

# *Bulletin on the Round Britain Reliability Run*

by **Tim Bancroft**

Well, this RBRR has passed off well and I would like to use this chance to record my final thoughts on the event. Before that, many thanks to the following who helped with the organisation of the run: Derek Pollock, Nigel Abdullah, Andy Everett, Andy Pearce, Barbara Aldridge, Barry Gibson, Bill Bolton, Bob Banks, Bob King, Bridget Snook, Charles Colvin, Craig Gingell, Dale Barker, Dave Jenkins, Dave Pearson and the staff at Canley Classics, Dave Shewry, Dennis Allen, Dennis Carter, Graham Reeks, James Carruthers, Jason Chinn, Jim Webb, John Millidge, John Snook, Keith Bennett, Malcolm Warren, Martin Randle, Mel Evans, Mick and Lou Callaghan and the staff at 'The Plough', Nigel Gair, Quentin Birkinshaw, Richard Stubbs, Steve Waddingham and Tim Hunt. Of course, thanks to all the marshals at the control stops for their invaluable help, their good humour and welcome was very valued. Thanks must also go to Mark McLean and the Triumph Dolomite Club for laying on hot soup and bread at Corbridge, the soup was hot – Ellis Stokes commented 10 days after the run that his mouth was still suffering from blisters! A massive thanks must be made to the Club's Treasurer, John Millidge, and Bill Bolton who travelled all the way up to Perth to marshal, then went over to Conon Bridge and onto Stirling to help out: I was staggered to then bump into John at the finish at Crews Hill – dedication or what! All in all, I reckon about 250 people were involved in the RBRR, a true club event!

The entry to the run was the biggest since the RBRR's inception in 1966, with 74 cars/crews making the start on the Friday evening. Unfortunately, we also suffered a large amount of retirements with seven cars not finishing. One crew, in a Spitfire, had a bad accident on the roads on the Scottish Borders that resulted in the car being so badly damaged that it could not finish, luckily both drivers were not hurt. Since talking to the owner, I understand that the car is an insurance write-off, which is a real shame as this has not happened before. However, the owner has already purchased a new Spitfire! Other cars that suffered from problems were a Spitfire, two TR4s, two Vitesse and a TR7 V8. One of the TRs suffered a head gasket failure, however they broke down outside The Crask Inn so immediately went in and had a pint! For a long time during the run Andrew and Sarah Johnson looked like they would have to retire when their Herald had a rocker arm break, however they found some new ones near to JOG and went on to complete the run, what a marvellous effort.

As usual, the start car park at The Plough was a hive of activity. The marshals, Nigel Abdullah, Bob King and Dave Jenkins did a marvelous job getting all the cars into the area allocated to us, the sight of Nigel riding his bike dressed in his day-glo clothing, directing cars is a memory that will stay in the mind for some time. The two police officers that were to help with traffic control got into the spirit of the event by having a good look at the Cyril Simpson/John Scott/Terry Telford RUC police 2000 and generally being very enthusiastic about the event. This year we did not have a celebrity start the cars off, instead the honours were performed by Alexander, the son of the charity's representative Pippa Gough. It meant a lot that Alexander did this job and from the smile on his face I reckon he was having a good time – a possible future Triumph owner? I believe that we had many members of the Club at the start to spectate; I hope that it was worthwhile coming along – the atmosphere at the start of the RBRR is very special.

Once again, the driving at the start of the event was quite fast, especially amongst the novice crews, however, the speeds seemed to get slower as the event went on. Some crews wanted to get to the stops first, which is not really within the spirit of the run, and I have been dismayed to hear that some of the marshals were getting badgered to open the stops before the 'earliest arrival time'. The crews that seemed to be in a rush were all new to the event, whereas, the more experienced seemed almost laid back and were seen to be encouraging and helping other crews: surely this is what this event is all about? The whole event seemed to suffer from terrible rain, apart from the section near JOG where the sun shined. However, this did not seem to dampen the enthusiasm of the crews.

The route seemed to please all the crews and the new control stops at Avon Heath Country Park and at Goodwood motor racing circuit were successful: many thanks to all the marshals at these stops. As usual, some of the Southern Area members came along to Avon Heath to spectate and chat: this local group seems to always make an effort, so well done. A few crews struggled to find the stop at Oswestry so the directions will be reviewed before the next RBRR. Also, I think we may insert another stop between Stirling and Oswestry and maybe replace the stop at Ashburton.

Some great cars took part, especially Dave Pearson's 2000 that was an ex-BL TR8 running-gear prototype; Tim Hunt's revitalised TR4A; the perennial 2000 of Nigel Gair; the previously-mentioned RUC Police 2000 of Cyril Simpson; the Herald of Andrew and Sarah Johnson; and Doug and Mary Crutchfield's superb TR5. In fact, all the cars were great: I don't think I saw a car that was in bad condition. It was very obvious that some crews had gone to great lengths to prepare their cars, especially newcomers Rob Swift and Mark Deacon in their very nice Mk 2 Vitesse; and Alex Chandler and Gwaredd Steele in a purposeful looking Spitfire 1500. Special mention should be made about some of the cars, as I know that their owners endured difficulties in getting them to the start, particularly: Ellis Stokes, who had to change from running a Dolomite Sprint engine back to the more normal 8v engine after numerous problems; and Malcolm Paris with his TR7 V8 which had a gearbox failure the weekend before the run, he replaced the box and then suffered distributor problems causing him to retire just after Blyth Services – a real shame; the previously-mentioned Dave Pearson, who changed the engine on his V8 saloon five days before the event, still, as fixing these old cars is part of his business at Canley Classics maybe it was not such an effort. I would also like to mention RBRR stalwarts Roger and Kay Keys and Andy Everett, who seemed to be changing manifold gaskets every time I saw them at a stop, still, their infamous orange V8-engined 2000 estate is such a good car that I think we can excuse them. Numerous crews were working on their cars the night before the event, but still made it, well done! And, of course, special mention should be made about Pat Barber and Blake Discher who brought Pat's nice GT6 Mk 1 all the way from the States to do the event: they suffered a problem in a petrol station but went on to finish the event in fine fettle. Nearly all the crews that I spoke to about this were full of praise that Pat and Blake should make such a tremendous effort. Blake runs a similar event in America and has kindly extended an entry to any Club Triumph member who wishes to have a go at this run – please contact me to find out more. It's strange how much the RBRR means to some members of the Club, an example of this is

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Doug Foreman who has previously entered the run in his GT6 Mk 3. Recently, the engine on this car has started to use a lot of oil, so he thought he had better change the engine. After many problems with the new engine he had purchased, he realised that the car would not be ready for the run, so the Saturday night before the run, he went onto e-Bay and found a Triumph Acclaim. He purchased this car and collected her on the Monday – dedication to the RBRR or what! A postscript to this story is that Doug and his co-driver Colin Jenner finished the run and managed to sell the car, whilst on the run, to Acclaim fan Barry McGrath! Barry and his wife seem to collect these venerable cars and have quite a few! Some bright sparks within the club are thinking of buying a few of these Triumphs so that they can sell them to future entrants whose Triumphs have let them down before the run! I'm glad to see that a spirit of opportunism is alive within the club. It must be said that all the cars that were entered were a great credit to their owners and the Club.

One of the other joys about the RBRR is that some Triumph traders enter the event and this year we were lucky to receive entries from five such organisations, these being: Brain Kitley (Dolomite Sprint) of Brian Kitley Triumphs, James Shackford (Mk 1 2.5PI) of TR Enterprises, Dave Picton (GT6-engined Spitfire Mk 3) of Picton Sports cars, as well as long-time RBRR advocates Dale Barker (Herald) of Moordale Motors and Dave Pearson (2000 Mk 2 running TR8 prototype drivetrain) of Canley Classics. How brave it is of these guys to put their reputation on the

line, although the likelihood of problems with these cars was small as all five cars looked, sounded and went very well! I cannot think of any Triumph event that attracts Triumph traders to actually take part, still, thinking about it I do not know of any other UK Triumph event that actually encourages owners to get out and use their cars!

Pippa Gough of the charity was so enthusiastic about the event and seemed to be everywhere at the start, she took loads of pictures that can be seen on the Club's website. She has kindly sent through a full set to me, if you wish one, again, please contact me to discuss. Do remember that the Club will be holding a dinner one Saturday evening next March at which all crews will be presented with their finishers' awards. I hope that lots of Club members will make the effort to come along as it is always a good evening. Also, please could all RBRR crews get their charity money to me as soon as possible so that we can present a big cheque to Children with Leukaemia.

So, all in all, another successful RBRR. I do hope that everyone involved enjoyed the event and I was most relieved that it seemed to go off without a major hitch. As is usual, the best aspects of the event were the variety of driving, the camaraderie of the crews and the pleasure of seeing loads of Triumphs on the road. I have a few ideas about making some minor changes to the event, however, to use some trendy vernacular 'the RBRR needs evolution not revolution'! See you all in early October 2006, long live the Round Britain Reliability Run!