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Background

In late 2011 I was talking to my good friend Victor Rodrigues and we recalled both the 1992 and the 2002 Tours of Brittany in which we both participated, and thought that it would be a good idea to keep the tradition going in 2012. The date was fixed for September 2012. I intended to use the Au Relais du Porhoët hotel in Guilliers as our base hotel; it is owned by the Courtel family, the same family who provided us with accommodation in 1992. Guilliers is too far to travel (in a Y type) from Caen in a day, so overnight stops were necessary on both the outward and return legs. I decided on Domfront on the outward journey and Avranches on the return journey.

PLANNING - The base hotel had twelve rooms and this determined the number of participants. Ferries were booked in February, accommodation at the hotels was also reserved and deposits paid.

I had provisionally mapped out our route, which included the obligatory visit to Pegasus Bridge upon arrival, then on to Falaise

After lunch it should have been a short drive to the Hôtel de France in Domfront. It was a relatively short drive to Domfront but the hotel could not be found. I suppose the address 'Rue de Mont St Michel' contained a hidden clue but one that was at first not obvious. Eventually we arrived at the hotel, it was on the main road to Mont St Michel (in the Notre Dame area of the town). You see the clues were there.

MG Y TYPE TOUR OF BRITTANY

David Pelham

DAY TWO - We departed from Domfront soon after 'petit déjeuner'. Once again my car had 'pole position' but driver and navigator roles were reversed, my friend David Hardy took over the steering wheel while I took over the maps and route book. I was to learn (as David had experienced the previous day) that French road signs have a habit of totally disappearing when in towns and either the roads are renamed frequently, or the Michelin Maps are

updated less frequently.

On the way I received a call on my mobile from Henri Hebels, who with his wife Marlies (who had travelled from Holland had



Y-types in Square at Josselin that important 3rd photograph

The author (right) and fellow Tour Initiator Victor (left) at the Patton memorial in Avranches

(birthplace of William the Conqueror) for lunch and then to Domfront for our outward stop. Day two would see us travel onwards to Guilliers, stopping at the walled city of Vitre for lunch. Days three and four would be spent in the vicinity of Guilliers with visits to Josselin, the Motor Museum in Loheac and a tour to the Atlantic Coast. On day five we would depart from Guilliers, lunch in Dinan, visit to Mont St Michel before arrival at Avranches. Day six would see us return to Caen for the ferry home, first travelling north and then along the Normandy Coast. However, I still had over six months to finalise the itinerary.

DAY ONE - We arrived on time at Ouistreham (Caen) after travelling on the overnight ferry from Portsmouth and quickly disembarked. We arrived at Pegasus Bridge at approximately 07:30 on a Sunday morning. At first it looked as if we would take a few photographs and then set off for Falaise but our presence was spotted by Arlette Gondrée the owner of the Café Gondrée who opened the café for us at a ridiculously early hour on a Sunday morning. Arlette was a small child aged about 4 years old when the Allied Troops landed on the 5th June 1944, the Café, her parents house was the first house liberated in France that day. How appropriate for our party to share coffee, croissants and pastries with her.

We then set off for Falaise but I had arranged for a lunch stop at Pont d'Ouilly about ten miles further south. As we drove into Pont d'Ouilly we were greeted by Victor and Evelyne Rodrigues, who had taken three days to travel just under 600 miles from Switzerland to join us.

decided to meet up with us at Vitre; they were already there and wanted to know our arrival time. Monday is market day in Vitre and it was impossible to park anywhere, however as we approached Henri waved at us and directed us to the railway station where we were able to park the cars. It was not possible to find a restaurant to accommodate the swelling numbers as there were now 22 of us, so everybody went off in small groups to 'refuel'.

After lunch the convoy kept formation for most of the journey, at Guer, about twenty miles from our destination I managed to take a wrong turning (again) with two other cars taking the D134 south instead of north. This delayed our arrival in Guilliers but upon arrival I was complimented on the fact that I played both 'Pole' and 'Sweeper' positions, something that many could not fathom out. When we arrived at the hotel many had taken up residence on the lawn and said that the hotel was closed; well actually it was open, in that it was unlocked but nobody was there. It was at this point the first stages of panic arrived. A little later Franck, the owner's son and chef arrived and served us with much needed drinks. Franck also had a good sense of humour, whereby he told us that no one told him that we were coming and so he had no food. I was much relieved when I found out he was joking, although it was a most convincing performance.

We were joined at Guilliers by Michel and Martine LeGoube; it was ironic that our YT owners joining us from France were the only ones whose Y-type didn't make it. Their YT had suffered from electrical problems the previous weekend and had been left at home.

The Courtel family had kindly provided a separate room for

dinner each evening for our party. This enabled various people to 'take the floor' when they felt the need. It also gave me a platform to discuss the timetable for the next day. Michel had offered to organise a tour to the Atlantic Coast several weeks before we departed. I had quickly taken Michel up on his kind offer, he was a local and his knowledge of the area was better than having our own tour guide. Various plans were drawn up and options given to all.

DAY THREE - A number of our party wanted a quiet morning and then planned to visit the Manoir de l'Automobile at Loheac, about 30 miles from our base camp in Guiliers after lunch. The rest of us had decided to visit Josselin a medieval town about thirty minutes drive from Guiliers and then make our way to Loheac later. I also had an ulterior motive in that only Victor's Y-type and my own car had participated in the three consecutive Brittany tours. It had become a tradition to park the cars in the town square and take photographs. I had managed this in 1992, in 2002 and I wanted another photograph in 2012.

We initially parked our cars alongside the River Oust, overlooking Josselin Castle. We walked into the old town, taking numerous photographs looking at the spectacular buildings. Then to my horror I found that entry to the square where I had planned to take the photograph of my car was now restricted. The French authorities had installed a bollard in the centre of the road to restrict entrance. However, it was in a down position, which either meant it was broken or would raise if you drove over it. After

a very old town designated by the French as a Petite Cité de Caractère.

DAY FIVE - Another tradition with Y-type tours in Brittany and in particular at the Au Relais du Porhoët in Guiliers is a photograph of all the cars in front of the hotel, together with the Courtel Family and the tour participants. After the formalities were complete we said goodbye to Michel and Martine who were returning home and had a YT to repair as it was needed for a wedding on the Saturday.

The lunch stop was planned at Dinan, another medieval town. Unusually for us, we arrived on schedule. We had a couple of hours there but it is possible to spend several days there and still not see everything. Parking was always going to be a problem but as in Vitre the railway station provided the solution. Departure from Dinan was not that easy and the 'dispersal' method was once more adopted more by default than plan. We all set off together but staying together was impossible. Individual routes were used but everybody rejoined the planned route at Dol-de-Bretagne, passing through Pontorson and on to Mont St Michel.

Arrival at the Hôtel Croix d'or in Avranches was straight forward; Henri and Marlies were in the lead and their Dutch Sat Nav was not deterred by being in France. I must say the hotel was stunning, the rooms first class, we were all located overlooking the garden and we had not only secure but in many cases covered parking for the cars too.



Golfe Du Morbihan (Atlantic Coast)



Jo Birkbeck performing maintenance on husband Jerry's YT

much discussion we decided it was broken and the opportunity for my third photograph was there for the taking.

We all had a coffee, took a few photographs and then set off to collect the cars. I was out in front and was first to pass the ramp; thankfully it stayed put. We stopped in the square and took even more photographs. The cars caused quite a stir and not only the locals but a few ex-pats had managed to find us.

Later we quickly caught up with the main party in Loheac or should I say we found their cars; after all eight Y-types parked together in a small French village was not too difficult. We met up with their owners and went on to the museum. Although predominately filled with French cars, there was a significant amount to see, and one could spend many hours there. There is a fantastic display of Formula 1 cars offering a complete contrast to the historic cars built a hundred years earlier.

DAY FOUR - Today was Michel's tour of the Atlantic coast and David my co-driver/navigator and I could have a rest. Michel was in the lead and we were only too happy to follow.

We headed off in the direction of Vannes with a drive around the Golfe du Morbihan, our intended destination. It was an amazing experience and one that would have not been possible without Michel's local knowledge. We stopped in numerous places watching oysters being loaded from local fishing boats and in other places just to admire the scenery. We had lunch in Pont Navalo and on the way back we stopped off at Rochefort-en-Terre

DAY SIX (Homeward Bound) - We said goodbye to Henri and Marlies who took their leave from us and set off for Holland. It was planned that Victor and Evelyne would drive north with us for about ten miles and then depart for Switzerland.

The drive to the Normandy coast was uneventful and my group had lunch at a restaurant near Omaha Beach. The meal took ages to prepare and what should have been a simple journey to the ferry ended up being rather a nightmare; roadworks and road closures resulted in us arriving less than 45 minutes before the ferry was due to depart.

I thoroughly enjoyed the tour, seeing many old friends being reunited and meeting new friends too. The weather was kind to us, the places visited of great interest and I believe that all who took part will have many happy memories for years to come.

It was my pleasure to facilitate the Tour of Brittany for my fellow MG Y-type owners. Michel has offered to organise a Tour of the Loire Valley and who knows we may soon be back to France again.

Editor's note: A complete unabridged 2012 Tour of Brittany report can be viewed at:

www.mgcars.org.uk/imgytr/newsupdates/brittany2012.shtml