

RUNNING COSTS

To the prospective owner of any elderly car, the cost of maintaining and running it is a big part of the decision which one to buy. Of all the MG's, other than those in current production, I contend that the 'Y' Type is probably one of the cheapest to run. Providing you are of a nature to do all your own servicing, and as this is only once a year on cars so little used, a great saving can be made on labour charges. Changing oil and a filter at home will cost one quarter of what a garage will charge you, and if you invested in one of the modern filter adaptations where a cheap modern car oil filter can be used, even less.

Re-oiling, greasing, brake adjustments, door hinge and latch oiling, fan belt adjustments, tyre pressure, water and oil level checking, should all be second nature, and cost nothing. Keeping the interior clean and the leather seats fed and polished, will use 25% of the average Leather Food bottle annually. Polish and cloths costs can add up, as can elastoplasts for those skinned knuckles on the odd sharp edge.

Batteries should last three to four years, longer if pampered. Tyres if of the cross-ply type will usually get between eight to nine thousand miles wear, maybe a little less on the front wheels. Radial ply tyres will double this life expectancy easily, but then the side-walls craze with the sun's action if not rotated on their rims. Cross-ply tyres are just £35 each from Vintage Tyre Supplies, radials another £20 each on average.

Petrol consumption is often a topic of conversation at meetings and rally's. It is true today that the standard needle fitted by MG back in the

early 1950's is perhaps a little rich. The standard needle is a 'FJ' needle. The rich needle recommended was a 'VS', and the weak one probably better used today was a 'No1'. These can be purchased from Burlen Services, the current SU spares supplier. You will certainly get better miles per gallon from a weaker needle, but you will reduce the car's ability to accelerate as well, and find you will need the choke out longer on cold days. On a car only doing three to four thousand miles a year, but more often than not probably a lot less, the cost of a new needle and jet may not be saved in the extra mpg gained.

The experienced owner will have an eye for items at auto-jumbles, knowing things like dynamo brushes will soon need replacing, or a bargain price for a water pump, or good quality 20/50 multi-grade oil on special offer. Fan belts and radiator hoses are often found in large boxes amongst other similar items. The 'X' series engine fan belt is a very thick one, I recently found four at £1 each. Other items worthy of purchasing for later use are brake shoe lining kits, (found 8 linings with rivets for £10 last year,) clutch linings with rivets, and loose brake cylinder seals and master cylinder kits, (seals 50p each, YB kit £5, this year.)

A keen eye, a knowledge of your car, what is soon due for servicing, keeping a log, and keeping to a regular servicing schedule, all go towards making things last much longer and getting good mileage from the item. That is exactly how your car's original owner probably was as well, otherwise how did it last into the 21st century? ■



Peter Vielvoye's immaculate YT at the 2002 Summer Picnic.



Photo by Alan Chick of roadside repairs on the Brittany Run. Jack Murray fixes a distributor whilst being threatened by the Register Chairman, (holding the starting handle,) Peter Arnell.

THAT SINKING FEELING.

(OR, GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF THINGS.)

When you next attend a meeting of any number of 'Y' Types, take note of how tall, or short, the driver looks whilst in the car. Then note how your initial impression was probably way out. The little fellow peering through the steering wheel as he negotiated his 'Y' into its parking space, will suddenly shoot up to be a 6ft 2inch giant as he unfolds from the drivers door, to tower over the cars roof.

Why did such magic appear from the cabin of an old MG? It is all due to the drivers seat. It is the most-used bit of furniture in the car. As the years pass, its horse-hair stuffing and ancient tempered steel springs, slowly give up. It is also true to say that many of us Anglo-Saxon types have large back-sides, where as the older Celts, UK Asians and others, do not appear to be so heavily built. As the average North American is even bigger than the UK Anglo-Saxon, I suspect their little M.G. drivers seats suffer even more wear and tear.

The fault is two fold, the car was never designed to last fifty years and more, and the seat springing is that of a cheap Morris family saloon. The springs underneath the seat-pan radiate out from a central bar, to hook into the seat frame periphery. Years of drivers bouncing about eventually causes the two rear-most (no pun intended,) springs to either stretch, or break off at one of the hooks at either end. The rear part of the seat

cushion then sinks to give the impression that a midget is driving the car. Quite a few owners simply put an old cushion on the seat, and sit on that to raise them up above the steering wheel rim. Once these two rear springs give up, the other will soon follow as they have to take the extra strain.

The cure is to remove the seat from the car, turn it upside-down, and fit new springs. It is well worth adding a layer of modern sponge between the pan and the horse hair, to give a bit more height to the seat, four to 5 centimetres will be sufficient, available from any market place. To get hold of springs can be a bit difficult, so either go to your local tidy-tip and raid old furniture or an old bed, or the Morris Minor specialists sometimes stock similar seat springs. (You could always steal those from the passenger seat and then convince your partner they are perhaps getting a little overweight, as they stare at the glove box lid.)

Once fixed, you can gaze through the centre of the windscreen again. But should you find yourself looking at the centre of the horn-push in the steering wheel, I suspect the wooden floor has given way, and it is time to attend to your own ever expanding waist. On my own YB I added an extra third spring at the back of the seat pan, so the car can cope with the inevitable middle-age-spread. Oh, ah right then, late-middle age spread! ■

MGYB 5 SPEED CONVERSION

When you change into top gear on your Y type, have you ever wished that you had another gear? Well this is now possible with the Hi Gear 5 Speed Conversion kit. When fitted this kit enables the car to be driven in today's traffic with ease, and allows the XPAG engine to reach its full potential without any strain. It can be fitted by anyone with moderate mechanical knowledge and should take no more than a weekend, once the preparation has been done.

The kit consists of the following parts:

New bell housing, Propshaft, Engine stabiliser, Engine mount, Gearbox mounting plate, Gearstick, New floor rail brackets, clutch plate, all nuts and bolts and a new Gearbox cover. You will also need to source a Ford Sierra Type 9 gearbox; these can be had for about £65.00. For the purists it is good to know that you do not have to cut the chassis when fitting the box, only trim small amounts from the original gearbox mounting plate, the car can be returned to original at any time in the future.

So how do you set about the Conversion? Preparation of the Sierra gearbox consists of filing off a portion of the rear of the casing, this can be done with a large half round file. Also cutting back the thrust bearing tube. It is prudent to drain the fluid from the Ford box at this time. Remove the Sierra gear lever, remove the cross shaft and operating fork from the MG bell housing and install in the new housing, bolt housing to Ford Box. The gearbox is now ready to install. Now the preparation of the car. Remove seats, floorboards, propshaft, propshaft cover and gearbox cover. Disconnect clutch linkage. Separate gearbox from engine and remove from the car. Don't forget to drain the MG gearbox before you start. Drain radiator and remove complete with grill from car.

At this point it is advisable to stop for a cup of tea and contemplate the work that has to be done.

To accommodate the new box the engine must be moved forward approximately 10mm. To enable you to do this the kit has a new engine mounting and an extension to the engine stabilising bar. With the engine on a Jack (and a large piece of wood) it is easy to move it forward and fit the new mounting and extension. Make sure there is no strain on cables etc. the clutch cover can now be removed from the flywheel. Inspect clutch cover and thrust bearing and replace as required. Refit clutch cover using new Ford clutch plate provided. Bolt rubber mounting to rear of gearbox and install gearbox in car, this may take some time as the box is a tight fit against the cross member, use a little patience here! When the box is bolted up to the engine it is time to fit the mounting plate to the cross member, this is quite easy. The gearbox mounting is now bolted to this plate and adjusted as required.

Time for another cup of tea.

Re-attach clutch operating mechanism and adjust the clutch. At this point make sure that the rear of the gearbox does not touch the cross member, if it does adjust the plate to gain clearance. You will now find with the new gearbox installed the handbrake fouls the gear lever, to rectify this the handbrake and cable plinth will have to be moved 5" back on the propshaft tunnel, this means you will have to drill out the spot welds on the cable plinth. Move the plinth 5" to the rear and secure with bolts. The handbrake lever fixing holes must also be re-drilled 5" to their rear and the hand brake bolted into the new position. The handbrake cables must be re-routed through the rear bulkhead, instead of entering via the floor.

Refit all parts you have removed, fill the gearbox with oil (use only Ford oil) and you are ready for a test run. The first run with the new box installed is a revelation. The box is quiet in all gears; you no longer have to double de-clutch. The car cruises at 70mph with ease and the engine revs are about 4000, lovely!

You will now have to re-calibrate the Speedo; instructions on how to do this are included in the kit. In conclusion, this modification is very worthwhile, it allows the car to be used on modern roads and in modern traffic. It has the added bonus of being able to convert back to original at any time. I strongly recommend it to all Y Type owners.

This article only gives you a general idea of the work involved and how to set about it. A complete step-by-step set of instructions is issued with the kit that are well written and easy to follow.

The kit is provided by Hi Gear Engineering, 82 Chestnut Avenue, Mickleover, Derby, DE2 5FS, Tel/fax: 01332 514503. Any owner who would like any advice, I would be only too happy to assist them. Any owner in the South East who would like the conversion carried out for them should contact J W Adams Vehicle Engineers, Tel: 01303 254258, without who's help I would have been lost.

Also my thanks to Peter Gamble of Hi Gear Engineering for his help and advice.

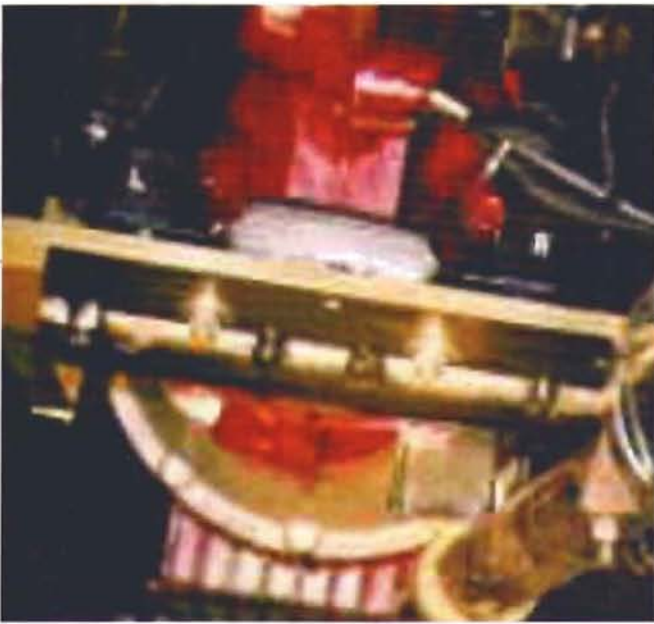
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P.S. Must now think about an upgrade of the brakes!!!

Note by Neil:-

I picked up a Hi-Gear Engineering leaflet at Silverstone, and they do the conversion kit for literally any M.G. The five speed gearbox used is that of the Ford Type 9, as fitted to the Ford Sierra saloon. The correct version of this gearbox can be found on the 1982-87 1.6L, 1.8L and 2.0L, as well as the 1982-91 1.6L and 1.8L. This gearbox





has the shorter primary motion shaft, (the one fitting into the clutch,) so DO NOT use the almost identical gearbox from the 2.3L and 2.8L Sierra, or any Capri, XR4, Transit van, or the 2.3 diesel. These gearboxes have a primary shaft that is too long. Again, there are four-speed versions of this gearbox about, and these can be identified by NOT having a 'sandwich' extension plate between the gearbox casing and the rear extension casing. The fifth-speed lives inside this 'plate'. The four-speed gearbox does not have this sandwich-extension. The primary shaft on the correct five-speed gearbox is 145mm long. To make life easy for you the company can supply a correct gearbox with their kit, including a heavy duty one for competition work. The standard Sierra five-speed gearbox has ratios of first-3.65; second-1.97; third-1.37; top-1.0; fifth-0.82. (Note, this is the gearbox ratios, not those after the rear axle.) A standard 'YA' has gearbox ratios of first-3.49; second-2.07; third-1.38; top-1.0. 'YB's are almost the same.

For the technically uninitiated, please remember that with such a five-speed conversion, fourth gear is actually top-gear, (ie direct-drive of 1.0 to 1.0.) The fifth-gear is an 'overdrive'. Normal motoring will still need you to use forth most of the time, but you can relax the engine by using lower revolutions on long fast roads. Unless you improve the engines performance by increasing its torque, you will still need to use third gear on many hills, and top, (fourth,) for shallow hills. To improve an XPAG's torque by a large amount you need to either fit a super-charger, or bore it out to 1466cc and fit cylinder liners. However, firms like Brown & Gammons could come to your aid if you buy their improved camshaft conversion kit, along with TF inlet and exhaust valves fitted to your cylinder-head, and a bit of gas-flowing to the ports, and a slight rise in the compression ratio.

Thank you Tony for the excellent article and photo's. A real 'Y' for the 21st Century. ■



This photo is a real jewel. The best caption sent to me will win a prize of the " Post War MG Saloons" booklet, written by me. Send it to Neil Cairns, 44 Highfield Road, Leighton Buzzard, Beds. LU7 3LZ; or email to me.