

A WEDGE PARTY TO REMEMBER

TRIUMPH TR7 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Saturday 27th September 2014

By Nols Pienaar

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The first TR7 appeared in 1974, and at our 40th anniversary event, by sheer coincidence, 74 cars arrived for the commemorative photo.

How about that!

Our effort to celebrate the South African chapter of the worldwide 'Wedge Anniversary' finally came to fruition on Saturday, 27th September, right here in Pretoria. The seed for the event was planted by Eric Fletcher at the February noggin when he informed us about the festivities and planned commemorative TR7 run in the United Kingdom, from Speke (Liverpool) to Canley (Coventry) and finally to Solihull, in a symbolic procession of 40 TR7's connecting all the plants where Wedges were built during its production span from 1974 to 1981.

In response I immediately thought that our Pretoria Triumph Club should pick up the challenge to host a South African commemorative event and instantly received wonderful support from fellow club members. Since we have a fairly strong representation of Wedges in our club (remember the effect of the 'wedge fever' epidemic?), I thought that our objective should also be to gather 40 TR7/8's to coincide with the number of years. I was convinced that this figure would be attained if we could get support from our compatriots across the Jukskei, as well as from KwaZulu-Natal and Bloemfontein. Once I got stuck in signing up cars I realised, however, how absolutely optimistic and not quite realistic my initial objective was.

Since the prime goal was to assemble the 40 Wedges in one spot with the idea of presenting them for a commemorative photo, I worked out a scale diagram for the parking of each car but in the process discovered that we would need a minimum of 32 Wedges to spell 'TR7' as well as the figure '40' in the photo. Initially, again while still in the optimistic phase, I thought that if we could source 20 cars from Pretoria, 10 from Johannesburg, and 10 from KwaZulu-Natal and Free State combined, we should be home and dry quite easily. However, faced with the reality of how difficult it was to find the dream figure of 40 running and willing Wedges, I downsized the required numbers to 32 TR7/8's and 30 'Other Triumphs' to be parked in a square 'laager' surrounding the Wedges.

Finding a suitable venue where all the cars could be presented on a level square surface of at least 40 by 34 metres next to an elevated vantage point for a photo from the top, as well as a facility for a social function with a braai afterwards, became the next challenge. Fortunately Willie van Niekerk, one of our very enthusiastic new members, suggested the Armscor sports field in between the 'Spookhuis' and the Waterkloof High School.

Being the man on the spot with access to the correct people at Armscor, Willie secured the venue for us and also arranged the use of Armscor's very nice lapa next to the soccer field. Perfect.

Our intrepid camera man, Terry Murphy, in a trial run before the event climbed on to the highest point of the grand stand roof overlooking the soccer field, and mounted his camera on a four metre pole for sufficient height. Thanks to this we discovered that we had to adjust the presentation of cars somewhat to allow for the depth of field in the photo. Without funds to hire a helicopter or a drone we were forced to improvise. Again, it was Terry and Bill Sales who were brave enough to climb on to the slippery pitch of the grand stand to hold the long pole with camera steady for the shot from the top on the big anniversary day. Think about it when you admire that wonderful photo of more than 70 Triumphs.



On the Friday afternoon before the event myself, Terry, Rudi Venter, Guy Snelling, Bill Sales, Eddy Gurnell, Albert de Vos, and Bill Flynn assembled on the soccer field to help Terry measure out the parking spots for the Wedges and the other Triumphs. Terry ingeniously marked the outline of each car first with small traffic cones and later with green spray paint in preparation for the parking process the next day. Willie also prepared very nice sign posts indicating 'TR7 40th Anniversary', which he attached to the correct lamp posts for the benefit of our participants who had to find their way the next day.

Since we received a good response from the KZN TSCC members thanks to David Blair's excellent motivational and organisational skills, we organised a welcome party for the 'Banana Boys' in addition to our other members from far away Nelspruit in Mpumalanga and Groblersdal in Limpopo on the Friday evening prior to the event. Engela van Vuuren once again proved to be a star as hostess and great lasagne cook, while she was ably assisted by the ladies who provided the tasty salads. It was a great pleasure for us to welcome from KwaZulu-Natal David and Anne Blair, Ken Philips and family, Brenda and John Murphy, Ed Fox, Terry Eaton, Peter Lilliecrona, Dave Lugg, Brian Hansell, Alan Halvorsen, Bill Dunlop and Derek Rudd. Rudi Venter, who also designed the beautiful commemorative dashboard plaque, came all the way from Nelspruit, while Hugo and Liesje Tempelman joined us from Groblersdal. Hugo is the man to be thanked for the lovely and huge photo on silkscreen of the 74 cars on display he donated to the clubhouse. Although they could not make the welcome function we are extremely thankful that Barrie and Ingrid le Roux made the trip from Bloemfontein and in the process provided us with that one missing Wedge (no. 32) that continued to elude us almost right to the end.

Without our members who volunteered to host our participants from far away, we would not have been able to get the support, participation and Wedges we needed to make the commemorative event a success. I wish to thank the following club members who opened their homes and hearts, and showed wonderful hospitality to our visitors: Bill and Helen Flynn, Bill Sales, Eddy and Giselle Gurnell, Terry and Sherryl Murphy, Albert and Tiekie de Vos, Guy and Marina Snelling, and Cathy Pienaar.

The magic number of Triumphs in the commemorative photo would not have been possible without the people who brought their cars along. The 32 TR7/8s assembled in one spot, in my book must be a Wedge record for South Africa. To put it into perspective: at the 2014 National Gathering in KwaZulu-Natal I counted the biggest contingent of Wedges that I had ever seen at any of our Nationals: 18 cars. The people who made our record number possible by their attendance therefore need to be commended and congratulated.

From Pretoria we had Bill Sales (3 Wedges and a Stag); Bill Flynn (2 Wedges and a Chicane); Marius Labuschagne (2 Wedges); Nols Pienaar (1 Wedge, a TR4A and a TR6); Albert de Vos (1 Wedge and a Roadster); Bram Janssen (1 Wedge and a Mayflower), Eddy Gurnell (1 Wedge and a Spitfire); Peet du Toit (1 Wedge and a Spitfire).

The following members each brought a Wedge along: Terry Murphy, Eric Fletcher, Megan Fletcher, Rudi Venter, Andre Greyling, Bruce Leslie, and Tony Oliveira.

Without our neighbouring TSCC centres we would not have made Wedge history. From Johannesburg I wish to thank Stewart MacGregor, Philip Knagg, Paul Kewley and Bruce Boswell. From KZN Dave Blair, Brenda Murphy, Ed Fox, Terry Eaton, Ken Philips, Peter Lilliecrona, and Alan Halvorsen. From Bloemfontein our man is Barrie le Roux.

However, the above names do not complete the picture and I wish to thank all those Triumph people whose other Triumphs 'framed' the Wedges for the occasion. From Pretoria: Hugo Tempelman (TR3); Ian Pieterse (TR3);

Johan Els (TR3A), Johan Retief (TR6); Duncan Roberts (TR6), Denys Fourie (Stag), Piet Hattingh (Herald); Henrico Boshoff (Herald); Taco Kamstra (GT6).

When was the last time you saw 16 Spitfires together? Our enthusiastic Spittie pilots from Pretoria in addition to the two who arrived in their Wedges, are: Mike and Jeanette Bilson, Johan Botha, Willie and Adri van Niekerk, Taco Kamstra, Guy Snelling, Helgard Joubert, Peter and Betty Rooke. A few Spitfire owners who have not joined the club yet also brought their cars along: Jacobus Landsberg, Jannie Parsons, Luther Hyman, Willie Visser, Louis van Aswegen and Basil Muller.

We enjoyed very good support from Johannesburg in their non-Wedge Triumphs: Harry Fairley and Elaine (TR2), John Craig (TR3), Jon Lewis (TR3A), Gerald Habig (TR3A), Eddie Steele (TR4A), Gino Casieri (TR6), Dickie Donker (Herald), John Crowther (Healy), and Mark Hirst (Panhard). Car (Triumph) problems at the last minute unfortunately forced some of our Jo'burg members to attend in their 'plastics': Mike Gilchrist and Rob McLeod. Ivor Carlson arrived by taxi to collect his GT6 that Derek Rudd drove all the way from KZN.



Everyone who supported us on the day were special but I need to mention a few specific things: Both the oldest TR7 (the yellow Speke-built coupe of Ken Philips), and the youngest TR7 (the red Solihull coupe of Bill Sales) in the South African Triumph Register were present.



The famous 'Canley Twins' both red TR7 convertibles belonging to Nols Pienaar (commission number 102939) and Rudi Venter (no. 102940) stood side by side again after many years. Some of you may recall that these two cars followed one another on the production line at Canley in 1979, got separated in the same year and by coincidence found a home in Constantia Park, Pretoria, when Chris Smit bought no. 102940 in 2005. When he sold the car to Rudi in 2010 (in Durban) they got separated again. Two of the five very scarce TR8's in our register, in other words 40 percent, were present when Marius Labuschagne and Eric Fletcher brought their two black beauties along.



I am convinced that it must be the first time that a 1951 Triumph Mayflower and a 1947 Triumph 1800 Roadster stood facing one another on South African soil. We witnessed this unique meeting thanks to Bram Janssen and Albert de Vos who brought their two very special Triumphs along and in the process nearly stole the TR7 thunder.

Four of the regional centres of the TSCC of SA were represented: Pretoria (38 members), Johannesburg (17), KwaZulu-Natal (11), and Bloemfontein (1). No fewer than 10 non-club members (yet) also attended in their cars. While this gathering in a way compares favourably with the attendance at the TSCC national gathering in KZN in April this year, it yielded 7 more Triumphs than those counted at the nationals. This situation makes a strong case for a future national gathering in the northern part of the country.



The lovely commemorative photo was the result of a real team effort: Terry took the photo, Helen prepared the caption, and Engela had it printed, while Bill Flynn took care of distribution and sales at the event on the same day. The same can be said of the dashboard plaque: after exchanging many emails with suggestions between Nols and Rudi, the final design by Rudi was chosen, whereupon Bill Flynn had the commemorative item made and took care of the finishing touches, sales and distribution. The preparation of the lapa for the braai and social gathering afterwards were largely due to the efforts of Engela, Willie and Adri, while Marius and his helpers made the fires. Thanks to Eric's video material we could also watch some American TV marketing footage of early TR7 on a screen.

The TR7 anniversary event was a great success thanks to fantastic support and participation by very many club members and Triumph owners from far and wide, as well as a tremendous team effort by all those club committee and other members who came forward and whose collective inputs resulted in such a great event.

What a 'wedge party'! A most sincere THANK YOU to all of you who made it happen.

Ps. A big thank you to Terry, Helen, Guy, Rudi, Cathy, Bill S, Bill F, for the great photos in this report.