

Spring in the South West

Ashton Court Bristol, Sunday April 23rd 2017



By Iain Fleming

■ Ashton Court

Western Area Coordinator Jeff Caswell and area team (last seen as Dick Dastardly and Wacky Racers on the cover of the last Soft Top Hardtop!) are very excited to be welcome you to Bristol in the South West for the 2017 Spring Rally.

The Spring event is always a great opportunity to get the MX-5 out after the winter and head off for a visit to somewhere you might not ordinarily get to and try a few things you might not ordinarily be able to!

This year is no exception as we head for the magnificent Ashton Court House and Estate in Bristol. This incredible Mansion house stands within a large estate on the boundary of Bristol and North Somerset, just over a mile from the city centre and very close to the Clifton Suspension Bridge.



Ashton Court dates back to before the 11th century, when it is believed that a fortified manor stood on the site, given to Geoffrey de Montbray, by William the Conqueror. By the end of the 14th century the estate was expanded by then owner the French Nobel man Thomas De Lions who enclosed the existing park for the manor. The property eventually passed

to the Smyth family who owned the property for 400 years until in 1946, the last resident, Dame Esme Smyth died. The house became derelict and was eventually taken over by the City of Bristol in 1959.

In modern times the house has served as a military hospital during the First World War, and in the Second



■ SS Great Britain



■ Bristol International Balloon Fiesta



■ Clifton Suspension Bridge

World War was requisitioned by the War Office and used in turn as a transit camp, RAF HQ and US Army Command HQ.

Presently only about a quarter of the building is occupied or usable and we hope to be able to use some of the internal rooms for the Rally, so that you will be able to take a look inside this slice of history.

The Ashton Court estate is also the home of the Annual Bristol International Balloon Fiesta, a huge festival with mass balloon launches, where as many as 100 balloons may launch at a time, and the night glow, when balloons are inflated and glow to music after dark.

The team are planning a very special treat with a Hot air balloon on hand at the event to be able to ascend over the Rally site for a short tethered flight to take in the event. Places for this amazing experience will be limited, booking information will be in the next edition of Soft Top Hardtop.

Bristol is a vibrant and energetic place with so much to see and do, it's as well known for Brunel's Clifton Suspension Bridge as it is for Banksy's street art, and not forgetting Bristol is also the home of Aardmann the creators of plasticine superstars Wallace and Gromit!

Brunel's SS Great Britain is the most visited attraction in Bristol and we can highly recommend a visit to see this magnificent ship, that was the world's first great ocean liner. The ship has had 170 years of adventure, travelled more than a million miles at sea and been around the world 32 times.

You are able to explore the decks, dockside and even down below the spectacular glass sea and experience the sights, sounds and even smells as you investigate life on board. If you've got what it takes to be a Victorian sailor you can even scale the mainmast!



We are arranging a very special rate for members to visit, we will have the details in the next edition of how to get your tickets, in the meantime why not visit the Brunel's SS Great Britain website, <http://www.ssgreatbritain.org>

As well as being a hot bed of film production and TV companies, Bristol is also a featured filming location in its own right. The Latest of the BBC's Sherlock was filmed in locations in the city and fans can Follow in the footsteps of Sherlock and Watson and download or print the special Sherlock Trail Map which will take you to all of the locations and will give you more details of what was filmed in each location. <http://www.filmbristol.co.uk>

Add to your list the Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, the Arnolfini and Clifton Suspension Bridge and the combination of things to see and do make Bristol an amazing place for a visit, you will want to spend a few more days in the city to take it all in.

Exploring further afield Cheddar Gorge, is a deep limestone valley about 45 minute drive from the Rally hotel. It is one of the country's most spectacular natural landmarks. You can enjoy scenic cliff-top walk or climb the lookout tower for panoramic views across the Mendip Hills and even try your hand at rock climbing! Go underground to explore stalactites and stalagmites in the ancient Gough's Cave, where, locally produced Cheddar is left to mature. Find out more at <http://www.cheddargorge.co.uk>



■ Cheddar Gorge

Staying in Bristol

Bristol is a very popular destination and as such there are many hotel and B&Bs in the area, but these can also be expensive. With this in mind we have arranged a great deal for you at the Holiday Inn, Bristol Filton.

With special rates on Bed & Breakfast accommodation for members over the Rally weekend and complimentary access to the Health Suite and Pool, Free Parking and Wifi access in the hotel.

The hotel is very easy to get to, situated on the outskirts of the City near Junction 1 of the M32, just a short drive from both the M4 and the M5, the Rally venue is a short drive away with a choice of routes to see more of the City.



The hotel offers ample parking, and a fishing lake in the grounds to explore, as well as bars and freshly prepared Asian cuisine in the restaurant.



CLUB RATES: Prices are per room, single or double occupancy.

- **Friday 21st April** - £75.00
Bed & Breakfast
- **Saturday 22nd April** - £89.00
Bed & Breakfast
- **Sunday 23rd April** - £75.00
Bed & Breakfast

To book call 0117 910 4271 Please quote the code 'CBA' when booking for these reduced rates.

Find out more at www.ihg.com and search for Bristol Filton

Rally dinner

Join Chairman Roger Mead as he hosts the Spring Rally Club dinner in the hotel's function suite on the evening of Saturday 22nd April, places are limited for the night and we are delighted to be able to offer an evening 3 course dinner with entertainment for just £28 per person.

The Menu and Dinner tickets are now available on the Club's online store www.mx5oc.co.uk/store or on the cover slip of this edition. As this limited evening tickets are likely to sell out quickly, please order at your earliest opportunity.



Car Competitions

The Competition paddock will feature on the drive of the Ashton Court Mansion at the heart of the Rally and is as ever a key part of the Club's Rallies. As with previous competitions you are able to enter your car in any one of the following 5 Competition classes:

- **STANDARD CAR CLASS** - Factory standard car, Mazda genuine accessories permitted.
- **LIGHT MODIFICATION** - Some cosmetic and light modifications to standard cars with aftermarket accessories, most members cars fit in this
- **MODIFIED** - Numerous enthusiast modifications and also forced induction cars (*except standard fit)
- **ULTRA MODIFIED** - Radical vehicle alteration, e.g retro body kit or MX-5 kit-car conversion
- **DAILY DRIVER** - The most accessible category for any car that is in use regularly, subject to age and mileage (bodywork and cabin judged only).



Trophies will be awarded to the winners and runner up in each class, and we encourage as many owners to enter their cars in the Competitions.

To enter all you need to do is email the coordinator at mal.jones@mx5oc.co.uk. Mal will send you the information you need with the Competition rules and judging manual to help you identify how the cars are scored and areas that you



can identify and tackle before the completion if necessary.

The entry cut off this year will be Friday 7th April, this is to allow for the Rally team to plan the final layout of the paddock for the day and arrange the Trophies. After this time we will be unable to enter vehicles into the Competitions. Specific information, times and directions will be circulated to all competitors shortly before the Rally. Good luck

