

THE ESSEX RALLY BY MICHAEL RABIGER

It's forty years since I rode in a Trojan and now I'm off to a TOC Rally, hungry for lungfuls of two-stroke smoke. Matt and Mary Littleson kindly fetch me from the train station in a superb Jaguar and soon we were at Clockhouse, home of Bob and Anne Adams. On the lawn, a row of cheery Trojans, each with its bright aura. Everyone so welcoming as we tuck into the sumptuous spread; the talk is of cylinder heads, white metal, and Scroggy mods, but also of theatre, books, and the pleasures of reconstructing the past. Ah, my people.

Carl Tantum brings his Saloon on a low-loader, Bob hands out beautiful maps, and we get into the Trojans.



How efficiently everyone's car starts up, and then-thrill of a lifetime-that well-remembered frantic jangle of epicyclics followed by the prolonged, elephantine grunt (from the car) as John Wilton changes his immaculate 1924 Utility from first to second. We're cruising to the Wilkin Jam Museum in Tiptree, and from our chariot a demure rumble and popping, and the suspension shimmying over the Essex cambers. The wind lashes my face: surely we're doing 70? No, says John, about 40. O the thrill and the memories! If only my wife and Chicago friends could see me now.

Unwisely I had volunteered to navigate. Within ten minutes we are lost and seeing more pretty

countryside than intended. Sheepishly I pass the map to Richard Potter in the back seat. He and John in laconic dialogue get us back on target. No wonder we won the Battle of Britain. Here come the first plashes of rain, and John's hood is a non-riser, but it matters not. It's motherland rain, and sheer joy from the noble eminence of a Trojan. After some tyre-grinding about-turns, we make Tiptree and dock in the Trojan lineup.

Inside the Museum we muse over the resourceful Wilkinses, see their first kettles, carts, bottling and capping equipment, and some arcane contraptions for de-stoning fruit (eviscerating laggardly employees?). Passing the Tea Rooms, the only exit is -lo! via the gift shop. I buy little pots of raspberry jam for my granddaughters.

At the Rose and Crown in Tolleshunt Knights we dine at long tables, Last Supper style. I get my neighbours' stories and am struck by the variety of people's backgrounds. History preservation has no common denominator: it's far more than restoring mechanisms-for there's something utopian and hopeful in preserving a car meant to liberate the masses.

Outside, more rain, and I am beckoned into Carl's original-state 1928 Saloon. Its picture windows and corduroy interior make me feel I'm in a mobile stateroom. Back at Clockhouse, Anne gives us the restoration history of their lovely 15th century home. I am moved to see Roman numeral assembly numbers chiseled into ceiling boards, with the IV given as IIII. I picture the medieval Essex carpenters encountering the 1920s craftsmen who made our Trojans. How they would recognize and respect each other's skills! And what a privilege to tread in their footsteps.

Thanks for the outing of a lifetime, everyone.

Michael Rabiger, (ex EV 99)

