

Syncronauts Chairman's Report 2009/2010

Welcome to the 2010 AGM...

What a significant year in the world of the Syncro. 25 years since the first ones were built.

It had to be celebrated in some way and it was, in Germany in April. It proved a remarkable success being the largest Syncro gathering ever, 550 vehicles attended at some time over the long weekend.

Last year I suggested that the Syncro was becoming acknowledged in the VW heritage world for its ground breaking concept at the time of its conception - perhaps even Volkswagen staff themselves were quite surprised at its continuing popularity and timeless capability when they came to support the 25Y meet and show their latest products.

After that first opening event, where many had a race against time to prepare for the long journey, a relapse in enthusiasm (and funds) for our annual 'set' of events might have been expected. Incredibly, quite the opposite effect took hold, with great support holding up for Syncropendence, Devon (late but fully reinstated this year) and a late Autumn laning event in Snowdonia.

Looking back now, the Syncronaut year should perhaps be noted for a couple of other things – an even greater enthusiasm for modifications in all areas; enhanced camping comfort & abilities, overall off-road capability, suspension and engine reliability and economy. Secondly... food. Camping & eating in style, *anyone can doss goes the old adage*, and with more now being now so well equipped, there's no need to eat anything less than top quality food cooked in the best way (often on a charcoal fire)

I'd particularly like to welcome all those newcomers we have met this year, in Germany, on the journeys, and at our events back here... we hope that our small club was welcoming, you had fun and that we'll see you all again at some time next year. We're always keen to meet like minded kindred spirits – wanting to use their Syncros for what nature intended.

Next year, the programme is already opening up, with Robert's Picos d'Europ invites being taken up with enthusiasm. I'm sure Syncros will be travelling into Europe and maybe beyond from the UK more often in the next few years as knowledge and confidence in their preparation becomes consolidated in an even wider ownership.

==The Syncronaut Year 2010==

We have a varying paid up membership because of the way that the requirement for membership registration works (fixed site events only) and the discount system, this fluctuates greatly. It is currently 54. We estimate that we have about 100 syncro owners in total attending or intending to at some time each year.

Syncronauts 2010 **Calendar** – this was again and is always popular with a good cross-section of our members we eventually sold about 80 calendars – generously sponsored by SyncroNutz, Syncrospares & AidanTalbot - Thanks.

Before a brief review of the year's activities and events I feel I should re-iterate last year's preamble on the 25 Year Anniversary preparations..

*We suggested one role we could play would be to help with the forum and website side of things. Having got a proper interactive forum setup for better communications, we volunteered Treasurer Jenny's skills to design & build a custom 25YearSyncro website. This has been a quite major task, getting the look just right, incorporating videos and recently making it multi-lingual – I think she'd rather not know how many hours has gone into it! **Many thanks Jenny.***

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Henning and Dina Gramann who organise the annual Mammut Park meet in Germany became the de facto 25Y event organisers, - **Everyone at 80-90 Syncronauts send their thanks for such a wonderful event, at such a wonderful place.**

Dubfreeze – We did not attend Dubfreeze as a club this year, neither did club80-90.

Syncro 25Years – Mammut Park, Germany – April 30th to May 3rd (long!)

I think it's fair to say that the UK Syncronauts punched above their weight helping with this event. Involved from early on after Mike Busman first mooted this event, we had Secretary Kev Horler visiting VW Nutzfahrzeuge Hannover with Henning Gramann (lead organiser) and others to agree their support package. An informal meeting was held at Vanfest with Committee members, Mike and Henning to rough out the approach & programme, then Chairman and Treasurer met Henning during March in London, mainly to offer support & to clarify ticketing, booking arrangements. I referred above to Jenny's top notch website and forum work, which ensured that all International representatives could stay in touch effectively, and visitors could see what was happening.

Statistics:-

By the day before departure, we had processed nearly 40 bookings from UK! This became the biggest Syncro meeting ever held by far with approx. 550 vehicles and 1400 persons in attendance. Our expectations were far smaller than what actually happened and thus were able to donate a nice amount of money to the charity project "Lichtbrücke" (Bridge of Light). So far €18,211.18 has been donated.

It also set attendance records for the Mammut Park site, which was several hundred hectares in total, with driving on about 50, although this was not totally a free ranging drive, in most parts existing tracks had to be stuck to, some very deep (army vehicle depth!) through woodland. Camping was on large steepening fields under woodland, with much wildlife in evidence, Red Kites circling down to ground level nearby.

High quality permanent on-site toilet/washroom facilities were complemented by a battery of portakabins, few would have wanted for better facilities.

Most travelled as a convoy on the Wednesday morning, from Dover, others going overnight Harwich to Hook of Holland, shortening the drive once disembarked (after the mass breathalysing). Some raced all the way there, others chilled overnight near Dusseldorf... the journey was good fun for many, coming across the occasional lone Syncros obviously targeting Stadtoldendorf. Approaching our destination, more became aware of the rather lower speed limits and thus the camera threat on the otherwise beautiful open country roads.

By the Thursday evening most of the UK contingent was pitched and as the evening wore on, an uncanny warm local weather system swept in, so even at midnight on April's last days, it was T-shirt time, getting everyone into a good spirits which aided browsing amongst the gathering international groups, parked up roughly in streets.



Well what happened? So many things to do, that it was hard to decide. The normal sales, parts stalls, very Syncro specific e.g. the Tristar people from Sweden Special adaptations, and then just trestle tables with bargains to be had. Towing, sand winching demos, great array of off-road vehicles, VW's latest offerings, Dakar style Tiguans etc. Competitions, evening marquee music, 25 birthday cake presentations.

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Then there were the trips out to car factories (Porsche & VW neutzfahrzeug) and **vehicle museums... one of which turned into a veritable Laurel & Hardy event** ☺

This was Saturday's visit to 'The Bulli' museum, near Hamlyn, of pied piper fame. It's a long story with lots of twist and turns, with annoyance & some frustration turning to laughs & jokes, tea and fine cakes came into it, Flamkuchen pizzas were served, local press photographed us all when the majority of those who set off eventually arrived, the long-suffering mayor long-departed! Those who stuck it out did get a real treat though... a visit to a really fantastic private VW museum. Roger's eyes as good as popped out when we negotiated special entrance late in the day, as every early Porsche he'd ever owned came into view... we called it the schwimmwagen museum, but that was just one of many special exhibits displayed in a typical setting. Even the original Herbie prototype was there!

A **German style trial** (quite different to ours) through the (very narrowly gapped) sticks led to a final drive off on the Monday... here are the UK / Irish results, out of 40 starters:-

2nd Sharon Essam
4th Andrew Scott
13th Dai Williams
18th Clive Smith
19th Patrick Townsend

Congratulations to Sharon and Pete (observer) for pulling off a fantastic 2nd place after a drive off between the top three – she brought back a great prize too. Andrew also deserves high praise for a brilliant drive around getting 4th in his concours Syncro camper.

Other UK entrants to be congratulated:

Show and Shine

4th K. Tucker

Highest syncro

1st Michael Ghia

Bus StopOver, Leicestershire, 18th to 20th June

Committee member Matt Sandall recommended this as a worthwhile event to fill the gap between Germany and Syncropendence. Our club80-90 cousins attend this well organised but nicely laid back event run by Andy of VWCuratins, so suggested we pitch up and display alongside them.

Myles kindly agree to orchestrate a display, putting Sharon & Pete's yellow Doka up on big logs, with large polished metal mirrors underneath, brilliantly showing off the transmission & undercarriage to passers by. Our shelter tent with full Syncro 25 Year event paraphernalia, picture boards and video (many thanks to Sharon for putting this together) running was manned in rotation, being setup by Doug & Jenny.

Over the weekend we met a few owners who dropped by, some completely new to us, creating some interesting conversation. Fran had brought his rare (but now infamous!) Aussie Trakka Syncro along, which I found worth a good inspection!

An horrendous cold wind ruined the latter part of Saturday, many preferring to shelter by getting an early night, but a bright fresh Sunday just improved and improved, so

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people were out in droves, the 80-90 raffle ticket sellers did well, creating a large (baying) crowd at the time of the draw.

Verdict – Well worthwhile, laid back with enjoyable browsing and a pleasant T1 & T2 crowd too (mostly heavily modified). But there had to be one ... bass box brat who just wouldn't turn it down ☺

Syncropendence 07, 2nd to 5th July, 2010

Considering it came so close to 25Year Syncro in Germany, **surprisingly nearly 30 vehicles attended**, an amazing turnout. Of course we missed the Irish contingent - having suffered their wit for nearly a week in Germany, that's always going to leave a noticeable vacuum ☺! The Scots made up for that though, including first timer Eric with a very clean and straight Doka. We welcomed other newcomers too, and to go with plenty of fresh blood, we introduced some fresh events.

Roger & Julia (thanks) proposed & planned a 'punch challenge', with help from Doug – what a surprise – nearly everyone got a 'full card' by the end of the day. Another surprise – everyone thought it was brilliant – proving that simple things please Syncro minds...☺.

Returning from their 25 Year Syncro success in Germany with enthusiasm for this different form of trialling (henceforth known as 'A German Trial', or if you prefer 'The Rhythm Method'), Sharon & Pete with help from Dai took it on themselves to lay one out up on the top by 'The prop-bender ramp'.

This was also well received, made us all think differently again, about that speed & haste thing and careful throttle use, other than one whose lovely shiny sill dropped onto a nasty tree root (hopefully all fixed now OK!).

Results: Winner Mark, 2nd Aidan

Following convention, those staying on for the Monday, went local laning in this beautiful area, which is always a treat - thanks to Doug and Aidan for this.

Some stayed even longer to really wind down in such a beauty spot. On a personal note, a nice touch was being woken early Wednesday morning after a good slumber, to the sounds of horse's hooves thundering past close to the tent... instinctively knowing that this horse was happy to be back in a lovely verdant field, later calling by to drop down nearby into the river for a good drink before checking out the quality of the grass on the opposite bank.!

Dai & Deb's Wedding (early August)

Dai & Deb are much loved club members, so it was not only nice to hear of their wedding but to invite so many was the icing on the cake this year, so we set the Devon laning weekend back three weeks to clear the calendar. And what a wedding ☺

As well as being keen Syncro owners, Dai & Debs also belong to the RiffRaff bikers club in Yorkshire, so some fantastic machinery was not only present but seen in action - by the Lychgate!

Congratulations Debbie and Dai Williams.

Devon laning (late August)

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Last year was a bit of a watershed for CJ's Devon meet, the first that he hadn't run since creating the Devon laning weekend in 2005. So this year we had time to plan a bit better, and think we succeeded.

We drove some good lanes again, a single group even going out late on the Friday afternoon for an early evening tour of some lanes - must do that again (but not get stuck recceeing first so we can return with the setting sun, rather than after...)

Three groups went out Saturday, including some difficult sunken lanes, returning from a long day out to cocktails contributed to by many but brilliantly masterminded by Sally - many thanks!

Perhaps Sunday was enjoyed even more, doing some longer distance touring down to the South coast taking in some really beautiful spots, pub-lunching in style before each group seemingly setting themselves up with a difficult 'get-out-of-jail' task on the way home.

3 hours after returning, Chef Paul and the other volunteer veggie peelers had produced a superb, all the trimmings Full Sunday Roast (charcoal roasted lamb) dinner. Eating around the campfire in the dark, nobody really minded that it turned into a lucky dip, as every forkful was 'perfickt' ☺

Monday found a good few remaining taking the traditional Exmoor tour, and again, romping up the Valley of the Rocks, splashing through the ford at Tarr Steps and eating Devon out of clotted cream. Returning via Porlock in amazingly clear air, the views over the channel to Wales, were quite exceptional as the sun started thinking about cooling and setting. Must be done again, and again, and again. Exmoor, lesser known, ignored or under-rated, but not by us!

Snowdonia (Camping at lake Bala, 1st October weekend)

Yes, the Syncronauts still hadn't run out fuel by the beginning of October, and that was a good thing! Because, everyone had smiles on their faces when returning both days, two groups went North and two South, each day. We have Doug & Aidan to thank for working out where we went, but wherever it was, thanks, it was very pretty in places, gave some incredible views from on high and there were some great scrambles, a delight for Syncro drivers ☺

Jenny found us a great campsite, affordable with good facilities and in a very lovely spot in my opinion, so thanks go to her again.

I'd also like to thank all those who took a gamble on this event, especially those we've not met before, because I think it was the highlight of the season. We hope to see you again, next year, whatever we decide to go, could be anywhere, probably will be anywhere ☺

==The Committee ~ Thanks ==

Thanks to all the committee members, for once again getting involved and working as a team, as and when required.

I'd like to thank **Doug Brett** (Vice Chairman) on your behalf, putting in an enormous amount of work, mainly behind the scenes, to ensure everything we do runs as smoothly as possible. Also, committee member **Matt Sandall** for his work liaising with club80-90 events and helping us whenever and wherever he can.

Thanks to the club's officers Doug as Vice Chairman, Kevin as Secretary and Jenny as Treasurer who carried out their work efficiently and giving good support and advice throughout.

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54 members renewed their memberships this year – most of these attended events. Many more used our facilities, offices and services, which is another reason why we are here

Thanks to all our members then for supporting us, many of whom contributed in their own ways, to making our meetings successful and pleasant events. Particularly - thank you for supporting us by attending the meetings that we organise, it goes without saying that is the object of our existence.

Club80-90 forums and website are now stabilised giving us an excellent means of conversation, communication. Syncro-centric developments seem to continue apace, so it's comforting anything we wish, can be stored reliably for posterity there. Thanks to Jenny for finishing the update to the Syncronauts' website, the next step would be to make an area that all Syncronauts can access to add their own blogs, projects and travelogues to.

Once again, trusting that next year brings more activity, interest and diversity in the UK Syncroworld. I am pretty sure that a focus will be more European travel – en Convoi!

Clive Smith
Chairman