

# Club 80-90 Synchronauts President's Report Dec 2014

## *The Year in General*

Once again I have to report a Syncroful year. Nobody can say that we let the year down by not Syncroing to the tune, melody and rhythm of VW's perceptive 80's vision - Synchronisation of drivetrains front and rear in a tough workaday Transporter bus/wagen/truck - culminating in what many are converting to and being converted to 30 years later, a comfortable camper or full expedition vehicle. This, whether based on twincab (Doka) pickup truck, panel (kastenwagen) van, Caravelle people carrier, dayvan or original Westfalia/Devon style camper.

Encouraged by *new* members with *new* ideas, *new* ways of looking at things, *new* places to travel to, *new* technology to do it with, *new* suppliers to help us do it. plus a flood of exciting *new* projects to keep us interested, motivated and entertained – 80-90 Synchronauts Committee decided to run our usual three annual events to keep the Syncro family together but as usual, tried to swing the changes a little with some additional events thrown in.

That usually means looking for something different and exciting for our first Spring event... I think The 'Bristol Boys', Patrick, Mark and Richard (plus support) succeeded superbly... and Mendipidy shows what scope there is for the future both in the West Country and elsewhere with a little imagination. I therefore offer no apologies for the lengthy reprise given to this year's first event.

Also this year Roger and his son Dominic led us down some excellent lanes in Devon, Alastair organised a Scottish meet, Jed secured us a great pitch at the Adventure Overland Show and Baz organised a laning event on the Salisbury Plain, his local stamping ground. Thanks to all.

Of course, many have been well aware that Syncro 30 is next year and the muddle, confusion and will I/won't I debate with oneself and others... as long as we continue to use our Syncros next year for what they were intended for or make progress with whatever longer term Syncro project we've embarked upon... that'll be tipping one's hat to Hannover and Graz sufficiently reverentially. After all, it's only a number, and no-one need be panicking over a drive to Berlin, Graz or anywhere else, when the money, time & resources might be better spent furthering one's progress on longer term dreams & aspirations... whatever they might be.

## **Some longer expeditions**

Steve Theobald travelled to Iceland and sent a very comprehensive gallery of images to the committee which were displayed at AO this year.

Jed, Louise and Isaac & Al and Harriet travelled for more than 6 weeks away to Morocco; after significant preparation and products testing. CVC have documented these travels in an excellent series of videos available on their website.

7 vehicles travelled from the French Fley meet (mentioned below) via Millau (French outdoor activity centre of excellence) to the Val d'Arran region of the Spanish Pyrenees, driving on and off tracks into Andorra. 4 vehicles then left Andorra and travelled through Northern Spain to depart ferry Bilbao via Pamplona, the others drove back up through France.

**Long distance visitors...** I am pleased to report again that we have a small but growing following of those from outside Great Britain that are happy to travel longer distances to enjoy our meetings (& hopefully our company)... Rob (Dutchdude); Lorcan & Sam and Dave and Paul from Ireland; Stefan from Germany; Jason from Denmark

**Newcomers..** Over the course of the year 17 new members registered with us, and of equal importance a good number managed to get to one or more meetings: Welcome!  
See Overland Adventure Exhibition for more on membership generally.

### **Commercial Enterprises supporting our Volkswagen Syncros**

I would like to take time to record that we now have two very good suppliers of replacement parts plus improved and modified parts for camping, expedition, performance and reliability.

**Brickwerks** continues to provide excellent support and an ever expanding parts list to make maintaining and improving a VW Syncro easier than otherwise with a 25 year old vehicle – including several excellent turnkey solutions;

It is also encouraging to see **CamperVanCulture** succeeding with provision of some fantastic products for T25s and sourcing general camper, expedition and Syncro specific items that otherwise would not be readily available.

Then there are the many support and backup services that provide the backbone of maintenance, restoration and refurbishment and equipment:-

Tdi Mario. McClements Electronics, TMT T3volution, Aidan Talbot Gearboxes, Dai Williams craftwerks, Fabzz fabs (CVC), Holman Engineering, SyncroServices, HugoRepatriationMonkeyard etc I think these (and there are bound to be others we know personally) should all be mentioned in the hall of fame for supporting us so well: I'm sure our members hope you all prosper, making our lives a little easier I think by cutting down on lengthy research for the 'ideal' fix, fact or fab(rication)

*PS. Please forward any others you think inadvertently left out of the hall of fame, for inclusion in the final report, thanks!*

**Syncro spot-failure of the year...** just keep us out of trouble! This year at Mendipidy two Syncros were found with loose front hub nuts (the big 30mm one). Since then we have heard of more and are told that the original nut is often better than the replacements supplied with a new front outer CVjoint. Alternatively Brickwerks can supply a better quality one for a quid or so. Make sure you do them up tight to avoid a surprise.

Also the usual nuisance of driveshaft bolts loosening off and falling out still tend to crop up ... quite often the front inners.

### ***Mendipidy May 2014***

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=131713>

**Recce** - A very cold day in February found a somewhat under-dressed group of Syncro Committee members hunched in the biting wind wandering the gnarled and ridiculously steep rocky outcrops of a Mendips hilltop farm... watching unlimited Land Rovers of dubious parentage attempting 'impossible' trial courses. A few actually succeeded but more staggering was that without windows front or sides, many of the drivers were gloveless -the words hatters and mad sprang to mind, not that they bothered to wear one.

Rain on the wind eventually 'forced us' to take refuge a few miles up the road in the Queen Victoria, and over lunch in front of a smoky but warm fire we thawed and chewed the fat... Ok, looks doable with caution, warnings and plenty of barrier tape ! Let's go and look at the 'proposed' campsite...

There we saw wide open fields (read exposed), plenty of well built long-drop toilets (we thought) and in the late low winter sun the picturesque glint (some without feeling might say) of flooded Somerset levels.

**Thursday** - Arriving at the Mendips hilltop campsite late afternoon in a cloudburst we were surprised to find the campsite field was surrounded by black clouds but clear overhead and dry underfoot.. that bode well we thought.

**Friday** – Jenny, myself and Patrick set off for final recce and setup of the driving site, later joined by Richard and Mark. Excellent lunch area, good field for general induction but plenty of areas that could trap the unwary and overall potentially damaging for a Syncro.

By late Friday evening this was looking like a very well attended first event with a large area packed with Syncros and a few other supporting vehicles packed in like sardines (for cosiness, conviviality& warmth presumably, as the field is enormous!) =

**Saturday** – a fine day and improving. By now 25 Syncros had arrived. In convoy we set out for the farm driving site a few miles away. After introductions and a safety talk from the clerk of course (who else?), vehicle scrutiny the drivers split up into groups for three driving areas. Newcomers were welcomed and then interrogated (or was it the other way around), and given a short induction on the nursery slopes, before being pointed at the terrain proper.. where some were taking it steady amongst trees and dips and dells, with the remainder having disappeared to test their metal and their mettle in rough country. 😊

Nice to see a few locals drop in to watch us, some parents and grandchildren, spouses. Dave Lowe called by to say hi... made a very relaxed sunny lunchtime on the park there. Afternoon – a free for all challenges amongst rocky ravines and steep climb-outs plus an Aidan inspired skill trial around those strange holes, easy to enter but not to escape... Some excellent driving; great climbs by Baz backwards, PeninsulaRich. Mark and Al. Someone in a blue truck got stuck sideways & steep– great recovery though!

Others got Sunburn! Or was it windburn? More others sat for an hour or more enjoying the first warm sun for a long time.. and laughed at the crazy antics (and male egos) 😊

A very bustling campsite and an increasingly cold and unrelenting wind got up – we suddenly realised what being on the leading edge of an wing must be like for a wing walker in winter ! Because that’s exactly where this field was if the wind was in the south.

**Sunday** – Assembled and drove in convoy to Brean Sands, via a long ford with a traffic jam, via a stop & line-up at Cheddar Gorge (to take in the circus like procession of cars bikes and buses) then another lineup at Brean leaving after a drive along the sands (gently gently as required). Richard & Lee departed for WelshWales, feeling homesick at the sight of the Severn Estuary.

Synchronauts rather like a bit of artisan food and drink, a group stopped to take advantage of a summerset cider (farm) shop before returning up Cheddar Gorge – now teeming with cyclists, walkers, runners and climbers dangling from unimaginable places dressed in unimaginably expensive looking cloth using unimaginably flashy kit – and we think our pastime is expensive.

Stopped at Queen Victoria for a pint or two and then a group meal there having scrubbed up (supposedly). The wind was even worse around a very unsatisfactory brazier that night... ugh! But hey... was a good night at the pub.

**Bank Holiday Monday** –A good number of green lanes and old tracks along and behind the Mendips had previously been recce’d and revved up for the Monday. In groups we set off at different times aiming at a free lunch wherever the group found itself... each group seeming to ‘discover’ some ‘magic’ lunch spot that the others would be envious of. It turned out over a pint later that they were all within spitting distance and had recce’d each other’s but given it a miss

Those with long onward journeys had forked off before lunch, so after merging into one group at a particularly 'heavy duty' afternoon lane, the weather closing in, we set course for the Queen Vic (our main and steady reference in the wonderful but disorienting world of the Mendips

Many of us found this a largely unexplored and pleasant area with a distinct feel and atmosphere of its own. Fortunately there are many more lanes & tracks that we did not get to, so... here's to next time!

The committee and members thank Patrick, Richard and Mark for the donkey work involved in bringing us to Somerset and the Mendips ... a really lovely and previously undiscovered region for many members.

## ***Syncropendence July 2014***

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=131680&start=120>

This year we enticed 24 Syncros to Llanfyllin, our usual site for July's Syncropendence meet. More newcomers were especially welcome adding freshness & variety to the campfire conversation (sounds good that, true or not).

A special mention and welcome back must be made for Geoff and Jane who attended our very first SP, at another Llan, idoes that one. They now have one of the (famous) Audi engined Rowan Medical Services Syncros and came to enjoy the weekend whilst bedding it down.

We had an English trial (setup by Paul & Simon) down around and of course, through the river, as entertainment when the weather got the better of us up on the hill... always a good exercise. There was a lot of interesting activity down in the mudhole Saturday afternoon with good entertainment value from old and newcomers alike... some remarkable escapes from the stream were witnessed - without a winch or tow line. But out came the tow ropes soon enough.

Whereas it was Dai & team who worked hard creating a devilish German trial up the mountain which proved impossible to clear with a zero - though Mark and I got close with one fault I think (and Dai himself) - at least I did something half right that weekend.

Simon and Baz were doing some very fine demo driving up the ramp and along the prop-breaker whilst each took their turn to drive the trial... afterwards being treated to some great two wheel trials riding around us by two lads on their ultralight flippyaroundy goanywhere machinery  
Fantastic stuff!

Late Saturday night around the campfire (what's new) and Sunday morning on the hill were both quite eventful! I can't reveal the former escapade here but the latter involved two broken rear driveshafts.

Hopefully everyone enjoyed their driving... and that of others!

Most of our fixed site events involve a drinks or cuisine theme, this one both. Max agreed to organise coming up with a 'fruit' theme..

So ... cheese with fruits in. Everything with fruit in... Debbie did some abs.amaazing chocolates, then a range of fruity cocktails. Mmmm. Thanks are due from all to those who contributed including Simon and Aidan who sponsored local Welsh beer.. very good and this keg didn't go whoosh .

Four stayed behind in Llanfyllin being kindly hosted by AT Gearboxes, licking wounds, making repairs and readying for the drive to the Next Event on the Friday...

## **CamperJam July 2014**

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=131918&start=15>

The 8090 Synchronauts seem to fit in well with the CamperJam Culture and they with us this time. Dedicated Syncro camping area in our traditional spot far far away but not too near our usual neighbours, the Brazibay dance tent ... too near and it makes you wanna dance all night and we can't have that....can we?

We had about a dozen Synchronauts arrive and camp with us, well down on our normal contingent but all quality members of course so no problem there. 😊

Fabzz and Carla brought along a really good large (bright red) gazebo and despite misgivings it was perfect.. once fitted out with fridge and about 100 litres of Jason's Danish Red (matching) tinnies.. lovely stuff on a summers afternoon. Thanks you three... a great contribution.

It's taken a time to get to grips with the CJam administration but with Committee member Rich Haslock playing lead fiddle in the liaison department with David we really seem to be getting there now.

Secretary Neil sorted a 'demo' permit from the MSA, Rich took up the challenge and arranged good controlled access to 'the Quarry' adjacent to our allocated camping area.

Lots of rides for lots of people (a real roller-coaster is 'the quarry') and somehow £80 of donations were thrown our way, Tracy, Sharon and Jenny gathering them up from the long grass as fast as they could. Funds boosted!

Official photographers were detailed by CamperJam; they stood in strange elevated spots; then taken around un-ceremoniously by Jason and (more ceremoniously) Simon TMT and no doubt others - and absolutely loved it.

Great drinks Sat night treated to a hilarious regaling of being a Glastonbury staff worker by Harriet with the odd encouraging guffaw from Al... she really doesn't take pity when you are in stitches however painful. Jed came over too and we had a pretty good evening at the fireside.

I have reported on the Saturday night laughs and despite copious coffees, too much walking about buying expensive things for maybe less than imminent purposes, Sunday was a lovely day too, especially since...

Rob DD & Jason Hugo Man (the great unwashed, Er! the truck not the man I hope) won display prizes and surprised us all.. Congratulations both. And young HugoMonkey loves CJ methinks! 😊

As usual the idea at CJ is to cruise off casually mid Sundernoons. Personally, we always visit the 'big house' as they have such a nice coffee girl, er, I mean barista and relax strolling around the deli there.. their pork pies must be fameuse le monde (even the French liked them two years ago).

### ***The French VW Event at Fley***

'Fley' is the French equivalent of an event run by 'Serial Kombi', a French 'Just Kampers' Fley is well across Midi-East in France near Chalon-sur-Saône, a good drive from any of the Channel ports, so most travelling down made sure that a good stopover campsite was booked before leaving. Six club members travelled in two groups, some preferring N(A) roads and others the simplicity of the 'payage' autoroutes. Pete & Sharon; Clive & Jenny; Rob and Jo(sephine); - Dai and Debbie; Mick & Dawn (T4 friends) and Max (Mags Barry).

All those Syncro Club de France members who came to the UK were there (and a lot more) and had made space for us in their allotted area. In short we were made very welcome!

What a sight by Saturday morning... a 10 acre field with about 2,000 VWs in it! A trip out of the site to a viewpoint above showed how tightly they were all packed... definitely 'not allowed' in the UK.



The Friday and Saturday were scorching, latterly broken up by some real ground shaking thunderstorms.. the incredible lightning forks proved elusive even to a 'B' setting on a digi camera but the rain was like stair rods (OK, those under 40 wouldn't know a stair rod from a bit of gripper rod, but it was fierce stuff!).

The SCdF provided a really tough challenge field nearby (it had rained a lot previously too, destroying much of the local crops) but all but Dai declined knowing we had a long onward journey. Ditto the local lanes that they had plotted out for everyone.. in retrospect I think we were a bit 'reserved' ...

Strange bands played (very, I actually took a walk at 1-00 am to see what was on offer, let's see it was not in any way mainstream), Illuminated Serious Moonlight Balloons ascended, and descended... nice people and horrible sick heads mingled... and let us just compare the loos at about 2-00 am Sunday morning, each and every one of them, short drop farmer built straw strewn stinkhouses. Mendips about +6 out of town, Fley minus -3 at best. Of course, we had our own facilities, who wouldn't? 😊

We enjoyed it all immensely, the friendly French people, the hospitality under the enormous gazebo that ... if you haven't seen... most or all the French club eat communally rather than hide themselves away. Laughter and high spirits and holiday seem to be the key ingredients.

However, getting out of the field, up even a modest ramp after a drop of rain Monday morning - was a do or die affair - even for Syncros. But out we went and off towards Millau.. most of us.

I missed the bit where we had to solder up a microphone using a gas stove and a 'soldering bit' supplied by the ever trusty elder statesman of the French Club Yves Poisson then a grand joint dinner for us Brits (that includes Rob and Joe, more British than any of us)

Verdict – wouldn't have missed it.. especially the 'special' fruit sangria our French neighbours made... magic.

## ***Devon August 2014***

Weather permitting (not always then...) the general atmosphere -at our lovely secluded, well situated and appointed campsite nr Cullompton in Devon - is relaxed. Nobody feels that they have to do anything or go anywhere having paid no fixed site fees. Except that being Synchronauts with Syncros, they do want to go and do, even if that's two times steak chips and a glass of wine for £20 down the local if arriving by Thursday evening...

With a sufficient quorum and consensus by Friday, the norm is to introduce any newcomers to the local lanes, which are not to be taken for granted. One in particular is always a fine drive, All Hallows, which Baz and Roger and Dom did whilst the rest waited like chaperones at the end. We also recce'd the flooded mill leat which always makes a nice evening walk.

Roger had agreed to recce and lead the weekends lanes, and had chosen two routes both working into Dartmoor. We welcomed newcomers Bernie & Amy who came out with us in a nice but slightly

rough sounding 1.9. Leaving Saturday morning we had a fair drive to get started but Bovey Tracey made up for it for a fine pub lunch. Finding a really difficult lane made up for the late start though, every twist turn and overhang being a challenge, unfortunately meaning Jim had to remove his massive roof rack... I hope others enjoyed the challenge, everyone worked together, even the many dogs, in difficult circumstances as the gaps were impossible in places. Nice when you get out of a deep long lane into bright sunshine.. makes you realise what Terry Waite felt like after years of confinement. 😊

Later climbing the spectacular route out and up a sheer Dartmoor valley side Bernie's engine just wouldn't have it, the heat seemingly messing up the carburation till it wouldn't start let alone run. With Jim and Dom's help, Roger and I tandem towed him right to the very top, running rough he then nursed it – well done!.

With a nice big fire blazing the night soon went in a haze of pass arounds.. I expect everyone's forgotten what they were, must have been rum, scotch?.

Sunday morning Jim decided that he'd severely hampered us yesterday, so Craig and Baz offered to sacrifice themselves on the altar of locklackdiffiness, whilst wandering at random we all wanted to get Bernie running a bit more reliably for the ensuing day out...

...which was another good Dartmoor day, with some more testing tracks from Roger again - requiring teamwork to cut, lift, remove timber and work through systematically; ending with a Fingle's Bridge climb... something everyone with a Syncro should do.

Monday broke wet windy and we watched as everyone packed and disappeared as early and fast as they could. When it rains there it really does, being under the Black Downs.

Thanks for all the support from those that came, and lovely to see those new faces, Sean Fiona, Bernie & Amy and Jim & Sal and all the lovely dogs.

Rumours are it may not be our campsite next year... lets wait and see, think that's nearly 10 years now?

## ***Adventure Overland September 2014***

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=135476&start=105>

So successful last year was the Adventure Overland Exhibition/Show at Stratford racecourse that we expected it to be even bigger & better this year... it wasn't, or certainly didn't seem to be. Not that any of our organising committee or members regretted attending since this turned out to be our largest get together this year, with over 30 members' vehicles setting up in the ample area provided which was once again conveniently right next to CamperVanCulture's stand so we could share passing traffic so to speak.. and of course food, drink and firepits after dark.

Last year we invested in a large new Coleman shelter tent which was a real hit at party time; and this year Max suggested we had a couple of roller blind hoardings produced to publicise ourselves and attract people in - setup is minutes making life easy at the start of day and (provided it's not blowing a hooley) look a professional way of getting the message across - and weren't too expensive.

So what was missing? Everyone it seems enjoyed meeting, greeting, eating, browsing stalls and exhibits and partying Saturday night.. There was plenty to see but... the show has lost its freshness and edge, pizzazz in three years seems to already not be progressing, improving, extending advancing, indeed stagnating. New stands with new products, if any not many?

The seminars were just as disorganised in just as unsuitable a place with just as useless media with just as noisy distractions as last year... think that says something. As far as food catering goes, the message from last year hadn't been learnt either... they should be a centrepiece or on star pattern with the other stands, not miles away, and they should also be 'open' !

Enough said, because the Synchronauts 'use' the show as an end of year bash for its members, to meet those who otherwise wouldn't or don't come to a driving meet, being Syncroless or mid-build also to encourage those browsing around for a club of like minded souls – to drop by. Parts (and ideas) swapping is endemic and infectious. 😊

This year the evening party started with Margaritas and nibbles, thanks to Marg's suggestion (Max) moving on to chilli and apple, with many different dishes coming from random contributors along the long line of camping units, hopefully everyone getting a chance to sample as many as they wished...

It was good to have Stefan from Germany and Rob from Holland attend, newcomers clift\_d, Danmetallic, Southern Sparky and three LT Syncros from various parts...

All welcomed and by late on a lovely hot Sunday afternoon, there were a lot of knowing waved departures acknowledging it might be six months till we meet again.... Ahhh!

## ***Scottish Meet September 2014***

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=48&t=136287&sid=47df5bf0c29ed3dcca2fe2817f541a>

The Scottish contingent enjoyed a green laning style day with the land rover green laning club in 2013. We intended to build on this outing with our own planned laning event courtesy of the Forestry Commission. Initial discussions with the Forestry Commission in the fall of 2013 were encouraging, however by the time the permission forms were submitted, a change in personnel at the Forestry Commission had a different view on our activities and our application for access was unsuccessful. There ended our efforts for an autumn off-road event in Scotland. This includes an influence from the off-road event in 2013 where we only had three vans attend and left one with a flooded engine following a failed river crossing. Therefore a simple pay and play week end was not considered for 2014 due to low attendance.

However, in lieu of an off-road weekend, we did arrange a driving and camping weekend. One of our Scottish members is a part owner in a sustainable forestry development, who offered up a corner of their forest with parking for camping and space for a fire. On Saturday the 27th September, 8 VW 4x4's met up at Aberfoyle; 1- LT 4WD, 1- T4 Syncro and 6- T25 Syncros, for a drive in the pleasant autumn sunshine over the Dukes Pass and up to the three lochs drive. The three lochs route is a gravel road maintained by the Forestry Commission and accessible to the public through daytime hours. It is a 7 mile circular route which provides access to three lochs and walking trails available from designated parking places. We enjoyed the drive around the route in convoy, stopping off for a spot of lunch and a walk around some of the musical artwork which has been installed on the walks.

From the three lochs route, the convoy headed out to the private forest where we squeezed the vans in to the parking area, leaving just enough space for a campfire. For the second time on the trip, the kids within the group were able to get out and run about in nature's back yard (from 7 camping units, we had 4 children under 6 who all got on well and enjoyed the weekend tremendously). Despite the efforts of some rain in the evening, spirits were kept dry following the



erection of a parachute between the vans and over the campfire, looking like a big top from a circus tent.

A jovial evening of fireside socialising ensued with some retiring to bed significantly later than others. The next morning, some headed off home, while others made a bee line to the nearby café for coffee and cakes before the journey home. A very enjoyable weekend was had by all with particular note of the family friendly environment fostered by all.

Plans are afoot for similar casual events in 2015.

### ***Salisbury Plain October 2014***

<http://forum.club8090.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=4&t=135537>

Overall what a busy year for everyone.. and we really hope to meet more new members, more from overseas and see many long standing Synchronaut members back again. We know there are a lot out there, who are building or reconditioning Syncros, of whatever form, and we are looking forward to seeing them and their mounts, be it animal vegetable or mineral or even female...