

Headcorn Airfield Rally 21 September 2008

This end-of-season bash with the Kent, Sussex & East London Section is always eagerly anticipated and well supported. I'm pleased to say that this year was no exception and a good time was had by all. I sneaked an extra couple of nights away from home and arrived at the airfield at Oh Christ Hundred Hours on Saturday, waking at about 0600 to the sound of generators and gas burners as a hot-air balloon was readied for take-off in the early mist. It made an impressive sight as it carried its payload of some dozen souls aloft for a flight wherever the wind took it over the Kentish countryside.

After a leisurely start to my morning, including a blast round the lanes and into the village of Headcorn itself in the Qpod buggy, others started to arrive in time for a late afternoon visit to School House Farm at Hawkenbury, the home of the Register of Unusual Microcars which lives up to its' name by caring for a number of very rare bubble cars. Out hostess was the owner of the Collection, Jean Hammond, who showed us round her cars whilst almost keeping a labrador cross under control. The teeth marks on my chest illustrate my definition of the word "almost". Not to worry, I'm sure that Carra and I will become friends in due course although our friendship will be conducted at a respectful distance until I can be sure of her!

The East Coast Pedal(l)ers had joined us for the weekend and investigated the on-site Wings bar for the evening whilst the rest of us sought warmth and sustenance from barbecues under the gazebo at NACC HQ, aka my camper.

The penalty to be paid for a sunny day was a cloudless evening sky and it wasn't long before we headed for our sleeping bags and sleep assisted by the consumption of a few bevvy's. Sunday dawned to the tune of the hot air balloons once more plus the added attraction of a boot fair to trawl through. Roly found a set of false moustaches on offer and made a very fetching sight modelling a selection.

Before long we had an impressive line-up of cyclemotors and mopeds ready for a slack 1100 start for the ride out to the Swan at Little Chart where lunch was taken in the garden. One hill on the way tested Ian on the Power Pak (I must have one of those!) and Ralph on his Solex but all but one of the starters made it to the half-way stop. All but one? You've probably guessed, haven't you? Luke. His Itom, a nice-looking piece of machinery which had passed with flying colours a test ride the night before and actually fired up on the airfield, didn't make fifty yards before declaring a lack of interest in proceeding any further. Oh, well, at least he didn't have far to pedal back to the car park. He'd also brought a Long John trade bike to show us and this was great fun once you'd mastered the technique which involved not looking at what the front wheel was doing, a bit like Ian Williams' gas-pipe-and-angle-iron recumbent which some may remember from years gone by.

The return leg showed up one casualty in the form of Maurice Drew's Cucciolo which shed the chain tensioner and allowed the back wheel to float excessively leading to the chain falling off every few yards until one of Team ECP jammed a bolt into place to shore things up. Field engineering at its' best. Back at the car park for the prizegiving, silverware went to Rebecca on an RM6 as a newcomer, Keith Rutledge for being a regular supporter of the event with his family, Dave Arnott's Victoria Vicky for the bike I'd most like to take home and John Redding for the furthest travelled.



Balloon lift-off



If the Devil should cast his net!



Oh my aching back! Rob Gill makes a dignified exit from the Qpod.



Time for lunch.



Lining up before the off

There's a row brewing as I don't know my East Anglian geography well enough apparently... The Qpod proved popular, with most of us trying it out and getting out of it with a smile and a bad back. The photos tell the story. I saw the last one off the premises about 2000 on the Sunday and settled down to one last bottle of 06 Domaine de Beausejour before crashing for the night. It was a strange feeling being the Last Van Standing in a deserted airfield but a good conclusion to a great weekend.

Many thanks to all who came along to ride and to support the event.

Runners and riders in order of signing on:
Dave Arnott (Victoria Vicky), Nick Devonport (Motoconfort X7 - yes that one again!), Maurice Drew (Ducati Cucciolo), Luke Booth (Itom Tourist), Ian McGregor (Power Pak), Keith Rutledge (Trojan Mini Motor), Geoff Hills (NSU Quickly), Carl Squirrel (Honda PC50 & sidecar), Dave Watson (Francis Barnett), Maurice Rodgers (Puch Maxi), Roly Scarce (Honda PC50), William Gill (Raleigh Runabout), Robert Gill (LE Velocette), John Redding (Batavus), Dave Gates (Peugeot), Ken Standen (La Francaise Diamant), Bob Redding (Honda Camino), Sharon Wikner (Easy Rider DX50), Martin Wikner (Easy Rider M50), Rebecca (Raleigh RM6) and Ralph Thompson (Velosolex).



Will it run - Luke Booth wields the spanners

Nick Devonport

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