



A drive in the country



**Above:**

Andrew Walker (left) with Big Blat organisers Geof Carlton Smith and Ernie Panks (Suffolk and Norfolk AOs)



*In September, Norfolk and Suffolk areas hosted their Big Blat, a major road-driving and social event for members.*

Words by **Ernie Panks** and pictures by **Paul Davis**

# The Big Blat

AFTER MANY MONTHS of preparation, an identity crisis and a BlatChat argument, September 19th arrived in a beautiful ray of sunshine. I tucked the prayer mat away and packed the car with all I needed for the day. (*Why didn't I buy an SV?!*)

The silence at Stonham Barns was soon broken by the arrival of the early morning crew; well, with the exception of Geof who wafted into the car park under Jaguar power (broken Seven diff).

Odd-job man Bill "you can't park there" met us at 8am and took charge of the main car park, instructing tin tops to keep their distance. With the signs erected, Geof's "EZ-up" table screwed together, and marshalls in their allotted places, we were ready to receive the first cars.

A massive BDR bark erupted out of the silence and then died. Mr 'Blue Light' Verona coasted dramatically into the car park.

Following that, a shadowy figure silhouetted against the early morning sunshine crunched his way across the car park: our Chairman, Andrew Walker (less Fireblade) arrived to help. As soon as all hands were shaken and people introduced, we set about the task of marshalling the first entrants into the car park.

A constant stream of traffic through the car park certainly kept us on our toes, each car being greeted by myself and then passed over to the 'bag team' in the main car park.

With the first group of entrants checked in, route books at the ready and bacon butties digested, Big Blat was off and running.

The first leg of the route took 90 minutes to complete. Following that a coffee stop had been arranged at Brockley Village Hall. Lois

Carlton Smith and her band of helpers expertly served flapjacks, scones and tea and coffee, just to bridge that gap prior to lunch.

Another 90 minutes later and the first of the long line of cars entered the Barnham Broom car park. Some confusion followed with a few of the early arrivals walking all the way through the banqueting suite and out towards me at the main entrance. The conversation went something like: "So where's the food Ernie?" "In the Barford Suite". "Can't be! It's set up for a wedding reception". "No, that's our suite for the day!" "Oh!"

By 1.30pm all had arrived with the notable exception of Richard Ince. Being the fastest Seven driver in Carrotland we concluded that he had a problem with the car.

But as they say, you can't keep a good man down. He arrived at the lunch stop in his 911 back up car. Not bad going considering he broke down in Walsham Le Willows, called his wife to recover the Seven, drove home, collected the 911, continued the route from where he left off to still arrive for lunch with 15 minutes to spare!

For the final leg of the route, the cars headed towards the Suffolk coast and a few managed to squeeze in an ice cream before swinging back inland to the finish for a BBQ and a chat about the day's events.

Judging by the comments at the finish line and the subsequent messages via email, the day was a roaring success and to cap it all we made £1537.28 for NtL.

Finally, a big thanks to all who helped during the day and to the 120 people who entered and supported the first major Seven club event that Geof & myself have organised.

So where's Big Blat going next year then? *More pictures overleaf >*



Seen on the Big Blat





