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30 Not Out! New Forest classic event makes history – A ‘good news’ story!

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On a beautiful spring Sunday in April, two south coast based UK classic car groups made happy history.

Kim Henson was there with his camera (as he was in 1987!).

During the past 30 years, so many things in life have changed, and of course world events have been turbulent, but for two separate groups of classic car owners in Dorset and Hampshire respectively, an enduring and tranquil annual event has brought them together on one day each April.

Quite simply, for three decades they have enjoyed meeting up each year, comparing



automotive notes, driving their vehicles in and around the beautiful surroundings of the New Forest, and chatting together in the spirit of a shared passion for their vehicles. Over the years many friendships have been forged and the event has gone from strength to strength.

So it came to pass that yesterday (as I write, Sunday, 9th April), members and friends of the two groups – the Dorset Group of the Austin A30/A35 Owners' Club, and the Hampshire Group of the British Made Car Club (as its name implies, this encompasses all makes and models), again headed for the start of the event.

I have to confess some personal interest as it was way back in 1986 that I first met John and Gwen Symons, at that time owners of a superb modified 'Wolseley 16/60' estate car (based on an A60 Cambridge but with the bodywork modified to incorporate a 16/60 front end...), and their friends in the local Hampshire-based group of the club to which they belonged, most of whom also owned examples of the BMC 'family' Farina models.

Anyway, while chatting about our respective car models, we agreed that it seemed a good idea to set up a joint event, as a 'one-off', between our groups, with the post-War 'baby' Austins providing an interesting contrast with the larger saloons and estates.

Therefore in April 1987 the first 'New Forest Run' involving the two groups of enthusiasts took place; then, as now, starting near Cadnam and following a circuitous route through the Forest, with leisurely stops for coffee and lunch being the order of the day. (In fact, in the early days of these runs, from their own caravan John and Gwen provided hot drinks for all attendees!).

Since then the event, following the same format, has taken place every year (with the exception of 2001 when 'Foot and Mouth Disease' restrictions prevented its happening), come rain or shine.

The organisation of each year's run alternates between the two groups, and although, inevitably after 30 years, there is some duplication of coverage of the Forest's by-ways,



every year participants say that by participating in the event they have discovered roads new to them.

So, after 30 years, how many people would still be interested in taking part in this year's event? Well, on a superbly sunny, warm Sunday (yesterday) at the start point, some 41 vehicles were counted, with a total of 73 people aboard. The organisers (this year it was the turn of the Hampshire Group of the British Made Car Club, who also liaised with Dave Mallett from the A30/A35 Club Dorset Group) were amazed at the numbers (the highest turnout ever) and Dave Withey, 'organiser-in-chief', expressed his delight and surprise, saying that despite over-ordering, there were not quite enough printed route sheets and the specially-made commemorative 'rally plaques' they had commissioned, to go round...





Enjoying the warm sunshine, here are some of the 73 participants at the start of the New Forest Run.

Quite a number of people who took part in the 1987 run were there again for the 2017 event, including John and Gwen, who had been so enthusiastic about this get-together from the outset, also my wife and I. However, I believe that we were the only ones attending in the same car that we had first brought along in April 1987 (our 1958 Austin A35 saloon).



On a personal level it was great for my wife and I to be able to participate in both the 1987 and 2017 New Forest Runs in the same car – our Austin A35, believed to be the only vehicle brought on both runs 30 years apart!



There were people of all ages taking part – as has been the case throughout the history of the event.

Vehicle types were many and varied; for example, among many others... A number of BMC Minis, a Riley Elf plus a range of Austin A30s and A35s, also Morris Minors/1000s, larger family-sized Farinas and Hillman Minxes, plus a Triumph Toledo, an Austin 1800 'Land Crab' and a now exceedingly rare Singer Vogue estate car, beautiful examples of Humber Hawk, Jaguar XK and Rover P6, two Triumph Stags, an MGB GT, a British-built Citroën 2CV and a French-made Citroën 'H' van.





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From Cadnam the route took in sun-dappled lanes through the forest, for a welcome coffee stop at Buckler's Hard on the Beaulieu Estate...



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After refreshments and a chat, participants headed north-west through the New Forest, over sunlit hills and through shady valleys...



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Eventually everyone arrives at Woodfalls where 48 people were able to lunch together, in a packed dining room...



Lunchtime!

Due to the numbers of vehicles taking part, they travelled in relatively small groups, and in addition there were various diversions from the main route, which some of the cars followed, the effect being that not too many vehicles at once were on the same section of road.

VERDICT

This happy event was declared a resounding success, enjoyed by participants of all ages. Indeed it was widely felt that this was the best-ever run so far, as well as being the one



attracting the highest ever number of vehicles and occupants – so far!

The deliberately laid-back nature of the event, the common interest of old vehicles, the chance to travel through beautiful countryside in small groups of very different cars, and meeting up again with the owners of different models, all added to its appeal.

In the spring of 1987, little did the organisers know that this ‘joint enterprise’ event would run to a second year, and I am sure that none imagined it would carry on for at least another 30 years! Long may it continue.

The author wishes to thank all those involved in organising this event (over three decades!), also all the vehicle owners.