



# Synchro!



The Newsletter of South Staffs and North Birmingham MG Owners Club

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## **(Ex) SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLINGS**

Firstly, many apologies for non-appearance of the club newsletter for several months. Following my resignation of club secretary this will be my last newsletter. - Alan Heeley

**STOP PRESS..... Stuart Lay has agreed to stand as club chairman until the next AGM.**

Due to essential improvements to the heating system at The Ascot Tavern the normal meeting on 23rd November is cancelled it will now be brought forward one week to the 16th November.

## Your MG Club Needs You

**H**ave you ever thought that you might like a more active part in running our club, in making important decisions about where the club is going and what it does?

### **Well now is your chance!!**

Following the resignation of club secretary, membership secretary and club chairman there will be a major revamp of our committee. So if you would like to be considered for a vital role in running the club then get in touch and put your name forward before the next AGM.



No club or organisation can run without a good committee organising in the background. Our club can't run without this structure, and that would mean the end of our friendly club and no more great days out. We can't let this happen, so names please, your club depends on you. Don't just sit there saying you can do better!

## MGs in the Trees 2011

The word ‘catastrophic’ was used to describe our premier event of the year. For those who were present there is no need to expand on this, but for anyone who spent Sunday the 12th. June 2011 in a cave, or more likely on holiday in some sunny place, I would explain that the only reason for ‘catastrophic’ was the unbelievably awful weather.

The day started reasonably enough, with even a bit of sunshine as the loyal army of members did the setting-up of the various stalls and marking out of the arenas.

Absolutely bang on cue as the first arrivals came, so did the rain. From that moment on, things just went downhill. The rain continued unabated for the whole of the rest of the day. Not only that, but it was really miserably cold for June. The combination of rain and freezing cold tended to make everyone lose the will to live after a few hours.

Despite the rain, the proceedings were lightened by the presence of the crazy policeman, (Stuart Lay), in police uniform at the front, frilly knickers at the rear! This caused even the most wet and fed-up visitors to arrive with a smile on their faces. A few hours on, and poor Stuart had to be literally helped from his soaked clothes, blue with cold.

As if that were not enough, an error in the road route (my error) caused some participants to get rather lost on their way to Leicestershire.

It was surprising and heartening that nearly all of the people who had manfully struggled with the road run actually returned to Chasewater rather than sloping off home.

The concours had to be cancelled, and of course there was a total absence of ‘passing trade’ by ordinary visitors to Chasewater.

Despite all of this, most people stayed with it to the bitter end to help with clearing up.

Many, many thanks to all who suffered that day.

The sad thing was that most people agreed that had the weather been at all reasonable, the new Chasewater venue would have been very good.

With this in mind, it was decided by the committee that we would try again with Chasewater next year, so make a date in your new diary (when you get it), for

**Sunday 13th. May 2012.**

So that’s it. MGs in the Trees 2011, best forgotten. Nobody’s fault; just the vagaries of our wonderful weather. And so to other matters. As so much ‘water has gone under the bridge’ or more to the point, time has elapsed, since the last newsletter, it seems a bit pointless to write lengthy accounts of many of the summer’s events, but here are a few bits and pieces, hopefully in date order. Apologies once more that some may seem like distant memories now.

## THE ABINGDON AIR AND COUNTRY SHOW, SUNDAY 8TH MAY

*By Steve Moore*

It was always going to be an early start to be in the showground by 09.30h., and the Abingdon Air Show was a good two hour drive away. But when the alarm went off at 06.00h on a Sunday morning it was a struggle to get out of bed. It was essential that a prompt departure was made, so after a quick briefing we set off bang on time from The Ascot to our first destination of Warwick Services on the M40. A steady 60 mph down a very windy motorway, and a close eye on the Satnav got us to the services with five minutes to spare. We picked up



Lin said “We are going to Abingdon” .... Meryl said “Where the Fox Hat” - (Try saying it in an Irish Accent—Paul Hill Joke!)

another four cars, and set off for the Air Show at Abingdon Airfield. This was the first time our club had attended this event, and we were very pleased with the organization on approaching the field. A separate lane had been set up for exhibitors and we drove straight past the quickly-growing queue of cars to our bit of the field, close to the arena.

First thing on every MG run, set up the table and chairs ready for breakfast, or was it lunch? No, definitely breakfast as it was still only 09.30h! The showground was filling up and the weather had forced the odd shower, possibly heavy, so we needed to put up the tent, just in case. The tent was laid out, but alas the pegs had got mislaid, so the tent was packed up again. Luckily, later in the day Pete Walker found a stall selling tent pegs!

The tent came out again and was quickly erected as the sky filled with some very threatening black clouds.

Typical British weather—when you are all prepared for a downpour, it doesn't come!

After a walk around the exhibitors and stalls the air show began after lunch with a dazzling display by a couple of stunt planes. The star of the show was the last flying Vulcan bomber XH588, on its first outing of the year. From the distance the low drone of the engines could be heard as it turned along a sweeping right turn to fly along the flight line of the airfield. Opening the throttle let out the raw power of its four massive Rolls-Royce Olympus engines. The sight of this would have been very different during the cold war. Giving a rare glimpse of the landing gear, the Vulcan made a slow pass along the runway before climbing into the sky and retuning to its base at The Robin Hood Airport in Doncaster.

This majestic aircraft is run by volunteers and charitable donations, and costing 19000 pounds per hour to fly, this was always going to be a short display.

The weather was still holding when the end of the Vulcan display signified the end of the show, and the mad rush was made for the exits. Parking in the display gave us a quick route out via a back way, and with the good old Satnav programmed to avoid the motorways we headed for home 'the pretty way'

Thanks to all who attended, and hopefully we will be back next year.

More info at [www.vulcantothesky.org](http://www.vulcantothesky.org)



## **THE LEICESTERSHIRE RUN SUNDAY 15TH MAY**

By Alan Heeley

This must be about the sixth or seventh Leicester run, and each year we have visited another little gem somewhere in the county.

This year the end-point of the run was Stonehurst Farm, at Mountsorrel, not far from Loughborough. The run itself was most enjoyable, but the weather decided not to enter into the spirit of things, and was quite chilly and windy. Despite this, there were almost 30 cars at the final venue.

Stonehurst Farm is one of the typical places, good for children, where various farm animals can be seen (and smelled!) at very close quarters. However, the other attraction of the place is the small but very interesting motor museum. This has been built up over the years by the owner, Greg Duffin, and what it lacks in quantity is more than made up for in interest. Greg gave some of us a brief guided tour. At a previous visit (planning our event), I had had sight of Greg on his back under one of the cars, a 1920s Austin, with the whole of the rear axle and suspension in bits, so he is extremely knowledgeable about all of the exhibits. Possibly the star of the place is what was the first bus in Leicestershire. It had been restored over many years from an almost total wreck. Some of the intimate details were fascinating, such as the radiator. This had been hand made from the series of tubes running vertically, on which had been threaded by hand several thousand washers which dissipate the heat on the final radiator. Greg happily said that he spent almost a complete winter on just this item alone. Despite the rather miserable weather, I think everyone enjoyed a great day.

## **CIRCUIT HISTORIQUE DE LAON ET DE L' AISNE**

The weekend of 27th-29th. May

Most people will have heard of this event by now, but just for those who know little about it, the form is as follows. We took the morning ferry from Dover to Dunkirk, and then drove to Laon. The Dunkirk-Laon distance is about 140 miles, and with the really excellent French motorways (at a cost), it is quite an easy journey.

On the Saturday there is an organised run for all of the entrants around the pleasant surrounding countryside.

The major event takes place on the Sunday, when the centre of the ancient walled town of Laon is closed for the afternoon, and there is the actual 'circuit' of the town.

This year marked the 20th. Year of the event, and each year there is a nominated 'marque of honour'. Perhaps fittingly, this year, this was simply 'British Cars'. Because of the

rather special nature of the event this year there were around 600 vehicles taking part. As I have mentioned before, the event is something which unfortunately could never happen in our country. We seem to be bound hand and foot by rules and regulations. The French seem to just get on and do it!

The Saturday run was perhaps a bit on the long side for a lot of people. It ended at the town racecourse, where the final lineup was extremely impressive.

It is always very evident that the large UK contingent make up perhaps 60% to 70% of the total number of participants, who are glad to escape the H&S etc. environment of the UK!

The Sunday, the day of the main event was blessed (or possibly cursed) with extremely hot weather. This led to a rather frustrating 'circuit', which, because of the large number of vehicles, rapidly became a large steaming traffic-jam in places. This in turn caused a large number of vehicle failures. Local garages were reputed to have been swamped with cars which had fallen by the wayside! On the social side of things, the event was notable for the superb couple of evenings at The Agora Restaurant, which has in recent years become a second home for the South Staffs contingent. For no particular reason a framed copy of the picture given at the previous Christmas party to The Ascot, showing the pub surrounded by MGs, was presented to the proprietor of The Agora, and now proudly shows a bit of our club in Northern France. The Saturday evening coincided with Colin Hawkins' 70th birthday, and Val brought along a birthday cake in the shape of an MG. The Agora was possibly trumped by the splendid evening at the Hotel de la Banniere de France. It was truly wonderful to see the large room put at our disposal filled with no less than 39 South Staffs members and friends. A most memorable evening. After Laon, we split into several groups. Some had to return home on the Monday, others had a few days in the Champagne region, a little further South, while another small group headed off into Germany for a short visit to the Moselle valley.

There were two failures during the trip. Geoff Edwards' recently-acquired B roadster decided to die, with a really trivial complaint in Laon. A much more serious failure was our friends from Shepton Mallet, whose MGB roadster, (Lily) after somehow dragging itself to Laon and Chalons-en-Champagne, finally gave up the ghost almost within sight of Dunkirk on the return journey, which was a great pity.

All in all, a very successful trip, greatly enjoyed by what surely must have been a record number of SSMGOC members for a continental adventure.

## **MALLORY PARK, SUNDAY 9TH OCTOBER.**

When, much earlier in the year, the October date was announced for the Mallory Park MG event, everyone groaned. What on earth would the weather do so late in the season, knowing how cold it



had been in (alleged) summer time previously?

When the actual day arrived, we need not have worried unduly. The weather was really rather reasonable, and for most of the day not too cold.

Due to Nigel's sterling efforts, the turnout was most impressive, with, I think, about 55 cars attending. There were groups from all of the West Midlands regions, plus some from further afield. The small pamphlet made by Nigel was very well produced and also very well-received. It was nice to see so many friends from the other groups.

It was rather a pity that the MG content of the day was so limited, because the couple of opportunities to see B versus F versus Midget etc. was, as in previous years, quite enthralling.

Many thanks to Nigel and Liz for another great day, which I am sure will have been a real boost for South Staffs club.

## **STATIC SHOWS**

During the summer the club participated in the Transtar events at Shugborough Hall, Trentham Gardens and Ragley Hall. Also the wonderful 'Cars in the Park' at Lichfield.

All shows went very well, apart from the traffic jam on the entrance to Trentham. The very good attendance showed yet again that for many club members the static show format is still very popular.

## **FEST JAZZ 2011**

The jazz festival at Chateauneuf-du-Faou in Brittany was attended by a small but very enthusiastic group from the club. The festival took place over the weekend of the 29th-31st. July. What can I say? Superb weather, great company, excellent jazz, open roads, great food and fantastic jazz.

The event will take place again next year. If you like any combination of the above delights it is highly recommended.

One little happening worthy of mention during the event concerned the MG TF belonging to our friend Georges, who lives in Wimbledon, and joined us for the jazz again this year.

We were just gathering for the short drive in procession to the festival grounds by the river, when Georges' wife, in conversation with someone, shut the boot. Unfortunately unknown to her the car keys were in the boot and they had no spare.

Everyone looked suitably grave, and left them (due to the pressing need to get on with our little procession), with a local MG man, an ex-pat called Ted, who has a nice 'real' MG TF.

The common wisdom was that the only known way to get the keys was to smash one of the rear light clusters. This had proved necessary for more than one of our group in the past. Ted was most anxious about this, as he said that it would effectively make the car illegal. And so we left them to their head-scratching. Imagine the surprise when only an hour or so later, Georges arrived to take his place at the line-up for the jazz with not only a set of keys but a completely intact car. What apparently happened was that the French equivalent of the RAC/AA were summoned. They looked at the car, and listened to the 'smash the rear light' theory. They then shook their heads and explained that they don't do things that way for MGs / TFs in France, and proceeded to produce a device (I wish that I had seen it) like a mini airbag, small and rectangular, which they slipped into the edge of the boot lid. The bag was then inflated with a small pump, and this forced the lid upwards far enough to get a hand into the boot and undo the bolt securing the hinge. This in turn gave sufficient space to get a hand inside and retrieve the keys.

Altogether a most fascinating little episode. Vive la France! (and French airbags!).



### **Christmas Party 26th November 2011 at The Terrace Restaurant Brownhills.**



There are still tickets available for the Christmas Party. This has been a very popular event in the past and we have had great nights before. Bring your friends and family, see Pete Walker or any Committee Members For Tickets.



### ***DATES FOR YOUR DIARY***

***MG Meeting 9th November 2011***

***MG Meeting 16th November 2011***

***Christmas Party— 26th November 2011***

***AGM 22 January 2012 (to be confirmed)***

***MGs in the Trees 13th May 2012***