

A Dutch T Type joins the convoy



MG by the sea

by John Dorney & Fabio Filipello

40th MG Car Club Italy Anniversary

We enjoyed a wonderful week in Italy from May 26 – July 1 2014, with MG Car Club d'Italia in Gabicce Mare, which is a traditional Italian seaside resort on the Adriatic coast south of Rimini, travelling down in our MG J2.

The event is arranged every two years and this year was the 10th meeting of MG by the Sea and the 40th anniversary of MG Car Club Italy. We first saw the tour advertised in *Safety Fast!* when it was chosen as the European Event of the Year in 2010. For that event there were 200 cars from all over Europe but normally there are about 120.

The event is almost unique in Italy as the 2.5 mile long convoy of MG cars is escorted by the Polizia Stradale, the Italian road police, on their motorbikes. They ensure that we are not held up at road junctions or roundabouts and we are urged past red traffic lights.

This year we enjoyed tours every day through the magnificent Italian countryside with always a first class lunch at various restaurants or town receptions. After lunch a different route explores more countryside through historic towns and villages before returning to our hotels in Gabicce Mare for dinner. There are also evening events

arranged on four of the evenings. These range from drinks and singalong in the MG Bar, to a 12 accordion classic concert, to an evening at the Go Kart track in your MG for a simple time trial.

We have been on several European tours with our MGs but the Italians stand out as the most enthusiastic about cars. It was also noticeable that the older the car the more enthusiastic the Italians are. The

J2 was surrounded wherever we stopped and my Italian is now getting quite good albeit with a limited vocabulary telling the locals about the car. Even black clad old grandmothers wave vigorously at you as you roar through the narrow streets of their historic villages.

We have been on three of these Italian tours in three different cars and have experienced the curious feature of a convoy.



A square of MGs

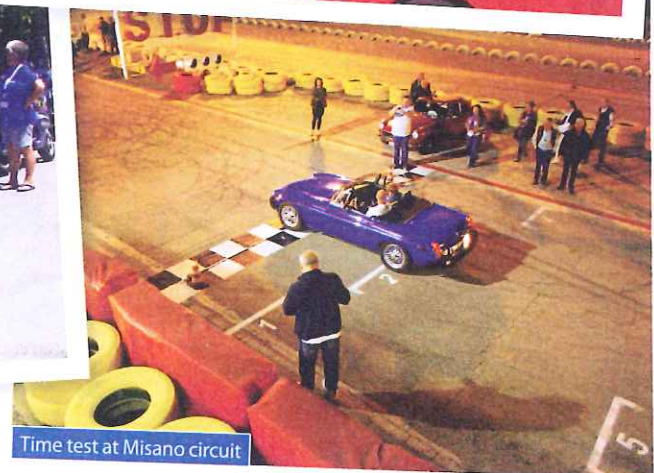
Enjoying lunch in the sun



Convoy getting underway after lunch



The police escort



Time test at Misano circuit

The cars are arranged in age order with the Triple M cars at the front then T types, MGA, MGB etc with F and TF models at the rear.

The first year we went in our MGC positioned near the rear and at many stages we were driving at 60mph (100kph) to keep up. The second time we went in an MGA and were in the centre of the convoy at 40 to 50mph. This year however we decided to take our J2 and were in the front group travelling at barely 30mph (50kph) behind the leading police car.

Just to check the speed phenomenon we dropped out of the front of the convoy and stopped at the side of the road to photograph some of the cars and then rejoined at the back. Sure enough we had to drive quite fast to keep up.

Another thoughtful feature of this event is the mechanical back up from a garage in Pesaro and also for the longer runs a tow truck follows the tour for the day, and on other shorter run days the organisers telephone and it will come to pick up your car in the event of a breakdown.

As well as being enthusiastic about old cars they also know how to mend them. We have had occasion to use them twice. Once a core plug failed on the MGA and the ensuing jet of hot water shorted the HT

electrics. A new one was fitted by the wizard mechanic in Pesaro, he just happened to have an imperial sized one in his tool box (try that in a garage in UK). The second occasion was this year when we had new tyres fitted. The company that fitted them had failed to centralise the tyres on the rims so the effect was tyres that were oval which caused a terrible vibration when driving at 30mph. The local gommistas (Italian tyre fitters) removed the tyres and refitted them concentrically to cure the problem.

If you have never taken your MG on a European tour we can thoroughly recommend them. If you are concerned about the long drive getting there then there are options. Several of the cars on the tour had come on an Autotrain from Holland or Northern Germany and many of

the older cars, ours included, arrived on a trailer. 1,200 miles in a J2 across Europe with no space for luggage, tools, spares etc is not my idea of fun.

So maybe we will see some newcomers in future years to add to the familiar faces of the MG friends we have met all over Europe.



Chasing Fabio's MGBGT