

THREE MONTHS IN 1969

Mark Brody, Highly Commended

After three years in Zambia, and having got far from home, I wanted to have a little adventure. The Mini I had bought there had another petrol tank for long journeys & the rear seat was replaced by a locked box.

My first objective was to climb Kilimanjaro in Tanzania which was very exciting and I climbed up to the top. It was very cold and very difficult. Unfortunately, today that is not the case due to climate change. On arriving at the very top I had to rest for some time. After recovering, going down was very easy. And a great relief!

My Mini & I sailed to India via the Seychelles. We docked in Mumbai. I retrieved the car and drove north. I saw the Taj Mahal and many other sites. At one I met a woman & asked her if she wanted a guide, meaning I'd share one with her to reduce the cost per person. Looking at my overgrown beard she replied "No thank you!" Once I rented a room but, after finding mice running over me, I paid a little extra somewhere else...

I then drove into Pakistan and I have a vague memory of filling up the petrol tank with aviation fuel! From Peshawar in Pakistan I drove through the Khyber Pass to Kabul in Afghanistan. The boarding house (hardly a hotel) had many rooms, 6 metal beds in each, both sexes together. One thing that initially puzzled me was why no one got up at all early. I think they were stoned on hashish! It was very pleasant sightseeing in the early morning.

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I met a group of roughish young men in Kabul. Two were ex-offenders. They had been going to India but were refused entry. We teamed up to go back to the UK together. We intended to drive in stages from Kabul to Kandahar, thence to Herat. However their Volkswagen broke down and two of them hitched a ride to Kabul for spare parts. People stopped to give us water. In fact we had set up signboard to alert them to our need. Shortly, the lads returned with the necessary parts. All was well and we drove to Herat. The next stage home was driving westwards through Iran. The quickest route was on a very rough pot-holed road. The Mini did not have sufficient clearance for that road. One lad volunteered to come with me. I was delighted. We simply kept going west: Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, & Yugoslavia. I remember the joy of seeing pretty girls with miniskirts – a joy after the covered faces in Iran. It was a simple matter to drive through Austria, Germany, France, then across the channel HOME! The customs officer asked me what I had to declare I said “nothing”. “What about the car?!” I’d forgotten that I’d bought it in Zambia. He didn’t charge me though. The car was on its last wheels! It was short drive to my mother’s house.