

JEC SOF/A - PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR AGM 2026

Hello and welcome to our 2026 AGM here in the lovely old town of Cognac. I shall begin with a brief review of 2025 and then move on to what we have lined up for you this year.

Last year was our most successful yet in that we had our highest-ever number of members. There was good support for our outings and trips and from your feedback these were a great success.

The truffle and wine luncheon at Domaine Montansier in February and the Cognac Rugby Club outing in March with a tasting at Cognac Bache-Gabrielsen were very well-received and we plan to repeat these events in the future.

The trip to the Auvergne in May was quite eventful and lots of fun, with John and Susan Ball setting up an "HQ" in a local bar wherever we went. I think this is a practice that we should adopt on all future outings! And who would have thought we'd find a whisky distillery up in the mountains?

The visit to the Citadelle Gin Distillery in July was perhaps the highlight of the year and certainly had one of the best attendances ever. We all had a fantastic time learning about gin distillation and then sampling the results with a copious and delicious picnic made up of local produce.

After a long, hot, dry summer with barely a drop of rain for three months, we contrived to hold our annual charity barbecue on the wettest day of the year – and boy did it rain! Luckily, we had a cunning plan. With the help of François Jobit and some of our members, we found enough gazebos to shelter the 50 odd people who braved the downpours to attend. Our hosts, Trev and Carine, did a fantastic job and our grateful thanks go to them and everyone who took part, in spite of the weather. There were many donations of very generous prizes from members and we managed to raise around 1800€ which was divided between two charities; the first being the Allison Campbell Trust, which provides end-of-life care, and which was set up by Trev's close friend Dave in memory of his wife.

It was particularly nice that Dave was present on the day. And the second charity was the Association française des haémophiles which supports children suffering from hemophilia. They helped Carine's son when he was young and so this is close to home for her too.

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In September we once again participated in the Rallye des Clubs at the Angoulême ramparts weekend. For the second year running we joined up with the ICBC for this event, and we are planning to do a few more joint events with them. We feel this will give us all a chance to meet some new people and see some different cars, for whilst we are all very proud of our Jags, there are plenty of other beautiful motors out there.

Whilst last year was a great success, it is disappointing to note that this year so far there has been a drop in subscribing members. Also, in spite of our attempts to encourage more French members, which was successful to a certain extent, we are finding that very few of those French members actually attend our events. We do try to welcome new members when they come along to events, but we cannot do this all on our own. So, please do introduce yourselves to anyone new you may come across at our meetings, make them feel welcome and help them to integrate into the Club.

If anyone has any suggestions as to how we can run the Club better, or entice more people to attend, please do come forward.

Looking forward to this year, we have eleven cars and twenty-four members participating in the Rotary Rally tomorrow to help raise money for the continuing fight against Polio. Then next month the Four Valleys trip is fully subscribed with 21 people and 11 cars touring around the valleys of the Lot, the Célé, the Dordogne and the Ouyse for five days. There are still a couple of places left on the Regularity Rally on 1st/2nd June starting from Périgueux, so if that may be of interest to you, please see Pete Upton today.

Then on Sunday 19th July we are joining up with the ICBC for a visit to the lovely Château de Hautefort, a display of our cars in the château grounds and of course lunch! Places are still available for this event too.

Our charity barbecue this year is on Sunday 30th August at the home of Julian Packman and his partner Régine in the commune of Bellevigne, in the Charente. Please make a note in your diaries and why not book yourself into a local hotel for the weekend? If you are unable to come, but wish to make a donation, please come and see any of the committee today. This year's charity will be chosen by the hosts as usual.

On Friday 4th September we plan to visit the Château de Varaignes and its museum of weaving and have lunch nearby. Spaces are available, so please register now if you haven't already done so. There are plans to participate in the Angoulême weekend of course and possibly visit the Nogaro circuit too.

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John McLennan our Secretary has not been able to participate as fully as he would have liked over the last year or so, and we all wish him a speedy resolution to his ongoing car troubles and better health from now on. Likewise, Régis our Vice-President, who travels regularly to Paris to help his recently-widowed son. He has had to take a step back from the Club, but we are very much hoping that we shall see him and Evelyne at the barbecue in August and that he will be in a better position to take a more active role once more next year.

Sharpie, our Treasurer when he is not gallivanting around the place on holiday, puts in a huge amount of work on our behalf, and keeps our finances in good order and Chris Sweby is doing a fine job as our Webmaster.

Incidentally, please do make use of the website. It has all the up to-date information on planned events and reports and photographs of past trips. One member recently informed me that he didn't even know we had a website! The address is jecsofa.fr

Will you now please join me in showing our appreciation for all these volunteers and to their good ladies for their help and support. Finally, my personal thanks go out to all of you, the members for your support and friendship, as without you there would be no club at all. And of course, to Annie, my wonderful wife who now has to share me with no less than FOUR old Jags and my golf clubs!! Thank you all for coming and for listening.

Chris Park.

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