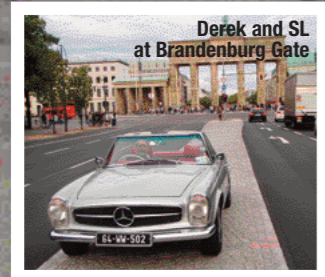


BERLIN

AUGUST 2011



Derek and SL at Brandenburg Gate

In the Spring it was announced that Mercedes would be having a celebration event for the 125th anniversary of Mercedes Benz (MB) and the motor car. It was to be held at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, 1000 miles from Dublin, at the end of August. The UK MB club organised accommodation at the Mercure Templehof and a half-way stop in Hamm in the Ruhr, both having good covered parking!

This sounded a unique event so we signed up and decided to make it a three week holiday. After much planning and squeezing luggage into the boot of our 1964 Pagoda, we set off. First stop was a rally for SL cars at Berkley Castle, near Bristol, which has been inhabited by the same family for 900 years, the guided tour pointing out that while Windsor Castle was older, the family there had changed. About 300 cars, four from Ireland, gathered in the lovely grounds and driving tests (at slow speed) were held. Disturbingly Carol beat me in this but we didn't win. After this we stayed with friends in Clevedon and Oxshott.

By DEREK MITCHELL

Our three children had arranged that we would spend our 40th Wedding Anniversary in the Isle of Wight as our daughter, Clodagh, does a lot of sailing there. We spent a day walking the attractive Coastal Path and they hired a J109 racing yacht for the Saturday and naturally we had a great time. After staying with each of the bridesmaids of 40 years ago we then crossed to Dunkirk and stayed a night at a town near Antwerp. Flemish Towns all have a lovely square with smartly dressed people cycling around.

Next we spent two nights at Hamm and took a rest day from driving and went cycling on canals which were surprisingly attractive for the Ruhr. Most young people we met said they wanted to leave the town but it seemed okay to me.

We were joined by Turlough Mullen and Máire Ní Shéalaigh in a 1965 230SL "Pagoda" and Jim and Ivor Murphy, in a 1970 280SE Coupe 3.5, who drove 11 hours directly from

Cherbourg. Next day we set out for the five hour drive to Berlin. On the Autobahns we cruised at 60/65 mph which was just faster than the trucks, this was fine as long as one didn't stray too long in the fast lane where many hurtled past! Both the Ruhr and the Berlin Orbital Motorway were complex and busy. I don't know how people navigated before sat nav. In some places there were three junctions within a mile, some in tunnels and with traffic moving fast you had to be in the right lane. We left the car at Tempelhof on the Friday with about 1,000 other classic cars from all over Europe, including a large contingent from Poland. Jim and Ivor stayed and having chatted to MB staff over a few beers, they arranged for a Maybach to take them to the hotel, but we had taken the bus!

Tempelhof was the worlds' largest structure (superceded by the Pentagon) when built by Hitler even having underground plane maintenance. The free admission event was well attended by the public and had lots of attractions:

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MOTOR CAR AND MERCEDES



The Irish contingent!



Carol, Derek and their daughters getting some rays!



Maybachs new and old

About 30 cars drove from the UK and Ireland and apart from a 170D of the 1950's ours was the oldest. After leaving Templehoff on the Sunday evening the three Irish cars went to the Brandenburg Gate



- The five Silver Arrows, Grand Prix winning cars, originally driven by Carricola, Fangio and Stirling Moss, from the 1930's and 50's driving around a circuit. Great sights, smells and sounds. Many queued up for fast AMG rides around this circuit.
- Participation in Smart electric car driving and S Class 'automatic stopping' all on handling circuits, truck stability demos, Unimog demo.
- An 'innovations' displays of classic and modern equivalent cars side by side, Gullwings, Maybachs etc.
- The current range of cars and cars from MB museums.
- Guided tours of the airport.

and Reichstag, stopped in the middle of the road and took photographs with Carol standing in the line of traffic! Berlin was surprisingly reasonably priced and full of good modern architecture.

We visited Potsdam, the Kaisers' palace, which had declined under East Germany but was now well restored and the VW Wolfsburg factory, virtually a city, on the way back. The production line tour showed far more robots than people making Golfs. The Museum had ground breaking cars of all makes and was particularly interesting. Then we spent four nights at Bad Karlshafen, a baroque town founded by Huguenots on the Weser River, which had good cycling and walking paths

clearly marked with directions and distances. A surprisingly rural area for North Germany with attractive villages and unpowered river ferries, operating on the power of the river flow by angling the boat to the current.

Overall we arrived back after three weeks, ten different beds and 2,700 miles in a 47-year-old car!



SL's, first and latest

