

Y-Type Newsletter

Y – Type 50th Anniversary – Tour of Luxembourg – 1997 *By Paul Rundell*

Bank Holiday Monday, 25 August, and eleven 'Y's and one MGB GT support car arrived at Dover to catch the Super Seacat ferry to Calais. Crews were Bill and Lesley Atkinson (Kent), Alan Chick and Mary (Wales), Tony Clark and Tonia (Kent), Mervyn and Mary Davies (Shropshire), Richard and Nichole Dick (Warwickshire), Dennis Doubtfire (Surrey), Andrew and Kim Gilham (Hampshire), David and Barbara Hague (Hampshire), Jack and Mollie Murray (Hampshire), David and Kirsty Pelham (Sussex), Paul and Joy Rundell (Hampshire) and Brian Moyse (support car – Surrey).

The weather was atrocious, but spirits and expectations were high. After an uneventful crossing we reached Calais safely and set off in convoy to Ardres, 16 km south of Calais, for a prebooked light lunch. This turned out to be a substantial meal, very enjoyable but taking rather longer than the hour which we had scheduled. As soon as lunch was over, we formed three groups and moved on, destination Laon, 100 km. south-south east of Arras, for a prebooked night stop, using either 'N' or 'D' roads. The drive took longer than we had anticipated, but nightfall found us all safe at the Hotel Campanile, though some had taken unplanned routes to get there.

Tuesday dawned much brighter, and we all left Laon together, intending to stay in a loose formation to Virton, where we were to join up with Jean-Marie Gillen, an enthusiastic 'Y' owner (as well as MGC and VA Tourer) who lives in Luxembourg and had bravely volunteered to be our guide and mentor whilst we were in his country. In the event, the lead car and nine others missed a turning, leaving Dennis Doubtfire and Brian Moyse following the planned route. The rest of us had to make a dog-leg to rejoin the proper road, which we accomplished quite quickly, just opposite the Garage de la Gare, Guignicourt, where we stopped for petrol. Whilst refuelling Alan Chick discovered he had problems with a leaking carburettor float and our stay had to be extended, whilst earnest Anglo-French technical discussions sent the mechanics in search of a soldering gun to repair the float and Madam Bridoux, whose family had owned the garage for 55 years, summoned the local newspaper to take photographs and set up a Champagne reception in the workshop! It transpired that she had learnt English to greet the liberating Allied armies in 1944, but fate dictated that the first troops who came to Guignicourt were French/Canadian! However it was to our advantage some 53 years later.

In order to get word to the 2 cars who had gone ahead and Jean-Marie, about the delay, 4 cars left first, and the remainder followed some 30 minutes later –rejoining the advanced part at Montmedy, our original planned lunch stop, though we had to forego lunch. We soon met up with Jean-Marie, who then led us into Luxembourg, and on to our hotel at Hoscheid, where we were joined by Chris Backland (Guernsey), and Bert and Maya from Beek (Holland), Victor and Evelynne Rodrigues (Switzerland), all in 'Y's and Rob Silk (Holland) in an MGB GT.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent on both organised and informal excursions exploring the Luxembourg towns, castles and countryside, whilst the indefatigable Jean-Marie also organised a dentist's appointment for one of our group who had dental problems. At dinner on Wednesday evening Jean-Marie presented each crew with a bottle of Luxembourg wine specially labelled for the anniversary, and we in turn presented Jean-Marie with an item of great rarity, a specially engraved Sakaguchi Spanner, made from titanium by Mr. Sakaguchi, a register member from Japan. This spanner is intended to remove hot octagonal radiator-caps.

Friday saw us on a coach trip to Luxembourg city and a guided tour of the cathedral, fortifications and shops, with Jean-Marie and our MGC-owning

coach driver acting as guides. Everyone agreed it was a splendid day and on our return to the hotel in the evening, we were joined by Pierre and Carol Debeugny from France, who arrived in their splendid YT.

Saturday saw the start of the 40th anniversary celebration weekend of the Luxembourg M.G. Car Club event which we were joining for the day. After registration at Hosingen, the choice was either, for the more serious, a rally-type route to Wincrange for lunch at the Cultural Centre, or for the others, a gentle self-select. route to the same destination. Lunch was splendidly organised by the local music society!! but with 500 or more people participating there was an enormous queue for the food. After lunch the

route returned to rally headquarters at Hosingen, where the concours buffs were to prepare their cars, while we lesser mortals just admired. Early evening was taken up by concours judging and then followed an excellent barbecue meal, with a piece of the most ornate M.G. birthday cake that could ever be imagined, then speeches, rocker cover car races which were keenly contested, and finally a disco far into the night...

Next day, Sunday, we began our journey back to UK, having to say goodbye to our European friends and also to Chris Backland who had been joined by his wife, Mary, for a trip to Poland. We also left Mervyn and Mary Davies who were going to the Black Forest for an extended holiday in their YT. Jean-Marie, who had looked after us so well, must have breathed a sigh of relief as he returned to his wife Silvie and son Mark, on the way home taking part in the hill climb event in his very fast 'Y'. The UK contingent split into two groups and headed back to Laon. One group paused for lunch in Mouzon, where the customers of the Café Maritime were puzzled to see a Frenchman and an Englishman discussing the menu in German and David Pelham doing currency deals



1. The human "Y". (photo Andrew Gilham)
2. Alan Chick and Mary depart from the "base-camp" hotel in Hoscheid. (photo Brian Moyse)
3. The "YA" of Jack and Molly Murray as they pass through the picturesque town of Vianden. (photo Brian Moyse)



whilst eating his chips. Evening saw us all back at the Campanile in Laon. After dinner in the hotel, several of us took the opportunity to visit the medieval cathedral and town, on the top of the hill above the modern town. One group did the round 5 miles on foot, being urged on by Kirsty Pelham.

Next morning we set off to Calais to catch the evening Seacat sailing, but Alan Chick's carburettor float decided to play up again, so half the group went ahead, whilst 4 Ys and the MGB GT waited for the local Total garage to repair the float again (unfortunately no Champagne this time). When the repair was completed, we said farewell to Brian Moyse in the GT, and the 4 Ys headed for Calais. After a short lunch stop, and a final 70km dash down the auto-route to pick up time, we all drove straight into the Hoverport and directly onto the Seacat, where we rejoined the others who had paused to visit a hypermarket on their way. An hour later, we were saying our farewells at Dover and heading for home.

Now it's all over, what remains in the memory? First, the friendliness and hospitality of the people of France and Luxembourg, especially Jean-Marie Gillen and Ton and Fredry Maathuis of the Luxembourg Car Club. Second, the pleasure of sharing the holiday with all the 'Y' owners both from the Continent and UK. Third, our tireless support driver, Brian Moyse, who did so



much to facilitate the tour and who always seemed to be there when needed. And finally, the enduring and endearing appeal of the Y – Type – the group of 11 cars, sharing a total age of more than 450 years, proved extremely reliable and found us friends wherever we went. We look forward to our Diamond Jubilee with anticipation!! ■

Memory Corner, prompted by the Trip to Luxembourg

Nicole Dick relives a childhood experience

I was quite glad when Dennis Doubtfire asked me to write a few words about my memories of May, 1940, something I have wanted to do for a long time.

On May 10th 1940, after having hopped to a neutral country, poor little Belgium yet again became the scene of a massive invasion by the Germans. My family left Brussels, like thousands of others, to join the mass of refugees on the roads towards France and the South. We soon left the main roads, my father, a fanatic of the Michelin maps, decided to travel on much smaller roads and villages, to avoid the appalling congestion of traffic, army convoys and German fighter aircraft coming regularly over our heads with their machine guns.

As we drove through Arras the other day with the Y Type rally, it all came back to me as I had approached Arras 57 years ago. It was very early in the morning then, with dawn breaking into a glowing red sky, the town was ablaze. Arras had suffered the most horrendous bombing all night. A spectacle never to be forgotten especially at the age of ten.

We were fortunate enough to have a contact there and those kind people took us in their home which, fortunately, was still intact. It was not going to be for long though the invasion was imminent and they had already planned to leave themselves. We therefore accompanied them to a village nearby called Ligny and moved into a beautiful old chateau which belonged to a very old friend of theirs. The place was choking with refugees but we were allocated the billiard room where we settled ourselves as best we could. My father and his veteran friend, both from the 14/18 war, had decided to stay put in the area. They were so optimistic

about the British counter offensive. But alas after another very severe daytime bombing raid, with everyone having taken refuge in the old cellars, there was a loud knock on the main doors. Our French friend followed by my father went upstairs to find themselves facing a German motorcyclist, very polite and alone. The Frenchman said to my father "Shall I shoot him?" The reply was "No, he is certainly not alone and we will all get killed". This proved to be right, as seconds later the whole column was gathering in the grounds. We were all turfed out with the exception of the old dowager who was allowed a room upstairs.



After one night spent in the stables, with a few hysterical people and a German doctor trying to cope, our friends went back to Arras and we were given shelter by the local priest. We stayed there a further three weeks with no petrol, always hoping that the British would succeed and make a breakthrough. We queued for bread every day under the German guns and cameras. The atmosphere was getting more fraught all the time, until amazingly, as the almighty always provides, the Cure gave us some petrol (he had a well full of it). He was delighted to get rid of us I suppose.

So we finally we set off for Brussels, again following minute roads on the maps (this might be the reason for my love of maps ever since). It took a long time but we made it without problems. We found our house still up, with the old gardener having his soup in the Kitchen. Relief, oh what a relief. Meanwhile, the German massive machine was sweeping through France with no-one able to stop it.

The war was supposed to be over for some – but certainly not for us, and so we started to live under German occupation, never realising that it would last four long years. We always knew, and never lost hope, that one day the "Tommys" would come back.

Nicole Dick. (NEE WYNEN) ■



4. All of these signs outside Vianden are so confusing. Does one of them mean "Beware – flower carts crossing!"? (photo Brian Moyse)
5. One of Jean-Marie's "impossible" games. (photo Brian Moyse)
6. Nearing the summit (photo Brian Moyse)

Alan Chick relates to Dennis Doubtfire the saga of a punctured carburettor float:-

The little Citroen garage had never seen six or seven Y-Types, or most probably the same number of any other make at one time either, and sold more 'essence' on our visit than for days. Madame and her mechanics were most hospitable and produced Champagne and nibbles for all. The local press were called and we dutifully assembled the cars for a photo-call.

My carburettor float was soldered up and appeared to be satisfactory and we proceeded to catch-up with our group at the proposed lunch stop. At Hoscheid, the float was again not functioning and Jean-Marie obtained the services of a helpful electrician who emptied and resoldered it. (It floated in water, but as you later advised me, we should have used hot water).

And so it came to pass, at Laon on the return journey, it was again out of order and the mechanic there did a fine soldering job and the float is still completely empty, if rather heavier than it should be. ■



Bert and Mia Keuren's thoughts; translation and P.S. courtesy of Rob Silk

Bert and his wife Mia, Keuren, together with Rob Silk represented the Dutch Y owners in Luxembourg. It was very pleasant to meet the other Y owners from England, Switzerland and Luxembourg. It was also a unique opportunity to see so many M.G. Y Types and to join in the tour. The hills of Luxembourg make it an ideal place for organising such trips. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We also very much appreciated the mementos commemorating the 50th Jubilee of the Y Type and the 40 years celebrations of the Luxembourg M.G.C.C., in particular the plaque

"Tour de Lux" and the model Y.

Driving home afterwards gave time to reflect that owning an M.G.Y is more than just another car. Tot ziens in Engeland.

P.S.

My personal memories are of new friends made-putting faces to names- and not to forget my three hour high speed personal guided tour of Luxembourg in Jean-Marie's hotted up 'Y' – not easily forgotten!!! ■

David Hague remembers his pre-Luxembourg preparations

My main memory of the Luxembourg trip is of apprehension slowly turning to elation as we reached our destination. The reason is that I had recently completed the restoration of my YB, my first (and probably only) full body-off restoration.

I purchased the hulk in 1991 on April 1st! It had been off the road since 1965. Having spent six years on the project, I was pressurised into booking up for the Luxembourg trip by my friends on the Register committee.

As the day grew nearer, I became more apprehensive with the amount of work still to be done. However, a major step forward was achieved in mid July when I was awarded an M.O.T. certificate. The next few weeks saw a number of teething troubles, mainly associated with the fuel line.

Came the day of the trip, we set off with much trepidation, not even having done the five hundred miles needed to run the engine in! However, that first milestone was passed on the way to the ferry, with further milestones along the way being successfully passed – Dover, Laon and eventually that euphoric moment when we arrived at our destination in Luxembourg. What a wonderful feeling of satisfaction to make it and what wonderful cars these Y Types are! ■

Dennis Doubtfire writes:-

For my own part, one of the many memories that I shall carry with me of the Tour, was the vastness of the Ardennes. It was whilst we were enjoying the run through this region that I could not stop wondering what it must have been like in 1944, speeding across in a Sherman tank. It was around here that some of the biggest tank battles of W.W.2 took place, as all the monuments and cemeteries bear witness to.

The other memory that we will all carry with us, is that of the day of our departure from Luxembourg, when we heard of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. ■



7. The breakdown stop. (photo Kim Gilham)

8. "Nudge, nudge, wink, wink. Andrew & Alan enjoy a chuckle. (photo Kim Gilham)