



Edinburgh, Lothians and Borders MG CLUB

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Virtual Last Run of the Season

November 2020



Credits: Helen, Martin Finch, Andrew, Steve, Joan, Jim T

MEMBERS' CARS

Martin Finch's MGB GT V8



INTERESTING CAR

An unusual one, spotted in Portugal by Andrew McGill.



MRS GRUMPY'S GRUMBLE



Many thanks to Steve Hastwell for some MG copy and if the rest of this month's mag seems like a travelogue, then there's a reason for that - let's be having some articles!!! Thanks go to Jim Tierney and Joan Sumner for their travel contributions.

Now speaking to companies on the phone is always fraught with difficulty - lots of computerised questions (none of which fit your problem) followed by endless 'holds' and being told 'your call is important to us'.

I'd just re-insured the Min with Lancaster but wanted to amend their statement and to remind them that when I agreed to get their forms by email, I didn't expect to still get them by post - especially as the reminder came by snail mail after I had already paid the premium!

On hold for ages, then get a real person who says he'll put me through to customer services (why for changing insurance details?) and yet another endless hold, so I hung up and decided to do it the old way and write.

The statement for the Min insurance had a few minor inaccuracies (like the Min is a 5 seater!) and had a blank for car club. I listed the changes and inserted Mini Clan for the car club. Nice letter in return, amending everything but saying they had me down as a member of the MGOC. This is true, but I naively assumed they'd want a Mini club membership for the Min insurance - but apparently not!!

Anoraks with the facility to undo the zip from the bottom, which is most of them these days. Now I've been on this planet for 68 years and NEVER felt the need to undo my jacket from the bottom - but then I'm female! It is always a faff to get the double zip bit together and do up - so why don't manufacturers produce both? Then if you want to undo your coat from the bottom you can - and grumpy old bats like me can have the simple single zip connector.

All designed by men that's why. I bought two replacements for the style of bra that I like in M&S recently. When I got home I noticed they were slightly different in that the strap adjusting bits were at the back instead of, as is usual, at the front for ease of adjustment. Now I have to say to have the adjusters at the back is about as useful as a bloke's underwear having the opening at the back!!!

INTERESTING CAR MMM 4x4 built in Lisbon

FOR SALE FOR SALE FOR SALE

Pedal Lock from Amazon - two bought by mistake and one can't be returned. Retail £20 - yours for a tenner. Contact Richard Spencer - richard@midkinleith.net



1968 MGB ROADSTER NRU 953G WINDSCREEN WASHER PUMP UPGRADE WITH A DIFFERENCE

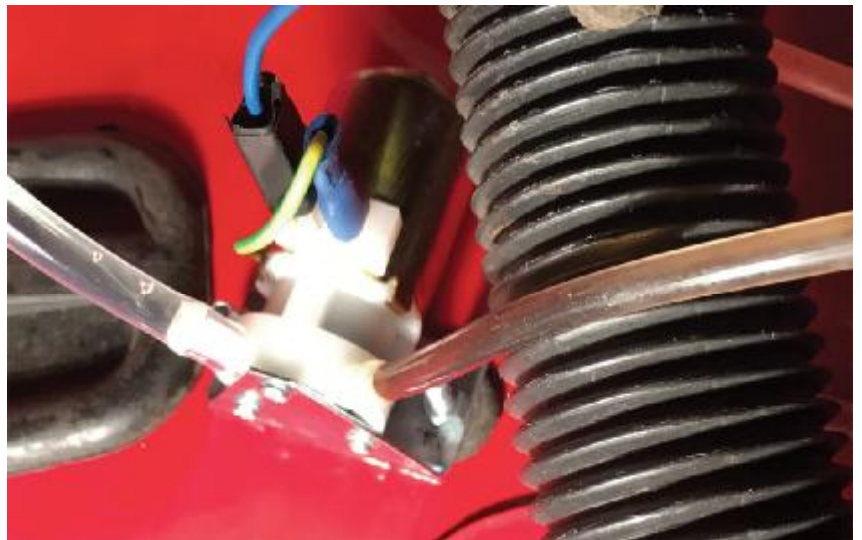
I guess those of you with early MGBs may have done this already, but I was keen to improve the windscreen washer performance of the manual pump, but wanted to keep the look of the original pump button on the dashboard.

As I had time on my hands I decided to remove the manual pump and carefully peel back the aluminium fold over the plastic end plate to expose the internals. As the old push button is hollow I could insert a round headed bolt with the head extending into the diaphragm and pushing against the end of the tube. I then cut off the fluid inlet and outlet ports and drilled a centre hole in the plastic end plate and fixed a push button 12V electrical switch from a motorcycle system. The end plate could be replaced and the aluminium edges hammered back into place.

Now I have a push button switch that looks like a manual pump.



Next thing was to mount a standard electric washer pump under the dashboard and connect up the piping from the original manual pump. Electrical feed was taken off the switched wire from the blower switch and second wire has direct connection to the positive terminal of the pump with pump negative terminal connected to earth via chassis mounting bolt for the pump.



All worked OK apart from spraying washer fluid over the top of the windscreen, but jets adjusted now. Now have an electric washer with the look of the original manual pump.

Steve Hastwell



VIRTUAL OCTOBER RUN

Jim T produced the route book and it had to be a virtual last run of the season, the same as the picnic run. Tony W and myself took a last minute decision to do it on a Saturday - in hindsight, it wasn't a smart move! The weather wasn't too bad and we managed to dodge most of the Ninja showers, but the weekend traffic was fairly heavy.

It was a pretty run, with some beautiful autumn colours and lovely views - including a very short but very intense rainbow. We were taken over the moor to Innerleithen and I think the entire population of that town was leaving it via the moor road!! We also saw the best and worst extremes of cycling behaviour - the best being a couple who moved into single file and waved us through when they could see the road was clear and we couldn't. Sadly, the worst was more common, where the cyclists stayed two abreast and you had to squeeze past on a narrow road - and be perilously close to not giving them the required distance. Also the couple who came round a blind corner two abreast, taking up the entire road and then gave me a dirty look when I had to stand the V8 on her nose - I was only doing 30 mph at the time and just as well.

We had a coffee and scone at the Gordon Arms where the owner noticed I'd last taxed the V8 in 1986 - so I explained that was the first tax disc I bought for her. Next was the Grey Mare's Tail - parking was difficult and we didn't linger there or in Moffat, as it was threatening rain. A thrash along the A701, a scenic run past Dawick & Stobo, before heading over the moor to Eddleston - which is now 20 mph, so you've been warned. We finished with a nice late lunch at the Barony Castle, before heading for home.

A lovely day out and many thanks to Jim & Marjorie for organising it. [Mrs Grumpy](#)



Aberlour Cottage, Bluefolds Highland Cottages, Glen Rinnes, Banff

My three days away last week (end of September) was the brilliant idea of my son who realised I was severely stir crazy. Doug had planned to cycle from Edinburgh to friends in Bettyhill, on north shelf of Sutherland, and suggested I meet him for a few days northeast of the Cairngorms on his ride home. He and I are in a 'bubble' and he found this lovely, beautifully appointed self-catering cottage in the middle of nowhere - well, actually, of course I exaggerate for dramatic emphasis. It's up off a B road on the lower slopes of Ben Rinnes between Tomintoul and Dufftown and worth a visit.

This was the longest drive I'd done since my abortive Snow Train holiday in Canada and, frankly, after shielding since my return in February I was in a mixture of excitement and wariness at being out and about at last. I took the A90 to Edzell and Fettercairn to reach the Cairn o'Mount pass, a curvy climb through the mountains. There was warm sunshine, beautiful scenery, courteous drivers on the single track stages and it would have made a lovely MG run but caution won out and this was the Corsa's show.

There are three conjoined cottages and we had the middle 2 bedroom one; the others are larger. Upstairs bedroom had double and single bed and panoramic view over the fields. Downstairs has twin-bedded room, bathroom with shower, and living room with kitchen/diner and the most effective of coal burning stoves. Everything was spotless and well equipped for cooking and eating - ideal for cars with small or no boots! There is TV and wi-fi. The site opens straight out onto the hill and well-behaved dogs are welcome - but remember the sheep.

The cottages are approached uphill through a farmyard and then onto a roughish track. Doug and I argued about accessibility for 'Bs, 'Cs and Midgets but I reckoned that the front valence on the VXR is as low as my 'B and the twin exhausts meant that I couldn't easily do the usual MG trick of keeping the nearside wheels on the middle hump to protect the underside. We sailed up and down carefully while entertaining the sheep and all was well.

Doug gave his bike a rest and I had two days when he drove and I map-read. A few club members (Neil?) should appreciate that, when not tailing them, this is a skill that I do have!



We were lucky with the weather and went for a wander through the mountains of southern Sutherland. We did a long loop from Bonar Bridge along Loch Shin and stopped for lunch at the Pier and Pebble Cafe in Lairg on the side of the loch. There was duck on the menu but, as we were outside in the sunshine with several snoozing ducks beside us on the little jetty, it seemed more sensitive to have fish 'n chips!

Our southerly circuit took us round from Laxford Bridge, Scourie, Ledmore, with coffee and cake at a very quiet, nice roadside cafe in Invercassley. Then it was Inverness to top up the tank and back for a quiet meal and the roaring stove.

We'd booked an NTS visit to Culloden as when I last visited it there was simply a bleak field with some marker stones. The visitor centre was quite impressive and the single guide on duty nabbed Doug for an informative chat. I used to room guide at Gladstone's Land in Edinburgh so I understood the urge to share all you know with a visitor - the trick is to know when they are trying to edge away from your enthusiasm. There is a move to build houses on the site, urgh!

From Inverness back across the Black Isle to the Highland Farm Cafe, east of Dingwall, overlooking the Moray Firth for macaroni cheese and icecream. They have created an outside restaurant sheltered ingeniously by stacks of hay bales under an awning and welcoming of dogs. I wanted to buy a local Speyside malt as a souvenir to keep for Christmas so we meandered back towards Dufftown's whisky shop. I left with a special edition Tomintoul single malt - now tucked away in the garage.

Doug left for Edinburgh at six for his twelve hour cycle and I followed south by Tomintoul and Lecht at a more sensible nine o'clock. The weather closed in and it was cold and wet when I caught up with him outside Braemar and stopped to buy him a hot cup of coffee. Once I got as far as the chairlift, the sun came out and the drivers fell into two extremes - Porches blasting round blind bends and Golfs at 35 mph but breaking at every SLOW sign aimed at bikers. My halo, as you will know, was shining.

It was a wonderful little, very Scottish, adventure and I'd be very happy to go back to the Aberlour cottage. [Joan Sumner](#)



MANY MOONS AGO

Where were we?



A TOUR OF NORTHERN ITALY; Part 1

Piemonte - Mantova -Verona

This area is especially designed for caravanners, campers, foodies and wine aficionados.

The most enjoyment will be gained by trailing a caravan, or driving with a small tent in the boot.

As the wine is such good value, a trailer is very useful! Although not perhaps with an MG!

The areas visited in this article also have good air connections from the UK, and cars can be hired. The most convenient airports are Torino or Genova for Piemonte, and Verona or Venezia for Verona or Mantova.

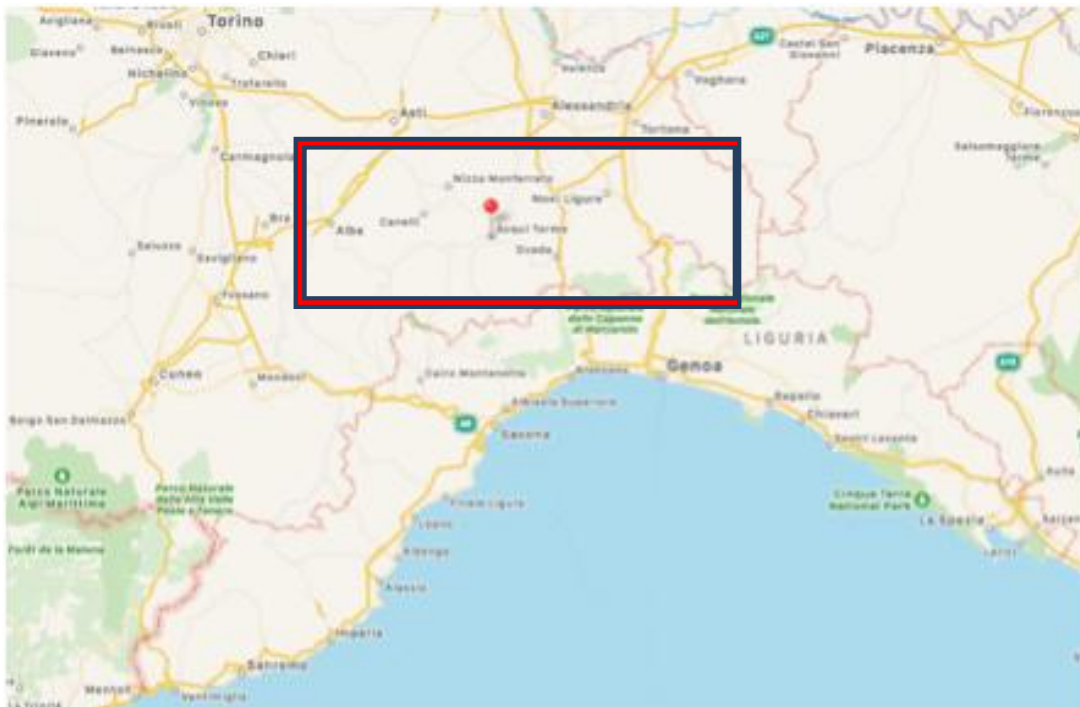


The lack of a car is no great problem around Verona, but a car is essential for a full enjoyment of Piemonte to allow you individual freedom.

Thankfully as well there are many hotels. They are about the same price or less than the ones here, but the quality is invariably much better there for the price.

The Overall Journey

The centre of our main holiday area is about 30 miles south-east of Torino and is Canelli and Acqui Terme which you will see on the map below outlined in red.



Torino is about the same distance from Calais as Dover is from Aberdeen.

Aberdeen to Dover can be done in a day, although it's a bit of a long day. Aberdeen to this part of Italy COULD be completed in two days. It's probably not advisable to try and complete the journey in 2 days!

We'd generally drive to Rosyth in time for the afternoon ferry to Zeebrugge. That's the expensive way but also the most convenient way. We could, alternatively, leave home early on a Saturday morning (3am or 4am), drive to Hull, and get the North Sea Ferry to Zeebrugge. For that, you need to be in Hull for about 5pm, you then get to Zeebrugge at about 8am. Alternatively you could go via Dover/

Continuing with the cheap-cheap theme, it's cheaper to book a late ferry out of Calais. If you turn up early, they'll generally put you on the first available ferry, which would otherwise have cost you more - but don't tell them!

The French Aire

The thing about taking a late sailing is that searching for, booking into, and getting set up in a regular caravan/tent park in the dark and late at night is generally to be avoided. What we tend to do instead is to set up overnight in a convenient or less-busy 'Aire'. The 'Aire' is a marvellous French invention which is a stopover camp site and very inexpensive.

Every 10km or so on the autoroute network there's a lay-by. Not the mere wider section of road you get on non-motorways but a genuine off-road (as much as 200m or so off-road) space, almost all screened from road noise by hedge or trees (or both), marked off in generous parking spaces for cars, cars and caravans, lorries, etc. All have at least running cold potable water and toilets. Some have a small petrol station with shop/sandwiches/etc., (some even have spotless showers.). Others are more elaborate and much better kept than the UK pathetic motorway service stations, having bureau de change, large play area for the children, staffed regional information centre that can book hotels and sell local wines, cheeses, etc.

The Aires have some disadvantages for overnight caravan parking (no power point to hook up to, only a few have showers, there can be noisy big lorries especially those with refrigeration plants, etc.), but are very convenient late at night, and a good place to rest during the day. They are signposted well in advance. For all but the most basic, advance warning signs tell you what facilities the Aire possesses. For the bigger ones, the signs will tell you how much petrol, etc. will cost at and also the cost at the next nearest one or two down the road. We drive south, mostly through France, whose roads are generally much less busy than those at home (it's a very big country, not many people) and almost truck-free on Sundays.

La Route Francaise

1-La Route Francaise (1)

One route we've used is via Reims, St Dizier, Joinville, Chaumont, Langres or Dijon, Besancon, Pontarlier, Verbier (into Switzerland, which demands an expensive motorway pass), Lausanne, Montreux, Martigny, Gran San Bernardo (into Italia), Aosta, Ivrea, Torino, Asti, Acqui Terme, and finally to Castalbogione. Gran San Bernardo isn't that much fun with a caravan, though, and the road surface has taken a pounding while the Monte Bianco tunnel was closed. I really prefer to avoid it.

2-La Route Francaise (2)

A pleasant alternative is to go via the very heart of France, for example to a small historic city called La Charité sur Loire, to spend a little time there and taste its lovely wines before moving on: possibly via Dijon, Bourg-en-Bresse, Chamonix, and the Monte Bianco tunnel. Most of the towns we'd by-pass, the smaller ones we might scrape past the outskirts.

3-La Route Francaise (3)

We have more recently driven via Brussels, Louvain, Luxembourg, Metz, and Saverne to arrive at a small town called Obernai in Alsace. Obernai is about 20 miles to the South West of Strasbourg, worth a visit on its own. From Obernai, it's a short step from entry into Switzerland at Basel, whence the roads are good through Luzern/Lucerne and the San Gottardo Tunnel to Bellinzona and Como, then down into Milano.

4-La Route Francaise (4)

When we went via La Charité, we continued on from there via the N7, which used to be the main road from Paris to the South coast. We drove via Roanne and Lyon, eventually following the Rhone all the way, thereafter, going into Italia via Nice and Monaco (all of which we by-passed, of course). We stopped overnight at sites at Mornant, which is a lovely village just South West of Lyons, and just outside Orange.

La Route Francaise - Camp Sites and Sights

You could stop overnight at either La Charité, Joinville, Langres or somewhere along the Côte d'Or. There's a good municipal caravan and camp site at La Charité. The camp site is very easy to find, being on an island in the middle of the River Loire: look for the bridge. There's only one bridge, and it's a big one. La Charité has a superb medieval Cluniac church to be visited.

Using the internet you can see that there's a very swanky chateau B&B close to Sancerre (where the Sauvignon-based wines are superb - amongst the best whites in the world, if slightly expensive - and you get the delicious Crottin de Chavignol cheese), all of fifteen or so miles from La Charité. (note Sancerre is my favourite wine and is also produced as a red expensive as well.)

Joinville has a nice camp site just outside the centre of the town, and there's a mammoth 'international' one (Eurocamp, Caravan Club, etc.) at Thonnanceles-Moulins (or similar name) about 10 miles south east of Joinville.

We had a nice lunch once at a 'Logis de France' hotel in Beaumont-sur-Vesle in the heart of the champagne country. You should have seen the wine list; it was about three inches thick! Unusually for France, it featured wines from all over the world. We returned there more recently for dinner, and that was just as good, although the place had been taken over by new owners, a husband and wife team. The dinner was excellent.

The Vesle is a small river which runs along the very bottom of the valley to the east of the main Champagne vineyard, separating it from the huge acreage of wheat fields there. There's a fine, although quite small, camp site at Val de Vesle. Also in the Champagne region, there's the very beautiful Valle de l'Aube, with a pleasant camp site at Lesmont. The village's facilities are a bit basic, but there are lots of others within a couple of miles. The countryside is splendid.

There's a good farmhouse B&B just outside the village of Fixin (yes, the village's got its own AC), where the village restaurant (Le Clos Napoleon) is tremendous. Enormous helpings - the size you'd normally get here for three people, no kidding! Fixin's not far from Gevrey-Chambertin, just a mile or so along the road to Dijon.

There's a big, good caravan and camp site at Primaux-Pressay not far from Nuits St Georges, and there are lots of hotels there and, indeed, all up and down the Côte d'Or.

If we stayed at Langres, it would be in one of the caravan sites just inside the 16th century city fortifications. I'd be very surprised indeed if there wasn't a hotel in Langres, it's a good-sized city and big enough to be worth fortifying and there still appears to be a military presence in the town.

Just south of Langres, about half-way to Dijon, there's a simple camp site at Vingeanne, situated alongside a huge reservoir which acts as a header tank for the extensive local canal system. The site's a bit charmless, but it's convenient for the main road.

We've also stayed at a small caravan site in a suburb (Challes-les-Eaux) of Chambéry, at the Hotel Ibis at Bourg-en-Bresse, at a caravan site in Poncin (just where the valley of the Ain meets the Bugey valley, where 'Burgundy' becomes 'Rhône'), and at caravan sites in Aosta and Settimo Vittone (both these are just inside Italy). The Bugey valley is very beautiful, as is the countryside around the city of Chambéry and its close neighbour the Lac du Bourget.

The country either side of the road up from Bourg-en-Bresse to Chamonix is splendid, if the daytime traffic and road's a bit frightening and you wonder just how good the brakes are!

Obernai, has a good-looking camp site, but the one we go to in that area is in a satellite village, Bernardsviller, just outside Obernai. It suits our purposes perfectly and is quiet and very well run. Alsace is beautiful and interesting, and they make pretty good wine there. Obernai/Bernardsviller are at the foot of the Vosges, which are a wonderland for the visitor. Strasbourg is about 20 minutes away by train.

Because we'd expect generally to be arriving in the Langhe, we'd plan on staying that night at the Brovia's (below) and having a celebratory dinner with some Barbera d'Asti from Gino's multi-year-old vines. You'd want to buy some of that to take home - it's classy stuff. He'd none left at all this year.

Most Direct Routes

This is almost certainly via Calais, Langres, Besancon, Lausanne, Montreux, Martigny, St Bernard Tunnel, Aosta, and Torino. Whichever route you take through Switzerland it is expensive to use the Swiss motorway system and another one for your caravan or trailer (about £50 all in, but it's good for a whole year's use).

Next best is by Calais, Langres, Bourg-en-Bresse, Nantua, Chamonix, Aosta, etc., but this has you going round Lac Lemman in a dog-leg. However, the road from B-en- B through to Lac Lemman is very beautiful, although it does carry substantial commercial traffic. NB: the recent fire in the Monte Bianco tunnel rules this route out for a while.

An alternative is by way of B-en-B, Chambéry, Tunnel de Frejus, Bardonnechia, and Torino. This takes you through the very pretty valley of the Bugey and is probably the most direct once you've actually crossed the Italian border. Beware, though the tunnel is used for all the hazardous cargoes and so is unventilated. The diesel fumes are very thick and unpleasant.

If you can afford it, the Rosyth-Zeebrugge ferry is a wonderful way to travel. You only have to drive as far as Rosyth, for a start, and you get a bed and a good meal into the bargain. Drinks are cheap. In the scheme of things, Zeebrugge is only a wee bit north of Calais, and the routes from Calais are almost equally applicable from Zeebrugge.

The route we have been following is Zeebrugge, Namur, Luxembourg, Metz, Obernai/Bernardswiller, Basle, Luzern, Gottardo, Como, Milano, Alessandria, and Acqui Terme

Through Germany

Germany's a lovely country, and everybody is so nice. The scenery is beautiful, the food's very good, and they do some super wines and fruit eaux-de-vie into the bargain. Most people will speak English happily to you - generally apologising quite unnecessarily for their poor English.

We sometimes go to or return from Piemonte by way of Baden Wurttemberg: that's in the south west of Germany.

It's fairly simple effectively to follow the Rhine south from about Bonn, which is reached reasonably directly from Zeebrugge via Brussels. Alternatively, cutting through Belgium can land you about the middle reaches of the Mosel valley. The Mosel's a must for a visit. The river scenery is straight out of a fairy story, the wine is amongst the best in the world, and they're well geared up for tourists of all nationalities. We've stayed at Pommern, just downstream of Cochem (a 'must see' town, if ever there was such) and at Schwiech, just downstream of the ancient (Roman), and fascinating, city of Trier. Access to the South can then be by the Rhine (which you can join at Koblenz), or by the Saar and Moselle (via Saarbrücken and Metz).

The other very attractive route in Southern Germany is by way of Champagne, the Vosges, Strasbourg and Alsace, and a quick hop across the Rhine and through the Black Forest. It would be easy here to get drawn into a full description of the Black Forest. I'm sore tempted. It must be one of the most beautiful areas of Europe. Go and see. Obtain guidebook and anyway, just go! We will have a holiday there one day, I'm determined.

Rötenburg-am-Neckar: The Neckar valley is very pretty: steeply-wooded sides, the meandering river, old villages with picture-postcard houses and beer gardens (and, yes, the beer is very good, although it's a noted area for wine!), lots of historic-looking schlossen, apple and pear orchards; (and the area's also known for its farm produced pear schnapps).



There's a beautiful Apollo mosaic in Rotweil - where Rottweiler dogs come from. There's a reconstructed villa at Hechingen. These are all within a twenty-mile radius.

Germany used to be known as being expensive. Nowadays it's slightly less expensive than the UK - and everything is of a superior quality. A fine panorama of Röttenburg-am-Neckar, showing the river. The barn can be seen just above the left-most bridge

Through Switzerland

You should note that the most direct route if you're going via Germany is via Lucerne, the Saint Gotthard tunnel and in around the north of Milan, but that there can be major hold-ups at the entrance to the tunnel (both Southbound and Northbound). It's a good idea to plan for the tunnel, in terms of having a comfort break or assuring yourself of a full tank of fuel, a sandwich and drink, etc. Midday at weekends the delay can be easily more than an hour.

This is still a very nice way into Italy, though, as it takes you right through the green heart of beautiful Switzerland (but remember it is expensive).



Beware!

Zurich and Milano have the worst driving that I know.

The Milanese are impatient and drive very fast: however, they do make allowances for UK Drivers pulling caravans. It must be said that generally Italians are very polite and well-mannered and believe it or not Swiss drivers are not at all patient or forgiving. Luzern is badly signposted, and the motorway divides almost without warning.

It is the same in Basel and via Basel is the way to go if you're going North into Alsace or the Black Forest.

Zurich is a nightmare, where the autoroute ends almost in the centre of the city, and everything is very poorly signposted. Roll on completion of that, by-pass motorway which has been in the building for several years! Maybe our GPS will make the traverse of Zurich all simple for us! The German alternative is to head South East from the Rhine valley at about Mainz, to skirt Munich in Bavaria, and to enter Italy by way of Austria's Innsbruck and Brenner Pass. Traffic's heavy through the pass, but all very well-tempered. And there's no tunnel but there is an autobahn toll in Austria. That's a good way to arrive if your trip's to be centred on Verona. The road down to Verona from Brennero is very beautiful, if quite busy. *To Be Continued*

Foot note: The above journey was carried out a good number of years ago and therefore some of the details are very much out of date. When you read it please excuse the style and grammar and if mistakes are evident then it would please me if you would just smile and read on. **Jim Tierney.**

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Please feel free to contact the committee if you have any queries.

Monthly meetings on the second Thursday of the month, 8pm at Boroughmuir Rugby Club, Colinton Road, Edinburgh

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

December 11

Christmas Dinner
(This may be taken out of our hands but we'll make the final decision in mid-November)



MANY MOONS AGO 2

Where were we?