

The TRIUMPH

September 2023

# TRUMPET

The Triumph Car Club of Victoria Magazine



TRIUMPH TR7



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Design and production of the *Trumpet*:  
Fran Madigan, editor@tccv.net

# THE COVER STORY



## The cars : Triumph TR7/TR8 development story

*An article originally published in 2018, written by Keith Adams for AROnline*

**The Triumph TR7 was the last of a great sports car line – although few would have believed it to be, when designing this important car back in the optimistic days of the early 1970s.**

The TR7 looked like nothing else on the road, but couldn't match the show with enough go ... but despite that, it went on to outlive the MGB, while becoming the best-selling TR of them all.

Sports cars were something that both BMC and Leyland Motors as separate companies had proved to be rather good at. In the USA, the MG Midget and MGB had enjoyed immense popularity, outselling their rivals, the Triumph Spitfire and TR6 by a considerable margin.

But when BMC merged with Leyland Motors to form BLMC, new dilemmas began to rear their heads. It was fairly obvious that the MGB and TR6 were reaching the end of their useful lives:

despite healthy sales in the USA and that being the case, the question of how to replace them would need to be answered before development of any new sports cars could commence.

The root of this dilemma was that although MG and Triumph belonged to the same company following the merger of 1968, up to that point they were rivals and subsequently, there was considerable overlap in BLMC's sports car range.

The MG Midget and Triumph Spitfire were aimed at the same customers and the Triumph TR6, GT6 and MGB were not too far apart, either. The result was that there were five models competing in pretty much the same sector – and all selling in comparatively small numbers in comparison with the other sub-two litre cars being produced by BLMC at the time.

## MG and Triumph proposals

At the time of the merger, both MG at Abingdon and Triumph at Canley were already working on their own interpretations of how their new sports cars would appear and be engineered – and the contrast between both companies would prove to be highly interesting.

In Abingdon, MG had been working on a promising sports car, code named the ADO21, which was a shark-nosed two-seater sports car, which unusually for its time, sported a mid-engined configuration. Of the other interesting technical aspects of this car, was the fact that the only major carry-overs

*Continued on Page 6*

## EDITOR'S NOTE

By Fran Madigan, TCCV member #904

Welcome to spring. Time to remove the dust covers and get out on the road – hopefully in sunshine!

Thanks to all the TCCV committee members, office bearers and volunteers for continuing in their Club roles for another year, as confirmed at the Annual General Meeting in August. And congratulations to all the recipients of the Annual Club Awards!

The *Trumpet's* focus this month is on the Triumph TR7, with a little about the TR8 as well. They both have an interesting history.

Alan Andrews has written about his experience as a TR7 coupe owner when he was living in Western Australia.

While we covered the TR6 in the May 2023 edition of the *Trumpet*, Peter Vibert has provided us with a detailed account of the restoration of his beautiful Mallard Green TR6.

You will soon receive details of a password change for the 'Members Only' section of the TCCV website – our webmaster, Alan Andrews, outlines the process. Alan has also started a series of 'Webmaster Hints' which will address a number of frequently asked questions about navigating the TCCV website. And while Alan was also the organiser

of the Hal Coulson Re-enactment Car Trial, held in early August, he was unable to participate due to unforeseen circumstances. In his absence, Graeme Oxley has documented the event. Such a shame about the state of our country roads these days – I have had many near misses with potholes myself of late.

Enjoy the fact that winter is over, and send in any articles about your springtime Triumph adventures!

**COPY DEADLINE**

**ANY TIME IS GOOD!**

Or, if it is for the next edition, please submit copy/photographs by the last Friday of the month.

Please forward to [editor@tccv.net](mailto:editor@tccv.net) or contact Fran Madigan on 0403 133 063

**NOTE**

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## WHAT'S AROUND THE CORNER?



### **TCCV general meetings:**

7.30pm on the third Wednesday of the month at the Manningham Hotel & Club, 1 Thompsons Road, Bulleen VIC 3105

**Register** on the TCCV website **by midnight the day before** the meeting.

**For more information, flyers and booking/registration details for these and later events - [Click on event.](#)**

### **SEP. 15-17 / Veteran Vintage & Classic Vehicle Club of Wangaratta: 52nd Annual Spring Rally**

The Veteran Vintage & Classic Vehicle Club of Wangaratta has invited the TCCV to join their annual spring rally. Meet at the Vine Hotel and tour through the King Valley.

### **SEP. 20 / TCCV – General Meeting**

### **OCT. 1 / Euroa Show 'n Shine**

Online bookings now available. Show vehicles \$10 (incl. driver), show bikes \$5 (incl. rider), general public \$5 and kids free. Featuring live music, food stalls, craft market, kids' entertainment and a special screening of *Wide Open Road*.

### **OCT. 5-9 / Grampians Adventure Tour – Joint Annual Rally**

Joint SA, Victoria & ACT Triumph Car Clubs event. Meet at 10am at the BP Service Station on the Geelong Bypass and travel to Hamilton.

### **OCT. 15 / Lara Lions Classic Car Show**

Venue is the Pirra Homestead, 108 Windermere Road, Lara. \$10 show cars, \$2 entry per person.

### **OCT. 18 / TCCV – General Meeting**

### **NOV. 3-4 / Gateway to Gippsland 51st Triannual Rally**

The West Gippsland Vehicle Restorers Club Inc.

invites you to the 51st Triannual Rally held in spectacular Gippsland.

### **NOV. 5 / Point Nepean Heritage Motor Show**

Inaugural 2023 Rotary Nepean Heritage Motor Show at the Point Nepean Quarantine Station.

### **NOV. 15 / TCCV – General Meeting**

### **NOV. 19 / MGCC 100th Anniversary: Annual Historic and Classic Hill Climb**

Following our impressive display at Caribbean Park in February, TCCV and TR Register have been invited by the MG Car Club Victoria to put on a show of Triumph cars at this event. TCCV to supply one each of TR5, TR6, Spitfire & Stag (of each Mark), 2000, 2500, Herald, Vitesse, GT6, Renown & Roadster.

Secretary David Ferguson is managing the TCCV list. Contact him if you are able to attend and display your car. Free entry for cars on display. Entry fee for classics not on display – \$20 (TBC).

### **NOV. 19 / Shannons American Motoring Show**

At Caribbean Park. For further details contact 0428 596 975.

### **DEC. 3 / TCCV Christmas Party**

At the Wheelers Hill Hotel, 871-881 Ferntree Gully Road, Wheelers Hill. Three-course meal \$33 per person after TCCV subsidy. Arrive by 11.30am to be seated by 11.45am. Register on the website.

**Events Coordinator:** Peter Welten  
**m** 0409 511 002 **email** events@tccv.net  
**or** ann.welten@bigpond.com

**For the most up-to-date and complete calendar for the year.**  
TCCV events are labelled with 'TCCV'.



# TCCV Presidential Backfire

By Pete Byrnes, TCCV member #830



Well, here we all are again, and only 110 shopping days till Christmas!

The AGM went off very well, and was well attended by members attending in person and by Zoom – once we got the technology sorted out.

There was a full list of nominees for the Committee and Club Office Bearers, so no election was required. The previous Committee members and Club Office Bearers all re-nominated to continue and were duly elected. The Committee and Office Bearers for 2023-24 are:

**President** – Peter Byrnes

**Vice-President** – Tony Cappadona

**Secretary** – David Ferguson

**Treasurer** – Denise McGuire

**Ordinary Committee Members** – Iain Perrott, Brian Churchill, Alan Andrews and Peter Welten\*

(\* Subject to a clarification of the Committee clause in the Club Constitution).

Our fantastic and dedicated group of Volunteers all agreed to continue which is a great outcome for the continued success of the club, and the list includes:

**Membership Secretary** – Roger McCowan

**Editor** – Fran Madigan

**Graphic Design** – Jimmy Carreras

**Collation** – Brian Churchill

**Events Co-ordinator** – Peter Welten

**Club Permit Officers** – Tony Cappadona, Noel Warden, David Ferguson, Terry Roche and Denise McGuire, (David Ferguson, Theo Rau and Peter Welten Scrutineers)

**Webmaster** – Alan Andrews

**AOMC Delegates** – Terry Roche, Peter Welten, Col Jenkins

**Trading** – John and Fay Seeley (assistance from another volunteer here would be welcome)

**Tool Librarian** – Lindsay Gibson and Andrew Richards.

**Photo Master** – Nick Rix

**Regalia** – Joe Klienitz

**Book Librarian** – Andrew Richards

There were a number of very worthy nominees for the Annual Club Awards for 2022-23 and the outcomes were a close-run thing. However, the final recipients were:

**Club Champion Awards**

**Ladies** – Judy Brown

**Mens** – Alan Andrews

**Stan Fisher Award** (Most improved car) – David Ferguson, 1976 TR6 (a special mention was given to Keith Brown for his work in preparing the car)

**ShIPLEY Award** (for outstanding contributions to the club magazine) – Alan Andrews

**President's Award** – Fran Madigan, for her extraordinary contributions to the club as Editor (a special mention was given to Jimmy Carreras for his contributions in Graphic Design)

Club trophies were unfortunately not available on the night and will be delivered to the very worthy recipients in due course.

I can't emphasise strongly enough how incredibly fortunate we are as a club to have such a strong, dedicated and competent team of Committee and Volunteers driving the necessary club functions, doing the background work to keep us in compliance with the various authorities, and keeping this a vibrant and progressive place to be. I look forward to a good and happy year ahead in the pleasant company of friends and fellow members of TCCV.

As always, I look forward to seeing you on the road, and please drive safely.

Best regards, **Pete Byrnes**

## Continued from Page 2

from the BMH saloon car range was its engine and Hydrolastic suspension; it has been said by MG enthusiasts that this car was essentially an MGF, some 25 years ahead of its time.

Over at Triumph, initial work had also started on its own sports car, code named, 'Bullet' and unlike the MG ADO21; this was a conventional front-engined car, using saloon car running gear. The cars may have conceptually been diametrically opposed, but elements of both cars would end up being incorporated in the final product.

BLMC management knew that it had to carefully pitch any new sports cars at an increasingly sophisticated clientele – and the cars they were currently selling were, to put it politely, getting over the hill. In the USA, buyers were turning to the offerings from Datsun (the 240Z) and Porsche (the VW-Porsche 914) in increasingly large numbers.

### **Pragmatism or sophistication?**

Whatever BLMC would serve up would need to be quick and reliable (to match the Datsun) and technically interesting (to match the mid-engined Porsche). Also, new crash legislation was being introduced in the USA, which many informed people in the motor industry assumed would prove to be the death-knell of open-topped sports cars. Because of these pressures on BLMC and the fact that there was a massive need to develop a viable range of family cars, money and resources would only be released to develop one 'corporate' sports car.

Of course, the marketing issue would need to be finalised first and because of this, in late 1970, Mike Carver, then a manager in Central Product Planning and Spen King travelled to the USA in order to sound out the dealers and try and understand what it was that would be required.

The fact that Spen King (at the time, the Chief Engineer at Triumph) would be so intimately involved in the early stages of the new car's development ensured that Triumph as a marque would get the inside track in terms of development. This would be in spite of the fact that of the Corporation's sports cars, it was the offerings from MG that were most in demand. Carver stated subsequently, that this was in no way intended to be a full market research programme, but a series of 'extended conversations with relevant parties.'

### **Triumph TR7: What the Americans wanted**

The result of these findings would prove surprising because they indicated that what the Americans really wanted was a conventionally-engineered front engine, rear wheel drive car. The reasoning behind this was that the Americans wanted reliability and the ability for a 'quick fix' should the car fail.

Once back in the UK, the product planners reasoned that this format also had advantages in terms of development – and the fact that it would be less costly for the company both in terms of time and finances. Donald Stokes wanted the company to have a product ready to sell by the mid-'70s and this tight deadline would



be easier to meet if the product the company was developing was a car that shared componentry with mass-produced stablemates.

Because the dealers wanted a car that occupied a similar place in the market to that of the biggest seller, the MGB, the advantages of the mid-engined layout were lessened significantly. Performance would not be great enough to exploit the handling advantages brought about by even weight distribution that comes with a mid-mounted engine and because the new car would be a two-seater, there was no advantage to be found in either configuration. In the end, it would come down to budget: front engine, rear wheel drive it would be.

### **Triumph engineering wins out**

Out of the MG and Triumph models in development, it was obvious that the Triumph Bullet would be the model to be honed into a production reality. Work on the Bullet had been ongoing since 1969; Triumph envisaging it as a combined GT6/TR6 replacement and prototypes were soon running with Triumph four and six-cylinder power units.

Once the green light had been given to the Bullet project by the BL Board, the full weight of the company's resources were put behind the development of the new Triumph at the beginning of 1971.

Donald Stokes made it clear that it should be ready for introduction in 1975. The Bullet was being developed as a cheaper front-engined version of

the VW-Porsche 914 and, as such, was not a full convertible, but a targa-top, rather like the Fiat X1/9 – this left a gap in the range for a full convertible and the MGB would be left to remain in production for as long as regulations allowed the company to sell rag-tops.

### **No convertibles needed – so they thought**

Product planning decided that even though the new car was conceived as a straight replacement for the MGB, it should be priced above the older car so there was no clash between old and new. Already, the Bullet was being moved away from its intended market, by the product planners ... something that would happen again and again in the Corporation.

The conception of the car was finalised; the finer details needed to be decided. Spen King was placed in charge of the development of the new car – and in a theme common with the subsequent Rover SD1 and Austin Maestro; the package would offer no technical surprises.

### **Familiar technology underpins corporate sports car**

The engine would be a development of the slant-four Dolomite engine, initially coming with a four-speed gearbox (developed from the Morris Marina) and live rear axle. Now that the ethos was for the production of a BLMC sports car (as opposed to a Triumph sports car), the option of a Triumph straight-six powered version was dropped in favour of the use of the Rover V8 engine which, at the time, was being used in the Rover

P6B, P5B and Range Rover.

King was an expert at honing conventional components into something comparable with more exotic rivals – and even though the rear suspension was not independent, with careful development and thoughtful axle location it proved possible to make the car ride and handle at least as well as its foreign rivals – and certainly better than the aged MGB and TR6.

At this point in time, it became obvious to everyone that the Bullet should be marketed as a Triumph; MG still had the MGB to sell, but the Triumph range would be cut at the expense of the GT6 and TR6.

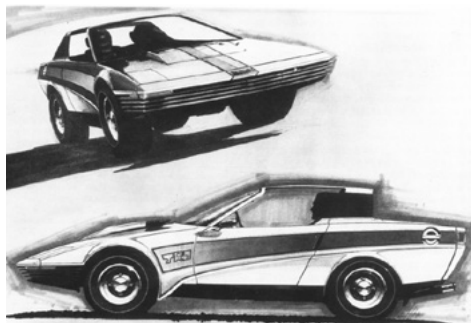
### **Harris Mann enters the equation**

During the early stages of development at Longbridge, there were TR7-shaped clay models produced wearing the 'MG Magna' nameplate, but it was a half-hearted effort, really. The name of MG was synonymous with open-topped sports cars in the USA, and this meant that while the MGB remained in production, it would not make sense to develop an MG-badged TR7.

Now it was settled that the new Triumph TR7 would not directly replace the MGB, but would also fight competitors higher up the price scale, its simplicity could prove to be a hurdle to sales. Even with the extra equipment added to the car to become a price replacement for the TR6 or GT6, the mechanical layout as chosen by Spen King did lead to the impression that the car was giving something away in terms of sophistication to its foreign rivals.

With this in mind, the Longbridge studios were asked to re-style the car, in order to increase its appeal; and following his work on Project Condor, the ADO71 and the impressive Zanda design concept, Harris Mann was handed the task ...

### **Adding a premium feel into the mix**



Harris Mann honed the styling in order to give the TR7 a more expensive look – also incorporating the 5mph impact absorbing bumpers that the car would require in order to meet upcoming US regulations. The most startling aspect of the styling though was reserved for the belt-line, which to emphasise the low nose/high tail stance of the TR7 was slashed down the side of the car starting high at the rear end and tapering towards the front, ending just before the front wheel.

It certainly gave the TR7 a degree of character and identity that the Bullet lacked. Elements of the ADO21 design were also included, especially around the area of its pointed nose and pop-up headlights. It was at this point in time that the targa top arrangement of the Bullet was dropped because the spectre of a complete ban on convertibles in

the USA was still hanging over the car industry.

It was still not known whether this arrangement would meet such regulations. Happily for the management (but perhaps less so for the dealers), the Triumph TR7 would feature a 'family' look shared with its Austin-Morris stablemates, dropping all stylistic links with Triumphs of the past.

### **Triumph TR7 design progresses rapidly**

As development progressed, by 1972 it became clear that the TR7 should be the starting point for a modest range of sports cars – and the TR7 in the form it was launched would be the base model in this range. Because it was obvious that the torquey Rover V8 engine would suit the car perfectly, this would head the range.

Below that, the 16-valve version of the slant-four Dolomite engine, at the time under development by Spen King and being readied for the Dolomite Sprint, was also earmarked to form the basis of the TR7 Sprint. Beyond this extending of the range of engines, at the point that the TR7 was nearing announcement, development of a 2+2 version commenced, with a view to widening the appeal of the corporate sports car.

The thinking behind this car, called the Triumph Lynx, was that with its extended accommodation it could be an effective competitor to the Ford Capri; a car which was proving to be a runaway hit for Ford and, in the process, was re-inventing the sports car market in the UK and Europe. The V8 engined

Triumph Lynx would be pressed into service as a replacement for the troubled Triumph Stag, which at the time was costing the company a packet in warranty costs.

### **The TR7 is go ... but for the US only**

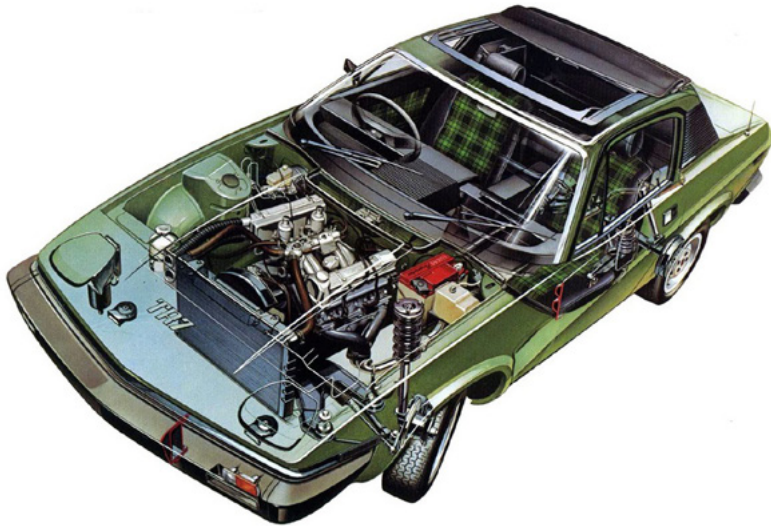
Speke was the factory chosen to build the TR7 from the time of its launch to the world's press in the USA at the start of 1975 – and because the US market was so important to British Leyland, the usual process of final testing and honing was dropped in order to get the car on sale as early as possible.

The decision was also taken to launch the Triumph TR7 in the USA only, European and British cars coming on stream later, once production could be ramped up in order to meet demand. The onus was now very much on the Speke workforce in order to produce the car at an acceptable level of quality – reputations were built on first impressions and if the car was built well, the positive image would remain with the car throughout its life.

Sadly, it was inevitable that they did not.

### **Safety and comfort take pole position**

Technically, the car may not have been exactly ground breaking, but there were a few points worth lauding the car for at the time of its launch. Safety was big news and the TR7 was designed very much with this in mind; the monocoque had been designed to meet all upcoming US crash regulations and intelligent detailing in the structure meant that the car would prove to score



well in passive safety terms.

Although it appeared that the car incorporated an integral roll-hoop, it did not – but the rear three quarter pillar was immensely strong, thanks to the box sections incorporated within, all the way up to the roofline and a cant rail over the windows.

One interesting aspect of the crash structure (and one that marked the car as being ahead of the game in this respect) was that the front section of the body shell did not contribute much in the event of a head-on collision, but merely acted as a crumple zone; the major energy in such a collision was in fact absorbed by the wheels against the bulkhead and the engine against the scuttle.

It may seem bizarre now that the movement of the engine in the event of a collision was a desirable state of affairs, but because the scuttle are

affected and intruded very little into the seating area of the passenger compartment, it was not considered to be an undesirable trait. The strength at the front of the car was also aided by its X-shaped front subframe and its less-than-pretty 5mph bumpers which were made from box-section steel and covered by self-skinning methane foam.

### **Controversial styling raises awareness**

Bodyshell strength was also above average for the time (but not in the class of the ADO17 saloon) at 7500lb ft per degree, but it was not the safety or strength of the Triumph TR7's body that drew comment, but its style. In an amusing tale that has now entered into the folklore of motoring history, it was Giorgetto Giugiaro that summed up the feelings of many people.

On his first viewing of the car at the Geneva Motor Show in 1975, he is said

to have paused to take a long look at the TR7. Pondering its styling, he is said to have looked at it in a puzzled way and then walked around the car, only to say, 'Oh my God! They've done it to the other side as well.'

This was no doubt a reference to the fact that in the development of new model styling, often different styling solutions are tried out on both sides of a clay model of the car – and Giugiaro obviously thought that the TR7 looked so bizarre that it could in no way be a production car!

It is easy to take cheap shots at the styling of the Triumph TR7, but alongside the Leyland Princess, it certainly showed that BLMC were keen on producing interestingly styled – bold – designs. It is just a shame that other factors conspired to play against the success of these cars before they had a chance to establish themselves on the market.

### **Production begins, quality stories follow**

Early quality niggles were not evident at the time of the launch of the Triumph TR7 and because it was an export-only car, the US journalists were reporting on the car a full year ahead of their counterparts on the domestic market. The launch passed off without hitch and generally the US press were impressed with the car, if a little unimpressed with the 'challenging' styling.

There were certainly no complaints regarding the handling and ride of the TR7, but what impressed even more than the chassis was the comfort

and habitability of the passenger compartment: it was certainly viewed as a much more civilised car than its predecessors.

### **Anti-emissions equipment hampers Triumph TR7**

Because of the strict emission laws that were in force in the USA by 1975, extensive anti-smog equipment was installed in the TR7 and the eight-valve 2.0-litre engine, which was not exactly the most powerful engine to start with, suffered badly from the resultant power loss.

In the USA, the TR7 was offered in two states of tune in order to meet the varying emission regulations within the country: 90bhp from twin-Stromberg carburettors in 49-State tune and a paltry 76bhp in single-carburettor California tune. In reality, this fact demonstrated that British Leyland had no suitable 'federal' engine in their line-up and they were suffering as a result of this.

The result was that the American press called for a hike in power, something that British Leyland knew was in the pipeline.

### **UK debut goes without (too many) problems**

The UK had to wait until 19 May 1976 for the TR7 to go on sale and the press generally treated this date as the time to treat it as a new model launch. Various detail changes were made to the TR7 in order to be more suited to European buying tastes – not least the use of smaller rear bumpers and an engine that was not strangled by

USA anti-emissions equipment: the higher compression, twin-SU version of the engine was used, producing a more realistic 105bhp.

This gave the car more class-competitive performance with a (Triumph-claimed) 0-60mph time of 9.4 seconds and top speed of 110mph, as opposed to 11.0 seconds and 107mph of its Federal cousin. Of course this was easy meat for the 3.0-litre Ford Capri.

But British Leyland had thoughtfully decided to launch the TR7 at a competitive price of £2999, which was some £696 (or, in these pre-inflationary times, over 20%) less.

### **Triumph TR7: what the papers said**

*Autocar* magazine reported on the car at the time of the UK launch and came away impressed with the car as a whole, but as always there were certain reservations. 'Performance-wise, the TR7 is no sluggard. It tries hard, a little too obviously, and is great fun in the tighter country road that is its favourite going. On motorways and wide, gently curving roads, its sporting pretensions are not backed up with quite enough power.'

Again, the chassis was praised for being greater than the sum of its parts and overall, they came away pleased:

'... it will find a wider public when they hack off the lid and give it a soft top.'

'When the TR5 appeared, a monthly fringe-contemporary described it as 'an engine in search of a chassis'. The TR7 is sort of revenge for that remark, or at any rate, a reverse – a chassis in search of an engine.'

Inevitably, because of the passing

resemblance between the two cars, the Triumph TR7 and Fiat X1/9 would end up being compared – and a year after the launch of the TR7 in this country, *Autocar* magazine did just that. What interestingly came from this article were not so much the relative merits of both cars, but what the public at large thought of them.

### **An acid test from the public**

'... The acid test, we took the Fiat and the TR7 to the Red Lion in Mayfair. A lunchtime hangout for advertising executives and director's secretaries, we realised that its verdict would be the final one. Which one would he/she rather go home/be taken home in? That white TR7 or the green X1/9?

'The green one,' said the willowy blonde who was obviously good at more than shorthand or typing. 'Because my boyfriend's got a green car. I think they're great.'

Whereupon a pair of skin-tight white jeans slinks in, sits down on the stool by the bar and looks demurely across at both cars. The long lashes caress first the TR7, then the Fiat.

'Well?' I ask, putting on my road tester's voice. 'Well, what do you think of those cars? Which would you rather be driven home tonight in?' She glares at me at first, then shuffles in her seat when she realises that it is just a questionnaire.

'What's the prize for getting it right?' she asks.

'One of these cars,' I joke.

'Oh well, in that case, the green one. I think it's a very feminine car. I wouldn't

like to drive it home, mind. Just sit alongside some Italian-looking guy. It looks much faster and more expensive than the other one. It looks too fast for a woman.'"

### **Was the TR7 lacking in sex appeal?**

And that was the problem. The Triumph did not have the immediate sex appeal of the Italian car and Peter Windsor's findings in that London pub certainly very potently demonstrated the fact. Inexpensive modifications to the TR7 could have easily reversed this situation, firstly the utilisation of more appealing colours and paint schemes, for a start: the TR7 V8 rally car was regarded by all that saw it as a fantastic looking car with its blue and white paint scheme and wider Minilite-style wheels, but the colour scheme was sadly not carried over to the production car.

In October of that year, Speke workers went on strike – and the end result of this was that any modifications that the company did try and incorporate into the TR7 could not be added. No one was building the cars. Those that were coming off the production line at Speke were proving to be suffering from indifferent build quality – and as a result were afflicted by the same depressing reliability issues that also affected the products of Longbridge and Cowley.

As we have seen, the net result of all this strife was the closure of the Speke factory and the moving of the TR7 production line to Canley, near Coventry – this disruption to production cost the company dearly and as a result, people who would have bought the TR7 in 1977 and 1978 were sadly forced to

look elsewhere. It took time to transfer the production line and then further time to get the Canley line up to speed.

### **The ramifications of Speke's closure**

Apart from the death of the Lynx and the TR7 Sprint, the Speke closure also marked the end of any further serious development of the car. Michael Edwardes was concentrating the company's efforts on ensuring that what little money was being given to the company by the government was channelled into the development of the LC8 and LC10 hatchbacks.

Luckily, the V8 version of the car was nearing completion at this time – and because the US market demanded this model, its future was assured. Also in 1976, and as a result of the fact that the impending ban on convertible cars in the USA proved to amount to nothing more than a scare story, work began on producing a drop head version of the TR7 'coupé'.

### **Triumph TR7's Canley improvements**

Once Canley did get up to speed, the improvement in the Triumph TR7 became immediately apparent: the quality of final assembly was of a higher order and a small round of changes was made to the car.

These included the fitment of the 77mm five-speed gearbox from the Rover SD1 and cosmetic improvements, such as the widening of the range of colours, a smartening of interior trim and the addition of a bonnet power bulge – in anticipation of the upcoming TR8.

The opportunity was also taken to incorporate running changes to the car, with the upgrading of the electrics,

instrumentation and cooling – all part of the standard running changes that would come part and parcel during the production run of any car, but in the case of the TR7 and all the strife at Speke, the company was unable to implement.



### Opening up to the elements

The convertible version appeared soon after in May 1979 – but again, disappointingly for customers in the UK and Europe, its sales were limited to the USA. It was immediately apparent to all that, in this form, the styling was everything that the TR7 should have been right from launch – so right were its lines. No longer was the ‘turret top’ an awkward looking car, but it has gone through the transition to become a pretty and striking open-topped car.

At the same time, the TR8 also entered pre-production at Canley and a few of these models were in the hard-topped bodyshell, but sensibly, when the pre-production run became series production, the TR8 was offered only in the convertible body style.

The structure of the bodyshell was strengthened in order to compensate for the lack of roof – an additional strengthening box section being installed behind the seats, which

linked the B-posts together. Extra strengthening was also added to the quarter panels and, curiously, BL engineers also incorporated an end-weighted front bumper, which was an expedient to lessen the effects of scuttle shake. Because of thoughtful design and against subsequent trends, the drop head version was slightly lighter than the fixed head version.

### Convertible and TR8 boost appeal ...

The USA market recovered as a result of the launch of the convertible model, but it could not have come at a worse time, as the world slipped into global recession following the Iranian crisis in 1979. This factor alone did not affect the sales of the Triumph in the USA, but when the exchange rates moved in favour of a strong pound, it certainly affected the profitability of the company’s sports cars in the USA.



When the TR8 went on general sale in the USA in May 1980, it was met with unanimous praise, being hailed as nothing less than the ‘Re-invention of the Sports Car’, by *Car & Driver* magazine.

When the convertible was launched in the UK in March 1980, it was also



greeted with enthusiasm by the motoring press. *Motor* magazine might have been more reserved than its American counterparts, but it concluded in its road test that 'BL's long-awaited TR7 drophead represents a significant development over the fixed head version. Lively performance with plenty of mid-range torque with long legged fifth gear.'

### **V8 denied to the UK**

In their hands, it had also proven to be slightly quicker and more economical than the hard-topped version. What the British were denied though, was the TR8 version, of which the Americans received the lion's share of the 2715-unit production run.

Thirty-five were produced in UK specification, but unfortunately events overtook the TR7 family of cars and if this glowing report from *CAR* magazine in December 1980 is anything to go by, we were short changed:

'I asked myself more than once the deadly serious question: 'would I spend my own hard-earned money on a TR8?' This is not a fantasy. This car is expensive by American standards, and yet no more than a Mazda RX7 or a Datsun 280Z, and a lot cheaper than comparably equipped Chevrolet Corvette. And all round it will outperform them all. 'Decidedly yes,' I answer each time.'

In conclusion, 'When the TR8 is launched in Britain next year there will be nothing in its class to touch it, save perhaps the Porsche 924. But don't expect to be able to buy it for what

the Americans pay, even though the British model (without the emission control equipment) will be considerably cheaper to make ...'

### **Triumph TR7 and TR8: the end ...**

Late in 1980, production of the TR7 and TR8 was moved, yet again, to the relatively new Solihull factory, south of Birmingham, to be produced alongside the Rover SD1. In reality, this move, which had spelled the death-knell for car production at Canley also proved to be the death-knell for the Triumph TR7 and TR8 itself, because Michael Edwardes had plans on the cards to put this massive factory on ice.

In May 1981, BL made public their plans to kill the TR7, but Ray Horrocks made it clear that production could be continued if demand for the car improved 'significantly'. Needless to say, it did not – stockpiles of unsold TR7s mounted up and, as a result, the closure of Solihull went ahead, a further 3000 jobs at BL were lost, as well as resultant losses at the Speke and Swindon body pressing plants and the closure of the Wellingborough foundry in Northamptonshire.

Sports cars no longer figured in the plans of the company and even though the Abingdon factory was being wound up at the same time and demand in the USA for the MG sports cars was still reasonably buoyant (although down by almost 50 per cent since 1977) the agreeable option of moving TR production to Abingdon and introducing the MG Boxer was not taken.

## The Shape of Things That Win

By Alan Andrews, TCCV member #572



I once owned a TR7 Coupe. Back then we couldn't afford a more desirable earlier TR or a TR8 or Stag. I remember paying \$6,500 for it from a military guy about to be posted overseas. It was maroon with red tartan upholstery. I wanted to repaint it midnight blue, but my boys said "Black, dad". So black it became. Gold side striping front to back above and below the door handle set it off. Limited boot space for sure, but we managed overnight Club trips. Factory air ably combatted Perth's hot summer days. Pulling back the English sunroof on milder days made it as much a convertible as certain TCCV members' Stags when extra fitted side windows and rear wind deflector are in place. No back seat; no kids; no pets. Just Joan and me. The smooth ride made it a perfect classic for us. The best part of a ton of BHPs was enough for me. My brother and I rebuilt the motor in my garage – seems to be a habit of mine,

rebuilding Triumph motors; hope I don't have to do it with the Stag any time soon!

Time passed. Family circumstances changed. Our younger son needed a car as his KA Laser was stolen and found burnt out in a forest north of Perth. He became the owner of the TR7. Immediate radio upgrade with boom-box. Ruined the electrics somehow. Room for only one mate. Not fast enough. Wouldn't do impressive burnouts. Eventually he traded it for a Queensland ex-police pursuit VP Holden. More room. More mates. More power. A recipe for disaster – thankfully avoided. What happened to the VP is another fascinating story.

An article (printed on the following page) extracted from an American online magazine I receive, took my mind back to those times 30 years ago.

The TR7 was not well received when launched in 1974. Being completely different in design and build from its successful immediate predecessors sent the pundits in a spin. The popularity of wedge-shaped cars subsequently proves that the design was ahead of its time. We all know about the labour upheavals throughout the UK in the '70s affecting build quality of everything British. In my opinion, had BL used the Dolomite Sprint engine in the TR7, history may be different, despite the strikes. In racing circles, though, many did the engine swap on both sides of the Atlantic with memorable results. The article below features the American SCCA experience. And then there was the TR8 which featured predominantly in a recent Tasmania Targa documentary of the event. The phrase 'Built like a brick s\*\*t house' comes to mind. Historic Winton in May also featured racing TR7s and 8s. Someone needs to write an article about Australia's racing TR7s and TR8s!

## Wedges on the Track and in the Woods

[An extract from an article in *Classic Motorsports*, by John Webber, June 2023, from the July 2008 issue. Read the full story here: <https://classicmotorsports.com/articles/last-waltz-triumph-tr7tr8> ]



Photography Credit: Courtesy John Buffum

Despite the TR7's reputation for poor reliability (not to mention a so-called lack of speed) some race teams found ways to make the car last and go fast. Following in the footsteps of earlier Triumph models, the wedge actually amassed a nice little competition record. During the 1976 SCCA season, Bob Tullius drove a Group 44 Triumph TR7 to five D Production national race wins in a row.

On the West Coast, Joe Huffaker's factory-backed TR7 also scored several national wins and finished second at the season-ending Runoffs to Paul Newman's TR6. Huffaker's TR7 returned in 1979 with Lee Mueller driving and won the D Production championship.

While the TR7 ran in D Production, its faster near-twin ran in C Production—where Ken Slagle took a yellow TR8 convertible to the 1981 national title. The car also has the distinction of being the last factory-sponsored Triumph in SCCA competition.



Photography Credit: Courtesy Vernon Brannon

Today, Charlotte-based vintage racer and collector Vernon Brannon owns this championship car, along with the TR8 coupe Slagle raced before he switched to the convertible.

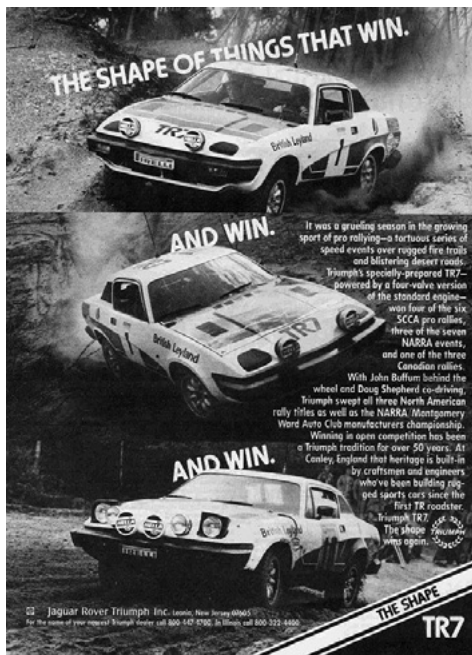
Also in Brannon's collection is the eye-catching, wedge-shaped trailer that carried Slagle's racer. Still painted on its side is Slagle's slogan: **The Shape of Things That Win.**



The sister car to our featured Group 44 TR8 racer was recently purchased from Bob Tullius by veteran racer Henry Wilkinson. Wilkinson, who lives in Asheville, North Carolina, is now having this car's mechanicals freshened and updated for vintage racing. Starting in Trans-Am in 1979 and continuing in IMSA GTO events, this coupe racked up a remarkable eight wins (including the GTO win and sixth overall at the 1980 12 Hours of Sebring) and five second-place finishes during its career. The car also made headlines in 1979 as the "World's Fastest Triumph." While qualifying for the fall race at Daytona, the TR8 was clocked on the banking at 178 mph. "The shape of the car is very, very good from an aerodynamic standpoint," Tullius later said. "That was our advantage. Jeez, I could steer it with one finger; it was that easy to control."

Wedges also won in the woods. BL quickly jumped into rallying with the TR7 and became successful on both sides of the Atlantic. Early rally TR7s

were powered by Dolomite Sprint 16-valve engines, which were somehow homologated despite their miniscule production numbers. In 1975, John Buffum's TR7 started dominating SCCA ProRally and North American Rally Cup events. Buffum and his co-driver (and wife) Vicki won seven events in 1977—five of them were in a row.



A year later, he switched to a TR7/V8 and continued to win, now paired with co-driver Doug Shepard. In all, Buffum's wedges won the ProRally Series and North American Rally Championships a remarkable four years in a row.





**TR7 on trend in its day:** Joanna Lumley as Purdey in the *New Avengers* with her bright yellow TR7.

## Annual 'Members Only' Password Change

*By Alan Andrews, TCCV Webmaster*

Every year, around the start of September, the password allowing financial members access to the 'Members Only' section of the website is changed. Members who have not renewed their membership are consequently blocked and their email addresses deleted from the email distribution list used to deliver *trumpet1* emails.

Those financial members without email addresses or who have requested their email addresses be deleted from the list are invited to contact me to learn the new password and/or to have their email addresses reinstated to the list.

**Contact me at** [webmaster@tccv.net](mailto:webmaster@tccv.net) or 0418 947 673



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# HAL COULSON RE-ENACTMENT CAR TRIAL

**1933–2023: 90 YEARS ON**

**5 & 6 AUGUST 2023**

*By Graeme Oxley, TCCV member #471*

Al Andrews spent a long time mapping out a 24-hour car trial from 90 years ago. Unfortunately, Al and Joan had to head north to the Sunshine State for a family emergency and missed out on “his event”. It was then up to Peter Welten and myself to be convoy leaders in Peter’s Stag. I drove from Wyndham Vale to Peter’s place and we headed off to the meeting place at Yarra Glen. Here we met with Chris and Sue Burgess (2500TC), Terry Sully and Mal Clark (Stag). Stu Smith in his TR7 and passenger Peter Green (who also owns a TR7), were to travel with us to Mansfield for lunch and then return home. They just wanted to go for a drive. Theodore Rau in his Herald convertible was to meet us in Mansfield.

We left around 30 minutes later than the nominated time. From Yarra Glen we headed to Healesville. We drove down the main street and off to Narbethong. From here we went through Marysville. The town looks great after the big fires. Headed towards Buxton and passed through Taggerty. At Alexandra we had a major issue with bridge works and we had to take a detour. Luckily, we had the iPad Queen (Sue Burgess) to guide us and she found our way to Mansfield. We came out near Yark. What a busy little town. The bakery was chock-a-block. Eventually we got to Mansfield and caught up with Theodore in his 13/60

convertible at the Mansfield Golf Club where we had lunch. The serves were enormous. After lunch, Stu Smith and Peter Green headed back to Melbourne.

After lunch we cut through to Benalla and on to Shepparton. We had a reservation at the Shepparton Art Museum but we got there 10 minutes before it closed. We ended up stopping at Maccas for a cuppa. It was time to head off and get to Kyabram and we arrived at the Philadelphia Motel in Echuca around 5.30 pm. It was a hell of a long drive for the first day. A courtesy bus was ordered and picked us up at 6.30 pm. We met up with Club members Les and Margaret O’Hanlon from Ballarat in their white Stag.

Chris and Sue headed off and picked up our special guest Pat Hughes (Colson) for the dinner at the Rich River Golf Club in Moama. The rest of us went by bus to the Golf Club. Again, the meals were enormous. I think Pat enjoyed catching up with members that she knew before moving to Echuca. At 10.30 pm it was time to catch the bus back to the motel for a well-earned sleep.

It was up early for the Continental brekkie at 8 am on Sunday morning. It was a very cold morning. Chris’s 2500TC had a layer of ice on the roof. We met up at the Ampol Servo and Les O’Hanlon was convoy leader down to Bendigo. Nothing like local knowledge. We then headed down to Rochester then onto Elmore and Bridgewater. There was to be a morning tea but the bakery was so full of hungry people. We decided to give it a miss and head off to Inglewood. The iPad Queen found our way to

Maryborough. Here we turned left towards Dunolly. At Dunolly we headed to Havelock and eventually we made it to the Park Hotel in Maryborough for lunch. Once again, the serves were large and delicious. Maryborough is a big country town and well worth a return visit. After lunch we stopped at the Paul Tidyman Automotive Service Centre just down from the Park Hotel. In his showroom Paul had five classic cars. They were in very good nick, especially the old Compact Fairlane and early Landrover.

It was then on to Talbot, Clunes and Creswick. We didn't actually go into Ballarat or Daylesford. The drive finished at the Ampol Servo on the Ballarat Highway at Ballan. Here we had something to eat and headed off. Because I had left my PI at Peter's place, I stayed as a passenger with Peter.

All up it was a terrific weekend. All the Triumphs behaved perfectly. I was amazed with Theodore's 13/60

convertible as it kept up easily and was trouble free. This was a very good event by Al Andrews and it was a pity that he missed his event. All up the drive was a bit over 800 km. The Victorian country roads are shocking. The potholes were everywhere. Last week [late July] in the *Herald Sun* there was a full two-page article on country roads. The roads that we subjected our Triumphs to were very, very sub-standard.

Top drive and weekend. Too much food.

**“And thus ends the Re-enactment Tour of 1933”**



At Maryborough. Red Stag is Terry Sully's and blue Stag is Peter Welten's

## Webmaster Hints

By Alan Andrews, TCCV Webmaster

This is the first of a series I will publish from time to time.

Searching for a member with an unspellable surname, like **Dovtrobozkiesw**.

### Unspellable Surname Searches

Sometimes a member may need the phone number or email address of another member with an unspellable surname. What can be done? Is there a short cut?

### Well, YES there is!

#### In Members Only:

1. Click the "Membership Search Facility" link.
2. Ensure "Surname" is the Search Type
3. Say you can spell the surname to the first three letters: Dov

Enter **Dov** or **dov** or **DOV** as the Search Value - **N.B.** *The entry is not case sensitive*

4. Then add a **PERCENTAGE** sign

You will now have **Dov%** as the Search Value - **N.B.** *No spaces allowed*

5. Click the "Submit Form" box

Every member whose surname starts with **DOV** will be displayed.

Choose the one you need, maybe using the first name.

#### Note:

- Entering just the first two letters will produce a list of all members whose surnames start with "Do", etc.
- Leaving the Search Value empty and clicking **Submit Form** will produce a list of every member ordered by surname.

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## The resurrection of a Triumph TR6

By Peter Vibert, TCCV member #978



### Background

The car was imported from the USA in 2007. It had passed through two or three sets of hands before I found it sitting in the open at Highland Valley in the hills near Adelaide in December 2016. Sills and "B" pillars had rusted badly, but replacement components had been previously purchased and came with the car. Brake callipers, discs, shoes and cylinders were missing.

### Preliminary engine test

The first job was to check out the engine before dismantling the car for its restoration. Twin Stromberg carburettors were jammed solid with goo and gunk. After stripping them down and fitting overhaul kits they were fitted back onto the engine. Will it turn over? "Yes"! Will it start? "Yes" – on about the second revolution. Once it had spat out all the accumulated stuff it proved to be ok to use with a lot of TLC needed on all visible components, generator, distributor, radiator, starter and so on. The engine can now be removed.



### Right-hand drive conversion

This was done before dismantling the car so that each side of the scuttle and firewall could be made good at the same time that other body repairs were carried out later. Graeme Smith came up with a RH drive steering rack which replaced the American one. Dashboard backing was cut up and welded into RH drive configuration. A new mirror image dashboard was made and veneered with New Guinea Walnut Veneer. Pedal box, accelerator linkage, brake booster and master cylinders were attached through new penetrations on the RH side as was the steering column.



### Body works

Now it was time to remove the mudguards, bonnet, boot lid and doors which had all their innards removed at the same time. Next, the body came off the chassis and, along with the panels,

it was taken to Ryan at Shepparton Soda Blasters in Keppell Street for bare metal paint removal. Then back to Mick Doherty's panel works for an undercoat and for John Truman's son Michael to work his magic replacing panels and repairing rust. Mick and his daughter Brook then set about painting all components Mallard Green which is the original colour.



## Chassis

While all this was going on the chassis was stripped of every component and taken to Oinka on Watt Road for sandblasting. This showed up significant rust damage which was carefully treated, and all damaged areas were repaired and returned to pristine condition.

## Chassis reassembly *Independent rear end*

The differential tested OK, so after replacing the seals it was reattached to the chassis. Driveshafts received new universals and bearings. Shockers and springs were replaced with new ones as were the brake shoes, cylinders and brake lines.



## Front end

All bushes, springs, shockers and tie rod ends were replaced, and Graeme Smith's RH rack (now overhauled) was fitted. New callipers, discs and pads were also fitted.



## Wheels

Eight-spoke Minitor (minilite look) alloy wheels replaced the steel wheels and new tyres were fitted.

## Engine and transmission

The car came without overdrive. Ray Mullins put me on to Bob Byham in Mt Gambier who came up with a suitable overdrive gearbox and overdrive. Both were in poor condition, so each received a meticulous rebuild. After fitting a new clutch and thrust race this was attached to the engine and mounted, on new mounts, to the chassis. The repaired radiator and repaired petrol tank were also refitted at this time.

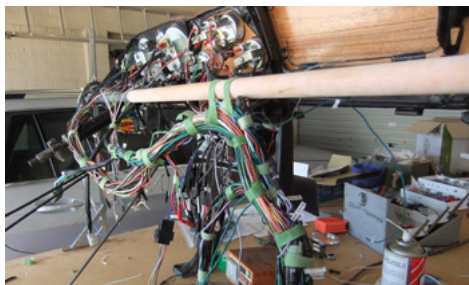


## Carburettors

The incredibly complex American model Strombergs proved impossible to tune, so a pair of earlier Strombergs were fitted and with the help of Ray Mansen at Ray's Motors the problem was solved.

## Wiring

While the body was away, I set up a big table on which I mounted the dashboard and fitted the instruments that had now been repaired by Howard Instruments in Heidelberg. I then set about unpicking the old wiring loom so I could replace and extend wiring to reach the new RH drive locations of everything. At this time, I added



wiring for cruise control, central remote locking, outside thermometer, bluetooth radio, headlights left on beeper, appropriate relays and so on. All these required an update to the fusing, so six terminal 'always on' and 'ignition on' fuse blocks were fitted.

## Lighting

Red indicator lights were changed to amber. Amber parkers were changed to white and American headlights were replaced with RH drive ones.

## Interior

The interior had completely wasted away leaving pretty much only a couple of rusty seat frames. These were duly brought back to life. New seat padding and covers saw them looking good again in the original 'new tan' colour. Door cards, lining and carpets, also in original colour, were purchased and fitted.





### **Hood**

A factory reproduction mohair hood in beige will keep the rain out and will look good against the Mallard Green body.

### **Various**

Alternator and starter were checked out by Rod Wild. Water pump was replaced as was the timing chain and front crankshaft seal. Front and back bumpers were re-chromed by Albury Electroplaters. All rubbers are new. Brake booster and slave cylinders were repaired or re-sleeved by ABS in Watson Street.

### **Parts acquisition**

Rimmer Bros in the UK were able to supply every item needed. Prices are fair and delivery takes as little as four days. PayPal proved to be a convenient way of payment.

## **Happy motoring!**



## MEMBERS' INFORMATION

By Roger McCowan, Membership Secretary,  
TCCV member #8, [membership@tccv.net](mailto:membership@tccv.net)

To our newest members – welcome to the Club. We hope your membership meets all your expectations and we look forward to meeting you at the many events we have around the state, especially when in your area. If technical or originality help is required please contact the club's Car Advisor for your vehicle model (see the TCCV website for details).

### Club Membership

As at 31 August, our total membership stood at 50. The smaller membership (compared to July) is due to 14 members who have not replied to my renewal reminder emails to either renew or advise their resignation from the Club.

Our two new members who joined during August are:

**Nathan Higgs** Herald

**Will Morrison** Stag

A reminder that renewal notices were EMAILED to members during the first week of May, and the membership expiry date was 30 June. The Club allows a two-month grace period for members to pay, so members who do not renew by 31 August are re-stated as 'Past'.

My thanks to those members who have used the online update form to provide me with correct information concerning

their membership and their cars. If you haven't already done so, please check your details on the Members Only pages of the TCCV website and then complete the update form (<https://www.tccv.net/members-only/forms/update/htmlform/update1-frames.php>) if any changes are needed.

A reminder that a Club Permit registration will not be issued unless you have met the requirements as set out by the TCCV, which includes being a current financial member.

### Name Badges

Wearing name badges at meetings and events assists members getting to know each other as well as identifies TCCV members at public events and is encouraged. Recently, quite a few members have ordered name badges for their spouses/partners. If you haven't already done so, perhaps you might like to do this. Please advise me if you require additional/replacement badges (\$10 each).

### TCCV Membership

**\$60.00** Annual Membership, with a **\$10.00** membership fee discount for eTrumpet in preference to a hard copy of the club magazine.

**\$20.00** one-off joining fee applies from 1 July to 31 December only.

Additional membership information, including an application form, can be downloaded from the club website.

# CLUB CONTACTS

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	Theodore Rau (Upwey)		<b>0407 518 344</b>
<b>Tool Librarian</b>	Lindsay Gibson	toollibrarian@tccv.net	<b>(03) 5989 6196</b>
<b>Triumph Trading</b>	Fay & John Seeley	trading@tccv.net	<b>0491 107 869</b>
<b>Webmaster</b>	Alan Andrews	webmaster@tccv.net	<b>0418 947 673</b>

## CAR ADVISORS

A number of TCCV members are subject matter experts for particular Triumph car models and are happy to assist other members as 'car advisors'. If you need any help or advice about your particular model, for contact details of the relevant car advisors.



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