

NEWSLETTER



JANUARY 2009



'A Happy New Year to all our Readers'

EXETER MGOC

46

BRANCH 0708

Newsletter available at exetermgoc.co.uk, the week-end before the monthly meeting.

Club Committee

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PART THREE - ONLY 358 DAYS TILL CHRISTMAS

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Dear reader,

Well, I don't know about you, but me? I say thank the lord it's finally over. I must say I enjoyed it at the time but the fun has to stop somewhere. It all kicked off in great style with the Christmas Dinner which was organised wonderfully by Barbara and succeeded in getting everyone into the spirit of things. Our first visit to the Teignmouth Golf Club was keenly followed and the staff there looked after us so well that I would sincerely love to return there next year if the bailiffs don't take my dinner suit. The last Christmas tradition in our household takes place soon when we gather around the latest credit card statement and openly weep until our tears wash away the balance and we pretend we never received it. Still for me the highlight will be New Years Eve, which I don't associate with Christmas as the only unshaven fat bloke wearing red will be me with half a bottle of "cab sauv" staining my otherwise "Persil white" shirt.

There is talk that 2009 may be a little harder than previous years, the economy taking a bit of a bashing but the committee would like to assure you that we will do our best to have plenty to do to take your minds off the doom and gloom. I'm sure it will be splattered across the front pages of newspapers far and wide. In order that you are kept abreast of things we now send out an e-alert which will remind you of any near future events, this relies on us having your email address, or if you are not on the net and would like reminding every now and then please send your details to me at tandh.hallam@btinternet.com or phone them through on 01803 326294.

Enquiries for the Moor 2 Sea rally have started to materialise, we have things almost finalised. We hope to see some familiar Exeter faces there, as well as both punters and organisers, so if you would like to join in with the fun ask for a booking form or download it from the website. This year's run will be a very comprehensive tour of Devon split into two adventures taking in Moor roads than ever before in a single rally, but don't worry we will give you directions and as much company as we can muster. So don't be shy but give it a try because we think it will do you good and just cannot imagine spending a whole weekend without you.

You will find all your club rallies and as much info as we have at this stage neatly entered into the dates for your diary section. We will endeavour to keep this up to date as the information filters through the cosmic grapevine but if you feel severed from the otherwise sturdy chain then do give me a call because as the song goes "I'm a big-big girl in a big### um! no not that one! "I'll be there" that's it or indeed if not there certainly within a short distance and my answer phone will be pleased to relay any messages.

So there it is, time to sign off and polish the silver (car that is) but before I go can I just say Happy New Year!

Tim.



Fine dining followed by the movers and groovers ?

NOTICE BOARD

NEW FOREST WEEK- END: 27th Feb – 2nd Mar 2009.

All those wishing to go to Lyndhurst please telephone the Ormonde Hotel direct, quoting Exeter MGOC and pay a non re-fundable deposit of £55 per person, telephone number 023 8028 2806. Web site www.ormondehouse.co.uk. The hotel is holding eleven en-suite rooms for those who have requested to come, if you have not provisionally booked with Barbara, but wish to go, please contact Neil or Trish on 01626 834824 after 6pm.

MG RUN TO FRANCE

For those people who have expressed an interest in a club French holiday next year, we will have a meeting at the Ley Arms on club night where we will have a table & discuss it. We have found a 7 bedroomed property near La Boule. Could all those interested scan the holiday brochures for a 6 bedroomed property somewhere north of the Loire in Western Brittany/South Normandy & bring them with them to the meeting.
Thanks, Roger & Pat.

FOLD-UP BENCH. If a club member require such a bench the club have a few available and are free to anyone who can collect. Please contact any committee member for further details.

SPEAKER'S AT CLUB NIGHTS. Does anybody know of any 'interesting speakers' that would be willing to address the club at club night. If so, please contact Tim or Neil.

LETTER OF THANKS FROM THE TEWKESBURY MUSKETEER'S MGOC VISIT

' Dear Roger and Pat,

Just a line to thank you so much for sending photos from our trip to Exmouth. It was a little while before Arthur was able to pass them to me but it coincided with a film night that we were having which meant we were able to view them on a big screen and everyone got to see them. Please pass on our thanks for the wonderful hospitality we received from the Exeter club.

Yours sincerely

Ann (Secretary, Tewkesbury Musketeers)'

CLUB REGALIA

DEVON GREEN (CLUB COLOUR) POLO SHIRT AVAILABLE IN ALL SIZES AND IN MALE OR FEMALE CUT	£10.00
VARIOUS COLOURS OF POLO SHIRT AVAILABLE IN ALL SIZES AND IN MALE OR FEMALE CUT SHIRTS CAN ALSO HAVE YOUR NAME ADDED FOR A SMALL FEE	£15.00 £ 3.00
ASSORTED BASEBALL CAPS IN VARIOUS COLOURS	£ 7.50
LAPEL BUTTON BADGES	£ 3.00
SPARE WINDSCREEN STICKERS	£1.00

MANY OTHER ARTICLES AVAILABLE SO FOR DETAILS SEE

PAUL WOOSTER – REGALIA SECRETARY.

Sunday November 23rd Run organised by Nic & Lyn

11 MGs met at Moto Services Exeter after grey skies the sun came out but not good enough for the Hoods down apart from Tim & Heidi who had theirs down for about 15minutes. We travelled along Moor lane from Exeter Services towards Pinhoe then up Church Hill and at the top lovely views over the valley and ventured into Stoke Canon and through the lanes to Netherexe, Radden Cross and through to Shobrook and into Crediton via many muddy lanes and pot holes, we then travelled through Yeoford and over to Chagford (more muddy lanes) and through to Postbridge and Manaton and over Hound Tor and hay Tor with a brief stop at Jays Grave but no flowers on it, Nic & Lyn did a nice write up on this subject on the back of our route map. Anyway, on we went to Ashburton and our terrific lunch stop at the Dartmoor Lodge where Neil & Trish's BGT was voted the Dirtiest Car. Many thanks to Nic & Lyn for an enjoyable trip

Hazel & Derrick Layzell.



Dates for your Diary

Monthly club meetings 2nd Tuesday at the Ley Arms Kenn at 2000 hrs
Contact: Tim Hallam on 01803 326294

January:-

Tues 13th, Club night **to include talk my Automobile Association.**

February:-

Tues 10th, Club night.

Fri 27th to Mon 2nd Mar week-end away to Lyndhurst in the New Forest.

Sean and Alison's run tba

Others:- March Tim and Heidi's spring fling TBA, April Tim and Georgie's run TBA.

British motorists might think they get a rough ride from traffic police. But officers on the other side of the Channel have greater powers and a less forgiving attitude



Most of us have been there - a wide, straight, smooth, seemingly safe and eerily remote French motorway that almost invites you to put your foot down. There's barely a handful of other vehicles around and no sign of speed cameras or traffic cops. There's even a suspicion that such autoroutes aren't policed due to a shortage of road users - never mind law breakers - to justify putting officers on the front line.

But nothing could be further from the truth. The French police are now issuing warnings in the clearest, most uncompromising terms that motorists driving illegally in their country will be identified, apprehended and ordered to pay on-the-spot fines of at least 135 euros (£104) in hard local currency.

You might consider yourself fortunate to be relieved of such comparatively small sum. Should your offence be more serious - 181kph (112.5mph) on a motorway with a 130kph (80.8mph) limit, for example – you can expect a 1,500 euro (£1,159) fine. Dare to drive without insurance and your fine will be 3,750 euros (£2,898). Driving without a licence attracts a fine of 15,000 euros (£11,592). Some offences lead to three-year driving bans and/or the seizure of vehicles and even 12-month prison sentences. Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs attracts fines of thousands of euros and even longer sentences; similar punishments are administered to those who refuse to take breathalyser or drug tests.

It gets worse. Exceeding the speed limit by 51kph (31.7mph) and causing an accident that puts somebody out of work for three months will cost you 75,000 euros (£57,960) in fines and possibly the loss of your car, a 10-year driving ban and five years behind bars. The French are also pushing for a change in EU law so that, from 2010, penalty points for offences committed on French roads would be added to the driving licences of foreign motorists.

None of this will come as a total surprise to seasoned travellers who for years have had their collars felt and their wallets emptied en route to French holiday destinations or the Le Mans 24 Hours race. But I doubt that many British drivers are aware of all the offences that can be punished by on-the-spot penalties. Not carrying a warning triangle in the boot and a high visibility jacket in the cabin (preferably under the driving seat) are two recently introduced examples. But you can also be fined heavily and banned for several years for "failure to maintain a safe distance", specifically 130 metres (142 yards) when travelling at 130kph.

You should already be aware that French motorways have lower speed limits (110kph, or 68.4mph) in wet weather. But were you aware that when visibility is down to 50 metres, the permitted top speed is only 50kph (31mph)? Ignorance of the law will not help you escape a fine, and French traffic cops are cranking-up their enforcement/punishment efforts. They have always been as tough as the massive boots they wear, but they're getting tougher still. Respect them, abide by local traffic laws, remind yourself that they're introducing more and more speed cameras and you should be OK. Disrespect them, and you'll be clobbered. It's a message they're keen to get across and to that end I was recently invited to join a group of British police officers as they met their Gallic counterparts on French soil.

Never forget that the Gendarmerie Nationale is not a bunch of friendly bobbies but a military police force numbering well over 100,000, many of whom live in army-style barracks. They cover 90 per cent of French territory, they have an annual budget of eight billion euros at their disposal (more than £6billion) and their clout is immeasurably large. Their official symbol is not an olive branch of peace but a grenade of war.

They're big on physical presence too, as demonstrated by Chief Francois Maquinghen when he, his police motorcycle, his police car and a police van loaded with lower-ranked gendarmes met me at our meeting point alongside the autoroute near Calais.

Despite the language barriers, Maquinghen has no trouble making himself understood. "In days gone by there may have been some discretion when a driver was speeding. If he did, say, 145-150kph [90-93mph] when he should have been doing 130... you know," he said, shrugging like only a Frenchman can. "But now it's different. There is no discretion at all. You will be stopped if you drive at around 150kph."

And the punishment?

"Exceeding the speed limit by 20kph [12.4mph] means that you must pay me a fine of 135 euros [£104]. Every time. In return I give you a receipt. It's the same for everyone, everywhere in France. And before you ask, I do not earn a commission or bonus based on the number of tickets I issue."

One of the Chief's junior colleagues bravely interrupts and emphasises that on-the-spot fines are the "only solution" to the problem of speeding motorists. The Chief doesn't disagree.

So what happens if a motorist genuinely disputes the allegations levelled against him?

In France, under French law, and in my position, everything I say is the truth," says Maquinghen, bluntly. "There is no requirement for me to provide a driver with a photograph of himself breaking the law. We need no pictures, nothing! If he disputes that I am telling the truth, then he has to prove that I lied."

That would be a difficult if not impossible task, whether you're dealing with the Chief or one of his armed colleagues at the roadside. If they say you're guilty, you're guilty.

"We accept only cash. Euros only. Or a Euro cheque. But not foreign currencies or credit cards," Maquinghen adds, helpfully.

But what if a driver is returning home from a long holiday has spent all his euros?

"If the relationship at the side of the road is good between him and us, we will help him find an ATM. We may take him to the cash point machine in our (but not his) car."

And if the relationship is not so good?

"He can take a taxi or walk to the ATM. He cannot drive his car until he has paid his fine."

Maquinghen insists that he knows of no case in which a driver talked his way out of paying-up, or of officers feeling so sorry for an offender that the financial punishment was waived. If you commit an offence, you pay, even if it means having the money electronically and expensively transferred by your bank or a helpful relative from the UK. The Chief recalls one driver who insisted that he couldn't and wouldn't pay and tried to prove it by sleeping in his car for three weeks. By week four he was not only fed up but increasingly concerned that his car or even his home could be seized and sold in order to meet the fine. So he paid.

"I understand that's it's not a happy moment for a driver when I stop him at the side of the road and tell him that a radar or other device has captured him and he has therefore committed a contravention," says Maquinghen. "He is probably a good guy in normal life. We arrive, he is scared. I would be scared. But he needn't be if he accepts he is guilty of a contravention and immediately pays his fine."

"Sometimes an unhappy driver throws the ticket on the ground. Or he resorts to bad words. But he cannot be unpolite. If he swears I arrest him. If he tells me to 'F*** off' that's a serious offence. More serious than a mere traffic contravention. You can't do it. I insist. And we carry handcuffs in case we meet resistance."

And guns...

"Yes we carry guns too. But to use mine I have to save a life," he declares.

He approves of my description of him as a firm but fair professional (with the emphasis on firm) and to show his appreciation he calmly stops eight lanes of autoroute traffic so that I can do a gendarme-approved U-turn rather than drive to the next junction and change direction in more conventional fashion. The move was almost as scary as the Chief himself. He didn't even wear the hi-vis vest that he requires ordinary motorists to carry.

The message was clear. Do exactly what the Gendarmerie Nationale tells you to do. Or else.

Roger L.

EXETER MG OWNERS CLUB - QUESTIONNAIRE

HI FOLKS, IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A GREATER KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE EXETER CLUB IT WOULD BE GREATLY APPRECIATED IF YOU WOULD FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURN IT TO A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE. AS A REWARD FOR YOUR TIME YOU WILL BE ENTERED INTO OUR GRAND DRAW AND THE CHANCE TO WIN A PRIZE.
PLEASE TICK IN THE BOX ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR ANSWER -

1. DO YOU THINK SUBS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED TO THE CLUB.... Y N

2. TICK THE BOXES IF YOU ARE A REGULAR ATTENDANT TO - CLUB NIGHT
SUNDAY CLUB RUNS THE ANNUAL EXETER EVENT OTHER EVENTS

3. ARE YOU HAPPY WITH THE CURRENT MEETING PLACE Y N

4. ARE THERE ANY IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE INTRODUCED INTO THE CLUB ACTIVITIES YOU ATTEND
.....
.....
.....

5. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HAVE MORE SUMMER RUNS IN THE EVENING TO VISIT LOCAL ATTRACTIONS? Y N

6. WE HAVE RECENTLY STARTED AN E-ALERT WHICH INFORMS MEMBERS OF NEAR FUTURE EVENTS SUCH AS RUNS, RALLIES AND CLUB NIGHT – WOULD YOU LIKE TO REGISTER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

OR

IF YOU HAVE NO INTERNET CONNECTION WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INFORMED OF THESE EVENTS BY TELEPHONE OR ARE YOU HAPPY WITH CHECKING YOUR COPY OF THE NEWSLETTER.....

7. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE MORE INVOLVED IN THE CLUB BY BECOMING A COMMITTEE MEMBER EITHER SOON OR IN THE NEAR FUTURE. Y N

IN ORDER WE CAN UPDATE OUR RECORDS PLEASE PUT YOUR NAME AND IF YOU ARE HAPPY TO YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS AND A CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER IN THE SPACE BELOW. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO USE THE REVERSE OF THE PAPER IF YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION AND THE PRIZE WINNER WILL BE NOTIFIED AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH 2009.

NAME.....

TELEPHONE.....

EMAIL.....

-DATES FOR YOUR DIARY-

Club runs

The Club Holiday to the New Forest – 20th-23rd Feb

February- Sean & Alison's run (tba)

March- Tim & Heidi's spring fling (tba)

April- Tim & Georgie's run (tba)

May- Brian's run (tba)

June- Keith & Judith's summer treasure hunt (tba)

July- Barbara & Paul's run (tba)

August- Derrick & Hazel's run (tba)

September- Neil & Trish's run (tba)

October- THIS COULD BE YOUR RUN

(See the committee with your master plan)

November- Nick's run (tba)

National events

Bristol classic car show- 7th – 8th Feb

New Forest Run- 7th June

Mountains & Valley Run- 7th June

Cotswold Caper- 14th June

The Moor 2 Sea rally 27th & 28th June

Powderham classic car show- 11th – 12th July

Sherbourne- classics at the castle- 19th July

Brunel Rally- 4th/ 5th & 6th September

More info will be added as we get it so watch this space or check the newsletter for more information.