



# AROC COTSWOLD SECTION MARCH NEWSLETTER 2019



## THE SECRETARY'S SCRIBBLES

### "ARE WE THERE YET?"



No - not the familiar cry that every parent has experienced from the rear seats of a car - but are we ready for what promises to be another action-packed year of all things Alfa related? I mentioned in the last newsletter a proposed convoy to **Spring Alfa Day at Beaulieu on the 14th April**. If you wish to join the convoy (always spirited but never illegal!) then the meeting point is Costa Coffee on the Milton Park Services just off the A34. (Postcode OX14 4TX). We aim to meet up from 7.30am for departure at 8.00am.

April also sees **"Drive it Day" on Sunday the 28th**. We are planning a run out for the day, maybe with lunch or dinner. We will keep you posted.

Another proposed convoy run is to the **Auto Italia Day at Brooklands on the 4th May**. Meet up point is at Peartree Services again just off the A34. (Postcode OX2 8JZ). This is an earlier start as it's a busy event and it pays to be there early. So set those alarms and meet up at 6.30am for a 6.45am departure.

Speaking of May events: a reminder that **May's monthly meeting is at "Caffeine and Machine, Ettington**. We have a reservation from 7pm onwards but I will need to know numbers attending by the end of April and also numbers intending to dine. It should be a good run out for all and I gather the food is great.

Work continues with **CAD 2019** and we should have everything in place by the time you read this. Promotion will be in the next "Alfa Driver" and also on the website and FB pages.

Tickets are now on sale for the **Silverstone Classic** and if you wish to take advantage of the club prices then the "early bird" discount is up to 31st March. Details of the club booking code are on the club website.

Prescott have now issued the details for **"La Vita Rossa" on the last May Bank Holiday which is 26/27th**. I have sent an e-mail to all. The booking code is: 901T19 for single days and W901T19 for the weekend. The booking deadline is the 17th of May. Full info on the Prescott web site.

On a different note and with the aim of mixing with more clubs Mark Knight has been in touch and we

have an invite to attend a **Maserati (Mr Hood!?) meet in Pershore on Sunday the 7th of April**. Mark has also put me in touch with the **"Petrolicious"** organisation who are having a meet at **Bicester Heritage on Sunday the 12th of May** to which we are welcome. The ad for the event is in the newsletter and you can apply directly. They are looking for an Alfa, classic or modern, which has an interesting story to tell, to be present on the day. The chosen Alfa will also be used for one of their excellent write-up's. So, if you fancy going and think yours may be **THE** Alfa they are looking for, then please let me know.

So, plenty to keep us all busy over the next few months and hopefully some good weather to boot. Ciao, Alex

## Petrolicious Event May 12<sup>th</sup> Bicester Heritage

*Petrolicious* engages with a youthful, social media savvy audience, the majority of which fall into the 25-34 and 35-44 age ranges. 70% travel more than three times per year, 70% have restored a car, and 65% own three or more cars. ***The first-ever Petrolicious drivers' meeting will be held at Bicester Heritage on May 12th***. It will be centred around the Technical Site at Bicester Heritage. A maximum 200 cars curated in advance, sourced from collectors, museums and submissions will be shown inside the Technical Site, with exhibits chosen based on aesthetics, the story behind the car, and their uniqueness. There will be a designated area on the airfield side labelled Petrolicious Parking - only for visitor cars deemed suitable for Petrolicious Parking. There will be an automotive art gallery, a Photographic Studio where visitors can have their car professionally photographed, a storytelling stage with Petrolicious videos projected and talks by the owners including former racing drivers, and a bespoke/limited run manufacturer area. <https://petrolicious.com/>

***"There will be various awards—including some for the parking lot contingent of cars—and we encourage you to bring your prides and joys."***

*The event is open to anyone who wants to attend, and tickets for non-members is £12.00.*

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/petrolicious-drivers-meeting-at-bicester-heritage-general-admission-tickets-57661862182>

## BUYING A "CHEAP" ALFA 916 FROM EBAY

In retirement, August 2018, I decided, since I no longer needed to be anywhere at a specific time, to indulge myself and buy an Alfa 916 Spider as a weekend car. I decided a Twin Spark would be most economical to buy and run.

My first eBay purchase was a red Phase 1, sold with an MOT and a £2000.00 bill for rear suspension overhaul 2000 miles ago by a top specialist. It had a current MOT, but needed paintwork doing due to fading and lacquer lift, but no rust.



Technically the description was accurate, but it handled a little strangely. When I got it home, I found the front tyres had wire sticking out from the inside edges and the paint could be scraped off with an ice scraper. The resulting body shop estimate was £5000.00 (fair as I found out since as I decided to strip it myself). I am now a couple of hundred hours in with different panels having multiple different coats of paint. The original red paint had gone rotten under the lacquer and just blocks up flattening discs - obviously not a quick job! So now, it is under a cover and I spend an hour or two with a DA whenever I have nothing better to do! I could not chemically strip it as bonnet, front wings and hood cover are a form of fibreglass .....a winter project.



I decided to buy another one to do some of the late summer/autumn events, but this time without a paint problem. Found a black one on eBay, fairly local, looking like a nice car. There were no paint problems other than a small crack in the grill surround on the bonnet. I also noticed a cheap manual aerial and the hood had shrunk with the usual problems. But what do you expect on a 20-year-old car? It started and ran,

with a slight misfire but no variator noise. The seller would not allow a test drive for insurance reasons, but since a set of plugs are £80.00 and with no service history other than a bill from a "friend" for a service and a set of plugs for £60.00 and the knowledge that the Twin Spark generally has a good reputation, I decided to go for it.

It overheated and expired on the way home – so I trailed it to an Alfa expert who initially correctly diagnosed a burnt valve, but when the head was off we discovered one cylinder was almost oval and the block was scrap.

It ended up with a full recon engine, new clutch, new alternator, belts, cv boot and a set of tyres (as they were all cracked) - and the MOT was out. Had it back in November 2018 just as the weather changed - took 16 weeks for the work to be done and next year's holiday is now in a tent.

In the meantime, determined to get something out of the summer, I bought Spider number 3 - green this time, clean body with no MOT, but with the failure notice for brakes and emissions. Ever the optimist, I thought "3rd time lucky". It had to be cheap as pension could not afford an expensive one and as I used to run a workshop 30 years ago, thought I could do it myself. Pads and discs are cheap and Halfords sell a money back MOT emissions fixer for a few pounds. The car was cheap, but 170 miles away so had it picked up by a transport contractor.

It started and ran but would create a smoke screen a destroyer would be proud of.

It did not seem to use oil or water. I checked for head gasket with fluorescent dye in the coolant and combustion gases check in header tank - Alfa experts suggested may be sucking hydraulic fluid from servo, but eliminated all that. Then the penny dropped - when do you buy a car off eBay with a full tank of fuel? Somebody had put diesel in it! I drained it off, but there were cat and lambda scrap and other electrical issues due to damp as it had been stored for some time. After fresh fuel, smoke problem still existed, not as bad but still not usable, so another winter project emerged!



I just hope the experts are correct and these cars are going up in value.

Moral of the story - if you want a 916, do not be a cheapskate, buy a proper one with a good service history from a genuine owner that has cherished it and give it a good inspection and road test. Red and silver seem particularly prone to lacquer lift.

Points to look for:

- Original paint: - If it has been re-painted, has it been taken back to primer? If not, it will just lift again and paintwork usually costs more than mechanical problems.
- Recent MOT and cam belt/balance shaft belt, preferably with variator change, if not, budget £500.
- Have a good look at tyre wear, particularly front inside edges.
- Lower front wishbone bushes considered a consumable.
- Knocking from rear suspension usually bushes, but if it has been going on a while aluminium subframe can be damaged. This is available second-hand for about £100, but a big job to change it, over £1000 in labour plus parts. It had just been done on my red one which is one of the reasons I went for it.
- Budget for a hood unless it has recently been replaced, they all shrink around the rear window. A place in Kent does them for £600.00 fitted. (All my 3 need hoods). All mine have manual hoods – easy enough to get up and down and I think there are enough potential problems with a 20+ year old car without trying to get an electric hood working.
- In all my 3, the radios were rubbish - it was actually the front speakers that rot out to just the chassis!
- Rubber seals round windows etc no longer available, nor small triangular plastic screw cover on front indicator/fog lamps.
- If Phase 1, touch the gear lever and instrument surround - if it is sticky, most are, this has to have grotty plastic paint removed and be repainted.
- Make sure that unless you are mechanically adept that you have access to a local Alfa expert - these cars do need looking after and like any mistress are expensive to maintain - very few main dealers were dealers when these cars were current, so specialists are best.
- When I was an apprentice at an Alfa garage almost 60 years ago, we only used Golden Lodge surface discharge plugs as Alfas were plug sensitive - seems they still are, so £80.00 a set it is.
- If you are going to do the diagnostics on ABS, engine and airbags yourself, the Phase one is not OBD, but has separate 3 pin connectors for each control unit - I have tried the two most recommended diagnostic programs and connection is variable - injector light is on one car and although diagnostics from one system connect, no fault codes found.
- Whatever you do, if you have a flat battery, REMOVE the ignition key before connecting jump leads - if the key is in the ignition when you connect the battery, in all probability the code

light will come on and you are then in real trouble.



Here is the latest update on the black one, which has had a £3000.00 engine rebuild with new clutch, alternator, second hand block, head etc, (the only part from original engine was the crank). I used it to go down to Portland Bill on 24<sup>th</sup> February for my 51<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary. It used a complete 5 litre can of oil in 350-mile trip. It cost more in oil than petrol. Whilst Alfas traditionally use a little oil, 70 miles per litre of oil seems excessive, so back to the engine builder next week. Saga will be updated in next Newsletter.....!

**Derek Mathers**

**AROC COTSWOLD SECTION**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Tuesday February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

The committee, chaired by Steve Davies and composing Alex Payne (Secretary), John Mills (Treasurer) and Chris Martin (Web Manager) led the meeting. Apologies were given by Neale Smith (Committee member) and 3 others. There were 17 others present including two visitors from the West Midlands AROC Section.

**Secretary's Report**

Alex explained that the February Newsletter summarised activities throughout the year and remarked on the success of events. One of the highlights was how the membership had also been involved as individuals and individually had attended many events. Cotswold Alfa Day was great and had changed to Saturday as a trial and to accommodate Cotswold Wildlife Park. The venue worked as a family friendly location and although the change of day may not have been everyone's choice, it still attracted 90 plus cars and some new faces.

He noted the change of eligibility rules for Bicester Heritage which needs Club Bookings to include at least 50% pre-90's cars, so the section will not be reserving a pitch this year. Alex thanked the Section for their support throughout the year and said he would be willing to stand again as Secretary.

## Treasurer's Report

John circulated a summary of accounts.

He reminded the section that it was possible to claim a subsidy of £50 per month from AROC UK on production of valid receipts. However, AROC UK also encouraged sections to be self-sufficient and to make minimal claims as over claiming by all would severely stretch the AROC UK funds. As a result, the Cotswold Section has this year made only 3 claims of £50, which is the lowest not only in recent years but also since the Section re-formed in 2005.

There are one or two expenses which could not be claimed from AROC, namely the cheque presented to Mike and Carol when they gave up tenancy of the Fox and the donation to Myton Hospice in memory of Malcolm Coulter who passed away last year (Alex represented the Section at the funeral).

The Section paid £71.40 for the hosting of the new website and were able to claim back £50 from AROC UK.

For our chosen Charity Friends of Pershore Hospital, we raised £73 in total.

Our total expenditure for the year was £2077.25. the balance at the beginning of the year was £504.56 and at present is £442.41. The aim of the Section has been to maintain a balance between £450.00 and £500.00 to be available for emergency payments such as printer or events prepayment.

During questions Mark Knight offered to discuss continued sponsorship levels and sharing his web host to reduce costs. Chris Martin would discuss this with Mark at a future point. Derek Mathers queried insurance cover and was advised that AROC UK has protection for Sections and is used, for example, at Cotswold Alfa Day for Public Liability and safety co-ordination with venues.

## COMMITTEE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS

Steve Davies began by saying that he was willing to stand down as Chair if anyone was interested in taking the role. However, there were no volunteers and the voting proceeded as follows:

**Chair** : Steve Davies Re-elected

**Secretary:** Alex Payne Re-elected

## Treasurer post (Vacant)

Dave Parker had written to the committee expressing interest and was elected. Neville Guibarra had also approached the committee with an interest in supporting with the Treasurer's role. The committee will talk with both Dave and Neville.

**Web Manager** Chris Martin Re-elected

**Committee Member** Neale Smith Re-elected

**(Non-Committee Newsletter Editor** David Slorach  
to replace Hazel Mills)

Those present were asked if they wished to volunteer to be co-opted on to the committee, but when no-one responded, it was acknowledged that Section members were very good at helping with and organising the programme and events when needed.

## COTSWOLD SECTION ORGANISED EVENTS

- **Cotswold Alfa Day 2019** is on Father's Day this year on Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup>. The venue, Compton Verney, is already known to many of the section and will have special Father's Day events happening and provide a lovely setting for the Alfas. The Giro Panoramico will start from The Bell at Alderminster, near Stratford. Both venues have been extremely helpful and encouraging.
- **Drive it Day 2019.** This is on Sunday April 28<sup>th</sup> Ideas were requested reference a destination. A suggestion had been to drive to the Gloucester Jet Age Museum at Staverton. Other ideas to be sent to Alex.
- **Mini Factory Tour.** Chris Martin is looking into this. Tours are available at Cowley for £15.00 per head and is offered at 6.30 on weekdays.
- **Autumn Drive.** Ideas were to be sent to Alex. A suggestion was Batsford Arboretum.
- **Christmas Lunch. December 7<sup>th</sup>.** The venue was confirmed as The Bell at Alderminster.

## REGULAR MEETINGS

It was acknowledged that The Fox was becoming increasingly busy and it would be monitored to see if it was making meetings difficult. It was pointed out that the Fox had several advantages and it was difficult to find venues which were central to all. It was agreed to stay with the venue and the night.

## EVENTS WITH COTSWOLD SECTION ATTENDANCE BOOKED

**Caffeine and Machine at Ettington near Stratford**  
May meeting on Tuesday 21st May, Evening Drive Out. Venue booked. Numbers needed a week before. More details will follow.

**La Vita Rossa** at Prescott Hill Climb. Cotswold section are booked in and discount code will be sent as soon as it is known. Need to book early and in good numbers to secure our own pitch.

## DISCUSSION ON FURTHER EVENTS:

**Bicester Heritage** – a reminder to book early and to be mindful of their eligibility rules for the main parking area.

## Suggestions from members:

*Derek Mathers:* promoted the idea of an input at meetings to share technical tips reference to projects in progress, proposed or failed. The idea would be that

it took up about 20 minutes and led to more informal chat afterwards. Helpful also as ice breaker to get to know others.

*Mark Knight*: offered to come to talk for about 15 minutes to discuss a specific topic on car maintenance/ restoration/repair using his business and personal car ownership experience.

*John Raper*: suggested a talk by other professionals in their field, possibly using Longborough Village Hall and an easy buffet and drinks.

*Mark Knight* offered a half - day experience combined with a drive and lunch. For example, make a visit to his paint shop with demos followed by a scenic drive to his workshops at Twyning and then a pub for lunch.

*David Storch* suggested involving the Pirelli Roadshow

*Steve Davies* suggested a Whisky Tasting Event using a colleague whom he knew, to which John Raper suggested a tasting event at the Cotswold Distillery.

### **NOMINATED CHARITY FOR 2019 DONATIONS**

Mark Grimshaw thanked the Section for supporting his nominated Charity "The Friends of Pershore Hospital" for 2018/2019. Mark Knight promoted "Fly to Help" a local charity which is aviation based but works closely with car clubs. They raise funds to offer respite days out for small groups, families or school children who have suffered some sort of trauma or distress. The beneficiaries are often children, but sometimes veterans. They are given a day out at an airfield looking at different operations and sometimes including a flight. <http://www.fly2help.org/> . This charity was accepted as the 2019/2020 Section charity and was seen also as a "thank you" to Mark Knight for his continued support and sponsorship.

### **AOB**

- Graham and Fraser from West Midlands section outlined some of their events and invited Cotswold Section to think about joint events and join any of their meetings in 2019.
- The meeting ended with a presentation and vote of thanks to John Mills for his role as Section Treasurer for the last 6 years and to Hazel for her temporary role in producing the regular Section Newsletter. They were presented with a scale Model Abarth 595, built and modelled by Alex Payne.

**Notes by H Mills**

### **RACE RETRO February 2019. Stoneleigh**

Here are a few shots of what you missed at this ever-popular event. Dave Townsend, Roger Lewis, Rod Ashton and John Mills all met up there on the Saturday.

*Alfa Romeo Montreal*



*Alfa Romeo 185T, 6 speed 1500cc turbo, 750bhp as driven by Riccardo Patrese*



*Cotswold Member Steve Dymoke's Alfa Romeo 156*

**COTSWOLD ALFA DAY** SUNDAY 16TH JUNE 2019  
COMPTON VERNEY, WARWICKSHIRE



The Cotswold section will once again host Cotswold Alfa Day in June this year with the ever popular format of a meet for coffee, and a breakfast bag and directions for the Giro Panoramico route, before arriving at Compton Verney.

Situated just off the historic Fosse Way is Compton Verney Manor House and Gardens. Compton Verney is set in 120 acres of stunning parkland and lake which surround the Georgian manor house and art gallery.

As the 16th of June is Fathers Day there will also be a special exhibition of "Painting Childhood" along with the other fine works

in the award winning gallery. The "Capability" Brown landscape also has large scale art works on display and to complement this there is an outdoor play area and family friendly cafe and gift shop. They will also be plenty of room to picnic, if you prefer. (There will be a small charge for the "Painting Childhood" exhibition only)

The Giro Panoramico will begin again at The Bell Aldermister. [www.thebellad.co.uk](http://www.thebellad.co.uk). They also have rooms so if you wish to make it a weekend away please book direct.

More information (including costs and how to apply) is on the new Section website. <http://arocotswolds.co.uk/>

**COTSWOLD ALFA DAY PLANNING  
IS UNDERWAY!**

**Look out for this ad in your next edition of "Alfa Driver".**

**The committee are well ahead with the plans for this great annual event.**

**They are also looking for extra help on the day with marshalling at The Bell and at Compton Verney. So, let them know if you are free!**



*AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST.....!*

As I hand the Newsletter over to the capable hands of David Slorach, I want to say a huge "Thank You" to everyone who made great contributions by sending photos and articles and making it their newsletter. It has been fun chatting to you all and encouraging you to share your stories.

We have seen many changes in style and input over the years and look forward to seeing the new reincarnation!

Maybe we can persuade Mark Grimshaw to resurrect his Italian recipes ...!

Have a good one!

Hazel XXX