



WHALE TALES

THE CAPE TOWN TRIUMPH NEWSLETTER

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MARCH 2021

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Last month was my 21st anniversary with the Triumph Sports Car Club. I joined the club in February 2000 and the first noggin I attended was on 16 February. The date has importance as it was my late dad's birthday as well. I was always a petrol head and loved cars since I can remember, got it from my dad as he was a motor mechanic with General Motors. We were always playing with cars and I loved it. My dad passed away in June 1999 after being involved in a head on collision on the road between Witbank and Middelburg. He was only 62 at the time. He had his own service station where he repaired cars and he had a Spitfire MK3 which he used as daily transport to see customers and buy parts, etc. My mother wanted to sell the car and I purchased it, had it railed down with Shozaloza Meyl and received the car in November 1999. The car unfortunately broke a clutch plate on the first day I drove it so I started looking for parts and came across the Triumph Sports Car club details. I called Mike Napoli who was the chairman at the time and he put me in touch with Nic Paxinos who then serviced the gearbox as well.

The past 21 years in the club became part of my life and I really enjoyed it. Not only did I meet great people, but also visited and seen places I would not have done and seen, had I not been with the club. I believe that everyone needs a hobby that can take your mind off the normal day to day issues with work, tax, politics, etc. and what

better way to join a club such as ours. To drive your Triumph, classic or normal car with us to breakfast, lunch runs or picnics with other cars and have a great time. This is relaxing and takes the stress off and we feel really great during and afterwards.

You made the right decision to join the club and as with everything in life, you will get out of it what you put in, so please join in, get involved and last but not least, enjoy it. I believe the lockdown rules will soon change and we can return to our normal activities again. In the meanwhile, be safe and we are looking forward to seeing you on an outing or noggin soon. Watch this space.

Triumphant Regards,

Gerhard

THE EDITOR'S DESK

I was interested to see that Gerhard had been with the club for 21 years. I well remember meeting him and Suzette at what was probably their first breakfast at the Gordons Bay Hotel and he was driving a red Spitfire like mine. They lived just round the corner in Somerset West and the rest as they say is history. If ever I needed help on one of my rebuilds, I think the engine on my TR3 came out 7 times, Gerhard was my go to person! For those of you who are new to the club, Gerhard has been the glue that has held the club together over the years, as well as being national chairman for many of those years.

His comments ring very true, the club has had its ups and downs but the one thing that has kept it going has been the love of our cars and the interaction between members. There have always been members who one could turn to for advice, whether it be how to do a certain job oneself or who was a good person to contract the job out to. There is an article by Paul Mitchell later that shows the pitfalls waiting out there if you don't have the right information, and the sometimes unscrupulous operators waiting to deprive you of your hard earned money! I was seriously thinking of having some sort of list of recommended suppliers but in this litigious age I am not sure I want to commit too much to the written word lest some aggrieved supplier decides to sue me or the club!

That having been said, I can certainly remember the likes of Chris Schutz, Peter du Sautoy and one Mike Napoli who were incredibly helpful and helped me avoid some of the worse errors of judgement that I was about to make. Even today it is great to have guys like Ashley Ellis and Daanie Barkhuisen around who are happy to give good practical advice and are always willing to go that extra mile. That is why I have been a club member and am very happy to remain one.

One of the biggest issues facing all classic car clubs, particularly here in South Africa, is the decreasing numbers of people who have the skills to sort out our cars. This is due to retirement, and also emigration, and that their skills have not been handed down to anyone. I well remember taking an overdrive to a chap that lived in Retreat who had rescued all the Leyland tools he needed when they closed down and threw them into a scrap skip. He did a wonderful job but sadly he died some

years ago and his son kept the tools in case he could use them, and sadly I lost touch but I doubt whether he still has them.

The UK and Europe have re introduced apprenticeship schemes for young people who want to get the skills such as boiler making, fitting and turning that used to be commonplace towards the end of the last century. I have met many very innovative young people who want to improve themselves, but do not know how to obtain the necessary knowledge and experience to proceed further. Maybe it is an area that all the car clubs should cooperate in to see if we can make sure these skills do not disappear with our generation.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

BREAKFAST AT JAKES, NOORDHOEK 7TH MARCH

The really good news is that our January trip to Jakes that had to be postponed is going to take place on Sunday 7th March.

Ashley has suggested that we meet at Constantia Village at 8.30 for a getaway by 9, travel down the coast road to end up at Jakes for a really great breakfast. The menu is shown below and the cost will be R130 per head including a tip.

Please confirm your attendance with Eddie Hughes at 082 555 0256 before Friday and put your payment into the club account, Standard Bank account no 78226929. Pre payment makes life a whole lot easier when it comes to settling the bill at the end, believe me!



TRIUMPH BREAKFAST

R130 PER PERSON

This includes a single cappuccino or tea plus the 10% gratuity

Further drinks will be charged separately

BREAKFAST

SMOKED SALMON

SCRAMBLED EGGS AND CIABATTA TOAST

OR

FULL BREKKIE

EGGS, BACON TOMATO, MUSHROOMS, PORKIES AND TOAST

OR

EGGS BENEDICT

POACHED EGGS, ENGLISH MUFFIN, HOLLANDAISE SAUCE AND BACON

OR

NAUGHTY 'N NICE BREAKFAST QUINOA BOWL

QUINOA, DARK CHOCOLATE, COCONUT CREAM, PECANS, BERRIES AND BANANA



This is a wonderful menu and should please everyone's taste buds. Please indicate your choice when you make your booking.

[BRITISH SPORTS CAR TOUR APRIL 11TH](#)

As of this weekend, this event is still on but keep watching this space as life seems to change constantly.

The venue has ample space for social distancing and even if we do not get the numbers of the past, I think everyone will be happy to get out and about and enjoy the company of their fellow car owners. If it is possible we would like to line up all the cars on the cricket pitch in front of the clubhouse for a group photo but we will give you details later. It is a wonderful drive and venue as we found out in November, please support this event.

The price is still R165 per head payable into the club account (Standard Bank account number 78226929) when you book. The meeting point is the Pot Bellied Pig on the R44 near Klapmuts at 10.00 am and the route is via Franschoek and the pass to the Elgin Country Club in Grabouw where you will have a buffet lunch.

HEARD AROUND TOWN

A CAUTIONARY TALE BY PAUL MITCHELL

Life gets in the way, priorities shift over time, and I have not been driving my TR6 enough recently. During last year, working from home, I hardly drove any car, and the last few times I had been out in the Triumph, it had been very hard to get into gear when hot. When I tried to get it going, it was also running rough and with work thankfully picking up, I had not had time to do anything. This combination of being busy, and wanting to get it going for Christmas led me into my big mistake.

Being sat at a laptop all day, I looked for local classic car specialists on line, and found one whose website looked decent. I used my MUA benefits to get it transported there on a flat bed, and described what needed to be fixed.

I asked them to do four things:

1. Fix the rough running. I was pretty sure this was an electrical problem given that the injectors were all ticking nicely when it was going. You can feel a distinct 'tick' as the fuel pulses in the pipe to the injector when the fuel injection on the six is running nicely. I thought this would be straightforward, maybe because I didn't understand it properly.
2. Sort out the fact that it was next to impossible to get into gear when hot. I had flushed and bled the clutch hydraulics, but it didn't cure it. Something bigger there, making me nervous.
3. Diagnose any issue with the speedo drive from the gearbox. For a while, the speedo had been registering much slower than the car was going, and I thought the issue might be at the gearbox end – easy to fix while they were down there, right?
4. Advise on anything else that might be an issue on a car that had been sitting for a while. This was a dumb idea. Never give someone an open ended invitation like this. I'll never learn.

I delivered the car to them on 1st December 2020.

In discussion on the phone, they reported that it was turning over slowly so there may be a wiring fault, and the compression on no. 3 cylinder was zero, due to a burnt out valve guide. This was weird, since turning it over hadn't been a problem – just keeping it running nicely. The cylinder was bad news, and sounded expensive.

Over the following few weeks I called several times to get an update on what was going on. Despite several requests I didn't get an advice on cost until they told me the car was finished. I went to collect it on 13th January. So much for Christmas.

By that point they had, according to the invoice:

- Rectified the electrical fault, fitting new plugs & points;
- Removed the head, stripping it, replacing a valve guide, cleaning & refitting, with new head gasket set. The work on the head was sub contracted.
- Removed the clutch, relining the plate, rebuilding the pressure plate and fitting a new release bearing – this work on the clutch also outsourced. They also fitted a new slave cylinder, seals and bled the system.

- They fitted new seals (O rings) on the injectors, and replaced one of the injector fuel pipes that was apparently leaking.
- Replaced an oil filler plug on the gearbox, and the oil filter.
- Done 25 hours of labour at R750 per hour (R18,750).
- Some other highlights from the bill were an oil filter at R540, and O-rings for the injectors at R295 for 6 – all before VAT.

The total invoice came to R33,347 (yes, thirty three thousand).

Still reeling from the size of the bill, I came to collect the car on 13th January 2021.

On examining my car:

- The metal bracket holding down the battery was not in the car;
- There was a new paint chip out of the boot lid (apparent from the clean metal underneath);
- The exhaust hanger I asked them to replace (by phone) was not done – my roadside wire job was still holding it up;
- The breather pipe and the adjacent hose were swapped with each other;
- The driver seat was not latched and the catches were loose.

Discovering all these things did not give me a great deal of confidence in the unseen and unseeable things that had been done. Such are the problems of letting someone else work on your car. Still, a little customer service goes a long way, so that was all good, right? Nope.

During the two hours or so I was there, the proprietor - let's call him Daniel - and his colleagues fixed the driver's seat catches, swapped the two pipes, charged the battery, and reattached the battery bracket, which they found somewhere in the back of the workshop. In the course of this, it transpired that one of the injectors was damaged, with part of the body ground away by something. I don't know how this happened – you can see the damage and the replacement circlip in the photo, next to an undamaged one on the left. Two injectors appeared not to be working properly, so they fiddled with them, and added some injector cleaner to the fuel tank.



At no point during the above two hours or so was Daniel anything but arrogant, inflexible, humourless and dismissive. Any question by me about the work they had done was interpreted as a slur on his integrity. At no point did he express any concern for my time, nor make any apology for the situation or any of the above errors and omissions, nor accept any responsibility for anything that had gone wrong beyond trying sullenly to fix it.

It is a difficult thing leaving your car with a mechanic – a little like taking a pet to the vet, or perhaps even a child to the doctor. When I drop my car with someone I always wonder, in hope, if they will look after it and treat it with care. Watching Daniel with a lit cheroot in one hand and an injector pumping fuel into a jam jar in the other, I think I know the answer.

After about 2 hours, the car seemed to be running OK, so I decided to cut my losses and leave. I paid the bill and drove away. When I drove it, the running became increasingly rough, and it was still very hard to get it into gear. You may recall that these were the two main problems that I had started with.

I drove back to the workshop in a mixture of fury with Daniel and anger at myself for having paid. Daniel by this stage had vanished, so I explained my problem in no uncertain terms to two staff members. I then apologised to both of his guys for losing my temper, got in an Uber – having told my lift to leave about three hours earlier, on the assumption that all was OK – and went home. I was depressed, furious and murderous in about equal measure.

About a week later I got another bill for fixing these problems. This one included two new injectors – one of the replaced ones being the one they had damaged, remember – charged at R7,400, which is R3,700 each. For comparison, Rimmers charge £73 plus VAT for a new one - about R1460 – or £30.50 if you return the old one. I asked him to put the old ones back, which brought his second bill down to R856 for flushing out the gearbox, injector cure, ATF, more oil and a fuel filter. No labour this time, so the man does have a slight conscience.

When I collected the car the second time, Daniel was conspicuous by his absence. I collected the keys and left. I didn't pay the second bill. By my reckoning, I need to replace the damaged injector, so based on just that he owes me R600.

Driving the car it is still running rough. One injector (the damaged one) doesn't seem to work properly when hot, although it does go into gear, and he did fit an exhaust hanger, apparently for free (last time I fixed that it was R50 at HiQ). So it has cost me R33,000, plus a lot of time and stress, to get the gearbox fixed, and replace the valve and redo the head. I still have a car that doesn't run well, now has a damaged injector, a chip in the paint, a speedo that doesn't work at all, and it doesn't want to turn over. Quite apart from the fact that it's taken the thick end of two months of summer to get to this point.

So, we reflect, we learn and we move on. Deep breaths, forgive those who sin against us, and take the lessons where we can. The key lesson I forgot is that my first point of call should be this club. I have been a poor member for years now, unless you give me credit for paying my subs. I was in moral credit having built the

website in about 2008, but that was pretty much my last contribution. Even so, Jamie was nothing but helpful when I called him – much too late for advice! And it was ever thus. Geoff Davies in particular has been incredibly generous with time and parts in the past, and many others like Jamie and Ashley Ellis with advice and help during the years.

Lessons:

1. Don't take your car anywhere without checking out the place first with people from the club. Get some advice and feedback before you take the plunge. This was my original sin.
2. Be very specific about what you want done, and make sure that you are consulted and kept informed regularly, say every R5k of bill or so.
3. Don't pay a bill without test driving the car and making sure that things are fixed properly.
4. Do it yourself if at all possible. There are not many people who will take the same care that you will, sadly.

One last thing – if it's your dark green TR3 in Daniel's workshop, please tread carefully, and don't pay without checking it thoroughly.

TRIADS

REAR SHOCK ABSORBER KIT FOR TR2 TO 4

This is going for R8600, please contact Tim Kent at 076 715 2383



TAIL PIECE

As this is the 60th anniversary year of the introduction of the TR4, I couldn't resist showing this photograph of 2 TR4s and a lovely TR5 at the Timour Hall show some 5 years ago. Hopefully this will happen again soon!



MICHELOTTI SPLENDOUR AT TIMOUR HALL