

## **FORMER PRESIDENT ALAN DOMVILLE CONTINUES HIS REMINISCENCES AS A MOTORING WRITER & LIFELONG GROUP FRIEND.....**

Many of the car manufacturers like to add on something extra to a model launch simply to ensure, amid the plethora of such events in the year, that motoring journalists not only write about the event and, as I am doing now, possibly pen something additional as well.

Suzuki, for instance, have now and again taken the opportunity to introduce us to their latest marine engines. Not so long ago I enjoyed a pleasant sail on Loch Lomond on a boat powered by one of their refined units - and so it was that some weeks ago a launch concerning their Swift special edition Attitude and four wheel drive models was given that extra ingredient ...a trip from Lymington on the Hampshire coast across to the Isle of Wight.

I had done this trip several times before, memorably with Ellen McArthur aboard when Renault were launching a new car, and also enjoyably with Peugeot in rubber inflated boat and with Volvo in one of their ocean-going yachts (despite a squall on the way back).

Deciding to forgo the rigmarole of a plane flight from Manchester to the venue or a long drive I opted to travel to the event by train. I didn't reckon on my coach bursting at the seams with humanity and being locked in a four seat berth surrounded by three women conducting a WI meeting for the duration! I was truly up for the sail following the launch - after all I descend from several admirals - eager to enjoy lunch at the Royal Yacht Club in Cowes while the less brave (and much younger than my 70-plus years) were offered their midday meal on the mainland.

But, hey, some 90-plussers who had taken part in the D-Day landings were parachuting out of aircraft over Normandy that same week.

After making my way through at least £300m worth of moored yachts I and my journalist colleagues reached three RIBs for our journey. Wearing a wetsuit that would have fitted both Sirs Redgrave and Pinsent at the same time I staggered into the RIB, and off we went. Bang, bang, bang went the craft as we thumped into every wave at 35 knots - and the advice was to stand rather than sit so that one's spine wasn't shattered. And as we made our way towards Cowes we came across a superb piece of Suzuki PR...a Swift resplendent on a RIB pointing our way forward.

My knees took the strain and I was pretty shattered when disembarking at Cowes, stumbling and bruising my leg that hopefully should heal within a few months. Lunch for me was a beef burger and nothing more given that I did not want to see my meal reappear during the return journey. We were warned that the weather was deteriorating, the wind was getting up and it would be a tough journey back. But first a detour into a quiet backwater where our pilots enabled the RIBs to form various twists and turns. Then, thankfully, we were on our way back to Lymington.

Yes there was even more bang, bang, bang - but I survived - and I have to admit that I wouldn't have missed the trip for the world.