

TR ACTION

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TR-DEUTSCHLAND Celebration in Soltau

BY RICHARD CHANDLER

A few German stereotypes are a little unkind, but a positive one displayed in spades by our German cousins at TR-Register Deutschland was good organisation.

Pretty much everything at the celebrations in Soltau, south of Bremen in Northern Germany went without a hitch. The people listed as helpers ran to over a hundred names. It was run by the TR Hanover and TR Hamburg Groups, our main contacts being Karl-Peter Ritter, Michael Tissen and Norbert Hegenbart who were prominent in the main team of 10 organisers.

Perhaps the most impressive single item was the 'Programm' document given to all participants. It was 78 pages long, in full colour with everything from details of the tours available, hotel information, history of TR-Deutschland, on site breakdown service by Jurgen Rothe, to addresses for ATMs, petrol, etc.

They hoped to have 200 cars, a figure not quite achieved, but still, it made you proud seeing so many Germans really enjoying their TRs and how these old British cars brought people together, just for fun.

It wasn't only the Germans who enjoyed the event. John and Jane Leleu drove mostly in convoy (more on that later!) with your scribe and wife Sian. Other Brits include Paul and Grace Sharp, Nick and Kate Hendley, Mark and Vuokko Denne, Tim and Fraser Ashmore, John and Janet Roberts and Phil and Jane Read. Apologies to anyone I missed out.

There were a number of cars from Belgium, Holland, Sweden and Switzerland, but, I saw none from France or Italy, both well populated with TRs.

The event itself started with registration and giving out of packed goody-bags, a drop of schnapps and a sausage! A highlight of the goody bag was a painted slate etching of whichever TR you had.

The first evening was a BBQ which was, in all honesty, not the best it could have been, but the beer was very welcome after a long, hot drive. I should mention the weather, as it contributed to the success of the event. Upper 20sC and not a cloud in the sky the whole time kept everyone very cheerful. The duo who sang to us were, shall we say, amusing, talented and sang British and American pop songs in English, sort of.

The following day there were trips to local sights, such as the towns of Luneburg and Celle, a salt museum, the Heathlands, where there was an ex-Berlin airlift RAF airbase, and Heidschnucken sheep. Most had tours with English speaking guides.

Saturday night was a buffet dinner followed by a German band called the Clogs who demonstrated why Britain, Ireland and America lead the world in pop music...

Sunday included the Mitgliederhauptversammlung, or General Meeting of Members, more trips, another dinner with a different, actually, pretty talented band followed by a group goodbye the following morning at the old British airbase on the Heathland.

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper TR trip without some dramas getting there and back.



We planned to travel overnight from Hull to Rotterdam, spend 1 night en-route and three nights weaving our way back to the boat.

On the flat, eastern end of the M62, John and Jane's TR5 started making a horrible noise from the rear off side, so they pulled off to investigate. Unable to locate the source, the AA were called and we, in true Top Gear style, carried on to Hull. The AA man was old school and found that the conical wheel bolts had not been seated properly but by the time he'd arrived and fixed the car, it was touch and go whether they would make it to the ferry in time. While John pretended there were no speed limits we tried to persuade P and O staff to keep the check-in open, a mere 7 minutes beyond the closing time, but it turned out they were true jobsworths and, in spite of the ship not sailing for one and a half hours after closing time, that was that and the Leleus were stuck ashore.

Showing remarkable grit and stoicism, they about-faced and headed for Harwich, had a short night's sleep in an Airbnb and took the Stena ferry the next morning to The Hook of Holland arriving ashore late afternoon. Meanwhile, we enjoyed a leisurely drive across the Netherlands and had a lovely asparagus-based meal and a beer or two in the charming hotel John had booked for us all. Late that evening, long after the restaurant closed, John and Jane arrived, bleary-eyed, hot and ready to flop into bed.

Don't think, however, that it was all sweetness and light for the Chandlers! My TR6 has suffered from poor hot starting for a while and we very nearly failed to board the ferry in Hull when the car almost failed to start at the petrol station just prior to entering the

port. It took a lot of time and, as it turned out, pointless fiddling with the injectors after we were pulled for a customs check and failed to re-start. The same thing happened in the hot 3-hour queue to get through passport control on the way back. (It took over 3 hours to get off the ferry going into Europe thanks to fingerprinting hundreds of car occupants and only 4 booths, but the engine was cold so no stalling).

Back home, I blanked off the front grill and under-bumper air slots, took it steaming hot to TR Bitz who diagnosed the ancient Lucas coil as the culprit, bolted as it is to the engine block; just perfect for some disabling heat soak. I might move it to the inner wheelarch one day.

Other than the wheel nut and hot starting, both cars performed faultlessly. We didn't stretch them on the Autobahns, preferring to use the German equivalent of A and B roads, which were smooth and completely lacking in potholes. There were bumpy road signs in places, but more often than not, we couldn't feel what the warning was for, even in a TR! On the very few stretches of Autobahn we drove, it was good to see everyday cars being driven at their design speed, probably towards twice our velocity.

We took in Celle, Goslar, Hameln (Hamelin) and Arnhem on the return journey. The famous John Frost bridge was not, for us, too far and

there's a fascinating museum nearby telling the story of the ill-fated, but not completely worthless attempt by the Allies in WW2 to secure important bridges for the advance eastwards.

I cannot help but reflect on how surreal it felt visiting this World War 2 site having had such a great, friendly experience with a lovely group of fun loving, pro-British, slightly eccentric Germans.

Another pause in the journey was when we just happened to find ourselves outside a car museum.... It's in Melle, near Osnabruck and well worth a visit. Highlights are a British section (no Triumphs though, only an Amphicar in another part with its Herald engine), many models of long-gone German makes such as DKW, Borgward, Auto Union, Horch, Wanderer, NSU, Glas, Gogomobile etc and some prototypes from major German manufacturers. Some looked good, others an obvious blind alley-VW forlornly sticking to rear-mounted engine designs as the Beetle waned, until the Golf was launched.



The main organisers



All the goodies given on arrival



Most of the British contingent



Some of the 190+ TRs