

## B31 COMBING THE COTSWOLDS

PROJECT: EUROPE 2011

SUBJECT: B31 COMBING THE COTSWOLDS SCRIPT

DATE: 15 JULY 2011

One of our loyal readers, Benny Brown of Radio Luxembourg, pointed out that we'd driven past one of the better motor museums when we left the town of Beaulieu. He'd alerted us to this gem long before we began the trip and we were tempted but we have to get serious about finding a new home for the MG. Visiting Beaulieu Motors made business sense. Besides, we had to make it to the Cotswolds before we lost our reservation. With that purpose in mind we decided against the quaint little country roads, small villages and

roundabouts and headed for M5, an equivalent of our freeways.

We arrived in the Cotswold village of Stow on Wold and headed for our B&B when we spied three vintage Austin Healey's lined up outside a pub on the town square. With one Healey you'd wave as you passed by; with two you'd slow down, wave and maybe toot your horn but with three you must stop and have a beer.

So we did.

The owners were members of an Austin Healey club in Holland and were on a tour of Great Britain with their spouses. Each of the cars was left hand drive (important for Holland) and had come from the U.S. Two were from California and one from Virginia and each restored to like new.





Rick Steve's travel book on England recommended the Cross Keys Cottage B&B. Margaret and Roger Welton were our hosts in their small but extremely well cared for four bedroom mini hotel. Once again, through a quirk of scheduling, we were the only guests that night. Since this has happened a time or two we're afraid word will get around and our reservations requests will be rejected.

Sort of like a bad penny.

On the walk to dinner we had a chance to poke around this quaint little



village.

The

buildings were all buff colored

native stone. At one time the Cotswolds were best known for the quality of sheep's wool. That importance is reflected in the name of village streets such as Sheep Street. Some of them are so narrow only one animal at a time can pass through...a convenient way to count them.



Following Rick's suggestion, we had dinner at the Queen's Head pub and selected pub grub items like kidney pie and lamb pot stew accompanied, of course, by a pint of bitters from the local brewery. Louise didn't favor the cellar temperature beer drawn by hand and went for a cold Foster's instead.



The sign at the door caught our eye. "Dogs Welcome," it read and, sure enough, a woman came in with her newly acquired shepherd on a leash. It sat at her feet patiently waiting for table scraps.



It got none from us because we hadn't eaten since breakfast.



We let ourselves in quietly to the B&B, forgetting there was no one to disturb but us. Our room was very small but still en suite. One major thing in its favor was the presence of WiFi in the room. Usually it is hiding somewhere else in the building. Louise took the opportunity to answer e-mail and check our dwindling finances. One thing we discovered was that the wall plugs were different from the French ones. In Great Britain they use large, three pronged plugs. Fortunately, good friend Terry Crofoot insisted we borrow his Rubic's Cube multi-plug adapter. Once you figure out how to get it apart it will plug into

anything in the electrified world. Without it this blog would have come to a screeching halt. Thanks Terry.



The next day we were off to another Cotswold village with the quaint name of Chipping Campden. It, too, was a sheep driven village until the bottom fell out of the wool market. Now the only ones being fleeced are the thousands of tourists who drive through and pay high seasonal prices.



As you might expect, parking is a continuing problem in a village that was designed to process four legged sheep versus four-wheel cars. Throw in the occasional service trucks and you are close to gridlock.



One thing that is free is a picture of the period style homes, many with the traditional thatched roofs that we see on Masterpiece Theater on PBS. The thatched roof is a trademark of the Cotswolds and people from around the world come to see homes they couldn't afford to insure against fire.

Once complete, a chicken wire type cover is applied to discourage mice, squirrels and magpies carrying lighted cigarettes from making nests. These are also homes where the owner is advised not to go outside for a smoke. I'm told a replacement costs approximately forty thousand dollars and lasts for twenty years. There are still master thatchers who ply the trade but each year the



demand lessens as does the straw that best suits the purpose.

We headed the MG down a long, 14% grade hill toward the town of Great Malvern, the home of the Morgan automobile manufacturing facility...another throwback to a previous era. We are scheduled to tour the factory building the car that almost replaced our beloved MG so long ago.



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Louise

and Ray