

HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR SCARCE MEMBERS

I thought it only right that since I do not have to prepare “a few words” this year for our Annual Christmas Dinner I should at least pen a letter to all our SCARCE members.

Well, unfortunately 2020 has proved to be more of a Scary year than any of us could have imagined and our 16 planned events in addition to our monthly pub meet have been almost completely curtailed. I am indebted to our Club secretary Martin for keeping members informed of developments of the ever changing scene. I also hope Deryck will have been employing plenty of bulb fibre to keep his Tulips in hibernation for next year! Or am I being too optimistic to hope for a drive-out so soon?

Having attended our trip to the Manchester Transport Museum at the end of February it soon became evident that the onslaught of the Coronavirus was not going to disappear any time soon and thereafter things began to unravel fairly quickly including the abandonment of our monthly meetings at the Cross Keys.

In any case, the year had not begun well with the death of our member John Warburton, closely followed by the death of that British hero Sir Sterling Moss and then in August another of our members, Steve Harper succumbed to his illnesses. I am sure many of our members have also had to deal with their own personal tragedies of friends and family members and my heart goes out to all of you at this incredibly difficult time.

Nevertheless, Christmas is a time of rejoicing and I am sure we will all do our best to make the most of it, even though I will especially miss walking next door to Christ Church for their usual evening Christmas Eve service with one or more of my family. Having been responsible for writing a 90 page Guide and Handbook on Christ Church Friezland I believe I am correct in saying that this is the first time since 1849 that there has been no such service. Strange times.

As far as motoring goes I hope that those of you who have “Classic or Rare Cars” have been looking after them and I know many people have utilised the enforced lockdowns to spend time generally fettling and polishing their beloved motors. From a personal point of view I have been trying to find a way of curtailing my gold Alvises’ habit of “failing to proceed” when the engine gets particularly hot and to this end Mike and Alistair have been assisting me in the quest. Having found that the head gasket was not entirely reliable, and whilst the car started with no difficulty as the engine heated up the gasket showed signs of leakage so we are hoping that this replacement along with a little attention to the head will remedy the problem. As some of you may know I have a history of blowing head gaskets (much as Moss had a history of wrecking gearboxes!) so it may have something to do with my driving skills (or lack of them). It may well have something to do with my love of rapid double-declutching as I come down through the gears into sharp bends - something my father taught me when I was having driving lessons much as he had been taught when he learned to drive in Military trucks in the North African desert. Admittedly they had full “crash boxes” so in his case it was a necessity whereas I just love the sound of a wide-open throttle! I believe this will be the fourth head gasket since having blown two on two different Rover SD1’s, one on the Bentley 4 1/2 litre and now this. I am however attributing this one partly to the previous owner as I don’t think it has ever been 100% since I bought it. I am sure many of you will emphathise as you try to sort out your own cars and remedy the faults that only you are aware of. It would be easier to just sell it on but I am determined to sort it out eventually even if I have to replace it myself as I did with the old Bentley.

Whilst on the subject of Alvises, in their Centenary year, you may have gathered it is a marque I am rather fond of. It was to be the featured marque at this year’s Goodwood Revival so this has had to

be postponed till next year. For any of you who have never been to the Revival I would urge you to consider it in 2021 should it go ahead, as in my opinion it is probably the finest event of the English Classic car calendar. Those who prefer their Festival of Speed no doubt include my brother who along with his Scary Team has been deprived of trials this year as Marshalls have trouble socially distancing as they are hauling cars and their occupants out of hedges. Prescott went ahead though motorsport without spectators is a bit of non-event.

I am indebted to Michael also for helping in the fight to keep our Classics on the roads by joining our Club as a member of the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs. Coincidentally, Malcolm Kindell, whom I purchased my blue Alvis from, is the long serving Alvis Owners Club FBHVC representative and has spent decades lobbying various M.P.'s to preserve our Motoring Heritage. Another prominent member of the AOC is Paul Chasney who is the FBHVC Research Officer. These surveys put us in a better position to negotiate with the Government over matters relating to the Historic Vehicle Movement. Out of the 1.5 million historic vehicles registered with the DVLA a significant number are registered as SORN. This is a two edged sword. Looking at the arguments of those opposed to us using our cars for what they were designed for - driving on public roads, they argue that this high number serves to show that these vehicles are actually becoming museum pieces as this is where they are trying to put anything that is not required to pay a tax to use the roads. This could well prove the cut-off point, certainly as far as Motorways are concerned, and that would prove the thin end of the wedge. In my opinion it is better to get as many of these vehicles up and running and registered as roadworthy, something I am endeavouring to do myself though it can prove a costly exercise! No doubt history will show that "my generation" have been very fortunate in enjoying the thrills of the internal combustion engine as it became more reliable but it seems unlikely that the same will apply to our next generation although there are many options on the table - not just the electric battery. Having been well served by my old Jag (4.2 Litre XJ8) after 17 years I finally decided it was time for a change and I have nailed my colours to the mast by buying another petrol powered motor. I loved the Jag and like my Volvo estate I had done 100,000 miles in her so she had served me well. Much as I would have liked to have been a little greener there is no way I would contemplate all the driving I am hoping, God willing, to be doing on the continent with the current constraints on refuelling my car.

I can well envisage the time when there will be so many electric cars there will be "punch-ups" at the charging stations as vehicles jostle for place to recharge their batteries. I was reliably informed by the CEO of Bentley Motors that rapid charging of lithium batteries significantly affects the life of the batteries and slow charging is to be "de rigueur" whenever possible. Ideal vehicles for popping to the shops or a Sunday drive out but not Grand Touring. I know there are many of our members who consider that the current thinking regarding the green lobby is flawed and it will be interesting to see how things roll out over the next decade or so.

Looking ahead with the new restrictions it now seems to me that even Drive it Day on Sunday 25th April may be a bit ambitious so this year it may be rechristened "Don't Drive It Day". It also seems fairly pointless asking your Committee to work out a timetable at this juncture without access to a fairly powerful crystal ball.

That leads me nicely to wishing you and your "bubble" a Very Happy Christmas, and remember what the great man said, "Tomorrow will be a better day". That certainly won't be difficult!

STAY SAFE.

Tony Littlewood.
Chairman.