

PAST EVENTS – 2013

TOC Annual Rally, Bury St Edmunds, June 2013

This was the first time we had joined in the club annual rally. We knew little about Suffolk, and even less about Bury, so this was an excellent chance to experience the area. However, as relatively new Traction owners, we did set off with some trepidation. John was worried about whether the car would make it, having just changed the oil pump. Margaret had packed her Kindle in case we had to wait for breakdown recovery, but was more concerned about driving round for four days, stopping only to listen to talk about Traction engine bits. Both our worries were unfounded. We arrived without incident and found that Jasmin Gagen had done an excellent job of organising the event. A lot of thought and planning had gone into the preparation, resulting in an interesting and varied programme, with choices to suit both drivers and passengers.

Jasmin would be the first to acknowledge the help given by her husband, John, and the rest of the team. We have joined in several events organised by our local coordinator, Helen Shelley, (who does an excellent job for the Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex Borders region), so we knew a few members. We were delighted to find that the friendly, helpful and welcoming atmosphere we experience in our local branch is also true of the TOC en masse. Newcomers at future events should however beware a friendly approach by Bev, who waited until we had consumed some alcohol and then asked us to do this report of the event for Floating Power. We were reassured that photos would be provided by Martin de Little and Steve Wright.

The following day we all parked our cars in the Greene King Brewery car park. As Bury is reasonably compact we were in easy reach of the events. We began by strolling round the fantastic market, held twice a week, before being given an informative and entertaining local history tour. The ancient buildings have seen a long history of political intrigue and lashings of blood and gore. We found that not only the tour guides but also the local people are proud of their town and are looking for opportunities to tell visitors about it.

After a speedy lunch we were back in the Greene King car park admiring and discussing Citroëns, before an afternoon's tour round the brewery. The apparently limitless sampling opportunities meant that many of us were pleased to accept John Gagen's offer of a lift to the evening dinner – what a star!

Apart from the generous carvery at the Flying Fortress, an entertaining quiz was provided by the friends of Jasmin and John. A tip for future events: if winning matters to you, you need to ensure that everyone in your team has remembered hearing aid batteries and spectacles, if needed! It would also be a good idea to ensure that someone on your team watches TV – no-one on our team seemed to do so. Other teams probably had their own problems, but the quiz was a great ice breaker, did keep the Traction talk down to a sociable level (a bonus for Margaret) and was great fun.

There was a choice of activities for Sunday morning, with some energetic souls managing to do both. Our rally coincided with the 'Hidden Gardens of Bury St Edmunds' event, in which many local gardens of all types and sizes were open to the public. This was obviously a very well known and popular event. Jasmin had also arranged guided 'Backstage Past' tours of the local Theatre Royal, which is the only surviving example from the Regency period still in use. We chose this option and it exceeded our expectations by bringing to life not only the building, but also the social history of theatre and theatre goers. For Traction owners there was also ample opportunity to chat and to dive under any open bonnet (Margaret's observation – John was too busy chatting and diving).

After lunch we all drove to Ickworth Hall, a National Trust property, and were joined by local club members to make an impressive display of Tractions in front of the Rotunda. The event ended in the afternoon with prize giving and goodbyes.

In a break with tradition, the concours judges were given time off for good behaviour and participants were asked to select their favourite cars. The parking of all the Tractions at the Greene King Brewery

during the weekend meant that we had time and opportunity both to appreciate the huge variety of models and to choose our favourites.

Those of us who didn't have to return home had a final gathering at yet another fine pub in the Suffolk countryside. We decided not to dash away on Monday and spent some time exploring Bury. We will definitely return to Suffolk and to Bury and are grateful to have had this taster weekend.

We must again thank Jasmin and John for their excellent organisation. The planning must have taken huge amounts of time, energy and worry. They must have been very relieved to put away the clip boards and the hi-vis jackets and relax at the end of Sunday to enjoy what was left of John's birthday. The whole event was wonderful and thoroughly enjoyed by all. We are delighted to have joined such an active, friendly club. If you haven't experienced one of these gatherings before, we would certainly recommend you take part in future events.

John and Margaret Moon

La Vie en Bleu. 1st and 2nd June 2013

Attendance at La Vie en Bleu has become an established event for the TOC and we have shared a stand with the Citroën Car Club and 2cvGB for a number of years. I have to say that I can't remember exactly how many: I think we started in 2006 when we had a stand of our own. Whichever year it was, I do remember that it was a particularly wet weekend and that my wife Jane spent most of one day sitting in the car, knitting. I think that is the only time she has been. Clearly the weather plays a big part in an outdoor event, but in this country so far as weather is concerned, if you can't take a joke you should go and live somewhere else. The best piece of advice I think is to always have an umbrella with you, if you don't need it to keep the rain off you can use it as a parasol.

This year it was a parasol. On both days. For those of you who are not familiar with this event, although it is billed as a French weekend, the timed hill climb event attracts entries from a wide range of makes and ages of vehicles, not just French. Of course there are a lot of Bugattis in attendance, from the earliest to the latest Veyrons. Combine this with the presence of other French car clubs and the French theme in the paddock area and the weekend caters for a wide range of interests. The Bugatti Trust museum is open to visitors who wish to broaden their minds and the excellent and recently extended catering facilities are available for those who wish to broaden their stomachs.

As in previous years, Citroën UK supplied a mobile hospitality unit; a very welcome facility organised as usual by Brian Drummond, which not only gives the stand a focal point but also, this year, provided shelter from the sun.

One of the attractions of the weekend is the non-competitive cavalcade drive up the hill climb circuit, which is open to all comers, although it is necessary to pre-book. Den Hewitt took part in his roadster and obviously thoroughly enjoyed himself.

In the paddock was Mike Tebbett's pre-war traction 11BL. Mike is part of the event organising team and was a marshal on the day and a very busy man.

On the club stand we had 5 cars on Saturday, including Jonathan Howard's Rosalie and 8 cars on Sunday. At one point on Sunday there were more roadsters than saloons although eventually it settled down to 4 of each. The present custodians of the roadsters were Den Hewitt, Philippe Alison, Tim Walker and David Boyd and of the saloons, Richard Smart, Eric Pennington, Ian Harvey, Nick Shaw, Patrick Russell-Jones, Barry Joyce, Colin Crawford and Martin Jones.

As always this was a very enjoyable event, with plenty of interesting things to see and plenty of opportunity to catch up with old friends and make new ones. It is well worth putting in your diary for next year. Simon Saint