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Motoring For Fun – A Welsh Adventure with two cars – and parting with a much-loved Jaguar on its way to a new life in Ireland...

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'Giles' Jaguar pausing at Magor Services (currently with building work going on!) on the



[M4, en route for mid-Wales.](#)

Kim Henson describes how a planned long weekend trip to mid-Wales turned into a slightly more complicated excursion over a much longer distance...

(All words and photographs © Kim Henson).

The Wales Adventure – setting the scene

Last week my wife Elaine and I went adventuring in Wales, initially for just one day in the company of fellow members of the Guild of Motoring Writers (and their partners), who were taking part in a variety of their own vehicles (indeed, the event was called the 'Bring Your Own Vehicle Day'). However, things became a little more complex, but still fun and very enjoyable...

I should explain at the outset that originally we had planned to take our Austin A60 on the Wales excursion, but things changed when I sold a car (oh yes I did!), and our dear old 1995 Jaguar X300 3.2 Sport ('Giles') was destined to go to Ireland. The new owner and his wife had booked to fly over to a UK airport relatively near us, then catch the train the last 40 miles or so to our home town, in order to drive Giles to Holyhead to catch a ferry to Dublin. However... Storm Amy decided to play her hand, so the plans had to change as the Dublin to UK flight was cancelled and we weren't sure when the collection could go ahead.

In a 'light bulb' moment it occurred to me that as we were driving to mid-Wales anyway, if my wife Elaine and I took two cars (one of which being the Jaguar, the other our Honda Civic), the day after the Guild adventure we could pop on up to Holyhead to deliver the X300 there. Giles' new owners would then need only to hop on a ferry as foot passengers, and drive the car home via a ferry to Dublin (rather than having to take a flight and then a train journey to pick it up, followed by a 330 mile drive to Holyhead).

Was this a silly idea of mine? Could we even do it? Would we be able to get to Holyhead (a further 140 miles or so on from our mid-Wales base) by lunchtime on the appointed day, in



time to liaise with Giles' buyers before they had to board their Dublin-bound ferry with the car, and with just a short timespan available? How would Elaine get on driving the Honda over such a long distance, this being the first occasion for her to drive more than a few miles in the car?

Decision made, we just 'went for it'. This is how it all worked out...

To Wales for 'Part One' - the first full day - of our adventure...

We covered the 165 mile journey from our home to mid-Wales the day before the Guild 'Bring Your Own Vehicle' adventure day, to be ready early the next morning. I was at the wheel of the X300, which was purring like a Jaguar should, and Elaine was driving the Honda, the first time she had driven it any distance, but she enjoyed the journey.

Now sadly, and rather annoyingly, the Jaguar's newly-installed in-tank fuel pump had started to 'buzz' intermittently on our drive to Llandrindod Wells, so although, thankfully, the unit was still pumping petrol as designed, we reluctantly decided to 'rest' the car during the Guild's adventure day, to give the car the best chance of reaching Holyhead the next day. In truth, if the pump had failed, there would have been little or no chance of me fixing it at the edge of the road, especially if under time pressure.

The Guild event day started in Llandrindod Wells in Powys, at the National Cycle Museum for the whole of the UK, and which happens to be located in Wales. It is housed in the wonderful old 'Automobile Palace' dating from the early years of the 20th Century, and built for Tom Norton, a local transport entrepreneur. Still proudly adorning this fascinating building in bold lettering are the company name, plus 'No. 2 Garage', 'Cycles', 'Motors', 'Aircraft' and 'Accessories'.



[The National Cycle Museum.](#)

We were given an enjoyable in-depth guided tour of the cycle museum by the friendly and knowledgeable volunteer team, showing us examples of cycles and how they developed, from the 1818 'Hobby Horse' to modern machines.



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This museum is well worth a visit if you are in the area; their phone number is (01597) 825531 and their website is: <https://cyclemuseum.org.uk/>

The town itself is also fascinating to explore (which Elaine and I did on foot), notably for its wealth of beautiful Victorian buildings.

Next stop for participants, with Elaine and I aboard our Civic, was the Elan Valley Visitor Centre, where lunch was enjoyed, followed by a scenic drive through the picturesque Elan Valley and on to Newtown, where we visited the workshops of 'Electric Classic Cars'; Tel. (01686) 807307; website: <https://www.electricclassiccars.co.uk/>



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A view experienced on our Elan Valley scenic route.



Classic Mini, 'electrified' by Electric Classic Cars at Newtown.

While personally I am happy to keep my classics running on their original type petrol engines, it was interesting to see and find out about the work being carried out by this firm converting a range of classic models to electric propulsion. The conversions cover everything from diminutive cars such as the Mini and Fiat 500 to Land Rover Defenders to Volkswagens, Porsches and other sporty machinery.

The original external appearance of the vehicles after conversion is retained and the conversions are all 'bolt-on' in nature, so that if ever required the car can be converted back to original specification with a petrol engine. If you are interested, conversion prices start at about £75,000.



Our single day event ended in the late afternoon, but Elaine and I returned to Llandrindod Wells for another evening, enjoying further exploration of the town, which led us to a lovely garage building that was once the home to a Rootes Group dealership. It is now a tyre sales outlet, but thankfully around its walls it retains the names of the individual Rootes makes – just wonderful to behold!



Above: Great to discover, a real Post Office! Pictured here at night, in Llandrindod Wells.



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Above: Fabulous ex Rootes Group dealership premises in Llandrindod Wells.

From mid-Wales to Holyhead; 'Part Two' of our Welsh adventure.

The next morning Elaine and I set off north-westwards in a two car convoy, with me driving the Jaguar (and enjoying every second) and Elaine following in our Honda. The Jaguar's fuel pump had decided to run quietly once more, and the car was truly a joy to drive as we headed up through the beautiful landscape of Snowdonia towards Anglesey. With their long gradients (both up and down), sweeping bends and excellent surfaces, the roads on this part of our trip ensured that the drive was most enjoyable and I was reminded once again what an excellent driving machine the X300 is.



A welcome coffee stop was made at the lovely Tŷ Cemaes shop (thoroughly recommended) in the village of Cemmaes, near Dolgellau, during which we discovered from Giles' buyers that alas the fuel pump on their modern car had failed, resulting in the couple missing their intended ferry. (Luckily he and I both saw the funny side of me worrying about my 30 year old Jaguar's petrol pump intermittently making a noise, but still working perfectly, while the fuel pump in his 'modern' had given up completely, leaving him stranded on a Dublin motorway!). Therefore, instead of the planned handover of the Jaguar at Holyhead being at around 2.30pm it was now going to be more like 8.30pm - a shame, but it did mean that Elaine and I could take our time to enjoy our picturesque journey even more, through the afternoon.





'Giles' resting in Cemmaes during a coffee stop.

We stopped in Porthmadog (Portmadoc) for a walk through the town and, following a tip-off from a lady parking her car next to ours, we enjoyed a fabulous fish and chip lunch (in the Portmeirion Shop/Café), then continued via Caenarfon (Caenarvon) to Anglesey, where we found a pleasant garden centre for a cuppa.



'Giles' parked next to the Civic in Porthmadog (Portmadoc).



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Wonderful mountain views from Porthmadog (Portmadoc).



With dusk soon to arrive, the last stop on our journey to Holyhead was at an Anglesey garden centre for a cuppa.

Arriving just before nightfall in Holyhead, following another tip-off from another lady in the garden centre visited earlier, we found a pleasant local pub ('The Standing Stones') where we had a bite to eat and awaited Giles' buyers to arrive at the ferry port, just three minutes away.

We were able to collect them in the Jaguar at 8.30pm, and they were genuinely excited and pleased to 'meet' the car, as we were to meet them. We all returned to the pub to sort out the paperwork, with only half an hour to do this and have a chat before they had to set off for the port to catch their ferry.



I felt a hefty twinge of sadness as I watched Giles' lights disappearing towards the Dublin-bound night ferry, but I feel very happy that the car has gone to a good home. I was delighted to receive a message the next day from Giles' new owners, saying that all was well, they had arrived home without incident, and that they were pleased with the car.

I was also relieved and happy that, despite its sometimes audible fuel pump, the Jaguar had driven impeccably to, and through, Wales, and I was thankful that I had the opportunity to drive the car on just one more brilliant road trip adventure, among so many enjoyed in the car over the last 10 years.





There was no time to dwell on parting with Giles, for with another 330 miles or so to travel, Elaine and I had to set off homewards into the night in our Honda (which I also find a very enjoyable car to drive, especially on long journeys).

Verdict... Sad but pleased...

Despite the logistical challenges, this automotive adventure turned out to be wonderful, both in terms of the originally planned 'Bring Your Own Vehicle' event in mid-Wales (for which grateful thanks to organiser Simon), and the extended drive to Holyhead and home again.

I was very reluctant to part with the X300, but if I am honest, I had too many cars to maintain, and I felt that I needed to concentrate on the older classics that I have owned for many years.

That said, I always wanted to own a Jaguar and had the privilege of being custodian of the incomparable 'Giles' for 10 years and loved the vehicle. Crucially important for me, I am pleased that the X300 has gone to enthusiastic new owners who really wanted the car. That's a happy result.

Last but not least, a few facts and figures:

Giles Jaguar covered more than 300 miles to reach Holyhead, and had averaged better than 40 miles per gallon; remarkably good for a 30 year old sporty six cylinder saloon, I feel.



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The Honda clocked up 715 miles over four days, and averaged 72.5 mpg; I was delighted with this too!



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Jaguar and Honda together in the village of Cemmaes near Dolgellau.