

A day out in the Cotswolds

The Gold Cup Celebration Run — 22 March 1998

Introduction

Following the success of the *Birth of the Y Run* a year ago, which was attended by 39 Ys the Register Committee decided to organise another early season gathering as a starter to the 1998 calendar.

The title suggests a grand affair – which of course for although those present it undoubtedly was – but it has a relevance beyond the topical link with a famous horse racing event held a few days before at nearby Cheltenham. The celebration was an obvious way of marking the Register's award of the Nuffield Gold Cup. The Cup is presented annually to the M.G. Centre or Register that in the opinion of the Directors and Board of the M.G. Car Club has done the most over the year to promote the name and spirit of M.G.s. In the main the Cup has been awarded to centres and the last time a register received the accolade was eleven years ago. So the efforts of Dennis, Jack and Paul over the years have been deservedly recognised and it was of course fitting that 50 years after the first of the marque rolled off the production lines a golden award was made. This then provided the context.

Planning the event

Following an approach from Dennis in November Richard Dick and I agreed to organise a run. Richard, who walks the Cotswolds on a very regular basis, knows the area edged by the small towns of Bourton-on-the-Water, Winchcombe, Chipping Campden and Stow-on-the-Wold like the back of his hand. Drawing on this experience he selected a route, the greater part of which followed narrow roads and lanes and passed through villages and landscapes whose character remains largely unchanged from the time when 'our cars' were the sought after models of the day. Together we checked Richard's route later that month. Other than some very minor changes this became the agreed course for the run scheduled to take place on 22 March 1998. Unfortunately, no-one appreciated until too far down the line that it clashed with Mothering Sunday — which certainly led to a small number of Ys being unable to attend.

Nonetheless, whilst Dennis gained approval from the RAC, Richard and I carried out another check but this time in his YB (USV 420). Richard drove and I made copious notes which I then drew up as a set of instructions. Ten days before the day I asked my wife Jo to navigate from these to see if there were any problems or ambiguities — which there were! Ironing those out was essential from my experience of the shortcomings of my route plans for the *Birth of the Y Run*. A lot of people are not terribly happy with a set of maps. Therefore reasonably detailed written instructions, together with a plan of the route meant that in the likelihood of anyone getting lost they could quickly find their way back to Bourton-on-the-Water the start and

finish point for the event.

The day it all happened

High pressure over England during the latter part of the week marked by a superb sunny Thursday set the scene, according to the weather centre who claimed that the sun would continue to shine over the weekend. Not quite!

'Our' day was cold and grey but at least dry as cars and occupants began to arrive at the British Legion Car Park in the middle of Bourton-on-the-Water. We owe much to Richard's negotiating skills for without the car park we would have been unable to stage the event in the village. Furthermore, the British Legion kindly offered coffee and tea together with a separate room for registration and a range of Dennis's 'goodies'. The indefatigable Secretary was the first to arrive as he motored up from Tiverton in 2 hours to arrive at nine. Not bad for a journey of well over 100 miles — as was said by someone 'Den, doesn't hang about!' By the time I arrived at ten (and I was quite impressed by my 33 miles in 50 minutes!) the car park was filling up and I went off to set up the Registration Stand. I had learnt from last years event of the need to be organised! Certainly the despatching of application forms and setting a date for their return together with the entry fee meant that all the administrative nightmare of form filling and cash collection was avoided. The previous night Jo, my wife, and I had filled each applicant's folder with a programme, route instructions and map. All the forms had been in alphabetical order but as I opened my file they all spilled out.) The instructions together with a rally board and plaque provided a very comprehensive drivers package.

Dennis beavered away selling all his goodies and taking orders and still found time to give help and advice — I don't know how he does it! In the meantime I had met Paul and Sara Barrow, who had kindly brought their camcorder with them on my request. They were very keen to help and I had suggested to Paul that a simple video of the proceedings would be a useful record of the day. So he went out to talk to owners, film under bonnets and just before the departure film our retiring Chairman Paul Rundell with the Gold Cup resting on the radiator cap of his maroon YA (PPE 928) which he has now sold for a TC. A fitting tribute to an individual who has done so much to help promote the cause of the Y. By 11.30 Paul was ready to flag away the first of the 33 cars that had made the start point together with an assortment of support vehicles including a ZA and an MGC. Although we unfortunately did not have a YT amongst our number we did, nonetheless, have Sandy Henderson's YA convertible — adapted from a vehicle that may otherwise have been scrapped. Sandy's model raised much interest. The other 32 Ys comprised 17 YAs and 15 YBs. Several of these cars were new to the organisers, though not to the club. Eleven cars that had not been present on last year's *BoY Run*, showed up, whilst a further 20 cars that turned up last year were missing, although several people had contacted me to say that they could not make it This does show that a target of 50+ cars is attainable so come on let's try and crack that figure at Silverstone!

New models and new friends

Three years ago on the 1995 Wings Run I met Tim Griggs who was restoring a YA (UMG 366) that he had



owned, I believe, for more than 25 years. The restoration was completed last year since which time Tim has done more than 2000 miles. The outcome of all his efforts is truly outstanding and the dark green paint and superb finish to the woodwork gave a stunning effect. Certainly, the car that I would have chosen to take home! We welcomed Andrew Coulson and family in their 1951 YA (UMG 473), who had recently purchased their car from Ian Hazell. They had also driven the furthest for the event — some 250 miles from Sharrow in North Yorkshire and fully deserved the little prize we gave for such endeavours. There were also several participants who were in the process of undertaking a restoration. I am sure that most of them returned home duly inspired. In particular, I would like to thank Roger Webb (currently restoring a '52 YB – XMY 55) who followed the event in his ZB (TER 980) and Keith Herkes, in an MGC, who had hoped that his YB (KMB 76) would be there. Keith brought with him some fascinating manuals and photographs that he had recently purchased, including the original pasted up workshop manual for the Y. Brian Cox, an associate editor of *Practical Classics*, came along in his YB (DFB 777) which I guess many of you will be aware of in Brian's monthly column on 'Our Cars'. Brian took a number of photographs, some of which should have appeared in *Practical Classics Weekly* by the time you read this article. Although we had no YT present we did have three owners of the model, including David Pelham (who came in his 1951 YA, MOT 129) and has just imported one from the USA, David Lawrence, a South African, who as well as undertaking a detailed restoration, has also managed to find the time over a number of years to write the definitive book on the Y. This should be available from the Club, by the time you receive this copy of Safety Fast. The third member of this trio is Mike Silk, who had come down from Yorkshire with some YT door panels and other tourer parts for Dave. Mike's own saga would be best written by him— he has owned his car for many years. His photographs bear testament to a superb restoration which hopefully will be on the road by next year. Others present though not with their cars, included Trevor Austin, from Kent, who owns probably the most original YA in the U.K

On the Move

By 11.40 nearly all the cars had gone and there were just two Ys and an MGC left. The Ys belonged to Dennis Doubtfire (1953 YB - YMG 125) and the other my own 1950 TA (RVW 761). This can be seen on the front cover, along the proud owner, on the March issue of the *Octagon Bulletin*, that arrived a few days after our event! (Signed copies of the cover will be available at Silverstone!).

Prior to our moving off someone noted a large pool of oil beneath my car. A weeping side cover gasket was the problem; tightening up the securing bolt merely aggravated the problem - it sheared! Luckily Mike Silk, who was travelling with me, had at hand tape and paper, which provided a suitable enough temporary seal to get me round the route and home — some 80 miles — thanks Mike!

By the time we got on the way we were well behind the crowd and other than seeing Ron Darvell in his YA (MJH 327) at the GWR Steam Centre at Toddenham we saw no other Ys. We were able to appreciate Richard Dick's fine choice of route and the fact that we saw no stragglers en route obviously meant that the instructions worked! We did lose Dennis near Toddenham as he searched for petrol but found him and he followed us to Snowhill. Here Dennis, Mike and I enjoyed our lunch, helped down with an excellent pint of Donnington Bitter,



in the garden of the *Snowhill Arms*. We moved on and all went well until just beyond Fish Hill. I had noted that Dennis was behind us through Broadway and after climbing that very steep hill I could see him in my rear view mirror. We swung left towards Chipping Campden and drove on for a mile or so but then there was no sign of our Hon. Sec. We stopped and waited until his black over grey car came into view. Dennis gratefully stopped the car looking flustered as steam escaped from the bonnet – the return spring on the carburettor had snapped! I found an old brake cylinder spring which Dennis then duly fashioned to serve the purpose.

Off again with no problems, until we lost Dennis once more and this time irretrievably as he missed a turn in Chipping Campden. We turned back but to no avail and felt sure that he would get back to Bourton without any problem, which of course he did. We rolled in just before 3.00 p.m. to experience a car park full of Ys which was a very pleasing sight.

Time to go

Just after 4.00 people began to depart and when I left at 4.30 the "Hampshire Mob", Dennis, Jack and Molly Murray, Joy and Paul Rundell, David Hague and David Pelham were still nattering away. My ears rang as Molly reminded me that I would be organising a run next year as the event is now a part of the Y calendar. We will see!

Jerry Birkbeck

Originally published in Safety Fast, June 1998.
Reproduced here by kind permission of the MG Car Club.