

# **NORTH HAMPSHIRE AUSTIN ENTHUSIASTS GROUP**

**Founded 1974**

## **Monthly Newsletter and Events Update**

Editor

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**Please let me have any articles for the newsletter by the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month, as a WORD DOCUMENT attached to an e-mail.**

[www.nhaeq.org.uk](http://www.nhaeq.org.uk)

**MAY 2010**

**Club nights at The New Inn, Heckfield, 8pm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in every month**

### **Mo's Mutterings**



I must say thank you to **Ben**, Ann and Colin's grandson, for the photo of the line up at dusk, outside the New Inn on the night of the Spring Airing. It was good to see younger members at club night, all due to the Easter holidays which enabled them to have a late night!

As some of you know, I have had a "bit of trouble" with my computer but thanks to Nick B, once again, all seems to be well. (Thanks to Pat for her patience).

I apologise for the fact there will be no Don's Doodlings this month! I have actually locked him in the kitchen so that he can finish the new units before Beaulieu on the 14<sup>th</sup> May. It could be a question of "no kitchen" – "no Beaulieu"!

I did let him out last week so that we could do a recce on the Bridgnorth holiday. All seems to be in order and we think it will be a very enjoyable few days. Don will soon be in touch with all members going to Bridgnorth and will bring you all up to date with the itinerary.

Bletchley Park was a good day out and very interesting, I can't believe the size of the first computers! The weather could have been a little warmer, especially when we had to stand outside and listen to our very good guide and the wind was whistling through the alleys!



Thanks to Jean E. for the lovely photographs above, taken at Bletchley.

Don and I also enjoyed our Drive It Day trip to the Watercress Line and thank Karen for organising this and Pete Barlow for the original suggestion. Also, thanks to Andy Seager for more brilliant photographs, I particularly like the two below, our organiser Karen with handbag, and on the right, Noddy and friends).



We would like to send our good wishes to Jenny Gillespie-Brown and wish her a speedy recovery from a particularly nasty bout of shingles she has had over the past month. We look forward to seeing her out and about again soon.

Maureen

## **Colin's Column**

With the better weather, it has been good to get Arabella out on the road. Over the winter I have taken off all the shock absorbers, cleaned them up, given them a coat of paint and replaced all the discs. I must say it has made a big difference to the suspension and the handling of the car.

I also decided to finally do something about the colour of the hood. When I bought Arabella 11 years ago the hood was a nice black colour but as always happens, it gradually faded to a light grey and was looking a bit tatty. I therefore decided to try Renovo colour restorer which had been recommended to me by Trevor (Edwards) and Phil (Dunford) who had used it on Jan's MG and looked very smart.

The first step was to clean the hood with the special cleaner; it was amazing how much dirt came off. Then I put the colour restorer on. After one coat it looked quite good, after two it looked a lot better but I decided to give it a third anyway. Finally I gave it a coat of Ultra Proofer to make sure it was nice and waterproof, having had it leak slightly if left in pouring rain in the past. I must say it looks a lot better now and having sprayed the hood for some time with a hose it seems to be waterproof.

If your hood is looking a bit faded I can certainly recommend the products and if you would like more details you can get them on the Renovo web site at [www.renovointernational.com](http://www.renovointernational.com)

### **Bletchley Park Trip**

With the winter behind us it was good to finally set off on our first proper run of the year to Bletchley Park, the historic site of British secret code breaking activities during WW2 and the birthplace of the modern computer. The whole day was organised for us by Trevor and Jean and what a splendid job they did, even arranging for the sun to shine.

We met up just outside Henley and followed a very picturesque route to Bletchley Park. On arrival we were given coffee in the library, which had been reserved for our private use, while we were given an introductory talk by our guide for the day.

We were then taken on a tour of the site, which was a lot bigger than I imagined. We visited various buildings where amongst other things, we saw the famous Enigma cipher machine, the Bombe rebuild and the massive Colossus, the forerunner of today's computers. We then returned to the library where we enjoyed a very good lunch.

In the afternoon we were free to explore the rest of the site. There is so much to see and do there that it was not really possible to visit everything. Ann and I went to the model railway exhibition, the Churchill Collection, the Post Office and the Toy and Memorabilia Collection before returning to the library for tea and a few final words from our guide.

It was then time to make our way home. Some made their own way but a number of us decided to follow Trevor back the way we came. Unfortunately for Trevor and Jean their car 'Clarissa' decided to misbehave and a number of stops had to be made with Trevor eventually deciding to call the breakdown service to get them home. An unfortunate end to a very enjoyable day. As far as I know, everyone else got home safely.

On behalf of everyone who went, a very big thank you to Trevor and Jean for all their time and effort in arranging a wonderful day. I just hope their journey home did not spoil it too much for them.

### **April Club Night**

Wow! What a turnout for our April club night. As always in April we had our 'Spring Airing' to encourage members to rouse their cars from their winter slumbers. We had a free draw for everyone coming in a proper car, with a £25 M&S voucher for the winner. It certainly brought a lot of you out, with 23 cars in the car park and 55 members in the clubroom, which I think is a record. It did make it a bit crowded but everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. The winner of the voucher was Tony (Westhall).

### **May Club Night (1)**

The May club night is called 'Ladies Get Dirty' and is the idea of Karen (Witton) and promises to be a bit of a laugh. It is a sort of quiz for the ladies and should make for an amusing evening. In case any of you men think there will be nothing for you to do, Karen says she has got something lined up for you to enjoy as well. The only problem is Tim, our landlord, is having difficulty trying to fix up the pole.

It all sounds like a lot of fun so come along and have a laugh and don't worry ladies, you won't really get dirty.



## **May Club Night (2)**

In May we are having two club nights, the second being on the 17<sup>th</sup> when we are very fortunate to have **Bob Wyatt** coming to give us a talk about his life with Austins. As most of you probably know, Bob has a passion for everything Austin. He has a lot of very interesting and amusing stories to tell, especially how he came to rescue hundreds of records from a skip at Longbridge when Lord Stokes decided to clear them all out.

I am sure most of you know that Bob has written some very good books on Austins and if you bring any along that you have, he will be happy to sign them for you. He also hopes to bring along a few of his books on the Austin 7 and you may like to purchase one. It is an extremely interesting book and well worth having. It is no longer available elsewhere. An evening not to miss.

## **Trip to Aston Martin Heritage Trust Museum**

Details of the trip to the **Aston Martin Heritage Trust Museum** on the **4<sup>th</sup> June** were in the March newsletter. I now need to ask you for the money, which is £15 per person. As mentioned in last month's newsletter I need it by the **10<sup>th</sup> May at the latest**, which is the date of the first May club night. Most of you have paid but if you have not done so and you will not be at the club that night or will not be seeing me before then, please post it to me by that date. The money is to cover the cost of admittance, coffee on arrival and lunch.

I must give the numbers after that date so if you want to go and have not given me your name yet, then you need to do so now, please. At the time of writing there are only a few places left.

The Heritage Trust Museum is at Drayton St. Leonard near Wallingford and I have worked out a route starting from Wokingham and the distance is just 26 miles. I will send the route with full details of times etc. to everyone going, nearer the date. Members may of course make their own way there but I would like to know if you are, so that I know whom to expect at Wokingham.

Please pay by cheque made out to NHAEG.

## **Trip to the IOW in a 1949 OB Bedford Coach**

I am informed by Trevor Mulford that there are **just 4 seats** left on the coach so if you wish to go on the trip to the **Isle of Wight** and have not already given your names to Trevor I suggest you do so now before it is too late. His phone number is 01252 620435. Details of the trip were in the March and April newsletter. If you want more details then give Trevor or me a ring.

The ferry has now been booked and paid for so we would like your money please. Cheques should be made out to **NHAEG**, the cost being **£22** per person and handed or posted to me by the **14<sup>th</sup> June at the latest**.

## **August Amble**

You will have seen in last month's newsletter under club nights and events that Ann and I are going to organise an '**August Amble**' on the **15<sup>th</sup> August** similar to last years. Since putting the list together John and Joan have very kindly offered to do a BBQ for us at their house at the end of the run.

I have therefore decided to start the run at The Hut (formally the West Meon Hut) situated at the intersection of the A32/A272. As those of you who went on 'The Big Breakfast Run' last December will know they do a fantastic breakfast at a very reasonable price. You can of course just have coffee or tea if you wish.

We will then follow a very leisurely route using quiet country lanes, passing through picturesque villages to eventually finish at John and Joan's house in Shinfield for the BBQ.

I will of course need to know who is coming so that John and Joan know how many to cater for. There is also a limit on how many cars can be parked at their house and how many people they can get into their garden. If you would like to go on the run please let me know by the July club night. **Places will of course be allocated on a first come first served basis.**

That's it for now, at the time of writing 'Drive it Day' is a couple of days away and by the time you read this it will all be over, hopefully we will have had a good day.

Safe and Happy Motoring,

***Colin.***

# Secretary's Scribblings

## Quiz News

A much larger entry for the March ('Prefix/Suffix') quiz; ten in all, four having all correct answers. Hence there had to be a draw between Phil and Jan (Dunford), Jan (Barker) and John (Chad), Malcolm and Sandra Ryley and Alan and Myfanwy (Pickett). In the event the prize went to Alan and Myfanwy for (I think) the second month running. Well done to them both.

April's quiz ('How many Triangles?') has attracted only a very few entries thus far but you still have until 8th May to get your answers in. Get counting!

This month's quiz returns to the more familiar format where, in this case, cryptic clues should lead you to identify areas of Greater London, all lying within the M25 motorway. If you think you know London this should be right up your street! Entries, as usual, in to me by 12<sup>th</sup> June, together with £1.00 towards prize(s).

*Hint!* If you enclose a £1.00 coin it's probably best to disguise the fact by placing it between a couple of pieces of stiff card or bubble wrap. One entry last month *had* clearly contained a £1.00 coin but this had been 'liberated' *en route* perhaps by some desperate postal worker or, taking a more charitable view, had 'escaped' through an obviously rain-soaked envelope.

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## Bletchley Park Code Centre Trip ~ 11<sup>th</sup> April 2010 ~ the Sequel!

Colin has alluded to this trip in his column. It certainly was, in our opinion (Jean and myself), a very worthwhile and thoroughly interesting visit although, with so much to see and take in, a second one is certainly essential to do justice to everything fully.

Despite the 'stop/go' behaviour of 'Clarissa', our 'Colwyn' A10, during the return journey, which resulted in this being extended to something like 5 hours overall, this did not detract from our huge enjoyment of the trip and it's pleasing to note that everyone else were similarly impressed. In particular, I would like, personally, to thank everyone, who chose to commence the run from the car park near Henley, for being there in good time. No-one was late and our departure was not delayed in any way. Thank you all for this. A good 2.25 hours had been allowed for the somewhat convoluted, 42 plus miles route to be negotiated but we arrived approximately 30 minutes sooner, without incident. I have since calculated that the outward journey, at least the section from Henley to Bletchley, was completed at an average speed of roughly 24mph.

Our (Jean's and mine) return journey turned out to be at just about *half* that speed for the reasons outlined below.

As some will be aware, problems started roughly 20 minutes after leaving Bletchley when 'Clarissa's' engine suddenly lost power and almost, though not quite stopped. Being obliged then, on several occasions, to stop and 'fiddle' around in various areas of suspected, possible sources of the problem, plus praying, cursing and attempting sundry other efforts to nurse 'Clarissa' home, she finally gave up just 8 miles from home in the village of Hurst. This necessitated, yet again, calling on the services of the quite excellent recovery arrangements operated through Equity Redstar Insurance, something which I can heartily recommend and am extremely grateful for even though I suspect my name is now becoming just a little too familiar within that organisation.

The 45 minutes or so we then waited for the truck to arrive gave ample opportunity for the two of us to review the situation, during which it was made abundantly clear to me that Jean's opinion regarding the 'joys' of pre-war motoring was at a very low ebb. Further emphasis was evident by her response to the truck driver, a very pleasant, sympathetic individual called 'Steve', whose vocal admiration of 'Clarissa', sick though she clearly was, and obvious enthusiasm and pride even at having her loaded

her onto his truck was clear. Jean was heard to remark that if he wanted the <\*&#@\$ thing he could have her – for nothing!

Having also had time to contemplate the possible cause of the problem and remembering a similar problem I had on a Ford Special , in the dim and distant past, some 50 years or so ago, I muttered that it might perhaps be associated with the condensor in the distributor. 'Steve', perhaps simply out of politeness and recognising the somewhat 'delicate' situation, tended to support this theory.

Once '*Clarissa*' had been loaded onto the truck, we then completed the journey home, arriving there, mercifully under cover of darkness, at just gone 9:00 pm, thereby sparing any further embarrassment by the scene of our return being witnessed by neighbours!

The next day, following a chat with Colin, who'd called enquiring on how we had fared, he kindly brought around his spare condensor. This was fitted in minutes, the engine sprang instantly into life and ran with any sign of the earlier problems during a relatively short, local test run. Reason for cautious optimism – but results not yet sufficiently convincing. We'd been along this road before! Read on.....!

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## When in doubt read the Instructions!

Having (it was hoped) eliminated the cause of the mechanical woes returning from Bletchley it was imperative that a good, long run be undertaken in '*Clarissa*' to ensure that the demons had been fully exorcised.

It was therefore fortuitous that, following my plea in last month's Newsletter for someone to navigate for me on the Alvis Inter Register rally, to be held in and around the Midhurst area, Roy (Roberts) very obligingly stepped up to the plate and offered his services. Thus it was that the two of us made an early start down to the starting venue, the '*Greyhound*' public house at Cocking Causeway just south of Midhurst on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> April.

Though we progressed with some trepidation over the 30 odd miles to the start the car behaved well and we were duly encouraged to believe all was now OK. At the start we met up with some other club members, Tony and Pat (Westhall), Richard and Christine (Scott) and Trevor (Wild) and Jane (Hanslip), all eager, no doubt, to spend a pleasant day driving around some extremely beautiful W.Sussex/E.Hampshire country highways and byways.

At 11:00am route sheets and instructions were issued and everyone nabbed a table outside the pub to spread maps and plot routes. Roy and myself, being somewhat new to the game and unfamiliar with the general form of the event itself and format adopted for clues, etc., spent probably more time than we should have on working out which of the 16 out of 25 indicated sites we planned to visit. Then the fun started!

Although we had no expectations of coming anywhere on the leaders' chart we thought we might not disgrace ourselves either. How wrong we were to be proved on the latter!

We drove steadily around, enjoying glorious weather, admiring quite stunning scenery, negotiating some formidable hills on and around the South Downs and solving a fairly decent number of the questions posed on the route sheet. All this, of course, as well as giving '*Clarissa*' a very good workout, which was a key part of the exercise anyway.

Suddenly we became acutely aware of the fact that we had just over 30 minutes to return to the start point by 3:30pm at which time we would begin to lose points for lateness and possible disqualification. We were equally aware that we were just about as far from the start point as it would have been possible to be! Not good!

Throwing caution to the winds and after crossing over the A3 at one point, we joined this and drove with some considerable haste northwards to join the A272 and thence on to Midhurst, eventually arriving back at the 'Greyhound' some 20 minutes late when Roy dashed in with our sheets in an effort to minimise any further delay. At this stage we felt able to relax a little. This pleasure, however, was short-lived when an organiser came out, pointing out that the answers we'd come up with had not been entered correctly on the Answer Sheet and we were being invited/required to transfer this information accordingly. Unfortunately this involved remembering *which* images (photographs) of certain items related to *which* map references – a daunting task and far too great to be performed quickly. We decided therefore simply to withdraw the documentation and declare ourselves 'out of the running' whilst acknowledging having learned quite a lot in the process of competing. The key lesson being 'Always Read The Instructions'!

In summary, it's pleasing to report that 'Clarissa' passed her test with flying colours, performing faultlessly over a total distance of 127 miles. Sadly her occupants didn't and failed miserably. Nevertheless, it was a great day out and our enthusiasm hasn't been dampened. We plan to have a go at a couple of forthcoming 'local' IR events; one planned for Hungerford (July) and another being Richard (Scott's) 750MC Scatter Rally, near Reading, scheduled for August.

Got a bit of homework to do before then though!

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## Need Tyres?

I recently needed to replace a tyre and inner tube on 'Clarissa' and, as in the past, went to North Hants Tyres in Aldershot for these. They are happy to replace, free of charge, tyres and tubes on vintage/classic (i.e. spoked) wheels, (something not *all* tyre companies are able or willing to do) and I have always found them very obliging.

This time, however, I mentioned our club and asked whether a discount might be offered to members using their services. They readily agreed to provide a 10% discount for any of our members who mention they're in the NHAEG so, if and when you need tyres, do check them out. Having surfed the net beforehand for other tyre suppliers I've found North Hants Tyres prices to be quite competitive.

They're located at 2 Ivy Road, North Town, Aldershot, telephone 01252 318666. Web-site is [www.northhantstyres.com](http://www.northhantstyres.com) and email is [sales@northhantstyres.com](mailto:sales@northhantstyres.com).

If visiting ask for either 'BJ' (a young man in a wheelchair) or 'Peter'. Both of these are aware of this new arrangement and facility. Probably a good idea to have your Club Membership Card with you, just to be able confirm membership.

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***Weather's looking fine for this coming Sunday (25<sup>th</sup> April - St.George's Day) for the Club's annual D.I.D. event, being organised this year by Karen. Should be great fun! No doubt a report on this in next month's Newsletter.***

*Trevor*

# North Hampshire Austin Enthusiasts Group

The NHAEG is pleased to announce that it has been asked by the **FINCHAMPSTEAD FETE** committee to stage a static display of historic and classic vehicles at their bi-annual event to be held on the 10<sup>th</sup> July 2010 in the Finchampstead village park.

As someone who has, in the past either attended or shown interest in the Motor Pageant, we are warmly inviting you to join us.

Entrance to the event is **free**, and the vehicle judged to be 'The Best in Show' will be awarded the Peter Adnams Memorial Trophy, which is held for two years. (To be returned prior to the next event in 2012). There will also be a prize for 'The Best Post War Classic Vehicle' (up to 1972), and 'The Best Pre-war Vehicle'. These assessments will each be based on the opinion of those actually participating in the event. We will also have an auto-jumble stall available for entrants to bring and offer for sale items of interest, with 10% of sale price retained for the 'Help The Heroes' charity.

The Finchampstead Fete is a typical English village summer event with all the usual attractions to be found, including tea, coffee and fast food stalls. You are of course welcome to bring your own picnic. We look forward to a very pleasant day out for all.

PLEASE put the date in your diary, and complete the short entry form below if you would like to enter the Motor Pageant. Please return the form below with your details by 1<sup>st</sup> July, enclosing an SAE for your acknowledgment and entry number. Many thanks in advance for your anticipated interest, and we look forward to seeing you there.

[illegible]

# Finchampstead Fete - 10<sup>th</sup> JULY 2010

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....Postcode.....

Vehicle Details: Make.....

Model.....

Year.....Reg No .....

My vehicle is presented fully conforming to current Road Traffic legislation

Signed.....

Please return form to :-

Mr Roy Roberts, 197 Frimley Road, Camberley Surrey. GU15 2QD.Tel No 01276 27043



## QUERIES OF THE MONTH

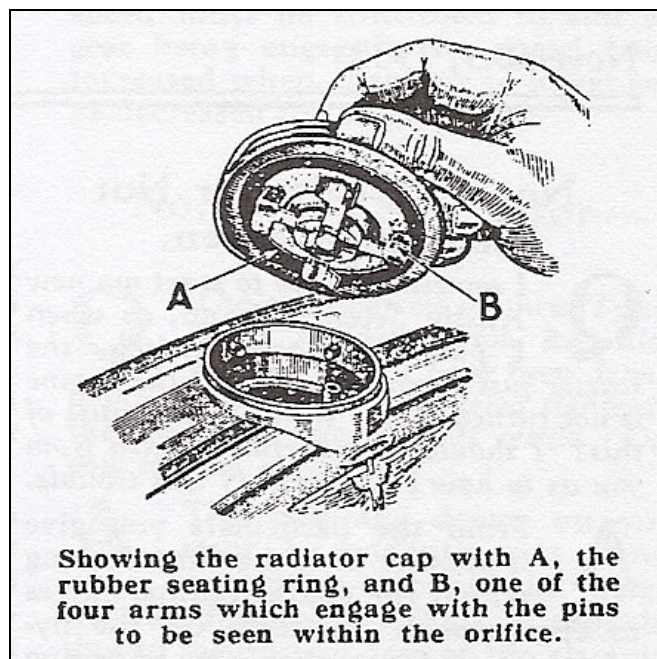
Some more “Queries of the Month”, these originally appeared in “The Austin Magazine & Advocate” during the 1930s and 1940s. This month’s selection consists of No 535, Radiator Filler – Austin Light Twelve Four and No 952, Brakes Oiling Up – Austin Ten.

No 535 appeared in October 1933, and No 952 appeared in August 1939.

### **No 535 – Radiator Filler - Austin Light Twelve Four**

**Q.** *After filling the radiator of my Light Twelve Four Austin, I find that during the first mile or so water escapes round the cap, getting on the bonnet and wings. Is this due to overfilling? Should not the overflow pipe preclude such a possibility?*

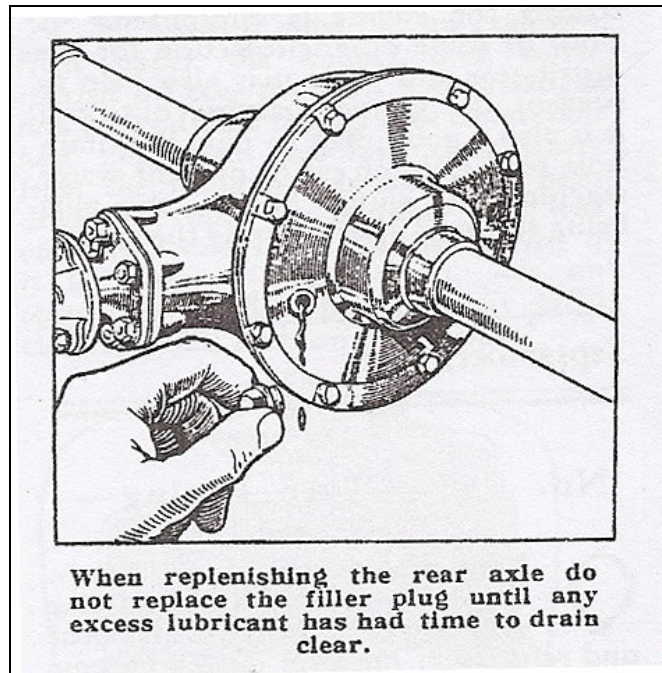
**A.** The leakage of water of which you complain is probably due to the cap not seating properly to make an efficient seal with the radiator orifice.



You should examine the rubber seating ring in the cap, which may not be lying snugly in its groove, in which event the cap will not seat correctly. Or possibly, in fixing the cap on some previous occasion, the arms inside, which engage with the pins projecting into the orifice, may have been strained so that they do not hold the cap down, when it is fitted with sufficient pressure to ensure an efficient leak-proof joint. You should look to these two points. The overflow pipe you mention allows excess water to escape, but, so as to allow for expansion due to heat, the level of water should be about 1 in. below the mouth of the overflow, or 1 1/2 in. below the radiator filler orifice.

### **No 952 – Brakes Oiling Up – Austin Ten**

**Q.** *I have a 1934 model Austin Ten and have recently had trouble with the brakes, due to oiling up. Regarding the rear brakes, I am told that oil from the rear axle is leaking into them and in respect of the front brakes the trouble appears to arise out of over-greasing the swivel axle or cross tube. I should be glad to know if these theories are correct and what can I do to prevent a recurrence of the trouble.*



**A.** The cause of your rear brake shoes becoming oiled-up is possibly due to wear in the hub assembly and ball races, or the oil seals may have become saturated and need replacing as they cannot function efficiently in that condition. The primary cause of this trouble, however, is overfilling the rear axle when replenishing, and care should be taken in future to allow any excess lubricant to drain out through the level plug after fresh oil has been injected into the axle.

With regard to your front brakes, over-greasing of the swivel pins, through the nipple at the top of the axle, may result in greasy linings. Over-lubrication of the hub caps may also have the same results. These only need very occasional treatment and even then sparingly. If too much grease is injected into the cross-tube nipples the excess grease that exudes may reach the brake linings past the dust shields and thus cause brake trouble.

*The “Queries of the Month” are reproduced with the kind permission of the Austin Ten Drivers Club (ATDC)*

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Some more old advertisements from the 1950s, these two are from 1955, and for a change, both companies still exist today.

I expect we have all used the double-ended tin of grinding paste with the big stripes on it, but I wonder if we could name the company that produced it!

Although Valspar is still in business, I don't think today they still produce the type of paint advertised in the 1955 advert. I have searched the internet and checked out the Valspar site but can find no reference to this type of paint.



**Give me**  
**CHEMICO**  
 GRINDING PASTE  
 for  
 perfect valve  
 seating



★ FINE & COARSE in ONE TIN **2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>** pertin

**CHEMICO**  
 JOINTING CEMENT


Guarantees perfect airtight, waterproof joints. In tubes. **1/9**

**CHEMICO**  
 CAR CLEANSER  
 AND POLISH

Cleans as it polishes, leaves surfaces gleaming and protected and resistant to rainspots.  
 IN 14 OZ. TINS. **4/6**

OBTAINABLE FROM ALL GOOD DEALERS

THE COUNTY CHEMICAL CO., LTD. SHIRLEY, BIRMINGHAM



**Proof of**  
**VALSPAR'S**  
*reliability*

Dear Sirs,


I thought you would be interested in the enclosed photograph of my Ford delivery van. I gave this van two coats of Cardinal Red Valspar Lacquer and one coat of Clear-Varnish in August, 1953.

Unfortunately, I have not a Garage for this vehicle ; therefore, it is out in all weathers which I think is a very good test for your Lacquer, and I think you will agree that the present condition of this van proves for itself the quality of your Products.

The amount of material used was 4½ pints of Cardinal Red, ½ pint of Black and 1½ pints of Clear-Varnish.

Yours faithfully,  
 (Signed) E. C. Barnes.

**VALSPAR**  
REGD. NO. 405848  
**2-4 HOUR LACQUER**  
*The enamel that boiling water made famous*



★ NO PRIMING OR UNDER-COATING REQUIRED    ★ FOR ALL SURFACES FROM TILES TO CARS  
 ★ DRIES IN 2-4 HOURS    ★ EASILY APPLIED, EASY TO KEEP CLEAN

Write for booklet and name of stockist to the Sole Manufacturers U.K.  
 Goodlass, Wall & Co., Ltd. 179/185, (V7) Gt. Portland St. W.I. Est. 1840

Andy Ranson

## MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

It is known that some insurance companies are now enquiring if potential clients are members of associated classic car clubs and are asking for their membership numbers. The list below has been compiled to help any member who has to provide such information.

These numbers are assigned to the Principal Member for his 'life' in the club and will not be reallocated on leaving. Should they rejoin, they would be allocated their original number, if known.

To preserve the planet I have only noted the Principal Member and in doing so I may have transgressed the current sexual equality legislation!\*.?.

These membership numbers reflect how long the member has been in the NHAEG and so suggests some who are worthy of respect from the club's masses. Lesser members should tug their forelock delicately before addressing 001 and not to upset 007 as he has a licence to kill!

One should stay friendly with members 002 and 014 as they could win the lottery someday.

Brian ADAM	005	Phil DUNFORD	041	Trevor MULFORD	006
Peter ADAMS	025	Paul EDWARDS	011	Alan PICKET	021
Ray ADNAMS	008	Trevor EDWARDS	014	Malcolm PONTIN	032
Peter APPLEFORD	037	George EWART	017	Tim PROCTER	042
Mike BALDWIN	024	David GEE	045	Andy RANSON	031
Jan BARKER	009	Peter GILLESPIE-BROWN	020	Robert RIPLEY	036
Peter BARLOW	019	Brian GRANT	004	Roy ROBERTS	001
Don BREAKSPEAR	002	Colin GREIG	007	Malcolm RYLEY	029
Mary BREAKSPEAR	003	Pat GUTHRIE-JONES	013	Richard SCOTT	016
C. BROOM/B MAYERS	010	John HANCOCK	022	Andy SEAGER	028
Nick BUCHANAN	026	Robert HOBBS	044	Russ TAYLOR	040
Dave BUTCHER	038	David HOLLAND	018	Tony WESTHALL	023
Ian CAMPBELL-FOSTER	034	Jane HOLT	047	Trevor WILD	033
John CANT	015	John LOCKYER	012	David WITTON	027
Mike CORBET	030	Stuart MASON	043	Robert WYATT	048
David DICKENS	035	George MOULTON	049		
John DODD	039	Eric MOUSER	046		

If you have any questions etc. on this matter please contact George Ewart - 017.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Part of Op.Colossus

A training establishment for parachute troops was set up at Ringway, near Manchester, on 21 June 1940 and named the Central Landing Establishment, and the initial 500 volunteers began training for airborne operations. A number of military gliders were being designed and constructed by the Royal Air Force, which had also provided a number of Armstrong Whitworth Whitley medium bombers for conversion into transport aircraft. Organizational plans were also being laid down, with the War Office calling for two parachute brigades to be operational by 1943.<sup>[8]</sup> However, the immediate development of any further airborne formations, as well as the initial 500 volunteers already training, was hampered by three problems. With the threat of invasion in 1940, many War Office officials and senior British Army officers did not believe that sufficient men could be spared from the effort to rebuild the Army after the Battle of France to create an effective airborne force; many believed that such a force would only have a nuisance raiding value and would not affect the conflict in any useful way.<sup>[9]</sup> There were also material problems; all three of the armed services were expanding and rebuilding, particularly the Army, and British industry had not yet been organized to a sufficient war footing to support all three services as well as the fledgling airborne force.<sup>[9]</sup> Finally, the airborne forces lacked a single, coherent policy, with no clear idea as to how they should be organized, or whether they should come under the command of the Army or the RAF; inter-organizational rivalry between the War Office and the Air Ministry, in charge of the RAF, was a major factor in delaying the further expansion of British airborne forces.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **Preparation**

On 26 April 1941, the Prime Minister was shown a demonstration of the airborne force that Britain currently possessed, and was informed that although some 800 parachute troops had been trained, their deployment was severely limited by the lack of suitable aircraft which could be used to transport them to any prospective targets.<sup>[10]</sup> The primary airborne formation in existence by this time was No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion, which numbered approximately 350 officers and other ranks, and had been formed from No. 2 Commando, a Commando unit which had been selected for conversion into an airborne unit.<sup>[11]</sup> The Commando began intensive airborne training in June 1940, originally 500 strong, but this had been reduced to 21 officers and 321 other ranks by September 1940; despite already receiving rigorous training, many of the commandos failed their training by refusing to conduct a parachute drop. One senior RAF officer at the Central Landing Establishment believed that such a large number refused due to a combination of inexperience and a fear that their parachute would not open when they jumped out of the aircraft.<sup>[12]</sup> On 21 November 1940 the Commando was officially renamed as No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion and reorganized to form a battalion headquarters, one parachute wing and one glider wing. By 17 December the battalion had officially completed its parachute training, including taking part in a number of demonstrations for military observers, and was considered to be ready for active duty.<sup>[12]</sup>



General Sir John Dill, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS), inspecting parachute troops at the Central Landing Establishment at RAF Ringway near Manchester, December 1940.



There were few airborne resources available to the British Army by mid-1941. The only unit trained and available for an airborne operation was No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion, there were very few transport aircraft available to transport an airborne force, there were few RAF flight crews with experience of parachute droppings and none with operational experience, and there were no specialized overseas facilities to cater exclusively for airborne operations.<sup>[1]</sup> However, it had been decided that some form of airborne operation would have to be carried out. The reasons for mounting an operation with such meagre resources were two-fold; firstly a successful raid would demonstrate to the rest of the world that Britain was still a force to be reckoned with and had not been defeated, and secondly a raid would test the fighting ability of the battalion and its equipment, as well as the RAF's ability to deliver paratroopers at a predetermined location at a required time.<sup>[13][14]</sup> The target chosen for the operation was an aqueduct that crossed the Tragino river in the Campania province of southern Italy near the town of Calitri. The aqueduct carried the main water supply for the province of Apulia, which at the time was inhabited by approximately two million Italians and included the strategically important port of Taranto; it was hoped that destroying the aqueduct and depriving the population of their regular water supply would damage their morale, and also have some impact on the Italian war efforts in North Africa and Albania.<sup>[14]</sup> The aqueduct was a significant distance from the Italian coast, making it unlikely that a sea-borne raiding party could reach it, and it was believed that it was too strongly constructed to be destroyed by aerial bombing; as such, an airborne raid conducted by parachute troops was thought to be the ideal way to eliminate the aqueduct.<sup>[1]</sup>

A small force of thirty-eight men—seven officers and thirty-one other ranks—was selected from the battalion and designated X Troop, commanded by Major T.A.G. Pritchard of the Royal Welch Fusiliers. Three Italian-speaking interpreters were attached to the troop for the duration of the operation: Squadron Leader Lucky MC, Rifleman Nasri from the Rifle Brigade and a civilian named Fortunato Picchi, a waiter in the Savoy Hotel.<sup>[13]</sup> Training for the operation began in January 1941 and lasted for six weeks, in order to allow time for six Whitley bombers to be converted to drop parachutists. A full-scale model of the aqueduct was built in early February to allow the troop to practice its assault, and during training one enlisted man was killed when he parachuted into an ice-covered pond and drowned before he could be rescued.<sup>[14]</sup> The plan for the operation called for six Whitleys of No. 91 Squadron RAF to transport X Troop from Malta to the target area on 10 February, while another two bombers would carry out a diversionary raid against railway yards at Foggia, approximately 60 miles (97 km) to the north of the aqueduct.<sup>[13]</sup> At 21:30 the troop would be dropped around the objective, attack and demolish it, and then withdraw 50 miles (80 km) to the coast to the mouth of the Sele River, where the submarine HMS Triumph would pick them up on the night of 15 February.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Battle

On 7 February X Troop boarded the six converted Whitley bombers and were transported 1,600 miles (2,600 km) to Malta without incident despite a significant portion of the journey being over occupied France. There the troop were briefed with aerial reconnaissance photographs of the objective that were provided by the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, which showed that there were actually two aqueducts in the area, one larger than the other; after a brief discussion it was decided that the larger of the two would be targeted.<sup>[16]</sup> At 18:30 on 10 February the six Whitley's took off from Malta, each carrying one officer and five other ranks of X Troop; the flight to the target area was uneventful, with clear weather and perfect visibility. The lead Whitley reached the drop zone, which was approximately 500 metres (550 yd) from the aqueduct, at 21:42. All six men and their equipment containers landed within 250 metres (270 yd) of the drop zone, as did the men from the next four aircraft; however two of the bombers failed to drop their containers due to the icing up of the release mechanisms, and the sixth aircraft failed to locate the drop zone and eventually dropped its six men and containers two hours later in a valley two miles from the aqueduct.<sup>[15]</sup> The six men who had not landed in the drop zone were Royal Engineer sappers who were supposed to rig the aqueduct for demolition, and their Whitley had been carrying most of the

explosives to be used in the operation.<sup>[17]</sup> Despite these losses, the troop gathered up the remaining containers and took up positions around the aqueduct. However, on examining the aqueduct it was found the piers supporting it were made of reinforced concrete and not brick as had been expected, leading Pritchard to suspect that the remaining explosives might be insufficient to demolish the aqueduct. After closer inspection, Pritchard ordered that the majority of the explosives be placed around the western pier and the rest against its abutment, in the hope that this would cause enough damage to destroy the aqueduct. A small amount of explosives were also placed under a nearby bridge that bridged the Ginestra river.<sup>[18][19]</sup>



 Memorial to the men of the Parachute Regiment at Tatton Park

At 00:30 on 11 February the explosives were detonated and the western pier destroyed, causing the aqueduct to crumble and effectively break in half, and the Ginestra bridge was also successfully destroyed. Leaving one man who had broken his ankle when he had landed with a nearby farmer, the remainder of the Troop withdrew from the area at 01:00, splitting into three groups and heading towards the coast.<sup>[20][19]</sup> The three groups moved as fast as possible towards the coast, but were all captured within a few hours of the aqueduct being demolished. The group commanded by Major Pritchard was spotted by a farmer who raised the alarm at a nearby village, leading to a local carabinieri unit surrounding the group; with little ammunition and heavily outnumbered, Pritchard decided to surrender.<sup>[19]</sup> The other three groups, including the six sappers who had landed two miles from the objective, fared little better. The two groups from the aqueduct were soon located by Italian soldiers and ambushed, forcing them to surrender after brief firefights. The third group were found by a group of civilians as they moved towards the coast; after attempting to bluff their way past by claiming to be German soldiers on a special field exercise, which failed when the local Mayor demanded identity papers, they were captured by carabinieri.<sup>[19]</sup> All were stripped of their weapons and equipment and transported to Naples, with the exception of the Italian translator, Picchi; he was handed over to the Blackshirts, a Fascist paramilitary group, who tortured and then executed him.<sup>[21]</sup> Even if any of the groups had managed to make their way to the coast and the rendezvous point, they would not have been picked up by HMS *Triumph*. One of the two Whitleys conducting the diversionary raid at Foggia suffered engine trouble after bombing the railway yards. The pilot radioed Malta, informing his airfield that he was ditching in the mouth of the River Sele, coincidentally the area where the rendezvous was to occur. Fearing that the message had been monitored by the Italians and that the submarine might sail into a trap, the decision was made by senior officers not to send it to the rendezvous point.<sup>[22]</sup>

## Aftermath

The destruction of the Tragino aqueduct had a negligible effect on the Italian war effort in North Africa and Albania, as it did not create a serious interruption to the water supplies of Taranto and

other ports; the water supplies in local reservoirs lasted for the short period needed for the aqueduct to be repaired.<sup>[23]</sup> However, the operation did create a certain amount of alarm in the Italian population and caused stringent new air raid precautions to be introduced by the Italian government, which were still in place when Italy surrendered in 1943.<sup>[23][24]</sup> Major General Julian Thompson has criticized the operation, claiming that although there was a great deal of planning in terms of how to insert the airborne troops, there was insufficient planning devoted to how they would be extracted. He is also critical about the lack of information gathered about the aqueduct, despite it being "hardly difficult to obtain."<sup>[25]</sup>

Lessons taken from the operation provided the British military with valuable operational and technical experience that helped shape future airborne operations, such as Operation Biting. It demonstrated the range and flexibility of airborne troops and proved that they could pose a threat to the Axis powers, and also provided a morale boost for the British military and the fledgling airborne establishment.<sup>[22][26]</sup> In terms of technical experience, it was found that the containers used to drop equipment for the troop were manufactured from a soft-skinned material, which sagged during flight and blocked the bomb-bay doors from opening; future containers were constructed from metal to ensure this did not occur.<sup>[23]</sup> All of the surviving members of X Troop would remain as prisoners of war until they were repatriated with the Italian surrender, with one exception; Lieutenant Anthony Deane-Drummond managed to escape after being captured and eventually returned to England in 1942, joining the newly-formed 1st Airborne Division.<sup>[23]</sup> When the airborne establishment was expanded, No. 11 Special Air Service Battalion was renamed 1st Parachute Battalion, and eventually formed the nucleus of 1st Parachute Brigade when it was created in September 1941.<sup>[27]</sup>

## References

1. ^ a b c Otway, p. 63
2. ^ Otway, p. 64
3. ^ Flanagan, p. 6.
4. ^ Harclerode, p. 197.
5. ^ Harclerode, p. 107.
6. ^ a b Otway, p. 21
7. ^ Otway, p. 23
8. ^ Otway, p. 28
9. ^ a b c Otway, p. 25
10. ^ Otway, p. 30
11. ^ Otway, pp. 31–32
12. ^ a b Otway, p. 32
13. ^ a b c Harclerode, p. 200
14. ^ a b c Saunders, p. 19
15. ^ a b Harclerode, p. 202
16. ^ Saunders, p. 20
17. ^ Saunders, pp. 20–21
18. ^ Saunders, p. 21
19. ^ a b c d Harclerode, p. 203
20. ^ Saunders, p. 22
21. ^ Saunders, p. 24
22. ^ a b Harclerode, p. 204
23. ^ a b c d Otway, p. 65
24. ^ Saunders, p. 25
25. ^ Thompson, p. 342
26. ^ Saunders, p. 27
27. ^ Tugwell, p. 125

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## NHAEG Club Nights and Events Diary

<u>Club Nights</u>		<u>Arranged by:</u>
May 10 <sup>th</sup>	Ladies Get Dirty	Dave/Don/Trevor Andy/John/Colin
May 17 <sup>th</sup>	Talk on Austins by Bob Wyatt (Please note this is an extra club night for May as Bob is unable to come on our normal club nights).	Colin
June 14 <sup>th</sup>	Half-Gallon Run	Tony/Pat
July 12 <sup>th</sup>	Concourse d'Elegance	Trevor/Colin
Aug. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Walking Rally	Trevor/Jean/Dave/Karen
Sept.13 <sup>th</sup>	TBA	TBA
Oct.11 <sup>th</sup>	Talk by Graham Steven on his submarine experiences	Roy
Nov. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Auction	Don/Trevor/Colin
Dec.13 <sup>th</sup>	Festive Fun Night	TBA
<u>Events</u>		
June 4 <sup>th</sup>	Visit to Aston Martin Heritage Trust Go to <a href="http://www.amheritrust.org">www.amheritrust.org</a> for details of the Heritage Trust Museum	Colin/Ann/Ben
June 26 <sup>th</sup>	BEN Run	TBA
June 30 <sup>th</sup> - July 6 <sup>th</sup>	Holiday in Bridgnorth	Don/Maureen
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	Finchampstead Fete	Roy/John H/Peter B
July 25 <sup>th</sup>	Picnic in the Paddock	Don (driving tests)
Aug.15 <sup>th</sup>	August Amble and BBQ	Colin/Ann John/Joan
Aug 30 <sup>th</sup>	Littlewick Show	TBA
Sept.4 <sup>th</sup>	Vintage coach trip to the I.o.W.	Trevor Mulford/Colin
Nov. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Nightjar	Nightjar Committee
Dec. 6 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Dinner	Trevor/Jean

I will add to this list as any new events of club nights are arranged. If anyone would like to organise an event or club night, please let me know.

**Colin**



**May Quiz – ‘Do you know London?’**

***All answers are areas of Greater London and Home Counties WITHIN the M25.***

- |     |   |           |           |
|-----|---|-----------|-----------|
| 1)  | <i>Are the residents all mad here?</i>              | _ _ _ _ _ | (7)       |
| 2)  | <i>Should get a taxi here</i>                       | _ _ _ _ _ | (7)       |
| 3)  | <i>A well fed pig</i>                               | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 4)  | <i>Metal entrance on top floor?</i>                 | _ _ _ _ _ | (8)       |
| 5)  | <i>Farming implement</i>                            | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 6)  | <i>Home for a goose?</i>                            | _ _ _ _ _ | (5)       |
| 7)  | <i>Sounds like a well-liked tree!</i>               | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 8)  | <i>Large area of water already for frying fish!</i> | _ _ _ _ _ | (9)       |
| 9)  | <i>A hiding place for William</i>                   | _ _ _ _ _ | (9)       |
| 10) | <i>A pebble from part of Kent</i>                   | _ _ _ _ _ | (10)      |
| 11) | <i>They adopt male fowl</i>                         | _ _ _ _ _ | (11)      |
| 12) | <i>Farmers use them for storage</i>                 | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 13) | <i>Getting better in an East End hospital</i>       | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 14) | <i>Isolated home for barkers</i>                    | _ _ _ _ _ | (4, 2, 4) |
| 15) | <i>The grave of a thinker</i>                       | _ _ _ _ _ | (7, 3)    |
| 16) | <i>Eastern beast of burden killed</i>               | _ _ _ _ _ | (7)       |
| 17) | <i>Value of land surrounded by water</i>            | _ _ _ _ _ | (9)       |
| 18) | <i>Once popular with photographers</i>              | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 19) | <i>Festivities that last one month</i>              | _ _ _ _ _ | (6)       |
| 20) | <i>Sounds like a choice of Dagenham car!</i>        | _ _ _ _ _ | (7)       |

***Entries to me, please, together with £1.00 towards cost of prize(s), by 12th June.  
Thanks!***

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