years to bring it back to life. When Bob's 16th birthday arrived, the L plates were attached and he was off down the road. We both joined the club in 1969 when we were 17 years old, and we've been good mates ever since.

A couple of years later we decided to go to the second Australian MG Car Club National Meeting held in Melbourne, Victoria which was a 500 mile drive away. The Nat Meets are held over Easter with a Noggin & Natter on Good Friday, a concours on Saturday, competitive events on Sunday and farewells on Monday. This format hasn't changed much since those early days.

Bob and I travelled in his white TC to the Melbourne event. Bob was studying and I was working, so we left after work on Thursday evening and travelled through the night. One thing I remember from that trip was that about every half hour there was a whiff of burnt oil. After several whiffs and about 200 miles down the track, I ask Bob what it was. Bob is a person who is a keen observer and aware of many subtleties, so his explanations are generally detailed and well thought out. In this case he had a small oil leak allowing a drop of oil to fall onto the exhaust manifold and he explained that whenever he smelt the oil, he knew that he still had plenty in the engine. He also told me it was designed that way, and I believed him.

We arrived in Melbourne, had a wonderful weekend and left late Monday morning to arrive back in Adelaide about 10 hours later. Oh, did I mention that we were billeted by two gorgeous young ladies? I thought

we had arrived in heaven when I met them, but that is not a car-related story so it can't be told here, other than to mention that they were obviously ladies of great taste as one of them drove an MGB.

Reminiscing can be a delightful thing, but coming back to 2017 and the National Meeting was held over Easter in Adelaide, South Australia. As usual Friday night was the Noggin and Natter plus rocker cover racing, Saturday was the concours and the red carpet theme party at night. You could either go to the Motorkhana or Kimber Run on Sunday, Monday was the choice of a Super Sprint or observation run followed by the presentation dinner, a farewell breakfast wrapping things up on Tuesday morning. 340 club members attended the event, displaying 180 MGs. The long weekend celebrated the 70th anniversary of the MG Y-Type and the 50th anniversary of the MGC, and two cars that participated are featured here.



The Y-Type

Let's have a look at the Y Type first. This is a 1948 YA, #1201, owned by Graham Loader. I asked Graham if he would mind me writing a short article for *MG Enthusiast* magazine about his experience with the car. He replied: 'Go ahead, but you can't take any photos - we've just returned from a 2200km (1370 mile) run and the engine's got dust all over it!' I gallantly offered to wait until he had cleaned the dust off...

After his retirement in 2000, Graham decided to buy an MG Magnette to use on Car Club runs, but in conversation with a chap he was told of a partially restored Y-Type that had been sitting in a shed for the last nine years. Not knowing what a Y-Type looked like, Graham and his wife Pat inspected the



ABOVE: Y-Type cabin is smaller than the Magnette that owner Graham Loader initially thought he wanted, but it has the same air of quality and craftsmanship.



MG. Pat gave her approval, so Graham opened his wallet and the Y-Type was theirs. Fortunately Graham had the skills to do the job - the Y-Type consumed the next two years of his time, and he produced a sparkling silver car with maroon interior.

While the Y-Type is close to original, he wanted to make a car that was reliable and performed safely in the modern motoring environment and travel comfortably at 60mph. The other option was to drive slowly, but that was a choice Graham wasn't prepared to take. So what did he do? The car came with 15in wheels, so he retained those as obtaining modern radial tyres was easier than with the original 16in rims. He replaced the steel brake drums with cast iron ones so they pulled the old girl up more effectively, and fitted an anti-roll bar at the front. He also found that the car handled more predictably when he removed the Panhard rod that had been fitted.

Initially the engine wouldn't rev smoothly and blew a bit of smoke out of the exhaust, so Graham stripped it down and found the crankshaft main bearing journals were not in alignment. That was duly fixed, and a number of other improvements were made at same time - the engine capacity was increased to 1347cc, new pistons were fitted and a standard TC Crane cam added. The head was modified to take unleaded fuel, TF1500 valves were fitted and the compression was raised to 9:1, while an electronic ignition smoothed out the throttle response. The result showed 45bhp at the back wheels, compared to the original 46bhp at the flywheel. »

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« The car was back on the road in 2005 and has covered a little over 30,000km (19,000 miles) in the last 12 years. The run referred to earlier that had got it so dusty this year was organised by the Federation of Historic Motoring Clubs SA. Called West on Wheels, it travelled northwest through farming country, and then turned south to the tuna town of Pt Lincoln before returning. 60 cars participated, with four MGs among them – Graham's Y-Type, a TB and two MGBs. They all completed the run without any major mechanical problems; Graham did hear a rattle and found a shocker bolt was loose, but this was easy to fix, as was a loose window winder.

Cruising at 100km/h (60mph), the Y-Type completed 250-260km (155-160 miles) per day and the perky little MG returned 31mpg for the trip. On the first day Graham was one of the last

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ABOVE AND LEFT: Sparkling silver paint adds to the YA's look of quality.

meeting in the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, with representatives from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, UK and the USA.

Andrew Roberts recently wrote: 'The MG Y-Type was far better than its detractors would have you believe.' I'm sure the same could be said of the MGC, which was publicly launched 20 years after the Y-Type and also had many detractors. BMC advertising for the MGC stated: 'Much more than meets the eye!' so maybe the advertising department were expecting some adverse comments? Well, let's now have a look at an MGC.

to leave, and had to travel 150km to the lunch time destination where he was the fifth car to arrive. He said: 'We passed an awful lot of cars. Some of the drivers were just so slow. It was great fun though, lots of lovely people and interesting cars.'

A total of 453 MG Y-Types are known to have come to Australia. The Australian Register currently lists 164 YAs, 72 YTs and five YBs. The MG Y team celebrated their 70th Anniversary in June 2017 with 33 MG Y-Types.



ABOVE: The XPAG engine has been enlarged slightly to 1347cc and given a number of other tweaks during a rebuild completed in 2005.



ABOVE: It has since covered a little over 19,000 miles, and returned a very creditable 31mpg on its most recent adventure.



ABOVE: When Graham acquired his YA as an unfinished and abandoned project, it came with 15in wheels. He has retained these as the tyres are easy to find.

The MGC

Gary Julian has been playing around with cars since he was 15 or so years old. He told me that on one of his first cars, a Mk2 Zephyr, he fashioned an E-Type like nose onto the front using hammers and an oxy welder. Can't imagine it? Nor can I.

His current car is a 1968 MGC GT, #4031. Always looking for something different, he'd heard about the MGC and decided to buy one without knowing much about them. He had a B at the time, but thought the C might be a bit more fun, and fun he certainly had. The MGC he bought in 2008 which came with a wad of receipts. Gary thought he'd just hop in and drive it, but when it arrived he found it had an unpleasant looking dash—yes,



ABOVE/BELOW: The same attention to detail has been applied to the interior as to the exterior – those flared Sebring arches were fabricated in steel and welded on.



the Abingdon Pillow. Not able to help himself, out came the dash and in went an English one. Then there was the automatic transmission – a five speed box would be nice, he thought.

The internet can be a wonderful educator. Gary came across the MG Motorsport site and discovered the Sebring replicas that Doug Smith has created. Now, building one of those would definitely be different... So he started to order all the bits he needed to create a Sebring tribute MGC. There was a Ford Sierra Type 9 five speed gearbox, fibreglass flared arches, a larger front anti-roll bar, a lightened cast iron flywheel, a mild camshaft, manifolds, electronic ignition... the list goes on and on.

Then he discovered the five link rear suspension, so he had to have one of those, and he found racing style Recaro seats so ordered those too. Plus some 8J Minilite wheels. With such wide wheels and tyres, he thought EZ power steering would help. He considered an alloy head too, but AUD\$10,000 was just too much of a stretch for his wallet.

Gary looked at the fibreglass arches he'd bought, but just couldn't bring himself to stick them to his C, so he had them copied in steel and welded those on the existing wings. He wasn't happy with the colour of his car either, finding it just a bit too purpley. He found the metallic blue paint was a Jaguar Mineral Blue colour from the early 1980s, so when repainting the C he reduced the violet tint by half. It's a beautiful colour and he didn't have to paint the engine bay as the colour is not noticeably different. »



ABOVE: Triple Webers are an arresting sight under any bonnet.

« Four years of work was coming to an end, and the National Meeting of MG Car Clubs held at Easter 2017 in Gary's home state of South Australia was only weeks away. The Cbring tribute car was ready to roll only three days beforehand.

Gary's MGC was first shown at the Concours and everyone was impressed. Three Weber carburetors certainly grab the attention of anyone passing by. I heard one woman comment: 'Isn't the colour beautiful, it's just like velvet.' At the end of the day Gary noticed a worn patch in the grass at the rear of his car. 'That's where people knelt down to look at the five-link suspension,' he said. Another comment was: 'I think you've over done the restoration.'

The car is impressive, but missed out on winning the Concours class by a mere five points – there just wasn't time to replace the wiring loom with a new one, and he hadn't polished the



LEFT: Gary Julian got himself a bigger project than originally planned.

tail pipe. But Gary has created an extraordinary MGC GT, and it is clear that he is not short of talent to have built such a beauty. (In case you're wondering, recent rolling road figures showed 220bhp delivered through the rear tyres.)

The new Australian MGC Register publicly lists 89 known and verified cars plus another 43 either not for publication or not verified, totalling 132 MGCs. The New Zealand Register lists 70 known MGCs and two known but unverified cars, totalling 72. That's a total of 204 MGCs Down Under. To celebrate the MGC's 50th anniversary a book called *MGCs Down Under* will be published later in the year, with personal stories plus clever maintenance and modification tips from owners in New Zealand and Australia. Look out for it!

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“ I HEARD ONE WOMAN COMMENT:
‘ISN'T THE COLOUR BEAUTIFUL,
IT'S JUST LIKE VELVET’ ”

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ABOVE: The inspiration for Gary's wonderful MGC GT is clear, even without this telltale badge.



ABOVE: The obligatory quick release fuel filler has been located on the righthand side C-pillar.



BELOW: Graham's Y-Type and Gary's MGC, pictured with the author's own MGC.

