

SHARING THE DORIS`S DREAM

It was back in 2009 that I first spoke to Ken Doris on the MG Enthusiasts MGA Forum, he had posted some great pictures, taken around 1968, of his wife Melons MGA in a thread that was called "Old Memories". <https://mg-cars.org.uk/cgi-bin/or17?runprog=mgbbs&access=61528672800012&mode=archiveth&subject=6&subjectar=6&thread=2009082218214226047>

One picture had a caption which made me chuckle, it was a pic of Ken standing next to his car which had a full-sized Christmas tree stuffed into the trunk (boot) and the words said, "Feeding the A some pine!"



He also posted a picture of his wife Melon leaning on her MGA which was parked next to Kens own Corvette Stingray.

Melon was (and still is) a very attractive lady and at the time, I was sort of compelled to post a comment that went something like, "Great curves on all three Models"!



I know, maybe a little “politically incorrect” compared to what I would dare to say today, but in my defense, back then I may have had a tiny trace of testosterone still remaining in my system as compared to now :^)

Ken was very good about it and took it as a compliment but I was kind of relieved to have a 3500 mile buffer-zone of Atlantic Ocean between Melon and me in the event that she happened to read it.

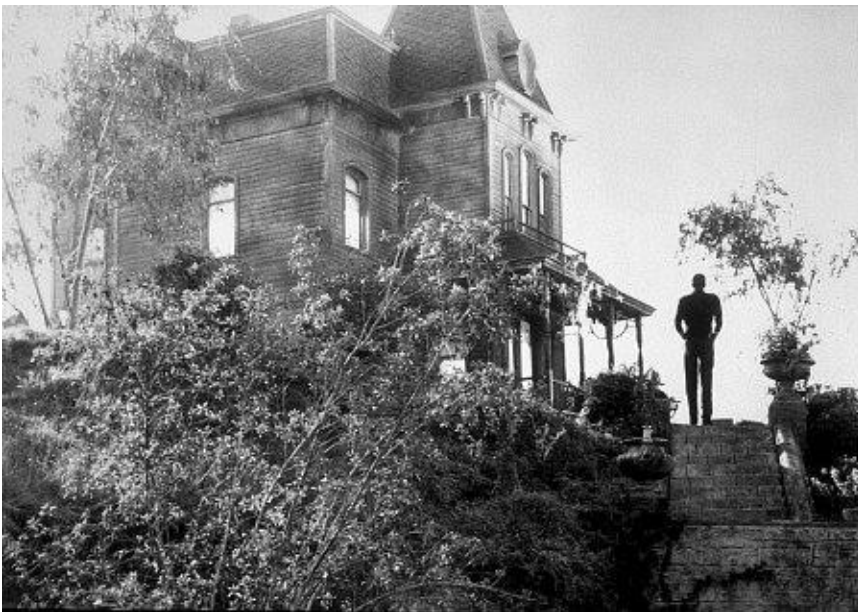
Well, earlier this year I noticed Kens forum post asking for advice on shipping their MGA over to the UK for a tour of the UK and Ireland and asking if there were any MGA events happening whilst they were over.

I mentioned that we were planning to drive up to the MG Car Clubs/MGA Register Scottish MGA Day in Dunfermline in August, and maybe they could consider meeting up with us near our home in South Yorkshire and driving up with us to Scotland with our MGA.

Ken was really keen on the idea and, even though by this time, he had decided to hire a classic car in the UK rather than risk their MGA in a shipping container, we thought it would still be a fun experience even travelling in company with a Morgan. Also, Paul Dean who was running the Scottish MGA Register said that he was very happy to rename their substitute car as an honorary MGA for the duration of their trip. I said that MGA was already included within the name of the car and so by changing a couple of letters into capitals, the job was done, ie- “MorGAn”.

Ken asked me if I could recommend a hotel near to me in Yorkshire where we could meet up and travel up to Scotland from. I gave him a couple of options and he chose one about 5 miles away from where I live but I also told him that they were very welcome to stay with us for the night if they wished. Ken said that whilst he appreciated the offer, they decided to go for the hotel in this instance.

I had to smile when he said that and I did completely understand, because although we had chatted about MGAs on-line for over 10 years, they didn't really know us at all. This appealed to my warped sense of humor and so I sent him an email which said something like, "I have attached a picture of our home below with me standing outside". "For some reason we don't have many guests even though we replace the shower curtains on a regular basis!"



My mailbox went quiet for a couple of days and I began to wonder if I had put my foot in it again! Maybe Ken and Melon hadn't really got my joke, suggesting that my house was similar to the Bates Motel in Alfred Hitchcock's film, Psycho.

But a day or two later, Ken emailed me saying that they hadn't recognized the picture at first but the mention of the shower curtains was what gave them the clue.

Ken also let me know that they had booked into one of the hotels near to us in Yorkshire and that they would take us up on our offer to drive up to Scotland together on the.

We had planned to meet with them for a drink at their hotel on the Thursday evening but we decided instead to call for them after breakfast to begin our journey.

When we brought our MGA out of the garage that morning it instantly began to rain and after about half a mile, we had to stop to put the soft-top up, which was a shame because, until then, we had been having the hottest ever spell of weather here in the UK.

When we arrived at the hotel to meet Ken and Melon for the first time, they were just fighting to erect the MorGAns soft-top and side screens. Ken explained that apparently it takes even longer to erect than the MGAs top, he also said that MorGAN guarantee that their weather equipment is totally waterproof, so long as the car isn't moving!

The first thing that happened was that Melon gave me her mandatory "South Carolina Hug", which was a very nice experience. :^)

I then handed Melon a gift carrier bag with a couple of essential travel items inside. I explained that the gift was a kind of a "Welcome to Yorkshire" combined with an apology for my personal comments 10 years earlier about her photograph. I had enclosed a bottle of Tamaguvlin malt whisky for Ken and a bottle of Chardonnay for Doris in the hope that all would be forgiven.

I think forgiveness was granted, because, as well as the "S/C Hug" I got a very big smile from Ken and Melon, they had also brought a present for us which was a jar of their locally collected South Carolina honey, which has turned out to be absolutely delicious.

So, we began our 260 mile journey North, my route was designed to avoid Motorways (Freeways) as much as possible and travel up through lovely countryside of the North of England and Southern Scotland.

At about 1/3rd of the way North we had arranged to call in at the Scotch Corner services on a stretch of the A1 to refuel both cars and occupants, it was the beginning of the school holidays and was chaotically busy, so we decided on a quick turnaround.

We persuaded Melon and Ken to try out some old-English "fast food" from a food stall outside the services entrance rather than queue with everyone else in the country for an hour and wait for a burger or Fried Chicken, this was a Cornish Pasty and the plan was to eat it in the car to save time.

A Cornish Pasty is a handful of chunks of beef, potato and veg seasoned with salt and pepper, wrapped and baked in a short-crust pastry shell which is pinched along its full length to seal it.

Melon was a little doubtful about the pasty but was persuaded by Ken to risk sharing one. Maybe it was my telling them about the history of the Cornish Pasty, invented over 250 years earlier by the wives of the Cornish Tin miners. They originally would have had a mutton instead of a beef filling and they were sometimes made bigger and with two separate sections, the 1st section filled with meat and veg, the 2nd section would have a sweet fruit filling. The idea being that you ate the savoury section first followed by the sweet section as a desert.

A good Cornish pasty with a thick pastry crust could be strong enough to survive being dropped down a mineshaft and could also keep the contents warm for hours. However, there was an even more important reason for the Cornish Pasty, tin mines were often contaminated with arsenic and so avoid being poisoned, the miners would hold the pasty at one end and eat it down until they reached their dirty fingers, they would then simply throw the dirty end away. Clever, and also perfect for us oily-handed MGA mechanics

Melon and Ken said that they enjoyed eating the pasty, but I will never ever know if, in actual fact, they threw it out of the car window into the hedgerow, rather than risk arsenic poisoning :^)

It was so busy at the service station that Ken said we should drive off steadily in our MGA and they would catch us up on the road after they had finished re-fuelling. So, we set off at a steady 50 mph but even after 10 miles, there was no sign of their MorGAN in our rear-view mirror, so then we turned off the A1 onto the A68 and decided to pull in to wait for them for a few minutes.

About 40 minutes later, we were wondering if we should turn back to see if we could find out what had happened to them, I decided to wait for 5 more minutes and they re-appeared.

Ken was a little flustered and a lot relieved that we had waited for them, apparently, they had seen the sign for the A1 and turned on to it, only to find that they had hit the Southbound instead of the Northbound exit. Typically, they were then unable to turn around for 10 miles and so they had added an extra 20 miles to this 10 mile leg. To be honest, I thought they had done really well to be able to cover the 30 mile run in just over 30 minutes, but that MorGAN Plus-8 does pack a lot of horsepower for its size.

The A68 is a fantastic road for an MGA, it runs for over 100 miles, straight up to Edinburgh through some really wild country and has some really exciting sections with sudden brows which can leave you VERY air-borne if you hit them too fast. (I found this out the year before when I first drove this road and discovered that my MGA has surprisingly sophisticated take-off and landing characteristics for a 60 year old design! :^)

We managed to keep most of the tyres on the road this time, but this lovely old Roman Road did allow both the MorGAN and the MGA to get up to some very high speeds on occasion and was great fun to drive.

As we got nearer to the Scottish border we stopped for a few minutes in Jedburgh, a beautiful old Border town with lots of history. In the car park we met up with Ian Wilson, the secretary of the MGCCs MGA Register who was also making his way up into Scotland and to Dunfermline and we continued on together.

It took couple of hours to reach Dunfermline but apart from the odd wrong turn by both drivers and some heavy traffic in Edinburgh, it had been a great classic car drive and we arrived in the late afternoon at the Clarke Cottages Guest House where pretty much all of the English contingent were staying.

The Scottish MGA Day is a one-day event and rather than just have an MGA gathering they instead, prefer to have a tour and it was superbly organized by Paul Dean, a fellow Yorkshireman, who now lives in Scotland.

It is a lovely part of Scotland with some amazing scenery and perfect roads for MGAs and this makes it a really attractive event for quite a few of us Sassenach MGA owners. (The Scots tell us that the word Sassenach comes from the old Gaelic word for Saxon, although part of me suspects that it may have a less flattering meaning :^)

I believe there were 5 MGAs visiting from England this year including the amazing Jeff and Pat Jebb who drove up all the way from Plymouth in their beautiful OEW TwinCam roadster, a journey of

around 520 miles. The Jebbs are a lovely couple who have for many years been totally committed to the MGA Register, they participate in virtually all of the MGA gatherings and I kind think of them as our MGA equivalent of Royal Family.

In fact, we had pretty much the entire MGA Register team with us up from England including, Stuart and Irene Mumby, George and Stella Dutton and Jonny and Marie Pollard.

Paul Dean had arranged for all of the English and South Carolina visitors to meet with many of the local MGA owners at a local restaurant later that evening which was excellent and really made a superb end to a great days travel. Doris and Ken were whisked away to the other end of the table and I couldn't help but feel sorry for them as I am not certain that they could understand so much of the local Scottish dialect.

Mind you, it does work both ways because I could imagine that it must have been a little puzzling for a Scotsman to be asked "How are "y-all", when in English (and Scottish), a Yawl is a type of sailing boat! :^)

The next morning was very wet and dismal and after a superb Scottish breakfast at the Clarke Cottages we splashed off to meet the rest of the MGAs at the Powmills Milk Bar (Tea-Room) for the start of the days run.

In spite of the torrential rain, there was a surprisingly large turn-out of MGAs in the car park, ready for the start.

The tour was through some beautiful countryside but was also a real challenge, lots of steep hills, hairpin bends, flooded roads, misted up windscreens, sodden route-maps, in-effective wiper blades, water dripping onto knees, and missed turns. This was made all the more worthwhile by our destination which was the lovely Fortingall Hotel in Glen Lyon, this was in a beautiful spot and it gave us all a chance to get drier on the outside, wetter on the inside and spend a leisurely couple of hours over a two course lunch, a really civilized afternoon.

Later that evening after the tour we spent a couple of hours back in the Guest House, helping Ken and Melon with a final important task. Because of luggage space and weight restrictions in their MorGAn, they asked us if we could help them to reduce the fluid levels of the whisky and wine bottles in their "gift pack". Naturally we were delighted to help them do this and we had a delightful evening with them which became even more mellow as the fluid levels fell.

This was only the second day that we had ever spent with Ken and Melon but they already felt like lifelong friends. They were scheduled to continue their journey in the morning and after breakfast with them, we waved them off into the drizzle after thanking them for allowing us to join in a small part of their Two for the Road Tour.

It was a fantastic weekend