



## Event Bulletin Number 1 – January 2009

Thank you for your entry to the 2009 VBOA International Meeting. We will be sending out these bulletins on a regular basis to keep you updated on entries, the event arrangements and some articles of general interest about the country you will be driving through and the places to be visited.

Entries are still welcome and we currently have a very respectable 60 cars and crews on the event with a few more “definites” still sorting out their arrangements. The event has a very International flavour as we have entries from Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, The Netherlands and Ireland as well as the United Kingdom. If you are able to access the VBOA website ([www.vboa.org.uk](http://www.vboa.org.uk)) we have established a special event mini-site which lists the entries with pictures of the cars being used.

We have been contacted by long time VBOA supporters Total Vauxhall and by Classic & Sports Cars who want to cover the event. Well known C&SC writer and Vauxhall enthusiast Dave Richards is planning to cover the event in appropriate style in his FD Ventora. He wants to ensure maximum exposure for the participants and will take shots for both C&SC and for the news sections of the other glossies and practical type magazines. Prepare to be interviewed!



The VBOA is also delighted to announce that renowned roadside assistance experts Brit Assist will be supporting the event. Established to provide a service for UK tourists holidaying on the Continent, they have also developed a highly praised support package for classic car events, tours and rallies. They support what is probably the toughest classic rally in the UK, Le Jog, from Lands

End to John O'Groats and the highly acclaimed MSA Euroclassic. Having experienced their back-up on events we can confirm that the Brit Assist team under the leadership of Norman Winchester is second to none. They have agreed to be in attendance for the duration of the International Meeting and to patrol the road runs on Saturday and Sunday. They will attempt on-site or roadside repairs wherever practical. Participants will only have to pay for any

parts fitted or for any recovery service should on-site repairs not be possible. This is an incredibly valuable addition to the event and the VBOA would like to thank Norman and the boys for their generous offer. Brit Assist also run classic tours in France with their full back-up service for peace of mind. The next event is the Tour de Bretagne 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2009. Full details at [www.britassist.com](http://www.britassist.com). Not that we hope any of you will need assistance as our Saturday road run has been designed as a gentle ramble through the county of Bedfordshire.

Entirely appropriate for this event as since 1905 the headquarters of Vauxhal Motors has been in Luton in the south of the county and the county town of

Bedford gave its name to some of the greatest van and truck products the world has ever seen. Many of the roads we will be using were either formal or informal Vauxhall test routes so many of the cars on the event are bound to feel at home again. Some may have even been built in Luton and you can shed a tear with them as you pass through the old factory area in Luton later in the day.

The first recorded use of the name Bedfordshire was in 1011 and refers to a river crossing of the river Great Ouse in Bedford town, "Beda's ford". The county motto is "Constant Be", which is taken from the hymn *To Be A Pilgrim* by John Bunyan, arguably Bedford's most famous son. Her most famous daughter is marathon runner Paula Radcliffe.

Aside from the industrial centres of Bedford and Luton, the county is mainly given to arable farming and the growing of vegetables such as cabbages, onions and (Brussels) sprouts. Predominantly a flat broad drainage basin of the River Great Ouse and its tributaries, the county is crossed East to West by two ridges. In the southern end of the county is part of the chalk ridge known as the Chiltern Hills and the Greensand Ridge is an escarpment across the centre of the county.

The fact that two of England's six main trunk roads and the major M1 motorway pass through Bedfordshire means that many people cross the county on their way to somewhere else without stopping to enjoy its charming villages and downland views. You will not be so rushed.

Our hotel is situated just inside the North Eastern corner of Bedfordshire on the border with Cambridgeshire just off the A1 London to Edinburgh trunk road (The Great North Road), formerly the Roman road known as Ermine Street. The hotel complex was started in 1983 on a 350 acre site and during the week is one of Europe's largest management training facilities. Two separate



hotel buildings are on the enclosed campus which includes lakes fed by the nearby river Great Ouse, a golf course and a leisure centre. At the weekend its whatever we want it to be! Our building has just finished a complete refurbishment to very high standards.

Our Saturday route makes a brief sortie North from the hotel into the outskirts of Eaton Socon before turning West to cross the A1 by bridge and travel on country roads to cross another of those North-South trunk roads, the A6 from London to Carlisle. The only village we will encounter is Thurleigh which gives its name to a major airfield which we will skirt round. Once a candidate for London's third airport (Stansted "won" the contest) it is now a motorsport centre and car storage depot. It was built during the Second World War and became the home of the United States 306<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group until 1945. Legendary band leader Glen Miller and his USAF swing band often played there as they were based in Bedford where the BBC had set up wartime studios. He left for his controversial last flight from nearby Twinwoods airfield.

We cross the A6 by a convenient roundabout and pass through the first and the biggest of several North Bedfordshire villages, Sharnbrook. The pleasant local sandstone is used to good building effect in these villages, many still featuring their original river reed thatch roofs. Never far from the Great Ouse we eventually cross it by an old bridge at Harrold and follow it again to Turvey and on to the charmingly named village of Newton Blossomville. A curiosity here is the structure on top of the wall where we turn left out of the village. It was built by the Home Guard ("Dad's Army") to provide a firing position up the road in case of invasion! Eventually we have to cross another of those A roads, the East-West one from Bedford to Milton Keynes and head for Cranfield on a road that has seen many a German chassis engineer scratching his head about the peculiarities of English country roads while evaluating the latest Astra or Vectra prototypes.

Rounding Cranfield we get a good view over the Marston Vale, once famous for its brick works and clay pits, to the two massive buildings on the horizon at Cardington which were built to house airships in the 1930s and more recently to film the Batman movies.

We cross another east-west road currently being upgraded to a dual-carriageway, hoping that any disruption in the area will not effect our progress. Look out for miles of plastic sheeting designed to protect, catch and relocate the rare Great Crested Newts which are protected by law. A local newspaper has calculated that so far it has cost £20,000 per newt! Just after passing through the very French sounding Marston



Moretaine we enter the Marston Vale Forest Centre for coffee/tea, biscuits and a break. Formerly a brick making area, the visitor centre was built on reclaimed land in the centre of a new forest, planted to celebrate the Millenium. It sits on the side of a small lake in a beautiful grassy area with outside seating (if the weathers fine!) and a children's play area. Inside are displays describing the history, geography, wildlife and plants to be found on the site, together with a tea room, pleasant shop and toilet facilities.

Our next port of call is the amazing Millbrook Proving Ground just 2 miles up the road which uses the uplands of the Greensand Ridge to create an unlikely Alpine road route in the middle of the UK which you will be able to try for yourself!

To be continued.....