



The Classic 'Y'



The Newsletter of The M.G. "Y" Type Register

Issue No. 159

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EDITORIAL

Well, the ink-jet printer I have struggled with all summer, and maybe for the last three years, finally went "bang!". So, we are back to the old-fashioned "cut & paste" method. Still, I managed like this for twenty years or so and it does have some advantages. So, press on...

REGISTER NEWS

Y/4099 (allocated No.1366 on our Register) is said to be hidden away in a lock-up garage in Woking, Surrey. It apparently wasn't roadworthy when it was put away some ten years ago. It is a 1949 car with engine no. SC/13912, and its body no. is 3076/? It has a "UMG" number-plate.

CARS FOR SALE

"M.G. YB Saloon, 1952. Mechanical running gear and body fully restored. Needs trim and interior fitting. Complete; all parts available. £4,750. Tel: [REDACTED]"

"M.G. YB Saloon, 1953. Maroon. Excellent runner, good condition, no rot and original body. Used regularly, good starter, reliable. Stainless-steel exhaust, new tyres, some spares. £3,800. Tel: [REDACTED] (Hinckley)."

Newsletter Editor/Registrar: J.G.Lawson, [REDACTED], Liverpool, [REDACTED]
U.K. Spares Secretary (new spares): A.Brier, [REDACTED], York, [REDACTED]
U.K. Spares Co-ordinator (second-hand spares): D.Mullen, [REDACTED], Liverpool, [REDACTED]

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L e T t e R S

Dear John,

Apropos your recent "find" of Y/5205, described in the "Register News" (7CY158) quite rightly as next "in line" to my Y/5205, I think I can give an explanation for the registrations ("UMG360" and "UMG186") of these two cars being so far apart.

I have known for many years that my Y/5205 is "out of order" in the sequence of car numbers and registration numbers, and the explanation I found (I think from a conversation I had in about 1986 with the son of the first owner) runs as follows. The first owner of Y/5205 was Mrs. Adrienne Marie Prové, who lived in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] she and her husband were Belgians and they had a business making fence posts and fencing accessories.

Mrs. Prové was in her late sixties in 1950 and liked "Y" Types; she bought a second-hand Sun Bronze model in 1948 or thereabouts, but her husband distrusted second-hand cars so a new black one, Y/5205, was ordered from University Motors, probably sometime during 1950. The car is thought to have left the factory in November or December of that year and presumably reached University Motors in early January 1951.

At the time, the Government levied Purchase Tax on all new cars and it may also have been the period when something called "Double Purchase Tax" was in force. Mr. Prové apparently learned or suspected that Purchase Tax would be reduced in the 1951 Budget and arranged with University Motors for Y/5205 to remain in their showroom until the tax change was announced (on 5th April 1951), whereupon the car was registered.

It is thought that while Y/5205 was in U.M.'s showroom, the opportunity was taken to replace its original plain hubcaps with its present medallioned ones (which were fitted to "Y" Types from Y/5420 onwards - probably from February or March 1951).

Mrs. Prové's son was himself over 80 years old when I spoke to him and couldn't remember the details of the arrangement his mother had had with University Motors, but it was probably an advance payment deposit of most if not all of the basic price of £525, with Purchase Tax to be paid on 6th April, at whatever rate was applicable. The actual tax paid on registration was £146 11s 8d.

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If the registration date of Y/5206 is known, it would help to confirm the above explanation and to more accurately pinpoint the date the cars were manufactured. The engine number of Y/5205 is 15029, which slightly precedes the engine in Y/5206, and its body number is 3863/3941, the last part being just one before that of Y/5206.

Y/5205 was looked after by the Provés' company chauffeur/mechanic until January 1986, when it was sold with a recorded mileage of just 6,163. The next owner kept it until November 1980, when the mileage was 41,241; it was showing 45,347 when I bought it in April 1986.

I hope you find this helpful and it may be that Mr. Tom Hume would be interested to know what happened to his car's next-door neighbour.

On a different topic, I have been involved in some correspondence in another journal about "Y" Type colour schemes, one issue being the interior colour of the Sun Bronze "Y" Types. You may know that there is a difference between your book, which says that Sun Bronze cars had either red or beige interiors, and Dave Lawrence's book, which says that they were produced only with red interiors. One of my original brochures confirms the latter, and I wondered if you could run through your database and let me know what it says about the interior colour of any "Y" Types originally finished in Sun Bronze.

Trevor J. Austin,
[REDACTED] Surrey.

I replied to Trevor and said that I'd seen his letter in the Octagon C.C.'s Bulletin magazine as part of an on-going exploration of the subject of original colour schemes by various correspondents over several months. I said that I had read these letters with amusement and some despair as here were people coming afresh to the topic and seemingly not being able to easily find the answers or be informed by the club they had written to as to where they could find the information. Trevor quite rightly pointed out in his letter to the Bulletin that Let There Be Ys has all the information anyone would need. And there is my (now out-of-print) book too which can be consulted. The Register database revealed several "Bronze" "Y" Types to have beige interiors (which I still maintain was an original optional combination), but were they like that when they came from the factory? I have to admit that there was very little in the database print-outs to back-up my beliefs. Surprisingly, Frank Vautier's famous race-prepared Y/7171 looks to be the best bet. Surprisingly, because mechanically this car is just about as "non-original" as one could get, yet the owner (eccentrically?) insists on keeping the beige interior (and dashboard etc.) as per a road-going "Y". Perhaps someone in the H.G. Car Club might ask Mr.

Vautier whether his car was Sun Bronze/beige back in the early 1970s, when he bought it? Trevor then replied as follows... - JGL.

Dear John,

I would like to know when Y/5206 was registered because I have a feeling, from re-reading 1950 production figures, that Y/5205 and Y/5206 might have been manufactured earlier in the year than the November date I had estimated. Much depends on whether "Y" Types rolled off the track evenly throughout the year or whether there were fits and starts. It is in trying to establish this sort of information that the loss of the production records is so tragic. My own experience in the motor industry in the late 1950s suggests that a target of "x" vehicles per hour or per day was, if ever achieved, only achieved as an average over a period.

I share both your amusement and despair at the way subjects I thought were long-ago settled beyond reasonable doubt come up again for further debate. There seems to be nothing like colour to create controversy, which is probably because anyone who has spent a considerable sum of money repainting their "Y" Type in what they think is an original colour is likely to be unhappy when doubt is cast on their choice.

When looking for a "Y" Type in the 1980s I saw one in Canterbury that had been expensively repainted with dark green wings and a vivid emerald green body. The owner was not pleased at my mildly critical comment and said he was taking legal action against the firm which did the job!

With these slightly controversial issues one often finds that everyone is right to some extent, and I think that is probably true of the Sun Bronze/beige "Y" Types. After reading what both you and Dave Lawrence have said, I would put forward the suggestion that the Sun Bronze/beige combination was probably not offered by M.G. (in the sense of a published option), but was almost certainly available to any customer whose prospective purchase depended on that variation.

You are right that manufacturers were often willing to make variations as "special orders", and although this was more readily done if there was a potential publicity benefit (I know, for instance, that Riley produced a special colour scheme for Earl Mountbatten's "RM", and that Vauxhall made a very special dark green Cresta Estate for the Queen), I daresay other customers could get similar treatment if they tried hard enough. This was especially the case, I reckon, in 1951, when "Y" Types were becoming more difficult to sell; and this in turn lends emphasis to the possibility of "YX"s being available in Sun Bronze and (Old English) White, in order to boost flagging sales.

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After all, it wouldn't take too much alteration to the production control schedule to put beige trim in a Sun Bronze body. And when one thinks about that combination, the more attractive it sounds than Sun Bronze/red. It was not as if the factory were being asked to use a totally different trim to the red/green/beige in general use. The possibility of a Sun Bronze car being trimmed especially in brown to see what it looked like is also there, and what sounds potentially attractive may have looked awful in practice.

Your other possibility of "austerity" forcing the adoption of a non-standard colour combination is certainly possible, because manufacturers often did run out of stocks of a particular item. If there was a shortage of red trim seats, for example, I can imagine the Production Manager telling the line to put beige in a Sun Bronze car rather than have an untrimmed body hanging around. I don't think Sun Bronze was a particularly popular colour compared to the other options (being metallic, it faded very rapidly and the nearest modern equivalent I have seen is on the current Peugeot range), so it wasn't one to "keep in stock", so to speak.

I am less inclined to think that University Motors would have retrimmed a Sun Bronze car in beige to suit a customer, as they would be left with a set of red trim to dispose of. It is not impossible that they would have repainted in Sun Bronze a Black/beige or Green/beige car to suit a customer, but that would probably show through on any such car still in existence. Finally, your suggestion of a "mistake" on the production line is equally possible; they did occur, but, in my experience, pretty seldom, as the inspectors were usually around to spot anything as major as an incorrect trim pack (which took some time to put in).

Feeling for these things is perfectly valid, and I have the feeling that a manufacturer like M.G., with a tradition dating back to the 1930s of pandering to customers' non-standard tastes, would have juggled around with a colour/trim combination as long as it didn't cost anything.

The fact that so few Sun Bronze/beige cars have survived is accounted for by the fact that there were very few of them in the first place. The chap who started the correspondence in the Octagon magazine has not replied giving the information about the colour of the trim in his Sun Bronze car, so we don't know where he started from, or where he ended up either!

Trevor J. Austin,
[REDACTED], Surrey.

TO ALL OUR READERS

MAY YOU HAVE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

'KSC171' - Development & Modification History

Section D. Part 1.

Engine Modifications (1)

Comp. ratio raised to 9.5:1. Can be brought back to approx. 9:1 by fitting standard .045" C/H gasket which compresses to approx. .035".

Head to Block Gasket .015" Steel "Corrujoint".

1/8" Thick x 3/4" O.D. S.S. Washers fitted on cyl. head studs.

Combustion Chambers polished & calibrated.

Head Exhaust & Inlet ports shaped symmetrical & highly polished.

Exhaust & Inlet Manifold matched to head ports & internally polished.

Exhaust & Inlet Manifold Gasket to Head matched.

Inlet Choke diameter opened out to take 36 M.M. O.D. Valve.

Exhaust port opening opened out to take 34 M.M. O.D. Valve.

150 lb. Open tension staggered pitch Valve springs fitted.
(Valve crash approx. 6500 R.P.M.)

Engine Modifications (2)

3 M.M. lift TC/TD Midget camshaft fitted with tappets set to .022" hot.

Inlet Manifold bored to take 1 1/2" H.4. S.U. competition Carb. Carb. matched & lined up to manifold on fitted studs.

Carb. Needles, Damper Springs & Tuning settings:

P6/"Yellow" (heavy) Damper Spring. S.A.E. 20 oil in Dashpot. Tuning to 7/8 flats on jet adjusting nut.

Alternative Needles C.S.2 richer with "Blue" Damper Spring.

R.L.S. with Red Damper Spring.

"Vokes" disc type air filter fitted & connected to rocker cover in place of export A.C. oilbath type. (T.F. Midget is fitted with the identical "Vokes" type).

Derek Ringer.