

# THE CLASSIC 'Y'



TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

1978 - 1988



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The Newsletter of the M.G. 'Y' Type Register.  
Volume 11, No.89, October 1988.

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## EDITORIAL

Sir Alec Issigonis passed away on 3rd October aged 81. Although more well-known for the design of both the Morris Minor and the Mini, he also, of course, played a large part in the design of the independent coil-sprung front suspension fitted to our 'Y' Types and to many other B.M.C. and B.L. cars all the way through to the demise of the MGB in 1980. His views on motoring in general will be sadly missed and one day, we trust, they will be valued for the wisdom they indeed contain.

If you have written to me recently about spares, either 'wanted' or 'for sale' then do not worry if you haven't received a reply from me. To re-iterate what was said last time, David Mullen has now taken over responsibility for co-ordinating the spares side of things and I will therefore pass on to him to deal with any letters regarding spares and there will not, therefore, be any more spares 'wanted' or 'for sale' adverts in the newsletter. I think it's as well to mention once again that if you do write to David and require a reply then please enclose an s.a.e. (or International Reply Coupon if writing from overseas). David's address is below.

And here's the caption for the photo on page 40!

Seen recently at a local show was this 1952 YB, 'CVV57' (black with a green interior and in very good original condition). It had last been spotted in the Coys of Kensington auction at the National Classic Motor Show at the N.E.C., Birmingham on 3rd May 1987.

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Newsletter Editor/Registrar: J.G. Lawson, [redacted]  
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## Register Number 306

Chassis Number	YT4668
Engine Number	TR/14434
Licence Plate	-
Body Number	53156-819
Sub-Type	YT
Year of Manuf'	50
Owner's Name	Miller D
Owner Number	918
Car Location	Vermont USA
Exterior Colour	Red
Interior Colour	R

## STOLEN

"If any member in the York or Hull district is approached with a propshaft re-conditioned, sprayed black, a spare wheel also black, with new tyre for M.G. 'Y' model, please obtain the name of the vendor and please inform me, your identity will not be disclosed and a reward given for the conviction of the thieves who broke into my premises. Anyone who has bought such items and can help, please do so. [REDACTED], East Yorks. Tel: [REDACTED]"

## CARS FOR SALE:

721. "M.G. YT Tourer. In immaculate condition. Must be seen, serious offers in region of £12,500. Tel: [REDACTED] (Bedfordshire)."

THE AUTOCAR, 29 JANUARY 1960

## Design for Safety

*Self-cancelling Indicators.* You mention "self-cancelling" indicators as a device which "fails safe" (8 January). The present-day steering-cancelling was excellent when first introduced about 1935, for then it was customary to signal only for right-angle turns, and there was the certainty that enough steering angle would be put on to operate the ratchet. It is now customary to signal lane-changes, and the wheel movement is so small that the signal is not always switched off on straightening out, but must be switched off by hand. Cannot manufacturers be persuaded to replace steering-cancelling by a time switch, as was fitted to the steering-wheel centre of the Y-type M.G.?

Of course the arrangement which cannot give false signals is the push-button control which was fitted to the 1935 M.G., but this has the disadvantage (which it shares with hand-flapping) that a hand must be taken off the wheel when it is most needed. Alton, Hampshire. M. BOWMAN-MANIFOLD.

## Directional Stability

*Y-type M.G. Suffers.* While I agree with Mr. A. R. Haynes (8 April) that the Darrba-Greene and Blaw Knox machines do not leave strip-like discontinuities within the width of the band of surface they lay, I have never seen a single machine large enough to span an A-class road in one operation, and at the junction of the several parallel strips they lay, long irregularities occur.

Jaguars are not the only cars that are deflected from their paths by these irregularities; my own Y-type M.G. suffers from the same fault, and I had put it down to the rack and pinion steering, which, having as high an efficiency in return as in action, allows forces at the road wheels to deflect the steering, unless an iron grip is kept on the steering wheel.

Newton, Nottinghamshire.

T. WHITTINGHAM.

THE AUTOCAR, 22 APRIL 1960

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## JOSEPH LUCAS

Our 'Y' Types, like every M.G. before them and, so far, every one since are fitted with Lucas Electrical equipment; indeed it was William Richard Morris, Lord Nuffield who gave Joseph Lucas Ltd their first really large orders for motor car electrical equipment in the early twenties. But just who was Joseph Lucas? Where and when was he born and how did his life unfold? Earlier this year I began asking myself these questions which I found I couldn't answer. So I set out to find some answers and, with the assistance of Mr. F.R.D. Slater, Advertising and Promotions Manager of Lucas Industries plc., I am now able to 'shed some light', as it were, on the life of Joseph Lucas.

Joseph was born on 12th April 1834 in Birmingham, the city with which he and his products were always to remain associated. His formative years were very much influenced by the teaching and ministry of George Dawson who was to have such a profound effect on the development of Birmingham that an American observer thought it 'the best managed city of the world'. Dawson ran the Church of the Saviour and its associated school and it was here, on Sundays, that the young Joseph Lucas received the better than average education which was to stand him in good stead later on when he entered the business world.

At thirteen or fourteen Joseph was apprenticed to silversmiths H. & G.R. Elkington who had pioneered the process of electro-plating but, on completing his apprenticeship, instead of staying with Elkingtons, where he could have earned quite a high wage, in 1860 he chose to start his own small business selling buckets and shovels etc and the newly 'discovered' paraffin from 86 Carver Street. The City of Birmingham had a long tradition of small metalworking businesses, indeed it was claimed that the knives of Boadicea's chariot had been made in Birmingham (not by Lucas, I hasten to add!). In the atmosphere of an expanding industrial revolution it was therefore fairly easy for someone in Birmingham to start up his own business.

The houses in Carver Street had been poorly built and soon turned to slums. Joseph and his wife, Emily, whom he had married in 1854, like many in their day, sought solace in drink until one day the realisation that he had a wife and three children to support dawned upon him and he joined the local Temperance Society, a movement he was to support devotedly for the rest of his life.

Joseph began looking around for alternative premises from which he could carry on his small business and, in 1871, he moved to 209 Great King Street. It was his preoccupation with selling paraffin which led Joseph into what was to be the most important aspect of his business for the rest of his life - the manufacture and sale of lamps.

The discovery of petroleum and paraffin in 1859 had given an enormous boost to the lamp manufacturing trade and it wasn't long before Joseph came upon a product which he admired and which he wanted to sell - the Tom Bowling ship's lamp. Sale of the lamps soon turned to a desire to manufacture them himself and he took on five men to help him set up his first small factory in Great King Street. In 1875, that factory became known as the Tom Bowling Lamp Works and all Lucas's products began to be stamped with the initials



'T.B.L.W.' Harry Lucas, Joseph's firstborn son, who was to play such a major part in the development of the business over the next sixty years, was given the job of costing the materials used in the manufacture.

The next major development which ensured rapid growth of the Lucas business was that of the bicycle; indeed the development of the bicycle and the life of Joseph Lucas proceeded side by side. In 1879 Lawson's Bicyclette had incorporated the novel features of two wheels of the same diameter and a chain drive. This 'safety' principle was perfected in 1885 in the Rover bicycle and, three years later, John Boyd Dunlop's pneumatic tyre at last made cycling an acceptable popular pastime amongst all members of the public. Joseph Lucas was just looking for new products when the bicycling boom began and, of course, it was therefore natural for him to begin designing and selling lamps for bicycles.

In 1878 Joseph's first cycle lamp, the famous 'King of the Road', appeared. The silver reflector at the back had a small hole in the centre which was fitted with a piece of red glass to act as a danger signal, a feature which was to reappear almost seventy years later on the 'Lucas 1130 sidelamps fitted to 'Y' Types! Joseph and Harry Lucas always stressed the use of quality materials and manufacturing processes in their products (indeed Louisa Lucas, Harry's sister, was put in charge of quality control and supervision of the female members of the workforce). Much of the next twenty years or so was therefore very often taken up with legal action against rival manufacturers in defence of Lucas patents.

Unfortunately Joseph's wife Emily had not joined him in the renunciation of alcohol and Joseph therefore took to spending more and more time travelling the length and breadth of Britain promoting and selling his products so that he could avoid the awkward circumstances at home. Son Harry was left to run the ever expanding factory and he made a very good job of it, at times even lecturing his father sternly by letter concerning differences in policy.

Apart from catering for the cycle trade, Lucas continued to produce all kinds of lamps - hand (candle) lamps, police lamps, railway men's lamps and lamps for horse-riders. They also continued to manufacture and sell oil cans, cash boxes, letter boxes, cash tills and sugar boxes etc.

In September 1882 in recognition of the expansion of the business and the significant part Harry was playing in it, the partnership of Joseph Lucas & Son was formed. At this time the beginnings of an export business began to become apparent, the Pope Company in the U.S.A. stating that they could sell Lucas lamps as cheaply as they could make lamps themselves.

In February 1885 Emily Lucas died and Joseph began spending more time at home in Birmingham. In November of the same year he married his cousin, Maria Tyzack. Cycle lamp production culminated in the definitive 'Silver King of the Road' or 'Silver King' as it became known; it was still in production as late as 1936. Lucas's first U.S. patent was taken out in 1889 and the 1890s saw a massive building programme at Great King Street in order to cope with the growth of the business.

It was while he was discussing with builders the design of his new factory buildings that Joseph Lucas asked of the builder's son, "Boy, what is the

cheapest thing on earth?" When the terrified boy did not reply, Joseph provided the answer: "LIGHT, and if you ever become a builder, be sure to get plenty of it in your houses and factories". Joseph Lucas was very fond of apt sayings and mottoes and another of these concerned his avowed aversion to alcohol and is, perhaps, still very apt today in the context of car club meetings. He said, "There's too much club business done in pubs"; something with which this writer wholeheartedly agrees!

The partnership of Joseph Lucas & Son had proven so successful that in November 1897 a new company, Joseph Lucas Ltd was formed. Acetylene was just becoming accepted for use in lamps, the Badger Brass Manufacturing Co of Kenosha, Wisconsin having been the manufacturers of the first practical acetylene bicycle lamp. Lucas soon began manufacturing acetylene lamps also. Joseph Lucas visited America several times during his life and, after severe customs duties were introduced by the U.S.A. in 1896, he arranged with the New Departure Bell Co of Bristol, Connecticut to manufacture Lucas bicycle bells under licence.

In 1900, Joseph's second wife, Maria, died and the following year he married Mary Anne Owen. At the company's Annual General Meeting in November 1902 he confidently looked forward to the coming of the motor car boom and forecast that Lucas's success in supplying bicycle accessories would be repeated again as motor car manufacture increased. Immediately after that A.G.M. he departed with his new wife for a combined holiday and business trip to the Mediterranean. After visiting Egypt, they landed at Naples just before Christmas 1902 but, sadly, by 27th December, Joseph, the old 'King of the Road' himself, had died of typhoid fever contracted when, refusing all local wines in accordance with his temperance principles, he had imbibed the local water instead. The legend goes that the Lucases, never ones to waste money unnecessarily, had Joseph's body brought back to the U.K. in a Joseph Lucas Ltd packing case which had contained business samples of 'King of the Road' and 'Silver King' lamps for the trip! At his funeral service on 14th January 1903, amongst the hymns sung were 'Lead Kindly Light' and 'No Shadows Beyond'.

My source for all of the information contained in this article is the excellent book by Harold Nockolds, "Lucas - The First 100 Years", the two volumes of which were first published in 1976 and 1978 respectively.

John. G. Lawson

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#### WORKSHOP MANUALS FOR SALE:

"YA" (red cover) Workshop Manual. Good condition. £40. Tel: Mr. G. Davies on [redacted] (Dyfed, S. Wales)."

AKD632A YB Workshop Manual (green/yellow cover) October 1958 issue. Fair condition. £20 incl. U.K. postage. Contact: J.G. Lawson, [redacted]



BENSON & HEDGES CONCOURS. BEAULIEU. 10 JULY 1988.

Whatever one may feel about the pros and cons of tobacco firms sponsoring events like this the fact is that it probably would not take place at all without Benson & Hedges support for Classic Cars magazine.

This concours is a serious affair with some very substantial cash prizes and some very tough competition from immaculately prepared vehicles. This year there have been five heats and a final due in September; the merit of the heats is that they are held in different parts of the country. I decided to enter for the one held at Beaulieu on July 10 because I took second place in my class in 1985 and Bill Dale was third in the class last year. Moreover, the event is well organised and in a good location.

This year neither Bill ( who had driven with his wife over 200 miles from Cornwall to compete ) nor I had any luck. The organisers divided the classes into open and closed models of up to and more than 2000 c.c. This meant that our class included vehicles from 1945 to 1974 of which no fewer than 36 were entered. It is remarkable that this included three "Y" types although Brian Hunt's GAA 146 did not turn up.

The quality of the restoration work on most of these cars was extraordinarily high and the judges had a very difficult time docking marks for items that would have passed without comment in a club concours. The organisation of this event reflects great credit on those responsible and it was well marshalled and offered sensible and friendly hospitality. A tour round the arena while a well-informed commentator described the cars was additional fun.

There is no entry fee and there are welcome stipulations like entrants must drive to the event or they will be disqualified. It is, therefore, a concours to think about but only if your car is in very good order indeed. Unusually, a copy of the judges marks is sent to the competitor later and there is no doubt that the event will favour the restored car as opposed to the original but worn one.

Nevertheless, the judges' task must have been hard and this is the first time I have been asked to fish out the spare wheel for it to be examined and to be asked to produce the owners handbook. They even check the cleanliness of the engine oil if there is a tie ! This is certainly a very professionally organised and run concours and the level of the prizes quite rightly means that your car must be very good indeed to get anywhere near them.

Taking things altogether I rate this event as extremely interesting and an incentive to really clean up one's vehicle. Not, however, such fun as the Club events.

Trevor J.Austin.

## CARS FOR SALE:

543. "M.G. YB Saloon, 1953, presentable condition, stored in garage for last five years. £2,500 ono. Tel: [REDACTED] (daytime)."

## CARS WANTED

"M.G. YB. Must be in good condition, rust free. Would accept one with slight cosmetics required. Tel: [REDACTED] (Edinburgh)".

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COMPRESSION TESTING Part. II.

by Reg Weeding.

### CYLINDER LEAKAGE TEST.

If a compression test indicates lower than normal readings or varied compression readings, a cylinder leakage test can be done. The cylinder leakage test will pin-point a problem such as a worn piston, piston rings, cylinder, faulty valve seats or a "blown" cylinder head gasket.

To carry out a cylinder leakage test remove all spark plugs, turn engine over until No. 1 cylinder is at T.D.C. on compression stroke, select 4th gear and apply hand brake. This to prevent crankshaft rotation.

Fit an air line to No. 1 spark plug port and supply air at 50 to 100 P.S.I. and then listen at the following points (see diagram).

At air intake (filter removed) A. if hissing is heard - leak at inlet valve

At exhaust pipe B. if hissing is heard - leak at exhaust valve.

At oil filter (cap removed) C. if hissing is heard - leak past piston, rings, cylinder. 20% leak acceptable.

Hissing from adjacent spark plug port indicates cylinder head gasket "blown".

Bubbles appearing when radiator cap removed indicates blown cylinder head gasket. A better and more positive check is at thermostat housing with thermostat removed. Could also indicate cracked cylinder head.

Repeat the above on all cylinders.

The above can be done with foot pump if you have an energetic helper.



## CYLINDER LEAKAGE TEST

