

# 2003 10 Countries Run Part 2

by Martin Randle

I ended my article in the last Club Torque with 15 crews having made it to Nice on the Saturday night. We had also only visited two out of the 10 countries at the halfway point! So, to continue the story from an organiser's and participant's point of view.

Sunday morning everyone comes round, eats some breakfast, pays their bills and generally get out to the cars. The first port of call (literally) was Nice Port where we all lined up in the car park by the sea wall so that we could do one of those things that seemed a good idea when first dreamed up but now maybe didn't— yes, a swim in the Med. How exactly do you get changed in a car park? Is it a question of the old English dance in a towel whilst quickly whipping off clothing and getting into your choice of swimwear, squirming about in your car or, perhaps, being brazen about it? Well, all approaches were taken and to spare anyone's blushes (including mine) we'll draw a veil over the subject – you just had to be there to witness the sights. Don't you agree Graham? Anyway, at least 10 made it down the steps to the Med. for a 10-minute swim and then back to the cars. I feel I can say that a tradition has been started!



It was at this point though that the planning started to go wrong. Now, can I just say that I had thrown the whole thing together really and felt that once we had got into the run everyone would pretty much do their own thing. From Steenvoorde though it was apparent that people expected me to give a lead and so the whole event continued under my guidance. Ok, fine and when I kept saying we leave at 11.30 everyone was happy with that but then I noticed that my guidelines actually said 11.30 in Monaco !Oops – half an hour behind time. Quickly we all got into the cars, lined up to leave and then found we had to go and find a ticket machine to get out of the car park! Still, panic over and the 14 remaining Triumphs set off for Monaco and it was a great sight to see the cars travel along by the Med and descend into Monte Carlo. Another memory for me was travelling slowly through the streets and hearing locals comment "Triumph, Triumph" – or at least that's what I thought they said!

Country 3 now clocked up and the route took us into Menton before heading up into the Alps again via Sospel. This is where problem number two came into play. The centre of Menton was closed for a motorsport event involving classic Simcas or some other French make. As a result plenty of traffic and hold-ups so we tried a detour up into the hills to try and cut through to the route we wanted. Following us was Tim Hunt and Mike and Kate Sloan but

it wasn't too long until Tim realised we weren't going to be able to get to the correct route and we had to turn round and head back into Menton. Coming the other way was Andy Pearce, Barry McGrath and probably others too who then had to turn round and follow us back as well! Next thing I can remember is seeing Dean Martin directing traffic whilst a 22 foot long Herald reversed back out of a cul-de-sac. I suppose this is the kind of surreal scene we entered this madcap adventure for and now some more French residents were sure that the English were all mad!

Eventually after all this mayhem the valiant crews managed to fight their way out of Menton and find the correct route (or at least some of us did). Mat and I had set off with a quarter of a tank of fuel that morning and thought that we could buy fuel in Sospel, which we should reach easily. As we left civilisation and started up into the Alps behind Menton the low fuel light came on – oh good! The road itself was superb, really tight hairpins climbing up into the mountains and I thoroughly enjoyed throwing the TR around the corners, rear tyres spinning and the TR a little bit sideways. All of this whilst being pursued by Andy Pearce and the sound of the two cars and their squealing tyres was just great. Can we get to Sospel without running out of fuel?

At last Sospel and there's a BP garage, hurrah! Damn it, closed and probably closed since 1965! Mat at this point got a little nervous but I can forgive him as he put up with some heated words later trying to find an exit off an Italian autoroute but that's another story. I assured Mat that we would be joining a main road later and there was bound to be a petrol station there.

We dropped down onto the N204, turned left and there was a Total station at La Giandola (now marked up for future reference) just as I imagined it would be! As I was putting petrol in the TR7 Mike and Kate Sloan pulled in and I will always remember Mike's words "You know, Martin, your organisation on this trip has been superb!". Yes, well, that's as maybe but a TR7 fuel tank holds 12 gallons and I put 11.8 in!

By now we were a little behind time but not too much to give a great deal of concern and all the crews were buzzing about the tremendous roads we had driven over. Just up the road was the Italian border and some of the crews set off but were soon back – unfortunately, there had just been a fatal motorcycle accident and the road into Italy was closed. A detour would have put us miles out of our way so we had our lunch at the petrol station and then at the



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side of the road. The delay was something like two hours now before we could get under way again.

After this sad event we moved into country 4, Italy and many of us realised that we couldn't follow the original route and stay anywhere near the correct timing so various detours were taken and the intrepid travellers became largely split up. Mat and I decided to take some Italian motorways but unfortunately for a small critical area they went off of our maps and of course that's where we needed to leave one motorway and join another. I can remember coming off one motorway but then we were off our maps and our car compass showed us heading south, in entirely the wrong direction. One thing I cannot recommend highly enough is a car compass as it really can help you put right any mistakes quickly. There did then follow some heated (on my part) discussions in the car and I have to admire Mat's calmness and admit that he was right – when I followed his directions we got back on track!

Now, there was only one arranged stopping point where we had to be at a particular time but, of course, it had to be now didn't it? A contact I had made via the TR Register Italy, was a fine fellow by the name of Alberto Grisoni who had booked a meal for us all at a restaurant at a place called Lesa on the banks of Lake Maggiore. Poor Alberto, he had booked a meal for 35 people and although my wife had e-mailed him to let him know we were late he hadn't picked his e-mails up! Eventually we arrived three hours late and we were the second car there, Doug Foreman and Colin Jenner in their GT6 had arrived some time before but it was quite a time before all the crews finally made it.

The meal halt here was another time to remember as by now all the crews pretty much knew each other and we had shared many experiences so far. Alberto had arranged a really nice place for us to have our meal, a very welcoming owner, friendly staff (even

allowing crews to use their facilities to obtain water for the cars and clean up after servicing vehicles) and not forgetting Alberto's wonderful TR4A for us to look at. It occurred to me that this man had never met any of us before but had arranged a meal and waited three hours for us to arrive so surely I should have thought of a gift for him as a token of thanks. A moment's thought and then I gave him my 10CR polo shirt off my back (with advice to wash it before wearing it!). I think another polo shirt was donated to the restaurant owner by one of the crews too.

Behind the restaurant various work was being done, the Stretch was parked at the side of the road and attracting attention as usual. I remember Doug Foreman asking me if the five litres of fluid he had bought was really antifreeze but I had to reply "No mate, that's screenwash!". I happily donated my spare water/antifreeze mix instead, gave some oil away to someone else and decided that I might as well act as if I was responsible for the whole thing anyway and be last car away. This was based on a feeling of responsibility for those who had decided to join me on this caper and on a fairly smug feeling that although others might be having problems my TR7 was going great. So, all in all I could afford to be a "sweeper" at the back of the field couldn't I? What's that about pride before a fall?

We left Lesa at 10.10pm with the sick Triumph 2000 "Workslike", the White Tornado and Andy Pearce's NGK eating 2500TC, four countries down, six to go.

In summary, at the end of the second full day there were 14 cars still running as Quentin was making his way home *sans* Dolomite, Graham Reek's 2000 was down on power, we had about 1200 miles under our tyres and due to delays we were four hours behind schedule.

Part 3 will follow in the next *Club Torque* but if you like what you are reading – get your entry in for this year's Round Britain Run and enjoy some proper motoring, then join us on the 10CR 2005!