

THE CLASSIC 'Y'

The Newsletter of the M.G. 'Y' Type Register.

Volume 10. No.84.

December 1987.

EDITORIAL

It was in the months of November and December ten years ago that The M.G. 'Y' Type Register came into being following the receipt of a huge number of letters from owners written in response to a letter published in 'Thoroughbred & Classic Car' magazine. The Register was officially set up on 1st January 1978 and to mark the Tenth Anniversary a new 'regalia' item will be immediately available as soon as this newsletter reaches you and for the remainder of 1988. Details are as follows:

'Limited Edition' die-cast model van (Ford 'T') in Old English White with 'Y' Type Register emblem decals on each side.

(Each van comes in its own box which is labelled to commemorate the tenth anniversary and shows the individual production number allocated to the van).

Price: £4.50 (incl. U.K. postage)

I have to apologise for the unfortunate choice of a model 'T' Ford with which to celebrate our tenth anniversary (instead of, perhaps, a B.M.C. product) but this model is the only one suitable at the present time. At least it is finished in an authentic B.M.C. (and late YB) colour!

The front page photo in the October issue of 'The Classic Y' was of Chris Green's beautiful red YT (one of very few roadworthy YTs in Great Britain).

Lastly, I have again to thank 'Autocar' for giving permission to publish the items on pages 43, 44 & 45 of this issue and I would also like to wish all our readers a VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A SAFE & PEACEFUL NEW YEAR.

25th November 1987.

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Register Number 286

Chassis Number Y5921
Engine Number SC/C74222
Licence Plate UMG290
Body Number 4629/4595
Sub-Type YA
Year of Manuf' 50
Owner's Name Murray J
Owner Number 885
Car Location Hampshire ENG
Exterior Colour Black
Interior Colour G

Register Number 813

Chassis Number Y6503
Engine Number SC/16199
Licence Plate JDA440
Body Number 5166/5122
Sub-Type YA
Year of Manuf' 51
Owner's Name Cordon Champ R
Owner Number 884
Car Location W. Midlands ENG
Exterior Colour Black
Interior Colour B

Register Number 585

Chassis Number YB0511
Engine Number SC2/17395
Licence Plate KVB201
Body Number 6201/339
Sub-Type YB
Year of Manuf' 52
Owner's Name Kvapil DJ
Owner Number 888
Car Location Nebraska USA
Exterior Colour Maroon/Grey
Interior Colour B

Register Number 838

Chassis Number YB1262
Engine Number SC2/18152
Licence Plate YMG184
Body Number 6879/1075
Sub-Type YB
Year of Manuf' 53
Owner's Name Davies P
Owner Number 891
Car Location Middlesex ENG
Exterior Colour Black
Interior Colour G

CARS FOR SALE:

- 279 "1950 MG YT RHD. Completely restored, no detail spared. "Best" Y-tourer in U.S.A. First place in WEMGTR. AACA national winner. £20,000 ono. Contact: Tom Boscarino, [REDACTED] New York [REDACTED] U.S.A. Tel: [REDACTED]
- 835 "For Sale: M.G. YB 1952 Saloon in very good condition. Original spotlight, old registration book, tow-bar, lots of bills. M.O.T. November 6th 1987 (car not being used at present; in need of exhaust system). £1,990 o.v.n.o. Genuine reason for sale. Tel: [REDACTED]."
- 467 "M.G. YA. Reg.No.'BUK94'. Complete car. Little work required to start running but bodywork needs attention. Ideal for restoration. £550. Tel: Mr. Gilmer on [REDACTED] (days)".

PARTS FOR SALE:

'Y' Type exhaust manifold £10; 3 x chrome ashtrays £2 ea.; steering knuckle £2; interior door handle 50p; bonnet support bridge £2; Morris 10/4 gearbox and bell-housing £45. Contact Chris Wallis on [REDACTED]

'Y' Type Workshop Manual. Complete but a bit 'tatty'. Offers. Tel: [REDACTED].

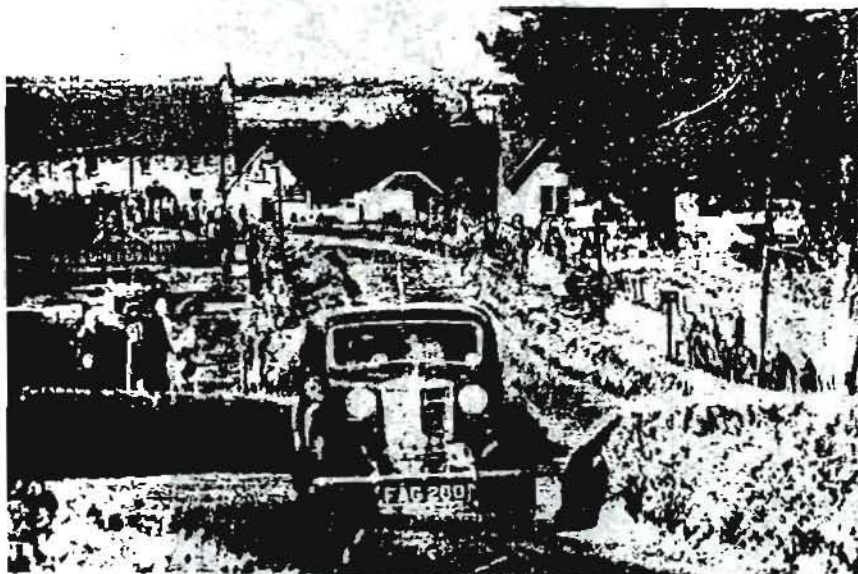
'Y' Type radiator grille. Tel: John Monkman on [REDACTED]

PARTS WANTED

Complete set of carpet retaining rails. Contact: Mr. G.G. Verbizky, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] New York, [REDACTED] U.S.A.

THE AUTOCAR, SEPTEMBER 18, 1953

Miss Agnes Balfour driving her 11 M.G. saloon through the snake at Bournemouth last Saturday. A fair crowd and excellent weather attended and saw an enjoyable day's sport.





DOWNLAND TRAVERSE

SUNDAY MILEAGE AROUND ICKNIELD WAY

By Michael Brown

UNDETERRED by Easter weather, we followed motoring tradition by getting the car out last Easter Day for the type of restricted touring outing which petrol permits these days. As a matter of fact, the weather in East Berkshire might have been worse; bright sunlight alternated with black showers, and the worst feature was the bitter gale, so that one dived back into the shelter of the car after a foray to "see the sights."

The route, however, had few sights that called for lengthy external contemplation; yet it can be recommended for several virtues, not the least of which is that it avoids main roads and popular directions. It starts north of Reading on A4009, an unimportant A road with a nice line in curves and a peach of a hill just before Peppard. The road swings wide on a right-hand bend at the foot, climbs sharply and then bends left equally sharply at the summit, calling for a quick drop into a lower gear just before the final bend. Such hills are fun, even in the family saloon. Peppard, straggling indifferently over the hillsides, is marked by sanatoria, through which the Chiltern breezes blow, one trusts, beneficially for the patients. A feeling of sadness is engendered by the ascetic chalets and one continues northwards with spirits muted by sympathy.

Towards Nettlebed the Chiltern beeches can be enjoyed. Where the road crosses the ancient earthwork of Grim's Ditch—so frequently encountered in this part of the country—they are conspicuously fine. The right-hand turn is taken almost before the car enters Nettlebed and the route is now B481 and then B486 for Watlington.



In this area the Chilterns are a plateau. As a result there are no great valleys over which to hover in enjoyment. But the sky and landscape have merit, especially on a changeable Spring day. The clouds chase each other over the fields, subduing the colours, sometimes deepening them, and affording fine contrast with the following sunlight. Up here the wind is fitting, for great areas of sky call for the winds of heaven; they invigorate, and emphasize, too, the roaring, spinning atom on which we live while it rockets through space. In fact, they put man in his insignificant place.

The hill down into Watlington is superb, and on this escarpment the Chilterns pose more consciously. Watlington itself makes no effort, however. It is pleasant enough, certainly, and seems remote however much one knows it. But it does not hold the imagination.

No Veils

The name of Britwell Salome does, though. It is a mere huddle of houses and a pub two miles away on B4009. The huddle deserves the expletive-sounding Britwell; the euphonious Salome belongs somewhere else; in the imagination, which is influenced by the Biblical counterpart. There is, of course, no connection. In 1236 Britwell was owned by a family bearing the name Aumaricus de Sulham, which became Anglicized by the good folk of Oxon into Sulham, and Salome is a fanciful by-product of this. Sulham and Sulhamstead are extant names of villages in the area.

The view towards Ewelme is grand, disclosing the distant Thames Valley and marked by the celebrated Wittenham Clumps, two prominent beech coppices on Sinodun Hill, site of Sinodun Camp. The Icknield Way is a mile over to the left on the hilltop, and one can imagine the ancient travellers sighting the camp from this point. To them, however, it was still a long march away. To the car it is a matter of minutes.

But you must linger in Ewelme. Why Ewelme should be as delicious as it is one of those accidents of history. Its houses are stacked up on the lower slopes of a hill, atop



"The Chiltern beeches... are conspicuously fine."

which stands the magnificent castellated church to dominate the village. Visit this church. It contains many splendours and, we are told, the tombs of Chaucer's son and his wife, and of his grand-daughter, the Countess Alice de la Pole. The tombs are there, but a Chaucerian scholar from whom I sought verification of the link doubts its authenticity.

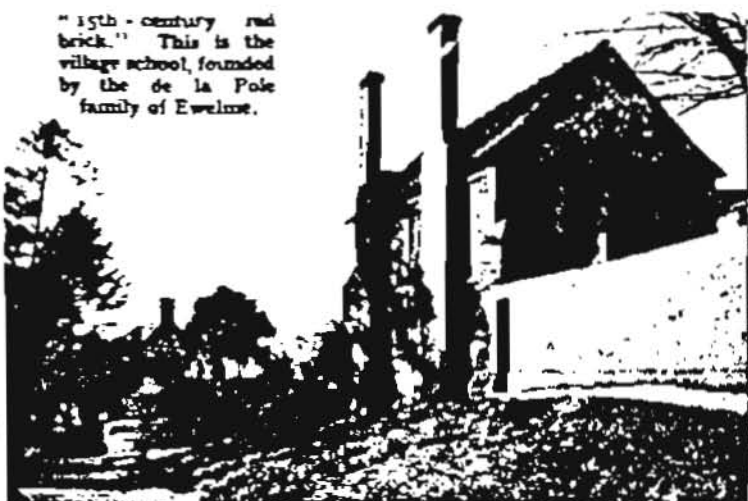
To the de la Pole family are owed the lovely almshouses and the village school, both 15th-century red brick. To Henry VIII and Catherine Howard Ewelme owes a reputation as a royal honeymoon resort, for the king and his bride stayed there in a palace the ruins of which are incorporated in the Manor House (not open). Thames-lover Jerome K. Jerome lies in the churchyard. Strangest sight in Ewelme was Highland cattle in an orchard, most familiar sight the sunlit hills revealed suddenly and enchantingly at various points during a circumnavigation of the village. As you leave for Crowmarsh Gifford and Wallingford do not miss the delightful view back over the barns to church and village.

Berkshire Downs

We headed east to west straight through the narrow streets of Wallingford on A4130, for this road provides the best view of the Wittenham Clumps. Just before Didcot turned south on B4016 for East Hagbourne and then turned to Blewbury for tea in one of the nicest tea houses I know. Everything is home made and there is room to park. Up on Blewbury Down excavations are at present going on, unearthing some quite remarkable finds. The area is rich in earthworks, ancient tracks, barrows and other evidences of our forerunners. A417, sweeping south-east over the curving shoulders of the Berkshire Downs, provides a succession of views, the crisp natural line of which is frequently broken by an earthwork. It is a curious reversal that the descendants of the men of the hills should cling so obstinately to the valleys. Perhaps the race has become softer, although it is more likely that the ancients would have preferred the valleys had they not been difficult of passage owing to the trees and undergrowth. Much history has been made on the Berkshire Downs, and it would be kindly to think of Harwell atomic energy town—over to the west—in that light. It is difficult, though. The aesthetic gap between Sinodun Camp and Harwell is unbridgeable.

So much for a Sunday jaunt. I have left you high and dry in your car on the Berkshire hilltops. Never mind; you are in good company. Ancient Briton and Roman travelled freely in these parts, and so do motorists on pleasure bent. Funny enough, it is only if you are engaged in making history at Harwell that you need theses and paraphernalia that go with modern civilization. Take the ancients.

"15th-century red brick." This is the village school, founded by the de la Pole family of Ewelme.



"Strangest sight... was Highland cattle in an orchard."



"Wittenham Clumps, two prominent beech coppices on Sinodun Hill."

Below: "The delightful view back over the barns to church and village."



SPECIAL BODIED 'Y' TYPES.

Before the Second World War all but a very few types of car employed the use of a separate strongly built chassis onto which a body was bolted. The body was invariably either 'coach-built', that is to say it was constructed by having metal panels affixed to a wooden framework, or, towards the end of the thirties, it was of pressed steel construction. It was therefore comparatively easy, given this method of construction, for different types of body to that offered by the manufacturers to be fitted to chassis. Indeed, coach-building businesses who did just this abounded and the variety of 'special-bodied' derivatives of both mass-produced and of the more up-market cars of the period was very significant. After the war, however, as the unitary construction method of car production began to take the place of the more traditional methods which had gone before, the opportunities for these often once renowned coach-builders declined until, today, the ability to simply 're-body' a factory-produced car to one's liking or design is virtually impossible.

The 'Y' Type M.G. was basically a pre-war design and employed a separate chassis onto which was bolted a pressed-steel body. Thus, production had not been underway long before various concerns began to look at the car with a view to offering different body styles for different markets, particularly as this had often been the case with pre-war M.G.s.

One of the more noteworthy coach-building firms who had carried out very elegant re-bodying work on a number of pre-war M.G. SA saloons was Reinbolt & Christie S.A. of Basle in Switzerland. A Mr. Emil Frey imported three early 1948 'Y' chassis and Reinbolt & Christie gave them very distinctive two-door convertible bodywork. The three cars so converted were given dark blue, maroon and dark green paintwork respectively. All three had beige upholstery. It should be remembered that the factory-produced YT convertible was not available until the autumn of that same year. On reflection, it is certainly this author's view that the Reinbolt & Christie convertible (which has since come to be referred to unofficially as the 'YRC') is by far the neater and more handsome of the two convertible offerings.

An article in 'The Autocar' for 14th May 1948 suggests that there were to be Zagato-bodied 'Y's for the U.S. market. Apparently, this design exercise was undertaken by the Italian coachbuilders at the behest of Mr. Roger Barlow, president of International Motors of Los Angeles. Open two-seaters and drop-head two- and four-seaters were to be built. Neither were the changes to be limited to the provision of a different style of bodywork for Zagato had plans to make one or two modifications to the chassis, engine specification and instruments also. There were plans to produce up to seventy of these cars with bodywork by Zagato, Castagna and Farina but evidence has only come to light of one, with coupe bodywork by Zagato, having been actually produced and it is not known whether or not this was released to the public. Indeed, the Abingdon Works Export statistics would seem to suggest that this project never really progressed further than the prototype stage as, listed therein, we find only eleven 'chassis only' delivered, nine in 1948 (three of which would be the 'YRC's referred to above) and one each in 1952 and 1953.

Not so much a special body but more a modified standard saloon body was that prepared by University Coachwork Ltd for an American customer in 1951. The rear quarter lights were blanked off and in their place were fitted dummy hood irons to give the impression of a drop head arrangement. Wheel covers were also fitted to the rear wheels, increasing the depth of the rear wings to a point where only the hubcaps of the wheels were visible. Flashing trafficators were fitted to comply with the latest U.S. lighting regulations and the bumpers were raised and the fixing points strengthened, the bumper blades being fitted with large 'TD' type over-riders.

The last YB chassis made, 'YB1551' was fitted with a special coupe body. This car was prepared especially for Dick Jacobs who raced M.G.s extensively at the time; the car was registered '982VWL'. Its very modern 'full-width' bodywork was a whole generation in motor car bodywork design ahead of the standard factory offering (which, it should be remembered, was designed in the late thirties).

Undoubtedly there must have been several more special-bodied 'Y' Types prepared whilst the car was still in production. One example which has come to light appeared in the 'cars for sale' columns of 'The Autocar' magazine of 4th March 1949. It is described as follows:

"Tankard & Smith Ltd. offer M.G. 1½-litre fitted with very attractive and special 2-door saloon in black with beige leather upholstery and black carpets, many extras including windscreen spray, exterior and interior as new, mechanically 100%, moderate mileage; 2735; 3 months' written guarantee.....198 Kings Road, S.W.3...."

At the risk of offending the so-called 'purists' it might even be said that the famous M.G. TD started life as a 'special-bodied' 'Y' Type. Works manager Cecil Cousins recounted some years ago how at Abingdon they took a 'Y' Type chassis and cut five inches out of the centre of the frame and put a sleeve up inside it. Then a TC body was placed on the chassis, various modifications were made and in about three weeks the TD was born.

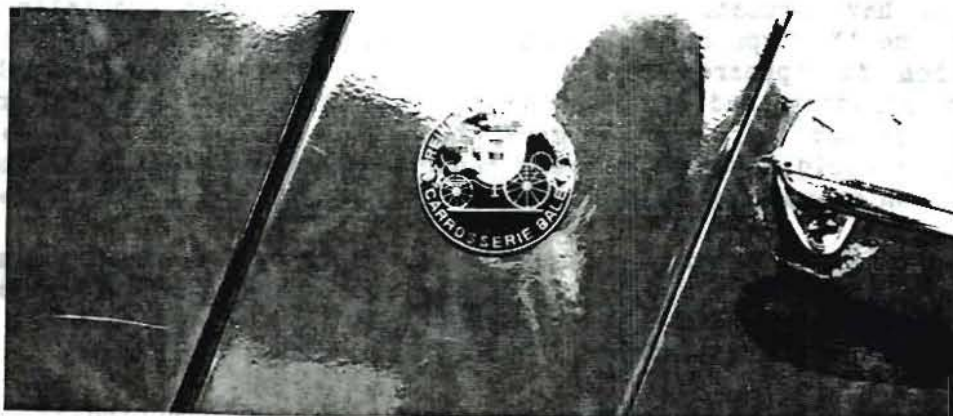
Since those days when the 'Y' Type was in production many private individuals have probably had a go at fitting their own specially designed bodies to the 'Y' Type chassis. After all, the chassis was of quite advanced design when it appeared in 1947 and gave good handling coupled with excellent rigidity and durability. By the time the sixties and early seventies arrived there were a great number of neglected 'Y' Type saloons around which could be acquired very cheaply indeed and thus lent themselves to conversion or re-bodying by those whose interest lay in that direction.

One re-bodied car which came to light a few years ago in Gloucestershire was 'WTV298'. This had been given a fibreglass low-slung sports coupe body with square headlights and was fitted with an 'XPEG' engine taken from a TF 1500. Unfortunately no further details of this car's history are known.

In Australia it seems that there is a 1947 'YA' which during its life has acquired a YT body and in Holland there is perhaps the most ambitious re-bodying project of all. For there, an enterprising owner has built on the back of a cut off saloon body which had suffered an accident, a tow-truck flat bed complete with towing crane!

Lastly, in our review of special bodied 'Y' Types, there are the TF replicas, at least three of which are known to exist. Given what was said above about the way in which the TD was developed and also bearing in mind that nowadays there are many people who would like to own a 'T' Type but who are unable to afford the high prices which genuine 'T' Types command, it is perhaps not surprising that several of these 'conversions' have appeared. What is perhaps unfortunate is that at least one of these 'Y' Type chassis with TF bodies was, back in 1979, being passed off by a car dealer as being a genuine TF! So, beware! That TF which you may be about to buy may not be all that it seems.

John.G.Lawson



The photos above show Ernst Kengelbacher's Reinbolt & Christie 'Y' Type and the coach-builder's badge which it carries.