

January 2018 newsletter

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OH dear, my first mistake

Did anybody notice the mistake in the last newsletter?. In the third sentence I mentioned about the depth of the heavy snow (oh no theirs that word heavy again) in 10mm, 15mm or 20mm. I meant to use the term cms which would correctly equate to 4, 6 or 8ins. My brother who has spent all his working life in the building trade noticed it straight away whereas I still often think in feet and inches. So, did anybody else see the mistake or are you all too polite not to mention it?

BORG activities in snow

While we are asked to help out in the snow and other instances of bad weather this is always done at the request of the County Council and other official agencies (police/ambulance/nhs etc) and meals on wheels. The response work we do is for the greater good of the community ie, taking nurse to hospitals so that they are fully staffed or helping with meals on wheels so the elderly people living on their own get a hot meal. What we are not (as a club) supposed to be doing is getting involved in pulling people up hills etc. Unfortunately some people still don't seem to have got the message as a club member was seen pulling people up Tring hill while wearing a BORG Hi Vis. If you fancy having a go at pulling cars/vans/lorries up hills etc by all means do so (I've done it myself several times) but you do it off your own back and not while wearing any BORG clothing.

Christmas laning trip

At the end of last year RT asked me if I could lay on a laning trip for the club for the quiet period between Christmas and the new year. Not having organized many green laning trips and hoping to go else where other than Salisbury plain or Wales I ordered some back copies of Total Off Road magazine as they show green laning routes giving details such as distance, duration of route and severity/damage risk etc. I chose the Cotswold route as it's not an area which we do very often. Jonathon came over one evening and transferred the route from the mag as they use tulip diagrams on to the memory map. Just before Christmas I went over to Andy's to transfer the route onto another club laptop.

I then got a phone call from Andy on Boxing day evening to say that he had been out to recce the route and that most of the route really wasn't worth doing as the Fosse Way had been levelled and flattened so much that one could do it easily on an ordinary road bike and after the heavy rains most of the fords were too deep to cross. So he made up a completely new route comprising what he said were some of the best lanes in the Cotswolds.

The meeting point was 3 miles south of J17 of the M4 at a petrol near Kington Langley. There were 7 vehicles including a new member in his Nissan pickup so we split up into 2 groups. What immediately became apparent was that we had ended up in the one part of the country where they had just had a nice dumping of snow. The first lane was just a few miles north of the M4, nothing too challenging but a bit sratchy and a nice covering of snow so was a good start to what was going to be an interesting days laning. As we had a late start and we had met up with the others we decided to stop for our first tea break. I had no idea of the new the route so I was going where my navigator was telling me where to go all the while keeping my speed down due to the snow covered roads and keeping a lookout for the people behind me. At one point we appeared to be heading straight for Kemble Airfield but the route took us round the airfield in a clock wise direction all on snow covered roads and tracks. It soon became obvious that by luck we had ended up in the one part of the country that had just had some more snow so driving on the minor roads (white roads on the maps) was an experience in itself.

Further along the route we drove into a long byway which wound its way along a valley floor across a stream and up the other side (well that was the plan) only to find our way blocked by the other group. The exit to the track was very steep and had tarmac on it. Due to there being a high retaining wall to the right side and an equally high embankment on the other side the snow covered tarmac was still frozen solid and we could barely walk up it. Andy was leading the other group and managed to drive it but only just and with the aid of the Quadrac four wheel drive system on his Jeep Grand Cherokee. The rest of us decided it was not worth trying so all of us had to turn round and head back down the track (oh what a shame we have to do the track again). At the end of the track my navigator decided that if we kept turning right we should eventually end up back on the route.

Those of you who have been to the Cotswolds will know that there are some nice quaint villages tucked away in the hills and valleys and accessible only by the minor roads that connect them. Now here we are driving them with the roads still covered in snow. Not wishing to have an accident I was keeping my speed down and descending the hills in low gear with Mark and new member Paul wisely keeping a safe distance from me.

After driving through another village (no snow this time but very narrow streets) we came onto our next lane. This got narrower and narrower till we came across the other group again. This time they were being blocked by a VW camper which could not get up the steep track. The end of the track was also the drive to a large detached house so as Andy who was in front he had the job of pulling the van up the track.

After a few miles we came across the next interesting lane but only after passing the other group going in the wrong direction!. As we were now the lead group I was now the lead vehicle so we were the ones having to cut our way through the fallen trees and be careful not to slide down the snow covered slope to my right. This has to be one of the most memorable lanes I've done for a long time as it felt like we were jungle bashing our way through the snow and trees while my navigator was taking pictures of the deer crossing the track right in front of us.

I really don't know where we were after that other than we went through or near a village called Misserden and after that called it a day. We kept on heading north till we came to the A40 and turned right for home.

Although I was asked to organize this laning trip a big thanks must go to Andy for actually setting the route up. To those of you who could not make it you missed a very entertaining day as just driving on the tarmac roads was an experience in itself. It was just luck that we ended up laning in the one part of the country that had a fresh dumping of snow.

New years day madness

I don't know what other people do on new years day but this year I thought my wife and I would like to go and see for ourselves an unusual car meet that my brother told me about. Although this is not a four wheel drive event I'm sure like me most club members would appreciate older classic cars and I also like looking at military vehicles. What my brother told me about was an informal car/classic vehicle meet at a pub called The Phoenix Inn, at Hartley Wintney on the A30. What makes this meet so unusual is that once the pub car park starts overflowing with classic cars anybody else who turns up has to park with 2 wheels on the pavement and on both sides of the public road and on the chevrons sown the middles of the road. You have to be there to see it, for you will see an Aston Martin parked next to a couple of old model A Ford pickups parked on the chevrons in the middle of the road and towering above all these is an old Scammell lorry parked up on the grass in the middle of the road. There must have been about a 100 vehicles ranging from fully a restored old Rolls Royce to a McLaren MP4 to a little 3 wheeled van. Then half way through

the morning a tractor club drove through obviously out enjoying a new years day run. The landlord was serving coffee and burgers all morning and still more cars turned up. What really interested me was an old wartime GMC 2/5 tonner or "Deuce and a half" as they were called. This had been nicely restored and was a winch equipped model hence all the levers sticking out of the floor. As the owner arrived fairly late he had to park with two wheels on the pavement and nearly 100 yds down the road. It started to rain about one o'clock so some people started to leave while the rest went in the pub, as you can imagine the pub was full to bursting. So if you fancy going somewhere interesting on new years day next year go on the internet and google up The Phoenix Inn Car Meet Years Day. It's also on you tube as well.