



Synchro!



The Newsletter of South Staffs and North Birmingham MG Owners Club

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Date: August 2008

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EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS

Firstly an apology. I was hoping to have put out the next newsletter before this, but a combination of two holidays in close succession, plus various other events made this impossible. In the past couple of months so much has happened that it is difficult to know quite where to start. At least, at the time of writing, the weather has at last improved, bang on cue for the club barbecue and the treasure hunt. Just a few weeks ago I had the terrible feeling that the summer was not going to happen this year.

We have had the continuing saga of trying to find a permanent home for our meetings, which culminated at the second July meeting with a vote for remaining at the Talbot for the foreseeable future.

My own opinion is that despite this we should remain on the look-out for suitable venues, bearing in mind the state of the pub industry at the moment. Nowhere seems to be safe from the very rapid current trend for pubs to 'go under'. At the moment they seem to be dying like flies, both in rural areas and in towns and cities up and down the country. For example, whilst away on holiday in Porthmadog, N. Wales, I was struck by the fact that in that small town one pub had closed, and all the remainder except one had 'For Sale' boards outside. An even more surprising example recently was a quite historic half-timbered pub in Yardley, The Ring of Bells, so it would appear that no pub is immune from the trend. The only salvation seems to be those that are, in all but name, restaurants.

We are living in very rapidly-changing times. The demise of pubs is one example, and the unbelievable increases in costs of everything concerned with our hobby is another. It seems that we may have to rethink certain club events, so that costs do not become unmanageable.

On a more positive front, it has been really encouraging to see so many new members during the summer months. Meetings have been lively, and club events very well supported.

As you will see, there have been many club events, so many that not all are included in this issue. Many thanks to the contributors of the following articles. I need more! In particular any technical tips would be most welcome.

THE CLUB WEBSITE

For those of you who have internet access have a look at our "New Improved" site. The layout has changed slightly to enable it to be viewed on all sorts of browsers and computer screens. Hopefully you will find it easy to navigate and keep up to date with any club activities. There will shortly be a full regalia page showing all our garments, sizes and prices, and club bits and pieces and an order form to fill in. The photograph section is booming this year with lots of photos from various events. If you have any photos please send them to steve@ssmgoc.co.uk to be included in the site. Also don't forget if you want your car to be part of our club website then please send details to the same email address.



Moseley Old Hall

CIRCUIT HISTORIQUE DE LAON 2008

Those of you who read about this event in a previous newsletter will be familiar with the general format. The event is held in the town of Laon, near to Reims, in France. Again this year there was a small SSMGOC presence, and a description of the proceedings follows.

3 MG'S, A PORSCHE AND A TVR IN PICARDIE

By Cynth Cherry

After spending three very pleasant days in Arras, Graham and I travelled 130 kilometres down to Laon on Friday morning 30th. May. Following our mid-morning check-in at the Ibis Hotel, we drove up the zigzag road to Laon old town. The old town is built on a promontory, and overlooks the new town and miles of surrounding countryside. We had lunch and a gentle stroll, and then set about booking a restaurant for our evening meal. You must understand that there are hundreds of entrants for the rally, probably two-thirds of them English, so places to eat are pretty busy.

Having done the deed and reserved a table for nine, we returned to the hotel to await the arrival of Colin and Val, and Ian and Shirley who were also staying the weekend at the Ibis. Alan and Pat Heeley, and Pat's brother Pete (with his immaculate TVR) were staying approx. 8 kilometres out of Laon at a place called Chamouille (a Mercure hotel) overlooking a lake where Graham and I have stayed previously on our rallying events, renowned for its breakfast!! - according to Pete.



Superb French cuisine at the Agora. Note those shirts!

So to Friday evening, everyone met at the Agora Restaurant for the speciality of the house, Galettes, and as usual with MG gatherings, we were a *little* noisy during the meal, but nobody expected the owners comment, "Oh no, you're not coming back again?" when Alan tried to book for the Sunday evening. Fortunately he was only joking. Meal over, we wended our way back to our respective hotels, not too late because we had to be up bright and early on Saturday for the 165 kilometre run.

Unfortunately, Saturday began a trifle damp, and signing-on took a little while, but once we had the route book in our hot little hands, the urge to get started became more acute.

Because there were approximately 500 cars on the rally, we were split into two groups, Rally A and Rally B. You follow the 'Tulip' charts in order to complete circular run. Rally A goes in a clockwise direction to the lunch stop at Marle, about the mid-way point, and Rally B goes anti-clockwise to the same destination. We were Rally B, and set off through the countryside towards Soissons, soon stopping for coffee, cake and a P at the Mairie (the Town Hall), of Etouvelles. (The refreshments are provided by the villagers, what a friendly lot). On the road again, past Chateau Presles to the Chemin des Dames, then to Marle for lunch. Marle is a local tourist attraction that is a reconstruction of a medieval village. Here we were given a sandwich and a soft drink (zero tolerance in France for drink-driving), and you could spend as much time as you wanted looking around the village, which was very interesting, and well worth the visit. Then it was back on the road to continue the circuit back to Laon, only stopping to receive gifts from the inhabitants of Cerny-Les-Bucy, a small village on the route.

The finish was at the Hippodrome, (a Horse-Trotting circuit), down in the new town, where there was a Champagne reception. By this time it was pouring with rain which put a bit of a damper on things (pun intended). However, it was not raining enough to put us off our Champagne, and having quaffed our share we headed back to the hotel to get changed for dinner (What happened to zero

tolerance?).

Saturday's dinner was at the Hotel de la Banniere de France, once again up the zigzag road to the old town. La Banniere was recommended by Alan, who knows the owner, Madame Lefevre very well (nudge nudge, wink wink). Madame Lefevre just happens to be the mother of the Mayor of Laon! (Talk about moving in high places!). Following our gastronomic delight we returned to our hotels tired (it was a long day), and with full and heavy stomachs.



The varied assortment of cars assembles in the Town Hall Square

Fortunately Sunday, the day of the actual 'Circuit Historique' was not such an early start, and we awoke to a glorious day. The programme for the day began with taking our cars to the designated parking areas and lining them up so that the French public and the other entrants could wander around and view all the different makes of vehicles.

Our parking area was in the new town, and in order to get to the Mairie (Town Hall) for the Mayor's reception, we were given tickets for use on the funicular railway called the Poma. The Poma travels approximately 3 km, and the return journey is normally a few minutes. However Ian and Shirley, Colin and Val and Graham and I, plus a few other folk got stuck on the damn thing for over 30 minutes, and missed the speeches (not a bad thing you may think, but the mayor had gone to a great deal of trouble to make his speech in English as well as French). However we were in time for a few nibbles and a glass of champagne, so no harm done.



The parade is opened by the car carrying the Mayor of Laon

Having risked the return journey on the Poma—everything ran smoothly on the way back down—we then set about finding something to eat (the inevitable baguette) and a small beer or two whiled away a happy hour in the sunshine.

At about 2 o'clock the cars that had been rally A, which were parked near the Mairie, started the first of their street circuits. They go round twice and each circuit is approximately 16 km. The mayor was being driven at the front of the convoy, doffing his hat and waving as he went by. The whole of the first convoy passed along the main street where we were parked.

Having finished their circuits, Rally A reparked where they had started from, and Rally B's circuit of the town began. Everyone who could take the roof off their car had done so by now, so that they could wave at the hundreds of local people who were lining the streets or sitting outside their homes along the route, waving and cheering us on our way. This is my favourite part of the weekend, and Graham loves to squeal the tyres on the tight bends up the zigzag to entertain the kids.

Unfortunately it's all over far too soon, and the streets that had been blocked off are opened again for normal traffic. End of a lovely rally, except for our final evening meal together at the Agora (if the owner lets us in after last time), then on Monday back to Blighty for us. (*Editor's note—I say again,*

As last year, can you even begin to imagine a British town being closed off for a complete weekend, with minimal Police presence, so that a lot of car enthusiasts, plus the general public, can enjoy themselves? Not a hope, not with elf'n'safety, and the various moaning Minnies that we have in this country, all busy saving the planet!

The Laon event is brilliant. It is ideal for a long weekend, not too expensive, and not too far; about 140 miles from Calais. If anyone fancies Laon 2009, please contact me.

THE COTSWOLD RUN, SUNDAY 1ST JUNE 2008

We gathered at Moreton-on-Marsh at 9.30a.m. for a short run to Burford, with Steve our leader, and Elaine his co-pilot taking the leading role. A total of 9 cars in various models travelled in convoy with some of our members, (Chris and Ruth) not realising that their car could achieve some of the speeds that were being set by our squadron leader, the retired policeman and driving instructor.

The turn-out at the park was very good, with over 300 MG's, old and new, with our contribution of 9 cars being increased by a further one, with Dave and Sue Powis arriving later.

We at South Staffs thought we had the best collector (big June) of raffle tickets until we arrived at the park. There she was from the Oxford club, and we only just managed to get out of our cars before being asked how many raffle tickets we wanted! Was she fast? - you would not believe it! Next it was out with the kettle for tea and coffee, and frying pans for bacon and egg butties. The smell attracted the locals who were told to form a queue.

Later we walked around the park to see the local wildlife; Lions, Hippos, Zebras and Meer cats, who were being fed.

TRENTHAM GARDENS TRANSTAR RALLY, SUNDAY 15TH JUNE

Static car rallies are perhaps not everyone's scene, but when putting together the events programme it was thought that we ought to

include at least one such event.

The Trentham event attracted a very good number of attendees from our club, showing that static rallies are still popular.

It had been previously requested that our club stand should be somewhere a bit more obvious than in previous years, when it was located rather like a lepper colony at the back of beyond! The location, while still not exactly prominent, was reasonable. Because of the excellent support for the event, there was a comprehensive line-up of about 20 cars, representing all the main MG types from the MGA onward, right up to the MGTF. The stand was erected with great precision, and the finished effect was really impressive. It was a pity that after all the effort, in the organisers' opinion the stand did not merit an award. The day was reasonable, weather-wise. A bit on the windy and cool side, but at least it stayed dry.

The vast display included just about every type of vehicle, from commercials to motor bikes. In addition, the shopping complex provided yet another way for us to return home via a cashpoint

MG'S IN THE TREES, 22ND JUNE 2008



Our chosen charity this year was St.Giles Hospice, Lichfield; a small delegation lined up there before the event. Pity the weather was not the same for the main event!

The event was again a major success. Credit for this must be shared by nearly all of the club members, who performed magnificently not just on the day, but previously with the general organisation. However, it would not be right if the Gwilt family were not given a special mention for the many hours of work that they put in to make the event so successful.

Since just about all our regular members were present on the day, it seems hardly worth going into a lengthy description of the event. The main feature weatherwise was the amazingly unseasonal strong wind. The group who were setting up the gazebos etc. at the Chase site had a terrible struggle on their hands to avoid being blown away. Apart from this, everything went very well indeed. The two road runs were enjoyed by all, the dog display was again a great success.

Special thanks are due to all who spent a large part of the day cooking the burgers etc. in a force 10 gale.

If you look at the visitor's page on the club website, you will see the comments from the participants. They were extremely complimentary, which makes the whole effort worthwhile.

All in all the event was a resounding success, and our worthy chief beneficiary, St. Giles Hospice, in Lichfield, will shortly receive a cheque for £1000 from the proceeds.

MOSELEY OLD HALL EVENT

SUNDAY 29TH JUNE

By Fran Davis

Many thanks to those members who turned out for this event, our second time at Moseley for what seems set to become an annual happening. We had an excellent display of cars representing the club, beautifully arranged, and the owners looked pretty good too!

Moseley has a special magic all of its own; it has an exciting and romantic past, having been one of the many Catholic houses that sheltered the young king Charles the second after his defeat by Oliver Cromwell in 1651, and it still exerts an attraction today.

Hidden away down a narrow dead-end lane, now almost forgotten, but which used to be the main road between Wolverhampton and Cannock, and thence north, the house now looks like a Victorian manor house until you spot the beautiful brick chimneys which place it firmly in the Elizabethan era. The house was built in 1600 by a wealthy Catholic wool merchant, Henry Pitt, who died

shortly afterwards, leaving the house, then referred to as Mr. Pitt's new house at Moseley, to his daughter Alice. By the time that the King came to Moseley, it was Alice's son, Thomas Whitgrave who was master of the house, although Alice, now widowed, still lived there.

After a tense 48 hours during which the King had to be concealed in a priest hole when Parliamentary troops came to the house, a daring plan to enable the King to escape was hatched. Charles was disguised as a servant to a certain Jane Lane, who had written permission to travel to Bristol, where it was hoped that the King could get a passage back to the continent for safety. This the young Charles eventually did after many adventures, getting a coal barge from Shoreham-by-Sea in Sussex back to France, where he had to remain for a further eight and a half years before being restored to the throne by a Royalist government in 1660.

Moseley's present appearance is due to its having been encased in brick in the 19th. Century to prevent it from falling down, but inside it is largely the same as when Charles arrived.

Moseley is well worth a visit. As well as the house there is a small well-kept garden, featuring plants that would have been growing in the 17th. Century. Wandering ducks, rescued battery hens, a splendid cockerel and several preening peacocks can be seen in the grounds. I must mention here the sterling efforts of Vivienne to protect the MG's from the peacocks, who love to admire their shiny reflections in the cars, and sometimes try to peck, with potentially disastrous results. There is, of course, the inevitable National Trust gift shop, potted plants for sale, a tearoom selling wonderful calorie-free cakes (I wish!), and a well-stocked second-hand book shop.

My heartfelt thanks, once again, to those who supported the event in spite of the awful weather (I shall have to pray harder next year!). It was much appreciated by the property manager, David Lee as well. The cars attracted a lot of attention and admiration, and even a new member or two, so well worth the effort.

Because of space constraints reports of the other late-July / early August events have been held over until the next issue, which it is hope will follow before long

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday August 13th Club Meeting, The Ascot tavern, Cannock

Saturday August 23rd. Club Holiday to Zell-am-See, Austria

This has been booked for many months, and it is hoped that everyone lucky enough to be taking part has a wonderful holiday.

Saturday August 23rd. Calton Wakes road run and Treasure Hunt. By invitation from the Black Country MG Club. Starting from The Park inn, George st., Woodsetton, near Dudley at 9.30 a.m., and run for approx. 70 miles through the lanes of Staffordshire and South Derbyshire, ending in the Peak District village of Calton near Ashbourne, to participate in the summer Fayre. For anyone wishing to attend who cannot be at the usual club evening, please ring Lin Hill, the organiser, on 07969 895413

Wednesday August 27th. Club Meeting, The Ascot tavern, Cannock

Sunday September 7th. Potteries and South Cheshire Charity Road Run

Starting at Stapeley Water Gardens, Nantwich. Entry forms available from secre-

SALES AND WANTS

A long list of MGB spares had been received from Dave Morris in Kidderminster. The list is too long to reproduce here, but if anyone is interested in MGB roadster spares please contact me and I will pass on the full list.

In addition, Dave has for sale an MGF hardtop, good condition, and an MGF exhaust.

Contact Dave by email at dave.morris@blueyonder.co.uk, or by phone, on 01562 637677

No other sales or wants from anyone—come on, don't be shy

And finally..... as they say on News at Ten

A little technical tip, passed on by an MGB owner whilst at Laon. The bullet-type connectors at the front of the radiator grille, which connect the headlights etc. are very prone to corrosion, as they are completely exposed to the weather. From Maplins', or similar, you can buy heat-shrinkable Polythene sleeving. You take the connectors apart and give them a good clean, and then slip the sleeving over them before re-connecting. The sleeving is then heated with a hair-dryer, or similar, and the sleeving shrinks, giving a weather-proof joint. The only down-side is a bit of a fiddle when you next have to take them apart for any reason.