

Richard Prior's MGB
engined YT.

With Ys in Japan and Australia

My eldest daughter Julie departed these shores in March 2005 with husband Rob and three month old daughter Millie, hoping for a change in lifestyle for about four years in Australia, where her husband's mother lives in Perth. As they had been living about an hour's drive away from us in Surrey, they were sorely missed and we wasted no time in booking our flights to visit them. My wife Barbara and I decided to go via Tokyo to look up an old friend from my days of working in Holland in the mid-70s. He is a global citizen, being a Dutchman with an American wife, living in Tokyo. Our visit created an opportunity to look up Y-Type owners in both Japan and Australia.

Part One – Tokyo

Our friends live on the outskirts of Tokyo in a real Japanese house with rice paper windows, not the apartment that most ex-pats live in. But the highlight of our visit (apart from the Y-Type event discussed later of course) was a trip on the bullet train to Kyoto, where we stayed a couple of days and had our fill of temples and palaces. The bullet train travels at over 200mph but is so smooth it feels like 20 mph. It is spotlessly clean, comfortable and so precisely on schedule that our Minister of Transport could benefit greatly by experiencing and studying it. The politeness of the Japanese is so

pleasant and apparently natural, even the ticket inspector bows on entering and leaving your carriage and the little girls on the buffet trolley seem to have permanent smiles!

The day after our return, we met up with Masaaki Sakaguchi, who is a very keen and active member of the international community of Y-Typers, having produced some beautifully engineered items for us in the past. These included key rings, radiator spanners and mini-tool rolls etc. Masaaki turned up at my friend's house in his 1952 green YB accompanied by friends Mike Ono and Tetsuo Hosoya. So what did these three gentlemen have in common apart from being good friends? Remarkably, they all own Austin-Healey 3000s and are clearly passionate about British classic cars.

Masaaki's car is well-used and fully capable of being driven around this city of 30 million people, being fitted with heater, heat shield, temperature gauge, etc. He bravely let me drive his car for a short trip in the suburbs, not too traumatic as he guided me through the road signs, traffic lights etc and at least driving in Japan is on the correct side i.e. the left! Masaaki and his friends then took us on a tour of the city, but in a modern MPV – well, there were six of us!

First stop was an amazing shop in the centre of Tokyo, B.R.G. British Classic & Sportscar Spares,

owned by Tsuneo Itoh. The shop is on the ground floor of an eight storey block of flats owned by Mr Itoh, and his beautiful 1958 MG ZB Varitone sits conspicuously in the shopfront! The shop specialises in spares for MG, Triumph and Austin-Healey and a brief tour of his stockroom revealed a treasure trove of spares. Then it was up the Tokyo Tower, an Eiffel Tower look-alike except it is 13 meters taller. As the sun set we were rewarded with a brief, but distant view of Mount Fuji.

The evening was rounded off with dinner at one of the top hotels, being served by beautiful waitresses who to my untrained eye appeared to be dressed as geisha girls. Barbara was clearly enthralled by the gripping dinner table stories of our varied car experiences! It was sad to say goodbye to Masaaki and friends but there is a possibility that they may come to MG Silverstone this year, next year, sometime hopefully.

The following day we spent touring Tokyo, becoming familiar with the Tokyo underground system. Here we met about 10 million of the inhabitants, where 'pushers' are employed to pack as many people as possible on the trains! We also went by ferry and back by monorail to a huge Toyota exhibition. This included a cinema where you experience being in a Formula 1 car round the Fujiyama race circuit. It's a sort of Imax cinema



Mike Sherrell's BMC 'B' series engined YA.

Right: (left to right) Tetsuo Hosoya, Mrs Itoh, Barbara Hague, Tsuneo Otoh, David Hague, Masaaki Sakaguchi, Mike One.



but with moving seats. You wear full racing harness and hear and feel every movement of the car; every gear change, every off-road excursion through the seat – a mind-blowing experience. Actually the seat only moves a matter of inches but it sure feels real. We ended up with big grins on our faces, just like schoolkids!

The next day it was farewell to Tokyo and Japan as we boarded the plane for Australia.

Part Two – Perth, Australia

Actually we spent a couple of days before Perth with an Uncle of Barbara's living in Blanchetown, about 100km inland from Adelaide. She last saw him in 1950, since when they had both changed quite a bit. Then on to our daughter's in Perth.

After my Y-Type day in Tokyo, I had to build up some goodwill with my better half and therefore agreed to go to a performance by Luciano Pavarotti on his farewell world tour. No, I am not a great opera buff, but at least it was a lifetime experience, culminating in a 'sing-along-a-Luciano' encore, something to tell the grandchildren I suppose – "I sang with Pavarotti"!

Perth is a very modern, clean city well laid out along the banks of the Swan River, about 10km inland from Fremantle. Obviously most of our

time there was spent in quality time with Julie and Rob and getting to know our baby grand-daughter. However we had a most enjoyable Y-Type day towards the end of our trip.

It started with an email to Alf Luckman in Sydney, taking him at his word about welcoming visitors to Australia. He put me in touch with Richard Prior, the local organiser of matters MG in Perth. They didn't have anything planned for that period, but on the other hand, they generally didn't need much of an excuse to organise one. As Richard was very busy with work, the organisation was handed over to Mike Burden.

We were duly collected on 12th November from our daughter's house in Attadale by Ron Mitchem in his red 1949 YA. As I am the Register committee guy responsible for sales, it was nice to meet up with people with whom I had previously 'done business' and both Ron and Mike were two of these customers. The first part of the afternoon was a garage tour, the first stop being at Ron Humphries house in nearby Melville. Ron has a large garage devoted to his YB, YT, a woody Minor

"BARBARA WAS CLEARLY ENTHRALLED BY THE GRIPPING DINNER TABLE STORIES OF OUR CAR EXPERIENCES"

1000 Traveller and various other MG and Morris cars, some assembled, others 'in process', in fact plenty to keep him out of the kitchen. The assembled gathering included Richard Prior with his rather special YT fitted with an MG B engine and gearbox, twinchoke Weber carb and electronic ignition, and Peter Copestake with his YT. Also attending were two TDs and a twin cam MGA – apologies to their owners as I do not have their names. The registration plates of several of the cars revealed numbers worth committing crime for in the UK – such as '1949YA' and 'MYYT'!

Next stop was to Bill Jenkinson's home in East Fremantle to meet Bill and his YA. Also under wraps in his garage were a TC and a PB, sharing space with a retired engineer's dream assortment of lathes and milling machines. At this point we were joined by that well-known exponent of TCs Mike Sherrell with his wife Loretta and his MGB-engined ivory and black YA. Mike was to be our chauffeur for the rest of the tour. Barbara was rather pleased to have female company as she and Loretta got on well and talked about everything other than Y Types (how boring!). Later in the day Bill told me he was on the look-out for a decent YB, so if anyone has one for sale please let me know and I will pass on the information – there are very few in the Perth area and all no doubt

Y-TYPE NEWSLETTER

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Ron Mitchem's 1949 YA.

already known to the fraternity.

Before we set off again we said farewell to Peter Copestake and his YT and Bill joined Ron Humphries for the trip in his YB. It was then up into the hills to Mundaring, the home of Mike and Lynette Burden. This is about 40km north of Perth and to an Englishman appeared to be virtually 'in the bush'. Mike and Richard soon pulled away from the rest in their B-engined cars, especially when powering uphill. However not a lot was gained as they appeared to get a bit lost when trying to find the appropriate dirt road – White Owl Rise – leading to Mike's.

Back in England Mike had warned me via email not to expect too much of his YA restoration as he is, like many of us, a self-taught amateur. Although I do not believe this was false modesty, the results of his labours really are a car to be proud of. In fact, I should say 'their labours' as I understand Lynette was very involved with the restoration, being busy with the sewing machine on the head lining etc. They have registered the car with its original UK number UMG 984 and when we were there just had a couple of minor bits to finish before taking to the road – no doubt by now it is once again well and truly in use.

Another attraction of this leg of the tour was the magnificent feast spread before us to enjoy. Mike and Lynette prefer this isolated position and although Mike works in Perth, he says it only takes around 40 minutes to drive in each day. Certainly they are in close contact with nature. Another

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classic car present was an immaculate green 1947 Jaguar. Before we left Mundaring we were joined by Alex Kochanowicz who I was told owns two YAs. On the return journey Mike was brave (or crazy?) enough to let me drive the YA, an experience I thoroughly enjoyed, although as the traffic got busier I decided to hand over the wheel again. I had thought his back axle was rather noisy but soon realised the droning was our wives' non-stop chatter in the back! Why is it that men have useful and interesting talks about fascinating subjects whereas our ladies merely chatter? Seriously, I would like to thank Barbara for supporting me in my interest in MGs and yes, I would prefer to eat my dinner tonight rather than wear it – I'm so glad I went to see Pavarotti!

We were safely delivered back to Attadale and thanked Mike and Loretta for their kind hospitality. Mike told me he is currently involved with his 18th (or was it 19th?) TC restoration. So how does he find time to write 'TCs For Ever' as well as world travels to talk and advise on TCs?

Two further items in which readers may be interested. Fremantle has got a good but small

motor museum, housing several MGs amongst other exhibits. These include a 1947 TC, an unusual 1934 PA coupe and almost inevitably, a K3 replica. Another interesting item is a replica (one of about a dozen I believe) of Karl Benz's original 1896 automobile powered by an internal combustion engine. The other item though totally unrelated to cars, was nevertheless enjoyed greatly by both Barbara and myself. This was a Sunday lunchtime trip on the Swan River in a side-paddle steamer accompanied by a trad jazz band. The steamer was powered by an Ipswich-built engine of circa 1920 albeit with diesel-generated steam. The ship itself was relatively modern (1980-ish I seem to remember) but built in tasteful period style with extensive use of the indigenous Australian jarrah wood. The band was The Gumnut Stompers and the beer flowed freely – as a delayed father's day present it took quite some beating – thank you Julie!

Two postscripts to this piece. Firstly I am told that the Perth Y-Type Run may well become an annual fixture in their calendar, so we hope to have the opportunity to participate again. Many thanks to Richard Prior and Mike Burden for the organisation; and to Ron Mitchem and Mike Sherrell for our transport. Secondly our daughter Julie is pregnant again, so we will be visiting again a little earlier this year in September; flights already booked. Unfortunately I am not aware of any Y Types in Kuala Lumpur, where we will be spending a few days on our return trip.

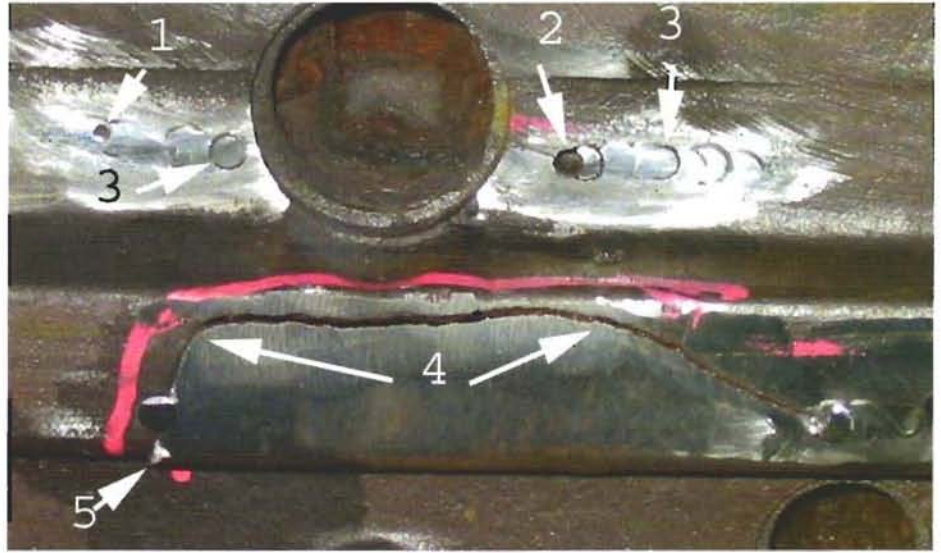
How to save your block!

Once upon a time, there was a lonely old MGY Type that had begun life full of hope, having been sold to its only previous recorded owner by University Motors Limited, Middlesex UK. Bearing the licence plates UMG 86, it motored happily around until it was hit amidships by something much heavier. Despite being in a garage, the freezing cold got right through to the bones of the car, and in due course froze the water cracking the block in the central upper water jacket and splitting the block on the main water channel to the radiator. Time continued to work away at the rest of the car, until eventually I came to hear of it and bought it in 2002, but it was clear from the extensive rot at the rear of the chassis and boot area this car was beyond economic restoration. In her demise though, parts have been used in at least 10 different cars to date.

Despite the damage done to the XPAG block, I was not inclined to throw it away. Having another YA, I decided to keep one of the two gearboxes that came with the car, and the engine – just in case: as you do! Fast forward now to 2005 and the purchase of another car facing extermination or humiliation as a hot-rod, this time an MGYT – body from one car, chassis from another. Advertised without most of the comforts – no engine, gearbox, brake system, jackall system, electrical system, petrol tank, rear wheel back plates, shock absorbers front or rear, hood, side screens, floorboards, seats or dashboard. Fortunately, I had many of these already so it was just a simple case of using what I had. This is where the engine came back into the equation.

As Neil Cairns said to me after I had finished repairing the engine, stitching castings has been about since the steam engine in the 1860s. It is much cheaper than re-casting. Not having heard much about stitching cast iron, I had originally thought of having it repaired by welding. Another good friend, Dave DuBois, then told me about something he had read on stitching repairs and directed me to a website www.locknstitch.com.

After a review of the site, I decided I had little to lose and sent a picture by email to their enquiry email. A very fast reply came back from Gary Reed, (CEO of Lock-N-Stitch Inc.) saying



that this (even the yawning gap) was eminently repairable using their C2F pin system. I ordered a kit and duly received a training DVD, a catalogue CD, one box of 50 C2F pins, one tap, two drill bits, one spot facer, one stop, one bottle of tapping oil and one bottle of anaerobic adhesive. After studying the DVD on repairing a casting using C2F pins and further correspondence with Gary, I ascertained that this could be done using much of the equipment that I already had – two electric drills, socket set, a grinder and a very good air compressor – and I would only need purchase a rechargeable screwdriver (for tapping) and a needle scaler.

1. Taking a bold step I drilled the first hole into the block at one end of the top crack. Afterwards, I thought, "No turning back now", and cleaned off the swarf with the air gun from the block, out of the hole and off the drill bit.

2. Next job was to set up the spot facer. Lock-N-Stitch shear pins should be buried in the casting to about 1/3 of the shoulder height – no more as if you go in too far the threads will not have enough purchase, not far enough and you will not get a good seal. However, this is not difficult to set up and once set, is good for the run: just ensure that the Allen key grub screw is in good and tight. Insert the spot facer into the drilled hole and recess the entry. Again, clean out the hole and the block surface with the air compressor and the spot facer.

3. Then comes the tapping of the thread. The good (and the bad) part of cast iron is that it is a relatively soft metal. Put the tap in either an air drill or a reversible rechargeable screwdriver on a medium torque setting, oil the tap, insert into the hole, tap and withdraw. Again, clean out the

hole and the block surface with the air compressor and the tap.

4. Care is required to ensure that the drill bit hole, the spot facer and the tap all go in at the same angle. Insert the pin, having first applied a small amount of adhesive to the threads – either in the hole or on the pin. Be careful that you do not get the bottles mixed up between the oil and the adhesive: it is not the end of the world if you do, just a minor pain as you will have to blow off all the wrong stuff and apply the right one instead! Wind the pin in securely with a ratchet socket set until the head of the pin shears off, then grind the protruding shoulder off almost flush with the block. Don't go too far so and blend it in completely – finishing comes later. Don't leave too much shoulder out either though, or the next pin will not interlock well.

5. Repeat steps 1-4, inserting the pins until you are just beyond the end of the crack, overlapping the last pin by at least 10% and as much as 80%.

6. Grind the remaining shoulders of all pins flush with the block.

7. To secure the pins tightly, the pins will then need to be peened over using the needle scaler. The block is then ready for full flushing of all swarf, and pressure testing (if it is a pressurized system) and then painting.

Mistakes will happen, however. When I had made one, I stopped, emailed Gary with details and followed his patient and thorough advice. One of the mistakes I made was oversizing a hole – he advised purchase of a slightly larger pin, drill, and tap which arrived swiftly. Another was I drilled right through into the cylinder wall in error. Again, a longer tap was recommended, and a special pin to go in from the cylinder wall. This I had professionally ground off and the cylinder honed in a machine shop (they all needed honing in any case).

Yes by the time I was done – buying the equipment I didn't have (air drill, needle scaler) and the extra supplies because of my mistakes, it probably cost marginally more than it would have done to have the casting professionally welded by a competent cast iron welder. But on the other hand, I had achieved something for myself and would be happy to do the same again for any MG owner on their block.