



# YB The First?

Chassis number 0251 is always a bit special on an MG, and this Y-Type is no exception. Now, after languishing for many years, it is wowing the crowds again and winning converts to the Y-Type cause.

WORDS AND PICTURES: ANDY STARKEY



**A**pple's latest phone is now out and people have been falling over themselves for the latest bit of tech to clamp to their ears, or more likely to be wandering around aimlessly with their faces glued to the glowing screen. The thing is, though, it only seems like a few weeks ago that its predecessor was the best thing since sliced bread. I don't know, but it feels like we are moving much faster with technology than we really need to. I mean, what can the new version do that the old one can't which warrants parting with around a grand? I suppose as consumers we have now come to expect that the boffins at these companies are toiling away to get their latest and best designs get to us before any of the opposition beat them to it.

All I can say is that it's a good job they didn't work for MG back in the late 1930s. In the final years of the decade prior to the onset of war, Gerald Palmer had penned the body design for the

new range of Y saloons based on the Morris Eight of the time. The car was to feature new and revolutionary front independent suspension designed by Alec Issigonis and Jack Daniels (no, not the Jack Daniels of Bourbon fame). By 1939 the car had been tested and deemed ready to take the world by storm at the Earls Court Show.

Unfortunately something was to interrupt MG's plans for that great unveiling – World War 2. It would be a long, agonising eight years before the car was to actually hit the streets. Could you imagine the likes of Apple waiting that long to release

their latest product? I know that a war is likely to suppress any consumer desire for the latest designs, but the pace of technical change during those missing years was immense. Just think: at the outset of the hostilities we were flying biplanes and by the end of it all we were whizzing about in jets! And yet when things calmed down enough to look towards the future, MG simply blew the dust off the Y and got it into production.

By 1951 the Y was to get a wee bit of an overhaul with a revised

Lockheed braking system, an improved rear axle and smaller 15in wheels.

The handling was then improved further with the addition of a front anti-roll bar, thus giving us the YB, just like the one featured here. In fact this is not just 'a' YB, it is 'the' YB, by which

I mean this pretty little thing is actually the very first YB to roll off the Abingdon production line on the 21st November 1951.

I'm sure you'll agree that it looks just as good today as it would have done more than 66 years ago, and of course there's a very good reason for that. Keith Buckley is a chap who doesn't shy away from a challenge, and when he found YB 0251 on eBay he did a bit of digging with the Y Register and the DVLA to find that the car was genuine and had been originally registered in





**RIGHT:** Silver Streak Grey was one of two metallic shades offered in a range of six colours on the YB.



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Rear window blind was one more period luxury in what was a well-appointed cabin.



« Kent, but seemed to have been lost for quite some time. The car was now residing in Scotland, and Keith had seen a post on the forums when a member of the Y community went to view the car. This confirmed that all the numbers matched the register, but ended with the unwelcome comment that it was 'beyond a rolling restoration.'

Nevertheless Keith bravely completed the purchase and the car was trailered to his home in Crewe so the task of restoration could begin. It was soon evident that although the chassis had survived and was in very good condition, the body was a different matter altogether and needed to be completely rebuilt. The wings had contracted a bad case of rust, the sills had gone, as had the chassis supports and the section that held the boot hinges. All in all, a fairly big task to say the least, although

with more than a bit of help from NTG Motor Services, all the new panels could be sourced so the job of getting the old body panels off could begin.

It was during this part of the proceedings that Keith was able to see some of the original colour scheme. 'As I got the front wings off,' he explains, 'I found a little section which revealed Silver Streak Grey with burgundy wing piping, a great discovery as I think it looks great.' I'd vouch for that too, Keith.

At this time and with easy access, Keith turned his attention to the engine and with some effort actually got it started. It all sounded pretty healthy considering it hadn't run in 35 years, although it soon became more than obvious that it needed new core plugs, thermostat housing and a radiator.

It was while the car lay strewn in pieces that Keith became aware that the upcoming Restoration and Classic Car Show at the NEC Birmingham was after

### At the NEC as a Barn Find in 2016





**ABOVE AND LEFT:** An opening screen and an in-built Jackall system were both carry overs from the 1930s.

barn finds to display, so he got in touch with the organisers. He explains: 'I told them what I had, and without hesitation they said they needed it. I had just one week to put all the old parts back on the car and get it to the NEC.'

You may have noticed that I haven't mentioned when Keith bought the car, or when he got it home, or even when it was finished, and that's for a good reason. Once the car had been thrown back together and was on the Barn Find stand at the show, people were commenting on what a great find it was and how it's such a shame that the finished cars don't get seen after they've appeared in this 'as found' state. That put a little light bulb on in Keith's noggin. He decided he would get the car from its found state to fully restored condition in time for the same show the following year! Was he mad? It would appear so. It was now March 2016 and plans were quickly drawn up, because

this was more than a restoration, Keith was now on a mission.

A relationship had been forged with a local body shop, Peter Adderley Body Repairs of Crewe. The YB was traileered straight there from the NEC to begin the marathon task. The repairs included sills inside and out, repair sections for all four doors, wings, boot and so on. The Workshop Manager at Peter Adderley's, Bryn, was extremely supportive of the project and allowed Keith to come into the workshop and get on with the mechanical and electrical side of things alongside their body repairs. The list, as you'd expect for the mechanics, would be a long one. We already know the engine needed quite a bit of Keith's attention, but added to that now were things like suspension bushes, rod ends, wheel bearings and a complete new braking system to mention but a few. What remained of the old wooden floor was used as

a template for a new replacement, something Keith made himself.

With the now bare metal body ready for paint, Keith got the electrical problems under control by making and fitting a new loom, ignition system and starter switch along with re-wiring the original instruments. New old stock tail lights and reflectors were fitted too. The exterior was now gorgeous in several layers of Silver Streak Grey paint, which I have to confess I wouldn't have thought could be an original colour, but it is despite its very modern metallic hue. The original bumpers were too far gone to be rescued, so a pair of TD ones were utilised with special conversion bars and new over-riders. The headlamps and grille are still original, and the



**ABOVE AND LEFT:** Power for the YB came courtesy of a 1250cc OHV XPAG engine making 46bhp at 4800rpm.



« amount of patina on them is a welcome reminder of this car's true age.

With the bodywork done, it was time to tackle the interior. A local specialist was once more employed to make good the ravages of time on the seats and soft furnishings. CC Trim of Northwich was Keith's choice in this matter, as they are well known for their classic refits. Another long list was drawn up and handed along with the car to John Cartlidge, the owner of CC. Keith had helped the process along a tad by making new door cards, using the originals as templates just as he had done with the floor, ready to be finished by John and his team.

The woodwork of the pillars also had to have some extensive attention as it would appear that a group of hungry woodworm had been dining out on it for quite some time. In cases



like this there's no alternative but to remake the devoured parts and replace them with new. The seating has been beautifully covered in a burgundy hide with contrasting piping, and a lush deep pile carpet has been fitted. There's an entirely new headlining and sunroof trim, which complements the adorable rear window blind and finishes the interior off wonderfully. Yep, a sunroof! Who said this car was behind the times?

I really do need to make a confession at this point and say that a car of this vintage wouldn't normally be my cup of tea. They have never really caught my attention or caused a little flutter of excitement inside me, until now that is. This YB just stood out when I spotted it at a local show as something very special, something romantic even. The closer I looked at the little design features and the attention to detail, the more I fell for it. Where else could you sit in what could easily represent Winston Churchill's study on wheels? I mean, that sunroof and the little drawstring blind on the back window, it's simply gorgeous. And what about

that Jackall self-contained jacking system that is not only pretty clever, but it still works a treat? I'm a proper convert to cars like this now and will not stroll past them at shows anymore. If you get the opportunity to see this car for yourself, you'll know what I mean.

And there's not a single hint to show that this car took a mere 12 months to restore. Oh yes, I nearly forgot to say, Keith and his trusty team of pros got YB 0251 finished just three weeks before the 2017 show, at which it was very warmly received. I should think so too.

As I am now converted to admiring these slightly older ladies, I can now suggest to Apple and the like, slow down a bit with your designs and let us enjoy what's good about one before ditching it for something new and more expensive. Mind you, having said that, it transpires that when this car was new it would've cost £989, which is about twice the annual wage of the time and was about half the price of an average house. So maybe I should say carry on Mr Apple, because your new iPhone is really as cheap as chips. 

