



750 Motor Club Norfolk Centre Newsletter, May 2010

Produced and edited by John King

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Welcome to the Norfolk Centre May 2010 Newsletter.
In this Edition:

Richard Young concentrates while driving and reports on the April Club Night. There's news of Norfolk and Suffolk forthcoming events and Nigel Stennet-Cox gives us an account of the Alfa-Romeo Duetto Spyder. Then we have a look ahead to the May Club Night with the St John Ambulance. An Austin 12/4 has been found, and in response to the Ferguson Tractor articles in the March and April Newsletters, a 'Letter to the Editor' has flooded in! Read on . . .

Concentration while Driving

Richard Young

We hear a great deal about drivers who get into trouble for using mobile phones when on the move. This practice is widespread judging from the number of people who can be seen doing this. To use a mobile whilst driving is illegal yet it is happening all the time. To some extent it is understandable. There is a real need for all sorts of drivers to be in touch with their office or depot several times during each day. Of course the advice given is to pull over in a suitable place before making your call; much easier said than done and that doesn't help with incoming calls. In these circumstances a hands-free system would seem to be the answer but not many vehicles are equipped with this and even then it would still be illegal.

But is this loss of attention to the job in hand not equally applicable to all sort of activities that we get involved in while driving? A rear seat full of small children having a strident discussion could well be considered a distraction, especially if things became too heated. A talkative passenger in either front or rear seat intent on holding a continuous conversation with the driver would to many people be completely distracting, especially if he was not someone who normally travelled with you. I once turned left instead of right at a junction and travelled several miles in the opposite direction I'd intended simply because the passenger simply kept chattering non-stop and I was completely unable to concentrate on where we should have been going.

If it's a journey on unfamiliar roads where it is necessary to keep track of exactly where you are and travelling alone many people might have a check list or sketch map showing junctions, road numbers, towns and villages etc. so placed as to be instantly available as needed, or if in a built up area and looking for a particular address, constant reference could be made to one's sketch or notes, possibly holding them in your hand for instant referral. This way they could be brought up to one's eyeline so that taking your eyes away from the road could be reduced to an absolute minimum.

Surely most of us on a long journey will have eaten a snack of some sort while driving but just removing the wrapping from a chocolate bar could be very distracting. Perhaps one of the most dangerous things we do is to take our eyes from the road to locate some minor control, often connected with the audio system but it could be any little-used button located in an obscure corner of the fascia. In this situation one would dread to think how far your car will have travelled at 70mph. It would be advisable to always carry out these tasks only when conditions were at their least demanding,

LOVE THE CLUB YOU'RE IN !

Your input is needed – it's your association, so why not support it with your ideas, suggestions, questions, photos and stories. We know you have motoring experience that you'd love to share, and we would certainly be pleased if you could share it with us. It doesn't have to be a literary masterpiece or a prize winning picture, but any contribution you'd care to make to this Newsletter would be gratefully received. Please write or telephone soon!
Thanks.
John King

FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN EAST ANGLIA

- Apr 28 **FORC meeting** at Stradbroke. Trevor Taylor with Mike Jiggle. Trevor was team-mate to Jim Clark in Formula Junior, and F1 in the 1960's. Contact Steve Wyatt, 01379 586225, e-mail: quiltherhouse@fireflyuk.net.
- May 2 **Wymondham Old Timers Classic Transport Show**, Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park, Fakenham. Jim Cawte (e-mail: j.cawte@btinternet.com).
- May 2 **Spring Car and Motorbike Show**, Imperial War Museum, Duxford. Jessica Jeske, 01223 497985, e-mail: jjeske@iwm.org.uk.
- May 3 **Broadland MG Owners Club 'Heritage Run'**. Contact: Margaret Whitwood on 01692 651333 or e-mail: alma@computer-assist.net.
- May 9 **Skeyton Goat Classic Car & Motorcycle Rally**. £3 entry. Pre-1975 vehicles only. 01692 538600.
- May 16 **The 750MC Oily Rag Rally**, Hardwick. Contact Ron and Barbara Houghton on 01508 530580.
- May 20 - 24 **Windmill Run at Goes, Holland**. Dave & Maggie Dickinson. Tel: 01423 780060 or e-mail: dickinsond@fsmail.net.
- May 23 **Iceni Branch Morris Minors Anniversary Day**, Boundary Farm, Langley. Tricia Loades, e-mail: patricialoades@btinternet.com.
- May 30 **Classic Car Show**, Wellesley Recreation Ground, Great Yarmouth. Contact Richard on 01493 651272.
- June 6 **750MC Allsorts Rally** to Pakenham Water Mill. Derek Barratt 01603 453650, jnking@ukonline.co.uk
- June 13 **Euston Park Rural Pastimes**. Entry forms from Jim Cawte (e-mail: j.cawte@btinternet.com).

i.e., on a road when traffic was very light and there were no other situations asking for our attention. But in fact we all know it just doesn't work like that.

Just a few weeks ago there was the case of the man who took out his handkerchief to blow his nose while waiting, out of gear and with handbrake applied, for traffic lights to change. A policeman at the roadside observed this and promptly booked him for not having proper control of his vehicle. It made most of the newspapers and TV bulletins and was eventually withdrawn but it makes us realise how careful we need to be.

April Club Night Report

Richard Young

Our meeting of 6th April saw eighteen members gathered at The Cellar House to hear about Judy and Charles Levien's recent visit to New Zealand. Charles has written about the Austin Seven contacts they made in the Melbourne area in the April Bulletin so this need not be covered again here. The trip was largely planned so that they could visit their daughter Rose who is currently working in Melbourne. After visiting Rose their destination was the Coromandel Peninsula in the North Island, and in particular to acquaint themselves with Barry Brickell and the incredible narrow gauge railway he has constructed in this challenging landscape, the Driving Creek Railway. Brickell is now in his seventies and this has been a large part of his life for the past fifty years.

The upper slopes of this volcanic area had been largely denuded of trees and vegetation by former mine workers who were put out of work when the mines closed, and this had resulted in a bleak and barren landscape. Barry's imagination had been fired as a young man when he came across a long deserted narrow gauge railway, and he determined that he would build his own at Coromandel. Railways are not his only interest however. Barry is also a talented potter and artist and has his pottery adjacent to the railway engineering workshops. He digs his own clay which when mixed with sand produces roof tiles as well as sculptures and pottery. But his main work is with the Driving Creek Railway.

The workshops are not only used to maintain the existing engines and rolling stock but also to construct new carriages and trolleys as they are needed. To make all this viable a great reliance is placed on attracting tourists and the income they provide, and this is a vital part of the scheme. The previously devastated upper slopes have, over the years been replanted with thousands of native trees. From the air it is apparent that the whole landscape in this area is once again thickly forested. This in itself would seem to be a major achievement but was only the first part of the ambitious scheme that Barry had determined to bring to fruition.

The railway up to the upper slopes has demanded an incredible amount of back breaking work. Gradients are as steep as 1 in 14 in places. Ravines had to be spanned and a path through the forest needed to be cleared by hand before the track could be laid. All materials had to be laboriously carried and manhandled into position. As the track itself progressed steadily upwards facilities for the expected visitors were slowly improved also. The whole enterprise has been carried through on a shoestring budget. Rails from deserted and long forgotten mine workings have been rescued from the jungle and brought back into use along with some new rails made in Korea. Barry lives in a caravan at the base although he has been planning to move into a house. The scheme is now run by a Trust. It depends largely on volunteers or people prepared to work for low wages for the satisfaction they get from taking part.

In 2003 part of the line was washed away by torrential rains which has meant a major reconstruction job, but the work of pressing on with the ever lengthening line has never stopped. At one point a double decker bridge has been built with one line passing directly over the lower one. Apart from the rails themselves just about everything is made of wood; with the whole area covered with trees this is the obvious material to use. Several reversing points are built along the line and also zig-zags which allow a turn-around in a very small space when needed for the return journeys. The latest reversing area is built out into space on a steep hillside and looks



precarious to say the least, and that's before a train is driven onto it.

Yard by tedious yard Barry and his dedicated band of helpers have extended the line, and it has now reached its destination. The video we watched clearly showed how the rails are retained in place by nothing more than small metal brackets secured by a single galvanised nail driven into the wooden sleeper. Some of the carriages Barry has built are articulated to allow the sharp curves around the bends to be negotiated. Children are kept out of these carriages – they might fall through the gaps in the floor otherwise because there is a complete lack of any guard rails at these points.

Barry comes across as a somewhat solitary person, quite content to devote his life to his various interests and projects in this remote region, and yet he delights in the numbers of visitors his railway and pottery attracts. He also organises pottery classes, and the different sides of the business run in conjunction with each other very successfully it would seem. One imagines that nobody is getting very rich from all this work and that if sufficient funds can be raised each year to continue that is reward in itself.

Several of our members commented afterwards that this railway, carrying hundreds of passengers every year would never be allowed to carry a single one in this country. It would give our health and safety people several heart attacks at the very thought. In New Zealand things are perhaps viewed differently. As a result of Barry's efforts, Coromandel has become a successful tourist resort.

The video presented to us by Charles and Judy provided us with a most entertaining evening which held our attention throughout. Many thanks to you both.

The 750 Motor Club Norfolk Centre
ALLSORTS RALLY
Pakenham Water Mill

June 6th.

Enter **NOW** to make sure that you receive your Rally Plaque!

More details or entry forms, from John King,
e-mail: jnking@ukonline.co.uk,
or Derek Barratt on **01603 453650**.



The Alfa-Romeo Duetto Spyder, 1971 - 1972.

Nigel Stennett-Cox

As Ray Price kindly reminded me in his note when he sent this picture, we are in the centenary year of the Anonima Lombardo Fabbrica Automobili. Well, strictly speaking, it seems only to have been A.L.F.A. from 1910 to 1918 when Ing Nicola Romeo acquired an interest in the company and it became Alfa-Romeo. Their chief designer had been Giuseppe Merosi since the start, and during the 'Twenties he essayed a 3 litre pushrod o.h.v. engine with the intention of the unit being used in Grand Prix racing. The formula changed however and this engine came to power the company's first model to achieve international prominence. It was the RL, a fine imposing car with a sharply vee'd radiator on the sports version, which came to occupy the sort of market niche which, over here, would be occupied by such as the Bentley 3 litre or Sunbeam 3 litre Super Sports.

There was a racing version, the RLS, and an even more powerful TF version which the company raced during the 'Twenties, with the team being managed by one Enzo Ferrari. When the team won the prestigious Circuit de Savio in 1923 the parents of Francesco Barraca, an Italian fighter pilot, gave Ferrari their son's Prancing Horse badge which we all know is carried on Ferraris to this day.

In 1926 Merosi gave up his post with Alfa-Romeo to work with Emile Mathis in Strasbourg, and his place as Chief Designer was taken by Vittorio Jano. This latter was undoubtedly one of the greatest designers of top-class competition cars ever, and had given the company the highly successful 2 litre P2 model in 1924. This was followed up by the P3 monoposto, 6C and 8C competition cars, and furthermore, 'Touring' versions of some, still with double overhead camshaft six and eight cylinder engines incorporating central gear drive to the camshafts and frequently using superchargers. The racing and endurance versions were quite simply the cars to beat in Grand-Prix racing, and it was those which

knocked Bentley off their perch in the role of dominating the Le Mans 24 hour race. Although W.O.Bentley's 'Speed Six' monsters won in 1930, the writing was on the wall for such behemoths, and subsequently Alfa-Romeo took over the laurels. The latter were only outclassed in their turn when the Nazi party decided to go motor racing c.1934, and when they did the Grand Prix Mercedes Benz and Auto Unions were developing some 600bhp from about 6 litres, so it was no shame for Alfa to be trounced by that.

Interestingly, your writer remembers working at The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, in 1975, and whilst helping with the Christie's auction in that year an Alfa-Romeo 8C made the highest price of the event, at some £17-18,000. Such a car would now set one back by some forty times that amount.

The pretty Spyder in the picture will remind some of our older readers of the similar but earlier model used by Dustin Hoffman in the film, 'The Graduate'. The car was very successful for the company, running alongside its sporting saloons, and remaining in production with little cosmetic change from 1966 to 1994.

Many will know that the company has been owned since 1986 by FIAT, who have pitched Alfa in competition with such as BMW, but perhaps without quite the success of the Bavarian brand. In the 'Sixties right through to the late 'Eighties Italian cars suffered terribly from rust whenever they were exported to less than temperate climates, with this problem seeing off the importation of that other FIAT subsidiary, Lancia, completely over here.

As an aside, Henry Ford the First is frequently quoted as having said, "When I see an Alfa-Romeo I take off my hat". This has forever baffled your scribe on account of Henry's even having heard of the brand, and also given the proliferation in the America of his day of other better-known prestigious makes. The Italian marque must have somehow come into his life in some way of which we will never know.



Letters to the Editor.

Dear John,

Richard Young has contributed a most interesting pair of articles to our Newsletter on the subject of Ferguson tractors, and the 'Ferguson System' of tailored implements which together so much revolutionised farming in this country.

I do hope he doesn't mind if I remind readers that the basic design of the tractor was carried out by the Ford Motor Company in America in 1937-39, under the personal supervision of Henry Ford himself, who maintained a lifelong interest in farming and tractors. The Ulsterman Harry Ferguson had gone to Ford with his design for hydraulics and mounted implements, having fallen out with David Brown of Huddersfield, and Ford designed a tractor around the hydraulics which became the Ford Ferguson 9N model. This looked just like a 'Grey Fergie', right down to also being grey, and entered production in Dearborn, Michigan in 1939. The side-valve engine was said to have been formed from half a Mercury V8.

A number indeed came over here on Lease-Lend during the war, but the model never entered production at Dagenham. Ferguson became miffed at Ford of Britain's refusal to tool up for the tractor's production, and at the end of the conflict took the design

to the Standard Motor Company in Coventry, thereby giving rise to the better-known model to which Richard refers. The bought-in Continental engine, and later a Standard Vanguard wet-liner unit marked the only real difference between the Standard product and Ford's original design.

Ford of America introduced an improved model in 1948 still incorporating Ferguson's hydraulics, which led to Harry suing them in the early Fifties and winning the case, but with far less in the way of damages than that for which he had hoped.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Stennett-Cox

Hi John,

Just a reminder that Ron and Barbara Houghton are holding their Oily Rag Rally at their home at Hardwick on Sunday May 16th. As in previous years, both the 750MC and the NA7 club are invited. Any member who wishes to attend should contact Ron and Barbara on 01508 530580. We have always advertised this event in the Newsletter as a 750MC event.

Regards,

Peter Brown

BEAULIEU 2010

If you would like to know more about the 48th National Austin Seven Weekend at Beaulieu, you should visit the 750 Motor Club website (www.750mc.co.uk).

The event is on Sunday, July 4 and among other things includes the UK's biggest Autojumble of Austin 7 bits and pieces and a display of Long-Distance Austin 7s. There is an 'interactive PDF Entry Form' at:

http://www.750mc.co.uk/images/uploaded/COPY%20Beaulieu_website_Entry_Form_2010_A4.pdf

The 750 Motor Club Norfolk Centre

May Club Night

*The Difference between Life and Death
and how **you** can make that difference!*

We are delighted to welcome the St John Ambulance to the Cellar House on **May 4th** for the evening. In their own words:

"We believe that it's absolutely unacceptable that so many people die needlessly – because no one could give them first aid when they needed it.



The difference.

St John Ambulance teaches people first aid - about 800,000 last year alone – so that they can be the difference between a life lost and a life saved.

We teach young people in schools and through our activities for young people.

We teach people in the workplace and provide first aid products.

We teach people in the community".

Whether you've had First-Aid instruction or not, the importance of this essential skill cannot be overstated. Refreshing those skills from time to time is also highly desirable. Now those wonderfully selfless folks from the St John Ambulance are going to bring us an extremely useful evening of interactive instruction. It could be entertaining as well, as attempts to resuscitate 'Little Anne' get under way!

Let's ALL be there on Tuesday, 4th May.

The fun starts at 7:30pm

(no need to bring your own bandages).

Austin 12/4 found . . .

A fabric-bodied 1929 Austin 12/4 that has been in a garage for over 30 years has been auctioned in Lincoln. The car, which has only one previous owner, has been kept in a garage since 1978, but its engine still turns over and its tyres stay up when pumped.

The 81-year-old car was sold by Unique Auctions on 5 April (sorry - we don't yet know the hammer price). An Austin 12 handbook, a licence belonging to its only driver, and a black and white photo of the car in its prime were also sold.

The car had belonged to Leslie Bulled. After his death, his son Roger brought the car out of the garage. While the fabric body has been badly damaged by age, it is hoped that a new owner may be able to restore the body and the rest of the car to full working order. Roger Bulled said "I was never into vintage cars, so even though we knew it was there we never thought about restoring the Austin ourselves, but it's something we would love to see done."

