

# ***RBRR: Car 81***

**by Frederique Slezak**

When David Picton said he had decided to enter his 2 litre Spitfire in the RBRR this year, I thought to myself, “Okay, I know the drill: a bit like a Le Mans caper only a bit longer. How hard can that be?” It sounds like fun and I readily agreed to accompany him, little knowing exactly what to expect.

Perhaps one of the first surprises was finding out that, contrary to my naïve assumption, I actually needed to take the Friday off work.. Yes, I really hadn’t given it much thought. I was actually convinced it would be perfectly reasonable to turn up and just drive non-stop for 48 hours after a week in the office. Perhaps not...

Then, of course, there was David’s attention to detail with the preparation. Yes, by all means look at a map maybe, but going to the extent of marking out the route, was this really necessary? Apparently so.

So, on the Friday before the start I had the simple job of assembling a few things and making sure we had batteries for the torch, while David set off to Slough (from Enfield) to get a replacement wire wheel, having just found out the spokes had come loose on a brand new wheel the day before. In fact, despite possibly living nearer to The Plough than any of the other Round Britain teams, we actually ran out of time and didn’t even manage to eat a meal before we left for the start at 7 pm. And, being novices to this event, we didn’t realise that it was actually a thinly disguised ‘eat your way round Britain’, with food being laid on at almost every stop!

Therefore, we switched to Plan B—a fast dash to Blythe followed by a longer stop, to ensure there was time for a meal. Being one of the first cars to reach the control, but almost the last to leave, meant we needed to make up time on the way to Corbridge and we had a great drive up the A1 seeing all the different Triumphs on the road.

This brief high was followed rapidly by a brief low as, on seeing four or five cars ahead, the inexperienced navigator decided to

relax as the small group, lead by a ‘police escort’ (or should we say, Triumph 2000) seemed to have the route sorted. We just commented that this seemed more like a round the houses reliability run than a round Britain run, when we got to a roundabout and, to our dismay, each Triumph went in a different direction!

Eventually, back on the right road again, the next high point was arriving at Corbridge to see the main street filled with Triumphs, which, judging by the some of the locals, appeared to be the biggest event since at least the last round Britain run.

Our experience this far seemed to set an unnerving precedent that saw us leaving most controls ahead of the Moll brothers, Francis and Andrew, in their grey TR7, only to find ourselves overtaking them again before the next stop. On reflection, this may be partly due to the fact that the fuel consumption of our car was closer to that of a PI saloon, and yet we only had the capacity of a Spitfire petrol tank! Anyway that’s our excuse, although the Moll’s (veterans of many Round Britain Runs) kept mentioning some fable about tortoises and hares, we can’t possibly think why...

As the weekend passed and we became more tired and less careful with navigating, it was a great comfort to come speeding round a corner and see the back of a grey TR7 appearing once again in our headlights, confirming we were in fact still on track.

The best parts of the RBRR were definitely the overnight drives through Scotland and Wales, where the great fast and winding roads, virtually free of traffic, enabled us to enjoy driving the car to its full – something you rarely have the opportunity to do in London.

Dawn in Scotland was well worth the wait. After breakfast we were extremely grateful for the help of James (the tall, good looking one with the tea cosy on his head), Dave and Frenchie (his two smooth-talking companions) in the grey PI, who acted as a guide for us while David recovered from his solo drive to John O’Groats. Following the PI, we had a spirited drive to Stirling through the spectacular Scottish scenery, the first half of which was in glorious sunshine with the roof down.

As newcomers to the RBRR, I was not completely sure what to expect, or just how uncomfortable a Mk 3 Spitfire seat could be, but fortunately David was perhaps a little more prepared for the event and certainly made sure our car was. We had a fantastic time, met some great people and are looking forward to the next one in 2006. Perhaps by then we’ll have a larger petrol tank in the car...



*David Picton takes a break at Darmoor*



*Car 81 at Goodwood; dawn in Scotland*



*Fred at John O’Groats*