20-GHOST CLUB - NORDIC AND BALTIC TOUR

1st to 21st July-2012

*A bevy of old Rolls there came*

*To Nordic Lands, wind, sun and rain*

*By the wayside some fell*

*Lack of petrol - Oh hell!*

*But to keep going was their simple aim*

Fifteen of the seventeen participating cars met at Harwich for the night ferry

to Esbjerg, Denmark. The seventeen included ten Silver Ghosts (1913-1924):

the Holmes, de Boers (Netherlands), Corbetts (joined in Stockholm), Tysons,

Palmers, Stuttards, Forsters, Banks,Mathesons (Australia), Whitaker; one

20 (1926): Crossley Cookes; one Phantom I (1927): Forbes; four Phantom II

Continentals (1930-1933): Macphersons, Duce, Keunings (Netherlands), Elliotts

(Austria); one 20-25: Fidlers (joined at Copenhagen), plus the Stuttard’s Range

Rover (mechanical back-up): O’Sullivan.

After a smooth crossing to Denmark we drove straight to Ribe and set

the standard of open air relaxed lunches in the old port of Sonnebrun

followed by sight-seeing (Ribe Cathedral).

Our route covered over 1,500 miles through Denmark, Sweden, Latvia,

Estonia and Finland. A couple of cars popped into Germany inadvertently.

A tour which surpassed our very high expectations in every detail, a perfect

number of cars, wonderful ambience, fascinating driving and fun.

In Denmark and Sweden we stayed in castles, starting with Broholm, drinking

tea on the lawn as swans and cygnets sailed elegantly through a passage in

a water-lily filled lake; monasteries including Bosjökloster and Vadstena,

founded in 1350 by Sweden’s only Saint, Saint Bridget; a Kro (country inn) ;

a state of the art eccentric modern glass hotel where the famous designer, Kjell

Engman explained his thoughts behind the whole concept and the “functional” but

very comfortable Copenhagen Island Hotel.

Despite John and Lesley Stuttard’s exhaustive reconnaissance and research

which resulted in excellent, detailed, “idiot proof” route guides and maps ,

navigating methods included: inspiration, maps of various scale, sat-navs

and occasional raised voices.

Denmark was immaculate, intensively farmed with huge farm buildings,

smiling hospitality, beautiful villages with thatched beamed cottages. Originally the

thatch was of seaweed but now mainly straw with the roof ridges held down by

wooden cross bar struts. Many buildings painted in “Falu” red, the dark red ochre so

popular all over Denmark and Sweden, once used for protection and now historically

and very prevalent.

Outings included: Cathedrals in Ribe and in Roskilde where most of the Danish

Royal family are buried, Copenhagen and Stockholm; Helsingor – Elsinore of

Hamlet fame; Car museums including, Egeskov, the Sommer Car Museum

where founder Ole Sommer showed us his collection and Sparreholm Castle Car

Museum. Art Galleries included the Louisiana Contemporary Collection with its

great sculptures and the fascinating Viking Ship Museum and the magnificent

Vasa Museum in Stockholm showing the Vasa which sank on her maiden voyage in

1628 was lifted from the sea in 1962 almost intact and has been housed in her own

museum since 1990 and had over twenty million visitors.

Strone Macpherson organised an exceptional visit to meet the very hospitable

Jock and Sylvia Monroe at Ledreborg Palace, their stunning “lived in” palace.

In Copenhagen the cars were displayed in the Tivoli Gardens, with the

Stuttards, Mathesons, de Boers and Tysons giving early morning and endless

TV interviews which resulted in large crowds from Denmark, Sweden and

Passengers from cruise ships coming to see the cars.

The long journey over the bridge from Denmark to Sweden was scarily windy. In

Sweden we drove through colourful towns, more intensive farming with “Falu”

red buildings and finally to Stockholm, the “Venice of the North” where many

enjoyed trips on tourist boats.

Until we discovered that 17,000 huge old American cars ranging from

Chevrolets to Buicks were en-route to a rally, we had the impression that

every other Swedish car was an old American banger.

The roads were clear and excellent. “Klaus and Luus (de Boer) saw a loose moose

in a forest”. Huge storks’ nests balanced precariously on telegraph poles and

chimneys, with storks strutting through fields. In towns we had to come

to terms with the local procedure at Zebra crossings: If a pedestrian even

considered putting a foot in the road, vehicles had to stop instantly. When one

old lady asserted her rights, the Forbes slammed on their brakes just in time

and heard her muttering in Swedish, when she confirmed that she had said “if one

had to be run over it might as well be by a “Rolls-Royce”,

It was re-assuring and helpful to have the technical support of Roy

O’Sullivan in the Stuttard’s Range Rover and PFTP (permanent failure to

proceed) was avoided and often replaced by TFTP(temporary FTP) with

minor problems en-route including fuel and water “vaporisation” or “running

out of petrol” in other words. Talk floated around about problems with starters,

carburettors, dynamos, brakes!, clutches and a certain person whose large

new oil can flew off the running board at a roundabout.

As confidence, or was it tiredness?, crept in, some doubled their daily journey

returning for a suitcase left in a hotel and lost shoes were not the only items

which had to be posted to England.

A magnificent mystery tour around the Stockholm docks following “our

leader” in a search for the Riga terminal initially amused and finally annoyed

the local busses as our turning and reversing cars blocked roads in every

direction. We drove backwards and forwards in ever decreasing and

somewhat desperate circles as if performing a private gymkhana and, no,

we did not miss the boat!

Elspeth Crossley Cooke & Sarah Tyson