

NORTH HAMPSHIRE *AUSTIN* ENTHUSIASTS GROUP

Founded 1973

Monthly Newsletter and Events Update

www.nhaeg.org.uk

OCTOBER 2008

Club nights at The New Inn, Heckfield, 8pm, 2nd Monday in every month

Mo's Mutterings



These are not ALL Colin's Austins but a gathering before the run to Littlewick Green Show on Bank Holiday Monday! No doubt Colin would like to own them all!

We are lucky enough to have some new members who are as follows:-

Ian Campbell-Foster who has a 1934 Austin 10/4 saloon with chrome radiator, registration AYL 888 and a 1964 Austin Mini Cooper, registration CPP 49B. Ian's telephone number is 01252 643905, mobile 07766 153 984 and e-mail iancampbellfoster@gmail.com.

David and Pam Dickens have also joined the NHAEG and they are looking for an Austin 12. Their telephone number is 01252 329033, mobile 07768 274 689, e-mail daviddickens@dashteam.co.uk.

I remember Don and I joined the NHAEG over thirty years ago when we were looking for an Austin. We eventually "found" Chummy at Lightwater, just up the road but for many weeks we went to see quite a few "supposed to be" Austins in states too bad to restore. Having read the Exchange and Mart first thing in the morning, in the early evening we used to bath the girls, put them in their nightclothes and bundle them up with blankets and pillows in the back of whatever modern we had at the time and trek off to faraway places!



On the far left we have Karen and Dave Witton's NEW BABY!

The champion golfer (or is it gofor) on the Isle of Wight was, of course, Don B.

The October club night will be slightly different than usual. Of course, ladies who wish to ask questions or answer queries, technical or otherwise, about Austins are welcome to join the gentlemen club members. Alternatively, lady club members who prefer not to do this can adjoin to another room at The New Inn where Jean Edwards will very kindly be showing us how to make a small flower arrangement and also a simple greetings card. I also have a couple of quizzes for us all to do just for fun. I think we ladies, can also have a “Noggin and Natter”! Any other suggestions or input from other lady club members would be most welcome, please e-mail or telephone me if you are able to bring along something to show us. Perhaps you have an unusual hobby you can tell us about.

Unfortunately, The Chippendales are not available on that night!

Maureen

Colin's Column

Despite some awful weather in August we were lucky to have a dry Bank Holiday Monday, which made for an enjoyable day at the Littlewick Show. Quite a number of members called in at our house for coffee, bacon butties and cake which Ann had prepared and we all left together for the short journey to the show. As usual there were a great number of cars as well as bikes and commercials, and the horse show and other various events. It was a successful show for the NHAEG with three of us, Don in his 7 Chummy, Trevor in his 7 Box and myself in my 10 winning first prizes in our classes, with John Hancock getting a second. I have been going to this show for over 20 years now and every one has been enjoyable.

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Four days after the above event it was off to the Isle of Wight for a long weekend at Norton Grange, which as always was, very well organised by Trevor and Jean. Unfortunately the break in the awful weather was very short lived and the weather forecast for the journey down was not good. However, the rain was not as bad as

expected and by the time we arrived at the ferry it had stopped. There should have been 29 of us but unfortunately John Hancock injured his back a few days before so he and Joan were unable to come.

At our stop for coffee on the way down a phone call from Dave and Karen was received to say they were having trouble with their car. They said they were going home and would hopefully catch us up at the ferry in a modern. Imagine our surprise therefore, when they arrived in their very recently acquired Austin 7 Type 65 which has been added to their rapidly expanding collection of cars.

Thankfully the weather over the weekend was not too bad after all, which meant we could do the planned walk on the Saturday. On the Sunday we met up with the Isle of Wight Austin Club at Godshill in the morning, with everyone doing their own thing in the afternoon. On the Monday morning before leaving, Trevor had organised a game of golf, which was great fun with balls going all over the place, the eventual winner being Don who received a bottle of wine. Well done Don!

Despite the weather it was a wonderful weekend, which went off without a hitch. When you are in good company who cares about the weather! I am sure everyone enjoyed it as much as Ann and I. Very many thanks to Trevor and Jean for all the effort and time they must have put into organising the trip. I know everyone who went appreciated it.

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At our club night in September we had a real treat, George (Ewart) gave a very interesting talk on the 'History of Vertical Take-off Aircraft' with the use of slides and some very early films taken in the 1950s. It was very professionally done and George, who obviously knows an immense amount about these aircraft, was able with the use of pictures and diagrams to give us all some idea how these amazing aircraft progressed over the years and also how they work. We had so many members there that we had to raid the restaurant for spare chairs and even then I think we had one or two members standing.

Very many thanks to George for all the time and effort he must have put into preparing this talk and also to his daughter Carinne who gave him a lot of help both in the preparation and with the presentation on the night. I know everyone there appreciated it.

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At our October club night we are trying something different. As you will have seen in the Events Diary we have called it "His and Hers Night" The idea is that the men will use our normal room and the ladies will use the conference room which Tim and June are kindly letting us use for the evening.

I will let Maureen tell you in Mo's Mutterings what the ladies will be up to. For the men we are having a question and answer session. The idea is that any members who have a problem with their car or have a question about them, can put it to all the other members present and hopefully someone will have the answer. With so many

knowledgeable members in the NHAEG, I would think most if not all the questions will be answered. This will also be a wonderful opportunity for those members who have not had a car for long or do not know very much about them to increase their knowledge. The more you know about your car the more you will enjoy using it. Obviously, we do not wish to be sexist so if there are any ladies who would like to know more about the cars then please fell free to join us.

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Quite often at club nights, members talk about shows they have been to or runs they have been on, why not share you story with everyone by writing something for the Newsletter I. am sure Maureen would be pleased to receive it. It would also be interesting to hear any stories about your cars or work you have carried out on them.(Please send any input as a Word Document to Maureen, attached to an e-mail).

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That's it for this month.

Safe and Happy Motoring.

Colin.

Christmas Club Night

It was decided at the last committee meeting that on our December club night, when we always have a bit of festive fun, we will play "Through The Keyhole" based on the television programme of that name.

What we would like is for members to bring along a photograph taken anywhere in their house or garage, which will then be passed around the room. The idea is to guess whose house or garage it is. There obviously needs to be a subtle clue in the photograph and if your house is well known to any other members then it would be best to take the picture in a room they would not have visited i.e. a bedroom or bathroom etc. It goes without saying that if you submit a photograph of your garage make sure your car is not in it.

Please bring the photographs preferably 4 x 6 or 5 x 7, although other sizes will be accepted, in a sealed envelope with your name on the front. As the photographs will be passed around they may get a little soiled so don't bring one which is of any value.

There will be a prize for the member who correctly guesses the most, so get your cameras out and start snapping.

Secretary's Scribblings

After the Olympics!.....

Following on immediately from Britain's outstanding successes at the Olympic games in Beijing this year there were further awards, (three 'Golds' and one 'Silver) at the somewhat lesser publicised Littlewick Show on August Bank Holiday.

Colin (Greig)'s 'Arabella', Don (Breakspear)'s 'Chummy' and, most surprisingly, 'PO', belonging to yours truly, all secured *Firsts* in their respective classes and John (Hancock)'s recently restored Box Seven, (yet to be named?) grabbed a *Second* in it's class.

All in all a great day out as usual with the added bonus of the NHAEG contingent coming away with an unexpected clutch of awards, plus something in a bottle to celebrate with!

Isle of Wight 2008

This year's trip has now been and gone and is fading in the memory. So far as can be judged (despite the quite indifferent weather inflicted upon us this time around) it was enjoyed by everyone who took part, journeying over to the Warner Resort establishment at Norton Grange, just outside Yarmouth.

This year gentle emphasis was placed on encouraging participants to 'circulate' at meal times rather than simply stick firmly at one table. Although optional, of course, it was noted that one couple, in particular, seemed to make a special effort to enter into the spirit of things, by 'mingling'.

As a consequence an award has since found it's way to these good people who were deemed to have been the 'best minglers'. Appropriately enough their prize was a box of Bendicks *'Mingles'* chocolates which, hopefully, have since been consumed and enjoyed by Hazel and Dave (Holland).

By way of appreciation Hazel penned and forwarded the following ode, which is reproduced, with her permission, for your amusement:

*"We are not professional minglers, I think you will agree,
We tried mingling at breakfast and mingling at tea,
Some times it was quite easy and went well all the time,
Some times it was quite difficult especially if there was wine.
My husband and I we thank you all for the chocolates quite sublime,
We may become professional minglers if we can find the time.
I've had a letter from the Queen although we've never met
Requesting I should take the post of Poet Laureate.*

Thanks to everyone, we had a great weekend.

Hazel and Dave"

Excursions - in general

As many will be aware, in recent years at least, there have been at least a couple of trips planned annually for members to enjoy. By some strange default situation Don (Breakspear) and I have somehow found ourselves organisers of many of these, not forgetting, of course, the invaluable assistance of our respective good ladies!

Needless to mention the organisation of any kind of trip, no matter what type and destination, inevitably requires considerable time and effort, which we accept readily and are prepared for.

However, during a recent informal discussion on the entire subject we came to the conclusion that we should, perhaps, try to rationalise matters, for a number of valid reasons. Amongst these is the desire to ensure that any trip which *is* organised is well-supported. This, in turn, also implies not placing too much strain on the finances of members especially since, in general, our trips are normally not regarded as the main holiday of the year for most participants but are simply 'add-ons'.

Timing is also a major factor since, when all is considered, finding a time in the year which meets with the convenience of the majority is not, in fact, all that easy and keeping trips well-separated in order to avoid the possibility of 'exhaustion' or 'vacation overload' is more difficult than one might imagine.

Therefore, and as a consequence of our discussion, we have concluded that, from hereon, only one of us will orchestrate something each year – for the foreseeable future at least! Next year, 2009, I plan to do the honours again and Don intends scheduling his next spectacular for 2010.

It naturally goes without saying, however, and must be emphasised, that this does not mean that some other member(s) may not plan something quite independently of our efforts. Indeed, everyone is most welcome and certainly encouraged to do so. The purpose of this announcement is purely to ensure that some visibility and clarity is provided to all members so far as the future efforts of Don and myself are concerned. Just keep watching this space!

And, in a similar vein.....

Included with the package of information provided to Isle of Wight trip participants was a questionnaire inviting comments and observations as well as suggestions for next year's 'expedition'.

Some of these have now been received back and are being studied to try to determine a destination, for 2009, likely to attract widest interest, based on inputs provided. It is hoped this exercise will be completed within the next couple of weeks or so and, at that time, details will be circulated.

If, in the meantime, any member(s) would like to add to the few responses already received please do so. Any suggestion, regarding destination, duration, timing and cost is very welcome; e-mail, phone or good old 'snail-mail' will suffice!

Christmas Dinner 2008

Those who attended last year's Christmas Dinner at the Longbridge Mill Restaurant, in Sherfield on Loddon, will recall that a fun time was had by all despite a fairly general criticism concerning cold plates and food, though well-cooked and plentiful, which could have done with being just a little bit hotter. The ambience was great though and the company superb! Thus, annoyances aside, the plan was to book again for this year, stressing our concerns in an effort to avoid repeat, niggling issues.

However, this plan has been somewhat thwarted by the fact that the Longbridge Mill has very recently been bought by *Village Inns* (a Mitchell & Butler's company) and there has been an inevitable change in management with not a little uncertainty about the immediate future operation since the establishment is closing for a five-weeks period from November 5th to December 8th for refurbishment associated with the re-branding exercise.

Whilst it is possible that we would still be able to secure a booking for, say, Monday 15th December, it has proven impossible, up until the time of writing at least, to obtain any information on pricing, menu and other vital details, and we are, therefore, a little lacking in confidence that we will be able to get things firmed up sufficiently in time. Plus there is, perhaps, a certain amount of risk associated with acting as 'guinea pig customers' in a freshly-opened eating establishment.

As a consequence we are now actively pursuing alternative options and hope to be able to offer something with which we will all be satisfied. In particular we are trying to find a venue which will not be so capacity-limited as in the past when we have had to virtually limit numbers attending our traditional 'festive feast'.

Nevertheless, when details of our research and deliberations are completed and sent out to members please don't delay in getting your requests for places in to me soonest to avoid disappointment. Once details are received, if you want to 'stake your claim', please let me know, forwarding a deposit of £5.00, per person, to secure your reservation. *'He/she who hesitates may be lost'*

Many thanks

That's quite enough for now. Safe motoring and take care!

Trevor

Stop Press!

Christmas Dinner 1st December 2008

*Addendum to the item under ‘Secretary’s Scribblings’.
There has been a late-breaking development regarding this year’s
function!*

*In view of considerable uncertainty arising with our initial choice of
venue for this function - Longbridge Mill, Sherfield on Loddon, having
been recently taken over, etc., - a decision has been made to make a
firm booking elsewhere. The establishment chosen is the Downshire
Golf Complex, which is in Easthampstead Park, ‘twixt Crowthorne and
Bracknell.*

*The cost this year will be £20.50 per person with a menu comprising a
choice of 6 Starters, 5 Main Courses, 6 Desserts, plus coffee, mints and
mince pies.*

*The full menu will be distributed shortly but, at this time, if you wish to
secure reservations could you please let me know via any of the usual
means (e-mail: trevor_c.edwards@btinternet.com; tel: 01344 775012;
or ‘snail-mail’: 55 The Brambles, Crowthorne. Berkshire. RG45 6EF)
and then also forward a deposit of £5.00 per person dining, SOONEST,
to avoid disappointment. Don’t leave it too late! Please make cheques
payable to “NHAEG”*

Many thanks,

Trevor

Events Diary Update!

| | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----|
| <u>November</u> | | | |
| 10 th | <i>Club night</i> | Auction | Don |
| 15 th | | Nightjar | |
| <u>December</u> | | | |
| 1 st | | Club Dinner | |
| 8 th | <i>Club night</i> | Festive Fun | |

Don's Doodlings

I would like to add my thanks to Trevor and Jean for organising the Isle of Wight trip and to George and his daughter Carinne, for Monday clubnight.

September 13th/14th was Beaulieu Autojumble weekend. Brian and Marlene Grant arrived here on Wednesday 10th as Brian and I need all day on Thursday to sort out the items into the right boxes and load the two trucks and trailer with boxes, beds, tables, fridge, cooker, lights and of course not forgetting Mandy.

On Friday morning Brian and I left home for Beaulieu at 6 am and had a good run down until we joined the queue to get into Beaulieu about a mile away from the entrance. The queue moved very slowly and did eventually make it into the field where we have to queue in further long lines before going into the main field to our stall. Two small problems, firstly the ground was very wet where we had to park and once we had stopped, quite a lot of cars and trucks got stuck in the wet ground and had to be towed out onto the hard standing by tractor. Plus the company Beaulieu had hired to organise marshalling and parking etc. were about as useful as a chocolate firescreen! It was chaos for a while but eventually we made it to our stall.

For the past three or four years we have hired a marquee which has been erected for us, thus saving about three hours with erecting our own stall. By lunchtime we were pretty much up and running.

Business on Friday was very slow and we started to think the credit crunch had hit Beaulieu but our fears were soon kicked into touch on Saturday as it was a lovely sunny day and trade could not have been better. Sunday we called "pound day" for obvious reasons, and it was! It was good to see all of you who came in for a cup of tea whilst at Beaulieu.

I have purchased ten litres of one forty oil. This is for your Sevens' back axle and if you would like a litre or more, please give me a container and I will fill it for you at a cost of £3.50 per litre.

Finally, please keep in mind any items you can bring along for the November Auction. They can be motoring or household items as long as they are in good and working order.

ON SUNDAY 5th OCTOBER there is a car rally at HECKFIELD PLACE where you can just drop in for two or three hours say, from 11.30 am onwards and leave whenever you wish. Heckfield Place is approximately one mile away from The New Inn, towards Eversley. Weather permitting Maureen and I will be there and possibly other members who are staying at The New Inn on the Saturday night.

That's all for now,

Don

QUERIES OF THE MONTH

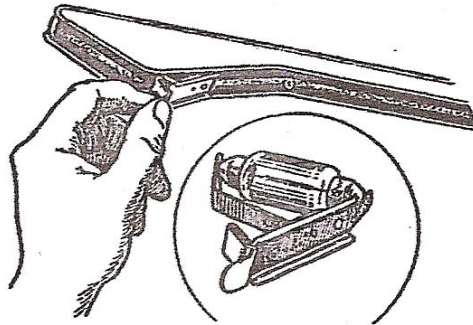
Some more "Queries of the Month", these originally appeared in "The Austin Magazine & Advocate" during the 1930s and 1940s. This month's selection includes; Direction Indicators – Austin Sixteen and Crabbing – Austin Seven.

No 547 appeared in December 1933 and No 1069 appeared in January 1942

No 547 – Direction Indicators – Austin Sixteen

Q. *I shall be glad to learn the method of replacing the bulb in either of my direction indicators on my Austin Sixteen, so that, in the event of a failure, I can quickly render these most useful fittings fully effective again. I take it that the bulb used is the same as that fitted in the instrument panel, side-lights and tail-lamp.*

A. On examining the under-side of the direction indicators you will find a small metal cover. This can be pulled clear downward at its outer end. If it is then moved as far as possible towards the end of the indicator arm the cover will come clear at its other extremity, bringing with it the bulb.



The bulb-holder can be readily pulled out of the arm. The bulb is of the festoon type.

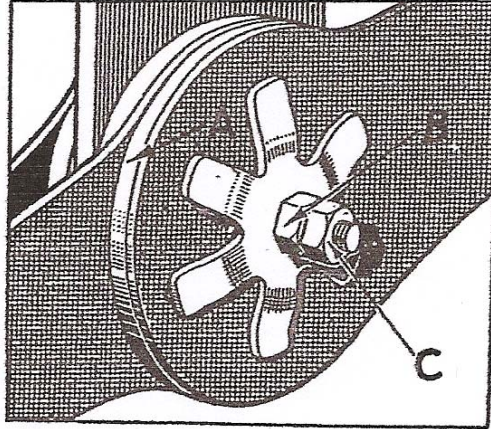
This bulb is not, as you assume, similar to that used in the side-lamps and tail-lamp. It is actually a festoon bulb, but any Austin Dealer or Lucas service station can supply the correct spare if required. The holder with bulb should never be removed when the indicator is switched on.

No 1069 – Crabbing – Austin Seven

Q. *My Austin Seven, a 1936 model, has recently seemed unstable, developing a tendency to "crab" to one side when travelling at 30 to 40 miles per hour on roughish roads, and there is an increased feeling of roll when cornering. Can you suggest a cause? The steering seems in reasonable good condition, and so far as I can see the front axle is all in order.*

A. Have you checked over the front springs, its anchorage and shackles, also the shock absorbers? If the spring is loose at its centre anchorage to the frame, or its

shackles are badly worn, the stability of the car will be affected. Again, if the shock absorber is requiring attention due to wear, the riding will suffer. In respect of the shock absorber, taking up the centre adjustment nut may effect a remedy, unless the friction discs require renewal.



The centre adjustment bolt for the Austin Seven front shock-absorber, is tightened by the nut B and secured by nut C. A is the friction disc.

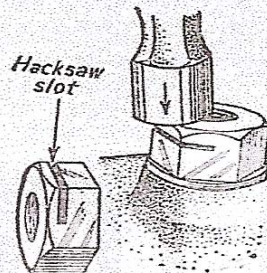
Replacement of these discs, or overhaul of the spring bushes and shackles, is then possibly the solution to your problem, but first of all ensure that the centre anchorage of the spring to the frame is quite in order and that the bolts are secure

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

I found this useful tip in an old motoring magazine (July 1954) recently and although a larger selection of lock nuts and washers exists today, this tip still might save the day and keep you running.

Simple Locknuts

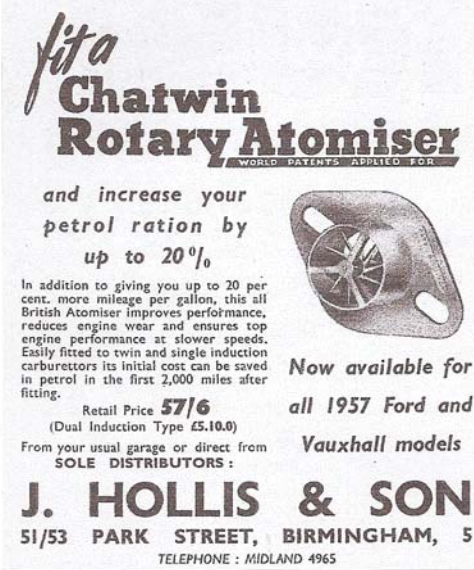
AN ordinary nut can be made into a useful locknut by cutting a slot about one-quarter of an inch from the chamfered face, as shown. Tighten the nut in place and bend over the edge so that slot is closed. The nut will never work loose, but can be easily moved with a spanner.



Making an efficient locknut by cutting a slot in an ordinary nut.

Sorry about my picture scanning this month, they all appear to be “crabbing”, must get the scanner’s shock absorbers or front axle looked at!

Another old advertisement, this one is from a motoring magazine dated April 1957.



fit a
**Chatwin
Rotary Atomiser**
WORLD PATENTS APPLIED FOR

and increase your
petrol ration by
up to 20%

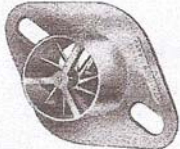
In addition to giving you up to 20 per cent. more mileage per gallon, this all British Atomiser improves performance, reduces engine wear and ensures top engine performance at slower speeds. Easily fitted to twin and single induction carburettors its initial cost can be saved in petrol in the first 2,000 miles after fitting.

Retail Price **57/6**
(Dual Induction Type £5.10.0)

From your usual garage or direct from
SOLE DISTRIBUTORS:

J. HOLLIS & SON
51/53 PARK STREET, BIRMINGHAM, 5
TELEPHONE : MIDLAND 4965

Now available for
all 1957 Ford and
Vauxhall models



Once again, if it was on sale today the Trading Standards people might show an interest in the 20% increase in miles per gallon and all the other claimed benefits. Still it might have improved performance a bit on an older car and engine development still had a way to go in the 1950s

It doesn't appear that the company Chatwin exists these days, a search on the internet only found the patent details for the atomiser (GB1549276) but that has now ceased through non payment of renewal fees. The only reference to a company called Hollis; Birmingham is a gun manufacturer, so not much chance of getting one of these gadgets to try on an Austin!

Births Column Witton, Myrtle

Dave and Karen are thrilled to announce the safe arrival of a new baby girl. She is full of life and a welcome addition to our family – a sister for Mabel, Molly, Millicent and of course Muriel. Muriel is now keen to leave hospital so that she can play with her sisters. Karen and Dave have now decided that Dave will soon need an operation.....

MORE NEWS FROM THE WITTON'S MUSEUM OF VINTAGE VEHICLES!



Myrtle has at last arrived! Here she is on display at Blenheim Palace.

Myrtle is a Type 65 first registered in December 1933 to Taggarts of Motherwell and remained in their ownership from new until 2000 when the car was sold at auction. It changed hands a couple of times, probably as it was in a run down condition and the project was probably too much for the owners. It was then purchased by a retired engineer from Chapel en le Frith who spent a small fortune completing a nut and bolt restoration. She has already had an enjoyable albeit muddy and slightly unplanned trip to the Isle of Wight. It was our intention to take Mabel, who for some reason is determined not to go to the IOW!! This time, she decided that she had had enough of the flimsy FZB carburettor and decided to shed the retaining housing for the compensating jet when we were near Alton.

I usually curse chewing gum but on this occasion it was put to good use after suitable chomping by Karen to hold everything in place whilst we returned home and treated Myrtle to her first run in earnest.

Remember this?



Since the article and above picture of my barn find 'Muriel', appeared in the Automobile in January, things have been dragging along somewhat. The first set back was that once the body was stripped and blasted, very little remained thereafter! I recall the previous owner saying that his father used to store tomatoes on the car so one theory is that it was the juice from the 'ruddy' fruit that ate it's way through the metalwork!

The bodywork is in the care of Ray Hood in Wiltshire and although the dreaded tin worm was found in the usual places, he had never seen rust in the roof sections normally covered by the fabric covering. Curiously there was also quite bad corrosion in the bulkhead panel behind the petrol tank. This can be caused by felt or similar material being used to dampen vibration but which conveniently acts as a sponge!

See below



As one door closes, another one opens, and fortunately Dave Williams of the Austineers had just bought an RM body and chassis on Ebay. He only wanted the chassis to build a special so a deal was struck on the body as a more cost effective way of solving the problem. The only slight problem was that Muriel was originally an RL and the subtle differences in scuttle length meant that I had to find another bonnet and petrol tank. I have had to sacrifice a bit of originality as she has now been 'cloned' like the Dolly the Sheep from an RL to a RM!

The 'new' RM body has been blasted, and primed and required some minor repairs to woodwork sections which was done to a very high standard by Sam Jackson.

Ray and I will be doing hours of filling and rubbing down with the intention of getting the paint on before the winter damp weather sets in. (Oh, I forgot its already here isn't it!)

The various panels have been offered up to check for fit to produce something almost resembling a car as below



The engine is still running happily in the workshop assisting general global warming. The chassis has been blasted and powder coated and this gave me the opportunity to replace all those difficult to get to bits when the body is on the car; eg brake cross shaft bearings etc. Of course some bright spark has suggested I replace all the riveted sections - eg torque tube and radius arm anchor points, longitudinal crossmember etc - with bolts as they all come loose with time. Pity I got it nicely powder coated already!!

The aim is to have Muriel ready and on the road ready for Beaulieu 2009 – assuming I am not bankrupt by then!

Millicent, our other RL has showed her prowess by behaving faultlessly whilst being caught twice in the mother of all thunderstorms. The first was on the way back from a pub out in the wilds of Suffolk one Thursday evening when it was virtually impossible to see more than 50 metres ahead. The second was on the return from the Norfolk Constabulary show in Norwich. Both engine and electrics didn't miss a beat. The car is also now riding the road much better now that I have replaced both rear springs.

When we purchased the car 4 years ago, I noticed that it sat quite 'high' at the rear, and other Austineers made the same observation. At the same time, the rear carden block universal joint was giving no end of trouble, needing constant fettling, replacement, and lubrication and I couldn't fathom out why.

Once the springs (which were repro) had been removed, it was found that there was no curve where the spring meets the axle eye. Consequently the axle was in constant tension resulting in the torque tube being forced upwards. This also resulted in one spring pin (15 mm steel) being snapped clean in half for God knows how long, and

the carden block having to work outside its normal limits because of the acute angle between torque tube and prop shaft. Some second hand springs from Dave Williams saved the day.

Oh the joy of owning Austin Sevens!

Dave Witton

“Listen very carefully I shall say this only once!”

Most of you have heard something about the D Day trips that some club members have undertaken in the last two years. No doubt you have heard the laughter as we listen to Pete Barlow’s attempts at French and also the cries of “mange tout, mange tout, pot pourri, pot pourri, chamois leather. Yes, we do have a great deal of fun and that is a credit to all who come and enter into the fun BUT there is also a serious side to all of this and actually the reason why Dave and I started doing this many years ago. Of course those days we were in a modern car – we really did not appreciate just how special it would be in an Austin.

The Normandy Landings were an incredible feat – something which we shall never see again thank goodness – but also the fact that it was a success is amazing and of course the reason was the meticulous planning for months and years, the countless heroes who undertook daring missions to ascertain important intelligence, lay false trails etc. and also the incredible bravery of so many men – some of whom we shall never know – but there are enough of whom we do. Some of those men survived the horrors of that day and the following bitter fighting into the next year. Some of these veterans will never return to Normandy – it is simply too painful. Each year however, many do and pay respects to their fallen comrades and the people of France. They are also willing and sometimes happy to share with the younger generation – that’s us – because they want us to know what it was like. It is so important that we do remember this – I am personally humbled when I hear about what they have witnessed, what they endured and all of it so we can now live as we do. During these trips we have made some friends of these old boys and this year they were pleased to see us again – and of course we are becoming quite infamous because of our lovely old ladies whom they all absolutely adore.

I remember one old boy who landed on D Day and fought all the way to Belsen. Can you imagine the sight with which he was met. He said that the worse thing was that they could not do anything to help those emaciated people as if they had given them their rations, it may well have killed them. No, this is not a reflection of the poor quality of the ration packs but rather the state the inmates were in. This old boy could talk about it but it was clear to me that he found it upsetting – even now.

Another colleague of his is called Harry. Dave and I are friends now with Harry. He is a cheeky chappie from Essex and is a very young 82! He is amazing for his age and his nickname is “Harry put your hat on straight”!!

Harry has given Dave some photos etc. of the landing time and we are looking for a suitable museum for these as that is where Harry would like these to go. Harry is one of the 50 or so who march into Arromanches on D Day for the 6pm ceremony. These old boys then stand to attention and parade as if they are 50 years younger. The ceremony there is very moving with the backdrop of the Mulberry Harbour which still stands in places today and it was only meant to last six months! Arromanches of course, is one of the British Beaches – Sword. The other was Gold, next along the coast

Another chap we met at Pegasus Bridge is called Billy Ness. He is very special to Pauline and I and more on this next month. I do want you all to know though, that he is a pensioner with no war pension – just the state pension and the only way he can afford to make the trip to Normandy each year is through the generosity of the Paras Veteran Association local branch based in Newcastle. Basically, they pass the hat around! I found this astounding – how is it that we treat our war heroes so poorly? So it seems to me that maybe we, as a club, might want to think of whether and how we might be able to assist Billy in time for next year. 2009 is the 65th anniversary – many say the last big one – as at the 70 years anniversary there will be so few veterans left. Who knows what will happen but I do reckon that even if they are still around, an 87 year old Billy will find it increasingly difficult to make such trips and so I really would like to help him now, whilst we can make a difference for him.

Next month I shall provide history on Billy – as much as I can. I would really like us to sponsor a hero – Billy is the same age as our cars so maybe there is a natural affinity there? I really would like to share with you the history on these trips as I firmly believe you have to go to Normandy and visit these places in order to start to realise just what it all means.

C'est tout cette mois – au revoir!

Karen Witton

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