

Pam and I have enjoyed the Autumn Gold Run from the MGOC at Swavesey for many years, as we did in 2013, though a bit wet, this year. And this event was generally the finale for our MGF for the season. However this year, we still had another great event coming, as in April we had seen a flyer sent to us by a Northants member (thank you Barbara T) about the 1st MG Meeting in the Dolomites being arranged for late October; our first impressions were, this sounds really good. Now, we thought we the Dolomites were in Northern Italy. Yes. But the Tyrols are Austrian aren't they? Yes/no... North Tyrol is Austrian and German speaking, but South Tyrol is where the event is held but also has 75% of the local people speaking German, but it is in Italy. Having cleared that up, as essential to know, because road signs and names of places on maps are in both languages, as you try to find exactly where we are booking. It was also confusing as you try to send your money for the event to an Italian bank which acknowledges receipt in German.

Putting that all aside, firstly we needed to plan backwards in order to arrive on time for the event's getting together meeting at 2pm. So, it was St Moritz for the local stopover, Troyes before as a nice historic centre and Calais as easiest crossing, or so we thought. We set off on Tuesday 22nd October, a fine day and crossing okay, but booking a hotel in Troyes was a nightmare, fully booked, and half term something was on, but we managed to find a room on the outskirts ready for a quickish departure. However, arriving at Troyes, we encountered the worst 'Donner and Blitzen' for years and this followed on the following day as we drove on wards to St Moritz Bad, the lower half and cheaper end of the fine town.

With the poor weather and the one hour time difference we were glad we had the MGF and the zigzag headlight deflectors throwing good light on the snow covered roadside edges as we climbed over the St Julian Pass (2284m) into the town (1822m) for the night at the smart 'The Piz' Italian Hotel it was reasonably priced with excellent bedrooms and food, only downside is the parking across the road in the public car park, but this is St Mortiz so no problems there. They told us of the sudden 500mm snow fall in September which caught out the summer tourists and the local as it was so early, but they said we would be okay as it was just in small pockets on roadside for now.

On Thursday morning we set off early so we were on time for the meeting. It was a glorious sunny day, though cool due to height and then another pass to cross Fuorn (2149) before dropping down into the fertile valleys surrounding the base of the Mountain Stelvio (10,000ft) towards Merano and Bolzano, the roads were getting busy now, and the countryside was full of vineyards and apple orchards, their leaves all turning varying shades of green/yellow and gold, just stunning, worth the drive in itself.

Arriving at the village of St Michael Eppan, as we parked a car just as a trailer arrived to unload a 1954 MG TF; they were from

near Genoa and we joined up with them and another couple in their MGB GT V8 from Germany and strolled to the café for our meeting. The entire group consisted of us and two other MGAs and a Midget from Germany along with two MG ZRs, so after introductions, a bag of goodies per person was handed out with local products, very nice, followed by drinks and cakes and with the programme being passed around and discussed.

Then we were led to our respective hotels in the village, ours happened to be on the outskirts in the middle of an orchard, formerly a small castle/manor house, all very historic and modern Italian, we were made very welcome. We were collected in our cars for a short drive to a winery for a tour and some very nice wines to taste with nibbles, we made some purchases as the wine was excellent. Then off to dinner at a local pizza house, were we all seemed to relax and mould into one group, despite the language differences. Maybe the MG language was good enough? It seemed to work for the whole event. Christian, the organiser was very fluent in the three languages which was very useful as was Rosalind his girlfriend, so we always felt involved.

On Friday we had been told to meet at the central car park and fill up with petrol for the day, before we leave for a day's outing, firstly to a castle, famous for its mountaineering connections and then onto an early three course lunch, so much for having had that excellent breakfast at the hotel. After the enjoyable lunch, the Big Dolomites Round Trip was the afternoon agenda with timing back for dinner at 7.30pm. So it was off up the hairpins and over minor passes, but all scenic and enjoyable, the Midget and the MG TF particularly were in their element and went very well on the tight hairpins. Dusk now and very useful following in convoy as Christian leads us to a mountainside restaurant for dinner, a traditional menu, with choice of starters and a main course of four types of pork on sauerkraut and vegetable, very filling and tasty. Followed by desert, platters of fruit and a surprise roasted chestnuts, a local speciality and something nice for us English. Driving back in the night, local knowledge of roads and villages was useful with Christian leading us, before we returned to our hotels for the night, we had a briefing of the 8.45am start for Saturday and petrol fill up, as it would be a long day. Back in the hotel, the

honesty bar was welcomed, for a beer to relax with before bed at midnight. It had been full day but very enjoyable.

Saturday's alarm seemed to sound very early, but 7am and breakfast called and checking the cars before we headed off for the group meet up; one car was having slight misfire, so off to the local garage for a check over. We set off for the The Four Passes Run with a lunch mid way, yes the usual three courses, very good as well, and included in the fee. With the passes getting higher

AUTUMN GOLD IN THE DOLOMITES

October 2013

Gary and Pam McCarroll



The McCarroll's MGF



The MGs gather



Interesting mountain road

Midget, MGF, MGA and two ZRs

Penserjoch passo

ZR driver sports the union flag

Snow in places

Italian based MG TF

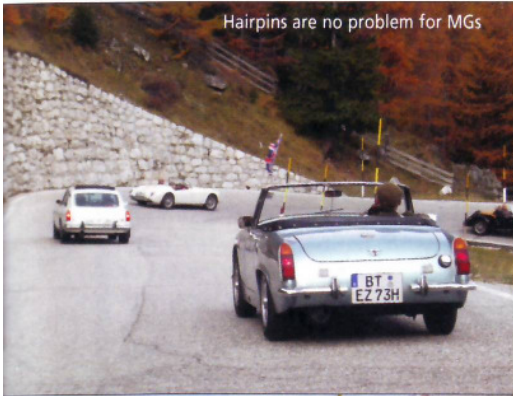
the views sometimes seemed to be restricted by the low mist, however stunning views and hairpins seemingly never ending. The height of the passes ranged from 1363m to the top one of 2215m, with valley views which were just great, we stopped for coffee wherever we could, there was snow in places but just great views everywhere. We thought of the miles that we had taken to get there were well worth the effort. Returning in the large town of Bozen/Bolzano where the Iceman Museum is, but no time to visit, a large town so with dust falling, keeping a close eye on the car in front in the convoy, we made it through for the return to our hotels for freshening up for the Gala Night at our village.

So smart casual, was the order of the evening, tops still down for those cars that could be drove off into the night, with Christian leading and Peter in the other MG ZR taking the tail

end, as he had done throughout, ensuring we didn't get lost. The dinner evening was in a hillside Dance/Night club in Italy, you will have guessed that without switching on our sat navs we didn't really know where we were half of the time and without Christian and Peter shepherding us, we would have been totally lost. The Gala Night was fine, we had dinner and dancing for some time and then the locals joined the club later. But that gave time for Trophy presentations to the various winners and a relaxing evening. It was our last night together, we had really bonded as a group and had enjoyed such a wonderful time and experiences and a few words of thanks were made to Christian and Rosalind for making us welcome and the event so successful. A small memento sent by the MGOC was handed over to Christian as a thank you.

On Sunday, we waved goodbye from our hotels and we all set

Hairpins are no problem for MGs



German based BGT V8



British car fan base

Classic lines of the TF in the mountains



Brace of ZRs



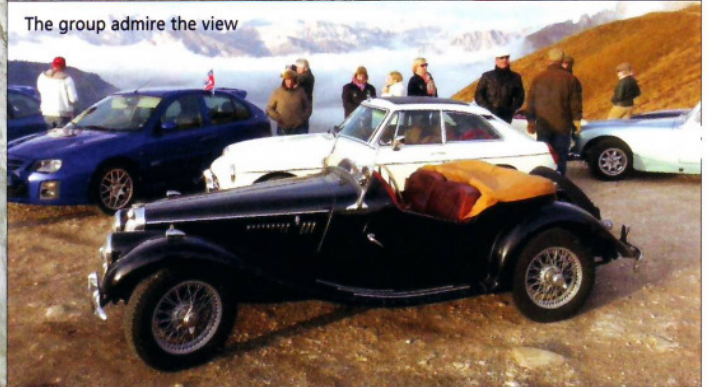
South Tirol



German Midget



The group admire the view



off home, we went via the village of Weggis set on the Lakeside of Luzern before drifting up through the Black Forest to Reims for our last night of the trip. In Reims we notice a news stand, with headlines severe weather in UK, what bad weather? We thought, yes, windy in Germany but what bad weather we ask, so we buy the paper and realise we have missed the big storm and the ferries not crossing the channel. We were hoping conditions would be okay for our crossing, it was hard to believe but only 24 hours after the storm the channel was like a millpond, lucky us.

What to do next, well Christiana and Rosalind are organising a Spring Run through the Dolomites in May 15th - 18th bookings by 4th March and then the 2nd Dolomites MG Meeting in June 26 - 29th bookings by 2nd April. See Newsbeat. For the May event for those from the UK, perhaps this event could be combined with say the

Historic Monaco weekend, and/or a run down to Lake Garda or something similar, whilst the June event could be combined with the Romantic Roads of Germany or again Lake Garda, with a scenic run up Stelvio Mountain.

We are booked in already for next year, so we can recommend these events to you, based on our experience. However you do need a well prepared and reliable car, common sense, but we can forget that high mileage can take its toll... Did we mention Autumn Gold at the beginning; well, we had really stunning autumn gold colours on most hillsides, it was truly wonderful.

South Tyrolean Spring Event 15-18th May 2014. More details from Christian Bianco christian@discohustle.info mobile +39 338 314 67 79 address Christian Bianco, Postfach 02, I-39018 Terlan Súdtirol, Italy.