

To the Isle of South Uist, Outer Hebrides, in a 1949 YT

(a visit to the in-laws)

Richard Knight

Thursday 22nd July (216 miles)

Having checked the weather forecast and seen the prediction for rainfall in the Greater Manchester area on Saturday, I decided to pull forward my date of travel by one day. I got up at 5am for a planned 6am departure from Romsey where I collected my friend and navigator for the trip. We set off on a rural route towards Grateley, Tidworth, Marlborough in the direction of Swindon, hoping to be clear of the crossing over the M4 and along the A419 before rush hour. We achieved our aim and were filling up fuel at Esso Calcutt services by 8-13.

Our destination for the first day was The Cotton Arms, Wrenbury, Cheshire, and we travelled through some fantastic scenery. This included Ledbury, a place I first visited on one of the few MG Car Club Spring Runs, and I have been back several times when passing. I applied sun lotion as the hood was down and the sun was shining. A difficulty travelling in a soft top open car is the concern regarding security and not wanting to venture far from sight of the car. A short time later at our second lay-by stop on the A417 for an obligatory leg stretch it was 9-15 and time for a "Boily" as my friend referred to it, meaning out with the camping stove to boil water for tea.



After the tea we pushed on to our next stop taking a diversion to Tenbury Wells where at about 11-20 I parked outside The Riverside Café. Time for hot chocolate before I walked around the main street and a quick look

around an Antiques shop. The journey continued along more rural main A roads with no more than a leg-stretch and re-application of sun lotion. The weather was glorious and at times possibly too hot, but one doesn't want to moan as there are too few glorious days in the UK.

I was driving along the A49 when out of the corner of my eye I saw an MG logo on a building containing Sports and Vintage Motors at Prees near Whitchurch. Having turned around I parked up and spoke to a fellow who was repainting the gate. I took the opportunity for a photo of the YT below the logo and after a short natter, hit the road again. A bit further along on opposite side of the road was garage with vintage cars, so not wishing to miss a photo opportunity took a slight de-tour round the next roundabout and drove back for look.

About 3pm we arrived in Wrenbury and called on a local MG owner associated with the Early MG Society and had an enjoyable chat about motoring and MG's amongst other topics. Then we headed on to The Cotton Arms, where both tents were put up and the car

was parked in the field for a much-needed rest. We sat in the pub to re-charge our mobiles and relax alongside the Canal then enjoy our evening meal before the nights rest.



Friday 23rd July 2021 (217 miles)

We were up for a second early start with clocks set for 5am and left at about 5-45 for Thornhill, Dumfries and Galloway. The early start was to avoid congestion around the great industrial North West from Warrington, up to Preston. I had previously done the journey twice before in my YB and know from experience that it is stop/start with many traffic lights and built-up traffic. This can cause temperature problems and cause fuel vaporisation if not careful. After negotiating this built-up area it was time for a cooked breakfast at Guy's Eating Establishment at St Michael's Rd, Garstang, Bilsborrow, Preston. This was a perfect stop for parking the car on a gravel car park directly overlooked by the outside seating area where I had my full English Breakfast. We then headed North on the A6 where we had a toilet pit-stop at Booths, Penrith and parked the YT in the shade to cool down after being held up in traffic in the town centre. We arrived at the Oakbank Campsite at around 1720 hours and erected our tents before driving to the Thornhill Inn for food, before bed.



Saturday 24th July 2021 (193 miles)

Another early start, leaving the campsite at 05-40am. It was a really cold start to the drive with the early morning dew on windscreen causing it to mist up before the air finally dried off the overnight damp from car. Around 08-15 we stopped at place called Beith off the A737 for a "Boily" and I decided that jeans would be better option from shorts. I also need to take driving gloves in future as my hands were white with the cold air.

Before crossing the Erskine Bridge, we stopped for fuel at a Shell Garage and then called into Brewers Fayre off Lomondgate Roundabout at Dumbarton. Unfortunately, unless a table was booked it was a two hour wait for full cooked "Scottish" breakfast, therefore Greggs it was, for takeaway bacon bap and sausage roll before hitting the road again. The early cloud cover changed to bright sunshine and warmed up the outside temperature by the time of our next pit stop at around 11--30 on layby somewhere not too far from Bridge of Orchy. It was time to drop the hood and apply the sun lotion. I also got confirmation from my

mother-in-law that somehow, she had spoken to the ferry operator and I could sail on the Malliag ferry a day earlier on Sunday, rather than our scheduled crossing for the Monday 26th July. This was now the same day as my wife and children were due to sail having, having only set off the day before. The trade off by travelling in a modern Skoda Octavia Estate, more luggage space and quicker speed, but less scenic motorway miles.

We arrived at our campsite at Acindarroch Touring park in Duror at 1-30pm and put up our tents then chilled until our evening meal, booked at Isles of Glencoe hotel, Ballachulish, just down the road. Afterwards I chose to take a walk along a footpath that was formerly the local railway line back in the 1960s. It was here I experienced



my first trouble with the midges that luckily were only flying in the evening. Thankfully I was not bitten before hitting the sleeping bag for much needed rest.

Sunday 25th July 2021. (83 miles)

Yet another early start leaving at 6-30am As I had strict instructions from my mother-in-law via a WhatsApp message be at Malliag to collect my tickets no later than 11-30 hours or I'd miss the ferry. The midges were out in force and had a feast on my poor friend who was badly bitten on both legs and arms but, fortunately for me, I was fairly unscathed by comparison with only a few bites on my arms.

We had a lovely run albeit there was morning mist that caused the windscreen to steam up as I passed various Lochs alongside the A830. We arrived at the ferry terminal about 8-30 hours with plenty of time to spare and before the ticket office opened at 8-45. A queue of people were waiting for earlier ferry to one of the other islands. I joined the queue and got my tickets was told to come back after 11-20 as there was no parking at the Port. We made our way to a car park away from the town centre and left the car unattended while we went for breakfast at a café.

Malliag is small port and most places were still closed apart from the one breakfast place and a COOP. After breakfast I decided it may be best to check with the ticket office that I was definitely on ferry. I spotted my wife and kids sat on a bench in the town, unbeknown to them I sneaked up to surprise them and let them know I was now on the same sailing as them. This was despite being told all week by Calmac, the ferry operator, that the ferry was full. I must say I was surprised my mother-in-law got us booked on the ferry or so I had thought...



At 11-20 we drove to the ferry port and spoke to the Calmac fellow with the clip board in charge of boarding. I gave my name only to be told there is an E Knight but not a R Knight. "You're not on my list" I was told. I protested that my mother-in-law told me she had spoken to the office and that I was on the ferry. "You had better go to lane 1" he said, and I parked behind the car in pole position. I walked back to town to get some bottled water from the COOP. I then got a call from my wife to get back to ca as the Calmac office wanted to see my tickets. After a run back I was "You're booked on Monday's ferry, you will have to go in the standby lane" by which time I had no idea if I'd make the crossing. There was then a nervous wait with raised blood pressure as the cars took an age to start to board the ferry. After two way walkie talkie communications between the port staff and the ferry we were told to make our way from the standby lane to board....phew! Elation overwhelmed my emotion at that point having contemplated an overnight stay of wild camping.



We had perfectly calm weather and sunshine on the 3 ½ hour sailing to Lochboisdale on the Isle of South Uist. We drove off the ferry to be greeted by my brother-in-law and his children and the YT headed off to my father-in-laws garage for a long rest while we all looked forward to a week of family fun ahead. All non-MG related, but including a trip to Island of Barra where we even watched a plane land on the beach.



Homeward bound.



Sunday 1st August 2021 (19 miles)
I took the YT to the petrol station at Balivanich to fill up for the return journey but ran out en-route! My gauge gives a false reading but to compensate I carry 5L fuel can. I really must get around to fixing that gauge, but it is one of those jobs I keep putting off. I refilled the tank and the spare can and then took some of the family for quick spin before packing the car for the return trip and early start on Monday.

Monday 2nd August 2021 (267 miles)
I set the alarm for 4am and drove to my in-laws to collect the YT before an early morning drive to Lochboisdale to catch

ferry that was due to depart for Mallig at 6-50am. We were the second car to arrive and once boarding commenced the Calmac staff obliged with my request to be parked in covered section of car deck. I was first to board parking right next to the stern door.

We had a perfect sailing and the sea was flat calm. 3 ½ hours later were back on the A830 and soon passing Loch's where the calm water looked like a mirror.



It was bank holiday Monday in Scotland and we did not know what to expect regarding traffic volumes, but like the weather my "God" the sun was shining brightly on us. We experienced few traffic build ups apart from a minor queue at the Lomondgate Roundabout in Dumbarton after fuel stop. We headed back over the Erskine Bridge and decided to take the Ayrshire Coastal Road back to the Oakbank Campsite again for our overnight stop. As we unpacked our tents it dawned on me that I had inadvertently left my sleeping bag back at the house in South Uist. A call to my wife confirmed that it was in the cupboard where I had left it on Sunday. Silly me! I was saved by the campsite owners who lent me use of duvet cover which kept me warm for the night.

Tuesday 3rd August 2021 (394 miles)

We had decided to forgo another overnight stop at Wrenbury, due to several reasons. My lack of sleeping bag and the church bells that chimed there on the half hour, every hour. Why? The need to wake all the locals with the church bell chimes I've no idea. So, the alarm woke us at 4-55am

At 5-22 hours we commenced our departure from Oakbank Campsite and decided to use the M6 southbound. I had experience of driving my YB on similar stretch early on a Sunday morning back in 2017, when I had need to get home early for family emergency, so I knew it could be done. That time we were in Wigton, Cumbria, but this time it was that little bit further to travel, plus it was a weekday, but once the decision is made go for it.

We drove down the M6 to junction 18, pulling off motorway at approximately 9-30 and the traffic was again kind. We only stopped for fuel at Tebay services and topped up the oil as a precaution.

As we were passing through Middlewich on recently resurfaced road, the shingle was still very loose and signs warned of the risk of skids and to drive at 20mph. You will know only too well that no one seems to take any notice. Listening to the stones bounce of the undersides of my YT's poor wheel arches while profanely discussing my views of the road surface with my



friend I suddenly recalled that I'm near The Hopley House on Nantwich Road. This is a place I stayed at a year ago in July on my last trip to South Uist in my YB. I quickly pulled off the road chippings much to my relief and ordered a full English breakfast with a pot of tea, which cooled my overheating blood.



By 10-45 we were back on the chippings for short time heading south towards home, taking the route south back along the A49 towards Shrewsbury, Leominster, Ledbury, Gloucester and Cirencester. We avoided congestion at the Air Balloon roundabout on the A417 as google maps suggested there was a queue and I feared fuel vaporisation if we were held up for too long. A map book and my navigator's local knowledge found an "access only" route up a very steep hill which I felt was better for ourselves and saved others from an obstruction if we broke down. I climbed the hill in 2nd gear just about making it to the peak. The next hurdle was to navigate Swindon and the approach to the roundabout over the M4.

At 4pm it was no surprise that there were delays and queueing traffic on the approach, but good use of lanes by first joining the outside lane and then the nearside lane closer to the roundabout, cut out the amount of time I was stationary. Keeping the car moving by slowly holding back from car in front kept the temperature down and I didn't suffer from fuel vaporisation. This kept the engine going around the roundabout, past mostly stationary traffic trying to head west onto the M4. We took the A346 back towards Marlborough and Tidworth, then back



towards Romsey, where we got the first spots of rain in West Wellow, before quickly unloading my friend's stuff and driving like clappers back home dodging the clouds above. Luckily being right on the edge of the cloud I was soon in the dry and there was no need to lift hood for the short drive back home and getting back into the garage to wait for servicing before the next trip.

A total of 1,389 miles.