

**NORTH HAMPSHIRE *AUSTIN* ENTHUSIASTS GROUP**  
**Founded 1973**

**Monthly Newsletter and Events Update**

**[www.nhaeg.org.uk](http://www.nhaeg.org.uk)**

**NOVEMBER 2008**

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

I think our new member, Mathilda, should have her photograph on the front page, don't you? Don will be so pleased she has arrived, as Karen has had her eye on his Chummy since she drove her in 2007!

**EVEN MORE NEWS FROM WITTON'S MUSEUM OF VINTAGE VEHICLES!**



***Enter Matilda!***

Karen has at last achieved her ambition of owning a Chummy - (which should take the heat off Don's for a while anyway!)

She is an AD tourer with mag engine previously owned by a Norfolk A7 member and was originally registered to a Mr Cyril Penrose in Warwick on 3 August 1927. Karen drove her from Wymondham to Suffolk where the only hiccup was when the carden block leather gaiter became loose and was flapping against the floor. I managed to get under Matilda to remove the offending object completely whilst Eddie Stobart was doing his best to run over my feet which were in the road at the time!

She will live in Suffolk for the time being at least where she just about shares the garage with Millicent with a couple of inches to spare. That is definitely it now! Now more Austin Sevens unless we down-size to make room!

Yes, we have heard that before, Dave!!!

Here are some of our other members at Cliveden.



**Ann and Colin on the left and Ruth and George on the right.**



**Hazel and Dave**

Our “His and Hers” Clubnight was a great success. We ladies enjoyed it very much! Several even said “when can we do it again?” Jenny and Ronnie were the winners with their general knowledge of the UK and Pat (Westall) completed more “joining” words than anyone else. Jean’s flowers and cards were lovely and thanks to Ann for coping with the raffle.

**Mo**

### **Colin’s Column**

With the sun occasionally showing itself over the past couple of weeks I have had Arabella out on a few days to collect the grandchildren from school, which they love. However, it did not show itself very much over the weekend when we spent the night at the New Inn.

We met up on the Saturday morning at the Henry Street Garden Centre for coffee and in some cases breakfast, before setting off on a pre-planned route to Cliveden in Buckinghamshire. The weather at this stage was not too bad, so we had the hood down and enjoyed a very pleasant drive.

On arrival at Cliveden we parked up and went for a walk around the gardens before making our way to the restaurant for lunch. After lunch we walked a little more and watched a short film on the history of Cliveden House. By now it was very overcast and starting to rain so we made our way to the New Inn where, after a game of cards, we all enjoyed an excellent meal and, as we were not driving, a few drinks before retiring to bed.

On the Sunday we had hoped to attend a car show at Heckfield House but it had rained all night and was still raining hard in the morning, so we decided, after a substantial breakfast, to make our separate ways home.

Despite the weather I think everyone enjoyed themselves and on my return home I sent an email to Tim and June to thank them, on behalf of everyone, for allowing us free use of the rooms with breakfast as well.

At the October club night we had a “His & Hers” evening. The ladies used the conference room whilst the men used our normal room. I don’t know what the ladies got up to, I will leave Ann to tell you about that, but the men had a question and answer session. The idea was that anyone having a problem with their cars could tell us about it, in the hope that someone would be able to help them with the problem. There were quite a few interesting questions and hopefully everyone got helpful answers.

At the November club night we will be having our annual Auction when you can bring along anything you want to get rid of, not necessarily car related, and hopefully Don, our Auctioneer, will get a good price for it. You may also manage to grab yourself a bargain or two.

We usually have quite a lot to auction so we will start at 8.00pm prompt. If you wish to put something in, please be there between 7.30pm and 7.45pm so that we have time to sort it all out. You will be able to collect any monies owed to you at the end, when Trevor will have worked his magic and sorted out what everyone is owed. As usual 10% of the money raised will go to club funds.

It’s always a good laugh, so come along and join in the fun.

Our next big event is the Nightjar on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, when we hope that some of our members will take part. It is a very enjoyable evening, which is shown by the number of entrants who come back every year, some of them coming from as far as Gloucester and Derby. I have taken part many times in the past and have always had a lot of fun. If you have never taken part why not give it a go, entry forms can be obtained from Trevor or downloaded from our web site. There are many prizes to be won including a shield for the best performance by a NHAEG member, which last year was won by Tony and Pat Westhall. If you would like more information on what it’s all about, then give me a ring or talk to someone who has entered before, I promise you a wonderful evening.

That’s it for now; see you all at the Auction. Safe and Happy Motoring.

***Colin.***

## Ann's Additions

I am sure the ladies who were at the October club night would like to thank Maureen and Jean for our Ladies Night. I think we all enjoyed the various activities on offer.

If the men are interested, we had two quizzes organised by Maureen, one to tax our knowledge on Great Britain and the other on missing words. Jean gave us two craft demonstrations – in the first one she showed how easy it was to make your own cards for birthdays, Christmas, birth announcements etc. Jean is very artistic and gave us all a lot of ideas, including using your own photographs on the cards. To finish, Jean then showed us how to make a flower arrangement. It was a lovely display and of course Jean made it look so easy and quick to do. At the end of the evening Jean presented the arrangement to June, the landlady, as a thank you for allowing us to use the conference room.

Sandra brought in a lot of cuttings from her garden and also many seeds to get us started in the garden next year. Thanks Sandra, a great idea!

Thanks also to both Maureen and Jean for a different and interesting evening.

## Secretary's Scribblings

### 'Nightjar 2008

At this particular time a number of us are deeply engaged with organizing our annual, premier event – the 'Nightjar' Navigational Scatter Rally which the NHAEG has run for the past 33 years and, this year, is scheduled for Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November. My personal involvement is with preparation of documentation and getting it out to interested individuals many of whom have been supporting the event for several years, in one particular instance since the very beginning.

Don (Breakspear), as has been the case for many of those years, is once again Clerk of the Course, though assisted this time around by John (Hancock); they have the often challenging and time-consuming task of selecting suitable sites, within a reasonable radius from Elizabeth Hall in Hook, (the start and termination point for the event), which participants are required to visit in order to track down a board bearing a bird's name. All this under powers of darkness and in (mainly) antique vehicles. All good fun – even on a cold and frosty night!

Colin (Greig) and I also carry out initial scrutineering of entrants' vehicles, as they arrive at Elizabeth Hall, before taking a turn as Roving Marshals, ostensibly seeking out those who might be tempted to cheat using satnavs or mobile phones etc. – both strictly forbidden - though the real reason is to visit the site of the famous soup kitchen to enjoy a cockle-warming broth prepared and dispensed, this year once again, by my son-in-law Rob, a commercial airline pilot, who possibly fancies himself as a frustrated celebrity chef!

Other key personnel include George (Ewart) who, together with John H, performs the very important tasks of Despatcher and Timekeeper. After the event all

entrants and officials are treated royally to fare distributed by our respective good ladies who also take care of all matters relating to hall activities. These generally include Jean (my better half), Ann (Greig), Ronnie (Hunt), though on this occasion she'll be on the other side of the globe and unable to be present, Ruth (Ewart), Roy (Roberts') relatives, Barbara and Carol, Maureen (Breakspear), as well as several others to whom grateful thanks are offered. This year, in Ronnie's absence, Joan (Hancock) has kindly stepped up to the plate to help with kitchen activities. In addition the services of those who volunteer to perform the vital role of Marshals, in far-flung, isolated points around the counties of Surrey, Hampshire or Berkshire, are also greatly appreciated. Such individuals include Dave and Karen (Witton), Roy (Roberts), Peter (Adams) and several other non-Club members. My sincere apologies to anyone whose name may have been unintentionally omitted from this list.

Sadly, however, despite our long association with the event, not many of our own members actually enter which is a great pity since it really does provide an attractive alternative to sitting staring at the television for an evening. One regular entrant travels all the way up from deepest Gloucestershire to take part; all on the same day, then travelling all the way back again *after* the event. Such dedication tends to put us to shame!

So, if you fancy a change from a boring TV routine and know someone who's got a basic appreciation of map-reading and compass bearings, who's also willing to act as navigator, why not give it a go? It's a lot of fun and brings a whole new dimension to the use and enjoyment of your treasured steed.

There's still just time to enter so, if you're intrigued, get in touch with me and I'll happily fill you in with all the important details.  
(01344 775012 trevor\_c.edwards@btinternet.com)

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Christmas Dinner – *last call for names!*

Anyone wishing to sign up for the Christmas Dinner, which, this year, is to be held at the Downshire Golf Complex, Easthampstead Park on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December, should let me have their names without further delay. The Downshire (RG40 3DH for those fortunate enough to have satnav, or Grid Reference 886666 for those who may have a copy of Ordnance Survey Map 175) is situated between Crowthorne and Bracknell and may be approached from two directions. The most obvious one is off the B3420, Nine Mile Ride, curiously via the entrance to Easthampstead Crematorium! The other is off the Old Wokingham Road, out of Crowthorne, over the Pinewood roundabout and then taking the sharp, right-hand turn, roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile along, signed as leading to 'The Hideout' Thai Restaurant.

Cost is £20.50 per person for a four course meal. Timing is 7:30 for 8:00pm.

The menu is quite extensive with a choice of six starters and six desserts. The main course is a Carvery, with traditional Roast Turkey, Honey and Clove Roasted Gammon and Whole Grain Mustard-topped Roast Beef, accompanied by a very wide range of vegetables, Yorkshire puddings, Pigs in Blankets and Prune and Apricot Stuffing. There are also vegetarian options. The meal concludes with Coffee, Mints and Mince Pies.

**Several members have already given in their names (and deposits) but if there is anyone else who would like to join our traditional, annual 'bash' please let me have your name(s), plus a deposit of £5.00 for each person dining, soonest, but by November 8<sup>th</sup> at the very latest.**

As soon as all names are in I will distribute menus to all concerned and request your menu choices which should be given/sent back to me promptly by return.

Balance of cost (£15.50) will be required at your earliest convenience after the dead-line date or, at the very latest by the 28<sup>th</sup> November.

Last year everyone who attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves and this year should be no different. We are not particularly limited for space this year so come along and help get the Festive Season off to a flying start!

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### Excursions ~ in general (follow up).....

Further to the announcement last month regarding trips in general, and the decision, made mutually between Don (Breakspear) and myself, to alternate with the organization of trips of three, four or more days annually, a fair amount of research has been done in the intervening period with regard to next year.

Members' views have been solicited and these have been used in a number of discussions with Warner Group Bookings Department to try to come up with something having as wide an appeal as possible.

Warners, however, have evidently introduced a change of policy so far as the offering of group discounts are concerned since these have been scaled back markedly. This, plus the fact that establishments and dates which may have suited our requirements well are seemingly unavailable or, at the very least, are significantly higher in cost than otherwise might have been the case.

In the end it was decided to opt for a long-week-end at Littlecote House, near Hungerford, between 8/11 May next year and this was proposed and publicised via e-mails as well as being also announced at our recent Club Night.

In the event there has been a disappointing and very lukewarm response. The reasons for this situation are probably various; e.g. destination, timing, 'too close to home', not challenging enough, otherwise engaged, maybe even the much-quoted credit crunch effect. Whatever the reason(s) just four couples showed interest which, in reality, doesn't make for a viable trip and definitely doesn't justify the amount of organizational effort involved.

Therefore, and with some considerable reluctance, I have decided to cancel plans next year for a group trip along the lines of our 'traditional foray'.

As an alternative thought though, perhaps we might give consideration to a number of day trips out to, say, NT properties, organized on an 'ad hoc' basis, at short notice, closer to times when, (should we ever get any!), decent weather is forecast. This may have a wider appeal than needing to make firm commitments so far ahead which inevitably is the case with more formal arrangements.

More on this at a later date but please do continue to let your views, opinions and suggestions be known through these columns.

## London to Brighton Veteran Car Rally – November 2nd

It's that time of the year when a few of us struggle out of our beds at some unearthly hour, (3:30am in my own personal case), to make the run up to Hyde Park to act as Marshals for the above famous event. Run, as it is, in November the weather can be mixed; it can be lashing down with rain, frosty and cold or, occasionally, it can, like last year, be relatively mild.

However, whatever the weather it's always a delight to be up, close and personal amongst the real, old veterans of the motoring world. Some, indeed all, are truly amazing and enables the interested observer to witness first-hand how the motor-car developed into what it is today, though, in truth, what we have now remains essentially what there was in the beginning. Four wheels (generally!), an engine (of some sorts!) powered by similar means, a steering wheel (though sometimes a crude bar!) and steering mechanism, plus (ideally!) some means of bringing the vehicle to a halt when necessary to do so. This latter item often appears to have been an afterthought in the minds of some early designers.

The vehicles which most impress and fascinate me personally with their speed, quiet operation and utter ingenuity are the steam powered ones, notably Stanley Steamers, which exhibit a remarkable turn of speed and can come upon you virtually unannounced with often alarming rapidity. In this day and age the fact that they require only copious quantities of water to generate steam might appear to be a distinct advantage. The fact, though, that they still need some form of heating medium, often just a neat jet of petrol blasted visibly and ignited under the boiler, belies the fact that they may not be quite as economical or environmentally friendly as they might appear at first glance. Nevertheless, could it be possible that the steam car might be ripe for a come-back in one shape or another?

Apart from steamers there are cars of every conceivable size, shape and concept, probably the most successful of the early Edwardian marques being the eminent French manufacturer De Dion Bouton since these models are evident in considerable numbers. The French and Germans dominated the early days of motoring with the British lagging behind for a while before getting their act together.

One of the oddest vehicles seen was one with a bamboo chassis which, as well as, presumably, providing adequate strength, clearly introduced an element of springing which perhaps the designer hadn't bargained for since it had a noticeable bounce when in motion!

An added bonus of being able to be so close to such venerable and magnificent machines is being able to chat with their owners/drivers who may even include someone of note such as Lord Montegu of Bealieu, though, in the main, most are just ordinary enthusiasts utterly dedicated to the preservation and running of 'horseless carriages' and their precious ilk.

So, on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, when you're tucking into your bacon and eggs, think of Colin and me and perhaps others from the club, who have been up for six hours or so already but who are, ourselves, hopefully then enjoying a very pleasant bacon sandwich or two in the palatial ambience of the RAC Club in Pall Mall, together with all the other Hyde Park Marshals.

If you've never experienced the pleasure of witnessing first hand the Veteran Car Run I do thoroughly recommend giving it a try despite the inevitable early start. Departure from Hyde Park commences at around 7:00am, with all vehicles being away generally by 8:30. Their route passes over Westminster Bridge, through Lambeth, Norbury, Croydon, Redhill to Crawley, where participants have their official coffee stop at the George Hotel at any time between approximately 8:45 and 13:30. Then on through Cuckfield, Burgess Hill, Clayton Hill, Preston Park, to the finish at Madaira Drive, Brighton - for those who eventually make it!

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Welcome to a new member!

We all welcome a new member, Bob Ripley, who came along to our October Club Night, posed a number of questions concerning his 1936 Ruby during the 'Technical Q & A' session held that evening and then joined shortly thereafter. Bob is interested in the ongoing restoration and maintenance of his historic vehicle and we shall not doubt get to see the fruits of his labours in due course.

Welcome to the Club, Bob!

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*On that note and whatever you're driving, ancient or modern, travel safely,! See you at Auction Night!*

*TREVOR*

### Don's Doodlings

As you can see from Colin's Column we had a very enjoyable day at Cliveden House and the evening at The New Inn. I am sure I speak for all of us who went on the Run to say thank you to Colin and Ann for arranging the whole thing.

I have gavel and block ready for the November Clubnight Auction so dig deep around the house and garage for items to bring along. Your unwanted presents or spare parts from the garage maybe just the thing another club member has been looking for the whole year!

Don't forget to bring along your one litre plastic bottle if you require the 140 back axle oil.

Don



## *A Salutary Tale!*

*Once upon a time there was a man who spent much of his time up in the clouds where he had all the time in the world to contemplate such perplexing and weighty matters as whether the fridge light really does extinguish when the door is closed, and pondering why nostalgia really isn't what it used to be, but, more importantly, considering what hobby he'd like to indulge in - if he ever found the time to adopt one.*

*Being a man of innumerable talents he got to thinking how he could best utilize his hitherto untapped engineering skills with something rather more prosaic than keeping a large, metal tube airborne for hours on end. "A- Ha", he thought, "I know what I'll do. I'll find an old Austin 7 which I can maybe play around with, do a bit of fettling on and possibly get into a good enough shape to be able to use it on rare occasions when the sun's shining and I've got nothing better to do".*

*When he returned to earth he casually mentioned this notion to his good lady wife, who, being a kindly soul and perfectly used to humouring him with his whimsical ventures, went along with the idea thinking " Oh well, it'll keep him off the streets I suppose" (Quite an odd thought really, all things considered!)*

*In due course the man came to hear of the very thing he was looking for and enlisted the help of a friend of a friend to assist him with a visit to inspect the said vehicle. As it turned out, at least in the opinion of his co-opted 'technical adviser', the overall condition of the object fell roughly into the 'It shouldn't be touched with a bargepole' category, which sentiment was gently conveyed to the man seeking some form of ancient transport. Despite assurances from the would-be vendor that the vehicle 'Had been running recently' or words to similar effect, the lack of a top radiator hose, battery, other vital organs and a widespread evidence of cobwebs did not support this assertion.*

*Undeterred, our man, resolute of purpose and taking his 'pseudo expert's' advice, made a derisory offer, based on roughly half the asking price, for the beast and left it at that fully expecting, quite reasonably, that this would be scornfully rejected in due course.*

*However, a small seed had been sown and, in the meanwhile, whilst awaiting a decision on his offer, our determined aviator, quite impatient to experience the joys of the open road, in an open car, had his attention drawn to the availability of a pretty little thing, then presently residing up in leafy Warwickshire, which he and his, by now, mildly concerned wife, went to view, inspected, purchased, collected and duly christened 'Molly'.*

*This was a crucial mistake and heralded the onset of an obsession far, far more serious than even the worst addiction to banned substances. Even before Molly's engine had cooled down, following her relocation to the tropics of Surrey, word came back that the offer made previously for the questionable creature seen previously and presently providing a comfortable home for itinerant spiders and sundry other invertebrates, had, surprisingly and miraculously, been accepted!*

*It then, of course, became necessary for this manifestly unroadworthy specimen to be collected and transferred to deepest Dorset, to a dark place, hidden from human prying eyes, where evil deeds would need to be performed on the creature, shortly to be named 'Mabel', in efforts to raise her from her long slumber. All the signs were there! Our man was smitten but, more worryingly, so, it would appear, was his good lady who seemed also to have caught the bug and was therefore quite powerless to help her man out of his predicament.*

*In quick succession there followed other acquisitions, 'Millicent', from a source close to the scene of Mabel's major surgical procedures, and then, shortly thereafter, 'Muriel', of whom little is actually known although she is believed to have been dismantled with fairly indecent haste and her bits distributed all over England, no doubt in efforts to hide the awful truth and avoid the unwelcome attention of gentlemen in white coats.*

*This, however, couldn't be the end. He, indeed they, were in far too deep now and simply couldn't help themselves. They found themselves scurrying to and fro, all over the country, frantically viewing, dismissing but inevitably befriending yet another young (though actually not so young) girl named 'Myrtle' who has the endearing but disconcerting habit of taking her top off in public, especially when the weather's fine.*

*The final(?) chapter confirms a niggling suspicion that the female of the species is not immune to the unmistakable effects of being in close proximity to someone exhibiting the symptoms so clearly in evidence and*

*in such desperate need of urgent treatment for the debilitating disease known to the medical fraternity as 'Austinaphilia'. Sadly, our man's wife has now contracted a full-blown case of the ailment also and has succumbed to the recent adoption of 'Mathilda', a sweet and well-preserved lady of a 'certain age' who, being of a somewhat shy and retiring nature, has chosen to reside quietly in rural Suffolk.*

*The moral of all this is the real need for everyone to take every precaution against getting hooked, like our two poor souls, on 'Austinaphilia.' The habit not only risks causing untold damage to your wealth but, resulting as it inevitably does in an ever-expanding family, entitlement to benefits for which, in such instances, do not exist, the accommodation problem reaches truly astronomic proportions and is the root cause of major headaches.*

*The worst aspect though is, once contracted, there is, as yet, no known cure!*

*So, will medical science come up with a break-through in order to be able to help our hapless couple? Or is this the end.....who can tell?*

*(Thanks for that, Dave W).*

### **2008 COMMITTEE CONTACTS:**

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## QUERIES OF THE MONTH

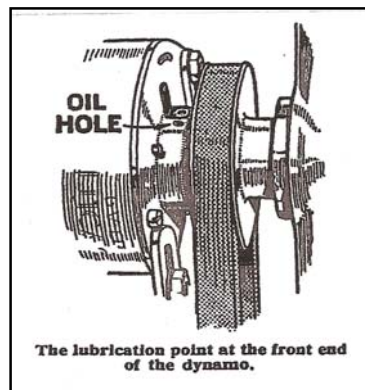
Some more “Queries of the Month”, these originally appeared in “The Austin Magazine & Advocate” during the 1930s and 1940s. This month’s selection includes; Dynamo Noise, Austin Ten-Four and Regulating a Clock, Austin Twelve-Six, both appear to have hidden solutions.

No 453 appeared in December 1932 and No 735 appeared in May 1936

### **No 452 – Dynamo Noise – Austin Ten-Four**

**Q.** *During the past few days a whistling noise has developed on my Ten-Four when the engine is running. It seems to come from the dynamo, but I have lubricated this through the small oiler at the rear end as per instructions, and yet the noise continues. Is the dynamo at fault or is it some other part of the engine causing this noise? Your advice would be welcome.*

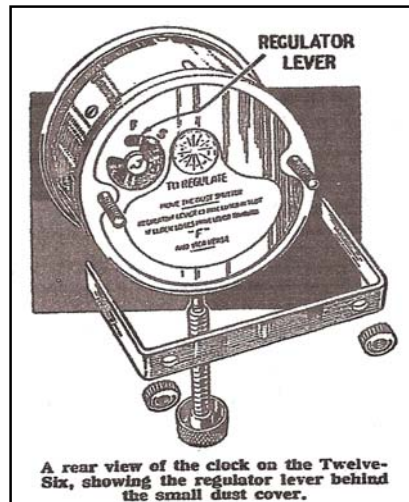
**A.** We think you will find that another point is provided on the dynamo fitted on your car. This is located on the forward boss of the dynamo from which the shaft carrying the fan pulley emerges. A small cover protects this oil way, and when swung aside a light oil such as “Oilit” or “Velocite Oil D” can be injected. The noise to which you refer probably arises from the front bearing of this dynamo which may have run dry. A few drops of either of the above oils will thus effect a cure.



### **No 735 – Regulating Clock – Austin Twelve-Six**

**Q.** *The clock in the instrument panel of my Twelve-Six loses steadily and I have endeavoured to adjust it (having felt what seems to be a small adjustment slide on the back) but without result. Can you inform me whether this clock can be set to give better time?*

**A.** The small slide or disc you have located on the back of the clock in your instrument panel is not an adjustment, but merely a dust cover for the actual adjustment lever.



Your best plan is to remove the clock from the instrument panel. It comes away quite readily on unscrewing the nuts behind its bridge strap. You will then be able to rotate the dust cover to reach the adjustment lever and set it towards “FAST” to give more correct timekeeping

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

Here is another advertisement from 1957. Mind you £4.10.0p for a battery in 1957 was probably a weeks wages for some people and bad luck if you needed two at the same time! It makes you realise that a battery at today’s prices is not such a bad deal after all.

**SPECIAL OFFER!**

NEW EXTRA HEAVY DUTY  
115 AMP. HOUR

**BATTERIES**  
**£4.10.0**

Double-life SIX VOLT. Well known make.

**AUSTIN 8 AND 10 h.p.**  
**1939 - 48**

BRAND NEW RADIATOR COWLS.  
All black. 35/- each

12-volt S.U. PETROL PUMPS. Unused.  
Guaranteed. 35/- each

6-volt DELCO COILS. Unused.  
Guaranteed. 17/6 each

**A. B. FLETCHER**  
63 & 89, DARTMOUTH STREET, BIRMINGHAM, 7  
Telephones: ASTon Cross 3450 and 1801.

After a search on the internet I found that A. B. Fletcher still exists today, however, it was bought out in 1999 by the Oscott Group and is now known as “Fletchers Autostore”. It has moved from its original site in Dartmouth Street to Great Lister Street but still in the centre of Birmingham. In the seventies and eighties it was a bit of a motorist’s junk shop but is now a modern motorfactors.

## **EVENTS DIARY UPDATE!**

### **December**

<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>		<b>Club Dinner</b>
<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Club Night</b>	<b>Festive Fun including “Through the Keyhole”</b>

### **January**

<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Club Night</b>	<b>AGM</b>
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Several club members who have been unable to come along on some of the Runs which have been organized over the past months, have asked for copies of the routes. Some of the routes have been sent to me and I have put them together as an attachment, so you may use them at your leisure. I would mention that the routes cannot be guaranteed one hundred percent correct as obviously, some of the signs or road markings may have been changed since the routes were used. It is suggested anyone using the routes also takes a good map with them, just in case.

**Maureen**

## **Listen very carefully I shall say this only once – Part 2**

Following last months' French experience, I would like to share with you some aspects of the trip. As you all know the merry band of 10 cars and 20 passengers set off to understand what it is all about or find out more about the experiences from so long ago. Those intrepid travellers who went in 2007 wanted to know more and indeed there were new things to see; for the new recruits of the chamois leather group, they were mostly not sure what to expect. I am pleased to report that everyone – to a car! – enjoyed the trip whatever they did.

One of our days was spent at Omaha Beach. This is the tragic scene of one of the American landings. Various gun emplacements defending this beach had not been silenced as expected. This together with the fact that the beach itself – shingle in those days but sand now – was covered in barbed wire and various anti-landing fortifications – basically the beach was a complete minefield – (literally) - of obstacles which the sappers had to clear first. This is what met the infantry as they were tipped out of the landing craft – some of which did not come in to shallow enough waters and hence some of the men – weighed down by over 100 lbs of kit – simply drowned. Those that did survive and managed to struggle onto the beach were mown down by machine gun fire. They were sitting ducks on a beach with no shelter. A few tanks managed to make it to the beach – but only a handful out of the 50 or so which should have arrived. Most just sank as again they were landed in water which was too deep. So on that fateful morning a handful of the Infantrymen actually were able to get onto the beach but were then pinned against the beach wall with no way out. They had sustained 95% casualties in the first wave of landings and the enormity of the situation cannot be over estimated.

There were serious concerns that the Omaha landing might not succeed. If that were to happen then there would be a serious gap in the landing beaches which could compromise the establishment of a beachhead in Normandy. The whole success lay precariously balanced at that point. The other landings' beaches, namely Utah, Sword, Gold and Juno had a relatively easy landing in comparison – casualties were still high of course – but the landing force was making good progress in establishing a foothold in Normandy which stretched from Caen to Cherbourg. We know that there were countless acts of bravery on Omaha beach and little by little they advanced. By nightfall the landings were established but the human cost was very high.

The American cemetery at Omaha is a beautiful tranquil place where c9,000 souls rest as well as the names of the missing on a wall of remembrance. This cemetery overlooks what is now a beautiful beach and on a warm sunny day one can look down on families playing on the beach. There is now a new visitor centre – opened in the last 12 months - and this is a very moving experience and something not to be missed. There is a continuous roll call of the dead and also special write ups regarding brothers and families lost in the war – in fact there is the family on which Saving Private Ryan is thought to be based with 2 of the brothers buried in the cemetery.

After such a thought provoking time, we led all our cars onto the beach and set up camp on a grassy area where Dave and I have spent many an idyllic afternoon with

our wine, bread and cheese – Ahh bliss! Well that is exactly what we all did and what a sight to behold. The ladies set out all the grub, the chaps opened the wine and we all tucked into a veritable feast. The sun was warm and after lunch most trooped down to the beach – whilst I did not see any one piece striped suits in evidence I think there might have been a few toes in the water!

Earlier in the day we had spent a good couple of hours at Pointe du Hoc. This is the place where a small band of US Rangers scaled cliffs to silence the large guns perched on the cliff tops. Scary stuff and worst when you think that they had to do that with ALL of their equipment on their backs – I cannot imagine doing it at all – not even if I was on Dave's back! There was a high cost to pay but they were successful and again another feat of incredible bravery which added to the success of the first day.

After such an incredible day, our cars were tucked up in the courtyard for a well-earned rest – they had probably covered nearly 60 miles that day and there were feeling a little tired. So whilst the chaps gave them a good drink and did what they love doing – fettling together! – us ladies prepared ourselves for the evening ahead. We all met up to have a good natter re the day, and practice our French. This is always an interesting time as Peter Barlow tries out his French language skills he has learned straight from the “Allo Allo” correspondence course!! Don, meanwhile, does the sensible thing and allows me to translate the menu and order his food. Usually Maureen and my Dave end up sharing a huge bowl of fish soup – they do have separate bibs – and then Don and I have the scaffolding set up for a delightful ‘fruits de la mer’ Mmm heaven! There is so much that the whole group join in and still we are lucky if we can eat the lot – but rest assured that Don and I do our very best!

That is a typical day really – a lot of fun but also a lot of food..... For thought. It is great that by being in France on the anniversary of D Day itself we are able to share the moments with veterans – again there were vets in the hotel and most are very chatty and want to share experiences which is fantastic – I never tire of the insights and anecdotes and their reasons for travelling. One chap had come back as he does every year to visit the grave of the farmer who had saved him from certain death when he landed in water and was wounded on that D Day morning. Unfortunately the Germans found something inadvertently left behind in the barn when undertaking search parties some days later. The farmer was rounded up and shot. This veteran pays a very personal visit to the grave and the family – he is eternally grateful. These are the personal stories that must have happened so often and each one has a part to play in our history.

Next month – Pegasus Bridge and Billy

*Many thanks to Karen Witton.*