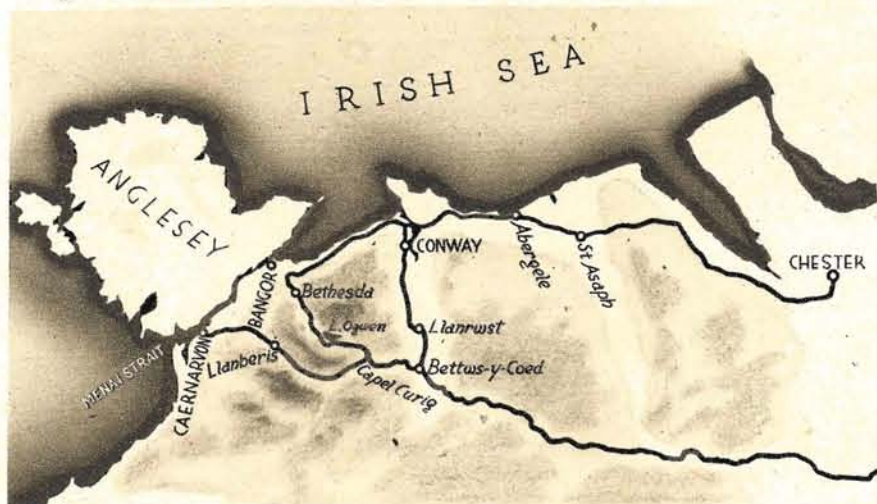




The coast road between Conway and Bangor, with the M.G. stripped for the sun.



The picturesque quayside adjacent to Conway Castle and the suspension bridge.



TOURING THE PRINCIPALITY
WITH A 1½-LITRE M.G.

by JOHN URBANE BULL

PLEASANT

TO appreciate the good and bad points of an old country one has to live in a new. When I first went to Kenya I had eyes and ears only for my new country. The vastness and barren majesty of Africa had and still have an irresistible appeal for me. But after a time I found myself thinking of old castles, ancient city walls, mature houses, and those places and ideas where man and time have combined to produce something we can loosely call tradition. Such places as Chester, the gateway to North Wales.

Chester is a monument to 2,000 years of human effort; a fort of the early Britons, a Roman town, and then Saxon Chester. The latter 1,000 years have seen much strife and battle, and as late as 1867 a group of Fenians attempted to gain control of the castle. The city wall is about two miles long and extraordinarily complete, it being possible to walk the whole circuit.

Many of my earlier holidays had been spent in North Wales roaming the hills, rock-climbing and swimming, and I determined to return. Besides, our new 1½-litre M.G., I feel certain, would have gone there of its own accord had it been possessed of a free will. Cars are like that. There are those that are meant to be driven along safe, smooth roads, mainly in built-up areas, and preferably with the occupants soberly attired. Not so the M.G. Something tougher and more exacting was demanded and above all the occupants must not dress like normal people, otherwise how are they to keep up with the current conception of sports-car types? Anyway there we were, bowling along the road from Chester to St. Asaph. Not exactly a propitious start, with rather more rain than we wished for. We were bound for Ogwen Lake Cottage. For the rock-climbing fraternity no other explanation is necessary; for the uninitiated the name of the house gives a clue to its whereabouts.

From St. Asaph we dropped down to Abergele and the

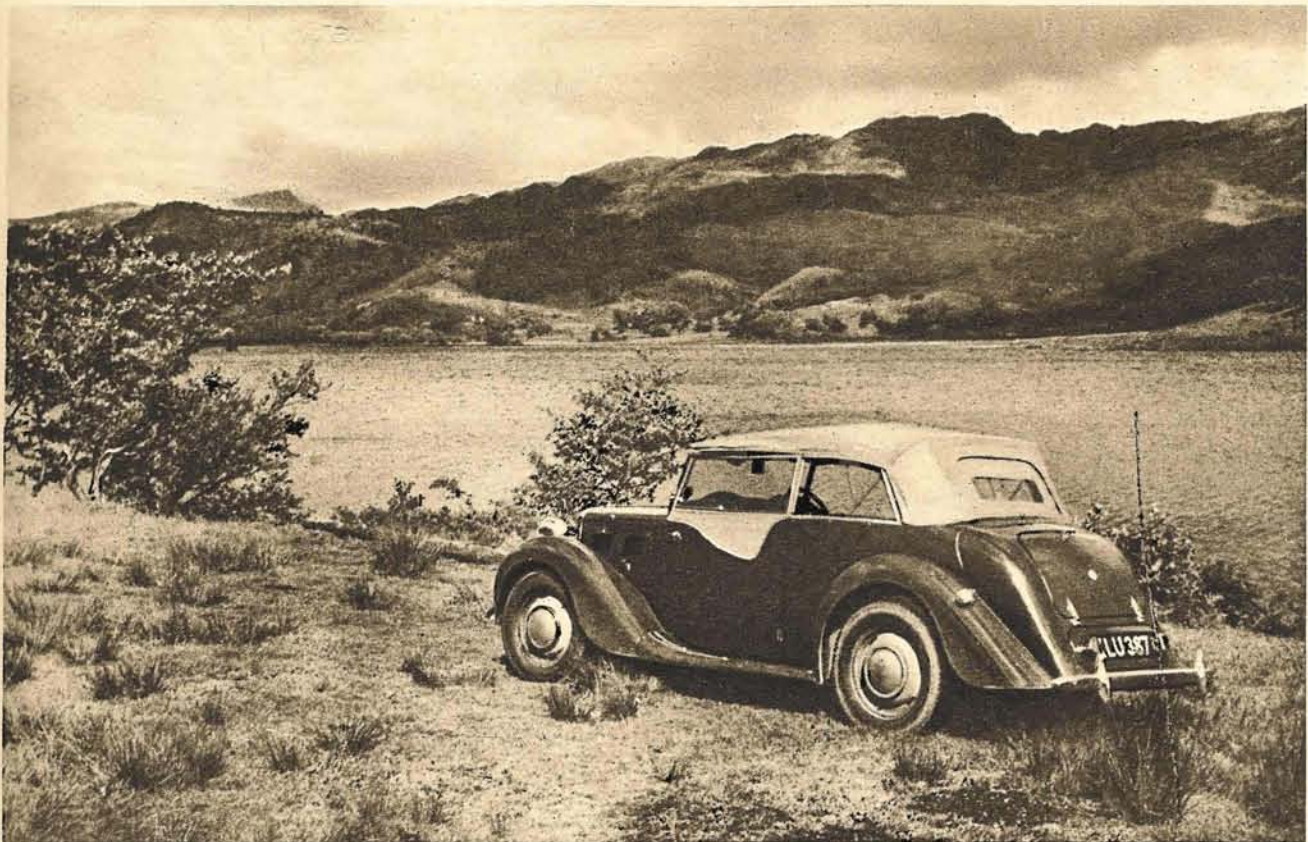
coast road. Beyond Conway it is truly a coast road. It battles with the railway for pride of place to see who shall be the first to dive into the sea. Neither actually does, but in several places one is supremely aware that the road has been engineered, and that the sea and the mountains have been told, "Stay, this is a road built by man for the use of man."

So we moved along admiring the sea, Puffin Island, and then Anglesey and the Menai Straits. We turned sharply inland just before Bangor, to Bethesda and beyond along A5, the main Holyhead-London road. It was still raining—but it was North Wales.

Fortunately, the rain cleared away during the night and next morning it was fine beyond measure, an ideal day for walking, an ideal day for idling about in a car with the hood and side curtains stripped down. What should it be?

We opted for a leisurely cruise around the beauty spots; so off down to Capel Curig. On the way, a coach loaded to capacity overtook us at something like 50 m.p.h., bent, presumably, on "doing" North Wales over lunch-time. Its destination became obvious when we passed the famed Swallow Falls.

To those who want a pleasant walk and a different view of the falls I would recommend them to continue down the road towards Bettws-y-Coed for another mile and then turn in left at the Forestry saw-mill entrance. Park the car and walk down, passing to the left of the saw-mill, and crossing the Conway river by the wooden erection that does duty as a bridge. After the bridge turn left up-stream on the lower path and climb steadily by a most delightful track through the rustling conifer plantations until you are opposite the falls. For the surefooted a descent can be made down the river bank to the farthest point, where the whole roaring river—flowing eastward, of course—awaits you.



A lakeside halt inland from the North Wales coast.

PLACES in WALES

The rest of the day we spent idling slowly along to Llanrwst, to Conway where we inspected the castle and the quayside, and then back along the coast road; we just had to have another look at that road.

Another pleasant day was spent motoring to Pen-y-Gwryd, via Capel Curig, and over the wild Llanberis Pass to Caernarvon. At Caernarvon the castle is a "must." I think it is the combination of wild, mountain scenery and glorious sea-shores, with the ancient history of the many castles that are found all over North Wales, that make the whole so attractive. From the towers of Caernarvon Castle one can see it all: inland the mighty mountains, in the foreground the sea and sands, and at one's side the stone parapets of history.

After several days of heavy rain, during which we slipped and slithered over the wet rocks of Tryfan, we decided to return to Cambridge. The return trip was carried out in heavy rain along what must be one of the poorest main roads in England—A.5. We were not in any great hurry and yet we took only six hours from start to finish. I suppose one is always enthusiastic about a new car; one likes to think one's choice is beyond reproach. Yet attempting to give fair comment I would say that the 1½-litre M.G. tourer is nearly, if not entirely, a car that cruises at 60 m.p.h. A magical phrase, "cruise at 60," but for a small car it becomes even more magical. Under even conditions the speedometer reached about 75, or perhaps slightly higher.

Still, I must not enthuse too much. During most of the trip that day the needle hovered around 60 and with complete mental and physical ease on the part of my wife and myself. The road-holding qualities are so good as to be beyond praise. I enjoyed being able to place my car on the road with complete accuracy. It is a car with personality, and as such to be cared for at a time when cars are tending to lose that personality.

Snowdonian peak, summit brushed by cloud.

