
**Bound
for
Britain**

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The Dutch group visits Spring Alfa Day at Chatham on Sunday afternoon.

Inspired by an enthusiastic report on the Alfaholics Trackday 2007, a number of Dutch 105-aficionados hit upon the idea of visiting the event on the next occasion. As the year progressed, plans became more definite. At the beginning of 2008, the decision was made and Norkfolkline Ferries was granted the task of shipping seven 105 series Alfa Romeos from Dunkerque to Dover.

On Friday the 11th of April, throughout the Netherlands, Nord-engines were started in the early morning. A number of participants gathered at The 105 Workshop in Etten-Leur, because there was a rumour that all present would be treated to coffee and rolls. After some final technical tweaking, the group departed to cover a vast amount of miles. Leading the procession were Egbert and Rosilde in a prugna-coloured GT Junior Unificato, followed by Paul in a red Duetto and Charlotte in a dark green Giulia Super.

Shortly after Gent, a fourth car joined the group, Robin and Birgit in a white Giulia Super. Due to a number of delays, the 105-squad was running behind schedule. This meant that the potential of the engines was addressed somewhat more in the next stage of the journey. A few minutes before the check-in deadline, the foursome arrived on the quay at Dunkerque. Shortly thereafter, a fifth car joined the 105-force: the Giulia Super of Martin and Olivier, painted in flat orange. The group was complete. Minutes later, the Nord-engines roared rather loudly on the car deck of the ferry, quite deafening but real entertainment for the ears! Those who only counted five participants – instead of seven as promised in the introduction - are quite correct. The other two members of the group had already travelled to Britain. Patrick and Hanneke with their white Giulia racer on a trailer, as well as Rob and Anneke in their white Giulia T1.



Waiting in line before entering the Dunkerque-Dover ferry.

After a two-hour Channel crossing, the cars left the ferry. By means of hand gestures, the group decided on whom had to lead the convoy, i.e. who had to drive in front on the left side of the road destined for Bristol. Alfaholics had booked a hotel there for everybody visiting the Castle Combe circuit nearby on Saturday. After many miles of sweat-inducing driving on the wrong side of the road, the British weather Gods then found it appropriate to treat the Dutch convoy to a hailstorm, followed by copious amounts of heavy rain no 105 windscreen wiper can battle with successfully. Cautious driving ensured that the deluge did not lead to any mishaps. Eventually the weather cleared and we were able to continue our journey in relative safety.

Unfortunately, no one had taken into account the combination of 'Friday' and 'M25'. This meant the group joined the traffic-jam on the M25 at approximately two o'clock, which gave everybody the opportunity of experiencing how it feels to be part of 'Britain's largest car park'. After a delay of more than three hours, the queue disappeared from the small rear-view mirrors and the road ahead opened up for flooring the throttles. The British miles were subsequently eaten-up in quick succession, until Robin, who was driving at the back of the group, begged the others to make a pit stop. The combination of inferior windscreen wipers, a worn windscreen and the setting sun had eventually led to 'zero visibility'. In turn, this gave everyone the opportunity to polish his or her 105's glassware.



Zero visibility.

At the service area, it became evident that not all 105's had endured the torments of constantly driving in traffic-jams particularly well. Martin's Giulia proved to be incontinent, as an indefinable fluid steadily oozed from under the engine block. Taking into account that no one was able to determine the source of the leaking fluid, Martin decided to keep on driving. To everyone's surprise, it was not Martin's Giulia that came to a stop first. Paul's Duetto steered onto the hard shoulder after negotiating a junction. Fortunately, the other 105-drivers noticed this manoeuvre in time. Like in the movies, all cars swerved onto the emergency lane at once, only to discover that... the Duetto had accelerated again and had continued its journey.

Half an hour later, the first participants arrived at the hotel in Bristol. Charlotte and Egbert checked in first, followed by Robin. Worryingly, after a while, only three teams had reached the hotel. Then, the phones began to ring. Martin and Olivier were lost and had suffered semi-permanent hearing loss caused by a rattling gearbox. The origin of the indefinable liquid could now be determined to have been gearbox oil. Eventually, the orange Giulia made it to the hotel under its own steam. Something that did not apply to Paul's Duetto. The red convertible had finally come to a halt in the heart of Bristol, with a failing alternator. Fortunately, Patrick had arrived at the hotel already, which meant the Duetto could be picked up with the trailer that had transported his Giulia racer to Britain. After all commotion ceased, the time had come to feed the empty stomachs. Close to the hotel, Alfaholics had reserved a big table in an Italian restaurant for all the trackday attendees. In a natural ambience, experiences of a very eventful day were exchanged.

On Saturday morning, the Dutch visitors travelled to Castle Combe circuit, in order to attend the Alfaholics trackday. There, the 105-squad was exposed to a dose of England's racing culture in its most accessible form, enriched with an Italian flavour. Besides several dozen-gentleman drivers - including historically justified trackday tools - the entire Alfaholics team was present. On the track, Patrick defended the colours of his nation. When it came to pure speed, Max Banks only outpaced him in the Alfaholics racer.



The paddock of Castle Combe circuit was invaded by an army of red GTA-replica's and racers.



The fastest car on the track: the Alfaholics racer.

One after the other, the Dutch 105-crew was given the opportunity to get to know the track. Patrick, who had fitted a passenger seat in his racer for the occasion, made this possible. Everyone with enough enthusiasm - and guts - got to experience what it is like to fly around the circuit in a Giulia racer. Unfortunately, the trackday came to a premature end for all the participants. In one of the final laps, Patrick's car came to a stop, prompting the track marshal's to instantaneously wave the chequered flag. In the meantime, the Dutch pit crew feared an enormous technical failure had occurred. On returning to the paddock, the driver was able to fix the problem rather quickly... with a Jerry can filled with petrol. And that was how Patrick learned his lesson to filling up the car before heading for the track.



Patrick repairs his Squadra Bianca.



Patrick's Giulia-racer lifts a front wheel while entering the corner.



One of the rarest cars on the track was this marvellous Giulia TI Super owned by John Bennett

Later that night, the underground parking lot of the hotel was transformed into an operating theatre, Martin's Giulia being the patient. Having listened to several trackday attendees, an attempt was made to top-up the Giulia's gearbox oil reservoir. The fact that this implied removing the entire centre console didn't discourage the brave mechanics at all. In the past, Egbert had managed to successfully complete this cunning operation once already. After the midnight hour, the engine of the Giulia turned again and the gearbox was declared cured. It no longer split liquid independently and the rattling of the gears had been muted.

On Sunday morning, alarm clocks rang far too early for the Dutch visitors, especially for Paul, who had made an appointment with the RAC. The night before, it had become apparent that his Duetto was reluctant to part company with the alternator, a piece of mechanical equipment the car had obviously grown accustomed to during the past forty years. The RAC mechanic was the last resort, but he could not perform a miracle either. Eventually, the 105-squad decided to hand over full batteries to the Duetto in turns, thereby ensuring completion of the journey as a group.

At ten o'clock in the morning, the 105-train left for Chatham in order to visit Spring Alfa Day, an event organised by Alfa Romeo Owners' Club (AROC). Despite continuous rain, this day also turned out to be a success. After a cordial reception, the Dutch 105's were directed to parking spaces that seemed to have been reserved for them in advance.





A diverse collection of historic Alfa Romeos - from popular to exotic models - was gathered at Chatham's Historic Dockyard

After arriving, the group had about two hours available to explore the Historic Dockyard - host of the event. A wide collection of Alfa Romeo models were displayed on the old Helipad, Museum Square and alongside the impressive Ropery building on Marine Wharf. Vehicles ranged from popular to exotic. Unfortunately, there was very little time to examine every model thoroughly. Just before they had to leave, the Dutch visitors and their 105's posed for a ceremonial portrait



Right before departing from Chatham, the Dutch visitors and their 105's lined-up to get their picture taken in front of the impressive Ropery buildings which date back to the 1700's

Subsequently, the group left for Dover in a great hurry, trying to avoid the fate that had almost sealed their doom on the outward journey - nearly missing the ferry! At the second roundabout outside Chatham, all went awry. Severe cases of mental block caused the group to separate and suddenly everyone was thrown to their own resources. Fortunately, the group was reunited at the sunny quay in Dover and nothing could stop a successful homecoming. While driving onboard the ferry, the British stewards proved to be quite concerned about the 105's well being. On the journey out, a few cars had scraped their undersides while driving onto the ship, but this time the group was directed straight onto the lower deck.

Around nine o'clock the ferry docked in France. The first petrol station in Belgium was visited to fill up the petrol tanks for the last time and to return all batteries to their rightful owners. Eventually, most 105's returned to their trusted garages around midnight. With over seven hundred miles accumulated on the clocks and having had an extraordinary experience...