



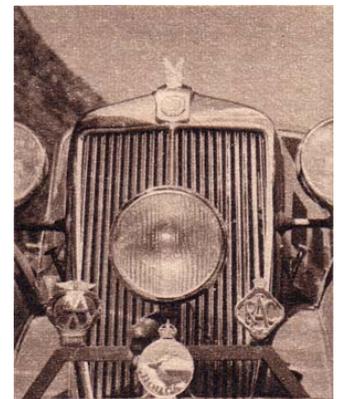
On the way through the Stolheim gorge, the road running alongside the river. The climb up the cliff-side comes later!

The 1 ¼-litre M.G. now carries a Norwegian reindeer badge in the place of honour between the A.A. and R.A.C. emblems. The butterfly on the radiator cap is a Lalique glass mascot

NORWEGIAN VENTURE

A 1¼ LITRE M.G. IN THE LAND OF THE CHRISTMAS TREE

by "Longships"



NORWAY is not for the speed enthusiast or those who enjoy covering long distances in the day — neither the roads nor the terrain permit such indulgences. But for an exhilarating holiday spent amidst the grandest scenery from snow-clad mountains to peaceful landlocked fjords — Norway cannot be surpassed. That it is exhilarating is amply proved by the high-spirited hand-waves one receives from other cars, particularly those bearing a G.B. plate, and it was evident that if we found Norway an "adventure," so also did they.

Too few British cars are to be seen at present, but the number is increasing yearly. The visitor from these islands will find, moreover, that he is given an exceptionally friendly welcome, which in turn engenders a warm personal regard for one's Norwegian hosts, whose way of life is so akin to our own.

Norway is a mountainous country and care in driving,

therefore, is essential, particularly so in view of the narrowness of the roads combined with frequent bends and, in general, a poor surface. At the same time touring in Norway is perfectly safe, and well within the capabilities of even the smallest car.

Bergen is the usual port of entry from Britain; the North Sea crossing from Newcastle takes about 20 hours. The city, both the old and the new, we found fascinating, and although it is reputed to be always raining (the inhabitants, so it is said, are born with umbrellas!) such is not our impression of Bergen, for during our visit the sun shone with a warmth and brilliance equal to the Mediterranean— though far more bracing.

Clearing the Customs, our M.G. 1¼ litre proceeded along the Tyskebryggen, or German Quay, past the picturesque timber-built houses which still remain from the days when the Hanseatic League reigned supreme in the city and thence

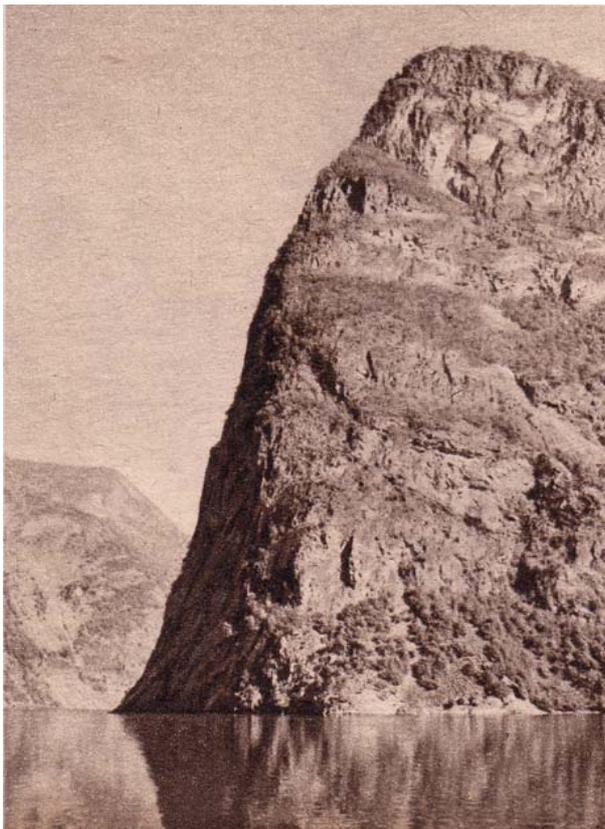
Descent from the plateau beyond Lake Holm towards Balestrand, with Jöstedal glacier visible across the valley



Below: A view that is expressive of all that the imagination pictures concerning Norway. Sheer cliffs rising from still fjords. This tremendous bluff towers above the Naeröy fjord

through modern Bergen into the open country beyond.

Norheimsund, or Hardangerfjord, a run of about 60 miles, was our first day's objective, and it proved a good introduction to Norwegian road conditions and scenery, including as it did the noted Tokagjel gorge, where the narrow, winding road clings — somewhat precariously, we thought — to the



rocky face of the mountain. The most hazardous looking sections, however, have now been superseded by three lengthy tunnels, where surfacing of the roadway was still in progress in the beams of lorries' head lights.

At Norheimsund we awoke to find the early sun glinting on the calm waters of the fjord, the distant mountains softly outlined through the summer haze — an idyllic scene. Later, after an appetizing Norwegian breakfast, we continued along the fjord and over the mountain beyond Granvin to reach the homely little ferry at Ulvik, where one drives on, facing outboard, and from the front seats of the car can enjoy in complete comfort the hour's run down the fjord to Brimnes.

Here the mountains close in so much that we wondered that there could be any outlet for a road. But there was, and soon, skirting the lakeside by Eidfjord, we commenced the long and steep climb upwards through the famous Måbødal, the road twisting and turning continuously for some 11 miles, reaching a height of 3,700 feet. The 1¼-litre took it comfortably, mostly in second gear, and it was pleasing to find that the engine temperature did not rise above 75 deg C, normal running being 68-70 degrees.

Unfortunately cloud and mist gave little opportunity for observing the scenery towards the top, but one glimpse we had, looking back down the gorge, gave a vivid impression of the height we had reached. Later, during the descent to Geilo, with the sun again shining, the road crossed a wide mountain torrent, the roaring mass of rushing white water, flecked with patches of pale glacier green, presenting a spectacle to which only an artist could do justice; it was typical of Norway's rivers.

From Geilo, in brilliant sunshine, so warm that we were glad to open wide all the windows of the car, we continued down Hallingdal to Gol, where a road branches off to Helmesdal, rising through pine woods to the plateau and keeping always by the river — peaceful in places but often foaming down between the mountain lakes. Everywhere



Up amongst the snow as the road approaches Djupvasshytta the M.G. pauses beside a partly frozen lake

Nature looked her loveliest, but even better lay ahead, as the road descended between precipitous mountains to meet the sea again at Laerdal, on Sognefjord.

We halted to enjoy the scene, and left the M.G. temporarily unattended. But she had been observed by other, inquisitive eyes, and on our return there we spied a baby elk with its little nose almost touching the car, wondering, no doubt, what sort of strange creature it had met. A picture was attempted, but with a few graceful leaps the elk was off, up the mountainside — we were too late! At Börgund, farther down the valley, there is to be seen the 12th-century wooden stave church, beautifully designed and ornamented — one of the few Norwegian churches belonging to this period that still remain.

From Laerdal the car ferry took us to Kaupanger, on the north shore of the fjord, and it was here that we met the little English family who from the registration number of their Austin A.90, came to be known to us as the “Emu’s.” Thereafter we frequently met, the Austin being easily recognizable by the reindeer horns decorating its bonnet. A happy *rencontre*, enabling us to exchange notes — and of a musical nature, too, when Godfrey, the youngest “Emu,” became the proud possessor of a pair of cow bells. We

should not repeat this, but sad to relate, the cow bells subsequently became confiscated!

At Sogndal, beyond Kaupanger, the M.G. headed inland towards the Jutenheimen or “Home of the Giants,” the road rising steeply on to the plateau amidst the wildest scenery, frozen, snow-covered lakes being passed on either side. It is, in fact, the highest through mountain road in Northern Europe, reaching 4,690 feet. By a more gradual descent we came to Elvesaeter, where we found an hotel of which the interior decoration and furnishings were carried out in traditional Norwegian style. The very charming female staff were, in addition, dressed in national costume of elaborate and colourful design; altogether a very happy choice of an hotel.

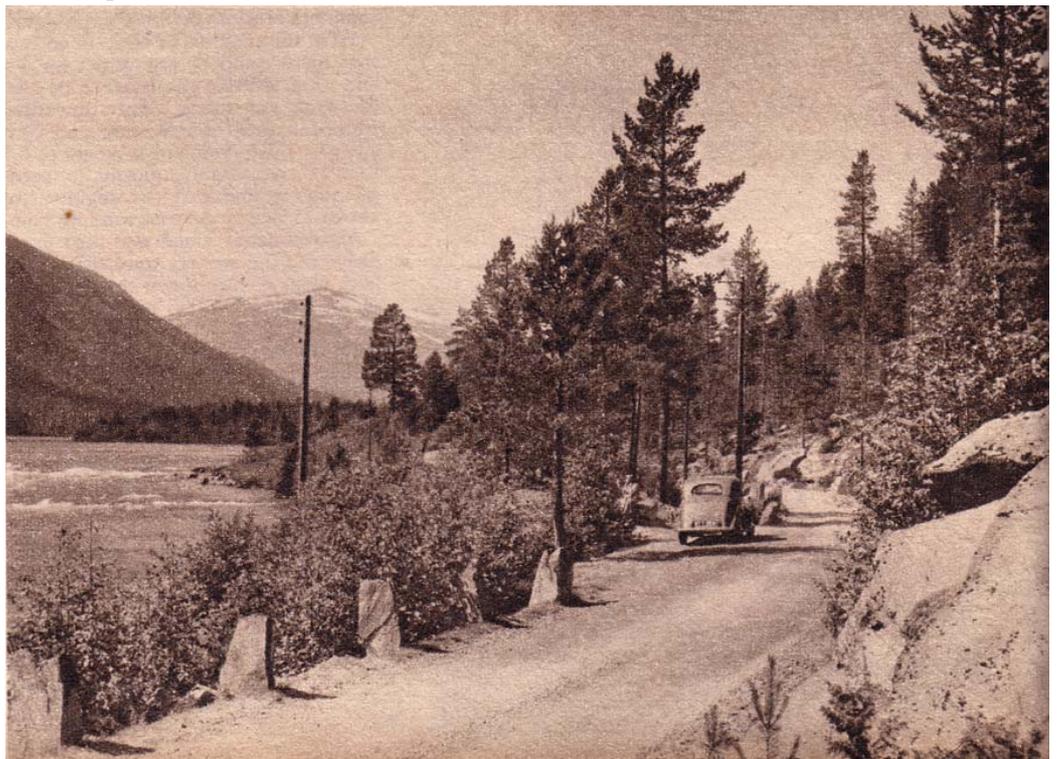
Then came perhaps the most memorable day of our Norwegian venture. Our road at first followed the river to Lom, where it met the main road to Geiranger, through Grotli. It is a fast road for Norway, but with a loose, stony surface, of which we were made all the more aware when an overtaking car threw up a stone that left a permanent mark on the M.G.’S rear door and wing, the impact being both unexpected and alarming.

Beyond Grotli, past lakes still covered in ice-floes, we came to the remote hamlet of Djupvasshytta, whence a quite remarkable toll-road has been constructed to the very summit of Dalsnibba mountain, 5,400 feet. A charge of 5 kroner is made — it is worth it!

Going Up

There is nothing hazardous about the climb, but one does seem to be reaching heavenwards in remarkably quick time even though, for considerations of safety, in low gear. It would be a very *blasé* driver (or passenger) to whom the ascent failed to give a thrill. The view from the top, where there is ample room to turn (but no protective barrier!), is most impressive. All around are snow-clad peaks and ice-fields; some of these one actually looks down on, while far below a tiny white ribbon marks the road as it winds in almost incredible curves ultimately to reach sea level down at the fjord at Geiranger.

On very exceptional occasions the M.G. is allowed to fly her own particular little White Ensign, and Dalsnibba was,

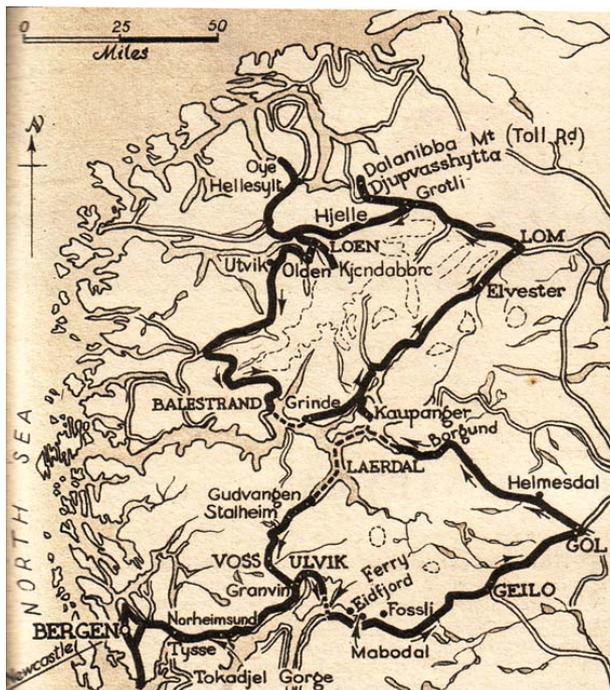


Down by the lakesides the scenery is friendly. This is the typical Norwegian road that runs through Helmesdal

we felt, such an occasion, the Norwegian flag on its lofty staff, marking the summit, providing an appropriate background.

Returning to Grotli a rough and narrow road, with the snow piled high in places on either side, leads over the plateau to Videseter, where it descends steeply by many twists to the luxuriantly green valley at Hjelle, continuing thence by Stryn Lake to Loen, which is at the head of the Nordfjord.

At Loen we broke our journey for a few days, exploring Loen Lake and visiting the Kjenndalsbre, a spur of the great Jöstedal icefield, the largest in Europe. The walk to the foot of the glacier, through a wild, boulder-strewn cleft in the mountains, with watercourses spanned only by a single insecure plank, repays one in full for the roughness of the going.



Another enjoyable day's run brought us to Hellesylt, on Geirangerfjord, past typical Norwegian turf-roofed farms where we watched the special breed of fjord ponies, fawn coloured with close-cropped manes, bringing in the harvest. There was, too, the remote but fascinating by-road through Norangsdalen to Oye, where sheer precipices of rock dwarfed the car and Slogden mountain reared its pinnacled tip nearly 5,000 feet into the sky.

Leaving the Nordfjord behind, the M.G. made a fast climb

up the many zig-zags over Utvikfjelle, the surface being good and the road itself of unusual width. Thence we came to Jölstervaten and the picturesque village of Skei, its tall spired church reflected in the quiet waters of the lake. Subsequently, as the miles went by, an increasing hunger marred our appreciation at the scenery until, reaching the summit of the pass over Rörvik mountain, we happily came upon a wayside café where our needs were most satisfyingly met.

There followed a long gradual climb to the shores of Lake Holm, remote but beautiful in its mountain setting. Then, with dramatic suddenness, a bend in the road brought into view a vista of majestic mountains, directly ahead, of such grandeur that we literally gasped at the surprise of it.

Below us our road twisted and turned in tortuous curves 2,000 feet down into the valley and so, almost breathless, we came to Balestrand, on the Sognefjord. There for the whole of one day we lazed in the sun by the fjord, our feet dangling in the warm, limpid blue water, the pine trees giving us shade. As the poet Omar might have said, it were heaven enough!

On the next stage of our journey the M.G. forsook dry land almost entirely, leaving Balestrand for an hour's run up the fjord to Grinde, after which a few miles of road brought us again to Kaupanger, where we re-embarked for a further three hours' voyage to Gudvangen, at the head of Naeröyfjord. With precipitous mountains on either side and ever-changing views to be seen from the deck of the ferry, the passage up the narrow, winding fjord is one that leaves an indelible impression.

Gudvangen possesses a small but comfortable hotel, and from it, next morning, we set forth along by the river up the famous Stalheim gorge, wondering how the steep climb at the end, which makes the ascent of the Stalheim cliff, would suit the M.G.

It is steep, climbing in zig-zags to a height of 1,640 feet in exactly one mile, as recorded on the car's speedometer. The gradient is said to be 1 in 4, but on meeting the "Emu's" later on, at Voss, we were both agreed that it does not compare with Porlock, where the two acute bends really are steep. It would not be fair, or correct, to say that the M.G. laughed at Stalheim, but she was not in any way put out by it. The engine temperature rose to 84 deg C – a record! The view looking back down the gorge is world-famous, and certainly impressive. It came, we felt, as a fitting climax to our Norwegian holiday.

Two days later we were at sea on our way back to England, but firmly resolved that it should not be our last visit to a land where one sees Nature at first hand, and scenery such as we have not met with elsewhere in all our varied wanderings.

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