

Y-Type Newsletter

A day out in the Cotswolds

The Gold Cup Celebration Run – 22 March 1998

Introduction

Following the success of the *Birth of the Y Run* a year ago, which was attended by 39 Ys the Register Committee decided to organise another early season gathering as a starter to the 1998 calendar.

The title suggests a grand affair – which of course for although those present it undoubtedly was – but it has a relevance beyond the topical link with a famous horse racing event held a few days before at nearby Cheltenham. The celebration was an obvious way of marking the Register's award of the Nuffield Gold Cup. The Cup is presented annually to the M.G. Centre or Register that in the opinion of the Directors and Board of the M.G. Car Club has done the most over the year to promote the name and spirit of M.G.s. In the main the Cup has been awarded to centres and the last time a register received the accolade was eleven years ago. So the efforts of Dennis, Jack and Paul over the years have been deservedly recognised and it was of course fitting that 50 years after the first of the marque rolled off the production lines a golden award was made. This then provided the context.

Planning the event

Following an approach from Dennis in November Richard Dick and I agreed to organise a run. Richard, who walks the Cotswolds on a very regular basis, knows the area edged by the small towns of Bourton-on-the-Water, Winchcombe, Chipping Campden and Stow-on-the-Wold like the back of his hand. Drawing on this experience he selected a route, the greater part of which followed narrow roads and lanes and passed through villages and landscapes whose character remains largely unchanged from the time when 'our cars' were the sought after models of the day. Together we checked Richard's route later that month. Other than some very minor changes this became the agreed course for the run scheduled to take place on 22 March 1998. Unfortunately, no-one appreciated until too far down the line that it clashed with Mothering Sunday – which certainly led to a small number of Ys being unable to attend.

Nonetheless, whilst Dennis gained approval from the RAC, Richard and I carried out another check but this time in his YB (USV 420). Richard drove and I made copious notes which I then drew up as a set of instructions. Ten days before the day I asked my wife Jo to navigate from these to see if there were any problems or ambiguities – which there were! Ironing those out was essential from my experience of the shortcomings of my route plans for the *Birth of the Y Run*. A lot of people are not terribly happy with a set of maps. Therefore reasonably detailed written instructions, together with a plan of the route meant that in the likelihood of anyone getting lost they could quickly find their way back to Bourton-on-the-Water the start and finish point for the event.

The day it all happened

High pressure over England during the latter part of the week marked by a superb sunny Thursday set the scene, according to the weather centre who claimed that the sun would continue to shine over the weekend. Not quite!

'Our' day was cold and grey but at least dry as cars and occupants began to arrive at the British Legion Car Park in the middle of Bourton-on-the-Water. We owe much to Richard's negotiating skills for without the car park we would have been unable to stage the event in the village. Furthermore, the British



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Legion kindly offered coffee and tea together with a separate room for registration and a range of Dennis's 'goodies'. The indefatigable Secretary was the first to arrive as he motored up from Tiverton in 2 hours to arrive at nine. Not bad for a journey of well over 100 miles – as was said by someone 'Den, doesn't hang about!' By the time I arrived at ten (and I was quite impressed by my 33 miles in 50 minutes!) the car park was filling up and I went off to set up the Registration Stand. I had learnt from last years event of the need to be organised! Certainly the despatching of application forms and setting a date for their return together with the entry fee meant that all the administrative nightmare of form filling and cash collection was avoided. The previous night Jo, my wife, and I had filled each applicants folder with a programme, route instructions and map. All the forms had been in alphabetical order but as I opened my file they all spilled out...! The instructions together with a rally board and plaque provided a very comprehensive drivers package.

Dennis beavered away selling all his goodies and taking orders and still found time to give help and advice – I don't know how he does it! In the meantime I had met Paul and Sara Barrow, who had kindly brought their camcorder with them on my request. They were very keen to help and I had suggested to Paul that a simple video of the proceedings would be a useful record of the day. So he went out to talk to owners, film under bonnets and just before the departure film our retiring Chairman Paul Rundell with the Gold Cup resting on the radiator cap of his maroon YA (PPE 928) which he has now sold for a TC. A fitting tribute to an individual who has done so much to help promote the cause of the Y. By 11.30 Paul was ready to flag away the first of the 33 cars that had made the start point – together with an assortment of support vehicles including a ZA and an MGC. Although we unfortunately did not have a YT amongst our number we did, nonetheless, have Sandy Henderson's YA convertible – adapted from a vehicle that may otherwise have been scrapped. Sandy's model raised much interest. The other 32 Ys comprised 17 YAs and 15 YBs. Several of these cars were new to the organisers, though not to the club. Eleven cars that had not been present on last years *BoY Run* showed up, whilst a further 20 cars that turned up last year were missing, although several people had contacted me to say that they could not make it. This does show that a target of 50+ cars is attainable so come on let's try and crack that figure at Silverstone!

New models and new friends

Three years ago on the 1995 *Wings Run* I met Tim Griggs who was restoring a YA (UMG 366) that he had owned, I believe, for more than 25 years. The restoration was completed last year since which time Tim has done more than 2000 miles. The outcome of all his efforts is truly outstanding and the dark green paint and superb finish to the woodwork gave a stunning effect. Certainly, the car that I would have chosen to take home! We welcomed Andrew Coulson ➤➤

➔ and family in their 1951 YA (UMG 473), who had recently purchased their car from Ian Hazell. They had also driven the furthest for the event – some 250 miles from Sharrow in North Yorkshire and fully deserved the little prize we gave for such endeavours. There were also several participants who were in the process of undertaking a restoration. I am sure that most of them returned home duly inspired. In particular, I would like to thank Roger Webb (currently restoring a '52 YB – XMY 55) who followed the event in his ZB (TER 980) and Keith Herkes, in an MGC, who had hoped that his YB (KAX 876) would be there. Keith brought with him some fascinating manuals and photographs that he had recently purchased, including the original pasted up workshop manual for the Y Brian Cox, an associate editor of *Practical Classics*, came along in his YB (DFB 777) which I guess many of you will be aware of in Brian's monthly column on 'Our Cars'. Brian took a number of photographs, some of which should have appeared in *Practical Classics Weekly* by the time you read this article. Although we had no YT present we did have three owners of the model, including David Pelham (who came in his 1951 YA, MOT 129) and has just imported one from the USA, David Lawrence, a South African, who as well as undertaking a detailed restoration, has also managed to find the time over a number of years to write the definitive book on the Y. This should be available from the Club, by the time you receive this copy of *Safety First!*. The third member of this trio is Mike Silk, who had come down from Yorkshire with some YT door panels and other tourer parts for Dave. Mike's own saga would be best written by him – he has owned his car for many years. His photographs bear testament to a superb restoration which hopefully will be on the road by next year. Others present, though not with their cars, included Trevor Austin, from Kent, who owns probably the most original YA in the U.K.

On the move

By 11.40 nearly all the cars had gone and there were just two Ys and an MGC left. The Ys belonged to Dennis Doubtfire (1953 YB – YMG 125) and the other my own 1950 YA (RVW 761). This can be seen on the front cover, along with proud owner, on the March issue of the *Octagon Bulletin*, that arrived a few days after our event! (Signed copies of the cover will be available at Silverstone!).

Prior to our moving off, someone noted a large pool of oil beneath my car. A weeping side cover gasket was the problem; tightening up the securing bolt merely aggravated the problem – it sheared!. Luckily Mike Silk, who was travelling with me, had at hand tape and paper, which provided a suitable enough temporary seal to get me round the route and home – some 80 miles – thanks Mike!

By the time we got on the way we were well behind the crowd and other than seeing Ron Darvell in his YA (MJH 327) at the GWR Steam Centre at



Toddenham we saw no other Ys. We were able to appreciate Richard Dick's fine choice of route and the fact that we saw no stragglers en route obviously meant that the instructions worked! We did lose Dennis near Toddenham as he searched for petrol but found him and he followed us to Snowhill. Here Dennis, Mike and I enjoyed our lunch, helped down with an excellent pint of Donnington Bitter, in the garden of the *Snowhill Arms*. We moved on and all went well until just beyond Fish Hill. I had noted that Dennis was behind us through Broadway and after climbing that very steep hill I could see him in my rear view mirror. We swung left towards Chipping Campden and drove on for a mile or so but then there was no sign of our Hon. Sec. We stopped and waited until his black over grey car came into view. Dennis gratefully stopped the car looking flustered as steam escaped from the bonnet -the return spring on the carburettor had snapped! I found an old brake cylinder spring which Dennis then duly fashioned to serve the purpose.

Off again with no problems, until we lost Dennis once more and this time irretrievably as he missed a turn in Chipping Campden. We turned back but to no avail and felt sure that he would get back to Bourton without any problem, which of course he did. We rolled in just before 3.00 p.m. to experience a car park full of Ys which was a very pleasing sight.

Time to go

Just after 4.00 people began to depart and when I left at 4.30 – the "Hampshire Mob", Dennis, Jack and Molly Murray, Joy and Paul Rundell, David Hague and David Pelham were still nattering away. My ears rang as Molly reminded me that I would be organising a run next year as the event is now a part of the Y calendar. We will see!

Jerry Birkbeck ■

1950 MG Y Tourer – EXU 3030 – XPAG 20438 – Body 45022/342

As Elizabeth grew and the pillow over the TD's handbrake (with safety belts) became inadequate, we had to seek a larger M.G. if we wanted to keep enjoying The New England MG "T" Register's (Register) trips and drive an M.G. to the Gathering Of The Faithful (GOF's).

Through a tip, we bought the 1950 Y Tourer, in October 1992, for a reasonable sum, considering that the engine was there, but not functioning. The body was also there, but the rocker panels were non-existent.

Between November 1992 and April 1993, the Boston M.G. Shop, rebuilt the engine. It was bored, balanced, crank checked for cracks twice, a new Hepolite piston and a Crane cam installed.

The body was left untouched. The color was grass green, certainly very "eye catching".

The car was driven in the Register's SKYLINE SOREE, April 19-29, 1993, from Front Royal, VA down the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway to Gatlinburg, TN. The total mileage was 1,230 mi from Bedford, NY and return.

From that trip, modifications to the car had to be made to insure better roadworthiness and safety, including:

- Replacing the 4 ply tires with oversize 16" radials, in order to attempt to reduce RPM's at road speeds and better handling.
- Installing vented TD front brakes, replacing the TC type drums which made the car unable to stop safely when fully loaded. The TD brakes improved the problem slightly, but stopping still was inadequate.



In June 1994, some home-made rocker panels were put in to ensure the car would hold together for the planned cross country trip the next month, sponsored by the Register.

On July 4, 1994, the YT started the cross-country trek to participate in the CALGARY STAMPEDE (commencing from Calgary, Alberta, July 16, across the Canadian Rockies to Vancouver, BC and ending in Seattle, WA. (USA) on July 30). The voyage started at Oneonta, NY, home of the Register's Chairman, Dick & Ann Knudson, in their TC, and two other cars, a TC and a TF. The trip took us to Stratford, Ontario, where we picked up other Register participants, through the upper Michigan peninsula, to Duluth, MN, to Fargo, ND, Great Falls, MT, to Kananaskis, BC (Canada), where the Register trip officially began. The challenge of the Rocky Mountains was soon evident to the YT, going through Lake Louise, Banff, Kamloops, Whistler, Vancouver and Seattle, WA.

The engine smoked most of the time from Montana on, consuming a quart of

oil every 250 miles. The fuel pump would go every time there was a challenging long and steep incline. The generator died as well; the water pump did its trick, but the rest of the electrical equipment and the carburetors behaved well. Thanks to the companionship of the Register members, their support made for a less frustrating trip. At the end of the official trip, both the driver and the car knew it had to be transported back home. A decision for a total restoration was easily arrived at and commenced in November 1994. The entire car was disassembled at the garage of my daughter's summer day camp, every

piece marked, parts placed in plastic bags and whatever couldn't be done at home was shipped out to different parts of the USA to be revamped.

The metal body work, the most difficult and costly part of the restoration was a bit of a nightmare, which we will not detail here. Suffice it to say, that 5 different highly recommended "craftsmen" were tried, all without much success. Finally a fully equipped and reputable restoration shop was located, with dedicated and knowledgeable master craftsmen. The car was finally brought to almost original condition on September 17 1996,

In the interim, also in November 1994, the engine was transported back to the Boston M.G. Shop, for a total overhaul, despite the fact that only 7000 miles were driven since the 1992/3 restoration. Apparently a leak down test pointed to a problem with one of the pistons and not a valve guide problem as originally thought. On dismantling the engine, we found broken rings, oversized ring bands, a burned out piston, a worn out cam, worn rod bearing and a cracked crankshaft. In other words, the engine wore out on the cross-country trip.

Realising that a rebuild of the engine alone would not solve the problem for a car that was going to be driven on Register trips. Nevertheless, the engine was rebuilt and, bearing in mind the past problems, the block was line honed, making it have a perfect fit for the new crankshaft that was installed. However, there is one problem that has yet to be resolved: the new rear main seal installed twice, still leaks!

However, before the YT was completed, another Register trip was undertaken: the RUN AROUND THE ROCK (Newfoundland), from July 15 - 30, 1996. The car put on over 3,000 miles round trip from Bedford, NY, and some more "kinks" were taken care of after the MK 62 GOF in Ottawa, Ont., August 22-25, 1996. The YT won first place in both the First Timer's and the Post War Variant.

Therefore, to solve a myriad of other issues noted on the past trips, such as better braking requirements, less wear on the engine while maintaining current road speeds, the least costly solution was found: a late MGB differential and front end was installed. Special plates were made up to go from a 4 lug (MGB type) to a 5 lug set up for the Y type wheel rim in order to accept the MGB front and rear end modification.

The MGB differential of 3.9:1 installed in the YT (original YT diff is 5.143:1) with oversize 16" radials on the narrow 3" YT rims handled poorly and was extremely slow on uphill grades. However, the front disc brakes made for

excellent stopping, even when fully loaded with 3 passengers and luggage. As the ratio couldn't be modified in a late model "B" differential, an attempt at modifying the tyre size was made by mounting a 4.75 X 16 Michelin radial on the YT rim. It turned out to be ridiculously small. Nevertheless, it became the spare wheel as it fits in the spare compartment and is the same circumference as the Dunlop 165 SR 15 SP20 tires that are now on the YT. These tyres on a 15" rim produced the desired effect of improved handling, going uphill at normal speeds without losing power and straining the engine. The RPMs increased ever so slightly over the 3.9:1 ratio with 16" rim and tires, but are very much lower than the original 5.143:1 ratio and 16" rim and tyres. The car does sit ever so slightly lower, but overall, the YT rides better, handles more comfortably and stops perfectly.

Some numbers used to help solve the issues to make the YT a more roadworthy car for today's driving conditions, realising that the car was going to be a frequent "tripper", are as follows:

	YT	MGB		
Track (R)	50"	49.25		
Ratio	5.143:1	3.9:1		
Brakes (R)	9"	10"		
Brakes (F)	9" drum	10" disk		
Hubs	5 on 4.5"	4 on 4.5"		
wheel size	16"	14"		
Track (F)	47.375"	49"		

	Tyre	Formula	(RPM/MILE)	Engine RPM/MILE
5.143	500/5.25x16	63360"		
YT Diff	81.64" circ.	81.64"	776	3989
5.143	185 SR 16	63360"		
YT Diff	85.75" circ.	85.75"	738.9	3798
3.9	185 SR 16	63360"		
MGB Diff	85.75 circ.	85.75"	738.9	2882
3.9	165R15	63360"		
MGB Diff	79.7" circ.	79.7	795	3100

Going Unleaded

Having read Neil Cairns article in the December '6 "Safety First!" about fitting an unleaded cylinder head I was interested in going down the same road with my YB.

At the M.G.C.C. Silverstone in June I examined the XPAG heads on the 'MG Classics' stand and purchased a converted head outright with no exchange. I knew that I would not be able to complete the work as quickly as an experienced engineer like Neil. I have no engineering training or background and my single garage is so full of bits and pieces that I have to move the car outside to do serious work. I feel therefore that my experience in attempting such a job may be of interest and value to others with XPAG engined M.G.s.

The day after the Henham Rally I drained the water, removed the bonnet and started unbolting. I had already done some preliminary work on the new head, ensuring that all tapped holes were free by running screws down them and screwing in old spark plugs. I also carefully relieved sharp edges on the combustion chamber near the plugs as recommended by M.G. Classics and lapped in the new valves using 'Brasso' as suggested to me by Neil Cairns. I also removed the carbon from the tops of the pistons and cleaned up the top of the engine block.

Now to remove the valve springs. Armed with my valve spring compressor, which had worked in years gone by on a side valve Morris 8 and a Frogeye Sprite, I set to work. First problem was that it wasn't large enough to fit over the large springs and caps of an XPAG. "Oh well," I thought, "I'll hire a larger one." Monday 2nd. September I hired a large valve spring compressor from Homebase. When I got home I found that it fitted all right. An hour later I gave up. There was no way that I could compress the strong double valve springs even using extension handles and all my strength. I returned to the hire centre and told them that the compressor was not suitable for the purpose intended but they still charged me nearly seven pounds. The following day I took the head to "Precision Ports", cylinder head specialists. The next day I collected the head with the valve springs swapped for a reasonable charge of £12. My advice to others is to go to an engineers in the first place and save money and effort.

Having first fitted the rear cover plate to the head I lowered the head onto the gasket and block. A word of warning, if you have the slightest doubt about any of your head studs, please replace them with new ones. I didn't! One of my studs was slightly bent. How a thick stud becomes bent I really don't know. I carefully tightened my head nuts a little at a time in the correct order and all went well up to 40 lbs. torque. Next time round the nuts with another few pounds of torque

saw the bent stud sheer off flush with the surface of the block. Remove cylinder head, drive to NTG and buy a new stud and three spare nuts. Now the fun really started, removing the stud remnant. I first drilled a small pilot hole into the stud and progressively enlarged the hole. I was surprised to find the stud fairly soft. When I had a fair sized hole I screwed in a left hand thread screw and happily the stud came out. New stud fitted and back on with the gasket and head. All went well, although I was a nervous wreck, I made it to 50 lbs. torque on all the nuts. Of course, all this messing about took several more days.

The push rods were refitted in the same order that they were removed and the rocker gear, with spacers, was fitted. The tappets were roughly set to about 19 thou. and the engine turned over by the starting handle. All well and good. The rockers rocked, the larger valves didn't seem to hit anything and the pistons went up and down without a problem. The exhaust manifold, side plate, thermometer housing and oil pressure take off were all refitted.

The next task was to determine whether or not I had a 12 or a 19 thou. camshaft. This took a long time using the methods outlined in "Safety First!", August 1996 and June 1995. Finally I decided that I must have a 12 thou. camshaft, although the rocker cover plate states a clearance of 19 thou. The split overlap method showed equal clearance of 27 thou. on valves one and two. It seemed a lot but I did it several times to make sure. I reset all the tappets to 12 thou. and fitted the rocker cover. I couldn't be certain using the crankshaft pulley method.

Finally, on Tuesday 18th November, I was ready to try starting the engine. Spark plugs in, fill with water, check for leaks, turn engine a few times on the handle, ignition on and with the second turn of the starting handle the engine started. I had done it after two months of intermittent work. Rather different from Neil Cairns six hours!! There were clouds of smoke as spilt oil and grease started to burn off but at least the engine sounded all right and seemed quieter with the 12 thou clearance. I switched off after a few minutes as I was asphyxiating myself with the exhaust fumes. It was, of course, raining hard so I had been unable to push the car outside.

No, it wasn't really as easy as it was for Neil Cairns but anyone should be able to do the job, it just takes a lot longer than you expect. I could probably have done it in four weeks only working one to two hours each session as I did. How glad I am that I didn't make a start in June. If I had, I should probably have missed the rest of the season and driving a Y Type is too enjoyable to waste opportunities.

Mike Smye ■