

Over the last few news-letters we have reported on the progress of Daman Thakore's epic drive from India to Abingdon in his 1950 MG YT, named affectionally as 'my Lalpari' or red angel. Daman has driven through 16 countries and over 12,000kms, accompanied by his wife, 21 year old daughter, 75 year old father and other close family members and back up crew in a support vehicle. A truly remarkable drive.



Daman and his team were welcomed on Sunday 29th October by MG Octagon car club members at the Gaydon motor museum followed by a presentation and dinner. Next on the schedule was a visit to Abingdon and Kimber house on Tuesday 1st November, but between times, Daman was able to make a flying visit to the Winchester area. A storage facility near Fishers Pond had previously helped in the preparation for Daman's epic journey by storing and shipping much needed parts, and were again assisting by trial fitting the YT into a storage container in readiness for its return journey to India.

It was a great opportunity for an impromptu meet with some Winchester MGOC members to find out more about the trials and tribulations involved in such a long trip. The meet was arranged by WMGOC member Richard Knight who was accompanied by fellow YT owner John Whittaker. I popped along camera in hand to grab some photos. As was to be expected with such journeys the anticipated arrival time of around 4pm slipped a little and the hoped-for arrival in daylight eventually happened in darkness at nearly 6pm. Driving in a foreign country, in the rain and dark, with 1950s lighting equipment was never going to be easy! Thankfully whatsapp provides a location tracker, so the YTs progress through Hampshire could be monitored on the screen of a mobile phone. Who knew?





The owner of the storage facility had especially brought his 1949 London Transport RT bus out of hibernation in readiness for a side-by-side photo shoot but sadly the fading light put paid to that idea. We did have a good look at the bus while we were waiting and it provided an opportunity for some 'anorak' discussions about the virtues of the RT versus its successor the Routemaster (RM). Did you know the RML, identified by its extra window could seat another 8 passengers? Or that a Routemaster is 14' 6" tall? (Says the son of a LT bus driver).



Daman and his daughter arrived in the YT, followed a little while later by his support crew. A very modest guy he is too, shrugging off the rigours of such a long journey and ready to chat about his car, the modifications they have made for the journey and the ad-hoc planning of overnight stays along the way. Hotels it seems were booked on the afternoon of arrival, such is the nature of unpredictable journey times and the desire to drive as much as possible during daylight hours.

The YT had been well prepared with a view to reliability and the sort of road surfaces they were likely to encounter. Modifications included disc brakes up front, a torsion bar, and larger wheel / tyre combinations to give a little extra ground clearance and a slightly higher cruising speed.

Electronic ignition was fitted, along with an alternator in place of the dynamo, a single carburettor in place of the original twin set up for simplicity, and a thermostatic electric fan. Lessons learned along the way included fitting stiff Perspex side screens for the doors after getting drenched by rain in Turkey.

A cracked windscreen resulted in a replacement being sourced, but in the end, it didn't actually get fitted. The cracked screen held firm, assisted with some sealant / glue and it was decided not to tempt fate, and to leave it well alone.



Both Richard and John were given an opportunity to get behind the wheel and even take a short drive around the yard. Before parting company Daman was presented with some WMGOC badges and windscreen stickers that hopefully will join the collection sported on his father's hat and find their way onto the support van windows. Maybe we can get the WMGOC logo seen on the streets in India?



There must surely be enough material and stories along the way to produce a book about the journey and I hear rumours that one might eventually emerge. It would certainly make a good read. In the mean-time a search for 'my Lalpari' on Youtube should find a series of videos showing early parts of the journey, with some fantastic scenery.

Larger rear wheel / tyre combination certainly fills the rear arches.



Somebody looks pleased to get a drive!

Under bonnet modifications

