

MGB REGISTER WEEKEND IN FALMOUTH, CORNWALL

On the 7th July 2014 my MGB, which I had restored 19 years ago (including fitting a re-conditioned engine), reached the magical 60,000 mile mark near Alnwick Castle, Northumberland. As, up to now, it had never let us down, it was logical for my wife and me to take our little black car on the MGB Register weekend in Cornwall.

On the 11th September we were ready and looking forward to a brilliant weekend. We set off from Solingen/Germany for Dunkirk at 5.30 in the morning. We encountered the usual traffic jam around Brussels and lost an hour but reached the midday ferry punctually. The weather was perfect and so it remained.

After a short nap on the boat we set off from Dover for the M25. Our destination was Exeter – still another 250 miles to drive. In the age of satnav it is more difficult to have an over view of the whole journey than it is with a map and we hadn't reckoned on passing STONEHENGE which was very impressive, even though we only drove past.

Our planned first night stop was the Lord Haldon House Hotel in Dunchideock, near Exeter. The roads after Exeter were very adventurous as the hotel is situated in the middle of nowhere and these roads became narrower and narrower. Thanks to the help of a very kind Mercedes driver suddenly it all made sense and the last few miles were child's play.



After 13 hours on the road, of which two had been spent on the ferry, we were the last ones to reach the overnight stop. We received a really warm and heartfelt welcome from Geoff Edwards, John Watson and the other MGB drivers. After we had settled in our room we adjourned to the bar and initially rewarded ourselves with a pint of the local brew. We didn't know anybody but were immediately engaged in conversation with the others and we found people much more hospitable than we do in Germany. This hospitality prevailed throughout the weekend.

We had booked the evening meal in the hotel in advance, and found the quality of the food to be excellent. After the sticky toffee pudding (a must) I felt full to bursting. Following the downing of another couple of pints of the local ale we fell into a deep restorative sleep.



Next morning it was obvious I was going to take advantage of the full English Breakfast, following which we all went our separate ways to drive the 70 odd miles to our weekend base in Falmouth. We decided to take the route over Dartmoor where 19 years ago we had driven our maiden voyage in our newly restored MGB. In short, the weather was great and we were able to drive with the hood down all the way. Stopping at a small pottery with attached café, we enjoyed our first cream tea sitting outside in glorious sunshine – wonderful!!

The journey was pleasantly stress free, we reached the Falmouth Hotel in good time and on this occasion, we were not the last to arrive. Once again we were warmly received by a new set of MGB owners!

“MG – THE MARQUE of FRIENDSHIP” -the Club motto is so very true!!

The Falmouth Hotel is situated right on the sea front. Where the name “Cornish Riviera” comes from was soon very apparent – warm weather, a glorious blue sky, palm trees and a car park full of MGs!!



Before the communal dinner with the other 33 MGB crews, there was a Power Point introduction on what to expect over the next few days – really brilliant organisation by Viv and Dave Broadhurst!

In the private dining room with beautifully laid tables each for 10 people we were once again greeted by John Watson and our master of ceremonies for the next few days – Roger Boys – who, ably assisted by his wife Nicky, organised the typically English after dinner entertainment.

The meal over, there followed an archetypal English pub quiz – anyone who has spent time in UK will be familiar with these. We, as Germans, had no chance on our own as it was very specialised, but since each table worked as a team this was not a problem. We couldn't contribute much to the victory but the enjoyment was guaranteed. We finished off the evening in the hotel bar.



The following morning was a dream – classic restaurant, view of the sea and the palm trees and a wonderful breakfast. It was Roger Boys' birthday and, as someone had mentioned it the night before, it was our special pleasure to present him with the “Solingen Zoeppken” (a kitchen knife, for which Solingen is famous) from our Bergisch Land MG natter.

Ulrike was initially not amused by the route books with their Chinese hieroglyphics, as we had previously got seriously lost using these in Germany. Never again we said at the time, but English people are much more relaxed about this – there was no compulsion to follow the route hieroglyphics to the letter and there was no regulated start with cars being flagged off at one minute intervals – you just set off in your own time – there were no trophies or stuffed toys to win, just “Have a nice day and relax”, which we did.

We followed the Saturday route for part of the way as far as the Eden Project and spent the afternoon there, bumping into Flora and Rory, who were also using this opportunity to spend time browsing the Project's educational displays. The Eden Project was started in 2001 in a disused kaolin quarry near St Austell and has become a real magnet for visitors. The two “greenhouses” are enormous glass cupolas of geodetic



construction, inside which various climatic conditions have been created i.e. Rain Forest, Mediterranean etc. – fantastic and somehow or other futuristic!

Our satnav took us back to Falmouth in the late afternoon and after our evening meal we had the “feely-bag” competition. There were 40 little bags and as teams we had to feel the contents to determine what was in each bag. It really was quite difficult, as so few were MG parts. I found the following “Road Sign” quiz much easier to answer. It was a fantastic end to a lovely day!

On Sunday morning we were the first at breakfast - typically German – and decided to try to follow the Chinese hieroglyphics that day - and we succeeded!!- - but before that the building-a-sandcastle competition had to take place. Our first thought was “we are not doing THAT!!!!” but after 5 minutes on the beach we were bitten by the bug. Elderly men and women building sandcastles? Definitely NOT normal but we enjoyed ourselves greatly although we didn’t win, but, hey! it’s not the winning, it’s the taking part that counts!



The route which followed was beautiful, down narrow lanes, through picturesque villages, past St. Michael’s Mount (like the one in Normandy), stopping en-route for a cream tea and everything done

at a leisurely pace. For us this really did have a holiday atmosphere. The Lost Gardens of Heligan were on the route, but we decided to postpone our visit until our homeward journey the following day. The route back to Dover passes close by in any case.



The Sunday evening Gala Dinner took place in the hotel restaurant and after the meal, there was another quiz – this time with photos of famous personalities, at least in UK. We managed to recognise five celebrities out of the thirty of which we were the only ones on our table to recognise Brenda Blethyn, who is Vera Stanhope in the TV detective series “Vera”. For that reason our team won – or so the member sitting next to us said. At last it was our turn to cheer - HURRAY!

In the raffle for Macmillan Cancer Support we had the great good luck to win an MGB Register umbrella and so we had a nice useful souvenir in addition to the now famous MGB Register sponge.

We celebrated the end of the evening with the MGB Register song, in which each table has its own lines to sing. Based on the carol “The Twelve Days of Christmas” the songs first line is “On the first

day of Christmas my true-love sent to me – a parts list for an MG”, with corresponding handmimes to support each different line of the text. This can be seen on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkOSFVVFQVvk). The song is at the end of the video clip.

At the close we adjourned to the bar in the company of Pat and Zara Kimber and Joan and Roger Cooper to raise a glass of excellent local ale to toast the wonderful weekend.



The time to go home came all too soon. 300 miles were ahead of us, but there was enough time for a short detour to the Lost Gardens of Heligan – a place definitely to be recommended for a visit, if you happen to be in Cornwall.

The two hours we spent in the Gardens were hardly enough but sufficiently restful, before we set off for Cranbrook in Kent – our last port of call in England on this trip before setting sail for France. In Cranbrook I had booked a room in the 15th century GEORGE HOTEL with which we were familiar from previous trips. However, we hadn't reckoned on THIS room – a fantastic four poster bed with a golden ceiling in a dark red room with plenty of space all round.

According to legend Queen Elizabeth the First (not the present Queen) stopped here. History oozes from every inch of this building!

In true British fashion we finished off the day with fish and chips washed down for me with Spitfire ale from Shepherd Neame – England's oldest brewery – and with Symond's cider for Ulrike. The 25 miles to Dover the next morning via the beautiful 'A' class roads of Kent made for a very relaxing drive, which is more than can be said for the rest of the journey via Lille, Namur and Aachen. However taking Joan's tip to follow this route rather than via Brussels and Antwerp as we did on our outward journey meant that we got home in four and a half hours instead of five and a half hours.

We were able to look back on a wonderful weekend which we had enjoyed tremendously. As is typical of cats of course, both our cats - Clara and Carlotta – were initially offended, but they soon came round.



Translation from German: Joan & Roger Cooper