

(From *Five Cars*, p.15) 1.6L 4-cylinder engine, was available (Car #3). Spectacular! But then another photo arrived at our laptop inbox showing the ragtop having been slashed right near the 'Lift-a-Dots'...duh! The rental company had three additional cars to offer us as a replacement; a 2012 Lotus Elise with no luggage space; a 2019 Mustang GT, convertible - (I asked if it came with gold chains for Ken to wear...ha); and a Jaguar XKE (Car #4)

We were now in the lovely town of Castleton, back in England, in the Peak District. The Morgan/Jag exchange took place in the parking lot in front of our favorite pub in the town, The Peak Hotel. We went so many times to the Peak that I was able to tell the bartender, "I'll have my usual," with a wink. Then, one night he asked us, "Didn't you drive into town in a blue Morgan, but now you are driving a red Jag XKE?" We smiled and said, "It is a long sto-



ry!" The following day, we had a wonderful time driving all over the area, including up to Mam Tor (Mother of all Hills) in England where we hiked to the top and surveyed the town of Castleton from above.

Driving an arrest-me-red Jaguar, which looked like a tube of lipstick on wheels, was anything but discreet as it sliced through the single-track roads of Great Britain. It did have some major advantages, though. It was a Coupé with roll-up windows and enough room to pack our luggage inside. Not that I was put off by the Morgan's side curtains, after all, I drive an MGA, but leaving it to grab a pint, is so much easier with a car that has a solid top with your bags safely stowed inside. The rental company said that the odometer read only 23,000 miles, which was correct, but it needed a '1' in front of that number, as it probably was 123,000 miles.

The strong smell of petrol wasn't that bad until we had to roll up the windows during an epic rainstorm. This is England, after all! Adding to the stress of driving in the pouring rain, on the 'proper' side of the road and being slightly lost - the entire windshield wiper arm flew off and had gotten trapped between the windshield and the antenna. After it flew off the second time, we tethered it to the car with dental floss, fearing that it would fly off again and land on the road. One must be creative while traveling in a vintage British car.

Our next stop was very special. We stayed in Ruthin Castle in Ruthin, Wales. Our son and daughter gifted us with two nights in the castle for our anniversary. The castle was famous as it was the last place that Prince Charles stayed on his way to his investiture as Prince of Wales, which was held at Caernarvon Castle, about an hour away. That was June 1969, two months after our wedding! The same room that he stayed in was our suite for the next three days. We knew we were in the right hotel when a spectacular silver-gray Jaguar Sedan nuzzled up to our Jag and parked in the lot! What a sight, two of the most beautiful cars on Earth next to each other, one Coupé and one Saloon! After a



few wonderful days, we said goodbye to the Castle and we were off to the coastal village of Holyhead, Wales, where we planned to take the ferry to Dublin, Ireland.

Holyhead is a scrappy town which is anchored to the coast of the Irish Sea. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, William and Kate, called the next town over - Anglesey - their home from 2010 to 2013. Kate was a regular at the shops of Holyhead. We planned a quick and uneventful overnight, at The Monravan B&B, as we had reserved the 8 a.m. ferry to Dublin the next morning. That evening, we had a wonderful time swapping stories of all the cars that we both have had over the years with the owner. We chatted for hours!

In the middle of the night, we got a text message from the ferry company that mechanical problems had resulted in



the cancellation of the 8 a.m. ferry to Dublin. We decided to try for the next ferry, by getting there early and waiting for the next spot. Unfortunately, the Jag's battery was totally dead. Yikes! The rental company sent a repair truck to jump-start the car and because the battery looked so sketchy, they did a diagnostic test and found that it needed to be replaced. So, what are the odds that a local repair truck is going to have the correct battery on board for a 1969 Jaguar XKE? The odds were greater that Leprechauns were in the trunk! Oh, I will mention that the truck driver cursed, in his Welsh accent, that there were no tie downs on that battery either, so every bump jostled it! He did manage to start the car and we left it running as we stowed our bags inside the car.

As the tow truck driver left, we wondered if the car would be able to start again on the ferry. The final complication was that the hand brake didn't work well so if asked to park on the ferry, at any kind of an incline, we might roll back and 'kiss' the car behind us. So, we had a come to a Jesus moment and we realized that the car probably would not start again after being parked and that would be a disaster on the ferry. The car rental company was probably happy to receive the call from us saying that this just was not working out, and we would not be taking the car to Ireland - the car and key transfer was arranged. Leaving it at the ferry terminal parking lot, we turned it off and said goodbye! What a beautiful automobile she was, though!

Ken and I dashed to the ferry as quickly as we could, hoping to make the 2 p.m. crossing to Dublin as the next one would get us there past midnight. Our premium lounge spot was gone with our original reservations, so we were traveling in 'steerage', ha ... no early boarding or VIP lounge... sniff, sniff! In Dublin we rented our last car, an Audi A4 - 6-speed (Car #5)! It was fine, reliable and dry, but not the sportscar that we wanted to be driving in Ireland.



That Audi took us blissfully through Ireland; the Cliffs of Mohr, Killarney, the Dingle Peninsula, the Ring of Kerry, then south to visit friends in County Cork, and finally to Kinsale before returning to Dublin. Unfortunately, we had to modify our travel plans for the remainder of the trip, unable to get back to England to see some wonderful sites there, but we know that we will return to this part of the world to see what we missed. Although there were many times when we would rather have been touring the local roads, instead we were in our hotel room, sorting out our car situation.

We did manage to see some wonderful sights, including going to Doune Castle where many of the scenes from Game of Thrones were filmed. Also, we visited Inveraray Castle, site of the wonderful Downton Abby 2012 Christmas Special. Liverpool and the Cavern Club were over the top for me as a true Beatles fan (I actually attended their Shea Stadium concert in New York in August 1963).

Seeing Ireland's greatest masterpiece, the Book of Kells was inspiring. During our month on the road, we hiked mountains, saw waterfalls, visited castles, walked around ancient settlements, and enjoyed so many pubs. A fellow on the Morgan Forum commented on our trip and wrote ... "Look, if you had said... 'picked up a Morgan in London, drove it for a month, all was great, delivered it back to London'... where's the story?" •



Well, we really had a wonderful trip, and 50 years of marriage is also an adventure, for sure. As Henry Mancini wrote in the theme song for the movie, "As long as love still wears a smile, I know that we will be two for the road, and that's a long while." •