



# Monkey Business

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*Bunged Together By Simon Griffiths*

Phew! What a meeting and what a month to follow; as Peter Lakin would say "I'll be glad when I've had enough!" Well that's not really true, but the July meeting was packed with friends old and new enjoying each other's company, good food, and much interest to be enjoyed.

We welcomed Frances and Andrew McDougall from Melbourne (AUS) who having heard about our wonderful camaraderie decided to visit us; having encouraged Norman and Claire to introduce them to us. Actually, they were in the UK for a family wedding, but, having started out in Glasgow, it was natural to visit us in Cheshire on their way up to London. Much discussion then ensued regarding Antipodean Alvis adventures and the swapping of yarns and, for bringing them along, I will forgive our Norman everything! All this culminating in our meeting being awarded the title 'best we



**Although the hood was down when Charles and Judith arrived it wasn't to stay that way!**

in Wheels-Alive as a first amongst many to come. I, for one, can't wait for my advance copy from Red Triangle to arrive so I can study the inclusion of every Alvis car ever built, along with a report and photos of owners of note. Well you can't say attending a Deanwater meeting is ever humdrum!



**I think she's saying to herself that it's a funny way to spell Alvis!**

have ever been to' - well that will do for me, although I expect the wonderful gift of a 12/50 repair tome generously given by Mike Robinson helped gain us the accolade. Mike is thinning his collection and kindly passed me some written history from his personal Alvis archive for onward transmission to the Alvis Archive Trust for appraisal; which has yet to happen but will in due course.

Whilst we are on the subject of tomes, David Culshaw together with his pal Graham Preston a former TA21 owner from Bramhall joined the meeting and we were highly privileged with David bringing us the first and only copy of his new book, 'Alvis Society'. This was, then, the only copy in the country for us to be able to take a quick preview at his latest work. In the brief time I had to look at his book I feel it is certainly a must to join such revered Alvis books as those by Ken Day in our home libraries. The book is well reviewed

The first part of our meeting is usually taken up by those who wish to dine so, once consumed, the meal is immediately followed by 'churning' which means by home-time everybody has occupied more than one seat and chatted to as many revellers as it is possible to do in one night. It is something I have noticed at our do that I haven't witnessed elsewhere, how we move round covering all subjects under the sun with each other. I discussed with Tim and Jayne the logistics of the forthcoming Tatton AOC display and I was also gathering



volunteers to come to the show to augment Tim's appeals to gather support, of which more later.

Simon, sadly sans Melissa, came straight from work (whatever that is), Tari and Michell Mirza, border raider Richard Plant-Locke, Charles and Judith Van-Ingen, Elizabeth Bennett and Mike Fitkin were all present. I had to avoid Mike as yet again I had forgotten to bring him an original example of a Speed 20 eagle mascot. It was impossible for me to talk with everybody as I had to chat with Chris Bluer about our planned trip to the concours at the Petwood hotel, again more later, and with Charles regarding the return of his re-engineered rear view mirror stalk. This discussion focused in on the British Association thread; another misnomer if ever I have heard one, as there is little that is British about it, other than the name, as the whole thread series was 'borrowed' from the Swiss Thury thread. It is a scientific wonder of devious and impenetrable calculations and formulae that it's wonder it exists at all, but that's what keeps the little grey cells working and is interesting - but I suspect only to some! Anyway Charles and I have had fun with it and, probably, in not too different a way as Judith would consider an N-harmonic musical key change which again only exists in the minds (or ears) of some.

Anyway I think I will now leave the July meeting and go through my Alvis month which has been probably one of the most enjoyable for many a year. Starting on the Tuesday week after our Deanwater meeting it began with GS 6656 and me visiting Tim and Jayne in Tytherington to hand over some of the Tatton entry tickets he was going to distribute. It was a glorious evening and GS and I then took the high road from Macclesfield to Buxton locally known as the Cat & Fiddle as, at its peak, I passed the highest licensed premises in England – which, funnily enough, is a pub called the Cat & Fiddle - then on to Buxton to join the A515 to arrive at Eric Ody's meeting at the Coach and Horses in Fenny Bentley. Here again stunning food and great friendship with Giles Lacey, Eric and Richard the farmer from Hartington was abound. The meeting was a bit light this month with Philip Wood and Vic Allen not able to attend. Eric's meeting is the oldest regular meeting as it is the successor to Ernest Shenton's Red House, then Bert Adam's hosting it, followed by John Pryer and Paul Shrouder at the Yew Tree and now with Eric at the Coach. The photo shows Giles' T all models and GS with Giles, Eric and Richard ready for a great drive home as the cooler air certainly suits our engines best.



My next weekend saw Chris Bluer and I venture out in his Jaguar Mk 2 to Woodhall Spa in Lincs at the Petwood Hotel

for their concours; and I must say this was my first Jaguar Mk 2 experience and a very pleasant one it was too. As I have said before, what a different story it would have been if Alvis had developed their prewar engine cylinder heads on the same lines but that is just wishful thinking on my part. Anyway, to the Sunday which, if it is not too British to say so, was almost too hot. This was not an exclusive Alvis gathering but, as a Marque, we were well represented with the first and last Alvis owned by Sqdrn. Ldr. Douglas Bader both cars sporting his Spitfire mascots. I also espied a TA 21 not known to me and a grey TD away across the field. John Fox brought his Graber bodied 3 litre, probably the most handsome and, being right hand drive, the most practical Graber bodied Alvis in England. Also across the field I chatted with Hugh Westlake in his TD DHC. As this was a



meeting of all Marques it does add a great deal of interest to appreciate non-Alvis cars as well.



However, without doubt, the highlight of this meeting was a display of several passes of the Battle of Britain flight comprising a Spitfire and a Lancaster, This was my first experience of seeing these two iconic aircraft in their natural environment, the air,



and it won't ever be forgotten. When I say seeing, well that is only part of it as hearing that legendary engine in the Spit was one thing but when four of them went over powering the Lancaster you could literally feel the air waves on your chest, I doubt the ground crews at dispersal ever actually got used to the experience if that is what just one is like. Anyway, I was amazed that I managed to get photos of the aircraft as they passed over to add to the ones of the ground-based cars for your inspection.

Next up was Tatton Park and the AOC stand. This year we displayed over both Saturday and Sunday in perfect weather, Tim bought the event shelter which this year was a parasol and not a roof. We had a total of 11 car days forming the display and, over the weekend, we had a car from every decade of Alvis car production - except that of the 2000's!

We also had a trophy winner on both Saturday and Sunday namely Ian Gaskell and his bother sporting their late father Bob Gaskells superb TD 21 S1. I have to admit I don't know what the trophy was for but the car certainly deserved it and the other winner on Sunday was Mike Fitkin with the ex-King Edward VIII's car, where a similar trophy was presented to Mike, as the photo shows, for the best Alvis in the 2022 show.



Also on the stand over the two days were Norman and Claire who, on Saturday, were with their ever-trusty TA 14 and, on the Sunday, a Manchester registered 1925 12/50 now owned by Dale and Marietta Parcell who live outside Melbourne in the Dandenongs. Well, the car hasn't travelled so far from Manchester to Cheshire in its 90 odd years which is more than can be said about its owners and, with Norman as the car's UK custodian, we cover some continents.



Elizabeth Bennett joined the display by driving her TC21 prototype car (seen in the background of the picture below) from Chester with her family as passengers. We are so proud of Elizabeth, it cannot be put into mere words, for her sheer determination to continue her connection with Alvis cars and the friendships she has formed over many years. To complete the display, Tim and Jayne with their family TD and me with GS my Firebird also welcomed Brian Bane from Antrobus with his lovely 1960 TD saloon. Again, the photos will tell all what a good display we achieved. One lovely little memory that shows the impact our cars have on people was



regarding a couple of chaps that came to us asking if Tim's car used to live in the Daresbury area as they remember they used to MOT test it for the then owner who turned out to be Jaynes father. I don't know how many MOT's must they have carried out but this one they remembered.

My last excursion this month with GS was to re-visit Hope Show at the invitation of Giles Lacey. Now when I say re-visit it is some time since I did Hope show, in fact the last time I drove an Alvis to Hope show I was in WJ8740 still carrying its saloon body! I hadn't long owned the car and I suffered brake fade half way down the ever-slipping A625 known as MamTor. That road closed due to a landslide in 1979 to give you an idea of how long ago it was! Needless to say I quickly learned the lore of drum brakes which is that you go down a hill in the same gear you go up it in and I haven't had such a bowel emptying experience since. This time however because of the closure of MamTor I used the Winnats pass which runs alongside the old road, where you could swear you are in the Swiss Alps it is so beautiful, but duly descended in 2nd gear with no excitement. However, talking



of excitement at the show there was a team of motorcycle display chaps and I have never seen anything like it. You will see in the pictures the boys defying gravity and disregarding the laws of physics; at least as I have understood them to date. How any H&S risk assessment is written to cover this is

utterly beyond me, it probably can't be written which is why they still do it. We saw the lads actually fully detach from the bike in midair, re-mount and land. Other feats included somersaulting whilst in the air to a degree that I would consider almost impossible with the bike stationary and then, to top it all, one lad actually somersaulted the bike itself whilst in flight, Giles and I were spellbound and speechless as the photos show - it was amazing.



**No - that's not just the same picture upside down!**

Anyway, back to Alvis matters we were four cars starting with Giles in 4949HP, his all T's car that I would like to hear how that car is to be classified in this futile talk of originality when it comprises bits of every post war 3 litre but that is how it left the factory as a retirement gift to William Dunn who designed



it. On to Hugh Westlake's conversion to a TD21 S1 DHC making a superb car for all weathers. Hugh and I continued our conversation regarding his fantastic method of directly mounting a Laycock overdrive unit to an all-synchro gearbox and Hugh has kindly loaned me his prototype casting and drawings for study. Next Alvis in line was Stuart Wilson's long term owned TD 21 series 2 DHC, Stuart lives in Combs and probably travelled the least of any of us to the show. And finally in the Alvis line up, and an interloper in class 6, was my Firebird (they arrange the display by litreage apparently) but I didn't know that when I arrived and just went with GS's stable mates so at least we were together, much to the consternation of a neighbouring Mk 6 Bentley owner who, when he enquired as to the CC of my engine was told "adequate to propel the car in true Alvis fashion"!

That was something which I have to say was proved absolutely when it was agreed that two friends Rob, Sarah and Joey, their dog, who had come by train to Hope, should have an evening meal together. For once I had to draw the line at any more strong drink, as Giles had brought a bottle of family vinified Californian wine that I had a glass of with our pork bun for lunch. I suspected this wine was something special and upon inspection of the label I discovered it to be 15.5% so one glass was quite sufficient, the decision was then made to get a Chinese takeaway when we got back to Disley so I could take up drinking again. They could then go home from Disley on the train using their return ticket. My point is that this required the Firebird to now scale the Winnats pass with three proper adults and a dog which, despite its ruling gradient of 28% (whatever that means, but that what the sign said) this extra load dropped me into 1st gear as we neared the summit but, with the legendary all synchro box, that holds no anxiety and, once in 1st gear, only half throttle was required to complete the task in front of GS to finish the hill so it had plenty more to give.

Well that completes my month, so I will sign off in the hope that I will see you all at the Deanwater Hotel (SK7 1RJ) for our next meeting which as usual is the first Tuesday of September which is the 6th in the evening

