

Birth of the “Y” Run

– March 16 1997 by Jerry Birkbeck

On the 14th March 1941 the first of the 1¼ series M.G.s ran off the production line of ‘A’ Black at the Abingdon works. Fifty years and two days later the ‘Y’ Type Register and the MG. Car Club celebrated the occasion with the first of a number of special events planned for the model’s Golden Jubilee — the Birth of the Y Run.

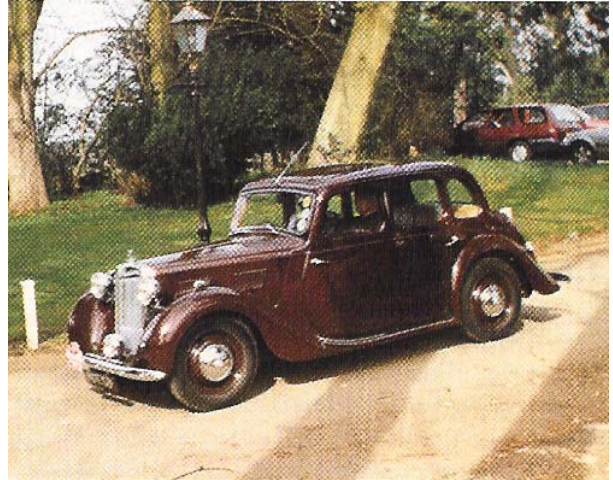
The aim of the organisers was to try and get as many together as possible and for that reason the Midlands was suggested by Dennis Doubtfire, the Register’s Secretary as an area for the venue. The Eathorpe Park Hotel, near to Leamington Spa in Warwickshire provided an ideal point to commence and complete the run. A good deal of time was spent by Dennis and myself in contacting ‘Y’ owners who had not responded to the coverage in Safety Fast, the Octagon Car Club bulletin, and other items in the classic car press. This proved very fruitful with letters and ‘phone calls encouraging owners to take part; and if they could not, then gaining some idea on the extent of the restoration. As BT continually remind us “It’s good to talk”. I discovered that people use their ‘Ys for the most novel of pursuits. Geoff Collett, a sheep farmer near Alcester in Warwickshire, who unfortunately missed the run due to lambing, told me that during the summer he has used his Y for rodent control. He apparently removes the passengers then drives the car across his fields, stops, opens the sun roof and then stands up using the roof as a support to hold his gun and shoot rabbits.

From the responses we received it looked as if we could get up to ‘Ys present on the day. In the event we reached 39 which nevertheless was probably the largest number of ‘Y’s gathered together in one place since leaving Abingdon. Sadly we did not manage a YT: Mervyn Davies, a regular at many MG. events was unable to attend. We were graced with the YT’s predecessor, a VA tourer owned by Charlie Plain-Jones which prompted a lot of interest. Charlie had asked some while before the event if he could attend and he was the only interloper amongst the Ys on the run.

What was fascinating was that each car had some distinctive feature that made it different from the others present. They varied from colour schemes, to more subtle features for example badge bars, additional fog lamps, extra lamps etc. Neil Cairns displayed external chrome wind horns, which were fitted when the car was prepared for its first owner. Arguably one of the most attractive cars was Frank Andrew’s superb green YB.

All the cars were a credit to the owners and many had travelled some distance to attend this unique event. Had there been an award for the entrant who came furthest it would have been won by John

Morgan, who had travelled from Dunfermline — a



David Pelham leaves to start the rally. (photo: Val Wallin)

round trip of 700 miles. Credit enough but even more so when he had replaced a set of pistons in the week before this journey. Alan Dinsdale of ‘Le Jog’ fame had made the short dash of 150 miles from Tiverton on the Sunday morning, whilst Jim Pritchard had travelled up from Tavistock in Devon by way of Cheltenham. Others came from Essex, Kent, Sale and Derbyshire. Dennis Doubtfire’s Surrey Crew arrived mob handed travelling somewhere between 120 – 140 miles to the venue. The West Midlanders were out in force including Len Shaw from Stourbridge with his Monte Carlo rally car. I had the shortest journey from Leamington Spa. Small beer in comparison with the others.

Even though one or two were unable to make it the balance was made up through the attendance of several late entries — including Brian Cox, from Practical Classics with his well know silver/grey YB. Just as remarkable was the presence of owners restoring their cars who came along for inspiration and advice! potential owners who had come from as far afield as the Isle of Wight and a friend of the Y Type Register from Australia.

It had been hoped that we would depart from the hotel no later than 11.45. In the event Paul Rundell looking resplendent with union jack to wave the starters off, flagged off Dennis and I at the end of the queue just after 12.30.

The rally route was designed as a leisurely drive through the Warwickshire countryside. Use was made of the Warwickshire County Road Map which includes all roads! and numbers them from A - E class. The Ordnance Survey marks only A and B roads by number. A set of instructions related to the county road network was supplied along with the maps. Unfortunately, the definition on the maps was not as good as it might have been — so it was

inevitable that problems might arise which they did (perhaps I should have used the tulip system a copy of which was provided by Lech Zakrzewski, but a broken wrist restricted my driving activities a month or so before the run).

Dennis and I took a short cut along the first section of the route and waited ... and waited ... until finally a group of Ys appeared, and after a long wait another bunch turned up. I believe, there were some navigational difficulties!

Peter, my father-in-law took over and drove a further 30 or so miles to Burton Dassett Country Park. A car nut, it was over 30 years since he had driven anything like this. He coped very well after some initial difficulties in locating the gear stick.

We noted one break down near Shipston-on-Stour although someone was already in attendance. Peter Blackwell's white YA had broken a hall shaft — fortunately he got back with the help of the RAC to Sale some '1 hours later. When I contacted him he commented that it was his first break down in 20,000 miles and 12 years of ownership. His 'Y' was due back on the road the following day less than 4 days after the incident. Later we came across John Morgan, near to Lower Tysoe who was experiencing fuel pump problems. he was busy fitting a replacement pump and turned up later at Eathorpe running well and ready for the return up north.

Our planned lunch time stop at Burton Dassett to take a group photograph never materialised as many owners preferred to stop at The Castle, a Hook Norton Ales pub on Edge Hill overlooking the site of the baffle between Royalists and Parliamentarians in 1642. Peter swapped the drivers seat for Andy Bean — a friend of mine who had navigated David Pelham around the first stage of the rally. Andy drives vintage tractors and sealed smoothly into driving the Y

We all arrived back at the hotel between 3.30 and 4.00 after a 65 mile journey to enjoy an afternoon tea and final natter. Farewells in the car park to a new lot of friends with the cry of 'See you at Silverstone' ringing in their ears. Dennis packed his YB with all the bits and pieces of a day's trading and spread the word about the register and made his way home. Brian Moyses in his MGB followed, and I finished off a few things, thanked and said goodbye to the hotel owners Rod and Carole Grinnell, before climbing into the Y and heading off to Leamington. I passed Dennis and Brian in a lay-by on the Posse Way before turning west for the 3 mile journey back home. A great day I reflected fine weather, fantastic turnout and an occasion that I think most of those present enjoyed. Fifty at Silverstone?



'Getting ready to depart'. (photo: Jo Birkbeck)



The wanderers return. (photo: Jo Birkbeck)

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