

Bo' drives coast-to-coast – and beyond

22nd – 28th June 2006



Ribblehead viaduct



Remains of ancestral home

Boanerges has been out and about again this summer, in one of the most daring cross-country trips to be undertaken since his memorable London to Paris centenary drive in 2002. This time the main challenge was the English 'coast-to coast', from Whitby to Blackpool, then beyond.

Back in April, the car had been looking tired. Relatively little repair work had been done for 2-3 years and the list of outstanding jobs was getting longer all the time. At Easter the engine was removed, the opportunity being taken at the same time to send the two rear wheels away for repair since they had become cracked and bruised. All was quiet during the April and May exam period, but in June the frenzied rebuild began.

The paint was barely dry on the new rear wheels as 'Team Bo' eventually set off for North Yorkshire in the early hours of Saturday 24th June. Travelling through the night, we eventually arrived on the quayside at Whitby, and duly set about preparing the car for the first leg. Expecting the car just 'to go' after so little re-commissioning was perhaps optimistic. But after several false starts, some re-aligning of the clutch linkage and a small engine fire – Bo was underway!

The first major challenge came rather sooner than desired. Pottering the first few miles over gently rolling hills, the car felt good – plenty of power. But soon after honking and waving through the picturesque coastal village of Lythe, it became clear why onlookers had been looking so concerned. Bo was now about to pay the price for the gentle 2-3 mile descent out of Whitby with half a mile of 1-in-4. Into first gear he went, and remarkably, Lythe bank was accomplished without even slipping out of gear.

Onward then through Guisborough, Northallerton and Bedale until eventually we made camp at West Witton, just outside Leyburn. In the morning, Bo continued through the stunning scenery of the Yorkshire Dales, passing Hawes, Chapel le Dale, stopping to admire the famous Ribblehead viaduct – and a well-earned cup of tea. As we rolled along, everything seemed to combine perfectly to allow a most spirited run over the fells – magic!

The 'coast-to-coast' part of this trip was completed on Monday 26th as we arrived in Blackpool. Deciding that we could probably do without the expensive rides at the pleasure beach, we opted instead for a quick pint on the pier, a ride on the tram, before saying farewell to our loyal 'support crew' of ex-drivers. Bo was then put on the trailer again, before setting off for Telford and the beginning of 'stage two'.

Our first objective on Tuesday morning was to reunite Bo with his very first home, or rather, the remains of it. Tong Castle in Shropshire had once been a fine country house but was eventually blown up in 1954, having been derelict since around 1910. All that remains of the house today are a few walls and arches buried in the extensive woodland, which is used as a paintball range. And just to prove how some things change very little in 100 years – we were remarkable spotted driving through nearby Shifnal by the great-great-granddaughter of Bo's original owner.

Unfortunately our grand tour of 2006 was soon to be abruptly ended on Wednesday 28th June when, having reached Stratford-upon-Avon via the Severn Valley and Worcester, we discovered a fracture in one of the engine mounting beams. Although not 'catastrophic', to go on was clearly out of the question, and so we decided to call it quits. Disappointing in some ways, but there was much to be proud of. If Bo had a 'clock', we'd have put around 240 miles on it. That's London to Brighton – four times!

David Horton
15th August 2006

More pictures of Bo's trip can be found on www.teambo.fotopic.net.

For further information about Boanerges see
<http://www.cgcu.net/motor/bo.php>

For further information about Tong Castle see
<http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/listed/tong.htm>

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