

SCARCE NEWSLETTER

Saddleworth Classic And Rare Cars Enthusiasts

No. 5 June 10th 2010

Having just returned from a fortnight touring a chunk of Europe I was hoping to find a few other members recalling their recent exploits but obviously you have nothing to share at present. Another possibility is that you are working that hard that unlike me you don't have the free time to fanny about writing newsletters! I know that in my absence Sally made an appeal to members to let her have some material to publish and I know she has been away for the last few weeks herself so it looks like you've got my boring reminiscences yet again!

Well for those of you who are interested I set off on 22nd May (which happens to be my son Guy's birthday) taking a ferry from Hull to Rotterdam accompanied by my 1993 Aston Martin which I hoped would behave itself for the next couple of thousand miles whilst I thrashed my way through the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Italy and Switzerland (not necessarily in that order). The journey was prefaced by a frantic few days whilst I located a set of new brake pads which is not as simple a task as might at first appear. O.K., if you don't mind giving the job to the Aston Martin approved dealership and shelling out a serious wad of cash the job couldn't be simpler but I am the sort of person who likes to get value for money when I've worked so hard to earn it in the first place. At least one local motor parts dealer gave up the hunt after supplying me with the wrong pads and I am grateful to my nephew Alistair (another SCARCE member) for removing the pads both front and rear in order to photograph them and ensure that the ones sent up from a dealer down south were going to be the correct ones as I was fast running out of time. I never realized that in the case of the Aston every pad on each axle is different with holes and springs in a multitude of different locations as the sets I have fitted to my TR for instance have always been the same on each axle i.e 2 sets of 4 equal pads. Nightmare! Even so the pads alone were over £150 but I did buy the Red Stuff ceramic based ones as opposed to the semi-metallic pads and I could certainly tell the difference when I needed it on some of the steep bends in Switzerland.

The car ran like a dream, the only time it "cut-out" being as I drove over the bridge into Crema where my father's POW camp had been situated. Fortunately I was able to free wheel into a pull-in and get the car restarted. How odd.

The “holiday” covered various facets as I was trying to :

- a) give my son Guy (who is presently living and working in Majorca) a bit of a birthday present and see the fabulous museum containing 450 cars of the Schlumpf Brothers in the National collection at Mulhouse
- b) give Heather a holiday though she could only manage the second week as it was half term and she has to work for a living unlike us OAP's
- c) follow in Dad's footsteps by retracing by road the journey he accomplished on foot when he escaped from an Italian POW camp and got over the border to Switzerland.
- d) give the Aston a good run and see a few parts of Europe I have never visited before.

On the whole after a huge amount of planning and logistics I think I can say the expedition went well, the only downside being that the one night I booked a room to share with my son he got no sleep because apparently my snoring kept him awake! Luckily I had booked him his own room for the other two nights he was able to join me so he did get some sleep. Four days after his 24th Birthday he was piloting the Aston through the longest tunnel in the World- the Gotthard Tunnel which is 17 Km long. Only two opposing lanes with no central reservation and I was sat in the passenger seat which is of course, since our European colleagues insist on driving on the wrong side of the road, the nearest one to the opposing juggernauts which pass within a foot or so from you. I have to say that since Guy has never been insured to drive the car before he did admirably (otherwise I wouldn't be writing this newsletter). I missed his company after those three days as Heather, though insured, declined the offer to drive on the wrong side of the road and I had some serious driving to do. Whilst the Aston has power steering and every luxury the Virage Volante is still a muscle car and you know when you have been driving it all day. Unfortunately the speed limits where we drove were very similar to those in the UK so I was not able to open her up to her true potential which on reflection is perhaps a good thing. In order to see some of the place and get more of the local atmosphere if I wasn't in a tearing rush I selected “no motorways” on the Sat Nav and found some beautiful little villages and amazing roads. Many of the roads around Switzerland and Italy are so winding that even 30 m.p.h would be lethal and the concentration required is far higher than that necessary on the motorways. Nevertheless I got some good photos and a decent amount of video particularly around the beautiful Lakeland of Northern Italy and the path of the Bernina Express – the little red train that Heather and I took from Tirano up to St. Moritz.

Having now experienced both the ferry there and back to Rotterdam and the overnight Autoslaap train on which we loaded the car for the journey back to Rotterdam from Milan I am now far more confident to try different cars and I hope my knowledge may assist other members in getting their cars abroad to see some beautiful places. I will bring a few photos with me to the meeting next Wednesday evening but I must give my apologies for this Sunday as I can't make the Saddleworth Show as I have a long standing arrangement to take the Bentley over to a charity do near Chester on behalf of the Army Benevolent Fund

I have attached a couple of photos to give a flavour of the last fortnight and I hope you will remember to send in a bit of editorial to keep Sally busy when you have a minute.

Hope to see a few of you for a drink at the Kingfisher on Wednesday night.
Bfn. Tony