



**MINUTES OF CLUB 80-90 SYNCRONAUTS
3RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on
THURSDAY 30TH OCTOBER, 2008
ONLINE**

Present:

Clive Smith	Chairman
Kevin Horler	Secretary
Jenny Sippings	Treasurer
Doug Brett	
Roger Crocker	
Russel Johnston	
Pete Pollard	
Matt Sandall	
Glen Sankey	
Dai Williams	

Kevin Horler(Secretary) welcomed everyone to the online meeting.

1/08 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Richard Haslock, Mark Williams, Aidan Talbot

2/08 Chairman's Report

Welcome to the AGM

The objective of the Synchronauts remains to encourage ownership and off-road driving of our VW Syncros, the latter being through the organisation of off-road site events and green-lane driving in various parts of the country. Also to make these meetings sociable and as good a place as any to exchange ideas, see other Syncros in action and hone our driving and wild-camping skills - a pint or two and a good crack always seems to play a part too.

After the new committee settled in last October, the subject of **Synchronauts membership** was discussed, as the then current situation seemed to result in an increasing number of members whom we had to keep track of, yet only a core who were active in coming to events and meets, which was always the prime object of the Synchronauts A proposal came forward

that we simply require a £10 annual subscription, and then deduct this from the first event of the year to which they came... thus encouraging attendance at our Spring or Summer main off-road site events. This has worked well, and whilst we didn't require subs from overseas members who couldn't get to an event easily, several have paid up. This system also gives us a small extra float and some more freedom when booking a site that might not be attended too well... evidenced by the Whaddon spring event (below)

The New Year calendar sold reasonably well, though not as much revenue was generated as in 2007. Many thanks to Jenny for designing and producing it again, all those who sent their photos in for inclusion and those who supported us by ordering one (or more). We don't do the calendar simply for fund raising, as it also makes a nice record of the Synchronauts annual activities; however, we should try to make sure that it is better supported knowing how much work is put into it.

Dubfreeze

February brought Dubfreeze around again, and the format of the previous year was followed with a stand adjacent to the club; plenty of people dropped by both stands and Dubfreeze is a good time to re-make old acquaintances from 80-90 or other VW clubs, answer questions about who we are, and find more Syncros or potential owners who are of the same persuasion – keen to use them to go camping and driving off-road in challenging conditions as well as ideal ones. The raffles are another good reason to attend, the draw at the club stand always being a hoot with lots of prizes and one or two really great donations from members and traders alike. Many thanks to Matt for liaising with the event organisers for us, Doug and Jenny for the majority of the stand props and all those who helped me, Doug and Jenny man the stand, or supply hot coffee!

Whaddon Spring Event

Looking to spin some changes to the event programme for 2008, we considered some fixed-sites other than Coney Green Farm for our early event and struck upon Whaddon, a farm site in Buckinghamshire used for Pay and Play. Knowing that we would need 20 to 25 vehicles to pay the agreed solus weekend fee, we still went ahead, and although well attended, made the expected loss on the weekend, but not without having given all those who came what we all thought was darn good run out for their money... weather was good and it was pleasing that more newcomers attended and as usual we invited one or two non-syncros. A local family (complete with babe in arms) with a Shogun that some of us green-lane with enjoyed the weekend and it was also very nice to have Matt's long term friend Johnny with his Quad-bike, take part... We here made first use of our new barbecue both evenings and Sharon and Jenny helped cook everyone a communal breakfast on the Sunday morning – much appreciated by all.

Whaddon is basically a large valley with a Motocross track on one side and an off-road site the other, which has a lot of water both in the bottom and half way up a spring-line on the off-road side, with a few artificial hills... only a couple of Syncros managed to drive through one deep clay bottomed splash, through sheer speed and power, all very exciting for the rest as spectators – a hose was provided so a lot of overnight drying out was needed on the Sat night! Sunday saw the day mainly being devoted to climbing through the boggy spring-line which almost turned into a Team Challenge. Lots was learnt about finding and marking through-routes, backing up and supporting one another and equipment and techniques for steep, boggy and very Syncro-challenging conditions. An undoubted success, well worth the nominal loss we made (~£200) to try out a new site, I think we felt that getting more than 10 vehicles was good for an early event at a new site.

As so often is the case, many more would have liked to have come, should inevitable clashes with dates and obligations not interfered.

Roger's Plymouth Event

A long drive brought a number of us to a field near Plymouth in May. This was a Synchronauts event organised by Committee member Roger Crocker, to fit in with the Plymouth Volksfest, to demonstrate some Syncro stuff just above their festival site, and then use a disused quarry right next to the campsite for some Sunday driving... Roger also guided us out for a wonderful evening sightseeing along local lanes into Dartmoor that gave splendid views of the coast near Plymouth.

There was quite enough good driving to make it all a very successful event, meeting more new faces and vehicles, and especially joining forces with a Baja Buggy group, for both days driving. We also met most of Roger and Julia's family which was a pleasure, and some of them drove out with us the next day to play climb the steep chalk hill in the quarry... or was it descend the impossible descent, or maybe drive through the impossible undergrowth? We met KarlT Saturday and V-Lux arrived in his diesel van the Sunday sessions. Was all very different yet as always, more experience gained and skills and judgement learnt.

Wind was the only problem, which became gale force both nights – we soon learnt about wind-screens – of the large and flappy type, but they worked so well after a bit of adjustment that we could soon just watch the horizontal wind and weather screech over our heads, eating and drinking in comparative comfort. As Roger said, as the wind hit another gust of 50~60 mph and the trees behind shrieked in agony – ‘welcome to sunny Devon!’

Many thanks to Roger and Julia for this WW4 Synchronaut event... Wild West; Windy Weather; Wacky Waces but Well Worthit springs to mind most 😊 Deepest Devon is not that far away, honest!

Syncropendence 2008

This was the best attended Syncropendence yet, with over 20 vehicles driving and others camping too. Where else can compare with the lovely hills above our campsite near Llanfyllin used for the third year running.... Just for the camping by the river and impromptu camper picnics high up on the hills overlooking Llanfyllin it would be worth the journey there, but with such fun driving up and around this large hill-farm site thrown in, I'm sure we all realised how fortunate we were... even a few hours sunshine over the weekend, or one fresh and clear evening is enough to put a smile on everyone's face.

Saturday morning was quite formally organised with two groups, Russel taking those more experienced to explore the many challenges on the hills, whilst we concentrated on routine induction with the other group e.g. failed ascent, steep climb and descent techniques.

The days were good, so no-one really minded some miserable drizzle at barbecue time, a couple of keen souls had erected a massive tarp linking the two shelter tents in no time, making it very communal when the showers came over. Andy Tyke, an honorary non-Syncro owning Synchronaut set up a short-wave radio station nearby, providing another attraction. The Syncro-Campers corralled their wagons and Johnny (and brother Depp) brought his new quad-bike...a real corker of a Honda 4WD import, and enjoyed his time with us again.

Re-engined now with a diesel again, the Project DoDoka was brought along by Pete Morrill and Lewis; many got a go and some flayed the thing to within an inch of its life through 'our' secret splash pond, others waded it as deep as dare in the river and then was driven home happily under its own power, slowly, but reliably back to Cambridgeshire. Phew! Long may it turn up at our meeting.

After a magic time on the hills again, Sunday finally turned into a beautiful, mild and calm, star-studded evening later on for those around the campfire staying behind for the usual Monday winding down trip along local tracks and lanes. Consideration should be given to hilltop campsite next year... which the farmer says we're welcome to do.

Late October Welsh Laning

What a great success this was, two weekends ago! A dozen trucks, again more newcomers, welcoming Richard Haslock again and Mick (of Mick&Tracy) brought his very straight and clean AAZ Doka out on the Saturday.

With lanes previously recce'd by Aidan and Doug, the Saturday started with a 50 mile drive to the first lane, then after a few more both groups running closer than planned, headed up into Strata Florida country, West of Aberystwyth. Layers of flowers or flower covered rock strata? Whatever it means it is a pretty rare and special terrain, although May might be more picturesque, it was well in the throes of becoming wild and desolate as winter approached.

After a while climbing, the track can be said to be a river, that has to be driven through or criss-crossed for a few miles... it's likely much later in the year not passable with Syncros, indeed a few weeks earlier it had been struck by storm floods causing several accidents one with unfortunate and tragic consequences. We met quite a lot of traffic coming the other way, creating possibly bigger challenges than the track and the many fordings along the way. There was also an Enduro bike orienteering challenge taking place towards the end of the run, adding to the sights – chosen do doubt as an easy place to get totally lost!

A long drive back in drizzle and darkness turning to rain, found a somewhat wet and bedraggled camp, so combined with getting the Shelter tent up and food on the table, it was all a bit miserable for an hour or so... so different than the Friday night around another of AndyMc's campfires– calm, clear and warm enough helping to make a convivial evening, even more so when Richard Haslock produced a bottle of 2000 vintage Port. Dai and AndyTyke despite having arrived late on, helped out keeping the night company till well past sensible bedtimes...

A few left Saturday night or Sunday morning but two groups soon formed up for some of Doug and Aidan's discoveries, this time very local... a really good set of tracks leading to a damn good fast flowing ford crossing got us into the spirit and both groups made new discoveries, one that got us into all sorts of shenanigans getting out of a boggy field. Have to do that again and just take the weather on the nose, we were quite lucky with it, really!

End 2 End

Kevin had taken the planning of this May event well forward by the time it became increasingly apparent that far too few were able to fully commit to participating. One thing that loomed large was of course, the rapidly rising costs of motor fuel early in the year, peaking during the summer. Also, it became evident that a good trustworthy vehicle would be needed and some were in the throes of engine, gearbox and other refurbishments. Kev's work has been mothballed for a future event. Recently it was suggested that maybe a Scottish, Welsh, English, Cornish? End2End might be run, as preparatory to something more grand.... PS. Just saw petrol at 98.9 locally, diesel at 109.9, so things are improving a bit...

Other Events

First weekend in December 2007, several Synchronauts went to Brickwerks open day in the morning followed by **Holmfirth green-laning**, guided by Simon Baxter in the afternoon. It was during this fun afternoon that the immortal phrase 'petrols are gay' was on everyone's lips as the diesels found a real big hole in the ground that required Plenty 'O Grunt to get out of.. Andy Simpson revelling in the challenge, both forward and in reverse! Unfortunately one group suffered a real plague of mechanical problems, several retiring home whilst the rest soon joined forces with some good climbs causing a fair bout of wheel damage I seem to remember.

Sat night found those staying over driving through heavy rain to the Dales, to camp at Helwith Bridge again (the Coast 2 Coast Sat night halt), where a few pints were sunk before a generally early night. We were glad of having got plenty of sleep by Sunday morning – it was

cold and bucketing down still. Splitting into two groups, Kev's convoy tackled a heavily flooded rocky river bank which proved too much on the day when wheels were found to be getting badly damaged. The other group touring around high up, saw rivers in flood everywhere, and when back down in the valleys found some deep wading and fording where Land Rovers were also out in force – made for some good photo sessions, now watched from on high by Kev's convoy on the way home.

Well attended by Synchronauts, **CJs August 2008 Devon laning event** again was fantastic, particularly on the Sunday, some really narrow ones there and in nice countryside. The wet that crept back in was getting more than annoying by the Monday morning though (it didn't then stop for another 3 weeks).

September brought **Vanfest** which too was very wet, despite this there was a Doka 25th anniversary in the form of an aerial photo shoot of nearly 60 pickups spelling out DoKa. Several Synchronauts entered their Syncro pickups into the design.

The Khyam Shelter tent

The Khyam shelter tent, suggested by Julia and bought after Syncropendence last year has proved a wise purchase, is up to the job, provided good shelter when required, usually from wind or rain, and at the last October Welsh off-road camp, we found that 12 fit comfortably, with room for drinks and space in the middle!

The only downside we can see is that with 6 sides and six zippable doors, people enter/exit through any one of them randomly when it's all shut-up against the elements, and even sometimes fall through them– so far, it has escaped any damage though.

Expenditures over and above our MSA fixed costs and site fees

Over the winter, we bought a new barbecue... not that we had one before, but as it had become a bit of chore for me to borrow and transport such a big item that the Committee decided we should find a slightly smaller one that also might be easier to clean. Jenny found a great New Year deal on a narrower but all stainless fold down barbie with wheels.

It's just large enough and was used at Whaddon and Syncropendence. Jenny extends particular thanks to those few who help her clean it, admitting that I'm also in there with those making a wide detour around it the next morning. 😊

We donated £50 to Club 80-90 funds in recognition for web-hosting the Syncro forum which we effectively use as our meeting place.

Thanks

Many thanks are due to the club officers Kevin and Jenny fulfilling their many tasks as Secretary and Treasurer respectively and of course Aidan for acting as Vice Chairman.

Doug has again kindly managed and transported the vast majority of bulky items to and from events this year – this would be a thankless task so to prevent that, many thanks are extended to him, it has made meets much more enjoyable for so many...

.. and to the whole committee who've provided input, feedback, specialist advice and help where and when necessary. The committee forum worked well again this year, making all our jobs much easier, it generally requiring little notice or fore-warning to get matters raised and dealt with quickly and efficiently – many thanks again to all.

Simon is retiring this year from the Committee due to expanding and ramping up his business interests, so I thank him on behalf of us all for accepting the role last year and his time and inputs during forum discussions. I'm sure we all wish him much success in his New Brickwerks premises and with his on-line parts emporium.

Membership

54 members renewed their memberships this year, over 20 of whom did not attend any events.

The Future

Onerous duties at work kept Secretary Kev from all the events he'd have liked to attend I'm sure, and maybe from some he'd like to have organised as well, so this year was back to our site events with the late October Welsh laning falling just right to fill a gap in the calendar – a good fix for the seriously addicted! Kevin has let me know that his work duties are back more on an even keel now, so will no doubt be planning something we don't know about yet!

Let's have a lively discussion again about what everyone likes to be doing, Syncro-wise... if it's Euro travels, that's something some have been debating amongst themselves. Jake and Ollie as well as Pete and myself have driven the Val D'Aran this year, so if you are keen on flora and fauna and high altitudes as well as track driving, the Pyrenees are for you.

From my perspective, a lot of time was taken up this year helping to get the DoDoka back on the road. Many thanks are mainly due to Pete Morrill and AndyMc for getting this to Syncropendence. John Morrill, Pete Pollard, Sharon and Jenny also helped a great deal. Aidan and Andy Simpson also helped on advice and some parts. This was time we were also allocating to continue reeceing Herts and Essex lanes... so hopefully we can finish that now and run this event in the New Year, when it's nice and wet! If you like fords, this'll be for you!

During the year a couple of clubs have made contact, initially to glean help with organising their own activities and site hire along the lines of the Synchronauts. They've had similar ideals and objectives as us, hopefully I've pointed them in the right direction. We have already had one joint event (Plymouth) with the Baja buggies, and bearing in mind that for example Whaddon required another ten attendances to break even, we might well consider joining forces with such other clubs, in order to be able to afford a wider range of quality sites.

NB. We are fortunate with Llanfyllin that we are charged per camping unit and per vehicle driving on hill, rather than a fixed fee.

3/08 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.

4/08 To receive any nominations for officers/committee members

Kevin Horler	Secretary
Jenny Sippings	Treasurer
Doug Brett	
Roger Crocker	
Russel Johnston	
Matt Sandall	
Clive Smith	
Aidan Talbot	
Dai Williams	
Mark Williams	

5/08 Resignation of the existing committee

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

6/08 Election of officers and committee

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

As only 8 people stood for the committee they were declared elected unopposed.

Doug Brett
Roger Crocker
Russel Johnston
Matt Sandall
Clive Smith
Aidan Talbot
Dai Williams
Mark Williams

7/08 Future Events

A discussion took place about planning the diary of events well ahead, so that dates do not conflict with other VW events. One of the problems last year was trying to recce new sites and this led to delays in booking definite dates and also using an online committee forum to agree dates is not always fast.

Key mentioned that he had ideas for a future event along the lines of Coast to Coast.

Doug suggested that we should have informal laning outings in different parts of the country on an ad hoc basis. This could be done by anyone, not necessarily a Synchronauts Committee member.

Clive outlined the usual Synchronauts calendar of events:

- Spring site event
- Syncropendence (usually first weekend in July)
- CJ Devon weekend (usually first weekend in August)
- Autumn laning event (last year in Wales)

08/08 Merchandising, stickers and fliers

This was discussed at last year's AGM and not much progress has been made since then. Matt offered to ask PrinterAI to print some windscreen stickers for us.

09/08 25th Anniversary event

At this time nothing definite was known about any planned events, however Russel had been in touch with Henning Gramann who was hoping to hold an event in Germany, but when and where still undecided.

10/08 Any Other Business

The following issues were discussed:

AGM

There was a suggestion that we should hold a face to face AGM rather than an online one. The difficulties of doing this were pointed out (we have tried in the past). At events most people prefer to drive or socialise, than hold meetings. Also it was agreed in the past that October was the best time of year to hold the AGM, as the year's events have all been run.

CB Radios

It was suggested that whilst we cannot make CB radios compulsory they should be encouraged amongst members especially for green laning expeditions. It was felt to be a good idea.

11/08 Close of Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.20 p.m.