

In 1966 I was living in Sydney, Australia, the ubiquitous FJ Holden was the car of choice but not for me, I yearned for a sports car and an advert for an MGYT caught my eye. I had no idea what that was but at \$100 (£50 in those days) the price was right. Over the years, after reading the occasional article or letter referring to Y-type MGs I have often thought that I should write down my experiences, so here they are.

I made my way home with the MG hardly able to contain my excitement, that evening when my flatmates went off to the pub I went for a drive. I will never forget that feeling of elation as I

piston shattered punching a hole in the sump, I still have the top half of the piston, which for many years served as an ashtray.

In the recent article by Chris Adamson there was mention of problems with half shafts breaking. Mine broke and yes, I still have the inch or so of splined half shaft I pulled out of the differential. I never seemed to have much money so taking the car to a garage was out of the question, if it broke I had to fix it. Chris Adamson mentioned a puller for the rear drums, I certainly never had anything as exotic as that and I must have had the rear drums off many times.

MG YT SYDNEY TO PERTH

Paddy Harvey



Just polished, just good friends

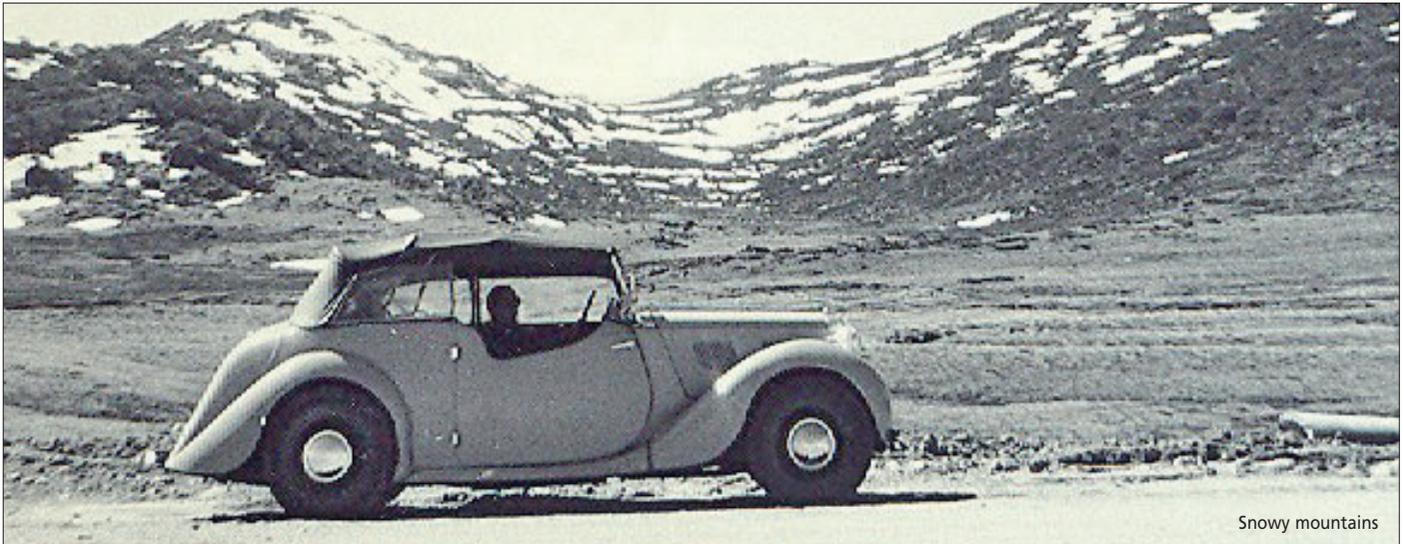
drove, hood down, north up the coast in the warm night air.

Looking back I am filled with horror at some of the things I did to keep the car running, but also amazement. With no tools I had to rely on the tool roll that came with the car and for reference, the owners handbook. If I remember correctly a couple of spanners were included in the tool roll.

When I had to replace the engine I borrowed a few tools from a friend and persuaded him and a couple others to help me lift the engine out of the car it. A previous owner had bored the engine out and I suspect had it balanced, it revved wonderfully. Too wonderfully because one day leaving some traffic lights a

I found a farm on the outskirts of Sydney that had car parts instead of animals. One of those wonderful places where amongst the weeds and in the disused sheds all manner of car parts were to be found. It provided me with a half shaft and not long after that when the differential packed up one of those as well.

I had problems with water in the petrol tank, following a tanker drivers strike, the steering wheel coming off while I was driving along (I hadn't tightened the nut up properly after fiddling with the horn button in the centre of the wheel) and brakes that refused to let go (that took me a while to figure out, the action



Snowy mountains

of the piston in the master cylinder had put a scrim of metal over the little hole that allowed the fluid to return to the reservoir).

One night I was driving back into Sydney, on a fairly remote stretch of road, when I thought I could smell petrol, then I realised I could see petrol, on the windscreen. Petrol was blowing up through the louvers in the bonnet. I pulled off the road and opened the bonnet, one of the unions to the float chamber had worked loose and petrol was pumping everywhere, I could hear it sizzling as it splashed onto the red hot exhaust manifold. I was able to tighten the union enough by hand to get home. A friend who just happened to be on the same stretch of road spotted the MG and pulled over, in his FJ Holden. I had spent the afternoon cleaning the float chambers. I had also tried to adjust the timing which probably accounted for the engine running so hot.

A girlfriend complained bitterly that oil was dripping on her dress from the speedometer (set in the dashboard on the passenger side) what nonsense I thought. A few months earlier the speedometer cable had broken and I had replaced it with one from the farmyard breakers that seemed to fit, unfortunately there must have been a seal missing somewhere. The wires that made up the cable acted as an Archimedes screw, gently taking oil from the gearbox up to the mechanical speedometer.

I even had to embark on a little carpentry, repairing the wooden frame in the driver's door. Hinged at the rear it could fly open if a you drove over a bad bump, despite becoming quite good at catching it, this eventually pulled the hinge bolts out of the wooden frame splitting the wood.

My worst problem was the clutch linkage, a metal rod from pedal to the lever on the side of the bell housing. I never knew if this was the standard part or some boy racer's fix, but it caused me no end of trouble. At the end of the rod there was a short threaded section that connected to the bell housing lever and it broke off several times. This left you without a clutch and if you were unlucky, in the middle of traffic. The rod had to be disconnected and a bolt welded on to the end, a simple task, if you are a welder. I have to say that when I walked oily and forlorn into the nearest garage I don't ever remember being charged.

Chris Adamson mentioned that his car's hydraulic jacking system had been removed and a brake servo put in its place under the bonnet, I expect he has wind up windows as well! Chris, you've missed a treat. Just select front, back or all, fit the handle and pump. The first time I used the jacks I pumped and nothing happened, I had punched neat round holes into the grass the car was parked on. Thereafter I carried pieces of wood to place under the feet as they came down. There was one other glitch, the seals on each of the feet were probably at the end of their useful life, they weeped fluid copiously, giving you less than a minute to change the tyre or find something to prop the car up with.

The Australian equivalent of the MoT checked all the usual things, but on a fairly casual basis in those days. The mechanic would ask you to turn the lights on and operate the brake lights and indicators. He would then sit in the car and press the foot

brake wiggle the steering wheel and sound the horn. The front would be jacked up and king pins checked and that was about it. In my time there was never any sort of road test. So when, the day before I was due to take the car for an MoT and I realised that I was pumping the brakes several times before anything happened, I decided to take a chance, I didn't have time to reline the brakes, which is what was needed. I left the car parked, in gear, on a slight slope in front of the workshop to be tested and watched while he checked lights etc. When he got into the car he knocked it out of gear, I had rather hoped he wouldn't do that, and although the handbrake was on it started roll gently backwards, he pulled harder on the handbrake, then put his foot on the brake, nothing. What was I thinking of? He didn't bother to check the king pins.

That little MG went everywhere, out into the bush, on dirt roads good and bad, and then one day a girlfriend asked me if I would take her home, to Perth. Well, how could I refuse? I gathered my few belongings, a jerry can for extra petrol, an extra spare wheel and a gearbox just in case. I have no idea what I thought I was going to do with a gearbox. I drove from Sydney to Perth via Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide. In those days there was a considerable stretch after Adelaide to the Western Australia border that was dirt road, across the Nullabor Plain

When my wife and I went to Australia a few years ago on holiday I was amused to see how these days the Aussies drive around with their windows tight shut and the air conditioning on full blast. I was also assured you should never attempt a dirt road in anything other than a 4x4, I said nothing.

During this time the MG was not my only car, I made a couple of impulse buys which were not half as much fun. At the end of 1969 I was returning to Britain and I sold the MG, the first person to inquire wanted a test drive during which the clutch rod snapped, again! He bought the car. Despite everything I was very sorry to see it go. I had learnt a great deal in the few years I owned that car, almost all on the "take it apart, work out what's wrong and fix it" principle. I feel sorry for those generations since who are no longer able to rattle around in old bangers and approach car maintenance in such a hands on way.

In an article on Y types some years ago it was stated that only around 650 YT models were made and almost all were exported, how fortunate that I happened on one of them. I bought the Y-type from the back garden of a Greek chap who was hoping to make a living buying and selling cars, a year later as I was driving in traffic through Sydney's Kings Cross area, notorious then for frippies as much as anything else, I passed a car lot and my Greek friend rushed out waving, did I want to buy another car? Not likely.

Since then I have had various cars, a Healey 3000, which became part of the deposit for our first house and a 1970 MGB which we have had for 36 years now. I do all (well most) of the work on it and seven years ago rebuilt the B with a new body shell. But I will never forget the Y-type.