



---

**MINUTES OF CLUB 80-90 SYNCRONAUTS**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**held on**  
**THURSDAY 19TH OCTOBER, 2006**  
**ONLINE**

**Present:**

Clive Smith	Chairman
Mark Williams	Vice-Chairman
Aidan Talbot	Acting Secretary
Jenny Sippings	Treasurer
Julie Adams	
Christoph Boltze	
Doug Brett	
Geoff Brookes	
Torz Cooper	
Ray Cowen	
Roger Crocker	
Matthew Davies	
Martin Edwards	
Steve Edwards	
Michael Ghia	
Bob Green	
Richard Haslock	
Kevin Horler	
Russel Johnstone	
Jenny Leonard	
Andrew McClements	
Pete Morrill	
Terry Newell	
Andrew Rhodes	
Matt Sandall	
Jake Stephens	
Steffan Stringer	
Mick Tann	
Dai Williams	

Aidan Talbot (Acting Secretary) welcomed everyone to the online meeting.

## **1/06 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Ian Hulley, Euan McKendrick, Andrew Scott

## **2/06 Chairman's Report**

The Synchronauts club was formed in the weeks leading up to an inaugural off-road event planned for the first weekend of July, 2004.

The name I think came from Mark Mudlark Williams, as did the now familiar sounding title for the annual summer event, Syncropendence. In fact, the whole thing spawned from a single post on club80-90 by Mudlark that made a lot of sense – let's find out what these things can really do off-road. Being a timid bunch - at the time - we thought a private site would be ideal where we could all overcome our varying levels of trepidation at actually putting our syncros and our driving to the test. Of the few posting regularly on the Syncro forum at that time, we knew only one or two were driving off-road at all often, and Thom DiamondHell Cowley was one of those. Having found somewhere in Wales, we persuaded him that he should meet up with us in Wales to recce the site. It looked good enough, so he in turn asked his IOW home club marshals to come along, and their Steve Darch kindly CoC'd the driving and together they all really made it very simple for us... and that event opened a good few minds! To fresh air at 2000 ft, wild camping, the joys of the Spragman's when it rains or blows and the support of seasoned club80-90 campers - nothing like a few spectators when you're making fools of yourselves in muddy conditions.

A fair bit of work had to be done to get the club ready for that weekend, but we soon realised that the biggest stumbling block was insurance, of the landowner indemnity type - Public Liability Insurance. It was simply not affordable or available. So we could either run under the auspices of the IOW club's MSA affiliation or form and constitute a club, agree finances, a committee, administrative duties and then affiliate ourselves. We chose the latter, looking forward to repeat events, and it was a close run thing time-wise. Jenny Tyger Sippings agreed to be Treasurer, Thomas Secretary, whilst Mark agreed to be the Vice Chairman. There was only one position left for me, so Chairman it was.

Soon we had the support of Aidan Talbot, Andy McClements, Jen Leonard, Andy Shearlaw and Euan McKendrick who volunteered to make up an initial committee for guidance and assistance. The most important thing at that time was that Mark and myself knew it wouldn't cost us much more than £200 each if no-one came! So with a quick guess at the support we deemed we'd have we set £40 for participating vehicles, and £25 for others. With great backing from members we'd never met, some just there for spectating, the camping and camaraderie, Jenny was sure we'd end the day with a small surplus – and we did. I'm sure we all thought it money well spent for a good weekend. The sun eventually came out on a glorious Sunday high up on Dethenydd Hill, amongst the white whirling blades of countless wind turbines... and the comedy of another sudden squelch and a disappearing Wellie – or Syncro roofline below the high marsh grass. A fun prize giving finished the day, and the last prize was the best in my opinion, a token case of beers to Steve Darch and his IOW marshals for seeing us through our first event safely.

One lesson we learnt then was that to hire a private site in this way, just for ourselves away from other 4WDs and the general public – requires a good recce, a firm commitment and the odd difficult decision. There is always a risk factor when putting on such an event based on a single site fee, so you have to be pretty sure of your members support to not fall foul of a non-profitable venture.

Thomas ran an informal Diamond Isle (IOW) weekend over August Bank Holiday, which was great fun having a trials bike and a mod trialer to play with as well as Syncros over open meadows, a custom made course and through lovely woods. The Syncros were led over the Tennyson Way by Steve Darch of the IOW 4x4 club to round off the driving.

Coming up to Christmas 2004, Jenny had the idea of a calendar to boost the club funds and with a bit of help from me, plenty of interest and a bulk order from Syncro-Nutz, we sold nearly 100. We had such good feedback that this was repeated for Christmas 2005, raising nearly £200 profit over both years. Thanks go to Jenny for that.

By Spring 2005 we wanted to offer the club's growing membership a chance to get out and meet up again. Geoff (Crazy Diamond) helped by suggesting a site near Stourport On Severn which he knew of and so Coney Farm joined our calendar, offering many treats and an ideal 'training ground' for those not having ventured off-road before. An added bonus being that it's centrally located on the map of the UK and was low risk as it was a good all-in fee for the weekend and plenty were showing early interest. Some good trials were run, and most of the committee helped marshal, organise camping or contributed one way or other. An added bonus was that most of those without Syncros got a drive or ride as they wished, with the Project Doka being there for its owners and a few others to drive - subject to the odd few quid being thrown in the pot! Judged a successful weekend event and a site well worth returning to with many areas still unexplored.

Immediately after Coney Farm 1, it was obvious we had a core of members who were looking forward to another July Syncropendence. This time we asked the committee for recommendations on a shortlist of sites that might fit the bill, using their contacts. Several emerged and were discussed before we received a positive recce report from the Secretary on a hill farm site in Wales which we could have almost exclusive use of, though for more than we'd paid before. This was Tom's farm near Rhyader, now somewhat notorious, though the committee decided on balance we should go there, one reason being that if we didn't, it might be closed next year!

Whilst many reported back that they were glad to have gone, and there was some great driving to be had, in retrospect we encountered a number of problems, mainly with the weather, the camping arrangements, the Project Doka and some of the motocross and enduro fraternity. Sad to say the Project Doka had arrived in a bit of a state and barely made it back to Bristol.

Financially we managed to survive but think we licked the wounds a bit after that one. Bob Hacksaw came for a day, with his video camera, and produced a great bit of work for us after editing it down, many thanks.

Next up was another visit to Coney Farm in early October, and we found the weather just about held up for us until the heavens opened and then it got almighty cold on the Saturday night, which didn't stop the usual barbecue and campfire shenanigans – at all, at all. Thomas was again CoC for the event, taking time off to set his usual challenging trials whilst Steve Darch took the load and set a good one up for the Sunday morning relaxed session. Token fun prizes were presented, SyncroSam's of note being not such a joke, having been presented for most helpful member under various vehicles in cold and at times wet weather.

This event was once again well attended and successful with a few newcomers being welcomed. As is normal a few came just for one of the days, but the general feeling has been that we should always strongly promote these as whole weekend events, to help pay our way and make the Saturday night camping as inclusive as possible. Quite a few tend to camp on the Friday night as well, important for a good start Saturday morning. And there's always those who stay the course to the bitter end, helping to tidy up the site, load the kit and ensure

lone stragglers get away safely – many thanks to those as well as the Friday afternoon arrivals who welcome, organise the camping and recce and layout the driving sites.

Not having been able to hold an AGM at SP2, we had decided to have a committee meeting at Coney farm, and the Spragmans came in very handy in that cold snap. The issue of our relationship with club80-90 was mooted and discussed as well as how we were to conduct committee business in the future - by email, as we tended to do or on a bespoke private forum board. The latter was agreed and setup within the club80-90 space for the time being, as the general view was that was our roots and we were still at a fledgling stage, appreciating particularly the support from non-syncro driving club members. Other matters were also discussed (subsequently minuted). At the same time we invited Cate Chalkley and Jake Stephens onto the committee.

The 2005 Christmas calendar did well again, we had somehow accrued a respectable working bank balance over the 18 months as we looked forward to a Spring event. We had Coney Farm in mind again, having built up a liking for the place as well as a good understanding with the owners – this took quite a bit of weight off our shoulders when planning and promotional matters drew close.

Coney Farm in April 2006 attracted around 18 Syncros and with challenging steep hillside trials on very slippery surfaces, and some real heavy mud plugging by the Scottish contingent taking place, overall providing experienced drivers with plenty of challenges. Several newcomers really enjoyed the site's good views, and an opportunity to try their Syncros off-road under good guidance, definitely hit the right spot with them. Notable were passengers enjoying the off-road experience too... with some really whooping it up The weather was dramatic and provided for some excellent photos to be taken over the weekend. Soon after CF3 within the committee to start looking for a Syncropendence 3 site, as it seemed the tradition was to keep looking for better site every year.

The committee, soon to have Syncropendence 3 on the horizon were generally finding that communications through a forum board in the written word and not face to face, or on the phone, was becoming difficult. Decisions were becoming harder to make, as we seemed to think that everyone had to have a say at all times, whether they wanted to or not, and some that the forum was there for a permanent and ongoing committee meeting whenever it suited. Some retrospectives from this might be that only a quorum need decide a matter, strict guidelines on the length of discussion would help, and that sub committees to deal with particular issues should be tasked to make recommendations. The dedicated committee forum board was not turning out to be the panacea that had been hoped!

With less than 3 months before July 4th and nowhere to go for Syncropendence, Treasurer Jenny Tyger found a link that when pursued led to three great sounding Welsh hill farm sites. With little time to mess about, Mark, Jenny and myself committed to a day's driving at the most favourable one – it was as good as perfect for Synchronautmania and also close to areas rich with Green Lanes and old tracks ... so within a few days of returning we issued a favourable report to the committee.

Despite dealing with some thorny pre-event issues, Syncropendence 3, 2006 was pushed ahead and several of the committee made special efforts to advertise the event one-to-one, by email and telephone, at short notice as we knew we'd found a really superb place and the costs, though high, were pro rata based taking a lot of the risk away.

With Mediterranean weather, fantastic views and almost unlimited acreage to drive on, all I can say is we 'consumed' as much as this hill farm's challenges as we could in one weekend, with some nice cooling interludes in the river meandering through the campsite fields and farmlands below. Thomas being away prior to the event, and in two minds as to his return, we

asked member Roger Crocker to be Clerk of Course, being an MSA marshal - so many thanks to him and Julia for travelling up – he assures me they had a great weekend. Other members came for the first time and from start to finish I think we all had a memorable weekend's driving, great atmosphere within the campsite and as usual all the children were just a joy to have around. Bob came, drove, filmed and again produced a very original and entertaining video for us -thanks. Ditto the committee members who came and contributed to A few stayed on another night to drive some really ancient tracks and lanes across to Vyrnwy Reservoir and back on the Monday, something others should do if we go there again – icing on the cake!

As you will see from the Treasurer's report we have nearly £500 in the account, which will hopefully allow a wider scope for future activities and meets, with a bit less soul searching beforehand than has been the case.

This is notwithstanding having built up a reasonable complement of necessary club items such as fire extinguishers, first aid, markers etc.

Being a new club still in transition there are some things as Chairman I would like to see in place within the Synchronauts to stand them in good stead for the future:

- A committee committed to maintaining the Synchronauts club as an ideal UK wide medium for Syncro owners to share knowledge, meet up and most of all to further their enjoyment of driving on and off road.
- A wider committee with members right across the country and yet with an efficient means of holding meetings as and when required, in an efficient and effective way, with sub committees taking on specific responsibilities e.g. liaison with Green Laning groups and organisations.
- A Synchronauts membership that is fully inclusive and nation wide.
- To eventually organise events that range further afield, and of wider scope, and the ability to represent ourselves favourably alongside other European Syncro owners clubs, here or abroad.

The club continues to grow, now over 80 members and expected to top 100 this coming year.

I am pleased to say that we have managed to fulfil the original aims outlined in the first statement of my report above - running off-road driving events suited to Syncro owners and drivers and making them welcoming to all members and good social occasions.

In the past few months we have sadly had several resignations from the committee. And Aidan, Andy McClements and Jake Stephens will not be standing again this year having a busy time ahead.

Aidan (Beaker) Talbot has been on the committee since it was formed, is often the first to arrive and last to leave our meets and is here now, acting as stand-in Secretary overseeing this AGM – Special thanks.

Many thanks to all who have served on the Committee for all their hard work in front of computers as well as at events, their guidance and involvement in making the events we have run successful.

Thanks to:

- Thomas for taking charge of many of the events we have run as CoC, dealing with MSA permits - and setting out some cracking trials sections!;
- Jenny for dealing efficiently and professionally in all matters relating to the Treasurer's responsibilities - as well as many way beyond her remit;
- Vice Chair Mark Williams for acting as a guiding light from day one to the present, with never a dull moment in conversation or the written word!;
- And finally, to all the Members who have shown their support by trusting enough to book up for our meetings in advance and then making the most of what's on offer from arrival to departure. Looking down on a campsite from high on the hills or watching 20 Synchronauts enjoying their driving and the surrounding countryside can only put a smile on the face of everyone involved and makes the committee's work well worthwhile.

### **3/06 Accounts**

The accounts were available for the membership to view and are attached to these minutes. No questions were asked about the accounts and they were approved by those present.

The club's finances are in a healthy state which means we can purchase further equipment as needed and if necessary can bankroll or subsidise future events if the need arises.

### **4/06 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members**

Kevin Horler	Secretary
Jenny Sippings	Treasurer
Doug Brett	
Roger Crocker	
Andrew Fendick	
Michael Ghia	
Bob Green	
Russel Johnstone	
Simon Mounty	
Andrew Scott	
Clive Smith	
Dai Williams	
Mark Williams	

### **5/06 Resignation of the existing committee**

At this point in the meeting the existing committee all resigned their posts.

### **6/06 Election of officers and committee**

Kevin Horler and Jenny Sippings were elected unopposed to the positions of Secretary and Treasurer respectively.

The online poll for the committee members was left open for 24 hours to give plenty of time for members to vote. Altogether 26 members voted and the following candidates were elected:

Doug Brett  
Roger Crocker  
Bob Green  
Russel Johnstone  
Simon Mounty  
Andrew Scott  
Clive Smith  
Mark Williams

## **7/06 Any Other Business**

The following issues were discussed:

### **The connection with Club 80-90**

Quite a wide ranging discussion took place concerning the links with Club 80-90. The Synchronauts grew out of Club 80-90 and without the support of the 2 wheel drivers, Syncropendence 2004 would have been a failure. A straw poll was taken on whether we should maintain the links with Club 80-90 and 75% voted yes. It was agreed that this is a matter that should be discussed in further detail by the new committee.

### **Future events**

A discussion took place about the number of events that we should organise and where they should be held. The general view was that 3 or 4 was plenty, not forgetting other meets such as CJ's Devon weekend and the Brickyard Dales weekend, plus other informal local meets. It was felt that we should look for new sites, as some people are getting bored with Coney Farm and in different parts of the country than our centralised norm.

### **Pricing of events**

One member questioned why we had different prices for 2 wheel drivers and 4 wheel drivers at events. It was pointed out that this is only the case at our more expensive events; at Coney Farm everyone pays the same. The issue of carrying passengers was also discussed at some length.

### **Synchronauts technical help**

One member suggested that there should be a 24 hour technical support for members. It was felt that 24 hours was unreasonable, but Aidan suggested that maybe we should have a syncro-specific help list like the Club 80-90 help list.

### **Thanks**

Andy McClements felt that he represented those who attended any of the fine Syncro club events held over the last two years, in thanking all those individuals who made them happen. This sentiment was echoed by several other members.

## **8/06 Close of meeting**

The meeting closed at 10.30 p.m.

Aidan thanked Mark for providing the platform and Clive and Jenny for all their work in setting up and running the forum and the techie stuff, all the committee from the past for their efforts and all of the members who took the opportunity to contribute.