

The Royale Owners Club



October 2009

Sabres feeling at home, in Monte Carlo of course

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Editors Ramblings

Hi,

I would have been very disappointed to see the magazine disappear, so decided to jump in with both feet!! This is a new venture for me, The vagaries of MS Publisher have given me even more grey hairs than I had when I started (If that is possible)

I think I have beaten it into submission enough to produce this first edition (if the printer will work without chopping all your names off all your addresses,again)

Having spent more time on the mechanics of producing a magazine than on the content, I must **thank all** those who have made a contribution to this issue.

In the future I hope to produce something with more news about what is happening to, and with, the car. With this in mind I will email you all individually asking for any news, comments ,insights ,gossip,problems,photo's,suggestions etc,that can be published. As an example, has anyone any experience of the new IVA test?

If I have missed anything or anyone I should have mentioned then this is my fault and will make repairs as we go along.

A Merry Christmas to you all, Alec Paterson



Editors Challenge 2008

Chairman's Chat

Since the last Chairman's chat we have had an iffy balance to the summer weather to be sure, but we managed to choose a wonderful week to go to France with John Nassaris and Wendy. Although the weather down to Plymouth was chilly to say the least, once we got off the ferry in Roscoffe the Sun was out and we drove to our accommodation at St Nazaire in hot sunshine. The hotel was beautiful and the food excellent, the only down side was it was not that close to the sea so I'll be having a word with John to ask for our next trip to have the hotel nearer the beach. We did have a nice pool though but as it was not heated only the brave ventured to use it, me, I only get in water to shower or to cool off when the temperature becomes unbearable. Our car ran well with no issues after our shake down trip to Italy ([More Later, Ed](#)) that appears to have revealed all the problems that may result in actual breakdowns. Still not happy I'm getting the full power I should get from the whole set-up though so I will be doing some investigating here throughout the coming months.

Wendy and I did try to arrange for another Christmas dinner/Party but the take-up was so poor that we abandoned the idea, 5 couples were not going to make up a party.

There was some talk of having a blog/members area on the web sit at the AGM and although we have not as yet progressed this idea but it has not been forgotten and I have enquired as to the cost and whether it would be difficult to manage. I'll let you know how this progresses in my next Chairman's Chat through these pages.

As I write this I have no idea as to the format it will be presented as we now have a new editor in Alec Paterson. I believe this is all going to be a new venture into technology for Alec so I hope you will all join me in thanking him twice. Once for taking up the reins as editor and again for taking the time and effort to practice new skills to enable us to continue to receive our magazine, I use the word Magazine purposefully as we are hoping to improve the quality of our newsletter to a point where it can be called a magazine. For this to happen you all need to do your bit and provide the content for our new editor to be able to give you something worthwhile. So please all who keep thinking they might provide some material but never get round to it, get your arse in gear and put fingers to computer.

We have as far as I know only one show left to attend this year by the time you read this which will be the Exeter Kit Car show 21st/23rd November. Although a very long way from Leighton Buzzard, Wendy and I are planning to attend on the Saturday so anyone else planning to attend we look forward to seeing you at Exeter at the westpoint Exhibition Centre.

I have circulated a document from the new owners of our beloved Royale Marque who claim they intend to re-launch in 2010 and the communiqué should be within these pages. I am ever hopeful this will be the rise of the phoenix in Royale form and I wish the venture every success, I'm sure you all ditto that sentiment and I look forward to a new Sabre on the block next spring.

As this is probably the last opportunity I'll have to wish all our members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year during 2009, please take it as read and hope you will all be spared to continue happy motoring throughout 2010.

Peter



Chairman's Challenge 2009

Royale Owners Club

Reprint of the Minutes of the 14th AGM
Warwick Suite, Stoneleigh Showground
Sunday 3rd May 2009

Committee: Peter Gibbons, Chairman; Shirley Kelly, Treasurer; Jim Waites, Event Organiser; John Kelly, Membership Secretary; Simon Carrington, Magazine Editor, Frank Muir

Number Attendees: 28

Apologies: Malcolm Instone, Jean & Archie Horton, Bill Paul

Minutes 2008: Minutes of the 2008 AGM accepted as a true representation of the meeting. Proposed by Peter Gurton, Seconded by Ray Hobby.

Treasurer's Report: The treasurer presented the accounts and explained the club has a reasonable balance in hand. Income during the year was more than expenditure and thus leaves an increased balance in hand over last year by approx £100. The club's Public Liability insurance was increased to £5 million as this is now a requirement by some exhibitions. Money's are now banked directly into the club's reserve account in order to achieve maximum possible interest. Current membership stands at 92 members.

No queries were raised by the floor and the accounts were accepted.

Membership Secretary's Report: As already stated the club now has 92 members. Membership fees have again been very slow in coming in (with 20 members needing to be chased for their payment) which is somewhat of a problem but all fees have now been received. All members are asked to try to pay as promptly as possible in the coming year.

We now have several continental members and it was mentioned that the membership fee does not currently cover the cost of magazine, postage and banking charges for these members. It was suggested that the club should consider whether it was appropriate to ask our overseas membership for a higher membership fee. However it was also felt that these members should not be penalised in any way. The issue was put to the vote of the floor and the motion for the membership to remain at one charge for all members was passed with no opposition. The overseas members present each stated that to help reduce the costs they were willing to receive the Rocket News electronically in the future thereby saving some expenditure. The treasurer also asked if they would consider paying in cash for their membership fees in future in order to avoid the bank charges on bank transfers etc.

It was mentioned that the current number of Royale Badges held in stock are 4 Metal and 13 Cloth. These are still available at a charge of £12.75 and £3.00 respectively plus postage and packing costs. There are currently no plans to reproduce more metal badges as due to minimum quantity for production etc, the cost would be high and turnover low making it an unviable proposition.

Chairman's Report/Events: This has been a good year for the club.

Several successful events this year included

- Trip to XVII Circuit Historique at Laon, France where initial rain was not allowed to put a damper on the trip:

- Woburn Transport Rally ('Pims & Cakes event') where the weather was lovely and a most interesting turn out of many types of vehicles from buses to bikes.
- Trip to northern "green" Spain in September organized and led by John Nassaris which was enjoyed by all who went and even the seas across the Bay of Biscay were calm for us;
- Christmas Dinner Dance which was held in early December in Worcester.

Forthcoming events include a trip to **Coventry Transport Museum and Cathedral** on 11th July (for more info contact Peter and Wendy Gibbons); **Music and Picnic evening in the Walled Garden at Luton Hoo** (for more info contact Jean and Jim Waites); **5 Day trip to France** in early September to be organised by John Nassaris (see AOB). Mention was also made of the Exeter Kit Car show in October which some members attend and feel is worth a visit.

Election of Officers: The chairman asked the committee if they were prepared to stand for re-election. Simon Carrington Magazine Editor, is happy to remain in office if required but is now unable to be responsible for the printing and dispatch of the Rocket News.

The chairman asked if any members present would like to take on any of the committee posts. No volunteers were forthcoming for any position.

A vote was taken and all current committee members were returned to office for a further year.

Simon stated that if no one else would take on this responsibility for Rocket News he would for the time being continue to create the magazine but would not be able to continue responsibility for printing and dispatch. The magazine usually comprises 12 pages in total. It was suggested that the magazine could be distributed electronically to all members as most are now available on email, and to place it onto the club's web-site where it can also be reviewed. However it was debated that some members are involved with the club only via the magazine, and not all members are happy to receive a copy electronically but prefer to have a hard copy to review at leisure and retain. Currently it costs about £500 per year to print and post, which will probably be significantly increased if the magazine has to be printed externally. If anyone would like to help Simon by printing and dispatching this would be a great assistance. However, as we currently have no solution to this problem it was felt necessary to investigate the cost of external printing and should no volunteer be forthcoming to print and distribute. It was proposed that the Committee be allowed to decide this issue once costs are ascertained.

Whilst discussing the addition of Rocket News to the club's new web site, there was discussion on what should be available for the general public and non members to view. It was felt that non members are able to obtain information that should be exclusively for those

who have paid to become members, and that we should investigate the cost of arranging a securer area for members only which would include technical tips, membership details, and events etc. It was felt that the creation of this would perhaps be cost prohibitive and that we may become too paranoid over these issues. The general consensus of the meeting was that the new web site is a really good advertisement and representation of the club and should stay as it is with the following amendments:

- Full membership contact list will NOT be shown on the site
- A disclaimer will be visibly shown
- Technical information will NOT generally be shown on the site

The above was proposed and seconded.

AOB:

VIN Plates

Available from Malcolm Badger

French Holiday

There will be a trip to St Nazaire, France in September which will be open to both Royale and JBA owners - Presently in planning stage: Departing 6th September, Plymouth to Roscoff overnight ferry, 4 nights in France. Costs £472 per couple plus accommodation etc. If interested in further details contact John & Wendy Nassaris.

Technical items.

- We have several members still building cars and one part build up for sale, details from John Kelly.
- IVA now in force. John Kelly is expecting to receive a copy of the full IVA Manual soon, but it's currently "looking like a minefield". For example - one issue covers kite marks on glass which would mean that Royale glass definitely would not pass the IVA test! Costs for the IVA are £400, with a £90 retest charge.

Members Contact List

A number of email addresses have changed and some on membership joining forms are difficult to read. It would be appreciated if members ensure they print their emails very carefully to avoid confusion in future.

Presentation to Simon Carrington

A presentation was made on behalf of all members to Simon Carrington and his wife Lesley in thanks for the immense amount of work that he has done for the Royale Owners Club as both Chairman and Magazine Editor/Producer over the past few years.

Meeting closed at 12.55pm.

Return of The Sabre, The Saga Continues

Dear Royale Owners,

It is probably long overdue to update everyone with the current situation regarding plans to return the Royale Sabre and Windsor to the market. Obviously since leaving John Barlow's ownership the Royale rights and moulds have passed to a number of different owners without a great deal of success. My company purchased the moulds and rights from the liquidation of Vintage Motor Company Ltd in 2005. I tried to establish a working relationship with the previous owner, Alan Beilby, but this proved problematic and in 2006 I moved the equipment from his premises and put everything into storage. In early 2007 I was approached by a company called Retro Classics Cars Ltd who were keen to help get the Royale brand back on the road. We agreed a deal whereby I exchanged a large proportion of the rights in exchange for 'sweat equity' that would see the vehicles ready to launch, along with two completed demonstrators. In fact one of the directors of Retro was Gary Lewington, who attended the Royale Owners Club AGM with me in 2007 to update the members at that time. Early in 2008, Gary and his business partner had a disagreement which resulted in the closure of their company, so the Royale rights and moulds passed back to my ownership again. However, Gary had undertaken a lot of work on the redevelopment and was quite a long way down the line for the re launch. In March of this I met with Gary and we worked out a deal...he would continue to undertake the development work and we would establish a new company as partners. Since this date, the development work has progressed and we hope to have some more details of the launch date soon, but realistically it is looking to be early in 2010. The plan has been to leave the general shape untouched but to look at every thing else. The car will be offered with a brand new engine package and is likely to be available as a self build kit, as well as a factory build version too. At the moment we have only a one page (temporary) website at www.sabresportscars.com (and yes it should be 'Royale' not Royal) but in time we will have a full website with full information on everything Royale! The Windsor however is still in storage and I'm looking at options here. If we redevelop this vehicle, then it's Gary's opinion that a lot of the work carried out on the Sabre could be transferred to the Windsor.

This is the current situation and hopefully with a bit more time, some more investment and no further people issues, we will be up and running again.

Thanks for the support from the Owners Club members who have been in contact and we will provide you with more details in due course.

Regards

Simon Rhodes

NOTES FROM THE SELKIRK SHOW

20th SEPTEMBER 2009



A Glorious Morning

The morning of the Selkirk Show dawned bright and dry, and the 65 mile drive to the showground proved to be one of those memorable experiences that linger long in the memory. The early morning mist was being burned off by the strengthening sun, but remnants of it were still hanging in thin ribbons halfway up the mountains or rising ghostlike out of the glens. You felt as if you could expect any minute to see the rooftops of Brigadoon appear fleetingly through the wispy swirls. The A7 north of Carlisle must be one of the most scenic stretches of road in the UK, and at 9.00am on a Sunday morning, it was almost deserted, despite the idyllic weather. A far cry from the frenetic chaos that can be expected by our friends unfortunate enough to live in the south of England on such a glorious morning!

Record Number of Entries

Every year seems to bring a record number of entries to this popular show, and this year was no exception. From its start in 1993 when there were around 80 entries, this year the field topped 1500 exhibitors, with entries ranging from a Cyclomaster bicycle 'clip-on' to large steam traction engines, and even a working fairground organ which entertained the crowd with a selection of old favourites. Also on display was what is thought to be the last remaining British F1 Hydroplane speedboat in existence. Powered by a 4.5 litre Daimler engine, it is capable of speeds of up to 70mph on a circuit and 100mph plus in a straight line. Quite what it was doing in a rally for motor vehicles is debatable, but it was causing a lot of interest, particularly when the owner fired up the engine, which showered the onlookers with water from its cooling system.

Kit Cars

There were 18 kit cars on display including my Sabre and that of Bob Muir and George Wilson. Also in attendance was a Dax Cobra replica, a couple of Westfields, a Triumph Spartan, a Locost, a Robin Hood a superb Jaguar SS replica, an immaculate NG TF, a Porsche 55 replica and a Triumph Spartan. This year for the first time that I have been attending this show, a

Royale was not awarded a prize, the first going to the Cobra Replica, the second to the Spartan and the third to one of the Westfields. The owner of the Westfield had only had his car for three months, and this was the first show he had attended. He must have been pleased with his purchase.

Club Stands

Nearly 50 independent Club stands were in attendance, including an impressive display mounted by the Scottish Military Vehicle Group. Included in the display were 2 Austin Champs, those charismatic 'British Jeeps' which those of us who did their National Service or served in the army in the 50's will remember well. The Champ was a superb vehicle, powered by a Rolls Royce B40 2838cc engine. It had 5 forward and 5 reverse gears, and was designed to operate in all climates, arctic desert and tropical, without any modification.

With its snorkel, it could operate in 6 feet of water with the driver standing up and steering with his feet! It was designed by Alec Issigonis, who of course is best remembered for the Mini. The suspension was awesome, far superior to the Land Rover. I remember once driving one for about half a mile cross country and only discovered when I stopped that I had left a mug of tea on the front wing. It had not spilled during the journey! The Champ was eventually replaced by the Land Rover as it was considered by our ever-watchful Ministry of Defence to be too expensive, regardless of their respective capabilities. Some things never change!

Pipe Band

Pictured above is the Galashiels Ex-Servicemen's Pipe band, a traditional Scottish marching band, who entertained the crowd periodically throughout the show with their stirring repertoire of well-known favourites. There were over 100 'auto-jumble' and other stands offering a huge variety of produce, both used and new.

A Successful Show

Once again, this proved to be an excellent and well run show, well worth the trip. It is easy to get to, being on the main A7 which connects to the M6. Well worth consideration for those living in Yorkshire, Northumberland or Lancashire.



For Sale



Badge Plinth Available and 15" Moto-Lita Classic3 wooden laminate rim, flat steering wheel c/w polished screw kit and fixing ring. A boss and centre cap will be required dependant on steering column type. Only done 2500 miles and therefore is in excellent condition. £40.00 plus P&P.

Contact Barrie Evans on 0781 4621376 barrie.evans4@btinternet.com



Two Chrome rear light indicator plinths for a Sabre and two Chrome rear light plinths for a Drophead. £35 each plus postage and packing.

Contact Jim Waites. Tel 01582 655076

The Grande Tour

Day 1

It's Wednesday 20th May and for reasons only a nutcase would be able to answer Wendy and I, together with John Nasarris and his wife also named Wendy were meeting in Dover this evening to make ready for the cross channel ferry to Calais the following morning.

The reason I use the word 'nutcase' is because we only got the car back from the repair shop a few days before, after experiencing several problems none of which, though repaired, had actually been tested and our first trip out was to be a 21 day tour taking in the classical sights of Italy via France and Switzerland.

It was a nice afternoon and our journey to the Ramada hotel near Dover was without any negatives as we booked in and began to relax in the late afternoon sun with a beer for me and a J2O for Wendy. John and his Wendy were not staying in the same hotel as us so we made contact and arranged to meet at the usual haunt we tend to eat in when staying in the Dover area ready for overseas crossings. A pleasant evening then in like minded company, a few beers and off to bed ready for the big adventure.

Day2

Thursday presents its self as a lovely sunny morning and we set off for the port to ready ourselves for what was to be a crossing that would put a Mediterranean cruise to shame. Perfect. Our route was to take us past Laon, a town we knew very well and a route we were very familiar with. As we had a long way to go and this is, in general a quiet motorway, we decided to have a relaxing first day and make our first stopover in good time to have a rest in the afternoon. It was a hot day with temperatures in excess of 30 degrees but with the hoods down and the pleasant countryside passing by we gobbled up the miles and made good time arriving in around three and a half hours. We arrived at our pre-booked stop over, a very pleasant farmhouse in the small village of Saint Croix just off the main route beyond Laon. The welcome from our hosts was very friendly and a cold beer and coffee were very welcome before we unloaded our overnight bags. We knew this was a little out of the way spot and as an evening meal was also on offer we also pre-booked what turned out to be one of the nicest meals we had on the whole trip. It was a warm evening and so a short walk around the village was called for before we tucked up in our comfy bed ready to make further progress on our journey the following morning. One of the exciting parts of this trip was the lack of real planning, we knew when we were going to leave, and we knew when we were going to return. We also knew where we were going to stop the first night abroad and we had also booked a hotel for two nights near Venice as we know this can be tricky. Everything else was let's see where it takes us. Obviously we knew roughly how many miles we were likely to cover each day and in which area we were likely to want to stop. But more than this we did not know and had no idea where we were going to stay. Wendy god bless her did purchase a couple of books that would help in this regard and more of them later, but where we were actually going to be we had no idea. I did say nutcases and John and Wendy went along with it, they must

also be bonkers to put their faith and holiday in the hands of fate. Well not entirely but you know what I mean.

Day 3

Once we decided to stop and find somewhere for the night we looked up the local hotels in Dole. Unfortunately the only one available had limited parking - it was on the village square opposite the church and the local market began setting up at six am the next morning and yes you guessed it, the only hotel parking was in the square. The receptionist fully understood our reluctance to check out at 5.30 am! While Wendy chatted her up in stilted French for assistance to book a nearby Chambre D'Hote with parking in the vicinity, the boys decided it might be politic to spend money in the establishment, so drinks and baguettes were ordered, just to be sociable of course in the circumstances. As with all the people we met on this holiday this young lady was wonderfully helpful and found us accommodation in a small village called Athee, only slightly off our route. We were making for the Mont Blanc tunnel at Chamonix if that wasn't obvious. The day started very warm and soon began to get even warmer, by the time we had made it half way the heat was starting to get well into the 30's but the cars behaved themselves and again we made steady progress without incident. One of the things I forgot to mention was when booking ahead we always checked that we had safe and secure parking and on arrival our new host for the night was amazed at these two beautiful cars arriving at his enormous house. His double length garage had been cleared of obstructions and he was proud to see that we were both able to fit in with only a small opening left by the rear car which on this occasion was mine. Dinner is usually provided here too, but a family party this night made this not an option so we needed to shower and change for dinner after the obligatory drink and cake that was provided. Again the weather remained very hot and it now became humid as we unleashed our beasts and drove into town for dinner. The selection was not good and although I can eat anything if I have to, Wendy provides me with higher standards and was not impressed by what was on offer. However, as we strolled over a pretty bridge I spotted what looked like a restaurant on stilts partially overlapping the river about half a mile away. It was thus decided to return to the cars as we did not like the look of the weather and drive. As we approached what appeared to be the chef/owner spotted us and as we pulled alongside I asked if he was able to fit a table of four in for us. His reply was that for anyone driving such magnificent cars he would always be able to fit them in, so we parked up, entered, were politely seated and ordered a light meal as we had had a heavy ish lunch that afternoon. Now none of his sounds very remarkable but as we drank our tippie and awaited our food, the thunder clapped, lightning flashed and the heavens opened as, until only recently, it does in France. (seems we get it too now - must be global warming). All seemed very exciting as we sat in the comfort of the restaurant and eat our meal, drank our drinks and generally enjoyed our evening. We paid our bill thanked our host for a pleasant meal and returned to our cars, the moment I opened my door I could see we had trouble, the floor was moving and the water was higher than the carpet pile, the rain though abated was still coming down and if the car started all we could do was take it back to

our lodgings and look at it in the morning. Thoroughly miserable, I went to bed bemoaning this turn of events that was not expected and feeling that the world had come to an end. I must get a grip of the real world some day!

Day 4

Sun shining, bright blue sky, I should have been happy, but I was still feeling down and wondering what I was going to do, especially if we encountered any more serious rain of torrential proportions. Now when all is at its lowest ebb (you would think this was a life threatening but my baby was unwell and I did not have a doctor to make her well, or did I). I have been far from home before in a foreign land with my JBA when it decided not to go any further and John was with us that time also along with several others on that occasion. I recall one member of the team was actually carrying a spare ECU, not that it turned out to be needed, just a loose wire but it took over an hour to find the problem and fix it.

So before we set off we worked to discover the cause of the leak and what if anything we could do to prevent it happening again. It soon became obvious that the source could only be the holes in the body that the wiper motor shafts protrude through, as there were no other points at which it could enter. Now John, being John, believe it or not, was carrying a small tube of silicone sealant! I didn't even know you could get it in small tubes, but have it he did. John's cunning plan was to envelope the areas in silicone and make a virtual igloo that no water would be able to penetrate. This took all of 15 minutes so we were soon ready for the road again. However, Wendy's little black book let us down this time and no accommodation could be found to pre-book ahead near Chamonix. However a little chat with our host over breakfast and he produced a copy of a book showing all the Chambres D'Hote establishments in the whole of France and every member enrolled. He proceeded to book our next night's stay for us and with a new destination entered into the Sat-Nav and our maps in hand to check our progress, we set off for the next leg of our journey, Cordon.

Cordon is a small mountain village in the French Alps near the major town of Sallanches. For the reader that is trying to follow our progress on a map, Sallanches is about 30 miles short of Chamonix. Anyway, our sunny start soon developed into wetter conditions and although the water leak had in the main been fixed (more of which later) the car now with the hood up was steaming up making it difficult to see because the carpets were now drying out, but condensing on the inside of the windows. As we progressed the weather worsened and the rain again came down in stair rods for at least two hours. This made progress slower and the concentration levels needed to be high just to see where you were going but about half way to our new destination the cloud began to break and the sun was out again, the hoods came down, the carpets dried and all was well with the world again. As we started to get closer to the Alps the scenery became spectacular and I kept getting from Wendy was look at this and look at that, my reply as we went by was take a picture I'm watching the road, not the right answer, and we should have slowed down and took more time to take in all that was flashing by, but our destination was Italy, not France so I think I had the wrong mentality in my head. I only mention this in case you the reader are tempted to make this journey one day, you will

have this thought with you I hope and take full advantage. No food was available at our lodgings at Condor so it was decided we would eat in Sallanches before we went up the mountain. We arrived about 14:00 but getting lunch proved difficult, lots of tourist bars to drink but little in the way of food. As a result we went back on ourselves a short distance and eat at a supermarket restaurant that was cheap and cheerful and had a fantastic view of the Alps ahead. After lunch it was chocks away and the mountain road ahead to find our resting place for the night. We climbed and we climbed, no part of this road went down hill it just kept going skyward with snow capped mountains all around and our driving steep inclines in 30 degrees, the temperature gauge took on a very nasty look as the gauge read over 100 degrees. However, no need to have worried, as just as we thought this might be a road too far we finally came to the most beautiful Swiss looking ski lodge you could ever imagine at the foot of Mont Blanc. Absolutely magnificent. As we knew we would not be eating proper food up here, we did have the foresight buy some snacks and beer and wine for the evening. However, it was still very hot and the sun loungers looked very inviting as we were offered cold drinks and nibbles by our new hosts for the evening, so we sat at the base of Mont Blanc with cold drinks, nibbles and 30 degrees of sunshine. We thought we would never want to leave. After a shower and freshen up we sat on the veranda with our beer and nibbles watching the sun set against the mountains this was a truly beautiful sight and one we could never have dreamt of before we left. Dragged ourselves away and turned in.

Day 5/6 Italy and beyond

Beautiful start to the day, warm sunshine even at 7am and the mountains looked wonderful, ate our breakfast outside in the mountain air, thanked our hosts and on the road we went, down hill this time, so coasted most of the way back into Sallanches and to the Mont Blanc tunnel at Chamonix. As we got nearer and nearer the mountains appeared taller and taller and one would think there was no way through but of course we know there is. As we climbed up to the tunnel we could feel the heat was going to be a problem and the morning heat turned into an absolute scorcher with the temperature well into the 30's. As you approach the tunnel there is a car park which we nipped into to put our hoods up to give us some protection from the dripping roof of the tunnel and the constant droning of traffic noise. However, hardly anything came from the roof of the tunnel and the traffic was much lighter than we thought it would be. The tunnel is wide and straight and you must keep 100 metres apart to make it safer since the accident/fire of some years ago. If you are claustrophobic I could see it as a bit of a problem but otherwise the space is such that you do not feel threatened. So it's an easy drive through, though boring and it is a relief when you come out the other side into the fresh air. I say fresh but it was even more humid this side of the mountains and the heat was oppressive, first stop was fill up with petrol, remove the hoods and on our way, Italy was ours for the taking, or so we thought. I have never seen so many tunnels in my life and these are not as big and wide as Mont Blank. They are two and three lanes wide and the drivers are absolutely bonkers. Lorries have to keep to the nearside lane, but if the speed limit is 60 kph which in most cases it was, and you drive in the inside lane, you would have a 48 tonne truck

10 inches from your bumper, so speed limits went straight out of the window. This was to be one of our longest days as there was little of interest to bother to stop for anywhere between the tunnel and Genoa. Our plan then was to use the motorway from the tunnel to after Genoa and then find a nice hotel near the sea for a couple of nights to recharge our batteries. No booking ahead here we were on our own, how hard could it be to find a hotel near the seaside in early June there must be hundreds, and there were. All full! The drive to Genoa was hard going, busy motorways, and lots of what appeared to us as dangerous tunnels many of which were poorly lit and very long, much longer than you would expect - some several miles. By the time we reached the coast we were tired, hot and tetchy, and as we asked one hotel after another for rooms to no avail we were becoming a little concerned. It turns out we had arrived on a bank holiday weekend, the first of the summer, the forecast was good and the whole of Italy appeared to be on this piece of coastline south of Genoa. After several failed attempts we decided the only course of action would be to go back to the main road, turn inland away from the coast and try there. However, on our way out of a town named Recco we approached a smart looking hotel that we thought we would give one last chance to. The answer was the same, almost! No we have no rooms at the hotel but we do have an apartment that you can have for 100 euros a night, the good news. The bad news it's up the side of a mountain overlooking the sea and your cars will need to be parked at the kerbside. After taking a look we were relieved that it was perfect for our needs and decided to stay for two nights after we gained a concession to leave our cars in the hotel car park Good negotiator, my Wendy, so we unpacked our bags showered and shaved and set off down the hill to park our cars and find dinner. Cars parked and dinner we thought getting a cab back up the hill would be a piece of cake. Oh dear, not a single cab working in the evening. Now most hill town roads have cut through for pedestrians that go virtually straight up the hill, we found an opening and some steps and off we went. Nothing looked right, the path was overgrown and every road we crossed looked nothing like the one we drove up/down. Unbeknown to us we had taken a path too near the beach that was in the main unused, the way out of this was to ask one family BBQing in their garden who gave a rough idea of where we needed to be until the two Wendys accosted a young man on a scooter who knew exactly where we needed to be which was about 400 yards further in land. Almost on it without knowing it, built in Sat-Nav I have - or was it fluke. The next day we walked down the steps in front of our apartment 10 minutes down - 15minutes up - easy as falling off a log. Great spot, nice and cheap, beautiful views and the second night we brought provisions and ate on our balcony overlooking the Mediterranean Sea, lovely and no mountain climb in the dark.

Day 7 Pisa

We walked to the hotel car park collected our cars, packed them and off to our next destination, the beautiful city of Pisa. We have been here before so we thought we knew where we would park the cars, however, unbeknown to us Pisa have introduced a congestion zone and although we had no trouble finding our destination it became immediately apparent we were somewhere we should probably not be without some form of licence. But as none of

us spoke Italian or more to the point read it we had no choice but to bluff it out. We came across a parked police car with a very large officer smoking a huge cigar, can you direct us to a car park please 'I asked', I have no idea what was the reply but the impression I got was 'sort yourself out, very rude to say the least'. As we struggled to extricate ourselves from our predicament we manage to see an exit that took us back across the river and some car parking meters. Filled with our euros we set off to the sites along with it seemed 500 Manchester United supporters who were in town en-route to the European Cup Final and taking in some sites on the way. But the weather was great if a little hot and we did what tourists do in Pisa and took in the amazing sites, and snapped our pictures and while the two Wendy's visited the museum John and I found ourselves a nice little bar where we enjoyed a nice cold beer. Sites seen and beer consumed we made for Monte Carlo, not the one in Monaco that we all know and love but the Italian one in the hills of Tuscany. Our stop for tonight was to be in an Italian Mansion or huge Tuscan Villa, I'll leave you to decide. The rooms were huge, the villa beautiful and the scenery spectacular, 80 euros a night but no food or drink (other than mini bar). So after we had time to relax for a while and wash and change we went into the town for dinner, probably the nicest evening out we had. The town is lovely, the food was lovely and the staff knowing we had walked to the restaurant from our villa gave us a lift home afterwards. Were else would you get service like that, brilliant.

Day 8, To be continued with photos

Finally

Many Many Thanks and best wishes to **Simon Carrington**, your outgoing editor, for his many years of stalwart support of the magazine and the Royale