



# Synchro!



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**The Newsletter of South Staffs and North Birmingham MG Owners Club**

[Website: www.ssmgoc.co.uk](http://www.ssmgoc.co.uk)

**Editor: Alan Heeley**

**Date: March 2008**



*The club stand at Stoneleigh, with new backdrop*

## **EDITOR'S RAMBLINGS** **by Alan Heeley**

The first period of the new year has got away to a great start, with several events held already. It has been really great to see such a good turnout for all of them. In the dark evenings of January a special event was the Highway Code-based quiz arranged by Steve. It was obvious that a lot of preparation had gone into the quiz, particularly hours of typing by Gareth.

I think that it is a good idea to periodically have a look at the Highway Code to keep abreast with the latest ideas. Anything that may help to avoid accidents must be a good thing. The latest version of the Highway Code seems to me to be much improved over previous versions, and well worth buying.

The quiz itself was very nicely organised, and we were also pleased to welcome a small contingent from the Black Country Group of the MGOC. The evening was a great success. Well done Sian and John, the worthy winners.

In this issue of the newsletter there is the re-

sult of a slight cock-up by yours truly, namely that due to a slight misunderstanding we have two reports of the same event, the visit to Gaydon. However, the two reports both make for interesting reading, and I particularly liked the paragraph in Lawrence's report about the 'awakening' of his car after the winter – most entertaining!

There are four articles from different contributors, for which many thanks. I think that you will agree that they are great journalistic efforts. Please keep them coming.

Finally, a word of possible explanation. Dave Powis's article describing the USA holiday is entitled MG's in America (part 1). As far as I am aware, he did not take his MG to America, and neither did Geoff, so why the title? Well some of you will remember one of the Christmas parties at the Longford House Hotel a year or two ago. A certain trio performed, unforgettably, the songs of Tina Turner, among others, suitably attired. They were introduced as the three MG's, which was translated by Steve Moore's son in his introduction as The Three Mad Gits. Could this have something to do with the title of Dave's article?

On a different note, the Kimber run will soon be upon us, (13<sup>th</sup>. April), and Roy Clarke would still like some more marshals for the event. Nothing too onerous, just a very pleasant and satisfying day out at Chatsworth. Please let us know if you are interested.

## **CLUB RUN TO THE HERITAGE** **MOTOR CENTRE, GAYDON** **by Fran Davis**

The day dawned bright and clear (for which I was very thankful, as Stan had declared that we were going in the MG "no matter what the weather"), for our first club run of the year.

We made an early start (well, it was early for Sunday), and a few of us met up at Frankley Services, attracting some admiring glances at our freshly cleaned and gleamed cars. There was Lawrence and Jenny's White MGA Coupe, Brian and Margaret's Pageant Blue MGB, Stan and Diane's V8, and our Tartan Red MGB Roadster. We made a very patriotic blur as we headed down the M42 and M40 for Gaydon.

It was an easy run without any holdup, and we arrived early, before the Centre had opened. The site is impressive; there are 65 acres of it, all beautifully landscaped and neatly laid out with masses of golden daffodils in full bloom to welcome us as we headed for our reserved places on the car park.

By this time we were ready for coffee, and, as the Centre had now opened we headed for the café for a welcome brew.

One by one we were joined by other club members, until we had a very creditable showing indeed; so many of us that we had to split into two groups for the guided tour. The men were in one group and the

women in the other. No surprises there then! Our guide was very knowledgeable and gave us lots of information about the wonderful collection of historic vehicles. There are always around 175 cars on show at any one time, with many more retained in store. Those on display included some of the earliest motors, including an 1896 Wolseley, through to the latest Aston Martin.

Our guide took us through the history and development of the motor industry and showed us examples of the many varied engines. Never mind all the technical bits, those early cars were just so elegant to look at!

We were also shown some recent celebrity cars; the Land Rover that Angelina Jolie used as Lara Croft in 'Tomb Raider', and the one that was driven by Sylvester Stallone as 'Judge Dread', as well as the pink monstrosity that was Lady Penelope's car in 'Thunderbirds'.

I was surprised at how many of the cars we were allowed to sit and pose in (you know who you are!).

MG's were well represented, and included two of the record-breaking cars in the EX range, still looking streamlined and futuristic.

I was particularly impressed by the 'Time Road', a display around the perimeter of the Centre, showing vehicles from different decades from 1896 to

1990, all shown on reproductions of the original road surfaces with the relevant road signs and markings as they were introduced.

Beautifully done!

After the tour we enjoyed an excellent lunch in the café, and then had a look at what the rest of the centre had to offer.

There were short films showing in the cinema throughout the day, a small but well-stocked gift shop and an excellent reconstruction of William Morris's (later Lord Nuffield) office. This is shown exactly as it was at the disused



military academy at Cowley used by Morris to produce the Morris Oxford car, better known as the 'Bullnose'. The first MG's of 1924 had been specially bodied Morris cars developed by Cecil Kimber as manager of Morris Garages. Later the MG company was set up at Abingdon, although the business was still personally owned by William Morris.

All in all, a very interesting and enjoyable day out.

## **DAY OUT AT GAYDON 27.01.08**

### **By Lawrence Downing**

A good idea from Steve and Elaine to do this in mid January 2008, as this is normally a trial-and-error month for weather. Cars are out to play or just warm and cosy in their various abodes. As it turned out, the weather was getting better for an early start to the year, so discussion time to either air up the beasts or let them slumber.

A few chose to disturb them, and what a good decision! The day prior came, Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup>. Garage doors opened, covers removed. A second thought crept in; will it start? Did I charge the batteries? Is water OK? Oh well, in for a penny, in for a pound! The bold stepped forward. Keys in the lock, doors opened up, and a slightly musty scent wafted into the air, of leather and plastic, like opening an much-loved old book. Leg in, and bum on seat. Key into ignition – *Please start!!* Turned the key, light on, ignition and oil lights bright. *Go for it!* Turned the key, and a slow slumber purr, then a full firing, and away it started. (Dave Powis please note – Ed!) Oh what joy one feels to hear those warbling exhaust tones. And a joyful part of days to come; the feeling of air in the hair, if you are lucky to be blessed with it, or, Where did I put my cap?

Full checks done, garage doors fully open, chocks removed, and lets go for a spin prior to tomorrow to blow away the cobwebs and gremlins. A final tuning and all is well.

Sunday the 27<sup>th</sup>, and an early start required

for a few. We meet up at the first services on the M5, i.e. Stan and Diane, Stan and Fran, Brian and Margaret, and myself in the MGA with Jennifer. Away we went to meet at Gaydon. On arrival the car park's empty. A few people come in to work, and our members arriving in MG's, parking in a pre-sectioned area. What a good turn-out. A coffee was first priority, then the tour.

Nice to see Frank and Julie in her special MG, and fully accommodated by Gaydon for people to get about. A guide asked for our party to be taken round in two groups. So ladies to the left, gentlemen to the right. We all met up after the tour guide and wandered around. What a good and interesting display! One lady has confessed to a long-lasting affair with an eminent yellow wire-wheeled sports model. I think that the Porsche may have to do unless the Euro Lottery comes up, and then rethink.

What a wonderful day out, and many thanks to Elaine and Steve for organising it, and to all of the members for joining in.

## **THE ALAN JONES MEMORIAL RUN**

**(formerly the Valentines' run)**  
**17th. February 2008**  
**By Liz Preston**

It was a cold frosty morning with wonderful sunshine. Everyone arrived at The Golden Cup, Yoxall, between 9.45 – 10.30. The usual old faces and new ones, raring to go. There was a warm welcome awaiting us at The Golden Cup, with a refreshing cup of tea or coffee with biscuits.

As we started to leave we were given our instructions and the route to follow, and also a very informative sheet of local history of the area that our journey takes us through. As engines started, MG's lowered their hoods, so that they could feel the cool breeze through their hair (*those who are still lucky enough to have any – Ed!*) There was a mixture of vehicles from Rovers, Porsches, Fords, Range Rovers as well as our faithful MG's.

were in a jolly frame of mind as we started.

**M.G.'s IN AMERICA**  
**By Dave Powis and Geoff Edwards**  
**With help from Sue and Joy**

All were in a jolly frame of mind as we started off.

After a while on the left-hand side in a field we saw a light aircraft with a deflated wind-sock and an empty house which was obviously part of the airfield. Further on, on the right we saw a lovely group of swans in the middle of a green field, obviously a bit confused or even colour-blind, as the field was green. We then had to look out for low-flying Cranes, two to be precise. You never know, they might have mistaken us for the lake!

The smell of the countryside was very uplifting. We also saw a few church steeples rearing up into the sky. The villages were so beautiful and quaint; church bells ringing.

Further on we actually thought that we might lose Brian and Margaret to the radio-controlled planes, but he resisted the call. The cars ahead of us decided that it was time for a stop, and a warm, which was much appreciated by all, so a few of us popped into The Black Horse at Sheepy Magna, a friendly village.

It wasn't too long before we set off again. It was not much further before we arrived back at the Golden Cup. We all arrived safe and sound, what a surprise! As this was our first club run it was very enjoyable, but we had a very competent navigator, our 11 year-old daughter Vivienne, who we thanked. (She really put the driver in his place, giving him some gip!). She cannot wait until the next run, even if, as Alan later said, "there was a bit of a sting in the tail", a slight error in the route notes very near to the end, but it was noticed, and all added to the fun, and everyone arrived safe and sound.

After the meal, which was enjoyed by all, I'm sure, Alan toasted to the memory of Alan Jones, and thanked all for coming, and hoped that everyone had enjoyed their day.

We would like to thank Mike (the bike) and Jacqueline for organising the day, which was enjoyed by all.

Looking back over the holidays that we have taken with the South Staffs MGOC, we have been from the idyllic log cabins on the side of Loch Irving at Fort William, with a mixture of sunshine and rain, riding through to Glencoe and up to the furthest Northerly point, John'O'Groats. There have been visits to the English Riviera, camping out under the stars, and of course our excursions across the channel to France and Austria.

Then there are the other excursions that we have taken along with our partners in crime, Geoff and Joy: fast cat across to Ireland, touring the Northern coastline, taking in the Giant's causeway. We have 'hopped under the channel to the spectacular bulb fields of Holland, negotiating the thousands of cyclists who seem to think that they have the right of way on the highway.

An interesting challenge, set by our tour operator Geoff, just to keep us on our toes, how far can a 3.9 litre engine plus MG travel on an empty petrol tank? Of course, in the name of curiosity we also visited the capital, Amsterdam, and had a shopping trip to the red light district (the girls' outlook on shopping will never be the same again).

So, when we sat down and tried to come up with an idea for our September holiday it proved to be difficult. We were all agreed that what we wanted was a two-week holiday in the sun (the girls insisted on this), with possibly a car show, shopping excursions, nice hotel, and plenty to eat and drink. A tall order, our past holidays having been so successful.

We had always said that we would like to go to America, and when this came up in our discussions, Geoff and Joy said that it was their favourite place to go, especially the famous Las Vegas. So the plan was to fly out to Los Angeles, stay there for a week, and .

and then drive across the desert to stop in Las Vegas!

A trip to the travel agent to collect handfuls of brochures, and the holiday took shape. Following our original plan, fly from Manchester to Chicago, change planes, fly on to Los Angeles, pick up a limousine at the airport, and stay at the Wiltshire Grande Hotel (pretty woman Hotel). After visiting places of interest, then drive across to Las Vegas, and stay at the Luxor Hotel (the one that looks like a glass pyramid), and explore the most famous gambling city in the world.

We shopped till we dropped for our holiday outfits, and also bought two new suitcases, big enough to smuggle in six Cosovans. Dollars were purchased, passports checked, and flight plan checked. Times for departure and arrival were confusing to say the least: i.e. leave Manchester at 07.30h., fly for 12 hours, and then land in Chicago at 17.00h., all in one day. However, coming back it would take two days? We were sure that it would all be right on the day.

As with all holidays, they always come round quicker than you think, especially when we were busy during the summer with our MG outings etc. So before you know it, we were meeting Geoff and Joy on the way to Manchester Airport to begin our excursion to America.

We boarded our flight, and settled back for the first leg of our adventure. As already stated we were to land at Chicago and pick up our connecting flight on to L.A. Our plane was due to land at 1.00p.m., and leave at 2.00p.m. So you have to land, pass through customs, collect the cases, and travel across Chicago Airport to catch a flight in an hour. As anyone knows who has travelled by plane, this is impossible, and yes, we missed our connecting flight to L.A.

We were instead dispatched on the next flight, and arrived in L.A. a little weary, but glad to be there. All we needed was to pick up our car and we would be on our way. We could tell straight away that we had a problem, when the Salesman looked at our four

four cases, and our tired team of travellers, and stated that there was no way that we would all get into the car we had booked as part of the holiday package. We would need a much larger car, but he would do us a good deal (where have you heard that before?).

A short time later we were on our way in a Dodge 4X4 Laredo (an American Range Rover), along with a Sat Nav that the salesman said we could not do without, and a hefty billon our credit cards. The Sat Nav did turn out to be essential; as we left the airport we were travelling in the wrong direction, but with a bit of Geoff's nifty driving we got back on track, and were soon entering L.A., the illuminated skyscrapers surrounding our hotel, right in the centre of downtown L.A. We parked our car in the underground car park, and watched it disappear with one of those hotel valet parking service attendants, and we would get to know these guys really well, as the only way to get your car back was to 'tip' the valet.



We quickly got the idea that you need a pocket full of dollars to pass on to anyone who does you a service; feeds you, opens the door, etc.

After an interesting breakfast and making friends with our waiter, who claims to be a gambler, and visits Las Vegas on a regular basis, we set off for Long Island, to visit the Queen Mary. The Americans have turned her into a hotel and tourist attraction, along with being used as a film set for filming period drama etc.

Next day it was off to Universal Studios to spend the day with the stars and go on a few fun rides (Joy said we would enjoy them!). Pictures taken with Shrek, Spiderman etc., all on behalf of our grandson of course, a ride round the film sets of Jaws, Desperate Housewives, disaster movies, cowboy films, to name but a few.



A nice easy day around L.A. shopping, including Maceys'. The clock is ticking, as off next day to Seaworld, straight into the first show with Shanu the Killer Whale. They must have known that we were coming, as there were four seats right up at the front, marked up as 'Splash Zone'. Who cares, bring on the whales. You guessed it, we got wet, but hey, we were on holiday.



We sat further back watching the dolphin show, laughed at the performing seals, and visited the penguins in the ice palace.

Up early next day, and we were off to Santa Monica (Baywatch Beach). Coffee in the farmers' market, down to the beach, and lets get on those bikes to cruise up and down with the cool people. Up to Venus Beach to mix

Up early next day, and off to Santa Monica home (Baywatch Beach). Coffee in the farmers' market, down to the beach, and lets get on those bikes to cruise up and down with the cool people. Up to Venus Beach to mix with the crowd; Geoff still trying to spot those bikini-clad girls on roller skates, while I kept an eye out for Pamela Anderson in her red swim suit.

Sue managed to get maximum attention from the Beach Patrol when she fell off her bike.



Final day in L.A., and we are off to the original Disneyland. Breakfast on Main Street, cruise on the steamboat Memphis Belle, more fun rides, lunch on Castaway Island, surrounded by all the Disney characters, walk round the Magic Kingdom Castle, and drop in to see Mickey and Minnie Mouse, in their house in Toon Town. The day ended with the parade down Main Street, with all of the characters, and decorated floats, along with a firework finale. A final tip to our car valet, and we were off on our 250 mile drive to Las Vegas; mile after mile of desert and mountains. As quick lunch stop and back onto the road. Three hours later we came out of the desert into the fun and gambling capital of Las Vegas.

The skyline is filled with fabulous hotels of every shape and size, with names that remind you that this is the place to be: Luxor, New York, Venetian, Mandalay Bay, Bellagio, MGM Grande, Caeser's Palace,, just to name a few. Pulling up at the Luxor, our hotel for the week, and walking into the largest glass pyramid reception you can imagine, we were surrounded by gambling machines, bars, poker tables, blackjack, roulette, all there, so you don't have to venture outside (a good many don't get outside!).

Let's not forget the cars. In Caesar's Palace there's a 'shop' where you can buy a Ferrari, Porsche, Bentley, Mustang, Lamborghini. You want it, they will sell it to you, but the best was the classic car collection in the Imperial Hotel, a collection of over 150 classic American, Italian, English, German cars, to name but a few, with price tags varying from \$150,000, to \$4 million, along with lists of celebrity owners to match. Something that caught our eyes was a green rubber-bumper MGB Roadster with an interesting price tag.



The car was \$1000.00. The driver's seat was on offer at \$17000.00, total \$180,000.00. The owner was Sharon Stone, the lady with no knickers! Another twist to this car show is that it is on the 5<sup>th</sup>. floor of the hotel, on the Main Street of Las Vegas!

One of the main showpieces, which is unforgettable, are the musical fountains outside the Bellagio Hotel, which create stunning displays which are world-famous, along with being one of the most fabulous hotels on the Vegas Strip.

A trip to the Grand Canyon, including a very bumpy flight, was yet another highlight of the holiday.

We could go on for ever about our holiday, but I think we have rambled on enough. We have at least 400 photos of our holiday adventures, and if anyone has an hour to spend, or if our holiday tales have whetted your appetite for possibly going across the sea to America, well, Sue seems to think that we are going back for her 60<sup>th</sup>. birthday in June 2010. So if you fancy a bit of Las Vegas, give us a shout.

**AND FINALLY.....**

## **THROUGH THE CHAIR**

**By Steve Gwilt**

There certainly has been a fair bit of water flow under the bridge in the short time since the last news letter. The AGM seems a long time in the past, but I would like to thank everyone that attended and helped to make it such a good meeting. Also I would like to welcome Steve and Alan on to the committee. Steve is already working hard on the website, and Alan is now already getting into the swing with the administration of the club.

We have already started this year's calendar with weekends at Gaydon, on the Alan Jones Valentine Run, and of course the International MG Show at Stoneleigh. Our stand at Stoneleigh prompted some very positive comments from visitors, and has been featured in MG Enthusiast. There was some new equipment on display and I would like to thank Stan for his effort and artistic flair which attracted so much attention. During the next few weeks more new equipment will be purchased to replace some of the tired and dated items that we have used in the past. The future is Bright (but not orange!!!!!!).

MGs in the Trees is coming along nicely. The route planning is well advanced (and that's all I know), and at the time of writing we have 55 paid up entrants, which is more than we had 10 days before the event last year. Hopefully we are on schedule to double last years numbers.

Elaine and myself woke the problem B last week and put a few miles on the clock without any drama or incident Sscchhh. We are keeping our fingers crossed that we manage Torquay at Easter without the help of a 'very nice man'!!!

Steve

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

Wednesday 12th. March Club Meeting: The Globe, Hednesford

Easter Weekend, 21st.– 24th. March; Club Holiday, Torquay

For those not participating in the club holiday, one suggestion is the 1950's weekend, at The Commandery, Worcester. With music, a 50's Tea Dance, and a display of classic cars.

Wednesday 26th. March Club Meeting: The Globe, Hednesford

Wednesday 9th. April Club Meeting: The Globe, Hednesford

Sunday 13th. April. THE KIMBER RUN. Centred on Chatsworth House, Derbyshire. There will be two individual runs starting and ending at Chatsworth, Probably too late to enter for the event itself now, but why not come and marshall. Contact Roy Clarke, Regional secretary, on 01543 670756.

Wednesday 23rd. April Club Meeting, The Globe, Hednesford It is hoped that there will be a short talk from Neil Atkins, of the Institute of Advanced Motorists, on the Advanced Driving Test.

Sunday 27th. April. Leicestershire run. Meet at The Bowling Green, Lichfield 10.00 a.m.

Saturday 14th. June Another non-club event, worthy of mention, is the family fun day, to be held at Arrow Valley Park, Redditch, which will incorporate a display of classic cars.

Looking at the distant future: I have been informed that there will be a regional event next year, 2009, on May 17th., centred on the R.A.F. museum at Cosford.