

OFF SIDE



British Motor Club of Southern New Jersey

NEAR SIDE

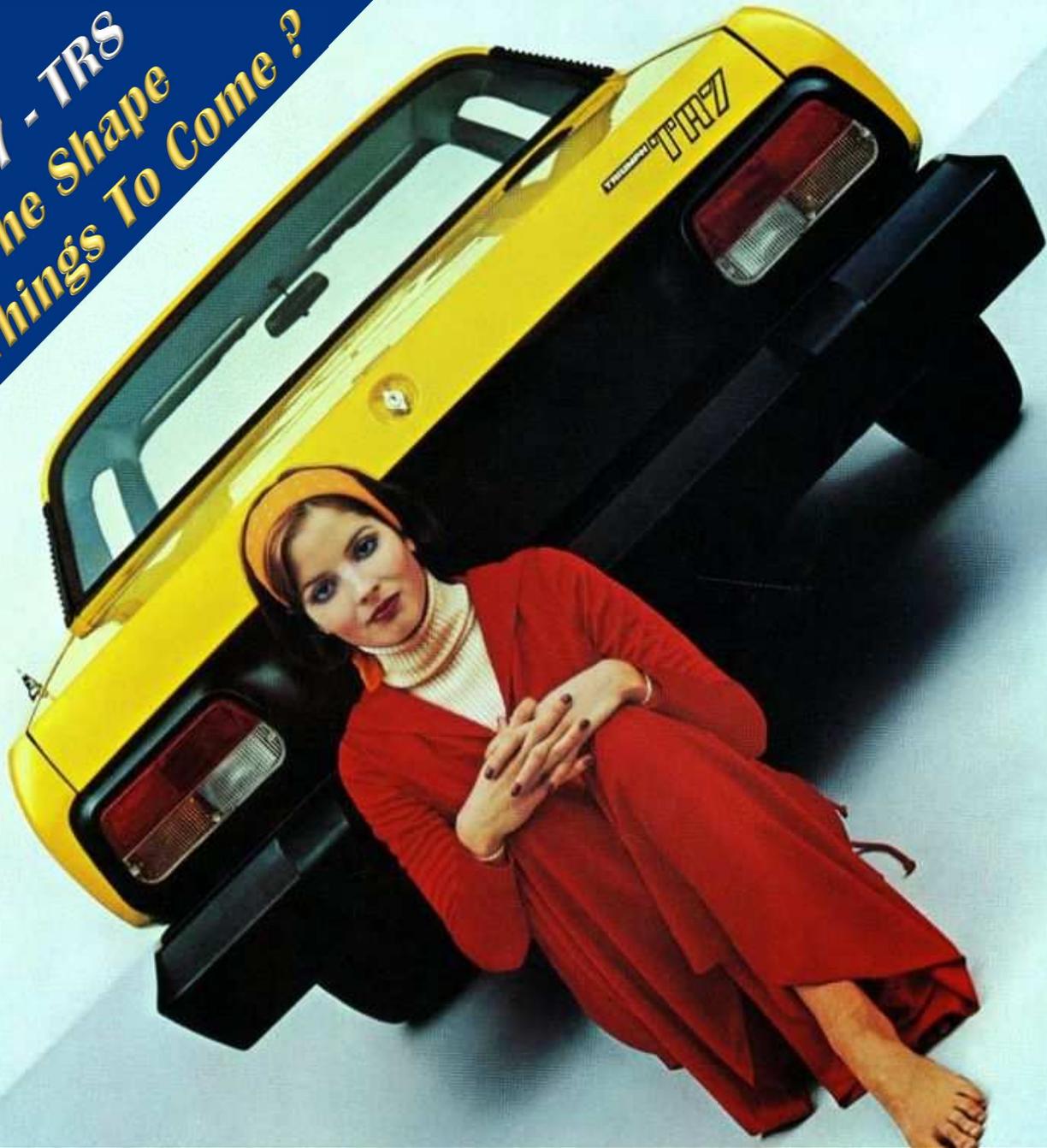


THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION
of THE BRITISH MOTOR CLUB
of SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY

March / April 2020
VOL. 30 ISSUE 02



TR7 - TR8
The Shape
Of Things To Come ?





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of
SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY



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WWW.BMCSNJ.ORG**

"Offside/Nearside" is the bi-monthly newsletter of the British Motor Club of Southern New Jersey (BMC), which was founded in 1992 to encourage the ownership, operation and preservation of British cars.

Membership is open to all owners of automobiles manufactured in Great Britain prior to 1996 and all owners of motorcycles manufactured in Great Britain prior to 1979.

The dues of \$15.00 per year, includes a subscription to "Offside/Nearside". BMC is affiliated with the following organizations: MG Owners Club (MGOC); North American MGB Register (NAMGBR); North American MGA Register (NAMGAR); Vintage Triumph Register (VTR); Triumph Register of America (TRA).

BMC Meetings

BMC Meetings are generally held on the third Wednesday of each month in alternating locations to best reach our membership base:

Odd numbered months (January, March, May, July, September):
Seven Stars Diner 1890 Hurffville Rd, Sewell, NJ 08080

Even numbered months (February, April, June, August, October)
Uno Pizzeria & Grill, 2803 NJ 73, Maple Shade NJ 08052

Meetings are not planned for November or December due to holiday scheduling conflicts. Meetings typically begin at 7pm, with food service beginning at 6pm. Dates and times are subject to change, which will be communicated by email to club members.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

OFF SIDE / NEAR SIDE is YOUR Newsletter.

The Editors are always looking for new material.

No material / No Newsletter. Simple as that. Please submit British car related copy and especially personal experiences in your LBC for us to use in one of our six annual Newsletters.

Project articles with pictures are really good.

PLEASE SEND NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EDITOR :

Joe Marchione: editor@bmcsnj.org

Note: If you are emailing please leave a message on 609-272-9743 phone number so I'm sure to get it.

Thanks—Joe Marchione

PLEASE SEND FOR SALE, WANTED or FREE REQUESTS TO :

Ed Gaubert: mgarage@comcast.net

Although we hope that these things are common sense, BMCSNJ has adopted the following policies and practices with respect to club sponsored events.

Membership meetings are sometimes held in restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages. We expect that members who choose to consume alcohol at these meetings will do so responsibly.

BMCSNJ supports safe and responsible enjoyment of British automobiles and motorcycles. All events sponsored by BMCSNJ are alcohol and drug free. Consumption or distribution of alcohol or controlled substances is expressly prohibited. All driving events are conducted in accordance with motor vehicle laws at all times.

This does not really represent a change to our prior policy or practice, it just documents it. If you have not been to one of our events before, come out and join us. You will be glad that you did.

>>>> DISCLAIMER!!! <<<<<

Readers are warned that any attempt at mechanical or other modifications described herein is at their own risk. Good car mechanics results in pleasure; poor car mechanics results in, at best, a personal rebuild. The opinions expressed in the articles of this newsletter are not necessarily those of BMC, the editors or advertisers.

The editors take responsibility for any editorial mistakes or errors.

It's March already and we should all be excited and ready to embark on another year of fun as winter changes to spring. As I write this, we have all enjoyed a mild winter unless of course you have some attraction to sub-freezing temperatures in an area where snow offers no enjoyment or value other than to those who push it into giant blackened piles in the Walmart parking lot. I grew up in Pittsburgh so a winter without snow feels somewhat incomplete. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining as I suspect that my future retirement will include a warmer climate.

So, listen to the **most** famous Groundhog in Pennsylvania and if you haven't already, it is time to wake up the rolling works of art sleeping in garages to find out what will stand in the way of having a great first outing. Remember, we are a club and club members help each other. It doesn't matter whether you have been with us since the beginning in 1992 or joined last month, we are here to help. While I can't say that we can provide the fix, I can say that we have a collective of hundreds of years' experience working on these cars. If you have a problem, please ask. Answers and opinions are free and a great place to start. All the officers' emails are posted on the website and in this newsletter. That is a great place to start. Also, you can feel free to post a message on our Facebook group where 70 members will see it and many will offer their two cents worth.

Check out the Events Page in this newsletter or online at our website BMCSNJ.ORG for the latest and greatest club activities. We have added a couple of events to expand on the success that we had last year. The turnout for our first two meetings of 2020 has been great. Lots of fun and a few prizes for our trivia winners! Please come out and enjoy! We are still looking for a place to have a Saturday morning swap meet in April. All we need is a parking lot, a field or something similar that the owner will give us the OK. Please let me know if you can provide that! Anyone who can come up with a place will get free dues for the year and a couple of extra donuts! I know it's only 15 bucks...what do you want? We are non-profit!

I'm sorry to have to beat a dead horse, but in order for the club to make any additional activities available, we need to have more participation. Our future depends on **YOU**. Come out to a meeting and get involved with something, large or small. You will be glad that you did.
Here's to a healthy and happy 2020!

Steve Ferrante

Treasurer/Registrar's Report March / April 2020

Money Is No Object

by Steve Ferrante

Our current paid membership count is 165 and our treasury remains on solid ground. Our renewal rate from last year was about 85% but I am still waiting on several who will be dropped if dues are not paid. Late payments continue to be a source of wasted time for me and chasing members for dues should not be in the job description. Going forward, there will be less reminders.

As you know, I am still looking for a new treasurer/registrar. This job is not hard but does require good organizational skills and the use of Microsoft Excel and email. Basic requirements are keeping the database current and accurate, sending out dues email notices, updating the database when payments are made, bank deposits and check writing. If you are interested, please let me know and we can discuss in more detail.

Club dues for 2020 will remain at \$15/year (free if you volunteer to be the new Treasurer!) and for that you will receive 6 newsletters per year, access to our Facebook page and unlimited use of club supplied FUN!

If you want to use PayPal for dues payments, just sign on to www.PayPal.com and send your dues to **members@bmcsnj.org**

Dues can still be paid by check mailed to my home address at:

Steve Ferrante – Treasurer BMC of SNJ
90 Strawberry Drive
Shamong, NJ 08088



SECRETARY'S SACHEL

March / April 2020

I really like auto shows. I've mentioned before, whenever I'm on the road I keep a list of car museums and collections. If I don't have something written ahead of time, I do an internet search to see what is in that area. Whenever we travel together, Linda indulges me with a visit to something car related. Like planning the time of year of our entire UK trip centering around the Classic Car Show in Birmingham. Of course, we then did another two weeks of touring England and Wales.

The Philadelphia Auto Show is an annual favorite with our immediate and extended family. We all get together and make a day of it to see what's new out there, the younglings' get to climb all over the vehicles, play with the construction equipment from Digger World and the old(er) folks get to reminisce with the classic/movie/celebrity/hyper displays. This year Land Rover unveiled the new (replacement) Defender. As a huge LR fan I was a bit disappointed that they have turned, read "reinterpreted," this new version from a working truck to a "Hipster-mobile." OK, I'll give them the benefit of introducing the necessary technology for engine management and CAN bus for operation, floor mats with no carpet too, but electric windows, Harman-Kardon 12 speaker audio and a touch screen with all the bells and whistles, that's what the Discovery is for! Who is going to shovel manure into the back of a \$60k "work" truck? Oh well, "Qualcosa per tutti" I'll stick to what I like.

Winter is coming to an end and we have had two successful monthly meetings this year, Sewell and Maple Shade. Join us for great discussions, some bench racing and sharing your latest projects. As the year ramps up, we are looking forward to more speakers and subjects relevant to our hobby. Bring out some younger enthusiasts to meet some "seasoned" members and catch the bug. Bring them to the events coming up too, Autobella Tech Session on March 7th (relevant to anyone with a paint job on their car), 12 Hours of Sebring at the Simeone Museum March 28th (demonstration day) and the regular meetings, the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Also, be sure to put Smithville on your calendar for May 2nd, that will come up quickly. See the Events section of this issue of Off Side/Near Side or the website for details. Several Tours have been added and pop-up cruises can occur at any time.

We have been keeping the website up to date for the events and our Facebook page has been very active. Join in the conversation and contribute. Well, back to watching the Six Nations Rugby Tournament, it's anyone's game at this point but I still would have rather seen Wales earn another Grand Slam again this year. I love winter.

Happy Motoring

Tom Evans

The Editor Writes

Joe Marchione



SEEKING MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

I am soliciting member articles about the **MG-TD** for the **July / August 2020 newsletter**.

The MG-TD will be the newsletter feature ride for our May / June Newsletter so, if you are an owner, present or past, or have a story about one, or are even just an admirer, please consider sending in something about your TD experience. Could be how you found it, how you brought it back from the dead, how you love it, how you lost it—anything will do. Or just send a picture of you and your car! Doesn't have to be a big deal.



If you're interested please send any material to your Editor, ME, at "editor@bmcsnj.org". I'm asking now because our cutoff date for member articles is one month before the month of the newsletter. Meaning that to have your piece published in the **July 2020** newsletter please get anything to me by **June** first, 2020.

Thanks. Joe Marchione

Welcome New Members!

Tim Platt
1961 MGA

Sewell, NJ

Bill Fisher
1974 MGB

Sewell, NJ



The Last Waltz: Triumph TR7/TR8

The Triumph Cycle Company of Coventry, Warwickshire, established in 1887, was known for bicycles, motorcycles and motorized three-wheelers long before it began building four-wheel cars in 1923. It became the Triumph Motor Co. in 1930, and built a variety of successful sedans and sporty cars. But following a series of acquisitions and mergers, by 1975 Triumph was part of largely state-owned British Leyland Ltd., and former competitors MG and Triumph found themselves under the same corporate roof. To the chagrin of MG enthusiasts, BL management decided to concentrate on the Triumph sports car and allow MG development to languish. Thus, while the MGB soldiered on virtually unchanged, an all-new Triumph TR7 arrived in 1975. And “all-new” it was.

Consider Triumph’s much-maligned wedge. The car’s controversial shape—critics called it a flying doorstop, a wacky wedge and worse—ignited a firestorm. The TR7 suffered some serious burns at the hands of the factory, the press and consumers. During the TR7’s debut, Italian master designer Giorgetto Giugiaro, after walking around the car and seeing the peculiar body sculpting with the deep, curved swage line on its flank, reportedly said, “My God! They’ve done it on this side as well.”

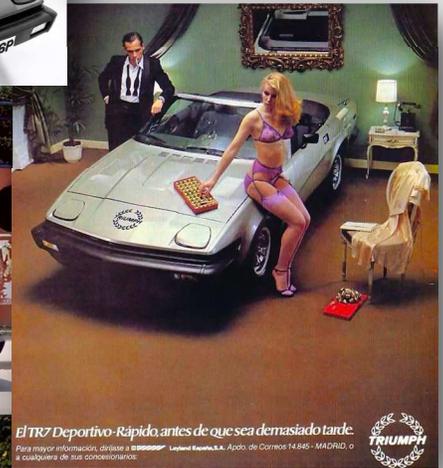
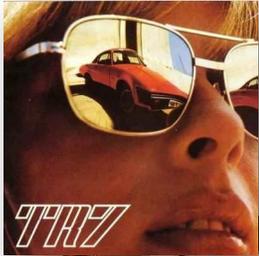


Years later, the editors of Time included the 1975 TR7 in its list of the 50 worst cars of all time, describing the design as “fit to chop wood.” They called it “horribly made,” citing the car’s many electrical problems (“The thing had more short-circuits than a mixing board with a bong spilled on it...and headlights that refused to open their peepers”), not to mention equally irritating and destructive mechanical issues (“Timing chains snapped. Oil and water pumps refused to pump, only suck”). In his book “Triumph TR7 & TR8 1975-1981,” Triumph expert James Taylor says that “a rough early TR7 is likely to be a constant source of trouble and disappointment.” Even today—more than 30 years after the shape was introduced—some Triumph purists refuse to consider any wedge a true Triumph. A very bad rap indeed. But if the car was that bad, how did the humble TR7 manage to become Triumph’s **all-time best selling TR**, surpassing even the beloved TR6? Does this car actually deserve to be ranked—as Time did—right alongside the lamentable Trabant? And how did its muscular and seldom seen sibling, the TR8, motor on to become a cult car of sorts, a latter-day Sunbeam Tiger? Are those who own these last-of-the-line British sports cars actually having the last laugh?



You can tell their marketing ad department had some doubts about the wedge being a bit less sexy than some of Britain's more curvaceous sports cars. Pretty young ladies have always been a staple of sports car ads of course appealing to the male (and female) libido connected with fast, exciting, sexy sportscars. But it seems when considering the questionable look of "The Shape of Things to Come" marketing relied more heavily than most when promoting the TR7 on the charms of some fairly "dare I say" sexy young things. Here's a sampling !

GIRLS !



GIRLS !!

CAR??

There's a Car ????

GIRLS !

GIRLS !

Was It Really That Bad?

Aside from the TR7's radical look, Triumph engineers actually came up with a pretty solid idea. Their new package featured many of the right elements: relative simplicity, a front engine in a sturdy monocoque, a roomy cockpit, rear-wheel drive, a solid rear axle and proven corporate components. They were aiming for a modern, affordable sports car to replace the TR6 that would appeal to the U.S. market. Whereas the TR6 was a body-on-frame roadster with four-wheel independent suspension, the TR7 was a unit construction coupe with a solid rear axle. The stubby coupe sat on an 85-inch wheelbase and weighed 2355 pounds. It featured coil springs on all four corners, MacPherson struts in front and tube shocks in back. It even came with front and rear anti-roll bars. The live rear axle was securely located by upper angled arms and lower trailing arms. Rack-and-pinion steering was used, and brakes were disc front and drum rear. This suspension setup provided a decent ride and solid handling. The disc front and drum rear brakes were adequate unless pushed hard.

Two people could sit comfortably in the cockpit while experiencing good heating and ventilation (a/c was optional for \$425). The instruments were visible and easy to read, and the controls were completely accessible. Overall, the TR7 offered a comfortable and pleasant, if not exhilarating, driving experience.



But it was powered not by a six, as was the TR6, which would continue for another year, but by a two-litre (1,998 cc) single overhead cam, inline four. This engine was also fitted to the Triumph Dolomite sedan (post-war) and sold to Saab who used it as the basis for its 99, 900 and 9000 engines. In the TR7 it was tilted 45 degrees to the left, allowing easy access to the two Stromberg carburetors. Its 90 horsepower would, according to Road & Track (5/75), accelerate the 1,068 kg (2,355 lb) coupe to 96 km/h (60 mph) in 11.3 seconds, and achieve a top speed of 174 km/h (108 mph). This was not that much different than the TR6's performance, and only marginally better than the original TR2's zero to 96 (60) of 12.2 seconds, and top speed of 166 km/h (103 mph) (R & T 4/54), illustrating the stifling effect that emission controls were having on performance.

Despite these advantages, designers launching a sporty new model for American roads in the early 1970s were shooting at a moving target. Stylists were forced to comply with ever-changing federal standards, including 5-mph bumpers, ride height requirements and engine emission controls. Even worse, because Triumph's designers were afraid the Feds were going to enact legislation banning convertibles, they initially offered only a fixed head coupe. This drew howls from the open-air crowd, not to mention Triumph's U.S. dealer network.



The TR7's styling, which was done by British Leyland, was decidedly wedge-shaped and not really very elegant. It looked short and wide and could have benefitted from the magic of an Italian stylist such as Giorgetto Giugiaro, as demonstrated in such exquisite designs as the Lotus Esprit, the DeLorean, the BMW M1, and many more wedge-like super cars.



To make matters worse, the TR7 had fewer cylinders than the model it replaced. One tester lamented, "It has virtually nothing in common with its immediate predecessor. Gone are the smooth but punchy six-cylinder engine, the overdrive, and the independent rear suspension." Even with all those challenges, the car might have still had a fighting chance.

The TR7's production was a disjointed experience, reflecting the somewhat chaotic condition the British auto industry was sliding into. When the first TR7 (code named Bullet) rolled out of the Speke plant in Liverpool in late 1974, constant and bitter labor strife—strikes, shut down lines and even sabotage, ruled the scene. It was moved to Coventry three years later, which resulted in a part-year loss of production. Then in 1980 it was relocated yet again to the Rover plant in Solihull, west of Coventry. The results of these production disruptions and periodic union militancy were seen in somewhat indifferent quality control for the TR7, which negatively impacted sales.

In 1975, the British government rescued the tottering giant from a financial bog when it purchased the majority of the BL shares, effectively putting the company on life support. Despite the infusion of cash, BL still faced major problems with its workforce.

The result? Cars that were called some of the shoddiest the U.S. and Britain had ever seen. Serious quality issues soon started bedeviling owners. Most notable were the head gasket problems, which caused engine overheating and often escalated into claims for replacement engines. Add in the electrical quirks, poor fit and finish, and loose parts (in one case, a rear axle fell off), and the car's reputation dropped like a wedge-shaped stone.



In a survey of owners of 1975-'78 TR7s, Road & Track reported that 43 percent of respondents—more than double the usual response—said that their cars had been out of service awaiting parts. Forty percent of owners said that poor overall quality was the worst feature of their TR7s, and nearly a third rated dealer service as poor. In this survey, the TR7 had the dubious distinction of generating the least brand loyalty of any of the cars R&T had surveyed to date. Thirty-five percent of owners declared they would not buy another TR7—twice the average percentage.

Triumph engineers, in addition to fighting bean counters and dodging labor delays, were working hard to solve these problems. In May 1978, in an effort to improve quality, Triumph's executives closed the troublesome Speke plant and moved TR7 production to Canley, Coventry, losing months of production in the process.



By July of the next year, Triumph introduced a new convertible version of the car. Most felt this move dramatically transformed the TR7's appearance ("The car they should have built all along," said one reviewer). These new cars also featured five-speed transmissions from Rover's SD1, which greatly improved drivability. Together, these changes helped spark buyer interest and gave sales a needed boost.

While the basics remained unchanged, the car underwent many updates and trim changes. To boost interest, BL built a handful of special editions featuring cosmetic changes and/or no-cost extras. The 1976 Victory Edition, the later 30th Anniversary Edition and the Spider are a few examples. The Southern Skies, which offered a sliding sunroof, was sold only in the southeastern U.S., and the Jubilee and the Premium were offered only in the U.K.



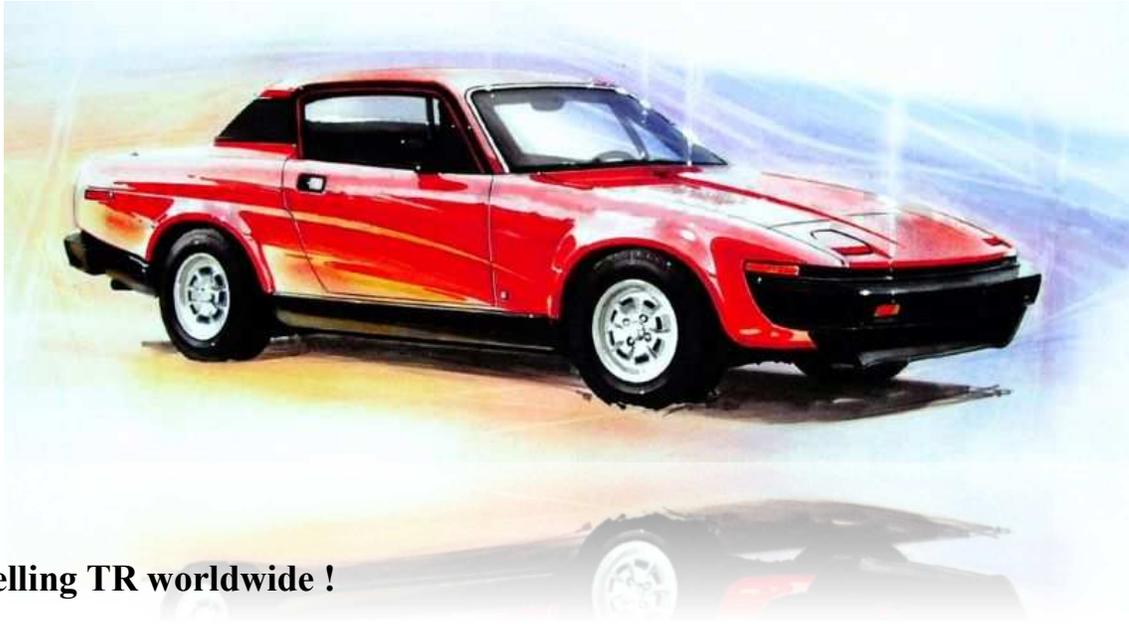
Ron Cobb, who is now retired in Central Florida, managed Imported Cars Inc., a BL dealership in Indianapolis. He recalls that dealers had high hopes for the TR7, but cars arrived more than a year later than they were promised.

He attributes early sales interest to the clever, wedge-based national ad campaign: The Shape of Things to Come. "When they started running those ads, they got people's attention," he recalls. "At first, the cars were selling so well, I couldn't even keep one for a demo. I had customers following the transport trucks to our dealership to see the cars. But because of all the production problems, I just couldn't get the [number of] cars I needed."



In his view, when things started to go south, problems in the Triumph dealership network contributed to the car's quality and service issues.

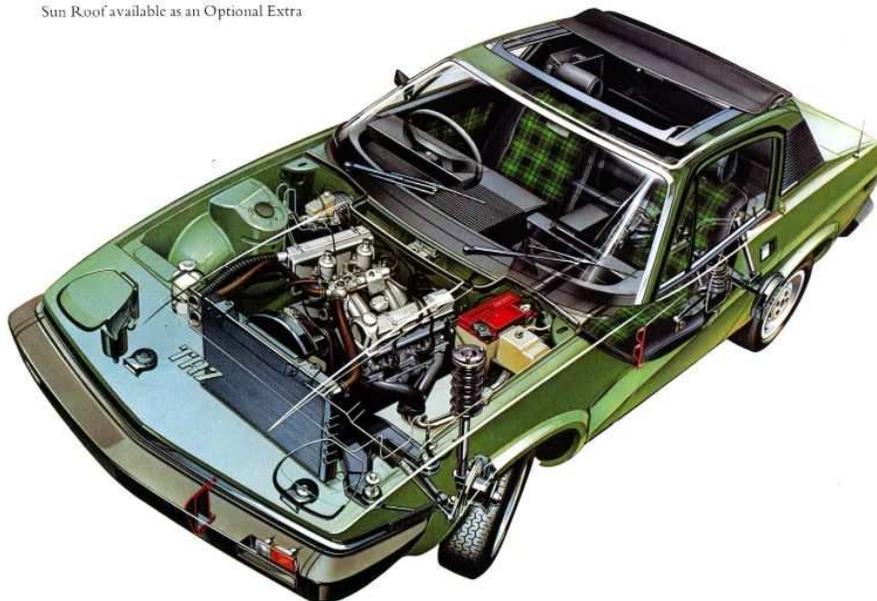
“By then,” he says, “dealerships were starting to slip, in part because British Leyland was nickel and diming us to death, and they just wouldn’t listen to us.”
And despite Triumph’s continuing labor and cash problems, quality control did improve. By 1980, the TR7 production line had made its final move, to Solihull, and there is no doubt that later cars offered significantly improved build quality and a multitude of design improvements.



Highest-selling TR worldwide !

In general, most reviewers agreed that the TR7 represented a bold new approach for BL, and some wrote that the wedge could usher in a new era: that of the “modern” sports car. For the 1981 model year, in an effort to boost power and economy and reduce emissions, the North American market TR7 was given Bosch fuel injection and a taller fifth gear ratio, the last production changes the car would see. By this time, the car was becoming more of a financial failure—adding to BL’s mounting woes—and in October 1981 the last TR7 rolled off the assembly line in Solihull, England. Sources differ over final production numbers, but most place the number at more than 112,000, making the humble TR7 the highest-selling TR worldwide. An estimated 65,000 of those cars were sold in the U.S.

Sun Roof available as an Optional Extra





TR8 Right Car, Wrong Time?

If all had gone according to plan, BL would have introduced the V8-powered TR8 in 1977. In fact, they built about a hundred prototypes (coupes without badges, most with automatic transmissions) in the Speke plant and sent them to the U.S. for testing. Then production ground to a halt during the strike and was never able to catch up.

The TR8 solved many of the problems plaguing the TR7. It was the same basic car, but a more powerful engine and a higher build quality redeemed the successor. Unfortunately, when BL finally managed to launch the TR8, new car buyers faced surging gas prices and new choices. (In July 1980, an *AutoWeek* cover headline read, "Japanese Imports: Small Car Fever Sweeps the U.S.") And then there was the TR8's "guilt by association" factor, fed by the TR7's well-publicized quality and dependability woes.



The TR8's \$12,000 list price probably didn't help matters either. Still, the car enjoyed a lot of good press. **Road Test magazine named the TR8 its Best New Sports Car of 1980**, saying the V8 "transforms the car."

The car's smooth and flexible 3.5-liter aluminum V8, which was a descendent of the engine GM introduced in its 1961 Buick Special, Olds F85 and Pontiac Tempest, weighed little more than a cast-iron four. With federally mandated smog equipment (including twin catalytic converters), the twin-carbed Zenith-Stromberg version put out 133 horsepower and 174 lb.-ft. of torque; the Lucas-injected California version put out 137 horsepower along with 168 lb.-ft. of torque.

During a Road & Track test, the car recorded a zero-to-60 mph time of 8.4 seconds (Car and Driver clocked 8.1 seconds) and a quarter-mile time of 16.3 seconds at 85.5 mph. Other than the engine, substantial changes from the TR7 included power steering, bigger brakes and taller final drive (3.08:1 vs. 3.45:1). The battery was moved to the trunk, and in addition to the standard five-speed manual transmission, a BorgWarner three-speed was an option—few were sold that way, however.

The car's combination of power, comfort, decent handling and open-air fun seemed to offer promise. But the sales the company had hoped for never materialized, and the end was in sight: BL pulled the plug on TR8 production part-way through 1981, although new ones were sold into 1982.

Some sources place total TR8 production numbers as high as 2800, making this the rarest TR of them all. When the last wedge rolled off the line, it represented the end of a long line of sporty Triumphs dating back to the 1920s.

It was also *the end of the mass-market British sports car.*



Car and Driver put the TR8 on its cover, calling it **“nothing less than the reinvention of the sports car.”** The review went on to brag about the car’s torque: “80 percent more than the TR7, 71 percent more than the RX-7, 25 percent more than the Datsun 280Z and 22 percent more than the Porsche 924 Turbo.” Road & Track said, “You aren’t going to trace down a Sunbeam Tiger or older Corvette after all, because you can now buy a brand new V8 roadster, one that will outrun most every other sports sedan and sports car this side of \$15,000.”



Today’s Wedge World

These days, wedge owners make up an enthusiastic and thriving community. They seem to enjoy their minority role at British meets, while technology, innovation and dogged persistence have corrected most of their cars’ faults.

Time does seem to heal, and wedge-bashing within the Triumph community doesn’t appear to be the sport it once was. In fact, many owners of earlier TRs also admit to a wedge or two in their stables. More than 30 years after its debut, the last Triumph’s styling has also caught up with the shape, and the car looks right at home parked beside today’s models.



Five-speed convertibles offer the most driving fun, especially those equipped with fuel injection. St. Louis wedgehead Terry Merrill owns three ’81 injected TR7s and believes they are a vast improvement over the other models. “The fuel injection makes the engine run remarkably smooth,” he explains. “My friend says it runs like a Toyota. And fuel economy is very good. I average 25 to 30 mpg city and interstate. And for some reason, the engines seem to last longer.”

He, too, calls himself a “champion of the underdog” in explaining his attraction to the wedge. He describes his experience at British meets this way: “It’s always funny to see a grandfather walking through the rows of cars, hearing him tell his young grandson about the various TR6s, TR4s, etc., and then stopping at the TR7s and whispering in the boy’s ear about the TR7 while the boy’s expression tells the story of what gramps is saying.”

And, the price of admission is cheap: Figure the nicest TR7 in the world probably won’t fetch more than \$10,000, while rats and project cars can be found for free. And despite the TR8’s rarity—experts believe only 1500 to 1800 still exist, most of which are in the U.S.—a decent running example can still be purchased for less than \$10,000. Projects go for much less, although an original example with less than 2500 miles recently sold for \$16,000 on eBay. While TR8 values are creeping up, the appreciation of these cars will probably never fund many IRAs or handle the kids’ college years. Some owners say they enjoy “running under the radar” and don’t seem to mind if the market undervalues the car. To them, it’s an investment in fun and driving enjoyment, like the kick

they get from putting another LBC owner behind the wheel and seeing his reaction when the car makes V8 noises and pulls like few other British cars.

And then there's the added benefit of surprising the occasional driver at a stoplight and having him lean over and ask, "What's that thing got in it?" To hear these owners tell it, the TR8 is today what BL hoped it would be. It's a fun car that offers plenty of room, decent handling and power to spare. It has air conditioning, a snug-fitting top that doesn't leak, and to top it off, this rarest TR of them all can still be bought on the cheap.

It's the car that almost brought the classic British roadster up into the age of computer-controlled fuel injection, five-speed transmissions and modern driver ergonomics. It appears as though these owners are having the last laugh. Maybe it's time to give the wedge a little love. After all, it's a milestone in our world.

Want to try a TR7? What To Look For

-- Rust is the TR7's worst enemy and there are plenty of crusty examples around or – worst still – nice lookers, which are full of filler and a layer of polish. And because TR7 residual values are so low, enthusiasts aren't exactly encouraged to spend big money on their cars so expect the worst.

-- The major rot areas are the chassis rails (particularly at the front around the subframe points), floor pan, bulkheads and inner front wings, especially at the strut top mounts. These Triumphs can literally fall apart at the seams and if bad, the car is of scrapper-use only. Other major areas include the A posts (very common), boot floor (check spare wheel well for rot) and rear suspension pick up points.

-- Sills are a real worry on TR7s because they are comprised of an inner, outer, center and strengthening panel (the latter on the rag top only); the most common dodge is to tack just a new outer on hiding all the crap underneath.

-- Those huge rubber bumpers can mask wild valance rot and these bulky US-inspired fenders can even droop or drop off entirely if their glued mounts give up the ghost.

-- It has to be an exceptional TR7 if you can't find any rot or repairs around the wheel arches, door bottoms and around the windscreen area. So vet well.

-- Mechanically, the car fares better. Loosely Dolomite-derived hardware is fairly sturdy and not dear to replace either.



-- As with all 1970s Triumphs, overheating is the biggest worry (the Dolly engine was half a Stag unit, remember). Silted and corroded waterways are common and head gaskets often fail. Worse still, a cylinder head can prove virtually impossible to remove if it has rusted on with the studs.

-- Check the state of the cooling system; if only water is in the header tank then be ultra wary as these engines need a constant diet of quality anti-freeze to keep them healthy and cool. And be doubly wary if there are signs of oil droplets; have a sniff to confirm!

-- The timing chain is rattle-prone although doesn't slip

like the Stag's. Listen also for cam wear and worn cranks, including that well-known Triumph foible, the crank end float (have an helper depress the clutch as you watch the crank's pulley move).

-- Early transmissions are Dolomite/GT6 sourced so will usually be tired on P- reg cars. Most featured the Rover SD1 five-speeder however, which apart from being slicker is also sturdier, although worn synchros (watch for gear clash) on second and third are pretty common.

-- The three-speed Borg Warner automatic 'box is reliable and doesn't detract from the Triumph's appeal too much – plus they are normally a lot cheaper to buy, too.

-- Suspensions are simple – damper, spring and mounting bushes usually go, especially the front shockers. TR7s normally handle well so if the car feels like an old TR6, then the suspension is clapped out.

-- A good number of TR7s were upgraded to V8 power. Check if it's been done properly (many haven't.) Ditto a conversion to Dolomite Sprint power. Turning the latter on its head, has the stock 1998cc engine been swapped along the way with a lesser 1850 Dolly engine? Bosch L-Jetronic fuel injection was used on last of the Stateside TR7s, although emission-sapping gear meant it was a good 10bhp down normal UK cars.

-- Various styles and types of trim were tried – and usually they all age rapidly; the tartan like seat facings are very hard to replicate now. A lot of TRs are running around with naff seat covers to hide the deterioration.

-- Is the TR7 winking at you? It's not a come-on... sluggish or no show headlamps are usually due to dodgy wiring or the motors being on the way out – around \$60 a pop to fix if it's the latter.

-- The TR7 is a lot more watertight than early TRs, and this includes the convertibles. As always, inspect the rag top for wear, damage and ageing plus check (and smell) for a weather worn cabin.

-- Although it's of scant consolation after 37 years of use and deterioration on the road, it is reckoned that cars made from 1979/80 are the best built. Whatever, even though parts supply is pretty decent from Triumph specialists (Robsport International has just started marketing proper heater controls for instance), there's little value in restoring a basket case unless it's something rare or special.



Parts of this article were written by John Webber in the July 2008 issue of Classic Motorsports. Pricing for examples of both the TR7 and TR8 Wedges have changed, but if you've been holding onto one for the past 30-40 years, you're in luck: values are going up! TR7 coupes are selling for around \$4,000 on average, with #1 examples going for around \$11,000. TR7 convertibles go for a bit more, averaging \$4,500. Want a pristine example? They're hitting \$14,000.

Expect to pay a premium for the V8, as TR8 coupes average close to \$7,000, going as high as \$18,000 for a perfect example. Convertibles will again set you back even more, averaging \$9,700 with a concourse-level example hitting a

whopping \$24,600. Time has been kind to the wedge. Now may be the time to resurrect the one sitting in your garage.



This Shape is still ...

**my
FAVORITE !!**

I've owned a bunch of Triumphs over the years; all the TR's (except TR-5) as well as a Spitfire and a GT-6. In the late 80's I bought my first Wedge, a Sienna Brown TR7 coupe with a blown motor. This was early enough in the life cycle of the cars that you could still find a good cylinder head in the scrap yards. Coming from a traditional LBC background this 'modern' car was a bit beyond the pale, but it was cheap, (\$500 for a 10-yr old car!) and it was still, despite the appearance, a Triumph and an LBC.

I rebuilt the motor and once I started driving it I thought, "Well, this is actually pretty nice." It was water-tight, the heater blew hot air and it started every morning. The only thing missing was a convertible top. That was quickly remedied with a white 1980 TR7 convertible, with the 5-speed gearbox, that I owned for several years, a sign that I was actually settling down. When my kids came along I stopped driving it and finally sold it to a young man who fell in love at fuel stop.

For many years I went without a sports car. This is when I had my Rover P6, which could carry the kids in the back seat. Finally the day came when I thought, "Nobody in back seat for a couple of years now", and I started looking again for a sports car. Being a 'little bit' older I decided I wanted something that was a bit more 'refined' so I set my sights on a TR8. This is the last of the LBC's so it benefitted from years of development (tongue-in-cheek) and I felt it was a car I could actually live with on a daily basis. Relatively dependable, comfortable, many of the creature comforts that we've come to expect like heat, AC, wipers that actually clear the screen, etc. Plus the 3.5L V8 gave it the pep that would make it feel like a performance car.



After a year or two of looking, in July 2015, I came across an advert in the VTR magazine for a car in Wisconsin. A 1980 Poseidon Metallic Green TR8 with only 21,000 miles on it. In the photos the car looked very nice and clean. The only issue was that there were seat covers and, knowing the fragile nature of the fabric on the seats in these cars, I feared the worse and asked for photos of the seats with the covers removed. I was delighted to see that the seats were perfect! Not even a wear spot on the left seat bolster! The Triumph seat covers

were on all of the cars life. The covers themselves are a bit tatty, but I only take them off at British car events.

After many emails, photos and phone calls I was ready to buy. Remember kids, Don't Buy a Car Sight-Unseen ! The VTR National was in Michigan that year and plans were made to look at the car while at the event in August. Plans changed and instead I contacted John Gunnell, a local restoration shop owner that I knew and respected and asked if he could take a look at the car for me. He reported back that the car was, indeed, exactly what the sellers claimed. I was happy to hear that, in person, the car looked nice and drove nice. The seller and I came to an agreement on the price; coincidentally the original window sticker for this car lists the original price at the same \$12,500.

When it arrived at the end of August 2015 it was, indeed, exactly as claimed. All it needed was some basic service and I started driving it right away. For our first trip my wife and I went on The American-British Reliability Run in October. 600 miles around the New York Finger Lakes Region was a great chance to get to know the car and its foibles. The only real issue was that, if we stopped moving, it would overheat and blow a dramatic steam plume. Once we started moving again it would calm down. I quickly located the blown fan fuse and that fixed that problem!



My next big trip was to Amelia Island in February 2016. The car performed (almost) flawlessly down and back, almost 2000 miles. Problems that were my own fault were a speeding ticket in Virginia and then losing the gas cap in North Carolina. I was interrupted during a fuel stop and neglected to put it back on. I realize now that it might have been cheaper to go back and look for it as the replacement was pretty pricey!

The Triumph, however lost the headlights just as we arrived back in Pennsylvania. Triumph choose to run the electrical power for all the lights through the headlight switch which had melted internally. This was the start of many small but significant modifications that I have made to the car. During the rest of the winter I pulled the interior out of the car and fitted a new Blaupunkt radio with better speakers in custom enclosures located under the seats and in the dash. I removed the gauge cluster, removed the clock and installed a mechanical oil pressure gauge. I shortened the shifter by 1.5 inches. I installed LED lights from LiteZupp with the 4 brake lights in the rear. I fitted powerful Halogen headlights along with a relay harness from instructions in the TWA newsletter.

When I replaced the sound system I fitted a black power antenna. I then had the luggage rack and the door handles powder-coated in semi-gloss black. Next I'll pull off the stainless steel windscreen trim and have that powder-coated also.

I installed stainless steel exhaust downpipes replacing the catalytic convertors. As maintenance repairs I've fitted new front and rear shocks, selected urethane bushings, sway bar lowering blocks, and the front strut pivot bearings. Next up is a new top; a tan vinyl top was available originally or I might go with a cloth top, which isn't correct but has a nice, rich look to it.

Now (November 2019) there's 36,000 miles on the car and I'm loving it! I rarely use the AC as I'd prefer to put the top down. I don't get to drive it as much as I'd like because of my job; I'm often test-driving somebody else's car. But I do get it out when I can and it's still my favorite.

Mike Engard

Editor note: Mike is owner of Ragtops and Roadsters and Pollock Auto Restoration



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(Rain Date Sunday May 3rd)

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ANTHONY DELIA GT6 March / April 2020 The continuing saga of Anthony's GT6+ project

Dear members,

Hope everyone is enjoying this wonderful mild winter we are having so far, no snow, no ice, no single digit temps.

As far as the GT6+ project is concerned, it has pretty much been put aside for the winter except for some engine work. My wife and I agreed that she should be able to park her daily driver in the garage for the winter since she is still working. Even though we have a three car garage, by parking the daily driver in one bay it does limit my working space. I do have a nice natural gas unit heater mounted on the ceiling so I can do some small repairs that do not require any heavy sanding and grinding.

In the last November/December issue I covered the de-greasing, cleaning and paint stripping of the chassis. This article will cover the inspection of the chassis metal and the welds. After a good look at the chassis I did not discover any structural issues that would cause any problems down the road. Some minor rust and pitting, and of course the usual dings and dents caused mostly from jacking during routine maintenance. Next question was, how to do the repairs? I could have just cleaned up the little rust, primed and painted the chassis, but I decided that it would not be the right way to do a restoration.

Now the grunt work begins. My records show that this phase started on 8-13-2013 a few months after the cleaning and stripping. For the most part, most of the dings and dents were pretty shallow and were merely filled in using a MIG welder and then ground smooth. Tried to pull them out first, using a stinger, but the metal was a little too tough. The worst dents were in the outriggers. I tried to straighten them using the stinger and the welder but was not successful at all. That left me with one option, replacement.



As most of us well know, when removing and replacing any part of a chassis the alignment of the new part is very critical. I found that a measuring tape, straight edge and square is not enough. In my case, I set the outriggers in place, then lowered the body in place, installed all the bolts then tacked the outriggers in place. It takes time but it's a guaranteed fit at the end. Once the repairs were complete I moved on to the next job. Are you all ready?

After a couple of Four Roses and taking another look at the numerous factory welds, I decided that they would not do. I guess I should mention that I would never attempt any of the welding repairs if I had no prior experience. I think that I did mention in one of the past news letters that I have about 7 years welding experience with one of the major oil companies. Didn't have much experience with a MIG welder, since most



of my welding experience was in the field where MIG machines were not used. I have a cousin that welded for 20+ years for a major chemical company, and during that time clocked-in many hours of STICK, TIG and MIG welding, much of which was X-ray tested. I told him what I was planning to do on the chassis, so one day he brought over his MIG machine and got me started. After that, it was just a matter of practice. Once I felt comfortable using the MIG, it was time to get started.

Before applying the new welds, the proper thing to do is remove the old welds. This required many hours of grinding and several different tools, which included a standard 4.5 in. angle grinder, 4.5 in. corner grinder and a high speed straight grinder with carbide cutters. In order to avoid the risk of warping the chassis you can not just grind out all the welds and then do all the welding.

Grind out a few welds in different locations, weld those and so on. At the end, all visible welds were ground out and re-welded. The job started on 8/13/2009 and ended on 9/14.2010.

Once that phase was complete I had to decide on a finish. For a while I had thought about a coat of hot dipped galvanize and than a top coat of single stage urethane. I actually loaded the chassis into my 1990 Plymouth Voyager and drove to a galvanizing plant in Folsom, NJ. They took a look at the chassis and explained the advantages and disadvantages of galvanizing. I decided that there were too many ifs. When I decided against the galvanize I had to find a painter. I spoke to a friend of mine who had his Toyota MR2 painted by a friend of his in his garage. I spoke with the painter, he came to the house, looked at the chassis. We agreed on a price of \$200.00 plus paint. He is actually the one who recommend the U-Tech 3.8 single stage urethane and epoxy primer. This paint is very similar to DuPont Imron.



I decided that before I would deliver the chassis to the painter there would be another process to complete, coat the inside. So I spoke with my cousin Dave, a serious car guy, and he recommended pouring some paint in the chassis and rolling it. But clean it first. So that is what I did. Took some time but it really is the right way. I first had to seal all the holes except one.

To seal the holes I used duct tape, not perfect but much better than masking tape. Once the holes were sealed I first poured in about a gallon of Purple Power de-greaser, rolled the chassis several times, drained it and gave it a good rinse with hot tap water. Drained out the water the best I could, than let it sit for several days in the sun, and also rolling it during the drying period.



Once I was satisfied that the chassis was totally dry I drove to the local Ace hardware store and had them color match the color of my Triumph (laurel green) of 1 gallon of oil base paint. At the same time I also picked up a gallon of oil based primer. The paint process is basically the same as the cleaning process.

Fill with primer, roll several times and let dry. Fill with paint, roll several times and let dry. I believe I applied 2 coats of each. Next, made the appointment with the painter, loaded the chassis in the Plymouth Voyager, drove it to Franklinville (about 15 min. away), dropped it off and picked it up 3 days later (8/11/2011).

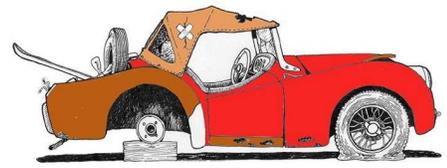


So that concludes the repair and painting of the chassis. The next article will most likely cover the cleaning and painting of the major bolt on parts for the chassis. Hope everyone enjoys the article.

Have a nice winter,
Anthony Delia



SWAP MEET



YOUR AD COULD APPEAR HERE Find a home for those extra parts or that car that you will never get around to restoring. Raise some cash to buy more extra parts or projects that you do not need!!

Contact Ed Gaubert: mgarage@comcast.net

Ads will appear for two (2) issues , as space allows

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FOR SALE: Assorted parts from 73 TR6.

Original transmission, exhaust manifold, rear differential, driveshaft, and rear axles. Best offer. Bill wstumm@outdrs.net or 609-420-4114

FOR SALE: Early MGB parts:

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Chris - email_chrisbethmann@comcast.net, mobile # 609.457.7051

FOR SALE: 2003 Rover Freelander SE

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Jim De Shields americantorque2@gmail.com

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Sedan brand (blue writing) ammeter +/- 60 amps	\$20
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Email Lee for pictures or more information. leesonic@yahoo.com

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Paul pis9@yahoo.com



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- The information shown below is the most complete available as this newsletter is printed, and will be entered as space allows.
- Questions about BMCSNJ Events should be directed to Tracy Westergard (events@bmcsnj.org)
- Priority will be given to British Car events which do not conflict with events sponsored by BMC or neighboring clubs..

DATE	BMC EVENT	LOCATION / STATUS
January 1/15	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	7 Stars Diner, Sewell 1890 Hurffville Rd. Sewell, NJ 08080 7PM / 6pm Dinner
1/25 12 pm	Simeone Museum Best of Britain British Racing at LeMans Demo Day Features: Bentley 3 liter, Aston Martin LM, Jaguar C-Type	Simeone Museum 6825 Norwitch Drive Philadelphia, PA 19153
February 2/19	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	Uno, Maple Shade 2803 NJ-73 S 7PM / 6pm Dinner
March 3/7	Auto Detailing Tech Session	Autobella Detailing and Products 206 Medford - Mt. Holly Road, Unit C Medford, NJ. 08055 9am-noon
March 3/18	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	7 Stars Diner, Sewell 1890 Hurffville Rd. Sewell, NJ 08080 7PM / 6pm Dinner
3/28	Simeone Museum Best of Britain The 12 Hours of Sebring Demo Day Features: Jaguar C-Type, Mercedes 300SL, Austin Healey 100	Simeone Museum 6825 Norwitch Drive Philadelphia, PA 19153
April 4/15	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	Uno, Maple Shade 2803 NJ-73 S 7PM / 6pm Dinner
April 4/18	Swap Meet in ATCO	Time and location to follow
May 5/2	Members Memorial Gathering At Smithville to benefit Samaritan Hospice	Smithville, NJ For directions: www.historicsmithville.com/directions and: mgarage@comcast.net
5/20	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	7 Stars Diner, Sewell 1890 Hurffville Rd. Sewell, NJ 08080 7PM / 6pm Dinner
June 6/6 Rain Date 6/7	<i>Spring Driving Tour</i> 	Meeting Location Johnson's Farm, 133 Church Rd. Medford, NJ 08055 Destination- Batsto Village 10am-Come early for breakfast .cjhrpc@gmail.com

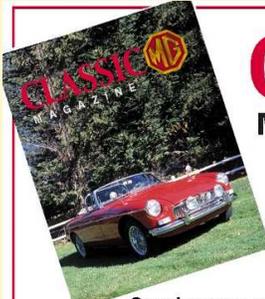
Events Continued



DATE	BMC EVENT	LOCATION / STATUS
6/17	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	Uno, Maple Shade 2803 NJ-73 S 7PM / 6pm Dinner
July 15	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	7 Stars Diner, Sewell 1890 Hurffville Rd. Sewell, NJ 08080 7PM / 6pm Dinner
7/18	British Car Owners Ice Cream Social 	5 Points Custard E. Landis Ave. (Rt.540) & Tuckahoe Rd. (Rt.557) East Vineland, NJ 6 threw 8:30pm robgt71@verizon.net
August 8/8 Rain Date 8/9	Tour of South Jersey 	IMPORTANT: Meet at Harrison House Diner Intersection of Rt.322 & Rt. 45, Mullica Hill, NJ <i>Come Early for Breakfast.</i> events@bmcsnj.org
8/19	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	Uno, Maple Shade 2803 NJ-73 S 7PM / 6pm Dinner
8/22	<u>Simeone Museum</u> Stirling Moss / The Champion that wasn't. Demo Day Features: Aston Martin DBR1, Maserati 300S, Jaguar D Type	Simeone Museum 6825 Norwitch Drive Philadelphia, PA 19153
September 9/16	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	7 Stars Diner, Sewell 1890 Hurffville Rd. Sewell, NJ 08080 7PM / 6pm Dinner
9/26 10am-2pm	<u>BMC of SNJ END of Year Show</u> <u>The Greenwich Artisans Faire</u> Benefits Cumberland County Historical Society	Ye Greate St., Greenwich, NJ 
October 10/21	<i>Membership Meeting</i>	Uno, Maple Shade 2803 NJ-73 S 7PM / 6pm Dinner
November December	<i>No Membership Meetings in recognition of the holiday season</i>	

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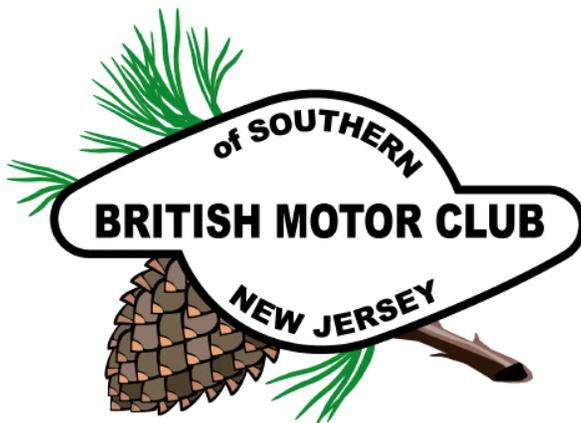
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