

What a great summer season of Merlin tours and holidays we have enjoyed this year. Despite an indifferent July and August in respect of the weather we have mainly struck lucky.

Mid - Week Tour June 21st - 22nd

Once again a good turnout of 23 cars embarked on two days of touring the delightful Cotswolds region. From our base hotel - the Oxford Belfry - took in most of the popular tourist hotspots of the Cotswolds. Main visits were to Buscot House near Lechlade and Broughton Castle near Banbury. A particularly impressive lunch stop on the Tuesday was Biby Court, a fine country house hotel at this major tourist village in the heart of the Cotswolds. Altogether a thoroughly enjoyable two days in beautiful countryside and mainly in fine weather.

For me the entire event was repeated on the following two days for a private event for Mike Stephenson's birthday party guests. Twenty cars and forty guests, many having never seen tulip diagrams before (!) enjoyed the experience immensely - and that was after the amazing birthday party celebrations on the Wednesday night.



John and Brenda Pugh enjoy the beautiful gardens at Buscot House



A varied line-up of classics at Broughton Castle



Biby Court lunch stop



Mike and Gloria Stephenson and their Aston Martin at Biby Court

Hants & Dorset Tour

July 16th - July 17th

Next event was the Hants and Dorset Tour which was based at the splendid Norton Park Hotel near Winchester. On the Saturday the tour covered eastern Hampshire with visits to the Gilbert White's House and Museum at Selborne followed by a most fascinating visit to the Milestones Museum at Basingstoke.

Unfortunately for the Sunday (17th) the weather turned wet for the scenic drive through west Hampshire.

A coffee stop at the Cranborne Manor Garden Centre was followed by a drive across the Cranborne Chase to descend the famous Zig-Zag Hill to Shaftesbury. The tour finished at the Classics at the Castle Show at Sherborne Castle after which the rain cleared and the sun came out for a mainly bright afternoon.

Classics at the Castle

July 17th

The day started wet which was a great shame as some exhibitors stayed at home, strangely feeling their prized classic cars would suddenly rust away if they were rained on!! However, the vast majority braved the elements and once again we had a great show. Around 900 cars this year, from the dawn of motoring veterans to the latest supercars. The Merlin Hants & Dorset Tour arrived at 12.30pm followed at 2.00pm by the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain's Wessex Tour with a dozen veteran and Edwardian cars.

Numerous trade and motor club stands, autojumble and crafts stalls, added to the attractions.

Charterhouse held what turned out to be their best ever classic car auction and the Show celebrated the centenary of Chevrolet. A fine display of this great American marque was featured from early 1920's tourers to the latest models arranged by Chevrolet UK.

Another special feature was a display of Jaguar E Types, marking this iconic model's 50 years.

Overall and despite the morning rain, another great Classics at the Castle.

Whatever the weather Sherborne Castle really is the most beautiful venue.



Best Club Stand awards presentation



100 years of Chevrolet



50 years of the Jaguar E Type



Classics parking

Isle of Man Tour - August 20th - 25th

Twenty-one cars gathered at the Heysham ferry terminal in Lancashire for the 3¹/₂hr ferry crossing to Douglas on the Isle of Man. After a super smooth crossing we gathered at our hotel - the excellent Mount Murray 4 miles south of Douglas. Next day we headed south to Castleton for visits to the Old House of Keys (the original Manx Parliament) and the medieval Castle Rushen. The local council even closed off the town square for us to park our classic cars,



above:
A line-up of classics in Castleton - Nearest ; David Uwin's Aston Martin V12 Vantage

right:
Merliners enjoying lunch in the sunshine at the Calf of Man



The Isle of Man really is the most beautiful island with a great variety of roads, dramatic coastal scenery and panoramic views from the mountain roads. We visited the Grove House and Museum plus the Milntown House and Gardens. Here we viewed the private collection of vintage cars and motorcycles. The only rain of the trip was during this visit but it didn't really bother us. A visit to the Isle of Man would not be complete

without a ride on the electric trams to the summit of Snaefel. These trams were produced in 1895 and are still going strong today.

We also visited the Great Laxey Wheel, the pretty fishing port of Peel and of course we had to



Feeling on top of the world - or at least on top of Snaefel

complete a lap of the TT course - and with no overall speed limit on the Isle of Man some had an extra bit of fun - say no more!

Overall a fabulous trip which everyone thoroughly enjoyed and I would highly recommend anyone to visit this truly beautiful island.



Brollies and smiles in the rain. Betty and Mike Lambert, Brian and Audrey Gibbins explore the Milntown Gardens

Picardie Tour - September 22nd - 26th

Sunshine all the way! This really was a truly sunshine holiday touring the often missed but really quite beautiful region of Picardie in northern France.

After our Eurotunnel train ride we had an easy drive to historic Montreuil and the superb Hotel Hermitage. Next day we continued south to Chantilly and our main base hotel for the tour. The Chateau de Montvillargenne is a magnificent hotel where we were looked after very well indeed.

Our daily drives took us through forests, across open farm land and through attractive towns and villages to pre-arranged visits. The Chateau at Pierrefonds is dramatic, whilst that of Chantilly a romantic and highly ornate structure sitting in a lake.



The group in front of Chateau de Chantilly

It is the horse stables at Chantilly which really impress - they are bigger than the chateau!, once accommodating over 200 horses.

We were treated to a fantastic horse show by the Russian Cossacks - it really is amazing what can be done with horses - what a show.

During our holiday one couple celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary. Geoff and Liz Clamp threw a pre-dinner Champagne Party on the terrace at the Chateau de Montvillargenne. Congratulations to Geoff and Liz and grateful thanks for your generosity.

Our final day took us back to Calais for the Eurotunnel but not before a lunchtime stop at the site of the Battle of Azincourt in 1415. Another great Merlin Holiday tour and held in glorious wall to wall sunshine.



Geoff & Liz Clamp with friends - a Golden Anniversary

Forthcoming events . . .

October 27th - 30th Autumn Classic - At time of this newsletter going to print we had 30 cars entered, an excellent number for an Autumn Classic (report and photos in next newsletter).

December 2nd- 4th Christmas Cracker - Entries still invited for the Christmas Cracker, this year at the superb St. Pierre Hotel and Country Club at Chepstow in South Wales.

JANUARY 1st 2012 NEW YEAR'S DAY MEET - NEW VENUE!! After four years at the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton, we are moving to the beautiful HASELBURY MILL near Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7NY - just off the A30 east of Crewkerne 10.00am-2.00pm

We assemble the expected 100 plus classics overlooking the lake beside the historic mill, which now houses bars and restaurants. The Great Tithe Barn will be open for refreshments including a Hog Roast and bar. Don't miss this great start to the New Year - at a great new venue.

Thank you for your support during the past year and I look forward to welcoming you on the final two 2011 events and during the coming year. Full list of 2012 Merlin Tours and Holidays below.

MERLIN EVENTS DATES FOR 2012

JANUARY 1st New Year's Day Meet, Haselbury Mill, Crewkerne, Somerset TA18 7NY (just off the A30 East of Crewkerne). Superb new venue. 100 plus cars expected.

APRIL 26th-29th Spring Classic in the Derbyshire Peak District, based at Buxton with visits to Chatsworth and much more.

MAY 30th-31st Mid-week Tour in Wiltshire, based near Swindon with visits to Lacock Abbey and Longleat.

JUNE 17th-21st Holiday Tour to eastern Normandy. Visits to include Honfleur, Claude Monet's Gardens at Giverny and the Benedictine Distillery at Fecamp.

JULY 15th 'Classics at the Castle' Show, Sherborne Castle, Dorset.

AUGUST 17th -19th Summer Classic touring Mid-Wales, based at the Metropole Hotel, Llandrindod Wells.

SEPTEMBER 18th-24th Holiday Tour in the Ardennes region of eastern Belgium.

OCTOBER 25th-30th Autumn Classic touring Cornwall. Visits to include the Eden Project, Goonhilly Earth Station and Lanhydrock House.

NOVEMBER 30th-DECEMBER 2nd Christmas Cracker - At the four-star Burnham Beeches Hotel at Burnham, Bucks.

The above dates and events are subject to possible alteration.

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Check our website for all future Merlin Events tours, shows and updates

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MERLIN EVENTS

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