

Welcome Letter From our Chairman.

Dear Members,

Welcome to the new Steam Car Club based in England. Why a new club? I'm sure when you read Greg Walker's letter about a militant group of 15 people and what they've done in the past ten weeks this year you'll understand and that's just the tip of the iceberg. I've asked the 15 to condemn the actions of their group but I'm afraid only two have. The club and many people personally, myself included, have had four years of suffering at their hands. Last year the board, excluding Gerry Stoneman, worked hard to solve the problems once and for all but the 15 fought us hard all year, they wanted it their way, they wanted to ban people from the club tour and force their will upon us all. Friendships were being destroyed and this had to stop.

The new club is now formed and in its first two weeks 120 people joined, substantial donations have been received, a big thank you to all these people. The club will run on the old morals and standards that we all expect. For those in England tours will be arranged by volunteers where all club members will be welcome. A declaration form making you responsible for your own car and actions will be produced. The magazine will come out four times a year, still edited by Jeff Theobald. He has promised new ideas and a new style will be introduced now that he's out of the clutches of the 15, so please send him your stories and pictures. He's still running the web site and it is safe even though on two occasions this year the 15 have threatened to have it shut down. So please visit it and see the ever evolving new formats, it's fabulous as is the magazine.

The new club has many friends around the world and this will expand to make the steam car movement more enjoyable for us all, where we can enjoy each other's company and cars and stories without trouble, let's bring the laughter and fun back into our worldwide hobby.

Thank you Basil



Letter to Members.

By **Greg Walker.**

My decision to prepare this letter is not being taken lightly.

Just a few months ago we felt that the Steam Car Club of Great Britain was arguably the best steam car club in the world. It was financially sound and we all enjoyed the website, the quarterly magazine, and, perhaps, shared experiences of tours whether we owned steam cars or not.

Then, shortly before our last AGM, we received a lengthy letter from a group of self-styled "concerned members" who we will call G15. They told us that all was not well - we had serious problems - our board was not listening - G15 would "rescue" us by electing three new directors at the forthcoming AGM. To raise issues with our board is one thing; to make a bid for control makes this tantamount to an issue of confidence. The result has been a major split within the club.

I am appalled at the behaviour recently exhibited by certain members of G15. Following the AGM, G15 has sought to intimidate Club officers. Frankly, given the debt of gratitude we owe to the victims of this intimidation for their unstinting efforts on behalf of our members, and the trivial issues that the antagonists use to justify their behaviour, their actions are beyond my comprehension.

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Can you justify a deputation of people from the “concerned members” presenting themselves at Jeff Theobald’s home when he had told them not to come? Can you justify a threat to involve the police and trading standards officers which preceded their arrival? One of G15 had refused to release the secretary’s computer to the new secretary for more than a year following her resignation. Such a contrast in behaviour.

However, the treatment of Jeff pales into insignificance when compared to that of Chris Busk.

I understand that, at about 11:50pm on the evening of February 24th, Gareth Jones telephoned Chris and subjected him to an unwarranted verbal onslaught. Chris answered the same set of questions at least seven times, his questioner becoming more and more agitated. This continued for about an hour. Chris was beside himself. Please don’t brush this matter aside. Please don’t try to say “but Chris could have just put the phone down”. We all know that this is not in his nature.

At 7:45am the following morning, Stuart Gray presented himself, uninvited and unannounced, at Chris’s home, having travelled a distance of some 150 miles, and persisted in attempting to gain access, continually ringing the doorbell and phoning. Chris was alarmed. After being subjected to this onslaught for over two hours, Chris escaped through the front door while Stuart Gray was still ranting at the rear. From what I have heard, members of G15 were in close communication with one another while Stuart was on ‘mission Busk’.

Many hours later, and still shaken from his experience, Chris returned to find a note on his door from the police. His home had been broken into by the gas board, witnessed by the police, and they had turned off his gas. Stuart Gray had apparently reported a suspected gas leak at 11:24am. We have all to ask ourselves whether it is likely that there was a genuine leak. (Intensive tests carried out at a later date by a gas engineer showed that the gas system would have been working as expected and not leaking a detectable smell). Chris will have to pay to have his gas re-instated and tested by an engineer – and his door will have to be repaired. Who is going to pay for these?

The consequence of all this is that Chris moved out of his home fearful of what else might happen. He was not prepared to return until he could be reassured by the police that the harassment will stop. The following day after the police had read a statement from Chris, they phoned Stuart Gray and insisted that he gave them an undertaking that he would not return to Chris Busk’s home address, which he did!

This sort of behaviour has got to stop. To each of the members of G15 I would like to say:

This is not big business. This is not war. It is a hobby club. Chris has been intimidated. Do the honourable thing and stop approaching Chris in person, at or near his home. Do not contact him by letter, email or telephone unless to make a complete and unqualified apology for the unexcusable behaviour of some of your colleagues and an offer of restitution.

Jeff’s treatment too should recognise the many years of unpaid service he has given to The Steam Car Club of Great Britain Ltd.

The officers of the new Steam Car Club have concluded that they cannot see a way to heal the wounds. We will call for an EGM to ask our members if it is not time to distribute the assets of our company in accordance with our collective wishes, and allow the different parties to go their separate ways.

The really sad thing about all this is that we seem to have lost sight of the fact that we are supposed to be a group of like-minded people interested in steam cars - that is why the club was formed.

Greg Walker.

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