

Saumur Rally May 2018 - by Chris Hayward

When Patrick Lemierre, chairman of Amicale Singer France, proposed organising a rally over a long weekend on the banks of the Loire, I jumped at the idea; visiting France and driving my classic car are among my favourite activities, and this rally combined the two.



By the starting date there were 39 vehicles entered: 15 from Britain, one from Jersey, 6 from the Netherlands, and 17 from France, with an overwhelming preponderance of Singers, of course, but others including an Alvis TA21 (David Keogh) among the British contingent.

For an event in the west of France the Channel Tunnel loses some of its allure, so I booked a Brittany Ferries crossing from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, and Barry Paine (with Anne)

suggested we travel together. Allan and Kathy Jones asked if they could join us, so our little convoy of two convertible Gazelles and a 4AD Roadster landed in France on the Thursday at 1.00 pm local time after an excellent three-hour crossing, leaving us at least five hours to reach our b & b accommodation booked near Avranches. We took a diversion to visit Port Racine, the smallest harbour



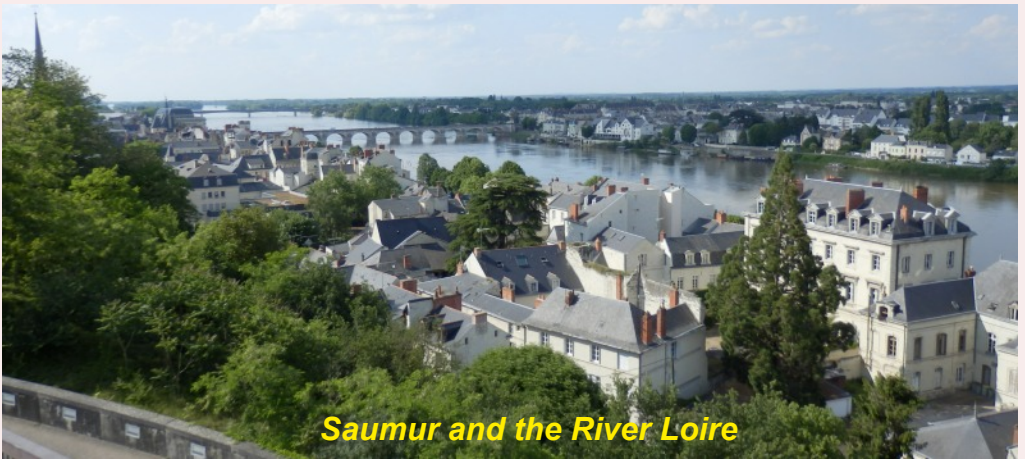
in France, then ambled down the western side of the Cotentin Peninsula, but not before my hurried map-reading took us on a long and steep descent of what turned out to be intended as a cycle track, causing Allan to experience brake fade, fortunately without mishap as there was no traffic!

The b & b turned out to be run by an Englishman, and was delightfully relaxing, with goats and chickens in the grounds, and we were well fed. Departure the next morning was marred for Allan by starting problems, but eventually we had an unhurried journey which avoided almost any place

bigger than a village - in one of which I had a puncture, with a threaded bolt piercing the tread of a rear tyre.

The rally began officially on Saturday morning with a welcome drink, then a short drive to a restaurant for the first of many excellent meals which showed us there was no need to 'stock up' at breakfast. That was followed by a visit to the old Château de Brézé which was





Saumur and the River Loire

unusual in being mainly underground, then to a wine tasting at a cave where I particularly enjoyed a local rosé, and finally back to the hotel for a formal meal. There the assembly



Château de Brézé

was treated to a humorous and well-received greeting in French from Simon Bishop (English version made available in print to



The Dry Moat

the anglophones). In it he explained his regrettable absence from the rally as being caused by the need to have his As-U-Dryv on stand-by for the royal wedding being held that same day.



The Underground Restaurant

The other two days had a similar pattern: visits to places of interest (underground mushroom farm, mushroom and wine tasting, fascinating museum of early 20th-century shops) punctuated by sumptuous meals at lunch and dinner. Having a spare seat, I took several different passengers,

(Continued overleaf ...)



**Jacques Benoit's
1947 Super Ten cabriolet**

among them an off-duty *gendarme*, which is unlikely to happen again! The weather throughout was perfect - very warm and sunny but not unbearable - and the driving on attractive and generally well-surfaced roads was a pleasure.

We were made to feel very welcome by Patrick and his fellow-organisers, and the whole

weekend was a great success. For the journey north, Allan and Kathy diverted to St-Malo for a few days in Jersey, so just the two Gazelle convertibles travelled first to a b & b deep in the country near Flers. On the Wednesday we had plenty of time before our 5.00 pm sailing from



**Rudi Arends's
Pick-up**



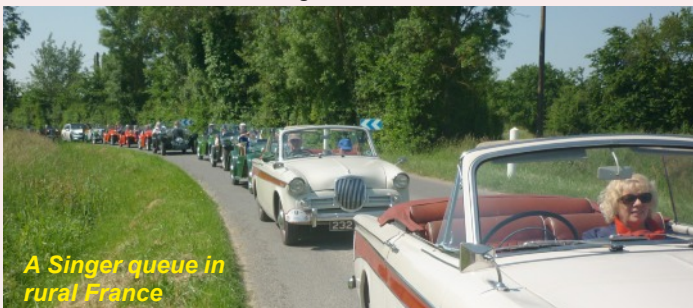
**Rudi & his 1912
M/Cycle at Foulon
Stable Yard in Doué la Fontaine**

Cherbourg, so we took in some of the 1944 D-Day landings sites, starting at Arromanches-les-Bains. After a look at the remains of the Mulberry Harbour still visible there, we returned to our cars to find them being admired

by a couple of locals, but after answering their initial questions I rapidly went off one of them who asked me how old I was on D-Day! Replying 'minus five', I soon led the departure from the car park. After a quick look at the huge American Cemetery at Longues-sur-Mer, we called in at Ste-Mère-Eglise and Utah Beach



**Early 20th Century Shop in
the Foulon Stables Arcade**



**A Singer queue in
rural France**

before rejoining the direct route to the ferry and home - a total distance for me of one thousand miles.

I am looking forward to the next trip.

Chris.

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With many thanks to Allan Jones, Barry Paine and Liz Heyer for sending their pictures.