

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

21 NOVEMBER 2021

STEVENTON VILLAGE HALL, OXON

In attendance:

Chris Bailey, Cleve Belcher, Ian Harvey, John and Bev Oates, Andrew York, Steve Reed, Chris Treagust, Vanessa Plumpton, Bryan Pullan, Peter Riggs, Philippe Allison, John Moon, Martin de Little, Bernie Shaw, Tony Hodgekiss, David Gardener, Simon Scotland, Simon Stokes

Apologies: Tony Malyon, Mike Wilcock, Roger Gullen, Jasmin Gagen

Chairman: Bev Oates

Bev welcomed everyone and reflected how good it was to be able to meet in person once again. Zoom meetings have worked particularly well and will continue for the foreseeable future. Although it has been a strange 18 months, the Club has continued to function. Furthermore, despite not addressing the SWOT exercise specifically, the committee has been looking at the issues that affect the Club on a more informal basis and implementing changes as necessary.

Bev sees her role as a ‘motivator’ and ‘chivier’ – not just chairing meetings but liaising with Ian and Cleve to ensure we are doing what we need to and doing it when required. This was her opportunity to thank the Committee and to try and make the membership more aware of the good work it does to keep the Club going by including the minutes of this meeting in FP.

Bev thanked Tony for the daily running of the Club’s finances having made a fairly smooth transition of the accounting system to QuickBooks, with thanks also to Cleve for managing this process and for spending time on a monthly basis to monitor the financial position.

Bev also congratulated Bryan for his continuing stewardship of our excellent magazine, Floating Power. Bev remarked how good it was to see Chris Treagust here having made a good recovery after his illness over the summer. She thanked Chris and Vanessa who both work diligently to ensure we have the necessary parts available to members to keep their beloved Tractions on the road. Further thanks were given to Cleve who has spent many hours trying to sort out import duties, transit coding, appropriate form-filling, etc. to keep the supply of parts coming from Europe and for whom there appears to be a glimmer of light at the end of a long, dark tunnel.

Bev also reiterated the necessity to keep promoting TOC and encourage people to find out more about Tractions, hopefully acquire one and join the Club. She thanked Ian and Mike Wilcock and those other members who helped them deliver three very successful TOC stands at shows this year – The London Classic Car Show at Syon Park, the British Motor Show at Farnborough and the National Classic Car Show at the NEC.

Bev also thanked Chris Bailey for his efforts in promoting Tractions in articles and photos in print and on-line media, and also Andy York who maintains our social media presence.

Bev then introduced and thanked a knowledgeable and keen member, Simon Scotland, who has been assisting us with our website in close co-operation with Cleve and John who were also thanked. She also thanked Steve Reed for continuing to man the Helpline, and also our membership secretary and her better half, John, who not only

manages the membership database but also has an important role co-ordinating data across all aspects of the Club's operations.

Finally, Bev extended thanks to all the Section Co-ordinators who have been making contact with new members and arranging events in their areas

Election of Committee Members

As a minimum of one third of the committee are required to stand down each year, the longest standing members, Chris Bailey, Vanessa Plumpton, Martin de Little, Bryan Pullan and Cleve Belcher, stood down and all were willing to stand for re-election, furthermore, Simon Scotland would be standing for election to the committee. The motion that those standing down should duly be re-elected and Simon should be elected, was proposed by Bernie Shaw and seconded by Bev Oates, and they duly were.

Finally, John Moon announced that he would be standing down from the committee but would continue to be the Champion of Slough-built Traction.

Finance

In Tony's absence, Cleve reported that the QuickBooks accounting system was working well and that at present the Club is consistently breaking even or showing a small profit. The various aspects of the Club's activities, particularly subscriptions and the spares operation are now working well together.

The ongoing import duty issues are particularly frustrating although HMRC have allowed us a duty deferment account so that we are not required to pay duty on imported goods at the point of entry into the UK. Andy suggested that in most commercial situations, an agent is normally required to deal with importation issues. Cleve responded that in our case, the carriers should deal with the import administration but Parcellforce, who we have been using, are proving somewhat inept, hence the need to find an alternative.

Finally, an invitation to vote on the proposal to increase the Club subscription from £36 to £40 had been sent to the membership by email with a deadline of 19 November. Ian reported that he had received 55 responses from the membership (excluding committee members).

The results were: For - 50 Against – 4 Abstentions – 1

A vote was taken at the meeting and all were unanimously for the motion, thus the increase will take effect from January 2022. Ian further reported that of the voting replies he had received, 8 members had also taken the trouble to express their appreciation of the work carried out by the committee and how much they valued the Club and the services it offers to its membership.

Floating Power

Bryan Pullan reflected that he had been in post nearly 4 years and during that time he had altered the format of the magazine and introduced colour to the cover pages which seemed to have met with approval from almost everyone. Tony expressed his preference for black and white images for the cover and Bernie agreed, but appreciated that the magazine was brighter and more welcoming in colour.

Bryan had also carried out a re-tendering exercise to establish if the costs involved in the design, production and distribution of FP could be reduced, after which a turn-key operation with the original printing firm was agreed with added benefits.

He confirmed that FP production continues to go well and he has some interesting technical articles in the pipeline but the loss of many social functions over recent months has meant much fewer social reports. However, the Sections Coordinators are very good at providing interesting reports on their activities, in particular, Peter Fereday in Scotland.

Bryan was particularly appreciative of Chris's 'Bailey's Banter' and requested more articles related to RWD cars to add more interest and looked forward to more reports from the Australian member restoring a Big 6 but was finding the latest lockdown was hampering progress. He also proposed to try and exchange articles with the editors of magazines from other European and Australian clubs. Bernie suggested he would send him the Traction Universelle magazine to which he subscribes as a source.

Bryan also requested more content from members and reminded us that there will be no calendar for 2022 as production costs had been deemed too costly. Simon Stokes suggested that a calendar could be pre-sold and advertised for sale in FP at a price that would cover the cost of production and postage. Martin informed us that it was normally 5 days work to produce the calendar and to be viable would require a production run of at least 100. Simon Scotland suggested that further research into the actual cost of the calendar should be undertaken and Bryan suggested that a Club calendar could have a sponsored charity content with a charity contribution from each one sold.

Membership

John reported that there were now 605 members of TOC (622 at the same time last year) of which 35 were based in the European Union and 47 elsewhere in the world. Phil Allison queried the actual numbers of members leaving and new ones joining and John replied that very few members actually formally resign from the Club but rather they stop paying their subscriptions which may be because they had died or had sold their cars and he would not necessarily know which. Cleve reflected that only around 50% of Traction owners in the UK were actually Club members. Simon Stokes also reflected that many people his age and younger tended to live their lives online and often have less permanent homes mostly without access to garaging or even off-street parking, but many have a keen interest in classic cars so an online FP would be of particular interest and could be the catalyst for future ownership and hence Club membership.

Spares

Chris Treagust reported that the current year was proving to be the most challenging for him since taking on the spares operation and that as a former Brexiteer, he had now changed his views having experienced first-hand the ramifications of trade with suppliers within the EU. Orders were now regularly taking 6 weeks from order to delivery as opposed to the 3 or 4 days of 2 years ago and VAT payments were causing major problems and suppliers were starting to chase payments long before the goods had even arrived.

Much of the issues were connected to the freight carriers engaged in the deliveries and the complications of the excessive administration required. He was actively engaged in changing to another distributor, such as Fed-Ex to try and resolve the issue and suggested that a further stock-take should be undertaken in April next year.

Chris added that he would welcome more shelving for the stores to make the storage and collection of parts easier and Bernie suggested splitting French and Slough parts into two separate categories to further simplify the operation. Chris also noted that many parts suppliers, including CTA, did not actively want Club members to buy parts directly from them, but preferred to deal directly with the Club who would then supply to the membership as this greatly reduces the administration process.

It was suggested that if the problems of parts deliveries continued, it may be an idea to arrange for regular parts collections to be made by someone in the Club.

Phil asked if we had considered CAS as a possible alternative parts supplier but Chris noted that in many cases their costs were notably higher than CTA, but Phil replied that this was because their parts were often manufactured to a higher standard and therefore were of superior quality. John Moon added that in his experience in rebuilding the rear suspension of his car, the silent blocs from CAS were of considerably better quality than those supplied by CTA, and there had been very little difference to cost between the two. Furthermore, James Geddes who has been professionally rebuilding Tractions regularly uses CAS parts.

No final decisions were made, but the matter would continue to be considered and discussed at future meetings.

Shop

Vanessa reported that there had been minimal sales of late. She had 50 grille badges now in stock and a few grey polo shirts, and if more were sought, a new clothing supplier would need to be found.

Simon Stokes suggested an alternative approach whereby the Club logo could be made available for printing on a wide variety of products from on-line suppliers with orders arranged through the website.

Marketing

Chris presented his report and continued to reach out to relevant magazines, in particular, “Practical Classics” was an ideal publication for us but preferred previews rather than reviews. The YouTube channels were working well, in particular, that of James Martin who was looking for a Traction to review in a short film, ideally within reach of Ipswich.

Andy continues to add content to our Facebook page and Ian regularly posts Traction-related images on Instagram. Simon Stokes suggested a ‘back-to-basics’ approach with a web-based introduction to the whole Traction experience for newcomers, something like “Tractions for Dummies”.

Social Events

Bryan reported that the Annual Rally in the Lake District would be attempted next year for the third time. There are 21 cars still booked and he would be requesting final numbers by the end of January in an ad in the next FP.

Bev suggested we should start considering the 2023 Annual Rally and Chris Bailey suggested that the West Country would be ideal. Thus the Sections would be asked to start looking for suitable locations and someone to coordinate the event.

Ian reported that the TOC stand at the National Classic Car Show at the NEC in November had been quite successful and 6 or 7 new membership enquiries had been taken. The plan had been to promote the Club at the most prestigious classic car show as economically as possible and the only expenses were Ian and Mike’s hotel bill and the cost of fuel getting the 4 cars to and from Birmingham (less than £650.00). Furthermore, as Ian has been storing 2 of the 3 wooden crates holding the exhibition display components in his garage since May, the cost of storage at RDW in Shropshire has been reduced by around £600.00.

The 3 shows also demonstrated the benefits of the TOC Roadshow concept whereby a comprehensive display relating to early Citroen cars – Tractions in particular and the activities of the Club – could be delivered and erected quite efficiently anywhere in the country with local Sections and members providing display vehicles, people to man the stand and accommodation for the build crew. Obviously, an outdoor show would require a shelter for the display and in time it would be necessary for the Club to have its own collapsible shelter.

Finally, Chris Bailey reported that the 17th ICCCR event would be taking place in Poland next year and he intended to attend and invited others to join him.

Helpline

Steve confirmed he was actively responding to mainly technical enquiries and continued to be astounded at the preposterous nature of some of the enquiries he receives.

Website

Cleve reported that he and John were jointly administering the website but were still some updating issues with the software but were now assisted by Simon Scotland who has now been appointed Webmaster.

Simon introduced himself as the owner of a Traction for the last 30 years and was professionally experienced in all website design, production and administration issues. He had been looking closely at our website for some time and had identified a number of areas which could be improved upon. He proposed a fresh initial page which would be welcoming to those new to Traction and would provide an informative introduction with fresh content to attract positive interest.

He later showed us a flavour of what he had in mind through a laptop presentation.

Other Business

Phil reflected that as Coordinators for the Surrey, Hants & Sussex Section, he and Sue had found it increasingly difficult to get events organised of late due in part to a general apathy probably connected to the ongoing pandemic.

However, he did announce that he and Rob Kiff and their respective wives were taking part in the Cape to Cape Classic Car Rally 23 April – 8 May 2022 in their Roadsters. This would be a 2,700 mile tour of Great Britain and Ireland in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support and they were aiming to raise £8,000 in donations. Details and more information would be provided in forthcoming FP and it was suggested that the Club could become involved with perhaps a display at the start and/or the finish.

Finally, Tony reported the recent death of Tom Evans, an early Club member and official and suggested a tribute in the next FP. He would liaise with Jasmin Gagen as Tom was in the Eastern Section and well known in the area.

Ian Harvey
Secretary
November 2021