

A Y.B. in Cumbria.

We have owned Y.B. KMJ533 for around six years now and carried out extensive mechanical work to bring the working parts up to the standard of the body work so lovingly cared for by previous owner Keith Dillingham.

The little car has an overhauled braking system, reconditioned front shock absorbers and a rebuilt engine with new clutch.

We rebored to +0.030" with 8.5 to 1 pistons. The block is fitted with a new Brown and Gammons steel cam, and pushrods. The cam has a revised lobe form to give "more torque and smoother power delivery" but we have not been able to obtain information with regard to the appropriate ignition advance curve so the precise improvement is not known and we may not be achieving the engines optimum.

All the timing gear has been replaced and the head fitted with new standard size valves and springs, but not guides. Instead of the makers 19 thou I have set the tolerances at 13 thou which certainly gives a quieter engine and very smooth tickover. This has produced no difficulties so far (5000 miles) but I do listen for any sound of valves failing to seat (misfire) and check carefully when on a run by listening to the tickover at the road side whenever we park up. Incidentally I use unleaded petrol and have not experienced any problems (isn't that what they were

designed to run on?). When overhauling we did not regrind the crank which had little wear but we did fit new standard size bearings throughout.

I removed the engine without the sump but, despite removing the floorboards and gearbox, I could not get the larger ten pint sump fitted to drop into place in the chassis. After a great many attempts I gave up and fitted the block without the sump and devised the sump replacement method using four long studs which I have recorded on the MGYTYPES.ORG website.

I fitted KMJ with new radials because of their better grip in the wet and greater resistance to wear but I have found that they are much heavier to steer at low speed and lack the precise handling of cross ply tyres. Of course they cost around one third the price of cross ply, which is another reason why I fitted them. I have to say that they transmit quite a level of road noise. From this experience I would simply comment that in my opinion, despite their economic advantages, radial ply tyres do not enhance the ride and driving of this little car.

After a few thousand gentle miles in gentle flat Norfolk the engine seemed to be run in and we decided to give KMJ the chance to stretch her legs with a longer journey to visit friends in the Lake District, so a journey of just under a thousand miles was planned for last November. We carefully packed the boot and were impressed at just how much it will hold. Essential fan belts, clutch cables, bulbs, lengths of wire, spare hoses and extra tools were stowed around the spare wheel and under the bonnet which,

of course, guaranteed that we wouldn't need any, and we didn't!

As we headed west on the A14 out of Norfolk we carried out a few timed miles to match the speedo to the distance covered. I expected some discrepancy because of the radials but was astonished to find that the needle reading was some twelve and a half per cent above the actual. Once we knew that we settled the little car to around a true fifty five which is just under four thousand revs. I had anticipated that would be the cruise speed but in fact, without much prompting from my right foot, KMJ ran at 60 - 65 m.p.h. which I estimate as 4,250-4,600 revs.

I tried to restrain her to the magic sixty but she was very quiet and smooth and on occasion when overtaking (with heart in mouth) reached a very creditable 65 and was clearly willing to go on. I have to say that the car revelled in those speeds and ran far more smoothly at 60 than 50. This quite astonished me because while, of course, I was aware of the good tum of speed that these little cars possess I had forgotten that they could cruise so smoothly for long distances at such a useful speed.

Despite all new mounts there is some slight vibration at low speed and I am sure this particular engine would benefit from full balancing. For all that its performance is quite a credit to a long stroke pre-war design. The carburettor choke and inlet manifold must restrict the power but I am anxious to keep to the original fittings, where I can although clearly the twin set up would be helpful.

On short jouneys the oil pressure holds

40 lbs but on the longer motor way stretches (1-2 hours) it dropped to 35. At first that worried me but as it fell no further but remained rock solid with 10 lbs at idle I decided that all was well. The pump gears and cam bearings are new so no doubt the slightly worn crankshaft reduces the pressure or possibly the gauge reads low but I heard no bearing knock, although I certainly listened for it especially on start up. There was no oil fuming or overheating. In fact the car ran very cool even when under load on the steep Lakeland hills. The ride is beautifully smooth and although we have no heater the engine warms the interior very comfortable. Of course we have the roof open as often as possible.

Driving is just magic and it is amazing how quickly the YB eats up the miles. The rack and pinion steering and firm suspension make handling the car pure bliss. Few pleasures compare with sitting behind that straight bonnet as the scenery slides by.

The run up to Cumbria was absolutely uneventful but I was totally unprepared for the very steep Lakeland hills and tight twisting roads around the village of Dent and Dentdale. At first I found the presence of those highly abrasive stone walls quite daunting and very worrying because of the responsibility of preserving KMJ's very original bodywork. The steering helped but the greatest difference between the YAs I ran many years ago and the YB are the twin leading shoe brakes. They just don't fade and are always very positive. I did have one or two quite exciting moments when running YAs because of the tendency to

fade when the drums were hot but the YBis much improved and gave no problems at all.

As I have said the engine gave no worries because KMJ never ran hot despite the very steep gradients but I was concerned for the transmission and especially the final drive. The YB dif. and half shafts took all the load when pulling away on steep inclines. Laden with four adults the engine was not always able to pick up revs and more than once I had to roll back to a less steep space and start again. Once or twice I had to slip the clutch to assist. KMJ seemed to take this brute treatment but I don't recommend the practice to any one, the fact that it is a new clutch helped.

I add here that when we were only two up the YB had no problems. I suppose that four adults on top of almost a ton of motor car is an awful lot for that restricted engine to pull on the steep slopes and twisting roads where one cannot build up speed. I also found it very difficult to engage first gear while the speed was decaying on steep gradients and tight bends. My best efforts to double de clutch were just embarrassingly pathetic (and I used to drive a Singer with a non synchro box). A saving grace in all this is that as with the foot brakes the hand brake is very effective and holds without difficulty thus making pulling away on steep gradients much easier.

One or two figures for those who are interested. Fuel consumption worked out at 27.8 per gallon of the cheapest unleaded which included the fast motorway driving, hill climbing and two

forty minute traffic jams on the M.6. Oil consumption was not good and we used just one litre of semi synthetic 10-40W in the thousand miles. Smoking on start up after a night's standstill might indicate trickling down the valve stems and I should replace the guides but the engine runs so well I hesitate to disturb it and who wants to risk pressing valve guides in and out of a perfectly good fifty two year old cylinder head? Of course the XPAG valves lack a modern oil seal. One of the results of the cool running was that the water level remained constant throughout the trip and did not require topping up.

YB road holding is as good as they say, the car is quiet to ride in and as I have said very pleasant to drive. I would like to try taking her on our annual summer trip to Italy but I think Viv, my wife, would not be overjoyed at virtually doubling the length of time of the already long journey across Europe.

In a way my judgement on the car and the difficulties of low power in hilly regions are clouded by the fact that since 1972 I have driven little else except Alfa Romeo and since 1989 a two and a half litre V6. That car can easily give almost the Y.B. maximum in second (60-65 m.p.h.) and reaches 112 in third so of course one doesn't notice English hills. This has undoubtedly spoiled me and taken the edge off my driving coordination in this very precious and fine little English sports saloon.

Thinking of those who are tempted to own a Y type I thoroughly recommend it. The Y is a good motorcar with all the appeal of pre war design but well able to

live with modern motoring conditions. It is easy to maintain, small enough to work on in limited spaces, comfortable and very practical. My only advice would be to take your time choosing, look for as original a car as possible and be prepared to pay more for the right car with the right history. You may be assured that you will end up with one of the finest of the small post war saloons. In summary the MG Y type exudes grace and comfort and great reliability coupled with a very unique personality. As our experience has shown no one could wish for a better or friendlier small car.

Dec/Jan 2005 **Phil Waltham**