

Legendary for his pipe, that beard and the occasional convict style haircut, Jim Milne stood down from the RGBB Board recently to start to plan his 'Exit Only'. We asked Jim for a note on what it was he was deciding to do.

It all started as a very casual remark two years ago when we started to think it was time to leave the Magic Kingdom. "Why don't we drive back?" sounded a great deal less daunting than it does now just two months before departure. However the excitement is building and the prospect of a couple of months exploring a whole new range of experiences and countries is something we are looking forward to immensely.

The first obstacle to overcome was a vehicle to take back. A Suburban certainly has the required space and is really remarkably cheap out here but the thought of a 5.7 litre engine guzzling huge amounts of petrol and the embarrassment of having the beast parked outside our house in Annan soon ruled that idea out. Margaret made only one stipulation, she had the final say on the colour but this also seemed to rule out a shiny black Morris Minor Traveller that I saw for sale at the side of the road. For a, thankfully, fleeting moment of nostalgia I thought that to drive this home would make an even more interesting adventure. In the end common sense prevailed and 4 wheel drive, a diesel engine of a sensible size and European specifications won the day.

The route more or less chose itself. We were not too keen to go up through the Balkans and a planned detour to friends in Beirut was cancelled by their departure for pastures new and the subsequent devastation of last year. This just left a sedate drive through Jordan, Syria and Turkey along the

Mediterranean coast and then up through Europe. We each had some specific wishes for the journey. Margaret's were to see Vesuvius and Austria and mine were to visit the Corinth Canal and all of the Calvados distilleries in Normandy. Other than that the route will be very flexible and anything that catches our eye or we see in "The Lonely Planet Guide to Where-ever" will get a detour and a visit.

Paperwork, as yet, hasn't been a problem. But no doubt Getting out of Saudi will have its traumas. After that with visas, triptychs and a British passport things should be fairly plain sailing. I am very lucky in having AXA insurance in the same building and, for a very reasonable cost, they can provide the requisite vehicle insurance, travel and medical insurance, and because I have always been insured with them, the very necessary green card. You can't beat "one stop shopping" convenience. (If that doesn't get me a further reduction in my premium nothing will!)

We are very fortunate that there is no timetable to adhere to. A mixture of hotels, camping and friends will allow us to explore a swathe of the Middle East and Europe that we have not seen, or in the case of Turkey and Greece, was last visited 40 years ago. Our final hurdle will be to get the car back into the UK, get rid of the funny plates and persuade the Licensing Authority that the car does, other than having the steering wheel on the wrong side, comply with the UK Vehicle Use Regulations.

Margaret and I look on this as a great finale to a wonderful time in Riyadh. We have thoroughly enjoyed ourselves through all the ups and downs and we wish all of you staying behind the very best and safest future. We will email bits and pieces back to RGBB News as we go back and they can be, perhaps, used in a later edition.

It was with some sadness that early last year I had to make the decision that we could no longer continue running the British School Scout Group. Following the exodus after the bombings and later the concerns that parents had letting their boys out in the evening Scouts disappeared completely and Cubs and Beavers became an after-school activity.

As in any charity organisation getting helpers was difficult and particularly so with the BSSG being affiliated to UK Scouting and the necessity for all adult helpers to go through the CRS vetting procedures in the UK. Eventually we could not comply with all the various legislations and requirements and our long running association with British scouting was brought to a close. This was a great disappointment as over the years we have provided a large number of boys with something that will stand them in good stead throughout their lives – membership of the worldwide Boys Scouts and hopefully a lot of fun and enjoyment as well. It also has to be said that we have provided a lot of adult helpers with a feeling of achievement and very good memories of being involved. I would like to note my thanks to all who have ever taken part in this.

At the final closure of the group there was a very reasonable sum of money that had been collected by the boys through various fund raising activities. Unfortunately this was all in an account with a local bank and with virtually all the people involved with the Group Executive having left it was proving quite difficult to withdraw the money. However with the help of a very kind bank employee, who I will not name but he knows who he is – thank you - , we were able to withdraw the complete sum.

Having discussed disposal of the money with the, very few, members of the pre-2003 Scout Group it was decided that it would not go to my farewell do but would be split as follows. 25,000 riyals would go to ICING to be used as Lady Bridget (or her successor) saw fit and the other 25,000 riyals would be donated to the British School as thanks for all the assistance the gave in providing space and the boys. That just about clears everything up that was left of the Scouts. I have still, however, two trailers that are looking for buyers. One is just a normal box type thing and the other is a small water bowser and they are available to anybody who wants them in return for a donation to ICING

THE WAY HOME



SCOUT GROUP CLOSES

See Picture on p44