



THE Y SERIES

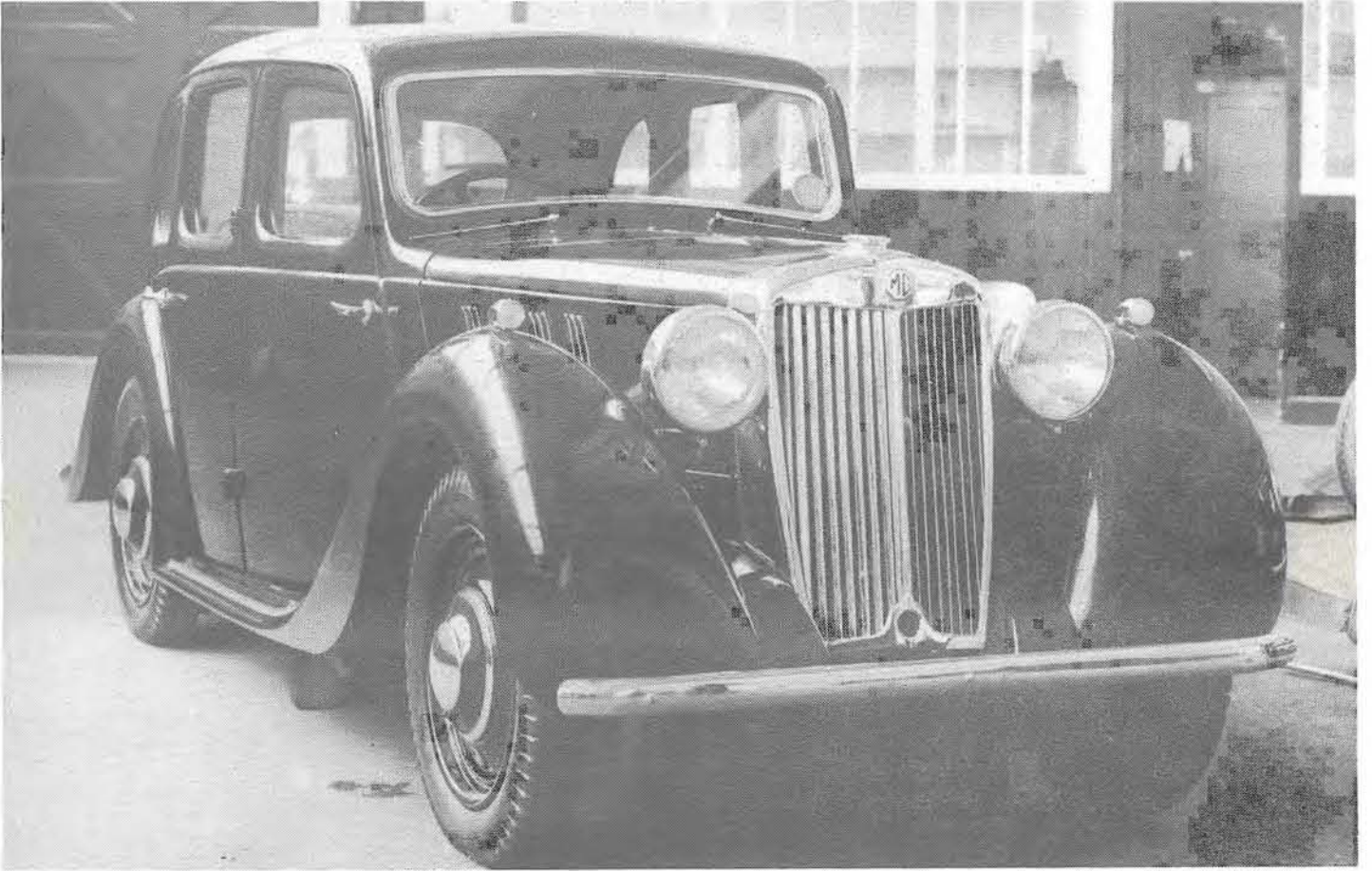
The very first M.G. with independent suspension was the R Type single-seater racing car, and several years passed by before the M.G. designers were satisfied enough to fit it to a road car. H. N. Charles originated the idea for ifs as far as M.G. goes, and he certainly had a hand in its refinement.

Independent suspension wasn't tried on a saloon at Abingdon until late in the 1930's Andy Andrews spent his life at M.G. working in the service department. He recalls: "I used to go all over the country for what we called service weeks. Reg Jackson, after they finished racing, was the Service Rep. and I went as the mechanic. We'd been to Liverpool for a service week and had used a works WA for transport (ERX 64). Reg had to get back for some luncheon in London. 'I've got to get back and I'll take the train,' he said. 'I'll leave you the car.' But it worked out that we could come back together after lunch. Reg was driving. We hadn't gone many miles when we came to this place where they had just tarred the road and put granite chippings on it. We were coming up to a brand new car going very slowly. We started to pass. Now this little car hadn't put any indicator out. There was a road to the right. At the very last minute he put out his indicator and turned. Reg slammed on the brakes so hard I went right under the dash. On those blooming chippings we just slid and hit the back of that car. We pierced their petrol

tank and pushed the car right up on the triangle. No one was hurt, but it was those folks' first ride in that car. The steering was damaged and we took it pretty easy back to Abingdon. After it came back, it was made into a pick-up truck. Then it must have had an experimental number because they put independent front suspension on it—the first car at Abingdon with it."

In the later 1930's, the drawing office for M.G. was located at Cowley where one of the bright young men was Alex Issigonis. Issigonis is most famous for his work on the Mini, but in those pre-war days he had spent a great deal of time developing an independent front suspension system for Morris. In 1937 the man in charge of the M.G. drawing office was Gerald Palmer and at that time they were working hard on the design on the Y Saloon for introduction in 1940.

H. N. Charles had done the suspension work for the Morris 10, but the instructions to the design office were to prepare a cheaper alternative for the Y Type. Morris Bodies in Coventry handled the body production as they did on all M.G.s of the period. A single carburettor version of the XPAG engine as used on the TB Midget was chosen for the powerplant. By 1939, Palmer and his crew had completed work on the YA, and it was ready to go into production.





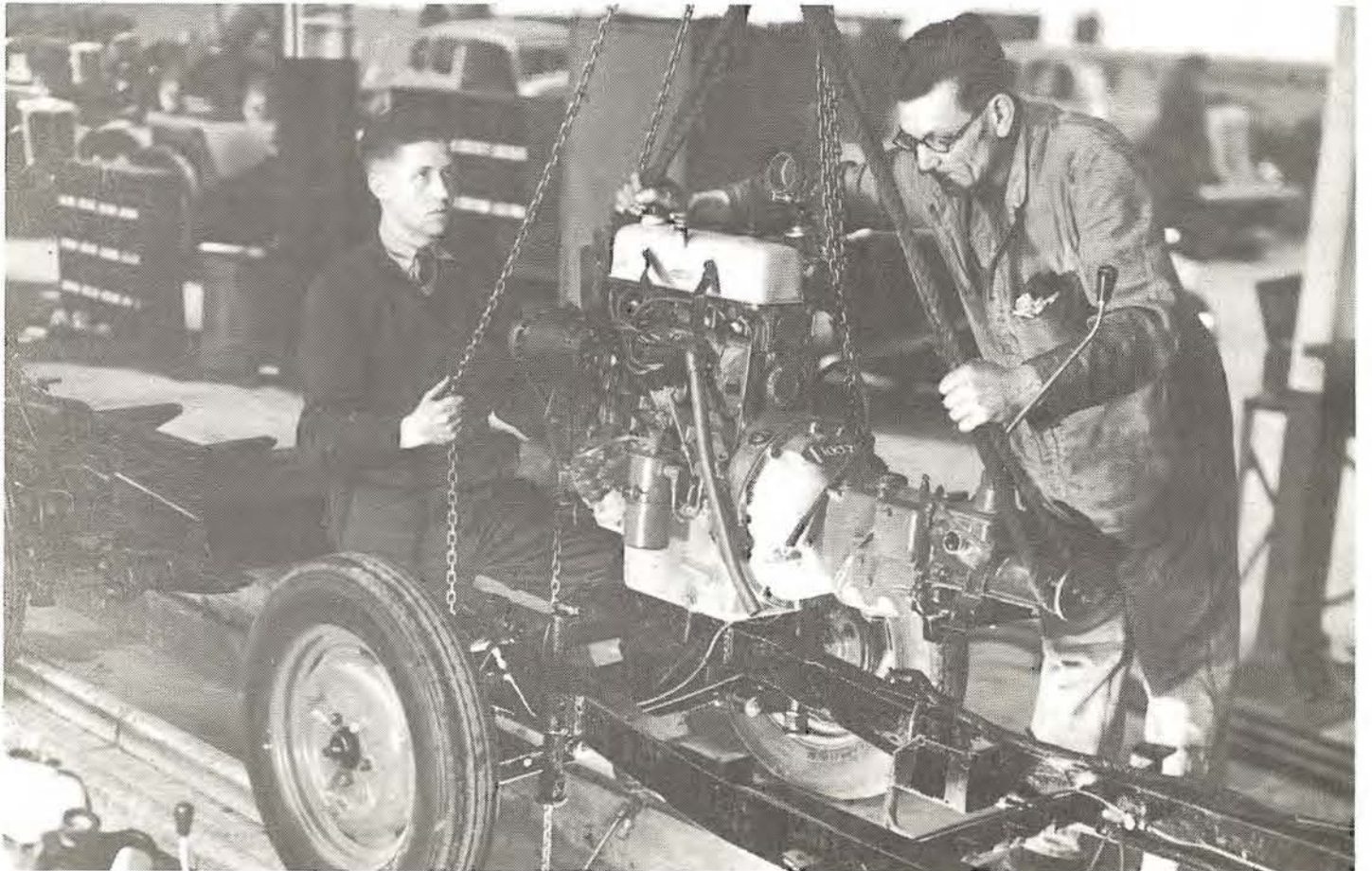
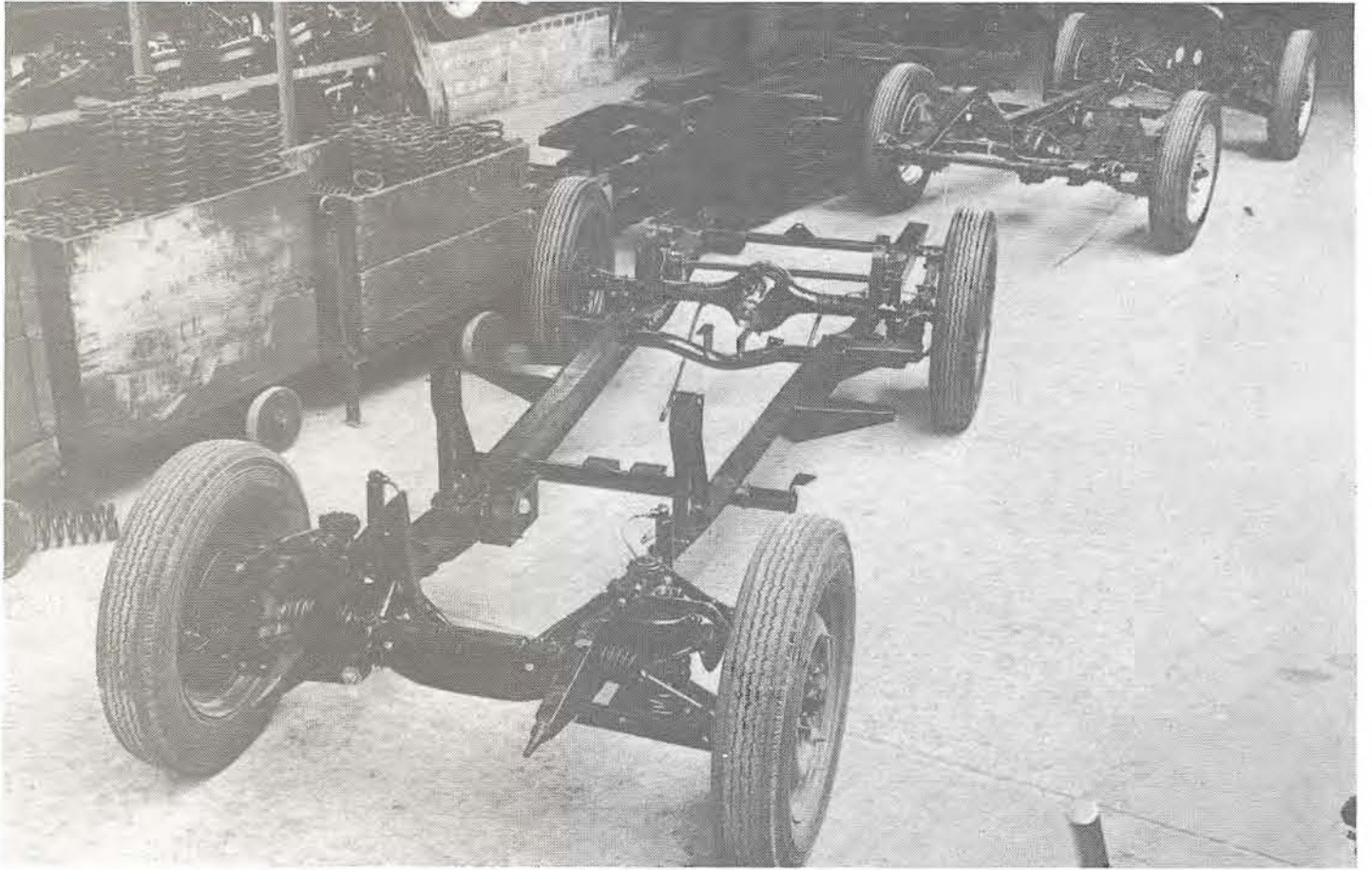
On the opposite page are two views of the Y Saloon prototype. This car was completed before the start of WWII. While the basic shape of the car remained unchanged, there were differences. Note that the prototype is supported by an elaborate system of blocks. The wheels on the production model (above) are simpler and nicer. The Y saloon continued a tradition of fine M.G. sporting sedans.

World War II, however, put a stop to that plan, and the project was held back until 1947 when the YA was officially introduced.

The YA was warmly received by the British motoring press. It was lauded for "looking like a car" in the days when many designers were going prematurely overboard for all-enveloping body design. Most journalists were delighted with the car's tasteful combination of saloon and sports car qualities. **The Motor** (28 May 1947) said, "It must be emphasized that, although the octagonal badge is generally associated with racing and sports cars, the 1¼-litre M.G. should rather be regarded as a refined fast touring car."

The Autocar (9 May 1947) said, "... it offers a satisfyingly high cruising speed, a maximum of over 70 m.p.h. if required, comfort for the family, and yet a high degree of driving interest for the driver who likes motoring for its own sake as well as for transport purposes. In addition it is smooth and flexible, with the result that handling it in town is not irksome, and also when the mood or occasion suggests such methods, it can be pottered delightfully round country lanes at 20 to 30 m.p.h."

Coupled with a sporting chassis was a luxurious body. Leather seats and a lavish use of genuine walnut trim were appreciated by all who were exposed to this car. The dash was efficient and showed off the traditional octagonal design to a good effect. It used a rigid box frame which later became the basis for the TD, TF, and MGA. Its sporting characteristics were enhanced by rack and pinion steering along with the independent front suspension. This was a "go anywhere" car, and many of them competed in trials,









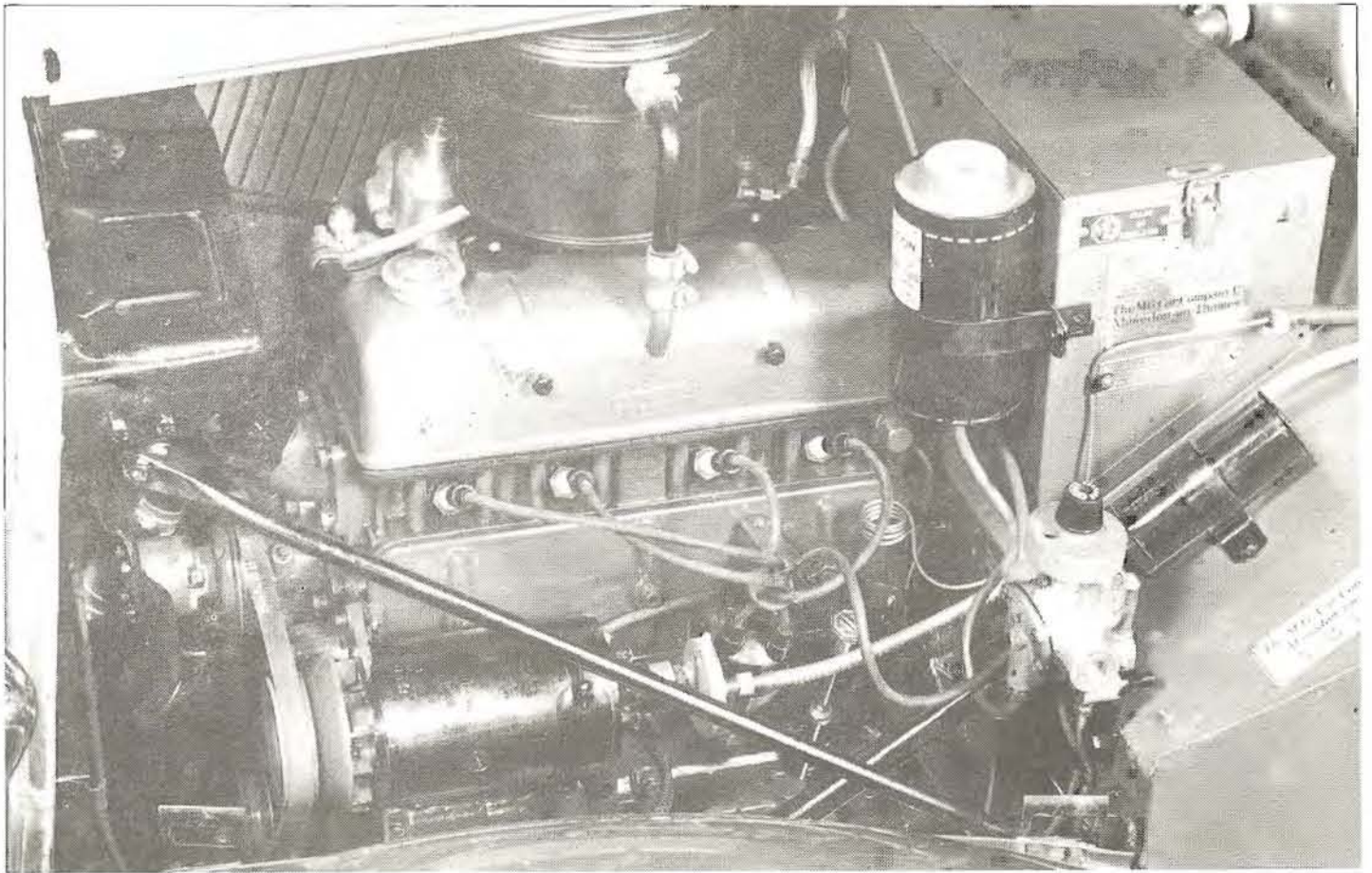
On the preceding pages are some shots of the Y in production at Abingdon. One should remember that the works has always been an assembly plant; for most models this means that parts were shipped in and assembled with care at Abingdon. The box frame with ifs became the basis for the TD, TF, and MGA. Trim used to be installed at Abingdon as done by these ladies on the second floor. The bodies then went down-stairs for fitting to the frames. Working at the "G's" has always been a source of pride with Abingdon people, and there is plenty of that pride in the marque. Built side by side with the TC, the Y can be proud of its sports car heritage.

rallies, and even races. Probably the best known racing personality involved with the Y was Dick Jacobs who had considerable fun as well as success in a Y saloon.

Top speed on a Y was just about 70 m.p.h. Richard Benn of Brighton, England, however, was not satisfied and asked Syd Enever and Reg Jackson for some help to see if it couldn't be persuaded to do a bit better than that. They took it to Stage V of the well-known tuning booklet (this included among other modifications, adding a Shorrock supercharger). Oversize back tyres were fitted along with racing tyres on front for safety, then Benn went along with Goldie Gardner when he took his record breaker to Jabbeke. Between runs of that famous streamliner, Gardner was delighted to do a few in the Y saloon — complete with tools, all equipment, and luggage. The fastest of his several runs was 107.36 m.p.h. The flying mile average was 104.725 m.p.h. which makes that car the fastest 1½-litre saloon in the world . . . I suppose, however, that records are meant to be broken.

The Y Tourer was designed with the export market in mind. It was meant to satisfy the American with a small family which just couldn't fit into the TC. In 1947 S. V. Smith and Donald Harrison from the Nuffield Organization took a fact finding tour of North America. They came back convinced that a four seater tourer would be in great demand in North America. They convinced the powers to be and the design of the Y Tourer was begun.

In *The Story of the M.G. Sports Car*, Wilson McComb stated that the Y Tourer was, ". . . about as sporting in appearance as the average Victorian bathtub." An unkind cut at the least, but Mr. McComb is entitled to his opinions, and he does have them. I have an idea, though, that some of those big Victorian bathtubs may have seen their share of sporting events in their day. Since only 877 Y Tourers were produced, it is safe to say that it was not a huge success. It cost the same as the saloon, weighed less, and the engine had







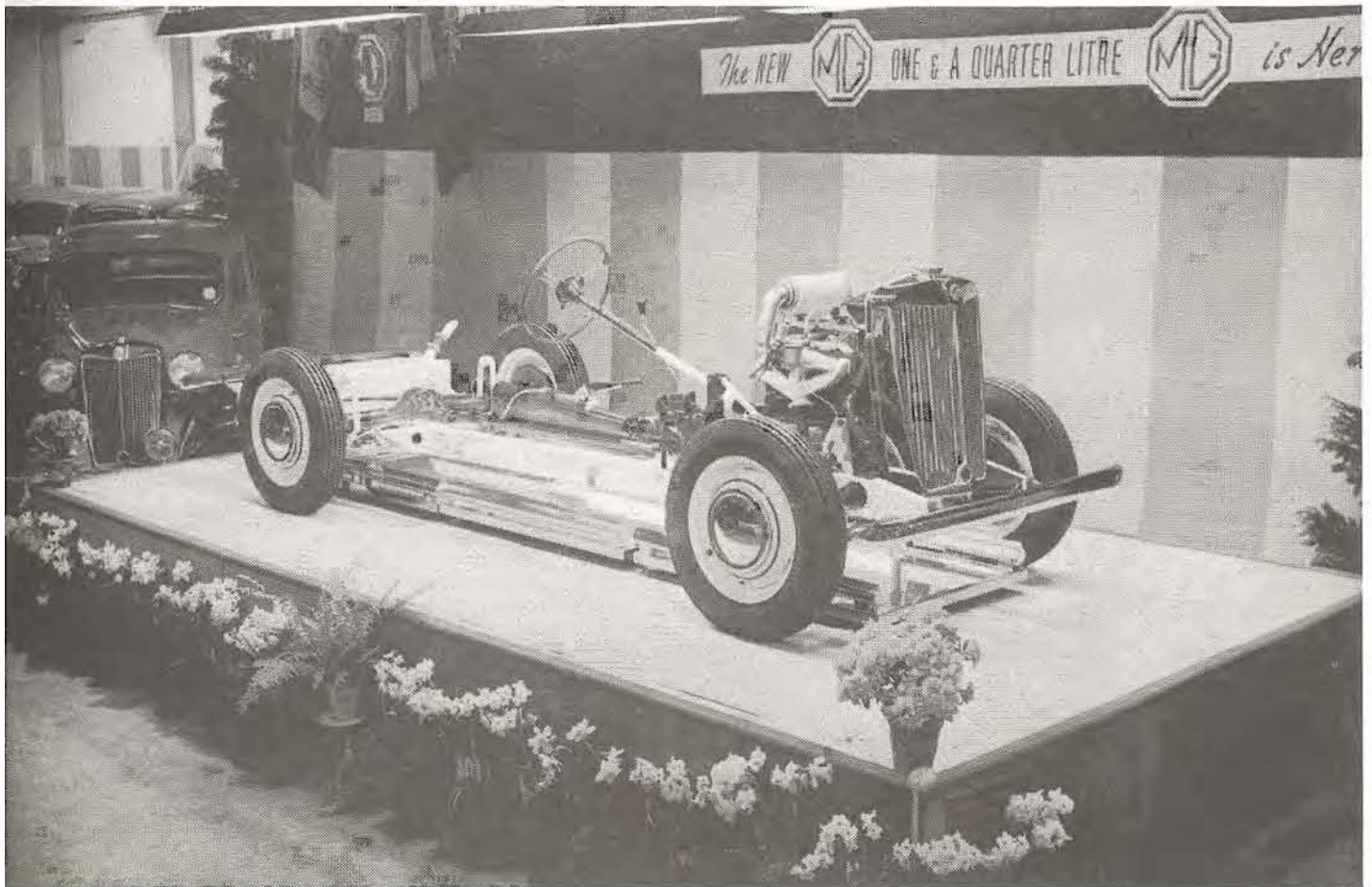
the twin carburetter set up from the TC; even so, it just did not sell well.

On the tourer the chassis and suspension from the YA was used. The body was a full four seater with front bucket seats hinged at the front to afford access to the full width rear seat. Since the rear seats were located forward of the rear axle, the seating position was as low as the front. Full weather protection was offered by a folding canvas hood and sidescreens. In fair weather it was possible to fold the windscreen flat.

While the prime motivation for the YT originated with a desire to satisfy the North American market, it appears that they were exported all over the world; indeed, only about half of the 877 went to America. By the late 1940's, the TC was too deeply entrenched as the sports car in America. It had captured every enthusiast's heart regardless of the size of his family. If he couldn't have a TC, then he'd just wait. The YT, then, wasn't the success hoped for in Abingdon.

It took about twenty-five years for the Y Tourer to be recognized for what it really is: an alternative to a two-seater sports car for a four member family. And it happened in America. The TC, TD, and TF really came to enjoy classic status in the USA during the 1960's. More and more of these delightful cars were found and restored. Often the owner found that traveling to a meeting of M.G. enthusiasts such as the well-known Gathering of the Faithfuls held twice each year necessitated a two car caravan in order to bring the family and everything they wanted for the weekend. Bear in mind that many of these American enthusiasts, (most are members of The New England M.G. T Register, Ltd) travel one or two thousand miles to a meeting, and you have an idea of the problems in taking a family along in, say, a TC. Little wonder, then, that these chaps started looking for an M.G. that would take everyone. The Y Tourer is a natural choice because it has an engine and transmission already

On the previous two pages are shown the prototype Y Tourer body which has had some modifications done to the battery box so it can be either RHD or LHD. Before the view of the body are two engine compartment shots: the top is of the tourer and the bottom is of the saloon. The serial number of the top car is YT1924 and is, in fact, the author's car—the third YT off the line. Another view of the car is shown above. Opposite is a view of the M.G. stand at the London Motor Show in the fall of 1948. The specially turned out chassis for the show is in the bottom photo—probably taken at the works before going on the show tour. On the following pages are shots of the cars at the factory.





familiar to the T enthusiast. In recent years, then, these cars have really come into their own for very practical reasons. In a way, it is sad that the acceptance of the YT took so long because many of them have been scrapped in order to salvage T Series bits. Anyway, in 1978 the Y Tourer has arrived as a desirable car. Doubt it? Try to buy one! Victorian bathtub . . . humph!

Consecutive chassis numbers for the various types of M.G.s produced over the years have been very logical and easy to understand. Every M.G. enthusiast worth his whit knows that most types started numbering with 0251 and that Abingdon 251 was the works phone number until the entire phone system was modernized in recent years (the

number still ends, however, with 251). But the Y Series of cars did cause some confusion with their numbering. The first Y (YA 0251) appeared in 1947, and the last one (YA 7284) rolled off the line on 19 November 1951. One might think that there were 7033 YAs built. Not so. Mixed in with the YA numbers were the 877 Y Tourers which were built in 1948, 1949, and 1950. The first YT off the line was YT1922 and it displaced a saloon which was scheduled for that number. So, when we subtract the 877 YTs from the total YA production, we find that there were 6156 of them built. The YB conforms to the standard M.G. practice: YB0251 was built on 21 November 1951 and the series finished with YB1551.



Improvement has always been a byword at Abingdon, and the YB is a case in point. A major improvement on the YB was the change to a hypoid rear axle to insure longer life, a quieter rear end, and a lower prop shaft to increase interior room. Ride and handling were improved with the addition of: bigger dampers, front anti-sway bar, and smaller 15 inch wheels. The reliable XPAG engine received the larger clutch and new camshaft as did the TD. Cosmetically, the improvements included fitting bumper over-riders, and the valance on the rear wings was deepened slightly. The YB gave the buyer everything that a good family saloon should provide; in addition it offered sporting motoring to the knowledgeable owner. As usual, it was a thoroughbred.

It is rewarding to see the Y, both saloon and tourer, really coming into its own as a collector's car these days. Already the specialist manufacturers have started reproducing some of the parts necessary for the restoration of these delightful four seaters. In America there are now separate classes for the Y at many of the meetings while in England at least one example is regularly raced. The days of tearing a Y apart to furnish parts for a T Series car are gone, and I am glad of it. The Y is every bit an M.G. as any of the T Series, and fully deserves the respect it is now receiving. Long live the Y.

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