

THAMES VALLEY AGM 4th NOVEMBER 2023

Committee present: James B., R. Kidson, P. Freeman, B. Marsh, V. Karruck, R. Fenton, I. Foster

Apologies: J. Ansell, I. Barlow, M and S Brown and J. Wilson. There were 22 members in attendance and the meeting opened at 11.20am.

Matters Arising from the 2022 AGM

A new N&N venue has been found near St. Albans. We are hoping to get it started in February or March 2024; Marlow and Ealing will continue as normal. It was thought that most of the suggestions from last year had in the main been actioned. It was highlighted that we do have some tools that are available to centre members via the website.

Chairmans Report

James made the point that we are still financially strong, and membership is holding up well. We are looking to encourage more younger members. The WhatsApp group is working well, though as usual we have a hard core of members getting involved which is acceptable, but it would be good to see some more of our members turn out. Ironically the AGM is becoming one of our better social gatherings and something to build on!

Events in 2023

Stratfield Saye was very well attended with 40+ turning out. Hook Norton, Fawley Hill and Drive it Day were all well attended. The Isle of Wight trip had 25+ attendees. We will look to replicate this year's success in 2024, albeit with slightly less events.

Directors Report

Ian reported that membership cards will no longer be sent out with to members but will be emailed to members so that those that wish to have a hard copy can print it off. The NEC have agreed to support the Dutch Healey Museum financially, but no amount was mentioned. It is hoped that members are getting their magazine on a more regular basis following a change of postal service.

Membership Report

Richard confirmed that membership was sitting at 162. We "lost" 7 members last year though overall the number has remained stable. He acknowledged that not all members want to participate in club activities. He also mentioned the "drive" to encourage younger members, with a view to perhaps doing more with the MG and Sprite Owners club. Ian thought we should try to get younger members to tell us what we could do to encourage more younger members to join.

At this point James Mather stood up, one of our senior members who regularly attends the Marlow N and N. The name should be familiar from the many articles he has written in Revcounter this year. He had been asked to give a talk by the Chairman re the above. He started by relating the story of his nephew a young man of 32 years who owns an MG and had been asking James which part of the engine is what and does what. James made the point that a lot of our generation grew up having to work on their cars as we couldn't afford

garage bills. He went on to mention that he is also a member of the Jowett Owners Club and they are trying to get some younger members by offering them a chance to drive an old car and experience it for themselves. Jowett have been in contact with Practical Classics magazine and their editor Danny Hopkins took advantage of this offer and was agreeably surprised by how it worked. James has contacted DH re the talk he was to give, and the comeback was that Practical Classics would be interested in promoting anything Thames Valley does. A member of the audience asked if it mattered if it was an Austin Healey, with a view to time constraints. This point was not fully discussed and left open. On reflection, our Chairman thought it might be more appropriate for National to consider. Hugh Ferris and Richard made the point that some of our children had grown up being taught the basics and some like us are still learning. Stephen Rein suggested we should advertise a gathering in Practical Classics and see the response. John Monk wondered if we are going to acquire an old “banger“ for people to learn on, and in that case we would need a lock up of some kind to store it? At this point the discussion was brought to an end with a view that the committee would discuss it at their next meeting. James Mather was thanked for his contribution to the AGM.

Webmasters Report

Rob pointed out that this year’s report followed the same format as in other years and highlighted a few interesting points. “Hits“ on the site dropped in 2019/2020 and then the following year increased dramatically – this was clearly a Covid phenomenon. The website is “open“ so anybody can look at it. About 40% of the hits are from The UK and 40% from the USA. We have had some interest from India, Ceylon, China and Saudi Arabia. We have approximately 5,000 hits per year. The most popular is the events page. Rob mentioned the technical page is also very popular and encouraged members to contribute, pointing out that often some of the gems of technical information are not to be found in an owner’s workshop manual. James mentioned we are on Facebook and Instagram with 400+ followers. Rob finished by promoting our Christmas Cards.

Treasurers Report

Ian reported that we have subsidised more events this year. Ian asked members to please put a reference against payments which reflected the event to make accounting easier. The Treasurers accounts were approved and passed by the members.

Election of Officers

The committee were happy to stand again for the next year. Sylvie Fenton suggested, I think in all seriousness, that it might be interesting to have a female committee member to look at events from a feminist view. This was discussed but in the end it was “left on the table“. The continuation of the current officers was proposed by Paul Gerhold and seconded by Brian White. The chairman let it be known that we would be happy to have another committee member if anybody was interested. It transpired that Phil Lloyd had volunteered and duly appointed.

Proposal 2024 Events

The following suggestions were made:

- 1) a visit to the Arromanches-les-Bains area around May or June to tie in with the 80th anniversary of D Day. Phil Lloyd has already started looking at a route with a view to

sailing overnight from Portsmouth to Caen. A discussion then arose with the possibility of looking at Newhaven to Dieppe as it was agreed it was cheaper and possibly quicker. This would be investigated. Barry pointed out the club had used this route in the past. Rob mentioned he had just returned from France on this ferry and found it much cheaper. There was also a 10% discount for over 65s if you booked by phone. Val asked if we were looking to be based in one place and then keep venturing out each day? The answer was “probably”.

2) Day trips are still popular and the focus of the club.

- James Ansell suggested a visit to Bremont watches at Henley in May or June. Ian Barlow is looking at going to Brize Norton RAF camp in September for their family day, the advantage being there is the opportunity to get the cars close to the planes. Shuttleworth is back in the frame with Ian saying he will have another go at getting us in as a club entry. Thames boats will be on the list, as will Kop Hill, both very popular excursions. Barry pointing out this coming year, Kop Hill will have the full Battle of Britain flyover.
- A suggestion from the audience regarding a possible Dinner and Dance. This went down like a lead balloon as Peter pointed out he had mooted this 12 years ago and was told with quick shrift that Thames Valley members don't dance. Peter wondered if that idea ever got back to the lady members in the club.
- Another suggestion was afternoon tea. This seemed popular and Luton Hoo and Woburn were suggested. Stephen suggested looking on Trip Advisor to find popular venues. It was also mentioned that the Crazy Bear (Stadhampton) did a good but quite expensive afternoon tea. Barry suggested that there is a barn near the Crazy Bear doing a similar proposition and we could explore as an alternative venue.
- Barry volunteered his garden as a venue for a barbecue and this was generously accepted.
- Sylvie suggested doing our own Antiques Roadshow where everyone went out to buy antiques to see who could make the biggest profit. Anita Foster pointed out this would need to be a 2-day event due to the cataloguing of the items for sale. Ian said he would look into it again as we had considered this a few years ago.
- Another member in the audience asked how to encourage race meetings for the younger members. Suggestions were Castle Combe, Thruxton and hillclimbs at Prescott and Shelsley Walsh; venues previously visited by the club. Peter also pointed out that at certain times you can go up the Test Hill at the Brooklands circuit.
- Hugh Ferris suggested that any touring snippets for Healeys would be useful to pass on to fellow travellers, but the committee were not sure where they could be displayed. Barry mentioned that he would be soon going to a talk about a trip from northern France down to the bottom of Italy and thought something similar might be interesting.

A O B Stephen Rein offered his 14 foot trailer to the centre, subject of course to normal insurance cover and agreements re wear and tear. Peter mentioned the Noggin and Natter Christmas Lunch on Tuesday the 19th December and looked forward to seeing a good turnout as usual.

The meeting closed at 12.31pm .