

MID DEVON TRACTOR ENGINE & MACHINERY GROUP

NEWSLETTER ~ JULY 2023



Chairman's Chat

Welcome to the Group's Summer Newsletter, we are now entering the Summer Show season.

Our group has had a very successful winter and spring programme of events with June being particularly successful promoting our heritage vehicles and charities.

As a group we recently supported the **Little Grey Fergie Challenge**, a **Ferguson TE20** was driven from **John 'O**

Groats to Lands End passing through **Crediton** on its way. On 14th June we provided a welcoming committee and tractor support through the town, collecting over £600 for the **Motor Neurone Disease Association** with the support of businesses in Crediton together with our tractor driving and collecting members.

Peter Burdass who lives in Scotland, on his epic drive has to date raised over £15,000 for **MNDA** research with this Herculaean effort enduring some very hot weather on the way.

Our group's formal meetings re-open in the Autumn, on Wednesday September 20th at Morchard Bishop village memorial hall.

Watch out for our up to date events list on our re-vamped website and for emails from Steve, our Secretary.

John Moore

Stan Agar

We have been really sorry to hear of the death of one of our long serving members **Stan Agar** who passed away on 30th May 2023. Many of you will remember Stan from the time of our rallies. He was our Motorcycle and Bicycle Marshall such was his interest in all 2-wheel vehicles. Stan continued to serve on our committee until the last few years. He leaves a widow Rosemary who also continued to lend a helping hand with the refreshments at our club meetings for many years. His funeral took place on 28th June at All Saints Church, Okehampton.

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Diary of recent meetings

January. Saw us starting the year by having to postpone the meeting due to snow & ice. Luckily our speaker was happy to come a week later,. George French was the speaker on Wednesday 25th. He brought along some of his vast collection of pistons from various vehicles to show us, with accompanying interesting stories concerning their use and 'misuse'! We had a very good turnout, as it was also subscription night.

February Saw us having a visit from Colin Smalacombe, who gave us a brief outline of the work done by The **Farming Community Network**, which aims to help all those involved in farming and agriculture. It was originally founded as Farm Crisis Network, but changed its name to FCN in 2013.

March This month's meeting had a very good attendance with over 40 members. Our speaker was **James Ashby** from **Vapormatic**. He told us about the Vapormatic UK company which began its life in 1949 at Budleigh Salterton. It has now been owned by The **John Deere Company** since 2001. Accompanying James was **Jason Heard**, from **Stonemans** Agricultural Engineers, a well known figure to most of our members. After a very interesting talk we all benefitted from generous prizes they brought along with them, very gratefully received!

March also saw our annual Skittle match against the East Devon Tractor Club which they hosted this year at Payhembury on March 18th. Sadly I have to report we lost to the hosts by a small margin of 6 pins. Their revenge for our win last year.

The **Spring Working Day** at New Buildings had to be postponed to 18th April due to the field being too wet. The new date went very well. A good turnout of 14 tractors and ploughs, plus lots of members all enjoying weather which was dry and sunny. We also increased our membership on the day so that's always good.



April This months tractor club meeting started with a one minute silence for one of our founding members, Pam Down who sadly passed away recently. She had been one of our founder members alongside her husband Norman.

The evening then continued with a talk and slide show from club member Robin Tapp. He told us about his time spent in Western Australia, he went there with his cousin to work on a relative's ranch in the late 70's. His relatives family had been given two parcels of scrub land by the government, each about 3,000 acres to clear and cultivate. Robin showed us photos of the digging out of a huge deep water retention pit. Using some very big machinery.

Robin went to Australia with his cousin so while they were there everyone called them Pom 1 and Pom 2 which caused a few laughs. All in all a very interesting and enjoyable evening, Well done Robin!

May This was a club visit to the Halse Machinery Centre at Ottery St Mary. Attendance was very good, once again we had about 35 members and guests attend. We were given a very good tour of the centre, looking at all the new machinery they have for sale, plus a very interesting and excellent insight into the family history and business model. The "wall paper " in the reception was made up of all the covers of the company's catalogues dating back to when they first started. It was a great talking point for many of our members. So also was the enormous amount of pizzas and drinks provided personally by Philip Halse. Everyone agreed it was an enjoyable evening.

Steve Williams –Club secretary

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### **Club Visit to Southmoor Farm**

By kind invitation of Phil Bragg, members were invited to see his private Tractor collection consisting mainly of John Deere tractors, some of which date back many decades. Phil has a wonderful set-up at Southmoor Farm enabling members to wander round to see all aspects of these interesting machines and implements, and were also able to hear some of the oldest ones running. Also available to see were some vintage (and not so vintage) cars.

Grateful thanks to Phil and Audrey for their hospitality and provision of lovely china and comfy seating, quite a luxury for us on a visit.



### An East End boy

If you had told me back in the Fifties when I was growing up in the East End of London, going to school in Bermondsey, that I'd one day be repairing tractors and farm machinery, I'd have said you're having a laugh!

We moved from Rotherhithe Street, Bermondsey, London SE16. In 1964 when I was a teenager. My father was born in Crediton - the war changed that! and so he ended up living in London. My mum was a true cockney. But dad always wanted to return to Crediton, anyway that's another story.

I did one year at school here in Crediton before leaving and starting a 5 year apprenticeship with Henry Norrington and sons Exeter, Crediton branch. Not knowing one end of tractor from the other (some friends say I still don't) but I enjoyed taking machinery apart and putting it back together, hopefully better than when I started. Working for a Fordson agency I soon found a passion for all things Fordson especially Fordson Majors.

Back in the 60s & 70s life wasn't so rip and tear. Machinery was taken apart and repaired, not just fit new all the time. My foreman was a man called Charlie Partridge who taught me everything from tractors, to milking machines, water pumps and balers.

That passion still remains, although I'm not a farmer and never will be ! I'll always have a love of agriculture and machinery.

**Steve Williams**

### The Little Grey Fergie Tractor Challenge

Peter Burdass passed through Crediton on Tuesday 14th June, at about 4pm Driving his little grey Fergie all the way from John "O" Groats to Lands End. Having lost his mother to MND on her 60th birthday, his aim was to raise money in aid of Motor Neurone Disease Research.

Mid Devon Tractor club had arranged to meet him at Mole Avon who kindly allowed us to use their field. The idea was to accompany him through Crediton with the 5 tractors we were permitted and to use the occasion to collect donations on his behalf.

We were delighted to have so much support on the visit from club members and the public and to welcome two local MND sufferers. Pete Burdass spent more time with us than we expected and most especially with these 2 gentlemen, Bob Adams & Keith Stanlake who made a huge effort to come & meet him especially on such a hot day! They were all happy to pose for photos.

Pete then travelled on to visit Mike Thorne's Ferguson Tractor collection accompanied by our tractor driving members. He was given a big welcome there too. His day ended at Lewdown where he stayed overnight before completing his challenge by arriving at Land's End the following day. Well Done Pete!!





A few of the hopeful donation collectors!!

Pete Burdass arriving at Mole Avon in Cridton on Wednesday 14th June on his way to Land's End.

Pete went on to Michael Thorne's Ferguson tractor collection in Coldridge later that day. Where he received another good welcome.

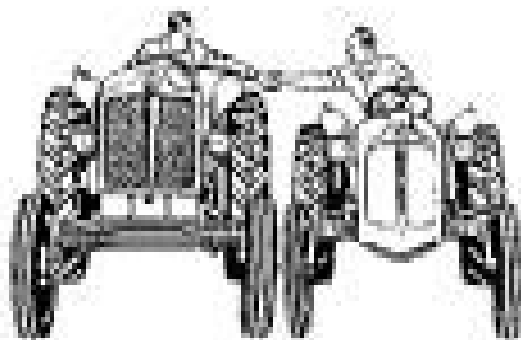


Pete Burdass (centre) with Bob Adams (left) and Keith Stanlake (right) who came to show their support for MND research which afflicts both of them.

Pete's brother & his wife on the right who were his support vehicle on part of his journey.

**Mid Devon Tractor  
Engine & Machinery  
Group**

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**Speakers & Club Events for early 2023**

**NB Club Meetings now held at Morchard Bishop Memorial Hall**

|                                  |                                                                      |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>July 22nd (Sat)</b>           | <b>Mid Devon Show</b>                                                |
| <b>August 5th (Sat)</b>          | <b>Morchard Bishop Rally.</b>                                        |
| <b>August 10th (Thu)</b>         | <b>Okehampton Show.</b>                                              |
| <b>August 17th (Thu)</b>         | <b>Chagford Show.</b>                                                |
| <b>August 19th (Sat)</b>         | <b>Christow Show.</b>                                                |
| <b>August 24th (Sat)</b>         | <b>Holsworthy Show</b>                                               |
| <b>September 3rd (Sun)</b>       | <b>Uffcombe Show.</b>                                                |
| <b>September 9th (Sat)</b>       | <b>Tedburn Show.</b>                                                 |
| <b>September 20th (Wed)</b>      | <b>Club meeting at Morchard Bishop Hall</b>                          |
| <b>September 23rd (Sat)</b>      | <b>Club working Day at Bow.</b>                                      |
| <b>October 7th (Sat)</b>         | <b>Club Gas Up at Morchard Road.</b>                                 |
| <b>October 14/15th (Sat/Sun)</b> | <b>October British Ploughing<br/>Championships, Bishops Lydeard.</b> |
| <b>Nov 15th (Wed)</b>            | <b>AGM</b>                                                           |
| <b>December</b>                  | <b>Christmas Party TBC</b>                                           |