



BERRINGTON HALL; PERHAPS A NEW ANNUAL EVENT?



SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLINGS

With the end of September the major part of the club run season is over, and several of the cars will now be in hibernation mode for six months. The summer, in the end, turned out to be not too bad, but I can't easily forget that the whole month of July was virtually a write-off; it just never ceased raining. Despite the never-ending bombardment from the media that due to climate change we are all shortly to be roasted alive I have to say that I have not noticed any trends that way around this region. Our garden furniture, now back in its winter quarters, was used a grand total of twice; the barbecue also twice, and on one of those occasions it managed to rain.

Our club runs, with the notable exception of the aborted one that began and ended in the trolley shelter at Asda, were generally held in reasonable weather, and were very well sup-

ported. The committee are now trying to put together a few attractions to lighten up the winter months.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY

As you are all well aware, the bookings for the party are now in full swing. It was surprising that from our 91 members, giving a theoretical total of 182, at the time of writing 90 bookings had been received, including about 20 guests. When the number of members who had not responded to the original invitation was counted, it was found that a surprising 49 had not replied. A follow-up invitation has been sent out to these members, and it is hoped that a good number will finally decide to join in with the festivities. On club meeting evenings, the chart showing the summary of bookings will be on view, and please would you just take a minute to

check it, as mistakes are very easy to make during a busy club meeting.

Finally, it really would be greatly appreciated if you could pay any outstanding balances *well before the Christmas Party itself*. Everyone did this last year, and it avoided having to fiddle around with cash or cheques on the evening itself.

CLUB MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

It was decided at the October committee meeting that it is time to increase the club membership fees. It is about five years since the last increase, and so an increase has become necessary. In deciding the amount, consideration was given to the situation regarding single members. It had been pointed out that a couple receive twice the benefit of subsidised prices for the Barbecue, the Christmas party, and two diaries. With this in mind, what was finally decided was that the subscription for a couple will be increased to £20, and the rate for single members will be unchanged at £12. The general level of expenses for the club, such as postage have increased significantly, and it was felt that an increase would put the club finances on a firmer footing. Printer cartridges alone account for quite a fair amount of money.

Someone said recently that when considering invading Iraq or Afghanistan, we should have forgotten both of them, and instead invaded the country that makes printer cartridges, whoever that is! They are horribly expensive. Please note that the committee have no desire for the club to build up 'loads of money' in a bank account. There is no reason for this, and the record has been good, in that we have spent whatever income we have had for the benefit of everyone, rather than just sitting on it.

Another small change in membership concerns new members. We have recently been taking £12 less the number of months at the time of joining for new members. For example anyone joining in September would only pay £3 for the remainder of the year. The change from now on will be new members

will be asked to pay either the full amount if joining in the first half of the year, or half if joining after June.

Normally, this type of decision would have been put to the AGM, but the timing of the AGM being in March is unfortunate, as membership fees are payable at the turn of the year. So the increase was decided upon by the committee, who feel that the amounts requested still represent very good value for money.

And so onto past events. This has been the busiest period of the year of course, and since the last newsletter there have been events just about every weekend. Here is a roundup of the main ones.

BERRINGTON HALL, 12TH JULY



The assembled gathering on the steps of Berrington Hall. Fortunately Shirley is now just about fully recovered, and sprinting around!

Berrington Hall, once the home of Shropshire nobility, is now the home of Gareth Gwilt, son of our chairman, where he now works for the National Trust, as custodian of this magnificent stately home, not far from Ludlow. The Gwilt family, between them, organised this event, which started as a road run from Cannock, and via some most attractive country lanes, ended up at Berrington Hall. The South Staffs contingent was joined there by

members of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire areas, which made a great gathering of about 50 cars in total. The Hall has very extensive grounds, and apart from visiting the Hall itself, the grounds provided absolutely ideal areas for picnics. A really good time was had by all, and it is hoped that this could become an annual event on our programme.

And here is another view of the Berrington Hall event, written by *Jacquie Ellis*

On the 12th July we woke to a fairly rare occurrence this summer—a sunny morning! The car was soon packed and we made our way to Telford Service Station following my JIT philosophy. We were much relieved to see a Midget on the M54, meaning that we were not running late.

Arrived at Telford services to find a good collection of MG's (should there be a collective noun? A mishmash of MG's to allow for various models?). Liz was in charge, efficiently handing out the routes and explaining the 'pub quiz'. After a chat we were off—the weather was still pleasant and Steve's route was easy to follow, with some useful info—although there was one deliberate mistake on the interval mileages. Other traffic that morning must have wondered why all these MG's (& Boxsters) were slowing down at every pub—reconnoitring for a Salopian pub crawl?

We had a good run into Ludlow and parked on the hill, now one way. In my three years of travelling from South Wales to Shrewsbury in the seventies this was the main A49! The Sunday market outside the castle had some unusual and reasonably-priced items. But I wasn't allowed to linger.

A short drive later we reached Berrington Hall to be welcomed by Elaine and Meryl who directed us to the executive parking area in front of the main entrance. There the two Steves ensured that we parked prettily. There was an excellent turnout with members from the Black country and Hereford joining us. Included in the admission were various tours of the hall: Taster, Below Stairs and Conservation. Dave and I opted for the conservation tour. This was very interesting, and brought a whole new meaning to the concept

of special cleaning. By the end of the tour the clouds had rolled in, and the rest of the day was sunshine and showers, but we hardy South Staffers were not deterred. After a picnic lunch we strolled to the lake, only getting a little wet when almost back at the house. In the next dry interlude we strolled to the gardens and timed the self-guided tour of the house to coincide with a shower.

We set a new record for how many people could huddle in the club tent. As the heavens opened up we gathered for the results of Steve and Elaine's ingenious pub quiz, which was won by a Black Country member. Dave and I upheld the honour of South Staffs by coming second. After this, people started to drift away, but the weather soon improved and we were able to browse the shop and plant sales, visit the butler's bedroom and laundry. We indulged in a NT afternoon tea in the Servants' Hall before making our way home via Bridgnorth and Wolverhampton.

What should have been a good run was spoilt by all the idiots in modern cars who braked for each hint of a bend. Also, we hadn't anticipated how busy the Wolverhampton ring road would be on a Sunday afternoon.

Berrington Hall was certainly a perfect place for a summer picnic, even if not a perfect place to live for some—Meryl was a little shell-shocked by her overnight stay!

It was an excellent run and day out in good company. Many thanks to Steve and Elaine for organising the day, and to Gareth for welcoming us to the Hall.

If you didn't make this trip, Berrington Hall is certainly worth a visit.

THE CLUB BARBECUE, 18TH JULY

Considering the generally awful weather that we had during virtually the whole month of July, we were very lucky to get away with an evening, though rather overcast and gloomy, was at least dry.

The choice of venue for the barbecue, Hatherton Parish Room, turned out to be a real winner. Had the weather turned bad we would have been able to go indoors, but the area outside was just about ideal for the event.

The morning of the barbecue was spent erecting the several gazebos, plus the large tent belonging to Steve. The latter turned out to be quite a challenge, and some considerable time was spent by the small army of helpers trying to sort out what went where.

The evening itself was most enjoyable, and the food was really excellent. The two Steves put in a mighty effort cooking the assortment of meat, which was notable for the square sausages, a strange breed!

There were two main highlights of the evening. One was the donation of two cheques, part of the proceeds from MG's in the Trees. The first was to the County Air Ambulance. The representative delegated to receive the cheque seemed genuinely bowled over by the amount; she was quite accustomed to receiving donations of the order of £50 to £100, and our £1260 seemed to come as a most welcome surprise to her. The second, and smaller cheque was gratefully received by members of the Staffordshire Search and Rescue. The second main highlight of the



The Black Country boys raring to go on the start line

Finally, many thanks to the small army of helpers who gave up their Saturday morning to set up the gazebos and tent, and then their Sunday morning with the great clear-up afterwards.



The presentation of the Air Ambulance cheque; very gratefully received

evening was the fantastically competitive Autotest, carried out using the highly-powered MG made by Lawrence. I can testify to the fact that the car seemed to weigh about a couple of tons towards the end of the course, and the speed of most of the competitors was surprising, particularly the two Steves, who, free from the shackles of their cooking activities, put in a great performance to win comprehensively.

THE ANNUAL LEICESTERSHIRE RUN, 16TH. AUGUST

This year was (I think) the sixth year of this now popular run, and the chosen venue was Belvoir Castle, right over at the furthest easterly point of Leicestershire, not far from Grantham. Well over two dozen cars took part in the run, including our little contingent of Porsches, this year three of them (and very nice they looked too).

The midway coffee stop proved to be highly successful. The landlord very kindly opened up the pub at Wymeswold, and we just about managed to fill all of the available space. Belvoir castle was very interesting, but unfortunately the arranged “butler tour”, of areas of the castle not usually seen by the public, did not materialise, which was a pity. The short tour in its place, including descending down to the ‘bowels of the castle’ as the guide put it, though interesting, was a disappointment. Nevertheless a really good day out was enjoyed by all, including a very good picnic, the star event of which was the gourmet meal cooking by Brian!

One small point mentioned afterwards was that for such a run, it would have been helpful if some directions had been given for suggested routes home. This had been noted, and will hopefully be included next time.

THE MIKE GREETHAM MEMORIAL TREASURE HUNT, 23RD. AUGUST

Treasure hunts have become the source of some problems recently. In fact they are specifically mentioned as being just about banned by ‘the powers that be’. Whilst this is in a way regrettable, the traffic situation generally, even on a Sunday morning, is nowadays such that dithering around on a public road looking for clues has become quite stressful for the drivers, and in certain circumstances, quite dangerous. From now on, such events will be a road run, with various stops on the way, and clues found strictly on foot.

With this in mind, the thoughtfully arranged run this year was very successful, but is likely to be the last where clues have to be found

when on the move in the cars.

Many thanks to Pete Walker and Derek Haywood or all of their work in organising the event. This has to be the most time-consuming and awkward thing for anyone to organise, and the rave reviews afterwards show that it was well-organised and extremely enjoyable.

THE WHITE HORSE SHOW, 30TH. AUGUST

As a newcomer to the show, I was not entirely sure what to expect, and was most agreeably impressed by the show, which takes place in Wiltshire, not far from Swindon. It is an old-fashioned country show, with displays and competitions of various country pursuits. It is not a game fair, beloved of the hunting, shooting fishing and strangling brigade, but included horses and other livestock, and such items as the quite wonderful display of five sheepdogs marshalling s small flock of geese.

Those of us who are descendents of Robin Hood had a go at the Archery, and there was also a tractor-driving competition, where yours truly demolished most of the course. A small group of us stayed overnight at “The Jolly Tar”, a country pub in a small village near the show site. This was really excellent, and very highly recommended. The pub was under fairly new management, and in these very difficult times it is hoped that they make a success of it; they most certainly deserve to. Another feature of the event was the vintage-type fairground. Just about all of us enjoyed a ride on the carousel, and also the dodgems (see the club website!).

On the Sunday, the main vintage transport feature was a display of motor bikes; the cars congregate on the Monday. Despite this, there was an interesting assortment of cars on view during our visit.

Once again, the weather was reasonable, but not really summer weather; there was quite a cold wind for most of the day.

Towards the end of the day we were treated to a brief (rather too brief) fly-past by XH558, the Vulcan bomber, which was most impressive.

The sting in the tail

The final event of the day was most unwelcome. Pete managed to lock the keys of his MGRV8 in the boot. I mention this not to embarrass him; it is terribly easy to put the keys in a coat pocket, and then put the coat in the boot, and bang it shut. I mention it for the club members who are fortunate enough to own one of these cars, because the remedy was as follows. The boot release is a push button on the dashboard. Pete took the switch apart, and then identified the two wires which had to be shorted across to actuate the switch. Shorting across opened the boot successfully. Personally I would not have thought of this, and would have had to be recovered by the RAC, but this could be a useful get-you-home tip. In Pete's case this was aggravated by the fact that perversely a fuse chose to blow in the middle of the proceedings, which added another hour of head-scratching to the rescue.

I gather that owners of MGF's and MGTF's are also extremely vulnerable to locking keys in the boot. In this case there is no boot release in the car, and hence no easy get-you-home procedure. It would seem that the only way to guard against this for F's and TF's would be a duplicate key well-hidden somewhere on the car, perhaps taped under a wheel arch or under the floor. It could be quite a life-saver.

Lack of time prevents bringing all of the events up to date in this issue, so reports of the later ones, such as the terrific day at Mallory Park and the Shropshire run have been held over until the next issue

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday October 25th. The restoration Show, at Stoneleigh We have a club stand Admission on the day £10, Seniors £8, accompanied children free. The show is from 10.00h until 16.00h

Wednesday 11th. November. *FOR THE LADIES*—Perfumes by the FM group 7.30 pm at Gwilt Towers. Come along for some fun while the old codgers talk about crankshafts and oil seals, and bring a bottle. Please phone 01922 415680 if attending.

Friday 13th., Sat 24th and Sunday 15th. November The Classic Car Show, NEC. Admission Friday £23 on the door, Sat and Sun £18 on the door. Slightly cheaper if booked in advance on the net.

Saturday November 28th. The Christmas Party. At The Terrace Restaurant, Brownhills. Tickets £20 for members, £25 for guests. If you haven't yet booked, please do so ASAP.