

President's Report 2015

Introduction

This for us (Jenny and me) was a very busy year in many ways, but I think despite that we drove more events and greater distance than ever before. As usual a good amount of our mileage was genuinely Syncro - off-road. Now on to you, the members, our club's events and achievements...

Some have said to Chairman Dai, to Jenny, to me or to other Committee members that they like the way the club has developed. In short, we know we love our vehicles and our driving – we seem mostly to be of one mind that serious Adventure Touring and Overlanding interests us of course, but when we get together at an event then families, friends, fun and food are very much at the core of things.

This year we really developed the food theme: just as we find when we meet up with the Syncro Club de France, good food shared brings everyone together with an added ingredient – conviviality !.

One other thing... I've said before in a President's report and I'll say again. Our members are now not only building better and more reliable Syncros, but it really is good to see this year some fantastic long distance European travels by whole families, ranging widely, trusting in their vehicles and using them as VW and nature intended.

Mendips 2015 May 4th 5th and 6th

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=141423&start=30>

Near Priddy again with the excellent Queen Victoria pub in striking distance of a wet and windy walk !

Cold, wet & windy! Always bring windproof clothes and All Terrains at a minimum Although a plus point was the improved loos... a somewhat longer drop this year ☺

We met more new members and those new to driving Syncros off-road. 16 vehicles arrived altogether.

Saturday – good day on the site. Despite the style of the site (rough going mostly) it seems most find some good driving there that tests either their capabilities or their vehicle...

Roger in his Audi Quattro Auto certainly surprised many with how far he could climb. In fact just being there down in the gully was impressive let alone along the ridges!

Some driving induction on the ideal fine grass slopes was given to those not previously of the Syncro persuasion before feeling their way a round the sometimes challenging site's tracks and gaining confidence - usually rapidly.



Sunday – green laning – much better weather than at Priddy. Nice walk to visit iron age long barrow after lunch.



Being the first event of the year always good to have a bit of a shakedown and a good scrute before the event – in theory. In practice this seems to be the event we should scrutinise well and offer our annual H&S blurb; experienced advice plus prayers for a serendipitous outcome!

More than one had the typical loose driveshaft bolts, loose hub nuts (front usually) aren't uncommon, forgotten front bashplate (me, thanks Patrick ☺), etc.

On that note we met Dai coming down lane the opposite way on Sunday - due a Mr fixit delay..... needed a tree stump removing at the face-off. So we could go back and

he forward. Sorted ! A pruning saw and a small axe can be useful.

Got back to campsite and it was blowing a hooley and shelter tent almost flying away.

Group meal at pub Sun evening.. always a treat to sit down with a table-full of fellow & fellowess Synchronauts and talk crap whilst eating simple good food and supping even better beer.

Bank Hol Monday – many packed up to go home & others visited Wilkins Cider farm. ‘twas good cider (you know that half a pint we all allowed ourselves). Bought a gallon to take to the French meet (see next) plus some cheeses and pickles.. all good!

[More photos here](#)

On a personal note Jenny & I had a nice recce day on the Friday visiting Wells with Simon & Patrick. If you plan to come next year and have the time the Mendip slopes are very pretty on a good day with a lot of history. Glastonbury isn't too far if you haven't walked up the Tor or been to the Chalice Well Gardens (or interfaced with real hippies ☺).

La Grande Savanne French Syncro club meet

This was based within Parc Naturel Régional de Normandie-Maine..being Les Alpes Mancelles just North of Le Mans and West of Alencon

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=141344>

A few of us (3 vans) joined the Syncro Club de France for their Ascension weekend meet in May. Clive & Jenny, Simon (TMT) & Rob (DutchDude).

Leisurely drive down over two days with Simon, meeting Rob at an Aire in a lovely town near Rouen – which happened to be hosting a vintage car rally that weekend.



An off-road site in the middle of a nature reserve. Simon and myself took it on ourselves to do a bit of induction on some very steep tracks - this apparently not being a part of the French Club's normal purview - we saw it as pretty important after one

or two eyebrow raisers.

Lots of driving activities, several set up by Simon. German trial, punch hunt, Syncro Quiz, Cooking in or out of a campervan etc.

Overall Winner - Simon TMT being received gracefully by all - their normal prize being a refund of the entry fee. Great idea!

Some superb dishes done on the fly (30 minutes allowed)... very impressed esp. the presentations; some offerings were 90% art and 10% cuisine ☺

Owner of the 50 hectare site was Gerard Depardieu (no it wasn't but his name was Gerard) a doctor, very experienced driver and someone who'd ridden the Paris Dakkar 16 times and held a unique motorcycle record (30 hours in the saddle at race speeds).. Not a bad vehicle collection either... including a classic PD Rallye Support Toyota and a Pinzgauer ambulance (for sale)

True to say the highlight was a Moroccan meal in a real Bedouin tent, Gerard and his wife being well seasoned travellers of N. Afreeka. Accompanied by music from the talented Jaquee.





In the normal thorough fashion 'Road Books' of approved local lanes for everyone to drive when and as they wished had been produced. We did a Sat pm trip with Rob – found a nice café with great views over the winding kayak riven river in a small town en-route...couldn't believe it when we noticed a Belgian beer shop was part of the attraction – well stocked too-until we left!

Final day after packing away.. all of us met up for a communal lunch in a town centre car park - overlooked by a castle - before departing French picnic anywhere you like style.. fantastic.. great weather too.

NB. We made some interesting new French friends, several being quite a bit younger than usual for French Syncro Club which was good to see happening.



After event we had to drive back to Calais, but Rob took a detour to visit the Normandy D-Day landing beaches.

NB. There was talk of an event next year maybe of driving on off-road lanes from Le Mans to Mont St Michel –sounds good?.

Syncropendence 2015

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=143042&start=60>

SP12 was very well attended - the best yet we think (35 vans including one that looked surprisingly like a Ford Escort... must have dreamt that bit)



Good to meet newcomers & our visitors from the continent Rob & Stephan.
 Sadly Peter (Eltee) broke down near to home on the Friday.
 A very rare RHD 16" Jagdewagen.attended (with owner I'm glad to say)



Good driving on't hills and meadows on Saturday for so many Syncros. with a
 German trial setup in the usual area and as always, proved popular.
 Roger (Mits Pajero) took a group up through the top woods until having to back the
 convoy out ! But not before he and Simon demonstrated some very steep climbs and
 descents...
 Several including Simon, Jason and James spotted a very deep & difficult route down
 in the mudhole area ~ Challenge! Great entertainment!



... and the weather was nice enough until some rain on the Sunday so GaryD and Josh set up a trial across the river from the camp field and kindly adjudged our efforts at driving through them English style... approving the winner for the prize.

There was some good hill climbing and a serious failed ascent later requiring a winched descent. All good learning experiences.

Nice ...



For the first time since SP1 at Dethyddd Hill we had a prizegiving, so many thanks to the prize givers at Syncropendence:-

Jed @ CVC : Some very nice kit for the 3 prizes for driving and trials;

Aidan Talbot Gearboxes : The beer we all drank;

Simon T3Volution : Bringing and erecting the marquee and presenting T shirts to prize-winners.

Prizewinners: Geoff for the German trial; Nick Babs for campsite trial, Neil won the prize draw and Jason for 'best extreme move', presumably ploughing through the

mudhole challenge to everyone's amazement... always be circumspect before saying 'that's impossible' ☺

Quote: Rich PeninsularKid Many thanks to all that took so much time to organise such a great weekend, and to all that attended to create such a great atmosphere. This must be the best auto/motor club in the country.

[\[More photos and videos here\]](#)

A small group of us (Rob, Stephan, Andy & Jenny & Clive) stayed on and went to Shell Island for a few days as a base for touring Snowdonia and visiting various museums & attractions (Electric Mountain recommended)
Simon and Alex camped behind Aidan's workshop to build a gearbox. We all met up at Aidan's again Thursday evening and took him for a meal at the Cain Valley Hotel as a wee thankyou for making his workshop premises available during the SP week. All ready for an early morning start to CamperJam not far away near Telford.

CamperJam

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=143174&start=15>

Thanks to Simon TMT who took a lead on organising this. After some debate on the Friday we agreed a really good pitch opposite the off-road quarry site and the 10 club vehicles who booked the weekend arrived

After taking in the show and stands Saturday morning with Sharon & Jenny administering the queue of hopefuls and Simon organising the marshals & drivers – the Syncro Experience rides commenced.



Repeated on the Sunday with David and the official CJ photographers getting some circuits too we raised £270 (rounded up to £300 by Synchronauts funds) for the Bloodwise Leukaemia charity, nominated by Ian SB's daughter Erin who we trust is consolidating her recovery.

This activity always engenders some interesting visitors and discussions and seems to

bring forward one or two each year who'd like to get involved with the Synchronauts or just find out more..

Within the Grand Marquee this time we also put up a Synchronaut history and activity display. Saturday evening centred on a Communal Mexican meal with contributions from many. Quite a feast! Some went to dance it off down in the main music arena till the midnight hour.



Sunday afternoon found us decamping and those helpers staying to pack the marquee away or just biding their time for a getaway were caught in a torrential shower that caused mayhem down through the main exit queue if you weren't on the tarmac by then. In truth the long winding exit queue never stays that way for long, the CJ marshals having upped their game since a few years ago.. always being pleasant and cheerful too. A dog fight caused a bit of a stir one day and subsequent discussion on social media afterwards, hopefully all lessons learnt for next year.

Thanks again to all the volunteers, helpers and those members who supported us one way or the other... everyone hopefully got a bargain of some sort at the show.

Syncro 30 Berlin (Berlin Busfest)

A few Synchronauts (maybe 6 or 7), and other VW bus owning Brits drove to the Berlin Busfest in August which was held at an abandoned airbase near Jüterbog.. Flugplatz Altes Lager south of Berlin in Brandenburg (old East Germany of course).

Upon arrival on the Friday we met up with three Syncro owners from Australia who'd had two Syncros shipped to Hamburg. Paul and Hartmann and his son-in-law Peter (also a Syncro owner back in Oz). They were to stay, travel in Germany then go to BusFest in the UK and before return met so many fellow Syncro owners. Americans and Canadians also came over...

We were then invited to the well attended French Club encampment for evening 'apero' but having arrived on the back of a relay truck after a sweltering 6 hour wait for recovery*... it was soon time to get back to our 'immobile palace' but took in some great atmosphere at the stage on the way.



Saturday we met Simon Baxter of Brickwerks who'd flown over, who encouraged us to at least walk the stands and meet a few peeps. Rob DutchDude had a stall on the taxiway and later we met Mac Esteban from Spain, more French friends, Steve Theobold*, James & Sally, Gareth Bell and many others who came by to encourage and wish us good luck with our repairs. Including many Germans and Austrians offering assistance...

The airfield site used also incorporates other sporting activities such as a large Go Kart track and complex, and low speed aviation such as microlights and towed hang gliders.

A fairly tight and humpy off-road course existed man-made in the flat sandy soil. This was being used for demos and free driving throughout the weekend, seemingly in both directions ∅. On Sunday Simon Holloway kindly offered me a ride round the course in the rebuilt Rallye Bus and having strapped in to the race style harness and removed the safety pin from the ejector seat, I experienced a very special Syncro.. the phenomenal suspension travel and energy absorption being as noteworthy as the power –which Simon also demonstrated on a quarter mile sprint across the extensive expanse the airfield offered. Line up, line up...

Saturday night there was a great band on stage with a superb sound system projecting across to our enclave, and plenty of innocent revelry. All seemed good to us.. until... after everyone had departed Sunday midday (normal for their shows apparently) a storm of great magnitude and force struck, breaking the central European heatwave...

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=123387&start=195>



The IG16 Tour of Germany

For those with a few more days or even two weeks to spare, and in order to celebrate 30 years of the Syncro, two members from the IG16 Club (Jork & Higgy) had organised a round trip of Germany starting from the Busfest event midday Sunday – exclusively to introduce non-German Syncro owners to the country.

This headed East towards Dresden and at quite a pace took in an enormous Southern arc touching Czechoslovakia and Austria before looping up to Cologne and finally Hamburg.



[Click to see full size version]

The tour stopped at many interesting places (e.g. the Zeppelin Museum, Friedrichshafen, off-road driving sites, notable city & cultural centres etc.) and each evening camped together, often being joined or even hosted by local IG16 members. The concept was that local club members and visitors could join and leave the tour ad hoc, to suit their own plans and timescale.

* Our little drama...which sort of 'made' the trip 'even more interesting' ∅
Having broken down on the way from Berlin itself to Busfest (a story in itself), we

had help, tools, translators and support from very many people too many to name. But Steve Theobald got down and dirty helping without batting an eyelid and got close to a diagnosis, James & Sally, the Aussies all supported us and Rob DutchDude insisted on staying with us after the show, whence we soon found a superb garage with keen VW guys who sorted it asap. We did additional touring and then by Wednesday night were off to Dresden for 3 days (fantastic) then finally drove across the middle of the country to rendezvous with the IG16 tour at Koblenz, where they were visiting and camping at a Basalt mine !

More about the tour here <https://www.facebook.com/Syncro-30-Germany-Roundtrip-919530891403019/?fref=ts>

Devon 2015

[http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.p ... 3&start=30](http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.p...3&start=30)

Thanks to Roger & Julia for organising this event and receiving the routes. We met and camped at our usual Kentisbeare campsite, over the weekend 10 vans came. Not as many as usual but this did not stop a good atmosphere and interesting off-roading adventures...

We had a good day around Honiton and another driving and touring in Dartmoor, always finding the odd lane previously untravelled (or trammelled ?) It was great to have Rob DutchDude over to see Devon and he passengered with one or two on each day, helping with Nav.& Comms.



We found a great pub in a nearby village for our Saturday night bash and think we set a record for people in the back of a Doka Vindic

We had a Chapter of Breakdowns too, with two diesels suffering injection pipe leaks and breakages.. a lot was learnt about this type of problem and ways of fixing it when all the shops are shut. After all, who can sell you an injector pipe for a JX or AAZ on a bank holiday Monday.

That evening, in celebration five of us revisited our new pub find, culminating in a late night game of skittles.

Scottish Meeting at Drumclog

The Scottish Synchronaut contingent met up twice this year the second time in September for driving at (the awesome Drumclog), organised by Dean and Mel. Take a look here:

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=145251>

Adventure Overland Show

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.p...7&start=75>

Our last meetup for a really good post season natter and I've not met anyone yet who hasn't enjoyed coming, whether the main AO show is good bad or indifferent we tend to do our own thing, and Stratford-Upon-Avon is reasonably central and convenient to get a good turnout: this year 30 trucks including new visitors to our camp including Peter Eltee making it from Scotland (amazing Nato blackout van) as well as Mel & Dean and Richard & Lee and Leo & Anna from Wales as well as Martin (Marlow) from Ireland in his LT.

So we took over an area considerably larger than originally demarcated and if you look at the great photos from Martin's camera drone you'll see how cosy we were...



And by Saturday morning we needed heat and cosy... these were the coldest weekend mornings this year and being near the Avon and very flat on the racecourse, dramatic mists, but leading to lovely clear days.

Our large Coleman shelter was erected with Campervan Culture's show stands adjacent and Huw's electrical/Solar stall across the way.



During the day an updated Synchronauts' events and travels display, co-ordinated by Jenny, filled the shelter but by 7-00pm a perimeter of tables was becoming laden with delicious Indian food.

Maybe someone counted but there must have been 25 major dishes to sample as well as many nibbles, breads, sweets and desserts.



For an hour or two leading up to kick-off (!) our encampment was full of cooks a cooking; on loadbeds; in the open; in ovens, in campers and chefs a cheffing even around the entrance to the Coleman...

The drink wasn't bad too.. certainly plenty of Cobra and Indian beers.

Thankyou everyone... it was terrific, we were told by... everyone ☺

Well fed, those who fancied watching the Rugby WC face off between Wales Vs England set off for the big screen provided by the AO crew.

Others just enjoyed a few more drinks out in the open enjoying the lovely clear

evening as the full blue Moon readied itself soon to be eclipsed.

Sunday dawned fair again after that cold night and like as not many made a quick race around to those stalls and bargains spotted the day before.

Oh! While others started the clear up...

With thanks to the helpers and organisers, Max, Sharon, Debs, Fiona and Jenny and to Ian for his VC display. Many thanks to young Isaac and Max for 'patrolling' and keeping the displays in good order!

Thanks

My first thanks must go to our Chairman Dai Williams who's always there when you need him. Can't ask for more than that.. and he delivers thanks Dai...

Roger Crocker, Vice Chair and being way down in Cornland of the Walls makes it difficult, supports us in every way he can, including taking on the Devon event which again this year, was a real treat.

Next thanks to our committee officers Neil (Secretary) and Jenny (Treasurer) who as in previous years have been there to support the Chairman and the club in those day to day duties that often go unseen.

Supported by the committee as a whole

<http://www.synchronauts.org.uk/about/the-committee>

when work, discussion, opinion or decisions have to be made, we rely on the committee..

Mark Williams; Patrick Townsend, Paul Gillet (Ireland), Richard Haslock, Aidan Talbot and Alastair Harris (Scotland)

Many thanks for stepping up and supporting our club.

It is with regret but with understanding that we announce Paul, Aidan and possibly Alastair cannot continue in their role due to other commitments and will be standing down.

We offer our thanks for their work over the years and hope maybe one day they can return to help keep us pointed in the right direction.

Thanks also to all those helpers and volunteers who've effectively made things happen and work for us in preparation for an event or on the day...

And finally the businesses that have also supported us, in one way or in another !