

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

Almost every time I attend a new car launch these days so many of my senior journalist colleagues declare words to the effect that "We've had the best days and they won't be coming back." They are referring especially to lavish trips to all points of the globe which took up to a week to undertake - about which I have reminisced in my series of contributions to our newsletter over the years.

Another well-used comment is "Who are these people?" This is a reference to the presence of non-journalists who have created websites, allegedly in order to obtain test cars.

And there's another. "Who could possibly consider inviting him or her - they cannot even drive!" In this instance the "Glass Half Empties" are complaining about the "influencers" who push products with the prestigious backcloth of, say, an Audi or a Mercedes-Benz.

To the first comment I would say the "days" are as enjoyable as they ever were; foreign trips are as plentiful as ever for those who supply cuttings after events. To the second the fact is that if companies' press officers were not receiving value for their outlay their accountants would by now have certainly let them know. And to the third the internet cannot be uninvented.

We live in an age where young children (or rather their parents) can make millions simply by opening the wrappings and playing with the toys inside on You Tube. Sadly there has inevitably become a rift between the different sets of guests on launches with too little effort being made to understand each others' roles.

I was greatly embarrassed recently when going down to breakfast during a launch with a colleague, one of the "others" invited us to join him at his table. My colleague made a weak excuse and walked on. I'm sure that when I became a motoring correspondent the doyens of the day - Lord Strathcarron, Raymond Baxter, John Bolster, Basil Cardew, Patrick Mennem, Courtney Edwards - may well have wondered 'who was this young whippersnapper from the sticks who joined their company?'

One of them, Jack Nihill had been invited to the Volkswagen Beetle Mark One launch attended by Adolf Hitler in 1938. But never at any time did I feel there was any animosity towards me. Indeed to a man (there were no women correspondents in those days) they were always helpful and supportive. And what stories they could tell!

What my pessimistic colleagues should be doing today is to adjust to and welcome the times in which we live and not continually yearn for days gone by.

There are around 60 million people living in Great Britain. There are around 60 professional motoring writers. Each of us, then, could be said to be one in a million.

We really are privileged and still have a wonderful profession to enjoy and I am certain there are still many exciting times and experiences ahead.