

Oxfordshire Summer Rally



Club members gathered at Finstock a beautiful Cotswold village and the new home of Richard Franklin and Helen our hosts for the day. The major attraction provided by Robin Batchelor, was a demonstration inflation of a hot air balloon in a field behind the Plough Inn which had been borrowed for the occasion from an obliging local farmer. Having rather unkindly evicted the standing tenants the balloon recovery vehicle and trailer made its way into the field together with a Fordson Major tractor and Ford estate car to act as anchor points. Unlike Trojans it would appear balloons start up and go with little encouragement and a following wind will take you into the next county before you have time to draw breath. A small army of helpers commanded by Robin assembled the paraphernalia including basket with burners and gas supply, ropes, balloon bag and portable fan and then adjourned to the Plough for lunch and liquid refreshment. Following Fathers' Day roast and "Rennies" in lieu of a sweet we galloped up the track to complete the dummy launch. A burner test suitably awed the assembled spectators and came close to singing a few eyebrows. With the aid of an auxiliary powered fan the balloon took shape and demonstrated its multi-coloured artwork and prodigious size with the tethered basket hovering just above the ground. A gusting wind however prevented and extended viewing and it collapsed in a heap of fabric stretched across the grass. Robin re-marshalled his army of helpers and the balloon was repacked and returned to its trailer. The company returned to the pub for further refreshment and found that an MGA with an Osselli tuned "MGB" engine, five speed gearbox and chrome wire wheels had

attempted to upstage the party. A real wolf in sheep's clothing and likely to give MGBs' a nasty surprise given a clear road. It was soon put in its place when the two Trojans present were started to demonstrate their hidden power potential and enveloped the pub and customers in a blue haze. It was then noticed that the assembled "Trojanless Potters were beginning to exhibit "withdrawal symptoms", Richard was quickly revived by David who loaned him his Utility and in conjunction with John and his Victory van they gave rides to the assembled wives and children round the village. Phil and Steve with tears dropping in their beer relived tales of Trojan "daring do" and like fishermen of "the ones that got away"; they were heard to remark that "if only Carl had been here we would have had it fifty feet off the ground in no time". The horses returned to the field three in-hand herded by a Yorkshire terrier which returned a few minutes later driving a Fordson Major! At which point Richard announced that tea with scones and cake were now being served at his house and we all trooped up the High Street for yet more refreshment. After claiming that none of us were really hungry, tea and cake rapidly disappeared and the horse's aversion to Trojans was explored. Robin was not entirely convinced that a Victory van would make an ideal balloon recovery vehicle but he would like to know why the rear brake binds on his Utility – a number of solutions were proposed. Finally the Trojans were returned to their trailers and towed out of Finstock along with the balloon, allowing the blue haze to disperse and this charming village to return to its rural peace and tranquillity.

With our grateful thanks to Richard and Helen for their hospitality.

An anonymous observer.

