

CURRENT AFFAIRS. THE PROLOGUE.

Even the humblest of pre-war cars and all post war Alvis cars have two assets absent on modern cars viz a starting handle and an ammeter. This piece is my grateful thanks to both.

South East Alvis Day at Michelham Priory sounded a very attractive event; so off went my entry form. It seemed, however, that my TE21 was not so keen on the idea! A week before SEAD whilst enjoying a Costa coffee a fellow customer informed me that there was water pouring out from under the car. He was not exaggerating: a fountain of water was coming out of a



split lower radiator hose. The spare hose that I kept in the boot was fitted after a bit of a struggle: it was very thin and the bore slightly too large causing it to pucker when the clamp was tightened. It got me home and the emergency hose was replaced a few days later by a hose from Red Triangle that was both sturdier and of the correct bore.

I was breaking my outbound and return journey from Brixham to SEAD, at Christchurch – roughly half way. I left in lovely sunshine but soon rain from the south west caught up with me and it was wipers and lights on; however during one of many hold-ups on the A35 I noticed that the ammeter was showing a rather unhealthy large discharge of current. I switched off main beam and increased the revs hoping to see an equal and opposite reaction from the gauge. No. The needle stayed on



zero. The ignition warning light, however, did go out and as the power steering felt normal I could assume that the fan belt was OK. This suggested to me that the dynamo was not producing current and my mood now matched the leaden skies and the torrential rain. However the journey passed off without incident and the car even restarted without hesitation when I refuelled ready for Saturday's second leg.

I should say that our friends in the SE do not agree with BST. No they firmly adhere to GMT. Thus it was that I was awake and ready to go an hour earlier than necessary. The car was not so easily roused from its slumbers and a turn of the key elicited a ugh.... More out of hope than expectation I tried the starting handle and to my surprise the engine purred into life. Again, the car ran without any problems - albeit with the ammeter resolutely reading zero- and I was warmly welcomed by Richard Long at the medieval gatehouse of Michelham Priory. I had a superb day and no doubt others will provide a full report, but the venue is beautiful, historic and is well worth a visit. As usual the SE provided a warm friendly atmosphere and are to be applauded. I had a picnic lunch and convivial conversation with Jan and Mike Baker and Chrissie and Owen Swinerd. For those of you familiar with Jan's picnics you will understand when I say it was a Tudor banquet!

There was no category for the car most in need of restoration so I came away without a trophy this year; but at least the car started on the key and saved me the embarrassment of swinging the starting handle.

When I arrived home I did one further test j This test applies to any car that either cranks slowly or not at all and will determine if it's a battery or dynamo/ alternator fault . Jump, bump or hand crank to get the engine running. Then disconnect the battery. If the engine keeps running it's a faulty battery. If the engine stops then it's a faulty charging system. In my case the engine stopped. As the ignition warning light went off without hesitation at about 1000 revs I knew the voltage regulator part of the charging system was working so it must be a faulty dynamo and as the dynamo turned freely the most likely problem is worn brushes. New ones were ordered.
To be continued.

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