

# Scotland NC 500 by Y Type June 2018



I first heard about the North Coast 500 on the radio in 2016 and it sounded like a fantastic route to see the north of Scotland. Having owned my 1952 YB for a number of years I felt that this would be the perfect vehicle but the engine needed a rebuild before undertaking the 600 miles up to Inverness, 500 miles around Scotland and the return 600 miles home. After a rebore and complete engine rebuild, I took the opportunity to put in a 5 speed Type 9 Ford gearbox, I was ready by late 2017. My wife/navigator agreed to come on condition that she could take the train to and from Inverness as she is not a fan of long journeys in old bangers. As the plan came together I decided to try and find B&Bs approximately 50 - 60 miles apart, this would give us plenty of time to visit places of interest on our way. The final plan involved 10 nights starting and ending at Inverness which included 2 days, one night in the Orkneys. No single days motoring was more than 86 miles and the shortest was 53 miles. Finding B&Bs was not as easy as you may think,

fortunately I started looking and booking 6 months before the dates of arrival. The NC 500 has proved so popular that many B&Bs are not interested in "one night only" guests and others were already booked up. The final stopovers were as follows: - Inverness - Applecross (79m) - Poolewe (61m) - Lochinver (86m) - Durness (53m) - Thurso (71m) - Orkney - Thurso - Dunbeath (56m) - Inverness (83m). A total of 489 miles without deviations.

As I had never been this far north I was not sure what to expect. I can tell you that the west coast was breath taking with vast vistas of heath and mountains with little evidence of mankind. The Bealach na Ba (Pass of the Cattle) is a must. It is the only way into Applecross from the east. It is a pass that rises up to 626 metres with many hairpins and the scenery is stunning. The Y went up with no trouble other than getting a little hot towards the top mainly because of the slow traffic ahead. The use of the engine



for braking when coming down into Applecross avoided any experience of brake fade. A lot of the western and northern highland roads are single track with passing places clearly marked. Of the various towns and villages that we passed through once leaving Inverness I think that Ullapool was a town that felt most full of life and a good centre if you want to stay longer in the Highlands. When on the north coast near Thurso a trip out to Dunnet Head the most northerly point on the UK mainland is necessary.

The Ordnance Survey Map No. 1, Northern Scotland, Orkney and Shetland was used for the major part of my planning. Also, the NC 500 website and book proved useful once up there. I think that the most stunning part of our

trip was the 2 days spent on Orkney. The Y had no trouble boarding the ferry at Gills Bay and at Stromness. There is not a lot to say about the car other than any fears of causing long tail backs were unfounded. We were able to keep up with all of the moderns in front of us. There are no such things as dual carriageways, let alone motorways this far north. The only breakdown we experienced could have been major but luck was on my side. I came out to the car one morning when up at Thurso having arrived back from the Orkneys the night before, opened the bonnet to check oil and to have a quick squint around and noticed water where it shouldn't have been and on the road beneath the engine, a core plug. It seems that overnight the core plug contracted faster than the block. The good news was that I had a set of core plugs with me but the problem was whether I was able to get to the side of the engine and did I have a long enough rod to hit the new plug? My luck was holding. I had a steel tube which I use as an extension to the wheel brace and the missing core plug was the rear most. It was just accessible and the tube just long enough for a few good thumps with a hammer. An old towel protected the bodywork. When I first discovered the problem, I thought that was the end of the journey but just over half an hour later we were on our way.

The only thing that I have not mentioned was the weather. We had decided to go in

early June as we had been told that this likely to be the best weather without too many midges. I would hate to think what the journey would have been like in rain, low cloud and cool temperatures. A completely different story from ours which was wall to wall sunshine but for two hours of very light rain on the last afternoon.

Going to and from home in Sevenoaks was relatively easy, sitting on the A1/A1M at between 50 - 55 MPH when the car seemed very happy.

I did a total of 1,834 miles and managed an average of 31MPG.

As already mentioned the only spares I needed were core plugs. All the other spares recommended for adventures like this have remained unused, I am pleased to say.

If anybody would like to know more I am happy for Jerry to pass on my email address and will be pleased to bore your further. I did record much of our journey on a dash cam. I just need to edit all the clips into a useful film.

### **Julian Bosworth**



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