



A WONDERFULLY SUCCESSFUL CLUB HOLIDAY IN HOLLAND



As you will read later in more detail, the club holiday to Holland was a great success, not least due to the unbelievably good weather. Here the entire party pause for a photo opportunity in front of the magnificent windmill in the Keukenhof Gardens.



The windmill itself, and just look at that weather, which lasted for the complete duration of the holiday!

SECRETARY'S RAMBLINGS

Firstly, apologies for the fact that this newsletter is LATE. Things have been hectic, so all I can say is sorry, no excuses; to quote a French proverb, *qui s'excuse s'accuse!* The start of this year has been, as they say, 'something else'. At each of our normal club meetings there have been some new faces, which is absolutely great to see. Every new member is very welcome. You bring a new individual set of interests and a different personality to the club, and the club itself evolves gradually into something slightly different. Looking at the small groups of people involved in conversation, it seems to me that our reputation for being a friendly club still stands up to inspection, and that our new-found friends soon feel part of the club.

And so, after months of waiting, the season has really started, and this year we have 'hit the ground running'. Just before the magic 1st. April, when the cars that have wintered untaxed appeared, we had the visit to Coventry Museum of Transport. This was followed very quickly by Stuart Lay's very successful

(and at times hilarious) quiz night at the Ascot. There was then the Easter break at Chirk, with the run to North Wales on Easter Sunday. The club holiday to Holland followed, with the home-based contingent putting on a display to celebrate St. George's day in Cannock. Finally, while the Holland group were making their way home, came the Windsor extravaganza. Nobody can accuse us of lack of activity for the start of this season! I hope that a similar level of events can carry us through the coming summer, and that everyone enjoys it. Please have a look at the programme of forthcoming events on the club website; there have been many new entries during the last month or so, and there should be a good mixture of the well-tried and the new.

GET WELL SOON!

As some of you will know, Geoff Edwards has been in considerable pain for some time with an ankle problem. He is due to have an operation on the 13th. May.

Geoff, we all hope that this will be an unqualified success, and look forward to seeing you sprinting around before too long.

COVENTRY TRANSPORT MUSEUM VISIT, 29TH. MARCH

This turned out to be a very well-supported event, with a start from the McDonald's car park at Bassetts Pole, and the short run to Coventry with hoods down. It was unfortunate in a way that we had to park at the rear of the museum, rather than in the area in front of the museum. This was because Coventry City Council insist that any club parking in front of the museum has to have £5 million insurance cover for public liability. (It does make me wonder what a row of parked cars could do to cause this amount of damage; it seems reasonably rare for them to suddenly erupt, expode and kill passers-by). However, that is their rule, and the up-side was that we had the most secure parking imaginable. The museum itself is extremely good, and shows the great heritage of the City of Coventry, with particular reference to the many vehicle manufacturers who produced the products on the city. There is a list inside the museum which must have at least 50 names of companies, some long-forgotten, some household names, which made everything from bicycles to armoured vehicles. It is very sad that virtually none of them have survived to the present.

One unfortunate aspect of the visit was that everyone dispersed within the museum, and then left in ones and twos later, and there was no opportunity for a decent group photograph.

I hope that everyone, particularly the new members, enjoyed the day out.

DVLA V5 documents

A cautionary tale for you. I had a car recently, and noticed that my name had been very slightly mis-spelt on the V5 document; just that they had spelt Alan as Allan. At the time it seemed an insignificant detail, so I just filed the document and forgot it.

Wind the tape on a couple of years, and it is time to pop down to the shops and buy another car. In my usually well-organised way,

this was only a few days after I had to tax the original car (a bit of impulse buying, maybe). I then found that nowadays you are required to surrender your old tax disc and claim a refund, in my case not far short of six months. The appropriate form was then sent off to Swansea, and it returned a few days later, with a rejection of the claim.

The reason? On the claim form I had spelt my first name correctly, and so the computer did not recognise me as the current owner of the vehicle (*computer says no!*). I then had to fill in another form to correct the original mistake, and eventually the refund arrived, with a month's amount missing.

The moral of this story is simply that when you have received a V5 for a changed car, read it very thoroughly, and send it back to be corrected, as otherwise the mistake could be a real pain some time in the future.

Oh, and by the way, when the V5 arrived for the new replacement car, they have totally miss-spelt the name of the road on the address!!!

INSURANCE

Over the last couple of months I have had to renew various insurances, as have various acquaintances of mine. Without spelling it out chapter and verse, the moral that came over VERY loud and strong, is to shop around for quotations; the results can be quite staggering. For example, a friend had a renewal quotation for his BMW for about £800. The act of getting hold of another quotation via the internet is a very time-consuming and extremely boring way of spending half an hour or so. If you do this a couple more times, you have to fill in every last detail. Every speeding ticket etc., over and over again, on website forms which seem to be designed to annoy. You know what I mean: "the fields marked with asterisks are mandatory", so you fill in the form, get to a certain point, and it refuses to go on any further because you have not filled something in. You look through carefully, but can't find it, so try again, but it stubbornly refuses to continue. At last you spot that although you have entered your name as *Mister* Jeremiah Ponsonby, you have not put a tick in the tiny box

that says that you are male! etc. etc. I think that this is all designed to make you lose the will to live.

But I digress. If you can manage to fight your way through the forms, the reward can be considerable. My friend was finally charged about £350 instead of the original £800. Worth the effort!

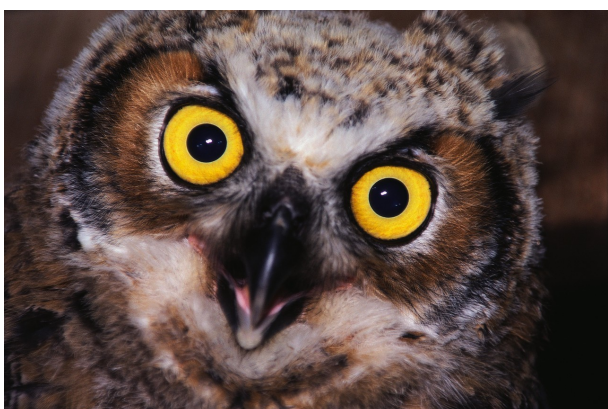
On a similar theme, I had to make a claim on the house insurance recently, the first claim in about 25 years. When the renewal came, the required premium was just about doubled. Go to a competitor company (declaring the claim, of course), and the premium asked for was almost the same as the old original. Once again, it pays to shop around.

QUIZ NIGHT WITH STUART, 8TH APRIL

There was a very good attendance for the quiz night, which had been organised by our worthy membership secretary, Stuart Lay. The questions were very nicely weighted, and the constant flow of funny remarks was great to hear, aided and abetted by the Geordie accent of Stuart, enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Stuart for organising such a well-planned and entertaining evening.

THROUGH THE CHAIR

A few thoughts on a motoring point of law, from Steve.



How are your eyes?

Do you know the minimum standard of eyesight required to drive a car on the road? It is something that is easily forgotten with the passing of time after the driving test.

However it is some thing that we should all know, not only for the safety aspect, but also to avoid prosecution.

Any police officer in uniform has the power to demand, any person driving a motor vehicle on a road, to take a roadside eyesight test. Spot checks are rare, but requirements after road accidents are common place.

Highway Code rule 92 says: *You MUST be able to read a vehicle number plate in good daylight, from a distance of 20 metres (or 20.5 metres where the old style number plate is used). If you need to wear glasses (or contact lenses) to do this, you MUST wear them at all times whilst driving. The police have the power to require a driver to under take an eyesight test.*

It is very easy to assume that everything is okay especially if you have recently visited the optician. However recently I have had two pupils who could not read the number plate whilst wearing glasses just prescribed by their opticians. Fortunately I always test my pupil's eyesight during their first lesson, so they are able to address any issues before they take their driving test when they are always required to pass the number plate test.

Don't get caught out. It only takes a tape measure and a car number plate to make sure. Your licence, or more importantly your life may depend on it.

South Staffs / North Birmingham MGOC trip to Holland April 2009

An account of the holiday by Chris and Ruth Austin

After last Easter's big hills on Dartmoor when Holland was suggested for this year it seemed like a good plan.

On Sunday after a leisurely 200+ mile drive to Harwich stopping off in Cambridge for an ostrich burger (don't ask) and a bit of culture at Flatford Mill (it should be safe to leave the car unattended 'cos there's a sign saying this is Constable country) we boarded The Stena Hollandica for our overnight crossing to The Hook of Holland. Compared with The Vomit Comet which bought us back from France last September this was a slightly more substantial vessel at 240mts in length and 45,000 tons.

Arriving at Duinrell Parc near Wassenaar next morning we were told that despite this part of Holland being famous for growing bulbs they can't apparently manage grass (except perhaps for the Brown Cafes of Amsterdam) and for this reason we were being relocated from our original island accommodation and dispersed around the complex



The bulb fields provided a brilliant splash of colour, and the timing of the trip was ideal for seeing them just about at their peak

which incidentally is huge with hundreds of chalets, tents and mobile home parks as well as a large Alton Towers type amusement park renowned throughout The Netherlands.

Waiting for the rest of the group to arrive from their overnight in Brugge while our chalet was being readied we explored climbing Adventure Mountain (actually it's a large sand dune but remember this is Holland) and marvelling that kids seem to enjoy being hurtled around violently in undignified poses – presumably they will grow up to be the next generation of MG owners.

When the others arrived we were sorry to learn of Colin and Val's misfortunes but pleased to hear that they may still be coming later in another car.

As for Holland, despite having been previously, we had anticipated driving down quiet country lanes between bulb fields with the occasional scenic windmill but the reality was that most of the roads where we were near The Hague and Amsterdam more closely resembled the M25 during rush hour. Similarly 'knowing' that the UK petrol prices were the dearest on planet earth we deliberately didn't bother to fill up before crossing The North Sea and were a little miffed to find that at E1.34 per litre. Dutch prices are around 25 per cent more expensive than at home.

Monday evening, despite warnings, the more adventurous members headed to Duinrell Irish Pub an event which judging from Alan's comments next day was not an unqualified success.

(It was not Irish, and had absolutely no resemblance to a pub. The speakers blasted out a relentless bass thump, which nicely killed conversation and the rather surly bloke behind the bar grunted that he had no Guinness or Murphy's, only some Heineken that tasted like the juice from an electroplating bath. It was about the most desperate place

in the known universe -Ed)

Tuesday saw our ancient MGA playing 'Tail end Charlie' to a convoy of six cars during an interesting drive to Scheveningen (which I thought was hard to pronounce until later in the week we visited

Noordwijkerhout) including going down a one way street the wrong way to see some amazing sandcastles being painstakingly constructed by a team of twelve artists drafted in from all over the world – its good to know that in these times of recession our EU contributions are being wisely spent.

In the afternoon Delft (which Joy knows through Ikea) proved interesting and by the time we got back to

Duinrell Colin and Val had arrived.

Wednesday saw the highlight of the holiday with a visit to Keukenhof to overdose on millions (and I do mean millions) of flowers. One gentleman was so pleased to see our convoy of MG's that he insisted in parking between us in fact so close to Pete's RV8 that he couldn't open his door to get out!



Geoff, sensibly given the distances to walk, set off in a borrowed wheelchair being pushed by a relay of helpers grateful for something to lean on but it was a bit of a surprise that when we reassembled to leave Joy arrived in the chair being pushed by Geoff!

In the evening Colin and Val tried to re enact the biblical story of the feeding of the 5000 on their decking using pork chops rather than

loaves and fishes. Later some of the younger element went clubbing in Scheveningen while we retired to bed.

Thursday morning saw us in the pretty village of Volendam scoffing smoked salmon with chips and mayo and buying souvenirs.

A discrete veil should perhaps be drawn over the onward journey to Amsterdam, suffice it to say that by the time the group re-assembled at Leiden Central Station to catch the train into Amsterdam some considerable time had elapsed and had we visited the hospital on whose multi story we were parked some blood pressure readings may have been found to be a tad raised. In Amsterdam a boat trip round the canals for some of us plus a welcome meal in a restaurant known to Geoff and Joy restored positive Karma as did Alan's impromptu striptease on the train back to Leiden.

Friday morning Ruth, ever adventurous, had a go on Duinrells large and scary waterslides. When I asked the young pool attendant up to what sort of age did people use these slides she replied "I think your wife is the oldest."

Friday late afternoon found us waiting in Noordwijkerhout for the legendary flower parade consisting of many spectacular floats decorated with millions of flowers to commence with Dave making friends with a dozy Dutchman who kept standing the wrong side of the barriers straight in front of him and Sue. Finally the floodlit parade arrived taking around an hour and a half to pass the point at which we were standing. When we returned to the underground car park we were pleased to learn that we would have a further chance to see all the floats again as we couldn't get out until they passed the top of the exit ramp!

We said our goodbyes on Saturday morning and in our case drove the 30 or so miles back to catch the 2.30pm sailing back to Harwich using up some time watching 'The Boat that Rocks' in the Hollandica's cinema.

And now, as they say, for something entirely different. Here is a short poem (yes, I think that this must be a first for our newsletter!), which was written by Bethany Vincent, February 2009

It is simply entitled MG's

*MG's
Our cars are MG's
We pay our fees
We do our run
It's all for fun
For men and women
All join in
It's time to get ready
So let's take it steady
For the MG's
Are ready in the Trees
Won't you please?
Turn your keys
Start your engines
The fun has begun*

MG's IN THE TREES

This is our major event for the year, now in its third year.. Our chosen charity for this year is the County Air Ambulance, who will be putting on a display at the event.

We need as many helpers as possible for the day itself. If you have not done the event before, please come along and enjoy helping at what should be another great day out. We need all the helpers possible in order to spread the load. If you are able to assist in any way on the day, please make yourself known to Steve Gwilt. 01922 415680, or Alan Heeley, on 0121 353 9916. Your help will be most appreciated.

EASTER WEEKEND BREAK TO OSWESTRY *By Meryl Moore*

What an action packed weekend. Four cars travelled to Oswestry mid morning. We arrived in Oswestry lunchtime for a meander round the historical town. After a short coffee stop and a picnic we ventured on to our accommodation.

On arrival we were met by an amazing four bedroom cottage with spectacular views

from all of the windows, and a patio that overlooked the castle at Chirk. After drawing out lots as to who got which room, the ladies quickly got to grips with unpacking whilst the men polished their cars, as the men do!. The cars drew attention to us as we had visitors from the "big house" to look round them.

Between the ladies we had drawn up a menu for each day which turned out exceptionally well with no one going hungry and some recipes being ex-

changed afterwards. . The Friday night was taken up by swimming in site pool and sauna which we had exclusively to ourselves. Brian tried to con us into thinking he couldn't swim, (how many times has that been done before.) Fran cooked a fantastic meal of beef in stout. So already the alcohol was flowing, which continued well into the night with the front room looking like a Threshers shop.



Saturday was Stan A organisational day. We had decided to go on a walk planned by Stan. Firstly we drove the cars up to Long Mynd at Church Stretton, parked and started our four mile walk. Stan purchased a route plan for the walk which all we had to do was follow the "yellow" route. FOUR MILES very quickly turned into 10.14 miles. (Precisely as Steve had got a hand held satnav) Not only were we walking but we were climbing, some of us needed assistance but oh did we laugh. Stan D and Fran were like whippets. After going a couple of hours and following the route stringently we lost sight of the yellow route and ended up doing the blue pink orange and red one as well.

The Saturday evening's entertainment was a murder mystery evening organised by Meryl and Steve. The characters were not type cast honest. Everyone had been given their characters beforehand so that they could arrange costumes. Everyone looked stunning especially our ex dancer played by Fran. Margaret did a very good job of being the local alcoholic and slurring her words in a very upper class accent. The murderer turned out to be

Meryl who was playing a clairvoyant and no she didn't see that one coming.

On Sunday we met up at Chirk Castle with another nine cars, which had travelled up from the Midlands that morning. Stan A had planned a route which took us to Worlds End and the Ponderosa Cafe at the top of the



Horseshoe Pass. The weather was beautiful and sunny and some people even took their sweatshirts off. (first time this year?)

On Monday we leisurely packed up and made our way home.

Meryl and Steve would like to thank Stan and Fran, Stan and Diane and Margaret and Brian for a brilliant weekend.

There is a possibility that we could hire the whole site out for next year which hosts two cottages and four log cabins. Watch this space.

Meryl Moore

MORE ABOUT HOLLAND, A VIEW FROM A NEW MEMBER

By Peter Fitzwater

To introduce myself, I am the brother-in-law of our secretary Alan. Until April this year I was the long-time owner (about 12 years) of a very nice TVR S2. After years of intense psychological pressure and death threats, I was finally talked into buying an MG by my sister! I had last year taken part in the Circuit Historique at Laon, in France, plus the Easter break at Tenby a few years ago, and so had had a taste of the company within the SSMGOC. I have now bought an MGRV8, and so far am delighted with it.

We travelled down to Dover on the Friday, and met up with Steve and Elaine, plus Brian and Margaret at the keystone. The ferry (Norfolk Line) was not only good, but surprisingly cheap, at only £55 return to Dunkirk, and had been very kindly booked in advance by Brian, as had the two overnight stays at Calais and Brugge. After all the expense and effort of crossing the channel, where did we eat? A 'British pub' in Calais!

Next day we went to Brugge (Bruges, as we call it). After a good breakfast at the Campanile we walked almost the whole way into the town looking for the bus stop, after some duff information! We then met up with Geoff and Joy, and Dave and Sue, and saw the sights of Brugge in the best way, by horse and carriage. This was surprisingly good value compared with the rip-off 10 Euros for a toasted sandwich in the centre square.

The evening meal was highly amusing, aided by the introduction of some of us to 'Quack' beer, in large glasses. Brian had automatically introduced himself to the proprietor and was immediately on first name terms because of the club fleece with his name on. Not being slow to turn the situation to his advantage he quickly negotiated free aperitifs for all!

The return to the hotel by taxi took a most unexpected turn, when the taxi driver, having seen the said fleeces with the SSMGOC logo, announced that he had an MGBGT V8 (plus and E-type Jag). Taxi takings must be pretty good in Brugge! He arranged to come and

'see us off' the following morning, complete with car, but didn't manage to make it.

We met up with the other party for the run to Holland, with Geoff as squadron leader. Considering the amount of traffic, we all stuck together very well. On arrival at the campsite we were all presented by Geoff with a CD, on which was just one song—you guessed it—Tupils from Amsterdam, by Max Bygraves! What a nice little touch.

For the main part of the holiday, I can only say read Chris Austin's account.

The only MG to misbehave was Alan's, which developed a strange chronic misfire at entirely random times, but cheered up only for the journey home from Dover. Must have been homesick!

It was good to see that Colin and Val made it despite their incident. (*what had happened was that following a front-wheel blow-out on the Porsche, Colin well and truly clouted a kerb in the dark, damaging the wheels and suspension. The car had to be recovered, and Colin gamely decided to come the following day in the 'ordinary' car. We were all delighted to see them – Ed.*)

The camp site and accommodation were excellent, and thanks to Geoff and Joy for the organisation, particularly the wall-to-wall sunshine for the whole duration of the holiday, and I must say that as the new boy, I was made most welcome by all, and immediately felt part of the club. The holiday was brilliant, and I hope, the first of many.



The gang enjoy a good meal in Amsterdam, in what looked from the outside like a small restaurant, but opened up inside like a Tardis

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 10th. May. The Kimber Run. As usual, the South Staffs club will be present in numbers to marshall the event, plus a few who will be participating in the run itself.

Wednesday 13th. May. Club meeting, The Ascot Tavern, Cannock

Sunday 17th. May. The Regional MG Event, to be held at The RAF Museum at Cosford. We will be meeting at the Ascot Tavern in Cannock, our usual meeting venue, and subject to numbers, will provide a cup of coffee (and loo facilities) for the departure from 9.0 a.m.

Wednesday 27th. May Club meeting, The Ascot Tavern, Cannock

Sunday 7th. June Treasure Hunt, watch the website or com to a meeting for further details.

Wednesday 10th. June Club Meeting, The Ascot Tavern, Cannock

Sunday 14th June MG's in the Trees, Cannock Chase. All hands to the pump; as many helpers as possible require for this, our major event of the year. If you are available, please contact Steve Gwilt

Saturday 20th June. Moat Hall School Fair. A small display of cars for the fair. If you are able to take part, please contact Steve of Meryl Moore, on 01543 425738

Sunday 21st. June Trentham Gardens Transport Festival; a Transtar event. Entry forms available at club meetings or downloadable from the net.

Sunday 28th. June Moseley Old Hall. As in previous years, a small display of MG's at this attractive and interesting venue. If you are able to go, please either sign on at a club meeting, or ring Fran Davis, on 01902 607475

And briefly for July

Saturday 4th July Cars in the Park, Lichfield. Run by Lichfield Rotary Club, this event gets bigger every year!

Sunday 12th July Berrington Hall Herefordshire. A chance to catch up with Gareth Gwilt in his new, and by all accounts highly desirable, new residence!

Sunday 19th July Beaumanor Hall Leicestershire, a Transtar event

Sunday 26th July Audlem Festival of Transport.

Entry forms for these events will be available at club meetings