



European Event of the Year 2010

A total of 193 MGs from 16 different countries entered this year's European Event of the Year in Italy. Among them was our MGC Roadster, which we had driven from home in Cornwall to Plymouth Ferry Port (35 miles) then sailed to Santander, driven across Spain to Barcelona (440 miles), another Ferry to Livorno and finally driving the last leg of our journey to Gabicce Mare (200 miles), the location of our seven-day event with the Italians.

It all started so well, the weather was beautiful, hood down all the way. The temperature rose as each day passed. Monday May 24, we arrived at the tourist office in Gabicce Mare as instructed, to sign on, collect all event details for the week and find out which hotel we had been booked into and check in. Everything went to plan and we even had time for a very welcome drink in one of the street bars nearby. It was not too long before other MGs came along and our gathering in the bar got bigger and bigger; meeting up with lots of old MG friends and making many news ones.

Monday May 24

The first day was very relaxed with MGs arriving into Gabicce Mare all day. Our welcome meeting was held in the local cinema in the centre of the town that evening and the programme was laid out for us to digest.

Tuesday May 25

Frontone 183km

This was to be our one and only day of driving our MGC. We received our group



Frontone Castle

briefing from Fabio in the market square first thing in the morning. We were to drive in convoy at all times, never stopping, never letting any other traffic into our convoy (unless it was an MG). We had seven police motorcycle out riders and a Lamborghini to lead us through the Italian traffic. We drove through red traffic lights, had right of way on all roundabout and junctions and did not even have to stop for a pedestrian crossing. We started with great expectations of a lovely day ahead. The weather was once again very hot, unfortunately, so was the car. We had not been on the road for very long at all before the temperature started rising and did not stop.

Fortunately, we had water on board; however, the Italian police were not too impressed that we had stopped. We topped up with our Cornish water from the boot and just about got back with the convoy, albeit the last car in the procession. Before long the temperature was up again and showing no signs of cooling. Our second stop meant we had to lose the convoy and go it alone.... After many litres of water we did get to the lunch stop, which was Frontone Castle. The buffet lunch was well underway, but we did manage to eat and top up with water for the journey back. Once again we lost the convoy within the first hour and, after nine litres of water later, we did make it back to our hotel late that evening.

Unfortunately we spent the next few days trying to get the car repaired at the local MG garage that Fabio put us in touch with. The mechanics were great, Google Translate was even better. I don't know how we would have got over the language barrier had we not had the workshop computer. But it was not meant to be, our European RAC Cover had to come

into play. We waved the car off on a car transporter on Thursday May 27 and did not see it again until June 18 at Tim Kelly MG Specialist in Cornwall.

Taking over from Ginny ...

As we live in South East England we had decided that we would make the journey to Gabicce Mare a part of the holiday. We chose a route that took us (with stops) through France and southern Germany via Lake Constance into Austria over the Arlberg Pass to Innsbruck (for two nights). We then took the Brenner Pass on the valley road beneath the motorway to Padua where we spent three nights and explored this beautiful city. From Padua it was a three and a half hour journey on the motorway to Gabicce Mare. We chose the motorway as it was much quicker, the weather had turned very hot and we did not relish the idea of any hold ups on the A roads (and the Midget overheating).

Wednesday May 26

Sansepolcro – 228km – 143 miles

This was the longest run of the event, 228k through stunning countryside to Sansepolcro 'the village of the Holy Sepulchre' on the river Tiber. The birthplace of Piero della Francesca (b.1415) one of Italy's greatest painters.

This morning Fabio briefed us again on how to drive in convoy. Keep up with the car in front (at a safe distance), ignore speed limits, pedestrian crossings, red lights and traffic trying to filter in from the right, follow the police directions, but most important of all don't allow big gaps to form between the cars. It had been necessary to repeat the instructions as some cars had got lost on the previous day.



The Italian Police



On the road with Marcus & Ursula from Switzerland



Waving goodbye to our poorly MGC

The route took us through four of Italy's most beautiful regions: The Marches, Emilia Romagna, Umbria and Tuscany. Due to the long drive, we left Gabicce at 8.30 and stopped for brunch at Carpegna. From Carpegna, the drive took us down the valleys with amazing views, descending into the town of Sansapolcro. Sansepolcro's golden age goes back to the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries and the centre, which is enclosed by fortified walls, features a series of medieval and Renaissance palaces and churches. Somehow or other we managed to fit all the cars into the tiny town square. We were greeted by girls in medieval costume handing out rose buds to everyone.

A tour of the Museo Civico had been arranged for us and we were guided by local students who showed us many paintings and treasures including 'The Resurrection', the most famous of Piero della Francesca's works.

After a lunch of local meats and cheeses, which we ate under the portico of the town hall, we left for our drive back to Gabicce, stopping for half an hour at the small town of Urbina on our way.

After dinner in our hotel, the evening was free to meet up with friends.

Thursday May 27

Corinaldo – 140km – 88 miles

Very hot today (high 20s), we took a southerly route along the coast through Pesaro, Fano and Mondolfo then on to Corinaldo. Corinaldo is built on a hill top with wonderful views of the surrounding countryside (this is a phrase which cannot

be overused), including the Appenine mountains. The attractive fortified walls were built in the 15th century of brick but look almost new. Many of the streets were steep or stepped and it was possible to walk along parts of the ramparts. Again we were treated to a wonderful lunch of local produce and had time to explore the town after lunch and partake of an ice cream from one of the many gelaterias.

The afternoon drive home took us on an inland route through pretty towns and past more hilltop villages back to Gabicce.

Another free evening to meet up with friends old and new.

Friday May 28

Fossombrone – 136km – 85 miles

Today we left the market square cheered on by the children from the local kindergarten. The route started in a south-westerly direction from Gabicce past Morciano, Mercatino Conco, then skirting Urbino. We then drove across the plateau of the 'Pineta delle Cesane' a dense pine forest to Fossombrone.

Fossombrone was founded by the ancient Romans and has many palaces as well as the cathedral and numerous churches. We parked on either side of the narrow streets and were welcomed with a speech by the mayor. We had time before lunch to explore the town and our lunch was set out for us in the main square. The town had also provided a DJ to entertain us and it wasn't long before people were dancing in the street.

After lunch, a visit to the Casa Museo Quadreria, housing a prestigious art collection, had been arranged for us.

The police siren announced our departure time and we returned to Gabicce on an easterly route via Serrungarina and Montelabbate. Although the skies were still blue we noticed that the police motorcyclists were stopping to put on their rain gear. Before long the sky had turned very black and the rain started, one by one the cars were stopping to put up their hoods (although some hardy souls braved the elements), we put our hood up in record time and joined the convoy again. This was the only time during the event



Leaving the Market Square at Gabicce Mare



Pesaro

that it rained during the day.

On Friday evening, a party had been arranged for us at a local vineyard with local wines, meats and cheeses and, of course, music. A late night for some!

Saturday May 29

Pesaro – 54km – 34 miles

Today saw a leisurely start at 10am. We took the narrow winding high coastal road south from Gabicce to Pesaro along the Strada Panoramica in the National Park. The road was lined on either side with yellow flowering broom, which heavily scented the air. We descended into Pesaro and parked around the fountain in the Piazza del Popolo.

Pesaro was founded by the Romans in 184BC but is most well known as the birthplace of Gioacchino Rossini, who was born in Pesaro in 1792. We were all given tickets which enabled us to visit the house where he was born which is now the Rossini Museum. After a pleasant couple of hours exploring Pesaro we left for the short drive back to Gabicce.

After lunch we had a free afternoon and were able to go to the beach and relax for a few hours.

On Saturday evening we were taken by bus from Gabicce to Gradara Castle for the Gala Dinner Speeches and prize giving. The day had been very hot again and just before our bus arrived at Gradara we had a torrential downpour. We had to walk from the coach drop off point to the restaurant and large number of us arrived at the dinner rather wet to say the least!

Among the awards presented during the evening was that for furthest distance travelled – which went to a group from Australia. Fabio in return received gifts from the national representatives including a giant Toblerone from Switzerland.

Sunday May 30

Grotte di Frasassi – 214km – 150 miles

Sunday morning bright and early and it is back to me, on the last day of our seven-day event. Barrie & I have both been offered passenger seats in MG TDs. Barrie was driven by Andrew Murfin from the UK and I was traveling with Ombretta Ruesch from Switzerland. We had a very different driving experience, having never been in 1950's MGs before. We all set off once again from the Market Square in Gabicce Mare, for our leisure drive to Grotte di Frasassi to visit caves that had only been discovered on September 27 1975. These caves have been described as one of the most spectacular in the world and they most certainly lived up to all expectations. We had been advised to take adequate clothing and good walking shoes. In the caves the constant temperature is 14°C and the ground was wet and slippery in places, from the constant dripping of water.

At times it felt like we were in a film set, the formation of the rocks so amazing, to the point of being unbelievable and the size of many formations just incredible.

After a delightful four-course lunch in a nearby restaurant, it was back on the road again heading back to Gabicce Mare.

Our last night with old and many new friends, meant it was quite a late one. Monday morning we waved off an everlasting procession of MGs and then went to the hotel pool for the rest of the day. Our return home did not start until the next day.

Tuesday morning we had a very early breakfast and jumped into a taxi (we had booked the night before) to Cattolica Railway Station. Our train left at 7.30am, for a two-hour journey to Bologna, then another taxi to Bologna Airport. A little downtime and a spot of duty-free shopping and our flight was ready to board for London Gatwick. Once landed at Gatwick and having collected our luggage, it was straight to 'Departures' for our Gatwick to Newquay flight. Touching down in Newquay was almost the final leg of our journey. All we had left to do was a short taxi ride home. Kettle on and a nice cup of tea by 6.30pm the same day. We had taken 7 days to get to Gabicce Mare and a little under 12 hours to get home, albeit without our beautiful MGC....

At the time of writing, our MGC is still with Tim Kelly MG Specialist. We did have it back for a short time, just to do MGC Day this year at Haynes Motor Museum. I will keep you informed of its progress and hopefully have some good news soon.

Finally, my thanks to Viv Parris for writing up on the days Barrie & I were unable to attend.



Sunday lunch