

## Newsletter No.29 - Les Aventures de SCARCE International le Deuxieme Division

Like all the best road trips this one was dreamed up accompanied by pints of good English ale. The plan was for myself and Peter Owen in my TR6, and Andrew and Ann Lord in Andrew's MGBGTV8 to go to the Spa Classic weekend in Belgium and then work our way over to Andrew's niece's cottage in Brittany taking in the Loire Valley on the way.

On Thursday 12th May we therefore found ourselves on the overnight ferry from Hull to Rotterdam, from where we drove down through Holland and into Belgium, reaching our hotel in Spa on Friday afternoon. I couldn't believe the amount of traffic in Holland. It was as bad as this country. I came to the conclusion that any Dutchman not actively involved in sticking his finger in a dyke was out driving a caravan of some form or other. Fortunately by the time we had reached Spa the traffic was down to the levels more normal for the continent.

The following morning we made our way to the circuit. Our hotel was on the outskirts of Spa on the road leading to the track so it was only a short drive and we were there.

Other people had told me but until you see it with your own eyes nothing can prepare you for your first sight of Eau Rouge. The camera shots you see on the Grand Prix coverage do nothing at all to convey the majesty of this bend, how sharp it is, and the gradients involved. The F1 boys take this bend flat out.

How they do that I can't conceive. The approach is downhill, down a long straight, so maximum speed. The bend itself is a slight left into sharper right which you exit up a 1 in 8 hill. On the telly it looks like a minor kink on a flat road!



This is the rolling start for the Trofeo Nastro Rosso, which I presume means Trophy for Nasty Red Cars, although there was a blue car and a breadvan in the race too!



A blue car. It won. This was his lead after one lap.

A breadvan. It didn't win.



I wouldn't have wanted to have been in the underpants at the end of these skidmarks!



The pits complex is huge, so there's always something to look at between races.

Why would anyone want to have one of these in red, when they could have one that looks like this?

Absolutely gorgeous.



I should mention that we could have driven our own cars around the circuit, but at 100 euros per lap we declined the opportunity!



Our three days at Spa passed all too quickly. On our last night we were chatting to a chap in a bar who told us there had been a European Rallycross meeting over the weekend at a track called Mettet, not far away, and that as the following day was a Bank holiday there was a national meeting. We therefore decided to take in this meeting on our way down to the Loire. A two hour drive found us at the Mettet circuit where the action soon started.

### A quick Fiesta

#### And a quick Volvo.

This car was amazing. All it had under the bonnet was the engine. The radiator was in the boot with two massive fans, presumably to improve the weight distribution. When he floored it, it just sat down and went. Far quicker than it had any right to be!



#### Another Volvo!



#### And a quick Escort.



On leaving Mettet we needed to find a hotel for the night and found a beautiful spot at a place called Falaen. Falaen used to be a station on the now defunct railway. The locals mustn't have been able to bear losing the track so they have invented these pedal powered four wheel railcarts that you can hire.

We didn't bother, they looked a bit heavy to me!

Our aim point for the following day was Orleans so we were soon on a motorway heading in the right direction. We were fairly bowling along when I saw in front a line crossing the full carriageway. There was no time to wonder what it was before there was a monstrous crash as the car leapt into the air and came down again. I think it must have been a trench for a cable or something that had been backfilled and left standing proud. I was convinced we must have at least broken the chassis or something, but everything seemed OK. At first. After a few miles I noticed a t-t-t-t sort of a noise coming from the rear of the car. By the end

of the day it had become a D-D-D-D-D sort of noise that disappeared on the over-run. The diff or a drive shaft were the principal suspects but without being able to get under the car to have a look we had no way of knowing. As there was no other vibration or slack in the take up of drive we put up with the noise and carried on. We discovered that once you were doing 70mph the noise disappeared anyway under the general racket from everything else!

Ann found us a cracking hotel in Orleans from the Logis book where we spent a pleasant night before heading off to our first tourist spot, Chateau Chambord. The chateau stands in the largest private park in Europe and is a very imposing building. Unfortunately it is currently covered in very imposing scaffolding, which detracts from the effect somewhat.



Also it is very sparsely furnished inside, presumably all the original furnishings were appropriated during the revolution. Whatever the reason the end result is that it has a very cold unwelcoming feel to it.

Totally the opposite was the next chateau on our list, Chenonceaux, which we visited on the following day, after overnighing in a place called Chaumont sur Loire. It was here we first noticed a garage with its petrol pumps all taped over, but never thought much about it.

Chenonceaux is a famous biscuit tin/jigsaw puzzle chateau built on a bridge over the River Le Cher. It is much smaller than Chambord and all the better for that. It has beautiful gardens and you can even go round the mediaeval fitted kitchens. A much more homely feel to it and you can actually imagine someone living there.



An impressive piece of invisible mending!



You'd need Brasso on draught for this lot!

After leaving Chenonceaux we headed back to the Loire with the intention of seeking out a hotel in Saumur for the next two nights. However before reaching Saumur we spotted a beautiful hotel in Montsoreau. Rooms were available so in we booked.



This is the view from the front of the hotel, Chateau to the left, Loire in the middle, beer garden to the right. What more could you ask for?

We spent an interesting morning in Saumur at the tank museum, it was an essence-tete's holiday after all!

It was here that we first became aware from the TV news about the industrial action that was affecting petrol supplies, although we were able to fill up OK here.

As we were leaving I was loading the luggage into the TR when an English chap appeared, loading his car too. He looks at the TR with a knowing look and says "TR6?"

"Yes" says I. "Fuel injection?" "Yes"

"When I was a kid I used to have an uncle who worked in the design office at Triumph. He worked on the Herald and the Spitfire and the TR4, TR4A and TR5. During the Second World War he worked on developing fuel injection systems for aeroplane engines, so he was one of the main men developing the fuel injection for the TR5"

He had really grabbed my attention by now so I asked him "What was he called?"

After an extremely long pause and considerable memory searching back came the reply "Uncle Roger"

We spent our last night on the Loire at Nantes, which is where the fuel depot was where the strikers had been making a nuisance of themselves. We didn't see any trouble at all, but we did see several banks that were all boarded up because of smashed windows.



Nantes is the home to the huge puppets that we have seen brought to Liverpool in recent years, and they have an elephant of their own.



After one night in Nantes we set off for Brittany, fortunately finding some petrol on the way. After a three hour drive we arrived at the cottage for a week's R & R. After staying here many times we now know the best places to eat and visit.



Cottage garden.

Andrew straightening up a pre-historic monolith.



Round the World racing trimaran at La Trinite.



Typical Breton scenery

After our week in Brittany Peter and I were due to come home, Andrew and Ann staying on a bit longer. We were booked on a ferry from Le Havre at 10.00 p.m. Friday night, so Friday morning saw us on the motorway to Rennes. After about an hour I just happened to ask Peter, "Have you got your bag?" The negative answer resulted in our returning to the cottage poste haste where the bag (containing our passports and Peter's money) was still on the kitchen table. Two and a half hours and half a tank of precious fuel lost. Bear in mind the car is still doing its machine gun impression! After this delay we finally reached Le Havre about 8.30 p.m. Imagine our surprise and overwhelming joy to be told the ferry had been cancelled because of industrial action. They had rebooked us onto the 11 o'clock ferry from Caen, which we had driven past an hour earlier. As we had already used our spare can of fuel to get to Le Havre there was no way we would be able to get back to Caen without filling up. We had just tried the only garage open but they only had diesel. The ferry guys advised us to set off back to Caen but come off the motorway at Honfleur and keep straight on at three roundabouts where there was a garage which had petrol that morning. This we did and as we were going round the second roundabout the fuel pump started screaming and the engine missing. We were running on the smell of kangaroo juice! We got round the third roundabout. The garage was coned off and no sign of life! Merde! Across the road there was an Ibis hotel but the road was a dual carriageway so we had to go round the next roundabout and come back to the hotel. How we managed this I don't know but we did. The hotel car park was elevated above the road up a steep ramp so I just put my foot down and we shot up the ramp and popped out onto the car park like a cork out of a bottle just as the engine stopped. We were able to roll back into a parking spot and fortunately they had a room available. Bliss! A meal and liquid refreshment were duly taken. The following morning the garage was all up and running again, having had an overnight delivery, so we filled up and duly presented ourselves at Caen, where we were put on the next available boat which was 4.30 in the afternoon. 9.30 that night saw us leaving Portsmouth and we duly arrived back in Milnrow about 1.40 a.m. The D-D-D-D-D noise had not gone any worse and the car had by now completed around 1500 miles like this. Its a tough old car!

Postscript.

Once home investigations pointed the finger at the final drive and this is what I found.



Two teeth missing off the crown wheel.  
Nothing several coats of money couldn't cure.  
All up and running again now with reconditioned final drive unit.

Deryck