



As the European City of Culture for 2008, it was fitting that some VW Culture should spread across Liverpool on the weekend of the 27th -29th June. Liverpool residents Helen Davies and Paul Ekoku agreed last year to organise this years event and we were based at the Holiday Inn in Frodsham, close to Runcorn, where we were close enough to the city centre but far enough away to give a good drive in on the Saturday. They managed to secure a significant discount on the accommodation compared with the advertised rates, which was welcome.

As people gathered throughout the Friday afternoon and evening at the hotel, no formal activities were planned but quite a number of us visited a recommended Chinese restaurant in Frodsham for dinner and enjoyed an excellent meal, returning to the hotel to socialise for the rest of the evening.

Saturday morning saw us gathering in the car park for the first part of the Mersey Beetle Tour. Diane and I are still without our Cabrio at the moment, but rather than face the prospect of following the tour I our Newbie, we hitched a lift with

A hearty Chinese Meal on the Friday Evening



SEY TOUR 2008

by Bill Bailey

Club Member Gail Bench, so it was hoods down despite the unseasonable chill and overcast cloud. The convoy drew lots of attention on the way into the City Centre, with people stopping in their tracks and waving as we passed by. Other cars were also peeping their horns, which drew a similar response from Gail and others, advertising our presence further. Ours was perhaps the noisiest of the cars as Gail had her stereo on and pumped out a few Elvis tracks along the way. The speakers low down behind the back seat make for an interesting feeling in the bottom when the bass is turned up, prompting a few very poor impressions of the King... Uuh-Huh! First stop was Otterspool Promenade,

part of an attractive area alongside the Mersey, where we parked up for a photo opportunity, chat and a brief walk along the river. As the convoy pulled into the car park, we were followed by a police car with a PC and WPC on board. It was not some "sting" operation in progress, they were just curious about the convoy and promptly took out their cameras for a few snaps of the display!

Onwards to the City Centre, we headed for the Liverpool Yacht Club for a cup of coffee and biscuit, parking the cars alongside the Club in a pre-arranged area. We had an hour or so to wander along the river towards the Albert Dock area, passing the Liverpool Echo Arena on the

way. This gave Diane and me the chance to check out the venue for our planned visit there for a concert the following week. The Albert Dock is at the heart of what was once was once part of Liverpool's major role as an international trading port, but following a decline in the 50's and 60's it has re-invented itself and is now a bustling retail and bar/restaurant area, and includes the museum celebrating the life and works of the other Beatles, the Fab Four. The area is certainly worth visiting as part of a trip to the City. Some of the party took time out to visit the Cathedrals and enjoyed listened to a choir practicing inside.



MERSEY BEETLE TOUR & AGM 2008

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The group gathered together again at around 2.00 to take a one-hour ferry ride, not across the Mersey but up and down it, entertained by an informative commentary about the City's history and heritage. The commentary did not advise us however that Jamie Carragher was on board, with his kids and was apparently very accommodating to those who wanted pictures with him. Diane is a Liverpool fan and was mortified to find out about our famous passenger only after we left the ferry!

Refreshments at the Yacht Club





Ferry on the Mersey

Returning gradually to the Yacht Club, Gail and friend Sharon appeared with two pink and two white Stetsons, complete with genuine plastic diamond trim. Gail explained that they were both going to see Dolly Parton the following week and were getting into character by wearing the hats at the gig. Gail donned her hat and as if by magic, produced a truly unique impersonation that can only be described as a cross between a scouser, a wailing banshee and a strangled chicken! To the amusement of all, she then insisted that anyone riding in her car had to wear a stetson for the rest of the day! Preferring not to walk back, I did the necessary and

Below - Dolly Parton, eat your heart out

whilst pink is not really my colour, it saved me a walk back to Frodsham and resulted in even more attention on the return journey. On leaving the Yacht Club, I arranged the cars in convoy and as we were about to set off, a black Volvo passes us, containing

two police officers in what turned out to be an unmarked pursuit vehicle. They smiled as they passed and we then pulled away to the traffic lights, with Gail leading with a chorus of "9 to 5", supported by three stetson-donned passengers and Dolly herself on the backing CD.

Convoy leaving the Yacht Club



MERSEY BEETLE TOUR & AGM 2008

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We took a different turn from the police, only to meet up with them and wave wildly at the next set of lights. Their smiles at the convoy will long be remembered as we headed off to visit a couple of landmarks, namely Strawberry Fields and Penny Lane, then to John Lennon's first home, which is now owned by the National Trust and sports a large blue plaque on the front. Apparently, tours are possible by prior arrangement.

Historic Liverpool



We returned to the hotel by various routes for the AGM, which saw two new members being elected to the Committee, Dave Parrot and Mark Anderson. Both have been members for some time and have been increasingly present at the various meets throughout recent times and it's good to

Feel that Brain Power!



have them on board. Welcome both! The evening saw us enjoying a very pleasant carvery meal in the hotel restaurant, followed by a quiz compiled and organised by Diane. The theme had a distinctly Liverpool theme with a mixture of easy and not so easy questions,

including a picture round. Six teams entered and Jokers were played tactically to achieve an advantage. The competition was hot but never unruly (!) but the eventual winners of a bottle of wine were Alan and Carolyn Aspden, Phil and Jackie Abbott. The prize was split in the best way possible, namely there and then!





Composite of Photos of all attendees

Sunday morning was a little overcast but threatening as we set out on a cruise to Delamere Forest, a large tract of woodland owned by the Forestry Commission with miles of tracks for walking and cycling to the south of Liverpool. Now in our Newbie as we had checked out of the hotel, we were Tail-End Charlie but it was good to see all the cabbies stretched out in front of us, which for me is yet another of the key features of our AGM's. We parked up for a photo-call and then set off for our trip to Speke Hall near Liverpool Airport.



Speke Hall

Built originally in 1530, Speke Hall boasts an atmospheric interior which spans many periods. Its Great Hall and priest hole date from Tudor times, while the Oak Parlour and smaller rooms, some with William Morris wallpapers, show the Victorian desire for privacy and comfort. The restored garden - very soggy for our visit as the heavens had opened - has spring bulbs, a rose garden, summer border and stream garden, and there are woodland walks and magnificent views of the Mersey basin and North Wales hills, at least there are when the weather is a little clearer! We took our time on the Hall tour and most of us met up in the nearby café for a snack and warm drink.





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We then had a photo call and a presentation to Paul Ekoku and Helen Davies for organising a really interesting and eventful weekend, but one that at no time felt pressurised or hurried, at a pace where we could all relax. They had recently moved house and Paul was quite poorly of late so all the more credit to you both for delivering such a good weekend. Many congratulations and thanks for a job well done!

Bill Bailey

Below: Presentation to the Organisers, Paul and Helen

