



Looking over Ullswater from Glenridding



A charming stream flowing from Red Tarn. Helvellyn is in the background

EXILE IN LAKELAND

A NEW CAR (FOR EXPORT ONLY) IN THE WORDSWORTH COUNTRY

IT is surprising how often an unexpected holiday turns out beyond one's optimistic expectations. So it was with us. We had returned from East Africa in a day and a half, and the impact of a glorious Easter left us rather bewildered. Things had happened too quickly; everything was upside down. It was warm enough at Easter to wear clothes I had worn in Nairobi. It seemed all wrong, but hasty consultation with my wife assured me that we weren't still in Nairobi and that such weather was undoubtedly in honour of our homecoming.

We made rapid enquiries about the new car, and the glorious weather still held when we eventually picked it up and set off. After possessing a number of saloons we had decided that a different kind of car would be preferred, hence a tourer. My last car was powerful, so we must have zip," and yet the new must be rather more economical than the last. I had read in *The Autocar* the description of M.G.'s new iflitre tourer. Here was what we wanted, and last November we placed an order in Nairobi for home delivery—only just in time, we found out; our choice was proving popular.

I will hasten over the various incidents, excited enquiries, open admiration, and almost suspicious demands of how had we "wangled" it. One admirer, a layman, asked us if it was American—"the finish is so good." He was right, for M.G.s have taken a little extra trouble, which may easily bring greater than average dollar rewards. Mind you, it isn't "new look," but then my wife and I are still waiting to hear a really plausible excuse for making the majority of quantity-produced English and American cars as they are. It is a type of extreme styling of which I have seen only two examples, both

sports cars, which bear a second look. Still, I am sidetracking a little. To come back to the MG., it is a good, straightforward car. The engine is similar to that of the TC series and, even with the four-seater body, is still powerful enough to give a pleasing performance.

A Birmingham visit expanded to a five-day exploration of the Vale of Arden. Glorious, but we had to push on, and the weather broke when we made our way northwards. After several days of wet in the north-west, when it became obvious that the well-designed hood would let in considerably less water than the brand new saloon of a friend of mine, we made our way to Patterdale in Westmorland. Ostensibly we were merely having a look, but our stay lengthened into a week as the sunny weather returned. To get to Patterdale I had chosen the Kirkstone pass road from Ambleside. Tricky, but easy enough without straining the engine at all. The rev counter placed directly in front of the driver is indeed a boon.

Whilst at Patterdale we walked to the summit of Helvellyn via Striding Edge and back over what I think was Sqaules Edge. The views from the top were faultless and there was no mist at all, but a small shower was obviously on the way so we hastened back.

It is impossible to describe how the Lake District looked after more than three years of what is for the best part of the year parched Africa. We were told there was a drought, but nevertheless here was water and here the grass was green, the trees were green, the hills were green, falling in gentle steps to small farms resting in the valleys; and again there was water—water in streams and water in placid lakes. A drought? Well, maybe.

So off to Langdale Pikes. We stayed at Wall End just



Blea Tarn road from Wall End to Wrynose pass road, with Langdale Pikes in the background.

at the head of the valley, at the point where it bifurcates and becomes Mickleden and Oxendale. The Pikes—that is, Pike o’Stickle and Harrison Stickle—were on our right, Bow Fell in front of us, and Pike o’Biscoe to our left. The weather was warm and dry and the trip from Patterdale to Langdale had been delightful. We had been able to enjoy in full the glorious vistas. When one has the top of one’s car removed it is possible to realize how much the average saloon restricts the vision. To enjoy a mountainous district it should be an open car. We had stopped awhile to gaze at the stone circle near Keswick; interesting, and in the heat of the early summer sun one could realize why our primitive ancestors looked upon the sun as all-powerful.

Thirlmere always strikes me as a sombre-looking stretch of water, and even in the sun it still possessed that appearance. Grasmere seemed much more attractive. At Ambleside we turned right towards the Langdales and followed the road to just beyond Dungeon Ghyll, and now we were at Wall End, in one of the remote areas of the Lake District.

The next day we decided to have a look at Scafell and Scafell Pike. A small guidebook said that incomparable views of these would be obtained from the top of Hardknott Fell. “Too easy,” said I. “We’ll take the car to the top of Hardknott pass and then walk to the top of the fell.” This meant navigating the road from Wall End to the bottom of the Wrynose pass road, climbing Wrynose, dropping down into the Duddon, and then climbing the Hardknott pass towards Eskdale. The car was well run-in by this time.

Hardknott is hard work because of the numerous hair pin bends necessitating numerous starts from dead slow. The steepest gradient is 1 in 4, and the whole is not much

easier than this. Short, sharp and furious would describe it. The notice at the bottom of Hardknott pass says, “Winding route with acute S bends. Steepest gradient 1 in 4.” We set off on this last leg of our short trip and in no time were at the top. No trouble at all; no other cars on Hardknott. In fact, the only life we did see was a number of cows, one of which became intensely interested in our car, and a motor cyclist, who seemed a little surprised to see us there.

I would not for one moment say that other cars cannot easily gain the summit of Hardknott pass, but the way in which the car handled, the manner in which the brakes maintained perfect control of the descent, led me to believe that at last I have acquired a real car. The coil spring suspension in front is excellent.

We walked to the top of Hardknott Fell and enjoyed the majestic sight that met us—the whole Scafell ridge. It is almost incredible the way in which the proportions of some of these fells lead you to believe them to be much larger than they are. Mountains five times the size of these look no bigger.

Afterwards we successfully navigated our way back to Wall End. The only car we saw at the summit of Wrynose pass was an M.G. TC series, driven by a suitably attired gent who, after salutation, sped on his way. It struck me then how much safer I felt with the slightly greater clearance the tourer seemed to have.

I am clearance — conscious. I holed the sump of my last car on the Belgian Congo – Uganda border and lost all my engine oil whilst in consultation with a beer-drinking Customs Officer, who later charged me overtime for spoiling his lunch.

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