

# Five Cars, Four Countries, Three Rentals, Two for the Road, and One Incredible Adventure

## How to Celebrate Fifty Years of Marriage in Style

By Melon Doris

So, if you are going to celebrate your 50th year of marriage and you also own a fifty-plus year old vintage sports car, how do you celebrate that event? Well, you ship that wonderful car over to where it was born - ENGLAND and you tour for... a month! Sound good? Well, that is what I proposed to my husband, Ken. Then we did some research on shipping a car overseas, only to read about a Mercedes 300 SL Gullwing being dropped onto the deck of a container ship from 30 feet up. After they reported that they had to X-ray all the structural parts for damage, I ran screaming out of the room saying..."Nooo!"

We still planned to be like Hepburn and Finny in the '60s movie, *Two for the Road* and travel through Great Brittan while having quirky adventures. Disclaimer: they were at a rather difficult time at the ten year point in their marriage in the film, but we cruised past that point a lifetime ago!

We started to look at renting an MGA and we found the perfect 'A,' but sadly, it was not available. We still wanted to rent vintage British iron and chose a beautiful arrest-me-red Morgan Plus 4 (Car #1). Brilliant! Then an e-mail was sent to us three days prior to our departure, showing the front end crushed and apologies given for a change in plans, but the company had a gorgeous navy blue Morgan Plus 8 available for the month...lucky us. So we took that car (Car #2).

The company delivered the Morgan to us at Heathrow Airport, ran us through some tech stuff on the car, and we were off! Did I mention that it was the hottest day in Britain in a million years, reaching 101°F in London that day? We were okay though, with the hood up, shading us a bit. One wrong turn and we



were zipping along on the fastest speedway that Britain has... the horrific M1 motorway...as Ken was trying to navigate driving on the 'proper' side of the road.

We safely reached our destination, Abingdon, England. All MG owners know that is the place where the MG factory was located and where all our beautiful cars were birthed. The old factory has been converted into condos, but they left the original windows of Cecil Kimber's office untouched in the renovation. There is a brick building nearby (the Kimber House), that houses the offices and museum for the MG Car Club where the staff plans MG events throughout Scotland. It is also distinguished as being the world's largest single marque car club.

We pulled into their very small parking lot, finding the only spot near an entrance which looked onto a conference room filled with people. The staff glanced at the Morgan and might have whispered something under their breath... but we weren't sure, ha! We assured them that we were part of the family as we had our very own '62 MGA at home. A staff member gave us a quick tour of their MG memorabilia and we were off to our hotel...or so we thought.

You see, the Morgan had an 'immobilizer' device wired into the ignition to thwart thieves. It failed, preventing us from starting the car, possibly because of the extremely hot day. After two hours and many calls to the rental company, the techs back in London came up with a work-around code for the problem... and we were able to get the Morgan back on the road.

We stayed overnight in Abingdon at the Crown and Thistle hotel before driving north the next day to

Pontefract, England. The next morning, we had the pleasure of finally meeting a fellow that Ken had been corresponding with for over ten years regarding MGA repairs, Colyn Firth and his wife, Chris. Not the COLIN FIRTH of the movie, *The Kings Speech*, but our Colyn Firth, ha! He is even more famous for his fantastic *MGA!* article about their trip through Austria (Vol 43/Number 2- November/December 2017). Colyn took the lead the next morning, heading north to Dunfermline, Scotland, where we would be taking part in Scottish MGA Day the following day.

Starting out in a driving rainstorm, about 30 MGAs tackled the single-track roads for about 120 miles into the Scottish Highlands. What an experience! Some of the roads were no wider than an 'A,' amazing! We traveled up



to the Fortingall Hotel in Glen Lyon, Scotland where we lunched with our hosts.

Near the grounds of the hotel was a churchyard which housed a 5,000-year-old tree, reported to be the oldest on earth. It was in existence at the time of Pontius Pilate's birth, which some historians claim was in Scotland, and that he played under the branches of this very tree. As the



sky cleared, we had a fantastic drive back to our B&B, the Clarke Cottages. We had a grand time with the Scottish MGA club.

The next day we set off by ourselves for more adventures in Scotland, heading to the Loch District in the western part of Scotland, a beautifully pastoral area where castles dot the shores. We cruised along, hood down with Celtic music drifting from our dashboard, passing places with captivating names like Loch Awe, Loch Lomond, and Loch Fyne. At the turn of the century, this area was visited by the wealthy elite for summer holidays. The area reminded us of the Great Camps of the 'robber barons' that we travelled to in the Northeastern USA, while driving in our 'A' in the '70s.



The Lake District of England was the next area that we wanted to explore. After a morning hike to the top of the Aira Force Waterfall, outside of the town of Pooley

Bridge, something hit the deck while we were driving. It sounded just like a dropped muffler.

We eventually were able to pull the car over to a safe spot and saw that the right side of the bumper was on the ground. The bracket holding it to the frame had rusted out completely and finally gave way. Ken walked into the town and found a hardware store where he bought some plastic zip ties and wire and we lashed the bumper back to the body of the car. Where is the A-Team and their duct tape when you really need them?

The following day, on the way to the Peak District of England, we were lost in heavy stop-and-go traffic, in a large industrial town when the electric cooling fans quit -sending the water temperature up the charts. We decided it was time to let this Morgan drive off into the sunset. We were thrilled to find that a British racing green Morgan 4/4, similar to an MGA with a (See *Five Cars*, p.30)

