

# Living with Acclaims

by Caroline & Barry McGrath

At the last count, we have owned eight Triumph Acclaims between us over a period of six years. We have four of them still on our driveway, and another potential addition to the family is beckoning us from over the hills in Liverpool. A number of our cars have been rescued from the great place in the sky, one of them even being resurrected from under a Micra in a scrapyard in Hull. We have one Acclaim that is best described as a workhorse and at worst described as a shed on wheels. At the opposite extreme, we have a very cared for 9,500 mile Acclaim that gets star treatment. This is the story of our Acclaims.

Marvin was the first Acclaim, a Triomatic bought from some Czech students returning home after some months touring Britain. It cost Barry £50, the same as the students had been offered by the local scrapyard. Marvin was a fine blue colour with a blue interior and grey dash. Marvin's biggest problem was his ignition switch that burnt out. Barry fitted a starter button off a Jaguar, and re-routed the wiring and all was nearly well again. You could still be happily speeding along the M62 at 50mph when the relay would cut out. A sharp slap under the dashboard with the palm of your right hand would set it off running again. We developed the habit of unclipping the ignition control module from under the bonnet whenever we left the car somewhere dubious-looking.

There wasn't much else wrong with Marvin apart from the lack of bodywork. When scouring the local scrapyards for parts, Barry and his housemate Rick acquired a mint green manual HLS model with a sunroof for the princely sum of £70. The scrapyard managed to roll a forklift truck removing the car on Eddie's roof, but the sunroof was left intact and the car still had its wheels with decent tyres on. The car kept the battle scars around the roof gutter though. Eddie didn't run far. His previous owner had sent him to the grave after dropping an exhaust valve. Rick replaced it but the piston rings were already damaged, and on the car's only successful drive up the road, it was sending clouds of oily smoke out the back. Since Marvin had a perfectly good engine, they borrowed a friend's garage for a body-engine swap. Marvin was given a new body, retaining his engine and Triomatic transmission as well as bonnet and boot lid. The DVLA decided that Eddie's number plate should remain on the vehicle, and Marvin was reborn. I'm not sure what really happened to Eddie; the remains were known as Dead Marvin, and eventually ended up back in the scrapyard. We enjoyed Marvin's company for four years, until the time came when there was no time, space or money to perform more life-saving operations – vandals had broken

all the windows, damaged the body and aerial – and so he returned to his maker.

So far, I had watched with mild amusement the antics of my boyfriend and his housemate with their Acclaims, and enjoyed driving both Marvins. Then, after my Rover 216 (effectively the Acclaim's son) was suffering from a bout of araldite-on-the-flywheel sensor, I sold William the Rover and picked up a beige HL from South Wales for £150 from a man who had been banned from driving. He had been stopped driving with a very noisy exhaust early one Sunday morning, and subsequently found to be enough times over the alcohol limit to pickle a squid. Being a Welsh car, it got a Welsh name, Ivor, and was duly repainted with a tin of New Spruce from Homebase and a 2" paintbrush one weekend. Ivor only ever had one windscreen wiper – a common affliction with Acclaims, and one that bothered my passengers more than me. The rust never got through all that extra external paint, but the body did suffer in other places. Eventually, when both Mr. MOT Tester and I could see the rear wheels through the wheel arches from the boot, Ivor was traded in at the local garage, netting me £50 off Aubrey the Mini.

A while later, Barry bought me a £100 black HLS we called Merlin, since it was such a miracle he passed his MOT without much hassle. He'd been owned by a man who'd seen fit to remove the rear seat and replace it with a wooden board with feet, thus



extending the boot to an impressive five foot length loading capacity (although we have been known to fit a few sheets of 6x3 foot plasterboard in there!). The seats had long since gone missing, but as we had the spares from Dead Marvin, this wasn't a problem. Dead Marvin's front seats became the ideal spot for watching a bit of television of an evening, complete of course with the ability to tilt the back – but not too far! Merlin was a great car, even going so far as to carry a fellow student home to London with all of his belongings. We had discovered how versatile an Acclaim minus the rear seats really is. Merlin's trick was to drop the lead out of the starter motor, so I learned to keep a pair of gloves in the glove box for such an occasion, which usually happened when I was at work about to go to a meeting at another site. I locked the keys in Merlin once, when the car was ready loaded to carry a number of work laptops across Yorkshire. A colleague unlocked the door rather easily using some flat nylon packing tape. Merlin became the first Acclaim to be sold directly to a new owner, a man whose first car had been an Acclaim and fancied another.



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For a number of years we were then Acclaim-less, thinking for several daft years that a more modern vehicle would be easier to maintain. It *was* easier to maintain, as I paid a garage to do so, but not as fun, and much more costly. Eventually we agreed we really did fancy another Acclaim, and found a red CD in Sheffield for an enormous £450. Prices really did seem to have increased in a few years, and also the number on the roads, and even in the scrapyards had decreased. We had never owned a CD model before, and the electric windows and chrome bumpers were lovely. The previous owner called her Sally, but this didn't stick for us, and after a long period of being "Triumph" or "Acclaim", or even "Red", it changed sex to be named Rupert. He needed some welding for the MOT, and some serious tweaking of the brakes, the handbrake being next to useless. It still is; when it stops raining we'll put on some new pads and sort the handbrake cable properly.



We took our new shiny Red Acclaim to Stoneleigh in February to the Triumph Spares day. Initially the car park attendant dismissed us, but then let us park under cover with all the other Triumphs. We spotted four other Acclaims there, but no one was selling any parts for them. We picked up a couple of bits of memorabilia, and joined Club Triumph at their stand. Whilst talking to Rimmer Brothers, we found out they had been offered an 8,500-mile Acclaim but weren't interested. We obtained the vendor's details and went to visit him in Sheffield.

We couldn't resist. It was in need of a small paint-job on the wings to be in concourse condition, and the driver's seat was very firm – something the other Acclaims never had, to the point that my head really is a bit close to the roof. It was a CD and still had all the Waxoyl in the boot pockets. We bought the car for £900 and called it New Acclaim. On the test drive and bringing the car back to Bradford, we put over six months' mileage on the car, giving it a much needed run up the M1 to blow out the cobwebs. The original factory tyres aren't great at gripping on the corners in the wet. The original owner had received the Acclaim as a retirement gift from his Rover dealership and, on his death, the neighbour drove the owner's wife to the shops in it once a week. The kind neighbour was wise enough, on inheriting the vehicle, to realise it was a gem too good to scrap. There isn't a tremendous amount of paperwork with the car, but enough MOTs to see the mileage is genuine.

Then we were well and truly smitten with Acclaims. My work colleagues are no longer surprised when I say we bought another at the

weekend – four Acclaims in nine months is not an insignificant number! We obtained a mint green CD Triomatic with a tow bar from Oswestry for around £100. Taxing it was a nightmare as it had been left on a disabled taxation class, and without the V5, and needing to tax it to bring it back to Bradford, I spent more than my allowed lunchtime queuing in the local DVLA licensing office to hand over my £105. The tax disc has certainly decreased in cost in the time we have owned Acclaims!



Nic the Trio is not the car you would show off to your friends in, nor the car for short journeys. But he's pulling his weight, literally, in the family. He towed home the newest Acclaim, another red CD, a couple of weeks ago. The idea was to use the new car as spares for Rupert, but on closer inspection, even though Rupert cost more than three times that of the new-red-car-with-no-name-yet, he was more likely to be the sacrificial vehicle. Until, that is, we found out about a red HLS MOT failure in Liverpool...

There are limits to the number of roadworthy Acclaims we can cram in the garage and on the driveway, particularly in a house with only two drivers. But we did win "most original car" at this month's Club Triumph Pennine and Pendle Area Show and Shine meeting with New Acclaim, making it all worthwhile. It's time to get out the Baby Name Book again, and make our lives easier when we talk about "the Acclaim". There's something important about having a name to shout at the car when it's not well. Maybe that's why the current cars don't really have names – they are all running rather well really.

