

A Busy Time with a GT6

by Tim Bancroft

After enjoying a busy time in my GT6 Mk.2 TAR 199J, partly done to celebrate 20 years of ownership, I thought it might be good to write in with my experiences of using her for some spirited events during two consecutive weeks in August and September, so here goes:

Classic and Sportscar Action Day at Castle Combe Saturday 30 August 2003

This was my eighth time of going to this event, which is a good value track day at the pleasant location of Castle Combe race circuit. The cost being £10 entry and five lap track sessions of five laps at £18, I generally purchase two track sessions which I find to be plenty. This year's event was extremely popular, with the Paddock and display areas being packed at the time of my arrival of 10.00am. It looked like 500 cars were present, ranging from Mini Coopers, MGBs and Lotus Elans to Subaru Impreza Turbos and Cosworth Sierras. After firstly having a spot of breakfast and then attending a drivers' briefing, I eagerly joined the queue to go out for my first session in my GT6 alongside my friend Jon Stevens in his Lotus Elan Sprint. The first hurdle is to pass the noise test, which is 100d(b)a at 4,500 rpm. The noise testing marshal looked at my car and said "Go on then give her 3,000 rpm, crikey! She's a bit louder than I thought, you'd better try 4,500". Any rate the car scraped in at 98d(b)a, which worried me as I did not fancy buying the awful bolt-on silencers that the circuit shop was selling at a vast sum. So I was clear to go to the collecting area, where the 30 drivers and cars for the next session were grouped. In recent years the Action Day has been getting very popular with the owners of the aforementioned Impreza Turbos, BMW M3s and other similar types of 'Classic' and sure enough I was right in amongst them, they probably thought that I looked like a mobile chicane.



Castle Combe

After an hour's wait whilst a very damaged Lotus 23 replica and BMW M3 coupe (crikey! they are the new GT6 – they don't go around bends) were recovered, we were off. My first lap consisted of re-learning the track and then getting humiliated by a rapid 1969 Cooper 'S', however once the GT6 was properly warmed up I started to give her some stick. Castle Combe has one notorious corner called Quarry Bend which is at the end of the fastest straight, the braking point for this corner is on the brow of a small rise, so remembering to keep everything smooth, it's very gentle on the brakes, put her down into second gear, through to the apex, and then power her out of the corner

with a bit of opposite lock using the whole of the road, great fun! I spent the rest of this session following a very wayward Mark 2 Capri (Cr*pi) who would not let me pass, frustrating but probably prudent after viewing his lines. Arriving back in the paddock I learnt that my buddy Jon had a great spin at Quarry, blaming the dodgy rubber he had fitted on his Elan, to which I reminded him that he should have a GT6! He owned a Vitesse that he used to sprint and hillclimb, but to quote has moved onto better things!!!

My next session, this time joined by another mate Jim Hauting in a Peugeot 306gti6 (another classic!), this time was much better as I actually managed to overtake some cars and again completed my laps without undue drama! My best moment was being overtaken by a rapid Nissan 200SX at the end of the straight, watching the driver get it all wrong through Quarry and catching him up, of course he powered away once on the straight, but still it is possible to get a GT6 to handle, decent rubber and dampers, an inch reduction in ride height and harder bushes all help. Jimmy did manage to overtake me though, not surprising as these Pugs are well balanced and handle very well, of course hand gestures were exchanged when he overtook me!

This finished a great day. It must be said that the Action Day is getting very popular, especially with the hot hatch brigade, but I did bump into James Elliott of *Classic and Sportscar* who told me that plans are afoot to make the event more classic car friendly next year. So if you fancy having a go, I'll see you next year!

National Day at Brooklands Sunday 31 August 2003

Arrived at Brooklands which is near to home to see a good turnout of Triumphs, including three or four cars that would be on the forthcoming 10CR the following weekend. I had a good look around the various museum buildings as well as a walk up one of the banked sections of track still present. The race drivers of the Brooklands heyday must have been mad to drive their big Sunbeams, Bugattis, Bentleys, ERAs and the like at race speeds to the top of these banked sections as it is barely possible to stand. I also noted that there was no fence present!! It made my antics at Castle Combe the previous day seem extremely tame.

Fellow GT6 owner Graham Ramsey asked me to take my GT6 halfway up the bank to have a picture taken in the company of his Mk.1 and his friend's Mk.3. Once the picture was taken his friend could not



National Day at Brooklands

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get out of his car owing to the incline of the bank. Thanks though to Graham for the idea, I'm looking forward to seeing the snaps.

The day was going very well, when the Club's Spares Secretary Keith Bennett sidled up to me requesting help with choosing the car of the day, blimey responsibility! Now I'm not one for concours and polishing, but my hat goes off to owners of all the cars that we judged. I trust that everyone present on the day considers that the choice of the Dolomite Sprint of Len Hughes was right as 'Car of the day', she really is a fantastic machine. I certainly agree with the members/visitors 'Favourite car of the day' vote which went to Doug Crutchfield's TR2, especially considering that he has participated in one RBRR with it and was due to start on the 10CR the following Friday, great car, Doug! As an aside, his car has been used by Polyphony/Sony for the next version of Gran Turismo (no.4) that is due out this November for the Playstation PS2 game console as the example of the Triumph TR2. This is fantastic as so far 30 million copies (!!!!) of Gran Turismo have been sold worldwide, making it one of the most popular electronic games in history. You never know it could/should introduce Triumph cars to a whole new generation of fans. It's a great game and I shall be getting myself a copy of the game and give Doug's car a good thrashing!

The other cars that took my fancy were the Dolomite Sprint with a Stag V8 engine of Philip Reader, who had let four inches of metal into the front of the car to accommodate the extra length of the V8. I could not spot the join, and the GT6 of Neil McLean which had extensive modifications such as BMW fuel injection and Emerald engine management, both these cars were superbly presented. It would be nice to have them along on next year's RBRR. I'll have to contact Neil to get him into the Club, as he is not a member.

It was nice to be asked to help Keith with the judging and topped what had been a brilliant day. Thanks to Jim Webb, Richard Stubbs and their merry band for organising a superb day.

10 Countries Run Friday 5 September to Monday 8 September 2003

In a moment of madness at last November's committee meeting I put my hand up to Martin Randle's request for drivers to join him on the inaugural Europe reliability run eventually called the 10CR. Glad I did.

As usual I cajoled my good mate Richard Arthers to join me. Now this was illogical as Rich lives 10km from Nice which was to be the furthest destination and overnight stop. Our plan was to pick Rich up from Gatwick on the morning of the run, go to Enfield for the start, drive to Nice, go to his flat, watch England beat Macedonia in a local bar, crash out, get up, drive back to Enfield, stay at mine overnight in Staines and then go to Gatwick and put Rich back on a plane to Nice. Probably not one of the best ideas we have ever had, but we did it and surprisingly enough it worked! Fair play to Rich for going for it, it just proves how much he enjoys these Triumph events. (Sadly he is off to Australia for a few years, so I'll need a new co-driver).

Car preparation for the 10CR was going very well until I noticed a pool of gear oil under the car on the Tuesday night before the Friday event. Wednesday night consisted of getting the gearbox out, legging it to Moss at Hanworth on the Thursday morning, buying a new copper washer for the bottom bellhousing bolt and slinging the box back in. I did not dare give her a test run on the Thursday night after I got the box in, as it was too late, I had decided we were going! So with 500ml of EP90 and the usual plethora of spares and tools we were off to Enfield.

Friday

The car park at Enfield was like a mini RBRR start with about 14 of the 16 crews/cars participating present. Marvelous stuff, Martin looked like a guy in seventh heaven. I was surprised to see Don Cook who had pitched up in his very nice GT6 Mk. 3 on his own to do the event, with maybe a glimmer of hope that he would get a co-driver. It was also good to see the Canley Classics Stretched Herald, with Dave Pearson, Craig Gingell and Jason Chinn dressed up as the Blues Brothers!

The first leg down to Dover went past without incident, except sadly Ellis Stokes retiring with a dropped cam follower in his 16v TR7, a shame as he had put a lot of work in to get the car ready (see you on the RBRR Ellis!). The Walker 2500TC joined us at Dover and we all boarded the 16.15 ferry thus putting us all an hour in front of schedule. The first stop on the other side of the channel was Steenvorde Services where we met up with Mike and Kate Sloan in their very nice TR4 who were also starting their European touring holiday and Dean Martin who lives in Belgium and had agreed to co-drive with Barry McGrath and Keith Bennett in Barry's Acclaim. However considering that Don was on his own, Dean kindly agreed to co-drive with him.

Off we all went, with inevitably cars getting bunched up into smaller groups, and we must apologise for getting our particular group lost in Valenciennes, however Mike Sloan took control with his superior maps and we were soon on our way.

Saturday

The section to Reims went well except at Laon where roadworks split our group of six cars up with just the Johnson's Herald and us continuing onwards. However we then got lost in Reims losing the Herald and ending up on our own. As we reached Chalons-en-Champagne we realised that we needed fuel, and not finding an open garage in town we headed off for Troyes where we found fuel at a Service area on the péage motorway A26. This obviously put us behind, and we then headed down the A5 to get onto the D396 near to Bar-sur-Aube. Now as Rich had managed to fall asleep I decided that a bit of fun was in order on what is a superb driver's road. After a good hour of sliding around I noticed a warning triangle and some skid marks on the side of the road, and had the thought that these French drivers really should learn a bit of car control. I then had a bad understeer moment waking Rich up, and decided to heed his suggestion that it might be a good idea to slow down. A bit later I started to have trouble keeping my eyes open so pulled over into the entrance road of a farm, to have a quick 30mins kip. It was creepy where we had stopped as it was pitch black, and like a wimp I locked the car up! As we did not get woken up by any of the other cars we realised we were the last car.

Driving along the D996 towards Louhans we suddenly saw about 10 Triumphs in a local garage so we pulled in to be confronted by the news about Tim Hunt who had a bit of a prang in his TR4. We then realised that the triangle and skid marks had been his! At this time of the morning everything always seems worse and on seeing the damage to his TR4 I've got to admit I felt like packing it in. Once we had our breakfast in Louhans we decided to continue. Full marks to Tim in keeping going, there is no way that I would have done that, I reckon I would have sulked off home.

Before leaving Louhans I checked under the GT6 to discover that she was still losing gear oil but we decided we would keep going and

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monitor the situation in Nice, so we set off to Lyon and then Grenoble. Not much to report on this section of the route as I was asleep!

I woke up in the vicinity of Grenoble and we decided that owing to the loss of gear oil we would do the lower route to Digne-les-Bains not going over Gap, as we did not want to put any undue strain on the box. As we did not stop in Grenoble for lunch, we stopped near to Serres at a lovely café for lunch under the shadow of the Alps, the only downer being that we could not have a beer, or a swim in the café's pool!. We decided to get on our way as the Stretch went past. Eventually we went past them as they stopped for fuel, however we stopped a bit further on and the Stretch team joined us in a lay-by for a breather. It was funny to see the reaction that they were getting to their car by passing traffic.

Once going we eventually lost the Stretch as we carried along the N85 and they turned off towards Nice, we were going towards Grasse and then to Mougins where Rich's flat is situated. That night we went to Antibes and found a nice bar to watch England play football against Macedonia and then found a lovely restaurant to enjoy a very pleasant meal, getting to bed at 10.45pm. A sleep on a Triumph road run, what next!

Sunday

I woke up at 8.00am and made my way to the underground garage where we had left the GT6, to check her over for the forthcoming arduous drive. The principal aim was to check the gearbox oil level and to my pleasant surprise found that she only needed 300ml of EP90, and this gave me confidence that we would finish the event.

As soon as I finished I joined Rich and his girlfriend Jane for breakfast on their balcony, a nice way to start what we knew was going to be a tiring day. We met the rest of the crews at the car park that Rich had recce'd in Nice at 10.30. It was good to see all the other cars parked up, a few drivers were having a swim (nice speedos, Martin!), whilst others were giving their cars a check over. I was disappointed to discover that Quentin and Mark in the blue Dolomite 1500 had packed it in at Sisteron in the French Alps, evidently they were worried that the car was running too hot and had thought it was best to drop out. Hopefully we will see Quentin and Mark on next years RBRR. So we left Nice, a bit later than proposed owing to a bit of a timing problem, deciding to follow Doug and Mary Crutchfield in their TR2 and the Walker team in the 2500TC. We passed through Monte Carlo, however when we got to Menton we found the road out of town was closed so rather than face a traffic jam that was going through the town we headed towards Sospel through the L'Escarne. After some very friendly help from a cyclist with the route we headed up Col de Braus. This road was the best part so far as it must have had about 50 hairpins climbing up and down the hills as well as loads of small tunnels where the road builders had decided to go through the rock instead of go around, absolute fantastic fun driving in convoy with the TR2 and 2500TC, Doug and Mary's TR looked great in these situations. We got to Sospel and I decided to stop outside a café, to be greeted by the owner asking me to move the car as it was obstructing the entrance to his passage to the terrace across the road, where locals were taking lunch. When moved we saw that I had left a patch of gear oil, and anticipating the owner of the café going A over T I cleaned up the oil with rags, whilst the café owner expressed concern about my gear oil loss. I told him not to worry it's a Triumph! The 2500TC was having problems as the braking was causing heat build up that was overheating the car's hub grease. However after a clean up, the Walker Bros (hopefully with 'No regrets') decided that we could all continue.

We joined the main road to go into Italy, to be confronted by a stationary traffic jam. Evidently a motor cyclist had come off his bike just after one of the long tunnels that are along this road. However in the jam we could see most of the other Triumphs, in fact the only car missing was the GT6 of Doug Foreman and Colin Jenner (nicknamed the 'Two Fat Ladies' owing to their girth and ability to get into a GT6), blimey! When eventually we did get going we entered the first of a few very long tunnels. As the opposing traffic was stationary it seemed rude not to drop the car down a gear into 2nd and give them a blast of 4,000rpm from a GT6, what a great noise. Doug and Mary did likewise in the TR2, fantastic, however we did start to worry about bringing the tunnel down!

The next stage going through Italy was great as everywhere we went the locals were clapping and waving as we passed through. The group got a bit fragmented and we decided to stay with the TR2, 2500TC and the Sloan's TR4. As we had to be at Lesa for a meal with some representatives of the Italian TR Register we decided to hit the motorways, arriving at Lesa at 9.00pm (some 3 hours late) for a nice buffet and warm welcome from the TR man. The restaurant was decorated like an American diner and I'm sure I saw Dave Pearson eyeing up the peppermint green and cream upholstery to see if it was suitable for the Stretch!



Queuing near to Italy border

The next section was through the Swiss border after paying the road levy of 40 Swiss Francs and through into Locarno. By now it was starting to dawn on me that we had been traveling for 42 hours and had only done five countries, the driving through the next five to the ferry at Dunkirk looked like being busy!

Monday

As the time was 2.00am I decided to get some sleep leaving Rich in the convoy with the TR2, 2500TC, Barry McGrath's Acclaim and the Sloan TR4. I woke up to find us parked on a bridge somewhere in Switzerland, hearing Doug telling Rich not to wake the lazy sod up! Once going again we went to the next open fuel stop and were joined by Don's GT6, and the Stretch. We hit Liechtenstein and then went back to Switzerland, but unfortunately as it was dark we couldn't see the local scenery, however I did notice that the town that we went through in Liechtenstein was very clean! Unfortunately going along the A1 motorway it had started to rain and we lost

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contact with Doug and Mary as they were experiencing problems with their windscreen wipers. Sorry Doug I should have let you have some of the Rain-X that I had. As the time was 5.30am and we had started to encounter commuter traffic we decided to continue along the A1 going near to Zurich, Basel and then cross the French border and head towards Strasbourg. Owing to time constraints we had to continue on motorways by-passing Luxembourg city. (However we did stay in the company of the Walker 2500TC, who did a great job in keeping the pace at approx 75mph). Not much to report for this final stretch as it was all motorway. We dropped into Steenvorde Services and met up with Martin and Mat in the TR7 and continued with them. We arrived at Dunkirk at 4.15pm missing our ferry that was booked at 3.45, however we got on the next one meeting up with Doug and Colin in the other red GT6 in the queue for the boat.

The journey from Dover to 'The Plough' along the M20 and the M25 was uneventful. We arrived at the finish at 7.00 where we learnt that Tim and Mark in the TR4 had traveled back over the channel with Andy Flexney and Paul Darbyshire in the yellow TR3 on the ferry before us. This meant that five cars were still to get back, Graham Reeks and crew in the white 2000 having head gasket problems in Germany and retiring, and the Sloans in the TR4 leaving us at Dunkirk to finish their Continental tour.

I had to attend a committee meeting at 7.30pm so missed seeing the last of the cars finish, however all drivers who did come to the finish were buzzing with excitement about the event and it seems looking forward to doing it again. After Martin had furnished a brief report of the event to the committee, it was decided to adopt the event as a Club Triumph event, and alternate it with the RBRR. Great decision!

The best aspect of the run was as ever making new friends and renewing friendships with people I had met on previous Club Triumph events. Also interesting to meet Andy Pearce who seems to have a spark plug fetish, 11 at last count!

I enjoyed the event though I did find it more difficult than the Round Britain Reliability Run. Next time I think I might take the Dolomite Sprint that I own as it would probably be more comfortable for a four-day event.

As was to be expected some aspects of the 10CR need a bit of fine tuning, however for the first time of running, what a successful event, let's hope it goes on to become as popular and good as the RBRR.

Thanks to all my fellow participants for making the event so enjoyable, and a big thank you to Martin for having the idea of the 10 Countries Run!

Classic Car 30th Birthday Meeting at the 'Ace Café', Stonebridge Park, North London, on Tuesday 9 September 2003

Popped along to this event, great variety of cars, in fact so many that I couldn't park anywhere near to the Ace. As I was wandering around the car park (in a bit of a daze after only just finishing the 10CR the previous night) I saw Steve Waddingham, fellow CT member and participant in last years RBRR and spent an hour or so in his company. There were some fantastic cars at the café, my

favourite being a nice Austin Healey 3000. Left the Ace at 10.30 and toddled home, thinking how well the GT6 was going, especially without the weight of spares and tools I had with me on the 10CR.

Aston Martin Works Car Club Navigational Rally 14/09/03

Steve Waddingham who works for Aston Martin had very kindly asked me to join this club earlier this year, to which obviously I said yes, but I don't have an Aston. Evidently the club is for employees of Aston Martin and anybody they wish to ask to join. The club runs a 100 mile rally every year to remember a former employee called Kathy Peach and to raise money for a local Hospice. The rally consists of driving a prescribed route that is navigated by the use of Tulip diagrams and tenths of mile distances,, this necessitates the use of a working speedo. the one thing that doesn't work on the GT6, so as my mate Jon Stevens was also taking part in his Elan it was agreed that we would follow them.

The start was from the Aston Martin works at Bloxham near Banbury in Oxfordshire and the route winds its way through some very attractive Cotswolds scenery. There were some nice cars participating, my favourite being a gorgeous TR4A that I learnt had been subject to a complete nut and bolt rebuild.

It was a good event though I was concerned that my exhaust system was going to be taken off as some of the roads passed over were little more than farm tracks. All in all a good event nicely topped off with a good pub lunch in a quaint village and a quick tour around the Aston factory at Bloxham where they have just finished making the last of the DB7 and at present are making the DB7 Zagato. (As is usual with Zagato designed cars, it looks a bit ungainly!)

All this left was a run home on the M40 back to Staines, however we were gasping for a cuppa so stopped off at Cherwell Valley services. Driving into the car park I saw three nice MGBs and decided to park amongst them. When we returned to the car after drinking the most expensive tea in the UK, I decided to check the oil, and opened the bonnet, of course who should happen along but the MG owners, who asked in a slightly sanctimonious manner if anything was wrong, to which I replied of course not, it's a Triumph! Now this pi**ed me off, the car had just done nearly 3,000 strenuous miles with very little trouble, and here were some MG drivers having a little dig! Any rate, we enjoyed the rest of the journey on the M40/M25 (not!), with no problems other than the rev. counter suddenly giving up the ghost and we arrived home at 6.00pm. I put the old car away in the garage and so ended her busy time!

As mentioned I reckon that I did about 3,000 miles over the two weeks, and I was very pleased with the car. She is not the most comfortable car, it gets damned hot in her, it's noisy and I always seem to get filthy, but I could not now imagine not having her, it's strange how a piece of metal can become such a big part of your life. The next work is to get the gearbox out and up to Dave Pearson at Canleys for a re-build and fit an electronic rev-counter and electronic speedo (not swimming trunks, Martin). Hopefully the next 20 years of ownership will be as rewarding and enjoyable!