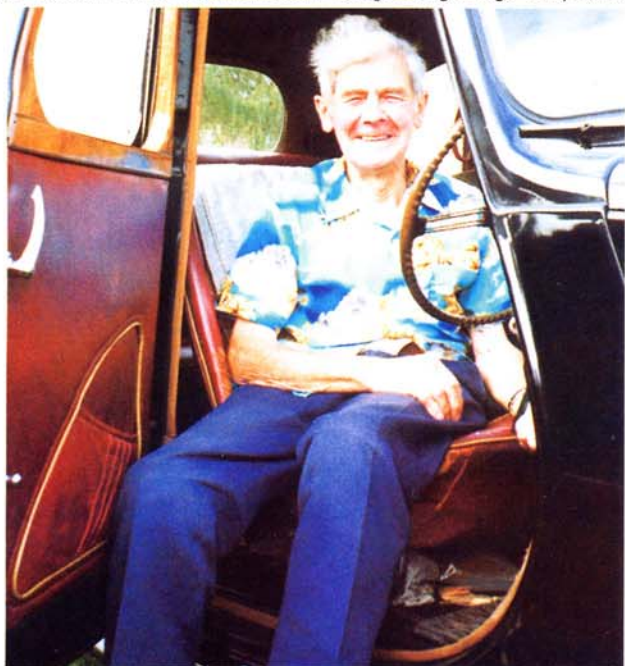


Back in September 1997, Keith Dillingham drove his 1952 black M.G. 'YB' saloon to the Austin A30/A35 Chiltern Rally at Stockwood Park, Luton. It was a very nice day, ideal for such small gatherings, and this meeting was popular with many local classic car enthusiasts, as well as the small Austins. The YB was skilfully guided amongst the teeming Luton traffic, to and from the park. Keith's very tidy, then 48,800 miles only, YB won third prize for the Visiting Car Class. He was very pleased, and grinned from ear to ear with pleasure as he was presented with the shield by the chairman of the Chiltern Branch of the Austin club.

Not very unusual for a tidy M.G. to take a prize at such a rally, you may think, but Keith Dillingham is a very interesting fellow. He was 82 years old last year, (1998) and he purchased his black 'YB' in July 1952, brand new. It was brought from the company of Dickinson & Adams of Bridge Street, in Luton; alas they no longer exist. Keith took along his 1937 'TA' to trade in for the saloon car, purchased because his family was growing and the extra seats were needed. With the traded-in TA included, he paid a total of £978 for the gleaming black car that had stolen his heart. He had to order the 'YB' but did not wait very long for delivery. The car looked so good the garage asked if it could be displayed in the showrooms for a week. Oh bliss!! Just imagine walking into a 1950's M.G. showroom, and buying the best car there. The 'YB' has won other prizes over the years, enthusiasts eyebrows raised when they discover the history of car and driver.

Keith has always run M.G.s, joining the M.G.C.C. in 1932, just two years after the club was formed. He first ran a BRG M.G. 'M' type Midget, where his M.G.C.C. membership entitled him to £5 credit for parts from the Abingdon company. This was followed by a BRG 'J' type Midget, then the 1937 'TA'. The 'TA' was cream with red upholstery and wheels. None of these M.G.s ever gave any trouble as they were all properly looked after, Keith insists. Getting married was the end of his two seater life, though he well remembers running up to Scarborough on holiday with the boat-tailed 'M' type Midget with his young girlfriend, in the 1930's. That was a bit scary, he told me, and grinned. The trip did not stop them marrying in 1941!

September 1998 saw Keith at the Austin A30/A35 meeting again, car spick and span, Keith with his infectious grin. July 1998 meant Keith has run M.G.s for 65 years. He has never owned any other make. The little 'YB' that has carried him about for forty-six years has still only covered 49,878 miles, this mileage as at the September 1998 Chiltern Rally! A retired retailer of Confectionery and Tobacco, from his little shop in Luton wedged between two railway bridges, he still lives in Luton with his wife, where they were both born and bred. The family were long ago grown up. As a member of the "Guild of Experienced Motorists," (once called the 'Veteran Drivers Club', hence their badge being a large Vee,) Keith's



Keith Dillingham with his 1952 M.G. YB. Born in 1916, he has only ever run M.G.s



KJM 539 'YB' saloon, still in its original black cellulose.

'YB' carries a disc with 64 on it, about to be replaced with 65. Sixty Five years of safety fast! motoring!! When he took to the wheel, there was no such thing as a driving test, once of age you just applied to the local council offices for a drivers licence.

With a ready grin from under the thatch of white hair, Keith will proudly tell you he has done all the servicing to his car over the years. It only goes to the garage for an mot he says. A recent fault with the horn relay was sorted out by replacing the 1952 Lucas relay with a modern version, wired up and fitted by himself. Such problems do not stop someone born in 1916, the second year of World War One. Today the YB is still original, its black paint a little faded, with the odd tiny knock and dent, but still looking very good. Chassis number YB0559, with the registration KMJ539, everything works except the clock. Earlier in 1998 he took the car to the T Register's 'T Party' at Old Warden. There he was bemused as a couple of enthusiasts looked at everything once they found out the car's history. Everything right down to the body number MG6226/387 was recorded, they even checked out his tool kit, still existing as it had done on delivery back in 1952. Only consumable items like tyres, batteries, and exhausts have been fined to the 1250cc M.G. four door car. The jackall system still operates as it did when fitted.

Yes, a very special M.G. with a very special owner, Keith Dillingham and his black YB.■

## Neil Cairns



The black 'YB' sporting the M.G.C.C. badge, Keith joining in 1932! Also the Guild of Experienced Motorists, (GEM,) badge with 64 year disc, about to become 65 years.



Keith does all his own servicing, recently sorting out a faulty horn relay

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