

## Y to the West Part 1

### **The Nullarbor Nymph strikes again!** By Delia Rayment with sneak-ins by Peter **(Or what we experienced in our MGY on our way to the Easter 2016 MG National Meeting in Perth, Western Australia)**

Everywhere we went on our Nullarbor crossing both going West and then back on the way home again Peter kept looking for the Nymph!

Several times he reckoned he had found her – young, tall, slim, blonde, but usually they had clothes on or they spoke a foreign language. Not like the true Nullarbor Nymph at all, for legend has it that she goes naked amongst the kangaroos, and is fluent in English.

The words Nullarbor Plains congers up various feelings and reactions from people. To some, it congers up feelings of **dread, fear or impending boredom**. But to me, the underlying feeling I have, when I cross this vast area of Australia, is probably one of awe. Awe at its size and its complexities. Firstly because from one end to the other of the Nullarbor Plain it is over 745 miles long. That is equivalent to travelling from London to Rome or from Brisbane to Canberra. This plateau made from limestone is about 250,000km square and is the largest karst on the Planet. A plain without any major cities, without any towns (only roadhouses), without any trees and without any creeks or rivers, that has ever changing vegetation, even if it is very slight and not all that noticeable at times.

Before we drove across to Perth for the 2016 MG National Meeting, we mentioned to friends and acquaintances that we were planning a cross nation trip. Most of the immediate reactions from them were “Why do you want to drive all that way and then back again too?”

This question was repeated again more forcefully, when we said how we would be travelling, but with the addition of –“But why in an MGY?”

**Why in a Y type.** After nearly half a century of driving to events, particularly National Meetings in roadsters – be they MGTCs, MGBs, or MG Midgets and arriving at the event either deaf in one ear, skin falling off ones face from wind or sun burn or both, we thought that it was time to try a “tin top”. Plus we also felt that we needed more room! Wanted to be able to converse on route a bit more easily, as we intended being away for possibly 6 weeks or so. The Y, at this stage of our lives, we felt was the ideal choice. For the trip was to before two nearly 70 year olds heading to Perth in our nearly 70 year old car. We were off for an adventure. We knew that we would enjoy the trip and we certainly did.

For many years we have travelled and organised groups in convey. It is extremely hard work and in the end because we all have different likes and dislikes we never end up pleasing anyone, let alone ourselves as to where we stay and what we see.

So this time going over we chose to travel by ourselves as we knew our car, we knew how far we liked to travel in a day and we knew where we liked to stop during the day and at night. Call us nuts or just down right Enthusiasts. It all depends on ones perspective in life. We probably go for the latter definition.

But like most humans we like a challenge and here was a challenge to cross Australia in our MGY. On route, we would be meeting up with fellow Australians and other world travellers.

**Preparation -** Peter’s preparation of the Y before our departure, was time and money well spent, as all the “modifications” or additions were most useful. The most useful of all, Peter thinks, was the installation of a “cruise control” for those long straight stretches. For instance, one straight stretch is 90 miles long across the Nullarbor.

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When we packed for our trip things were loaded in a particular order. Firstly it was spare parts which went into all the nooks and crannies, then water (we always carry plenty of this) and some food (mostly dried or tinned – survival stuff). Next into the car went the camping gear. We were going to be away for at least 6 weeks and this would not only help our budget but also if we got caught out/or saw a nice camping spot we would be OK.

Then we supposed that we would need some clothes. This meant a variety however - from camping clobber to full evening attire for the National Meeting Presentation Dinner, in Perth. Isn't it funny how, the more formal one dresses the less clothes one needs!

**Luggage** - We appeared to have a fair amount of luggage. It looked a lot when spread out on the floor. Peter said there is not as much room in the Y as what we have in the MGB with the spare tyre mounted on the back of the car. We were also worried about the weight, so we weighted all the camping gear, clothes, spares, tools etc and it was about 70kg. Then there was still food, but there was not much of that. Equivalent to about 2 not big passengers and it is a four seater car. No problem.

**The Route before the National Meeting** - Our trip from near Noosa on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland to Perth Western Australia was to be mostly a direct route staying on the "black stuff". We have bush bashed in our MGB before and after other National Meetings but not this time. They are other stories.

Generally speaking we travelled south-west towards the Queensland/New South Wales border at Cunnamulla, where we headed south to Cobar then west to Broken Hill, Port Augusta, Ceduna (both in South Australia), across the Nullarbor, then further west to Norseman, south to Esperance and off north-west into Perth via the Stirling Ranges. A trip distance of approximately 3200 miles or 5150 km each way. A distance from London to Cairo via Genova and Tunisia.

**Here are some of the highlights of our west bound trip** - We departed as temperatures skyrocketed, for this was one of the driest summers on record.

This was an early Easter and it meant that we had to leave early in March to reach our destination some 3,200 odd miles away on the other side of Australia. We knew it was going to be hot but we did not expect to find temperatures of up to **45°C in the cabin** as we travelled from Cunnamulla south to Bourke, Cobar and out to Broken Hill. Not ideal travelling temperatures in a non-air-conditioned, British made car! The Y wasn't really meant for these temperatures or distances. However we had full confidence in our little car, and I had full confidence in my husband's abilities to fix most problems in that quarter.

Peter had installed a personal fan down in the foot-well area, which oscillated. It was OK at



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shifting some coolish air around at times but once it got to over 40°C it felt like you were in a fan forced oven!

We felt the heat and so did poor little Victoria (this is what we call our little Y – for she is short, plumpish, and a brownish colour). So much so that twice (only twice) Victoria came to a dead stop, because of the fuel boiling in the fuel line. Luckily it was on the open road with nobody else around. The traffic was really heavy at this stage! From Bourke to Cobar (95 miles) only 5 cars passed us and we passed a big truck.

Peter alighted, got out his personal drinking bottle, aimed it at the petrol pump and fuel line, cooled them both, and hopped back into the car. Then I squirted my water bottle over his head to cool him down. He started the engine and off we went again!

I guess if you made that into a movie it would look as if we had had this happen heaps of times before and we knew exactly what to do. It certainly pays to know your car – and what is needed to remedy the situation.

This had happened years before on a very hot day at home when there was still a pusher pump fitted to the car. Once we had put a sucker type SU pump to the car we had had no more problems until now!

At Cobar we booked into a Motel as it was so hot and we sat in the swimming pool until dark when it was still over 38°C at 7pm and was bad still next morning.

**Home to Moonie Xroads** - Initially we were sitting at about 55mph until we hit black soil country after Dalby. The lumps and bumps (but bitumen so it must be good, ha ha!) is normal for black soil. Also with the ruts from the B- Doubles and with the cross ply tyres on the Y, we were tram-lining all over the road besides flying through the air. The exhaust pipe, which is 5 to 6 inches above the road surface, was bottoming badly. Not much fun so we slowed down to about 50 mph. The shock absorbers on the Y are very small and don't do much. You still had to be on the ball but it was a lot more relaxing. We ended up travelling to Perth at this speed.

**St George, Queensland** - was good for me this time as I was able to find my grandparents grave – quite emotional. This is something I'd tried to do 2 other times when we were zooming through over the years. There is no plot diagram at the cemetery and you have to go to the Shire Council Office during office hours to look at the plan. Both other times before, it had been on a week-end.

You know what it is like when you are working and have limited time to do things. But now that we are retired things have changed.

**Cunnamulla** – Our camp for the night was a beautiful grassed area with a backdrop of sand dunes just outside the Caravan Park fence. Magic - as we watched the sun set and then the sun rise again on them, the next morning.

**Cobar** – The big open cut mine, the huge slag heap and the museum are must sees at this very

Our 1st camp  
Green grass & sand dunes  
Cunnamulla



Guess where?

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friendly, clean and tidy town which services several very profitable mines in the area.

**Wilcannia**-On the self guide brochure that one can obtain from the information centre it is described as "In the middle of nowhere, the centre to everywhere!" Built on the Darling River in the late 1800s as a port during the time when Australia "rode on the sheep's back", its remaining grand buildings can attest to its importance. They even had to build a high level, centre opening bridge across the Darling at the town, to let boats come and go to Bourke (95 miles to the north). One looks at the mighty Darling now and wonders how this was possible, as there is hardly any water in it, certainly not enough to have boats going up and down!

**Broken Hill -We had already travelled 1,162 miles from home, and by Peter's facts and figures we had covered more than a third of our way to Perth. Yippee!**

**Broken Hill** – What a town! We always love it. It has so much character and history. In its heyday, it was a very rich city, as one can see by some of the fancy public buildings and splendid old homes.

We visited the Palace Hotel which featured in the movie "Priscilla – Queen of the Desert", to look at the murals which are everywhere in the hotel - and almost got mobbed. We were spotted arriving and at the bar, we were made most welcome by some "girls" from the local Veteran and Vintage Car Club who wanted to know where we were going and where we were from, etc. Our 10 minute visit turned into an hour and a half stay or was it longer! Who cares! The murals are spectacular and worth a look. Two-up is on Friday Nights.

The Hotel decided last year to organise the Broken Heel Festival to celebrate 21 years since the movie was made. The celebrations went off with a bang. It looks like it could become an annually event with it being held again this year on the 9, 10, & 11 of September. It could be fun. The movie's BIG HIGH-HEEL SHOE is at the pub.

On the night we were there I did offer my day glow orange feather boa to Peter to wear, but he declined. Truthfully guys you don't have to dress up in drag to enjoy the place.

We had two nights in Broken Hill. What we called lay days, to catch up on washing, recover from continuous driving and see more of the town. We had these lay days in several places on the way over and back. We had too, the distances were so great and after all, this was meant to be a holiday not an endurance race.

The second day in Broken Hill saw good rain that had the large spoon drains across the roads flowing. We visited an original (Retro) Milk Bar to see their museum, partake in a milkshake and take a photo outside the bar. Next thing we knew the owner told us that we have just been put on his Facebook page and did we mind! Then when we got back to where we were staying, not to be outdone, the owner decided that she wanted a photo in front of her motel the Lodge Outback Motel for her Facebook. Saying – "And guess where they are staying?"

All good fun – people were appreciating/noticing our little old MGY

This Motel turned out to be a popular MG stop, not intentionally, as the Armstrongs (MGBGTV8 special – from Yeffon, Qld), the Herghtys(MGA Coupe – Redcliffe, Qld), and the



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Burns (MGY – Newcastle, New South Wales) all stayed there on their way, separately, going over to the National Meeting. That we know of. The stretch of road from here to Peterborough is somewhat lonely but still interesting as it is dotted with ranges that in years gone by would have beckoned those in search of their fortunes. Be it for the gold, lead, zinc or to farm. It is heartbreaking to see the ruins of stone farm houses built by the returned soldiers on land they were given. Particularly, when George Goyder in 1865 as surveyor-general had indicated to the powers that be, that this land was unsuitable for farming and the blocks too small for grazing. One of his main indicators that helped him determine this was, that he studied the different types of natural vegetation! Have we learnt anything from this! We think not.

**Peterborough**- The “Railway Town”. In its heyday it would have been a very busy and rich town. There was a major roundhouse to turn the many steam engines around. It was equipped for 3' 6", 4' 8½" and 5' 3" lines that South Australia had at the time. On the way over we chose to stay over night as we wanted to go to the Steamtown Heritage Rail Centre museum which was well worth our visit. And as the brochure says it is a museum with a difference!

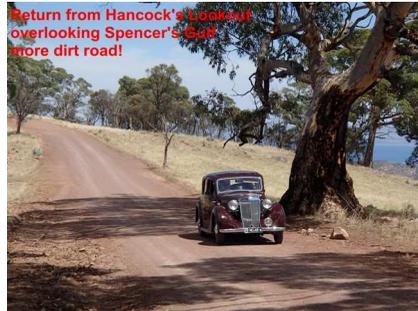
**Kimba** – Is reputed to be Half Way across Australia. Obviously this is from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean. But we had had a little further to go than that and didn't reach the actual half way mark of our trip over until we were at Ceduna.

**Ceduna** – *Half Way on our trip! Yippee. 1745 miles.*

All of these little towns we were going through now have somewhat changed since we travelled here 21 years ago. The beautifully kept green grass on the beachfront near the jetty made a welcome sight after some of the arid region between Cobar and Ceduna. The frequency of dumping points for RVs was good, if you wanted one. Considering they never used to have such things, when we went across in 1995.

**Penong** – “The town of windmills” and they certainly are making a big “todo” about them. As we left, this tidy little town, Karen, our Navman made a profound statement. “Straight Ahead for the next 200 kilometres”. This wasn't the first or the last time that we would hear such an instruction as we headed off across the Nullarbor.

**The Nullarbor** – Every time we have traversed the Nullarbor we are enthralled by the changing vegetation and it has been different each time. A



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lot of it might only be low growing but it depends on the time of the year and whether or not there has been rain. This time on the way over it was the greenest we have ever seen it, and when one looked closer one could see some small flowers with buds forming on a lot of the vegetation.

Some areas reminded me of Africa, as the acacias presented silhouettes unlike the ones in South Africa with their leaf clustered head, often times blown sideways.

The Baxter Cliffs, which run over 120 miles across the western end of the Great Australian Bight are just magical. One could sit at the edge of the cliffs for hours just watching the ever changing colours in the ocean and the sky, taking in the beautiful fresh air at the same time.

Access to the "official" viewing points, we are sorry to say, are now being limited owing to the way the world has gone regarding suing etc. and people's inability to be responsible for their actions. Also there is a money making point just back in aboriginal land that has a lookout with a good bitumen road to it. Certainly the grey nomads have found tracks to cliff edges to camp with their monster vans. What a place to stop on the edge of the world.

The Roadside Rest Areas across the Nullarbor on the Western Australian side have now become somewhat civilized, to years ago. Not so on the South Australian side where designated rest areas are few and far between and when one does stop, one has to fight your way through used tissue paper etc behind the nearest bush to do what you have to. Navman "Karen told us a few times across this stretch that we needed to stop, that we had travelled over 2 hours and could she find us a Rest Area or Café – "Not so out here lovey, I am afraid." we more or less said together.

Peter thought that he saw the Nymph late one afternoon as we drove into the setting sun towards Border Village, after travelling 336 Miles that day. I looked quickly to where he pointed but I just shook my head and said "I think the fading light is playing tricks with your eyes, darling!" "Kangaroos yes but no Nymph. Time we were off this road as we don't want to hit any kangaroos."

**Madura Roadhouse**-We had to stop at every Roadhouse along the way as we had to buy

The 300 foot Baxter Cliffs go on forever



Its all Limestone



Very very flat. Different signs



Making the most of some shady trees for smoko

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petrol, as the Y only has an 8 gallon tank, and if we didn't refuel then we would run out before the next roadhouse. This was one of the things we had factored into our trip before we left. Firstly, checking that we would be able to go the distance between roadhouses and secondly allowing extra time each day, for refuelling. We didn't realise how much extra time to what we had thought we would need however, because every time we stopped, people would want to talk. This didn't worry us at all but a 15 minute stop often extended to a three quarter hour stop. Madura Roadhouse was no exception.

We pulled up for fuel, Peter had not got out of the car when a head popped in the window with a voice saying "I used to have one of these!" plus a long history of when, where etc. No problems. Peter got out refuelled and went to pay. Whilst he was doing that I was finishing writing up the details of our purchase in our log book, when a head came in my door saying "I used to own one of these!" Different person, different story – but still very interesting.

**Out of Africa?  
No! The Nullarbor**



**Fraser Range. Camp at 1st light**

**Fraser Range Camper's kitchen**



**The buildings are much older than the Y**

**Fraser Range Station** – We camped 60 miles east of Norseman that night to check the place out for our return visit. On our way back we were going to be accompanied by two New Zealanders, Warwick and Juliana Protheroe in their MGB and they had expressed an interest in staying at the property. A very interesting place, a working sheep station that provides a welcome stay for travellers. Some of their workers come from different parts of the globe. One couple we met from Germany, had come for a night's stay and were still there, now working, a month later. They were having a ball. Who needs the big cities!

**We were now three quarters of our way across to our destination, having now travelled some 2656 miles.**

**Esperance** - Esperance is one of my all time favourite places in Australia. I guess it must be the BIG granite outcrops everywhere and the

**Boy The water's cold**



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wonderful bays, and islands made of the stuff. Guess it reminds me of when I was a kid and the odd holiday we had on Magnetic Island off Townsville in far north Queensland. Whatever, this area always makes me feel free and that I would like to go exploring the archipelago out there in the Great Southern Ocean. One can conquer up dreams of explorers or pirates when one looks at some of the names of the islands, as there has been many a foreign sailor here.



**Ongerup - Malleefowl Research Centre** - One of many interests in our life is birds. We love them. Mind you we are not Birdos or Twitchers. We just appreciate birds for what they are and what they do and yes, we have a little refuge at home as we are "Land for Wildlife" people. Anyway when the opportunity presented itself to visit the Yongergnow (easy for you to say that) Malleefowl Centre. We were the first customers through the door the day of our visit. What a wonderful Education Resource. We thought we knew about the fowl, but this visit gave us a much broader understanding of the Malleefowl's needs. Needs which are similar



to our "big foot" bird – the Scrub Turkey at home here. It also gave us the opportunity to see them up close and personal.

**Stirling Range** - After all the flat, plain areas across the bottom of Australia, the Stirling Range was a sight for sore eyes. The geology of the range is quite spectacular. The biodiversity within these ranges is internationally recognised as one of the



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world's top 34 hotspots. It was added to the Nation Heritage list a decade ago. We were in luck throughout this region as were able to see some wildflowers in bloom. We must come back during spring one year to see it in its full glory.

**Bridgetown** - As we headed into this beautiful little town in the Blackwood Valley our first port of call was the Blackwood Valley Cidery, as it was lunch time. Our visit was well timed as with the lunch came free entertainment with soothing jazz in the background.

A shame for the town though that timber-jinkers start roaring past at about midnight and continue into the day. We weren't able to have too much sleep that night as they sounded like they were driving through the tent!

The towns people are certainly friendly enough as we had to have a tyre looked at by a young fellow (about 40) as it started going down slowly. On investigation it turned out to be what Peter



had suspected it to be a pinched tube. And

so several of patches later, the tube talced and fitted correctly into the tyre and onto the wheel, we left for Perth. We had new tubes fitted into new tyres before we left home, but obviously they hadn't been fitted correctly. Peter had unfortunately not been present when the tyres and tubes were fitted to the wheels. Obviously the fitter!! did not know how to fit tubes. Like making sure the tube is blown up in the tyre before the tyre is finally fixed onto the wheel. Talcing the tube lets it move more easily in the tyre to get rid of any wrinkles in the tube. If these wrinkles are not removed, they rub and wear holes in the tubes. Not good. Peter certainly does not let any tyre fitter refit a wheel to the Y or the Midget. If they use an air rattle gun (Spanner) they will break the wheel studs. The original wheel braces with their small leverage only let the correct torque to be applied to the nuts.

Whilst waiting for the young tyre fitter to look at our tyre we headed south just south of Bridgetown to look at a collection of old cars some one in the caravan park had told us about the night before. What a sight. Old Mercedes, Citroens, Borgward Isabellas, Pioneer buses etc all housed in old double- decker sheds. But no MGs. The owner Scotty was "home" and took

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us on a personal tour of his collection. For this is what he called it. He said he wasn't a hoarder- there is a difference!

**Donnybrook** - Our visit to this town was made interesting as we chose to go to a solar farm where the owners have developed, over the last 20 odd years, a method of drying stone fruits grown on their farm such as peaches, plums by the sun. Solarfruit have a comprehensive range of products which make ideal healthy and convenient snacks for travellers. Useful particularly as one travels around the country where there is the likely hood of having to go through Quarantine checkpoints, as we did both coming and going to Western Australia. We had to make sure we were NOT carrying any fresh vegetables or fruits, which can be hard to monitor at times when you are unsure of your next stop.

**Perth- We finally arrived one day early than planned, with 3421 miles under our belt - YIPEE**

We had actually been doing less and less miles in the 4 – 5 days leading up to us travelling into Perth. But at least we didn't have to rush any more every morning to hit the road. We had left a few days up our sleeve in case of a break down or whatever. We had wanted to make sure that we would be well and truly in Perth for the National Meeting, which was the main objective of this trip.

We now had the task of cleaning the car, as we had gone through a few lots of grasshoppers at different times that had embedded themselves into hidden nooks and crannies. Plus there was dust throughout from the odd side roads we had driven to lookouts. Everything had to be removed from the car so that we had free access. All the dirt had to be removed in readiness for the Concours set down for Easter Saturday when the judges would be giving the car a thorough going over for any faults etc.

With all our efforts of travelling all this distance and cleaning, will it be worth while at the National Meeting events!! Stay tuned for our report on the National Meeting and going home.

### **Fact Sheet to Perth**

17 days travelling  
covering 3421 miles  
consuming - 2.5 litres of oil  
using - 131.93 gallons of fuel  
fuel costing - \$765.50  
Cheapest - \$1.08.9 per litre  
Dearest - \$1.70.0 per litre