

June already, and it really is summer. The main content of this month's notes were written in Australia. Alf Luckman has contributed his views and six superb photos. Next month Jerry Birkbeck will be appraising you all of the need to use your old car, as soon as you think we

will find our hobby curtailed by bureaucracy and red tape. It will not be much fun to finally complete a long restoration only to find your pride and joy will need an application completing with the local council, as to where and when you can drive it.

One can only hope the efforts of the FBHVC will prove successful in diverting any draconian laws away from affecting us, one of the most loyal, law abiding groups in the motoring world. Use it or lose it, is a good motto to have. Over to Alf for more light hearted reading. ●

## FROM ALF LUCKMAN, AUSTRALASIAN INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE - Y REGISTER

### INTRODUCTION

I am drafting this article, several weeks before Xmas, because I had casually mentioned (by email) to Neil Cairns, that I might be able to assist with the June issue of *Safety Fast!*. I had in mind scratching out a few paragraphs with an Australian flavour, providing a couple of photos and that would be my contribution. Not bloody likely! The next thing I knew Neil had gratefully accepted my offer and I found I was slated to write the whole thing.

3500 words and half a dozen photos will be very acceptable, thanks very much, and please make sure they are ready by March!

So, here we go, a potted view of Y types Down Under, as seen from the rather myopic viewpoint of a Sydney resident and Y type tragic.

Once upon a time....No, that is no good it has been used before. I shall start again.

Briefly, my association with the Y type started 25 years ago when I acquired my present car, Y3192, intending to use it as a club car in which my wife and I could participate with our - then - three small children. Up to that time we had a TD, but experience had shown us that two adults, three kids and two seats did not compute. For various reasons putting the Y back on the road at that time did not work out.

Too much work, too little time, too many other interests and not enough money. We have all been there have we not?

The Y was put to one side and I bought a Mulette, which we used till the youngsters got sick of going out with old people and silly old cars and were old enough to trust them not to burn down the house in our absence.

After I retired, ten years ago, I restored the Y and put it back on the road in 1997.

About 1996, I found that restoring an old car, which few people knew anything about, was not as easy as I had thought. Seeking assistance, I contacted the Godfather of Y types, Dennis Doubtfire who at that time, from what I could see, filled the positions of Registrar, Secretary and Scribe of the Y Register.

For all I knew he probably filled up the inkwells in his spare time.

Dennis, with Jack Murray and David Pelham, very kindly came up with a couple of small parts I needed and I am forever in their debt for the encouragement and help that was forthcoming during, and since, that time.

I have maintained a regular correspondence with Dennis over the years and the file I have kept of our writings is now quite voluminous. In September 2003 we had the pleasure of meeting him and the



Y sedan on route back to God, left in the open for 30 years

lovely Barbara when they visited Sydney. I organized a Y Type gathering and an Aussie barbecue luncheon to greet them. We ended up with five Y types on my front lawn along with several other MGs of lesser worth. A number of photos of that occasion were published in the June '04 issue of *Safety Fast!*.

### PREAMBLE

An extensive Y Type register of Australia has been put together, and a great deal of information has been accumulated about Australian Y types, by several dedicated people over quite a number of years. Particularly, Tony Slattery in Queensland and Steve Brompton in Sydney.

This database is always being expanded as 'new' cars are found. I am told we know of 351 cars, made up of 250 YAs and 97 YTs and 4 YBs in Australia. Out of this total, the number of drivable cars is anyone's guess. However, this relatively small number of Ys and the distances separating them are such as to militate against having a really comprehensive group in the same place at any one time.

Another of the difficulties experienced in Australia is the fact that the YB was never sold commercially there. It was apparent, I imagine in 1952, about the time the YB was developed, that the market for such cars was dwindling. In addition, from 1949 the General Motors Holden, (for many years the most popular car in the country) was selling like crazy. People seemed to prefer a six seat, six cylinder, 60 hp, all steel construction, modern styled car to the elegant lines of the somewhat dated (and more costly), Y type.

At present the largest MG club in Australia, the Sydney Club, has only five cars on its register. Many more cars are known about - we estimate that there are perhaps 170 in a variety of condition in New South Wales. We have contact with quite a few of their owners but actually getting them together is not easy. Our annual Concours numbers are not too bad - we have averaged twelve cars in each of the past two years. For many years, if we managed three it was cause for rejoicing! With new restorations coming on line our numbers are slowly expanding.

Getting people to attend such events involves a lot of cajoling, telephone calls and threats of physical violence to ensure they do turn up on the day.

It is known that approximately twenty Ys (both sedan and tourers) exist, and are active, in the Newcastle region but that is more than 100 miles to the north of Sydney. These are the two largest cities in NSW and contain about one quarter of the entire Australian

population. To top that off, these cities are linked by only one decent road, and that is barely adequate for the increasing traffic demands.

That is another reason it is difficult to get substantial numbers of Ys together

### DISCUSSION

Each year in Australia, MG clubs in the individual states (with the exception of the Northern Territory), take turns at organizing the National Meetings where MG people gather to compete and meet with each other. This event is held over four days each Easter. Nat. Meets may not necessarily be



Group of Sydney cars at a club concours in Oct 2004

## SPECIAL THINGS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN Y'S

Because of the distances often travelled in Australia, there have been popular modifications made to a number of local Ys.

The most common, from what I have seen, is the fitment of temperature gauges. It was learned many years ago that Lord Nuffield often did not have temperature gauges fitted to his company's products because he declared, "my cars do not overheat".

Perhaps if the good chap had tested his products in Australia he may have had cause to think again. The Y has an excellent radiator with a large capacity and generally works well but a long 'fast' trip in country areas during mid summer has been known to cause some grief.

Most of the temperature gauges utilize a 'sender' unit fitted into the area adjacent to the thermostat where the water is nice and hot and the sender 'bulb' is fully immersed all the time. Problems have been encountered with the external temperature gauges sometimes fitted to the radiator cap. Those things are not much use unless the sender unit is in the water and one only has to lose a few inches of coolant out of the

held in the state capital. Generally they are held in a nearby centre, away from the problems of the larger cities.

Even though there is always a fair turnout of interstate cars attending an adjacent state's event, experience has shown that the distances and costs involved militate against too many interstate people making the treks involved. Three years ago the Nat. Meet was held in Perth, Western Australia, and that is 2500 miles from Sydney. With a return journey that is a lot of driving, even though a few souls put their cars on the Trans Australian Railway, the costs associated with that exercise were fairly horrendous.

The meetings held on the eastern seaboard are usually well supported by clubs and the most recent, in Southern Queensland attracted five Y type entrants. Only two of those came from neighboring states. As an adjunct to the 2004 National Meeting a "Y type gathering" was arranged but for various reasons it attracted only three cars. Again the tyranny of distance was thought to be the main culprit. As an example, a return trip from Sydney to Brisbane relates to something like 1100 miles. That would equate with London - Berlin, or thereabouts and return, which gives you a rough idea of the distances involved.

From these numbers it can be seen that there is not a great deal of travelling, by Y type people to the next state. Generally a roll-up of five or six Ys, of either persuasion, is looked on as a good showing at a National meeting.

There are always exceptions of course. There is one hero from Sydney, Ivan Petrie with his beautifully preserved YT, that he has owned for thirty years or so. He with his wife Sandra participate almost every year, no matter where the event is held.

In 2007 the Nat. Meet will be held in Hobart, Tasmania and, all being well, in company with other local Ys, I will be driving down there. I will have an advantage though. The Tasmanian Ferry now leaves from Sydney and that will do away with a lot of driving. Also, it's down hill all the way! I participated in the 1998 National meeting, held in Hobart and by the time I got home I

had driven 2473 miles in 15 days. That included a circumnavigation of most of Tasmania.

The Ferry usually departs from Melbourne. That is another way of saying one has to drive 560 miles from Sydney just to get to the starting line.



Shock absorber modification



**Philip Whites four-door tourer in progress**

header tank and the gauge is useless.

To overcome this difficulty readers might care to check out the article on the web site which details a radiator overflow system, where coolant is retained by means of what is essentially a 'sealed' system.

This works extremely well and has the added advantage of enabling the radiator cap to be tightened sufficiently so as to prevent its removal by light fingered persons and little boys.

I understand five speed gearboxes have been introduced in recent times to a few cars. For long distance touring some owners have found these to be an asset. Driving for many hours at 50 mph, gives one a chance to take in the scenery, but it also makes for a long, long day in the saddle.

I know of one case where a higher diff ratio out of a Morris Major has been fitted to the Y rear axle and I am told it works very well. Reducing engine revs by about 500 rpm at 55 mph. That car utilizes a standard Y gearbox. However I understand the owner is also looking at the question of a five-speed box. He does a lot of long distance touring.

Twin carburetors, utilizing manifolds from Y tourers and T types are very popular, and with a tweak of the camshaft makes the standard YA a much more 'drivable' car.

The question of why Nuffield took the good TC engine, de-tuned it, then fitted it to a much heavier sedan has always been a question of conjecture in a country of long distances.

At a recent Sydney gathering of four sedans and seven tourers, the driver of the one sedan fitted with a single carburetor reckoned he was almost a 'social outcast'. I have seen photos of a Y, in Victoria, fitted with a supercharger and there are reports of a local - Sydney - car currently being modified in the same way.

All sorts of variations have been seen on this theme of extracting more power from 1250 ccs and carburetors from Magnettes are not un-common. They make a real

difference with the 1 ½ inch mixers.

I have also seen two Y's fitted with complete Magnette engines and gearboxes. They really get up and go. The owners reckon their cars are getting towards what Nuffield should have built in 1947.

Of course, stopping such modified cars can create some difficulties. Firstly vacuum assist on the brakes is not an un-common modification at all. That makes for a better traffic car up to the time brake fade makes its presence felt, and the white knuckles appear, then things get interesting. Provided one is aware of riding the brakes, there are no real problems. Trust me on that one.

In the Sydney region a popular and very practical modification is the fitting of an improved headlight-mounting bar. This is a very clever idea and details can be found on the web site. It allows the radiator to be easily removed without having to dismantle the headlights, with all the associated problems of re-wiring those items when the radiator is replaced. Virtually every Y type in the Sydney club and a few in other places have this modification fitted.

Flashing turning signals are well established in Australia. With today's traffic it is a very brave person who ventures out in a car not fitted with these aids to safer driving. With a small modification it is possible to connect up the original trafficators to the new flashing signals. That essential modification is an item that has been known to cause wonderment to little children in the car in front, looking out their rear windows.

There is a car running around Tasmania fitted with a 3 ½ litre Range Rover V8. It also has a Borg Warner Type 35 transmission coupled up to MGB rear end.

The engineering of that car is beautifully done, but it really could only be described as a hot rod. Interestingly though, from 50 feet away, other than being a bit lower than a normal car, it is very difficult to see that it is not a standard vehicle. There are photos of that car on the Y Type web site.

Shock absorbers were another perennial difficulty in the old days when Australia's roads outside city areas were little better than dirt tracks. In many places there has not been all that much improvement since those times. They may now have a bitumen surface but they are still only tracks.

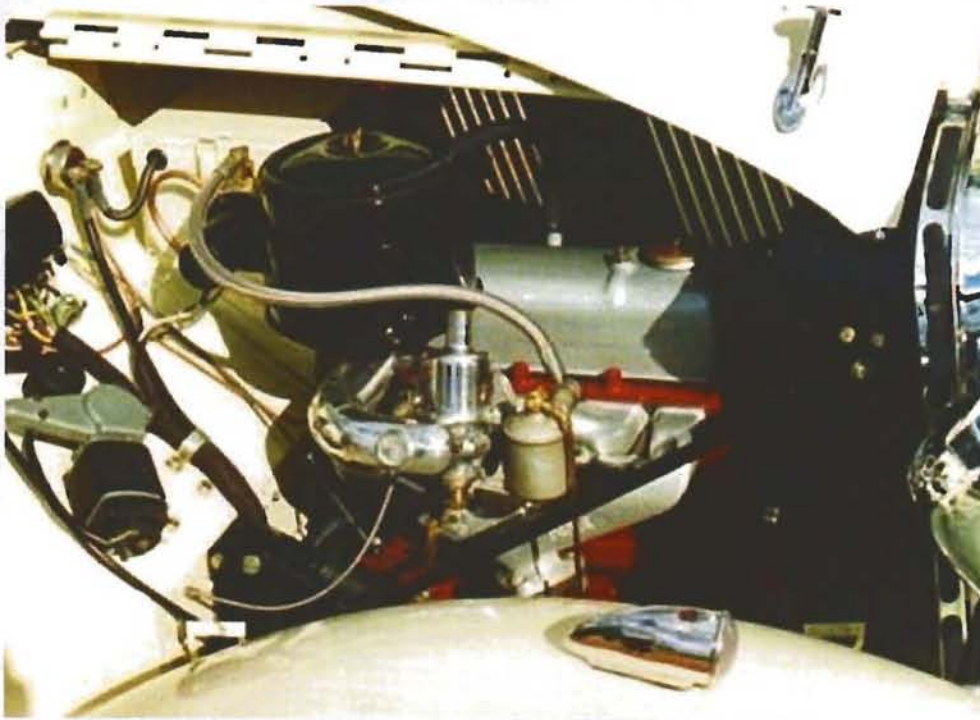
It is fairly apparent that the original shockers on Ys wore out very quickly. Local engineering firms did not take too long to come up with numerous clever ideas for fitting improved (read, tubular) shock absorbers, both to the front and rear. Such units were preferred over trying to repair the original fittings because they were a lot cheaper and easily replaceable. A lot of Sydney cars retain these 'after market' fitments and they seemingly continue to work well.

Please don't get the idea that every Y in Australia is a modified monstrosity. There are a lot of untouched cars and these can be seen at most concours events. Owners usually fit small additions or modifications to their vehicles to make them more drivable in today's city traffic or to make touring a little more enjoyable. However, the overall concept changes little and the majority of cars in Australia are pretty well original. In concours competition, 'originality' is much sought after and substantial points are lost for un-original items found by the scrutineers.

Having said that, you might care to look at the photo of the four-door tourer that is being built for Philip White of Sydney.

This car has a sad history and Phillip is to be congratulated for the time, effort and money he has put into saving this car from the wreckers. When completed it really will be a unique vehicle.

Because of someone's carelessness, it fell off a trailer and the driver's side was suddenly very second hand, from the roofline to the running board. The car is being totally re-furbished, the roof has been removed, the doors cut down to the window sill level, the windscreen removed and



Peter Martyn's recent restored engine bay.

replaced with that of a YT (finding that item is, in itself, quite a story), but the wipers from the sedan have been retained. There is another feat of the motor body builder's skills. The body structure has been carefully reinforced and is extremely rigid.

The mechanicals will soon be re-built, and after fitting of a new hood, utilizing YT bows and windows, together with repainting, it will be back on the road.

In the Sydney and Newcastle areas at least eight restorations are known about at the present time, plus others we probably have not been told about. A lot of restorers are coy about revealing their projects - until they need something. Then we hear from them!

On the question of spare parts, a Sydney club member was able to assist a YT owner

in the UK last year with a half shaft, he could not obtain elsewhere, despite pleas on the Net. That chap was so anxious to get the shaft he arranged to have it flown "back home".

It is becoming obvious that there is a demand for re-cycled parts. I have had numerous enquiries over the past several years from restorers after it was learned that, in company with some colleagues in the Sydney club, I had broken three sedans, found in the proverbial barn. (Photos of those cars appear on the web site, which shows myself as the owner of all three, but that is not correct).

All those cars were in very poor condition when found and were really only suitable for the re-cycle bin. Quite a few parts were obtained from these cars,

including one engine - with no head, and half full of rain water. That will make a nice mooring point for someone's boat some day. Generally though, not much came out of those three cars.

My enquiries have also shown that in the Melbourne region similar numbers are being worked on. This augurs well for the continued growth of our favourite toy in this part of the world.

## USING OUR CARS

One of the favourite pastimes of Y type people in this country is the Breakfast Run. Recounting this form of colonial madness seems to cause great glee among people I have spoken to in the UK, where such things do not seem to be looked on with any degree of enthusiasm. I have sometimes wondered if you local people eat breakfast ? !

At a designated time and place, the cars gather, usually about dawn and drive to an arranged place where breakfast is ready and waiting. This is usually a resort area or hotel. Depending on the distance to travel - possibly 80 miles - we arrive at the venue about 8.30 am. After scoffing the goodies, and doing a lot of talking we all get back into our cars and head off home, arriving there before lunchtime.

The roads are not crowded, the day is still young when we get home and we have had the pleasure of giving the cars a good work out. These outings are very popular among the Sydney Y fraternity and drivers of lesser vehicles.

I think the majority of Australian Ys are 'everyday drivers', but a number are registered under the Historic Vehicle classification and, as such, may only be used whilst participating in club events. For this concession the owners of such cars pay a much smaller annual registration tax than those on 'full' registration.

Y type owners in the various Australian states do not enjoy the concession for cars of 30 years and older, which is given in the UK.

## WEB SITE

I must make reference to the wonderful Y Type web site, put together by the Register Committee. This is undoubtedly an outstanding part of the whole organisation and is known worldwide. I have received complimentary remarks on its worth and usefulness

from many Australians who have been able to access information and contacts that otherwise may have been lost to them.

It is an outstanding asset and the on-going work of the committee members is to be commended.

## INVITATION

Something to keep in mind; if any Y persons are contemplating visiting Sydney or other parts of Australia, let me know via my address on the Y type web site. Tell me when you will be arriving and I will see what we can do to make you welcome. Over the past few years we have had several people call in and visit and it has been great to make their acquaintance. ●



Two recent restorations by David Ardill ( cream) and Geoff Meller (red) of NSW.