

MGS IN THE DOLOMITES IN JUNE 2015

Gary McCarroll

The third MG Dolomite trip, held in June 2015, proved to be more challenging than previous years. Still based in the village of Appiano/Eppan near Bolzano - the ten UK based MGs - from Scotland to Surrey area, joined in with the eight MGs from Germany and Switzerland. The MGs faced many challenges on the long day drives from the extreme heat, at 28 degrees centigrade up in the mountains, then at first the Italian motorbikers and later in the week the German and Austrian motorbikers, as the trip coincides with local holidays. Motorbikes were buzzing all around and nearly over us, overtaking one or two MGs at times, as the roads narrowed with sheer drops, driver's side tight bends and the unlit tunnels made the journey "close up and friendly" for everyone. Those noisy bikers also competed with the other road users, the cyclists, and you had to admire their efforts, pedalling up the hills and then speeding down but they seem to survive. Meantime we were enjoying some spectacular drives and views. As ever Christian Bianco, our MG ZR driving organiser who lives locally, had planned out interesting routes and with the route books in English, so we had a fair chance of reaching each day's break stop, lunch and dinner stops - at which no one went hungry, maybe overweight after the trip, but not hungry.

This trip had been mentioned in the *Enjoying MG* in 2014 and over the winter various enquires about the event and mileage involved was made, email made it easier to provide details for those interested. Some entrants preferred to make their own arrangements for outward bound or return legs, to visit family/friends or just seeing places, while others had to return for the work/commitments, so MGers were looking for different things around the time in the Dolomites. Six of the car owners met up for a lunch to discuss things over and more or less agreed to meet up on the route out, staying in some hotels together. Others met at the NEC for a brief hello and see you in Italy, so it was very informal, no great convoys or speed or limitations on any entrant.

Six MGs had planned to possibly meet up at Waterloo, scene of the famous battle and the 200th anniversary very near on Friday the 29th, three MGs were leaving Thursday and overnighting in Lille, two others stopped off at Swavesey for a photo call enroute to Dover for their overnight and meeting up in the Docks with a third MG from the St Albans area. All went as planned, though the Customs checked us out, before the smooth sailing to Calais and onward to Waterloo to catch up with the first three MGs. Slightly overcast, the view of

the Lion Mound at Waterloo was good. Those who enjoyed the climb up and returned down discovered some leg muscles they hadn't known before. A new below ground visitor centre has been built and nicely done - UK cash involved we believe - worth a visit if you're in the area, but not the easiest place to find, despite the 200th anniversary arrangements being put in place.

So six MGs set off on the first leg to the Dolomites staying in a nice hotel overlooking a lake, well planned by one member. Our next leg involved us staying in Germany in Freiburg and the hotel in the centre, with the historic old town nearby, but some visited the historic town of Colmar in France, en route, and with the weather now hot and sunny a fine drive was enjoyed.

Sunday presented us with more miles to cover and a splitting up again, with different hotels in different places booked, before the final run into the Dolomites scheduled for lunch time Monday at the Post Hotel on the SS38, for those who know, that is at the bottom of the road up to the Stelvio Mountain. Gradually we arrived and the UK MGs were joined by some from Switzerland and Germany. After lunch we then made our way to Bolzano area and our hotels in the Village Appiano/Eppan, to book in and later to meet up again for the "official" reception and cocktails in the Castle Hotel, with introductions and general guidelines for the rest of the afternoon and dinner arrangements. This was the beginning of a tight timetable of events for the week. So on



Some of the MGs took the opportunity to visit Lion Mound at Waterloo



British MGs in the mountains



The Post Hotel Dolomites



A couple of German MGs



Motorbikes were everywhere

Monday evening we drove off for a visit to a winery and later for a dinner in this spectacular positioned restaurant overlooking the Bolzano valley. The food was excellent, as were the views and the setting stunning. Now all we had to do was to find our way back to our hotels, via the twisty narrow hillside roads - follow the leader/Sat Nav was the essential, somehow we all made it back, more by luck, we think.

Our first full day was Tuesday and heading down to Lake Garda and up in the mountain area overlooking the Lake, here again we encountered the joy of the bikers, and negotiating the narrow roads, but with great views and scenery. Lunch on the shores of the Lake was excellent and the tour of an original olive oil museum turned out to be more interesting/informative than we first thought. Dinner en route back to the hotel was good and then we made the return leg back to the hotels some miles away. On the Wednesday we returned to Lake Garda, but on the opposite side, so a different run out, again with stunning views and drops, looking down on roads that were like windy ribbons on the lakeside. Lunch again was generous and later dinner a more manageable size, which with the heat was welcome, then that drive back to the hotels afterwards.

Any plans for our rest day off were put on hold as the beautiful weather encouraged us to relax and chill out and other MGs joined us, two Harper Roscoes (MG TF recreations) from the UK,



Roads that were like windy ribbons on the lakeside



Lakeside with Harper-Roscoes and MGB

who had travelled from Nice (using the car train down from Paris to Nice, reducing wear and tear on the cars and occupants - sounded a good scheme) amongst others from Germany, Switzerland and Paul from the USA, (he with his wife touring Europe - he is from the Nashville area and has a 1973 MGB) whilst the newcomers, had their welcome cocktail and wine tasting to enjoy.

Friday, another hot and sunny day and we were off towards the Cortina area - more fantastic mountain roads, passes - yes more bikers and cyclists and even cleaner air perhaps, a skiing area, and maybe even more Alps to enjoy if you are a skier. There is a great little A5 booklet in English called The Dolomites the Great Passes available and if you are going to the area, worth a look. The Passes are famous to locals and skiers but in the spring conditions in a heatwave were most attractive, being very green with the flowers out. We enjoyed more great lunches and dinners before returning to our hotels late in the evening.

Saturday, and the beginning of the weekend, saw more bikers and us heading east of Bolzano and again over high passes and in



Harper-Roscoe on the mountain road



Christian presents the awards



Dramatic scenery and more bikers

glorious weather, more great drives and views - perhaps we were becoming too accustomed to the surrounding beauty? Maybe, but the lunch stop in the hills was as good as ever, however this was a shorter day as the Gala Dinner awaited us back at our hotel.

Each year a Gala Night dinner takes place, this year with the weather so fine, the hotel laid on the dinner in the gardens. Presentation of awards were made by Christian to various MG'ers. One award was to the car furthest travelled which was won by Albert and Lorraine from Scotland, Barry from the High Wycombe area received the oldest car award for his MGA Twin Cam, the oldest driver (some were worried on this one, as we all seemed to be getting older, on these trips) but Wilf from Germany received this award, aged 73. These were amongst the many awards made. The evening was a relaxed affair after the hectic few days in the Dolomites and a chance to wind down, before leaving to our various destinations on the Sunday. Some headed straight home, while others continuing their individual tours, via Pisa, Germany or France. All arrived back in the UK safely and in one piece, but some later than others.

Thanks go to Christian Bianco, Rosalind and Walter (TR Owner - who helped out on routes etc) based near Bolzano for their efforts in putting together the whole event - yes, quite challenging at times, but this is The Dolomites.

In 2016 the Spring Time MG Meeting will be held from May 19th to May 22nd and based near Merano. For more details contact Christian the event organiser - email him direct on Christian@discohustle.info in Italy or Gary McCarroll Christian's UK contact on g.mccarroll@btinternet.com

Look out in *Enjoying MG* for further details of next year's 2016 Dolomites weekend.