

# Y-Type Newsletter

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### CHAIRMAN

P Rundell  
Byways  
Bishop's Sutton  
Alresford  
Hampshire, SO24 0AL

### TREASURER

B Moyse  
12 Cater Gardens  
Guildford  
Surrey, GU3 3BY

### SPARES COLLATOR

D Hague  
8 Long Down  
Petersfield  
Hants, GU31 4PD  
01730 266362

### PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLATOR

J Murray  
53 Bell Hill  
Petersfield  
Hants, GU32 2EH  
01730 300134

### SECRETARY

D Doubtfire  
Eden House  
Portsmouth Road  
Milford, Godalming  
Surrey, GU8 5DS  
01483 415608

### PUBLIC RELATIONS

D Pelham  
Yew Trees  
Stream Park  
East Grinstead  
West Sussex, RH19 1QN  
01342 314764

### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

I Hopkins  
26 St Johns Road  
Hampton Wick  
Kingston on Thames  
Surrey, KT1 4AN  
0181 977 6572

### AREA CO-ORDINATOR

J W Atkinson  
26 Grosvenor Road  
Petts Wood  
Kent, BR5 1QU  
01689 825854

## Chairman's Chatter

### Paul Rundell

I am writing these jottings just after our return home from seeing off "The Birth of the Y Run" on March 16th. What a privilege to flag away 40 cars, probably the largest ever gathering of Ys, and our sincere thanks go Jerry Birkbeck for organising it, even down to the weather. Our car would have made but I am in the process of re-building the engine, which was using almost as much oil as petrol, in preparation for the Luxembourg trip in August. I am taking the opportunity to have the cylinder head modified for unleaded petrol – already 4 star is not so readily available, even in this country. I am also fitting Ron Gammon's crankshaft oil seals, in the hope that the garage floor will stay a little cleaner. Whenever I work on one of the cars, I am always amazed that a dismantled vehicle seems to occupy three times more space than when it is re-assembled! But now it is back to the garage – Dennis wants these notes for the magazine, and he has told me he expects to see the Y on our Herons Ghyll Run on 20th April – I will certainly be there, but at my rate of progress it may be the MGA that does the honours! ■

## Picnic at Pinware – the first Y-Types in Labrador

By Jerry Keller

In July 1996, my wife Lee and I drove our cream and brown '53 YB saloon – the "Road Hog" – on the "Run Around the Rock" tour of Canada's remote Newfoundland province. North Sydney, Nova Scotia, the official start, is a good 1000 miles from our New Jersey home, and we're joined en-route by our good friends Roy and Georgy Jacobson in their lovely red '52 YB. In North Sydney, we would meet 6 TCs, 6 TDs, 7 TFs, 1 YT, and an Arnolt saloon for the 14-hour ferry voyage to Newfoundland. In addition to a wonderful two-week jaunt with old and new M.G. friends, Roy and I had our own agenda.... to be the first Y-types to visit a place which contains some of the last unexplored territory in North America.... Labrador!

Locals say that St. John's, Newfoundland, the oldest city in North America, also has the most pubs per capita. We thoroughly enjoyed "researching" that claim, and it may just be true! We also visit the site of Marconi's first transatlantic radio signal, photographed whales and puffins at Bay Bulls, drove through herds of caribou, marvelled over an iceberg at Twillingate and were humbled by the hundreds of remote lakes and rivers, vast moors and forests of this mostly still-wild island. And, at the pretty fishing village of Grand Bank, the Road Hog has a small adventure.

Parking near the centre of town, we crossed the road, then turn just in time to see the Road Hog off on his own, down the hill towards the

harbour! Giving chase, I grab the door handle and dig in my heels, but I'm no match for a rolling Hog. I'm dragged across a parking area, down a short but steep grassy incline, finally letting go just before crashing into a small shingled building at the waters edge. I'm unhurt, but the Hog is wounded, his left front wing torn away from the apron and crushed into the wheel. Locals quickly materialise to pull the Hog back up onto level ground, where a nervous survey shows the damage to be mostly cosmetic. The Road Hog is driveable! The building is only slightly dented, although – naturally – it's the oldest and most historic on the waterfront. Then I noticed that, if it had rolled only a foot or so further to the right, our beautiful YB would have gone down a boat launch ramp into 50 feet of salt water! The RCMP constable astutely determined the handbrake has failed, so I won't be charged, and it's off to Bob's Auto Works for repairs. Returning next day from the French island of St. Pierre, we're delighted with the temporary fix... the Road Hog's wing is quite roadworthy, plus it's painted and washed!

Five days of scenic wonders later and 900 miles west, a brave pair of YB's – the Jacobson/Keller "Dawn Patrol" – sets out northward along the coast from Rocky Harbour, ever watchful for those huge, dangerous moose that can jump out and crush an M.G. without warning. As in the sea shanty, 'we're outward bound for the Labrador!' Aboard the ferry from St. Barbe, the Strait of Belle Isle crossing is smooth, and we soon

enjoy our historic moment as we cross the Labrador border and continue north. Roy & Georgy have brought champagne and even dense hordes of black flies cannot spoil our luncheon celebration at the Pinware River. Nor are we put off by the bleak, chilly drive back to the ferry for the return voyage, but a warm hotel, a good "Jiggs" dinner, and a shot or two of "screech", the local Newfie rum, are indeed welcome tonight.

Next morning, we're on the road early for another long day. First, it's 70 miles further north to L'anse-aux-Meadows, site of the first Viking

settlement in North America, then lunch at St. Anthony's on "Iceberg alley", followed by the 225 mile run back to Rocky Harbour. We manage a quick stop at Port au Choix to learn more about the native Beothuks who once lived here, and we're back at the hotel shortly after dark. We did see one vague shape off in the foggy distance ahead, quickly gone in the mist. It MAY just have been that elusive moose you know, but who cares? We've seen the Labrador! ■

## A Gem of an idea

By John Morgan (Dunfermline)

I bought my M.G. YA in March 1993 in a sad dismantled state, rebuilt the beast to a tidy car as original as I could, including the engine. In June 1995, we took her, or rather she took us, to the Morris Register, Manneken Pis Rally in Belgium, then a week round France and back home to Scotland. Two thousand miles in two weeks and she ran well. Over the next two years she's done a few more long runs and lots of rallies.

Well, on 2nd March 1997, the Morris Register had their London to Brighton Run, which we did, then went to Portsmouth, where a leaky oil filter union was soldered up by my brother-in-law. The amount of oil sprayed down the nearside chassis leg should preserve it for ever. We left Portsmouth for Carmarthen, South Wales, where we stayed for two or three days with relations, then decided to continue our journey up to North Wales and Portmeirion. But, it was not to be! One hour out of Carmarthen a strange "tinkling" noise from the engine. We pulled up, half on the grass verge, just outside of Cenarth village. The locals were very friendly and helpful. The local garage gave us a tow in on a rope, put us up on the ramp, we all studied the poor old thing and I explained what the various parts of a 'Y' engine are. Anyway, we all decided it was beyond a half-hour repair as there were obviously serious internal problems.

So, we phoned for a tow truck. Now, this is the useful part of the story! I belong to G.E.M. (Guild of Experienced Motorists), who also run G.E.M. Recovery. This is a scheme where you pay a once a year premium and you are covered, same idea as the AA and RAC, for roadside repair,

hotel, tow, etc., the difference being that you pay the repair garage at the time of the repair/breakdown. You get a valid receipt, then when you get home, you send in a claim form. You also get a free-phone number to call and G.E.M. will allocate a suitable garage to do the job.

Anyway, we phoned about 12.00 midday, the tow truck arrived in about 45 mins., put the car on the back, us inside and took us the 440 miles home, tired but safe and sound. I sent in my claim form on the Saturday, and on the following Wednesday, the cheque (for £741) from G.E.M. came through my door. How's that for service!

The tail to my story is that the 'Y' broke an exhaust valve, holed a piston, bent a con-rod and chipped a big-end shell. By the Wednesday, I had all the new bits, plus a second hand con-rod, four exhaust valves and a new oil filter, that expensive Australian "can". I feel a modification coming on in that area, I like the idea of a modern tin can at £3.00 not £25.00 + VAT as now! Ran the engine on Thursday, fixed a few leaks, had a drive on Friday and God Willing! the "Birth of the 'Y' Run" on Sunday 16th March.

For information, membership details of G.E.M. are as follows:

Annual Membership	£13.50
Annual G.E.M. Recovery	£27.50

There's a joining fee which I think is waived if you use Direct Debit. You need a clean driving licence and to be a sensible and considerate driver. Address is: G.E.M., Station Road, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH 1 8 5EW Tel: 01342 825676. ■

## Veneering or "Ironing away with a smoothing dash!"

By David Hague

It is possible for the amateur to replace the veneer on a Y-type. Fortunately all the veneered surfaces are flat, which makes the clamping needed when glueing much easier. It does however take a good deal of patience and it is not cheap. I have just completed mine during the course of a chassis-up restoration, which meant that all the woodwork was off the car already – if it is not, this would be step one. We are talking, of course, about the dashboard, lower windscreen rail (facia rail) and door cappings.

Much of the old veneer was either already flaking off, or would come off with a sharpish scraper blade. For more firmly adhering areas I used a DIY hot air gun and scraper. Then I removed all traces of old adhesive so I had a good fiat surface to work on. New veneer was purchased from

Messrs J. Crispin & Sons of Shoreditch (Tel. 01 71-739-4857), who also offered much helpful advice and hints over the phone. The veneer is European walnut burr (the best), which is beautifully figured due to being cut from the base of a branch or trunk. For this same reason, it is less readily available and not normally in large sheets – hence the cost.

It is therefore necessary to use two sheets of veneer for the full width of the dashboard – 36 inches. By using two sheets cut consecutively and turning one sheet over, one can achieve the desirable "book match" effect i.e., matching left and right halves. In fact, originally even the door cappings were made from two pieces book matched. However, I believe this was probably done to save money rather than from any aesthetic considerations. ➤

On the question of cost, the walnut burr veneer sheets cost £12 / sq ft for long sheets or £6 / sq ft for short, ie. 1 ft. maximum length. I chose the longer sheets, as otherwise I would have needed to use four pieces across the dash, with a double book match. Total cost of veneer for dash, fascia rail and four door cappings was £131 including VAT and post & packing – 4 sheets of veneer each approximately 24" x 14".

The next stage was to carefully decide where the pieces were to be cut from. The most important area being the dashboard, this was selected first, trying to avoid the little holes and imperfections in the veneer as much as possible, including those on the adjacent sheet for the book match. The other areas were then roughly mapped out.

Veneer when purchased is rather fragile and very wavy, so the next thing was to make it flat. This was done by first spraying the sheet with water from a greenhouse plant spray, ensuring all the surface was covered. It was then clamped between two stiff boards – I used 1" MDF, with several sheets of newspaper either side of the veneer. After a couple of days I unclamped the sheet and roughly cut out the required shape, allowing 1/2" or so extra all round and clamped again. The following day, I replaced the damp newspaper with dry, and clamped again. After another day or so it was ready to use, but I must add a cautionary note here. It will start to curl again fairly quickly, so you only have about 30 minutes to work. However, if it curls too much, it can be re-moistened and re-clamped without problem – this is not a job to rush!

I used an old-fashioned animal glue – remember the type you have to heat up in a double skinned pot (my pot was an old saucepan with an empty can inside!). Having got everything ready, I then unclamped the

veneer, made the accurate cut for the centre of the dashboard or fascia rail, applied the hot glue to the wood and spread it quickly. The veneer was carefully placed on top, then a thin sheet of polythene, followed by quickly clamping the work together. The polythene was used to avoid sticking the veneer to the clamping boards.

At this stage I should say that although I was advised to use animal glue, I think I would try a modern PVA adhesive if I did the job again. The animal glue was recommended since any areas not sticking well could be re-heated with a warm iron and clamped locally. Unfortunately, since the glue cooled very quickly, I had rather too many areas not sticking well, although they did respond well to the warm iron treatment. After leaving overnight, the clamps could be removed and the veneer cut near the correct size, final trimming being with a sandpaper block. After locally treating any bubbles as above, the next stage was to fill in any small holes or cracks in the veneer, small ones with Brummer stopper, larger ones by inserting tiny pieces of veneer, glued and clamped again.

I then sealed the surface with glue size, (as used for wallpapering) before rubbing down with progressively finer grades of sandpaper. As I could not obtain a good colour match with the stopper, I carefully touched up the treated areas with a little wood dye and an artists brush before the final sanding. The newly veneered woodwork was then given several coats of polyurethane varnish, removing any imperfections with fine sandpaper between coats. After hardening for two weeks, it was wet flatted with 1200 grade, wiping off excess water quickly to avoid damage to the veneer. Finally, rubbing compound was applied followed by T-cut and a final polish to bring up the desired deep lustre. ■

---

## Birth of the "Y" Run – March 16 1997 by Jerry Birkbeck

On the 14th March 1947 the first of the 1 1/4 'Y' series M.G.s ran off the production line of 'A' Block at the Abingdon works. Fifty years and two days later the 'Y' Type Register of the M.G. Car Club celebrated the occasion with the first of a number of special events planned for the model's Golden Jubilee – the Birth of the Y Run.

The aim of the organisers was to try and get as many 'Y's together as possible and for that reason the Midlands was suggested by Dennis Doubtfire, the Register's Secretary as an area for the venue. The Eathorpe Park Hotel, near to Leamington Spa in Warwickshire provided an ideal point to commence and complete the run. A good deal of time was spent by Dennis and myself in contacting 'Y' owners who had not responded to the coverage in *Safety First!*, the Octagon Car Club bulletin, and other items in the classic car press. This proved very fruitful with letters and 'phone calls encouraging owners to take part, and if they could not, then gaining some idea on the extent of the restoration. As BT continually remind us "it's good to talk". I discovered that people use their 'Y's for the most novel of pursuits. Geoff Collett, a sheep farmer near Alcester in Warwickshire, who unfortunately missed the run due to lambing, told me that during the summer he has used his Y for rodent control! He apparently removes the passengers then drives the car across his fields, stops, opens the sun roof and then stands up using the roof as a support to hold his gun and shoot rabbits.



David Pelham leaves to start the rally. (Photo: Val Wallin)

From the responses we received it looked as if we could get up to 40 'Y's present on the day. In the event we reached 39 which nevertheless was probably the largest number of 'Y's gathered together in one place since leaving Abingdon. Sadly we did not manage a YT – Mervyn Davies, a regular at many M.G. events was unable to attend. We were



graced with the YTs predecessor, a VA tourer owned by Charlie Plain-Jones which prompted a lot of interest. Charlie had asked some while before the event if he could attend and he was the only 'interloper' amongst the 'Y's on the run.

What was fascinating was that each car had some distinctive feature that made it different from the others present. They varied from colour schemes, to more subtle features for example badge bars, additional fog lamps, extra lamps etc. Neil Cairns 'YB' displayed external chrome wind horns, which were fitted when the car was prepared for its first owner. Arguably one of the most attractive cars was Frank Andrew's superb green YB.

All the cars were a credit to the owners and many had travelled some distance to attend this unique event. Had there been an award for the entrant who came furthest it would have been won by John Morgan, who had travelled from Dunfermline – a round trip of 700 miles. Credit enough but even more so when he had replaced a set of pistons in the week before this journey. Alan Dinsdale of 'Le Jog' fame had made the short dash of 150 miles from Tiverton on the Sunday morning, whilst Jim Pritchard had travelled up from Tavistock in Devon by way of Cheltenham. Others came from Essex, Kent, Sale and Derbyshire. Dennis Doubtfire's 'Surrey Crew' arrived mob handed travelling somewhere between 120 – 140 miles to the venue. The West Midlanders were out in force including Len Shaw from Stourbridge with his Monte Carlo rally car. I had the shortest journey from Leamington Spa – small beer in comparison with all the others.

Even though one or two were unable to make it, the balance was made up through the attendance of several late entries – including Brian Cox. from Practical Classics with his well know silver/grey YB. Just as remarkable was the presence of owners restoring their cars who came along for inspiration and advice, potential owners who had come from as far afield as the Isle of Wight and a friend of the Y Type Register from Australia.

It had been hoped that we would depart from the hotel no later than 11.45. In the event Paul Rundell looking resplendent with union jack to wave the starters off, flagged off Dennis and I at the end of the queue just after 12.30.

The rally route was designed as a leisurely drive through the Warwickshire countryside. Use was made of the Warwickshire County Road Map which includes all roads, and numbers the from A-E class. The Ordnance Survey marks only A and B roads by number. A set of instructions related to the county road network was supplied along with the maps. Unfortunately, the definition on the maps was not as good as



The Wanderers return. (Photo: Jo Birkbeck)

it might have been – so it was inevitable that problems might arise, which they did! (perhaps I should have used the tulip system – a copy of which was provided by Lech Zakrzewski, but a broken wrist restricted my driving activities a month or so before the run).

Dennis and I took a short cut along the first section of the route and waited.....and waited.....until finally a group of Ys appeared, and after a long wait another bunch turned up. I believe, there were some navigational difficulties!

Peter, my father-in-law took over and drove a futher 30 or so miles to Burton Dassett Country Park. A car nut, it was over 30 years since he had driven anything like this. He coped very well after some initial difficulties in locating the gear stick.

We noted one break down near Shipston-on-Stour although someone was already in attendance. Peter Blackwell's white YA had broken a half shaft – fortunately he got back with the help of the RAC to Sale some 4 hours later. When I contacted him he commented that it was his first break down in 20,000 miles and 12 years of ownership. His 'Y' was due back on the road the following day less than 4 days after the incident. Later we came across John Morgan, near to Lower Tysoe who was experiencing fuel pump problems. He was busy fitting a replacement pump and turned up later at Eathorpe running well and ready for the return up north.

Our planned lunch time stop at Burton Dassett to take a group photograph never materialised as many owners preferred to stop at The Castle, a Hook Norton Ales pub on Edge Hill overlooking the site of the battle between Royalists and Parliamentarians in 1642. Peter swapped the drivers seat for Andy Bean – a friend of mine who had navigated David Pelham around the first stage of the rally. Andy drives vintage tractors and settled smoothly into driving the Y.

We all arrived back at the hotel between 3.30 and 4.00 after a 65 mile journey to enjoy an afternoon tea and final natter. Farewells in the car park to a new lot of friends with the cry of 'See you at Silverstone' ringing in their ears. Dennis packed his YB with all the bits and pieces of a day's trading and spread the word about the register and made his way home. Brian Moyse in his MGB followed, and I finished off a few things, thanked and said goodbye to the hotel owners Rod and Carole Grinnell, before climbing into the Y and heading off to Leamington. I passed Dennis and Brian in a layby on the Fosse Way before turning west for the 3 mile journey back home. A great day I reflected ..... fine weather, fantastic turnout and an occasion that I think most of those present enjoyed. Fifty at Silverstone? ■



'Getting ready to depart'. (Photo: Jo Birkbeck)