

The picnic drive for traditional turnouts on June 12th in the rural landscape of Aichach (Upper Bavaria)

There is a story told about the Worshipful Guild of Barrel-makers in Munich, Germany, who gave a sign when leaving their homes to dance their traditional Guild's dance. Their initiative showed the citizens of Munich, that the plague was over and thus encouraged them to leave their homes too - where they had hidden for years - and to enjoy life again.



This happened in 1517 and the year 2021 evidently has some parallels with that year, with the corona-restrictions having been lifted now.

It would be presumptuous to assert that the corona pandemic was as bad as the plague in Munich during the Renaissance nor can we compare ourselves to the courageous members of the Guild of Barrel-makers, who reintroduced public life and gaiety to Munich. It was, however, our personal aim that driving activities be organised again and to set a sign of activity as soon as conditions permitted.

Now, with the beer gardens being reopened and shops (with masks still being worn) selling their goods again, driving competitions still seemed impossible because of the long period of preparation needed for their organization and so we decided to postpone our club's traditional picnic drive until June and to invite drivers of traditional turnouts to this entertaining event. And they came...



Of course, some of their horses were not fit yet for such a long drive having overcome such a lengthy period of inactivity, some of the carriages and sets of harness were not in show condition,

and some drivers were simply surprised and not prepared for such an event coming so suddenly. So just nine of the many drivers that we invited signed up for the drive and six of them then arrived at the Pferdehof Hartl on the morning of June 12th and unloaded their horses and carriages. There was a pair of Haflingers to a rural type of Victoria, another pair of Haflingers to a Hunting Carriage, and a pair of Freibergers to a Mylord in natural wood. There was an extremely elegant Trakehner to a Four-Wheel-Rally-Car and a pair of Kladruber horses to a Body Break.



Fortunately, the area between Dachau and Aichach, in Upper Bavaria, is an area of natural rural beauty. An area still pure farmland. Literature gives us a realistic and impressive picture of this area in the novels by Ludwig Thoma, the celebrated Bavarian novelist of the late 1800s. He was an expert concerning the landscape and the lives of the local farmers as he had his own shoot there. There are many miles of well-kept rural lanes well suited to carriage use over the fields and woodland – and there are several romantic places well-known to locals and suitable for picnics with turnouts.



The drivers were warmly welcomed in the morning and given a map of the area indicating the route and several short cuts for those drivers whose horses were not top fit or for drivers who became thirsty with the sun being very bright and warm and who wanted to get to the picnic place quicker. The longest route was of about 20 km, the shortest variation 12 km. It was a drive along country lanes amidst meadows (the smell of cut grass in the air as the hay making had already begun) and through shadowy forests. The picnic area was situated in a shallow hollow beside a pond and on



the rim of a spinney where the horses could be unharnessed and tied to trees in the shadow. Hay for the horses to keep them occupied and clean water to drink had been provided by the organizer. So, the horses were calm and relaxed.





As tradition required everybody took their own food and drink – and picnic hampers, folding chairs and table.



The drivers were in fine form, calm, satisfied and happy as were their horses and guests. They enjoyed friendly conversation and good food and drink. A few clouds caused concern but the weather kept the promises of the forecast. Despite several gusts of wind there was also a constant soft breeze keeping the hollow pleasantly cool.



Preparation for the drive back was conducted without haste and after their rest the horses pulled forward well and returned back to trucks and trailers soon, the second section of the route being just about six kilometres. As soon as they returned the horses were boxed and the carriages pushed on the trucks. The farewell conversation took its time – everybody thanked the staff of the Pferdehof Hartl for their hospitality, and the organizers of the driving club for their organizing the picnic drive.



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