



“Nobody expects the Spanish Indecision”

We left Castle Bromwich at 3:30pm on Saturday 12th June 1971 in my gleaming 1967 MGB soft top. It was drizzling but that couldn't blunt our enthusiasm for the trip. The beautiful hollow sound from the new exhaust could be heard through the hood and the Beach Boys were singing California Girls in glorious stereo on the 8-track player. Helen and I had planned the holiday in detail. Two weeks camping in Calella by Lloret de Mar in Spain. We met up with friend Bernie in his '64 MGB sports and his co-pilot John at Stonebridge. By 11pm we were at Dover, on the ferry and at 1am arrived in France. We were soon seeking a layby to rest up for a sleep.

After some packed sandwiches early in the morning, we were on our way again. The drive (before motorways remember) along those tall, tree lined, endless narrow roads was superb if somewhat boring. But with the sun shining, the roof stowed, the wind in the hair made up for that. In some of the villages along the way, the sound of 2 MGBs approaching was unmistakable. Locals would come out and wave at us. Paris in the morning is special. The Eiffel Tower, Notre-Dame, the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile and the bridges over the Seine are sights to behold. Bourges, Limoges through Toulouse heading for a sightseeing tour of Andorra. The driving through the Pyrenees mountains is quite addictive.

We arrived at the pre-planned camp site “El Toro Azul” around 3pm in the afternoon. A few metres from the beach, the site was



ideal. The facilities were basic, but then they were everywhere in those days. We did plenty of sightseeing, venturing as far as Barcelona to the south, which was quite congested, even in '71. Many evenings were spent in Lloret de Mar, back then it was known for its night life. It turned out to be a great holiday, with the 3 S's: Sun, Sea and S-s-s-s-angria. Ah ha..... I know what you were thinking.....

So, here is where I digress for a bit. Helen and I had prepared in depth for this trip. Back then you had to apply for an international translation of your driving licence, a Green Card extension to your car insurance. We took the precaution of AA 24-hour International Recovery, a complete service and new exhaust on the car. Now being somewhat of an enthusiastic mechanic, my MGB was in superb fettle. A week or so before departure I heard a feint tinkling from the gearbox. The gearbox was removed and rebuilt with all new roller and needle bearings. There was no way I was going to break down. Would you believe over the whole trip we achieved over 30 miles to the gallon and we didn't have overdrive! I shudder to think now but stuff was stowed everywhere in and on the car. Even the spaces under the wings and in front of the radiator was stocked with spare parts I thought I might need as well as tools.

Now for my pal Bernie things were a bit different. His decision to accompany us was somewhat late in the day. He only just managed to get his papers sorted in time. His MGB Roadster was a 1964 model and to put it frankly was just not in as good condition as mine. I don't even think he serviced it before the trip. But hey ho, what the heck, throw some clothes in a rucksack, just pile in and go....That was Bernie.

Back to the story - on the last but one day of the holiday we decided to meet up in Lloret. The chaps went off before us, we had some packing to sort. Later we went to meet them. They were in the agreed parking lot, but John was nowhere to be seen and when I asked where he was, Bernie said “He's just walked over that way; hang on I'll give him a shout.” Bernie got out of his MG. He held on to the windscreen, put one foot on the car door sill and was about to stand up on it. As he crouched slightly to launch upwards, his other foot, which was on a metal water soakaway, slipped and all his weight went on that sill. He fell over into the car and hit his head on the gear lever. But more ominously there was a loud metallic crunch. His car sill had broken in half [almost].

Fortunately his head banging didn't hurt too much but his worry was his MGB. We parked up and went back to help. We found Bernie, sat on the ground, obviously seeing stars, mumbling “What the heck am I going to do?” He had found that he couldn't shut the door. The body had sunk and a crack appeared in the floor. After discussing the alternatives, which included our lack of funds, there was only one thing to do. We jacked the car up to shut the door and just carry on regardless. OMG we had to stifle our laughter. To cut the story short, that really put the muckers on his holiday. He knew a big repair bill was in the offing. We took on board much of their luggage. We left at 12:15 on Thursday 24th and got to Calais at 11pm Friday. When loading the cars on the 8.15am ferry we, and some crew had to lift Bernie's car over the small ramp steps to get it on board. What Bernie omitted to tell us was that each time we stopped on the journey he took peek at the floor; the crack was gradually approaching the tunnel. We got Bernie home safely and arrived home at 3.30 pm totally tired out and slept the rest of the afternoon on the settee.

What a superb holiday! I can't remember ever laughing so much. But there is a moral here:

The PAIN in the BRAIN is caused mainly by the DRAIN.

OK, I'll get my coat.

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