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Welcome to the SVW 4-page spread, which this month is dedicated to the annual SVW Event that took place this year from July 26th to 28th.

The event was based at The Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa. It's amazing how many people we've spoken to who have said they have stayed there. It's quite a grand looking hotel and used to be the base for 617 Squadron (Dambusters) officers in WW2. The organisers this year were Peter Ratcliffe and his partner Alison Jackson.

For the first time in many years, I was not in my VA Tourer. The event often coincides with my partner Sharman's birthday, so we decided to make an 8-day holiday of it, plus the VA was having a long list of jobs done at Market Square Garage in Petworth, some of which had been building up for a few years. The only thing that could not be done was the fitting of the new rear leaf springs – more on this in a subsequent article. I didn't get the VA back home until after our return home, but I can already report that the new front leaf springs seem to have made a considerable difference.

On our way to the event we dropped in to see Grahame Page in Colchester. He was in fine form despite now being confined to a mobility scooter. It was pleasing to again see his VA Saloon that his father bought new.



Arrival line-up at Petwood Hotel

We were not privy to all attendees in advance, so it was with some excitement that we arrived at the hotel hoping to see old friends on the Tuesday afternoon. On collection of our rally pack from Alison, we could

see the full list of runners and riders, a total of 21 SVW cars (22 if you include Piotr's driveable chassis that was trailed to the event), several non-SVW vehicles and 65 people. We were back to pre-covid numbers given our friends from The Netherlands would be with us again.



The Craystons (VA Tourer) tackle The Splash with gusto!

New to SVW 'eventing' were Peter Bishop (VA Tourer) and his friend Jan Bunting, Steve and Gilly Curtis (VA Tourer), David and Helen Walker (SA Saloon) with their friends Robert and Julia Atkins and Tom Westley (WA Keller Replica) with his friend Will Gough. I had previously corresponded with Peter and had met Steve briefly when he bought his VA from Tim Phelps a few years ago.

The Tuesday evening started in the bar where I found Peter Bishop before everyone migrated to the dining room where there was allocated seating to receive our pre-ordered dishes. Peter Ratcliffe told us about the area and what they had lined up for us.

Wednesday took us on a 66-mile circuit to include much of the Lincolnshire Wolds, an early lunch at The Royal Oak near Louth and Cadwell Park race circuit. As I was without my VA Tourer, I was delighted to ride with Robert and Jane Crayston in their lovely VA Tourer during the morning and equally delighted to ride in the comfort of the WA Tickford of Christopher and Ann Rowe, including the laps of Cadwell Park. The Wolds were an eye-opener for many who may have believed that Lincolnshire is all flat; in fact the Wolds were reminiscent of the hills and woodland of where we call home in West Sussex. The route from The Royal Oak took us through a ford, known locally as The Splash. Cadwell Park is mainly a motorcycle venue, but we were booked in for three laps while they had lunch. Few will forget Piotr and Anna taking to the track in the chassis and overtaking some of us to get some good shots and video. We then proceeded for afternoon tea at Claythorpe Watermill.



Assembled ready to take to the track



Piotr and Anna race past WA Tickford with some parts missing!



Your scribe enjoying Cadwell Park from the rear seat of Christopher Rowe's WA Tickford

Back at the hotel we had the SVW Register AGM at 6pm before drinks at the bar followed by the gala evening meal with guests John Day, MGCC President, and his wife Janet. The hotel's link to the Dambuster's squadron inspired an amusing game whereby we were all given 'kits' to make paper aircraft which were then thrown in the direction of a chair (the dam!) to see who could get closest - the winner was Perm Perry. The Frances Adam Award was presented to John Dutton by John Day and Jim Andrews. Votes were secretly cast for The Ratcliffe Cup.



The Dutch contingent enjoying the gala dinner



John and Gail Bannister's grandson Toby evidently enjoying proceedings



Table 7 with John and Janet Day at the far end



John Dutton is presented with The Frances Adam Award by John Day and Jim Andrews



Around the other tables at the gala dinner (which did not appear in Safety Fast!)



The last day of the event is usually an early start despite the possible headaches from the previous evening. After breakfast we all gathered in the car park to hear Peter announce the winner of The Ratcliffe Cup for the car that most people would like to take home. Most of the SVW cars present received votes, including Piotr's body-less VA! Not unexpectedly, the winner was Tom Westley and his superb WA Keller replica. The build was started by Peter before his retirement and was continued by SVW Ltd following their move to Worcester, albeit with outsourcing to other specialists. Two SA Keller replicas were present and were certainly contenders for the cup. 'Replica' may appear something of a deviation from the pre-war MGs we love, but these are faithfully styled on the original Swiss SA Keller, built on original chassis at huge expense and will always be much admired.



SVW line-up alongside Lancaster



VA Tourer of Nigel Wilson makes the most of the photo opportunity



Pater van den Heuvel's VA Woodie in the UK for the first time since the 1970s

Thursday continued with a 12-mile drive to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre where we had reserved parking close to a Lancaster Bomber, a great photo opportunity. I suspect the whole event was planned around this occasion as on this day they would be starting the engines and taxi-ing. There is nothing like the sound of four Merlin engines on full song. There is a plan to get this Lancaster airworthy over the next seven years or so. We had plenty of time to explore the hangar and other buildings before setting off to The Red Lion a couple of miles away for an excellent buffet lunch.

After lunch we drove another 12 miles to The Bubble Car Museum, something close to my heart having previously owned a Messerschmitt KR200 for some 22 years and currently owning a 1958 Bond Minicar! They certainly have an eclectic mix of rare machines, well worth a visit. The roads we travelled today were not as exciting as yesterday, but the long straight roads over the Fens have a certain charm of their own.



A brace of SAs Kellers owned by Berend van den Broek (left) and Bert van der Linden



The Ratcliffe Cup was awarded to Tom Westley for his WA Keller

Some people headed home at this point, but we still had quite a few staying an extra night at the hotel. We joined a group going to a local Indian restaurant, which turned out to be a good choice.

It was a truly excellent event and we now look forward to next year when we may visit God's Own Country of Yorkshire.

Take a look at our Facebook group to see more photos.