

Chairman's Report 2012

Firstly, thanks to the committee members for their time, decision making, help organising events and many other contributions to a smooth club life.

Also others have contributed as always, with their time at events, supplying or loaning necessary materials, too many to name but once again, the membership offers it thanks.

Thanks to Dave Dunn for printing the Synchronauts stickers for us, and we are now expecting a second batch for the forthcoming year, many thanks.

That we might say the Synchronauts as a club has matured, is something that over the last year or two has been heard said more than once – though often soon followed with some jape that it's a shame not all its members following suit! It is perhaps true, approaching our tenth Syncropendence, seeming to have established a set of events that many of our members like and are happy to return to annually. Now though, we also find more members travelling and touring further afield... the Overland Exhibition seems to have crystallised this for those who attended... but more of that later!

Of the events this year, Syncropendence was quite special and a first, a Scottish event. NB. More particulars can be found in the [Past Events & Meets](#) sub-forum.

This year seems to have been characterised by rain, rain and rain. Shipston, Syncropendence, Snowdonia, CamperJam and even Devon was wet, wet, wet... so although making things a bit hairy sometimes and a nuisance at others, didn't dampen our spirits too much!

Shipston

For the second time ever we booked Wagtail, Shipston for an early doors event (April 13/14/15), and arrived soon after a heck of a downpour. Whilst making access to the campsite a bit slippery slidey, the weather for the weekend itself was OK, but the site was very wet in places, creating plenty of challenges grappling for grip .

Attendance was good, many new faces turning up, showing and trying out their Syncros.

Here's a quote that gives a feel: *Slippy, gloopy mud, easy to get stuck, blue skies and nice out of the wind. Beer left overnight was ice Sunday morning* [Toomanytoys: since Shipston known as Toomanytows]

A 10 gate trial was run by quite a few, both ways, yet difficult enough for only one or two to get a clear round.... Another high point (!) in the weekend's entertainment was a twin side-by-side tow of a completely flooded Disco out of a water-filled bomb-hole.

Syncropendence 9; Snowdonia week; CamperJam (28th June ~8th July)

For some time we had planned to invite members of the French Syncro club to our main summer event and this year seemed 'now or never', so to make it a full week for them, Syncropendence was moved forward from its normal week to allow for a visit to CamperJam the next weekend. The whole week in between was filled with camping, touring and off-roading in the Snowdonia region.

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Four French visitors attended SP9, Rob Baetson from Holland and our member Jason Edwards also drove from his home in Denmark so giving the week a good international flavour.

31 Syncros and over 50 people came to Wales. Due to heavy rain Saturday conditions became quickly dangerous on the grass up on the hills, as well as very difficult to negotiate in some of the well rutted muddy gullies. We mostly abandoned the hill driving until later. Paul came to the rescue by setting up a trial in the field across the river from the campsite. Sunday turned out eventually a much better day, those that ventured up and out finding much better conditions though still a stimulating challenge getting about; some visitors enjoyed a relaxing afternoon nature ramble through the steep woods, footpaths and rocky climbs before resuming driving the site

Many contributed to making SP9 a great Syncro festival on the social side, but particular thanks for help and commitment must go to Simon & Tracy Whitmore (large marquee, food, drink and organisation), Neil and Sally (food) and Aidan Talbot (facilities made available) and Paul & Jenny (food and overall organisation).

The social theme throughout the whole week was nibbles and drinks every evening, come what may... everyone provided something at some time, an enormous variety, with Daniel & Yves always ready to contribute a nice wine or some food from their stall - a great success.

On the Monday after SP9, 13 travelled on up the North Wales coast to Shell island, to base themselves in the dunes there for touring and green-laning Snowdonia. It rained again, and again... Two day-long laning excursions were driven, taking in some places challenging, picturesque and classic routes, that everyone enjoyed immensely. A mid-week free-day touring and visiting was also scheduled, so by the Friday morning (raining again) breaking camp for the convoy drive (an event in itself!) to CamperJam Weston Park was the order of the day

Arriving at Camperjam circa 6pm Friday, it was Ahem! Wet. Very wet under tyre, but we splashed through nicely to our designated area, showing off a bit I suppose. Before settling down one or two had started towing mainly stranded T4s and T5s out of trouble.

As last year, and despite deep mud everywhere, a relaxed and friendly atmosphere pervaded. Saturday we were slated to create an interesting static display of our Syncros, which looked great, Dai's fabulous expedition 'stripey' taking pride of place, Daniel & Yves setup their French Market stall again, a big success wherever we were, CJ staff photographers got to work and then we broke up for the evening.

A final foray for the Sunday, was planning and running a 'Syncro experience' in an on-site disused quarry, which again became a great photo opportunity for CJ and gave quite a few visitors new to Syncro an eye opening trip, the going cutting up quickly to a very slippery clay on some steep climbs and descents.

By Sunday afternoon the weather was much improved, as a somewhat sad time approached – many goodbyes to those we'd been camping & travelling with for 10 days, although with a resolution to meet again in France next year.(4th~12th May has now been suggested).

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If you haven't already read the article, [issue 61 of VW Camper & Commercial](#) has a four page picture spread of the Synchronists off-roading at CamperJam.

A separate report is available on the forum, including a list of all those who attended.

Devon: August 3rd~6th

Our August Devon meeting near Cullompton has I've heard, also *matured*. Perhaps it's become a bit cheesy, but what I think is meant, that we stick to a fairly well liked itinerary. Some lane driving is very good (read challenging, after all this where the term fluffy and non-fluffy lanes was coined). Balancing the best of those lanes is the touring & sightseeing stretching from North to South coasts, with plenty of breaks for groups mixing it up & taking in the picturesque countryside at some leisure. Overall the event has a nice relaxed atmosphere though maybe that's just a combination of the time of year when the sun is starting to wane and the effect being in the West Country itself tends to have.

On the Friday afternoon's green laning there was a sad moment when we realised that the old man who'd lived at Hack Pen Mill cottages his whole life (90 years nearly) was not about, the places being gutted.

This year, there was plenty of time for laughs and roadside natter, but not for the first time in Devon, things got a bit serious with some high drama here and there! The weather was again, wet, wet and yes wet, so it's those lovely breaks between the showers (or cloudbursts) that make it all so worthwhile (isn't it!). However whilst grip degrades from showers and surface water, soil stability can degrade from incessant rainfall.

Having missed a turning one of our groups took what looked like a good route that hadn't been recced recently, and for some got a bit narrow as the tracks curved around steep drops, with the edges undermined by weeks of rain. Everyone got through with mutual support & a team spirit, but a few clear messages were learnt: one was that far too few carry any really useful equipment.

Devon is also becoming a longer meet, many arriving now Thursday for the Friday afternoon/evening scratchy drive and departing Monday or Tuesday.

A visit to the Devon & Somerset Gliding club field should I think, be on the agenda, with a chance to fly and see the Black Downs and potentially half of Devon & Dorset from above.

So despite the intermittent rain, many stayed for the Sunday, a drive to Fingle's Bridge, a pub lunch followed by a real cracker of a climb up through the woods, and an equally steep descent. It was Fingle's being just the first. On to Dartmoor, tea and cake at massive Tor, surely the wilderness was conjured up by these places. Then we found 'the lane', a real corker under dripping canopies, finished off with a good steep scramble. Returning out of Dartmoor's magic grip, we were hit by a cloudburst of Devonian proportions.... everyone seemed to stop in their tracks as, wipers thrashing, our Syncro convoy rolled back down onto the main roads, washed clean as a whistle with waves of water splashing above the tallest hightop.

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A long tour is the order of the day for Monday and so it was, to the North coast, Tarr Steps was running well of course, and yet the view to Wales from Porlock was so clear we were asked where in Devon it was.

Most people departed on the Tuesday, but a few stayed longer for more sight seeing.

Scottish Drumlog meeting 22nd & 23rd September

For some years those Synchronauts north of the border have been hankering after a proper off-road driving meet and thanks to committee member Alastair Harris' efforts, this came to pass successfully towards the end of September.

Five Syncro owners supported the event and most stayed the Saturday night, making this a good social meet-up as well. It seems a high point was the mandatory Synchronauts 'twin tow' but in this case, out of a brisk running river (apologies, 'twasa *burn* no doubt!)

I'm told everyone expressed a wish the event would be repeated next year and we're sure it will – hopefully some travelling up across the border to support those bravehearts, who themselves think nothing of driving overnight down into the heart of England or Wales for a short weekend's driving on our pathetic lowland humps and tumps ☺

Adventure Overland Show 6th~7th October, Whilton Mill Karting Centre, nr. Daventry

This was without doubt an eye opener for many of us, perhaps because its theme(s) epitomised what so many Syncro owners aspire to, some dream about and a few manage to do..!

The organiser, Tom McGuigan. Sums it up in the blurb (<http://www.adventureoverlandshow.com/>) like this:-

[Quote] ADVENTURE OVERLAND is a major outdoor show featuring all forms of independent/organised 'alternative travel' (certainly not your average beach holiday package), an event that brings together 'under one roof' so to speak, the sort of folk who love exploring the great outdoors.

This includes adventure holidays whatever the method of travel - from walking, treks and general backpacking, to overland tours, safaris & expeditions utilising cycles, motorbikes, 4x4's & trucks. [/Quote]

The words there that particularly sparkle (in my eyes), being safari, expeditions, overland

<http://www.adventureoverlandshow.com/>

Tom had got in touch to invite us to bring some suitable Syncros, allocating an area for a displays kiosk (well, our Khyams sufficed). This the Committee agreed to do, with Chairman Dai and Paul bringing the *Stripe* and the *Unicorn* respectively: very different but both relevant to the theme. Jenny organised the displays, having a whole new batch of

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recent images printed and mounted beautifully, and many others helped including Pete, Sharon Pollard supporting us on the stand.

Quite a few of our members came by, several camping overnight in the field provided and everyone was enthused with the dazzling array of overland vehicles, from historic WWII LRDG Jeeps to massive and fully equipped safari and support trucks. A nice touch were the seminars being run from Friday night through to Sunday afternoon on a wide range of subjects, many giving first hand knowledge of where to go and just as important what to expect. A dizzying array of stalls was to be found, even down to displays of various bushcraft and trakka skills too!

Definitely one for the diary next year if you like the theme, a lot was learnt. It seemed very much along the French Syncro Club lines, being great long distance expeditioners.. we will inform them I think ☺

Salisbury Plains drive Sat 15th September

Six vans go mad over Salisbury plains, and not without an enormous amount of splashing about in deep clay coloured water too. (and more than one Syncro hit trouble or didn't quite make it there)

.Camped Friday/Sat night at Bell Campsite, Devizes (of 6X fame ☺) Nuff said this was good; Roger initially organised; had to call off due family; think Baz (Syncrobaz) deserves a mention for keeping the momentum up; and as always Neil Axeman & Sally are making things happen. Jed took 2 photos and had an AFM failure, not sure they were linked....

Syncronauts did the plains before, fine as long as British Army are on hols and not lobbing shells over t'eads and I must say, ground is hard and unforgiving so can produce many an injury to your Syncro. Plenty of historicals a round that area too, a stopoff at the Henge O'Stones always a possible. Ancient (megaliffic like) historicals I mean.

Purchases (What have we sold what have we bought?)

We have sold about nothing, and bought for the good of the club this year:-

A large Coleman shelter (wait & see) – if the sun shines and we have showers it'll be *perfect*, if it hammers down for days on end, maybe not, though we did also include the side panels too.

By general consensus (of 1) about 23 metres (90 foot) of 12,000 lbf breaking strain plasma rope, to be available at the main Syncronauts events and especially for green-laning recoveries (idea is to keep on good ground and recover alien vehicles on dangerous or radioactive surfaces)

Future events advice

The Syncro Club de France have invited Syncronauts members to Normandy for the dates May 4th to the 12th. We anticipate this will be well worth attending if possible