

**Three way
shoot out
for Classic
Cars
magazine**
By Martin King



Alfa Romeo 1750 GTV, Porsche 911 and Triumph TR5.

Apologies in advance, if I have let the side down!

My excuses, compared with the opposition were insufficient preparation time for the event and lack of a bottomless restoration fund!

What am I talking about?

Well curiosity got the better of me and I recently agreed (at short notice) to take part in a 3-way comparison test for a forthcoming issue of Classic Cars magazine. The brief was to take 3 very different "late sixties" classics and reflect on their respective merits.

The cars in question were to be an Alfa Romeo 1750 GTV (preferably red), a Porsche 911 and a Triumph TR5. The original entry in the "red corner" had to drop out at the last minute for reasons unknown, so after catching sight of an email circular from Stuart Taylor and a quick chat with the wife, I put my car forward. The car in question being a 1970 Mk2 with rather a lot of miles on the clock. I sent them a pic beforehand, explaining that she is no concours winner but basically sound and they said fine (rather than cancel the shoot). That's when my headaches started, as there were only 5 days to go and no weekend in between for preparation.

Recently she had not been pulling that well, nor for that matter starting great from cold, so after a quick call to Alan at Benalfa, we agreed that I should bring her in for a hurried tune up. After I explained the symptoms, he suggested it was the recurring problem of ignition timing drift. A quick examination of the distributor, confirmed that there is rather too much play but given the lack of time for a major repair, he readjusted it to the optimum possible. As I pulled away from Westbury, the pick up at lower revs was fantastic and I was feeling confident of giving the larger engined opposition a run for their money.

The shoot was to take place in the hills of West Wales, near Llandovery, on the Saturday. The Friday was bright and sunny and so that evening we headed down the M4, full of enthusiasm about what the next day would bring. Our base for the weekend was to be a seaside cottage near Cardigan about an hour from the start point. The Saturday dawned windy, grey and brooding but fortunately not raining (as yet). We set out for Cilycwm, a small hamlet just north of Llandovery which was to be the rendezvous point. Driving over the twisting mountain pass from Lampeter, I had the vaguest feeling that things weren't quite right, as she started to stutter again at low revs but what the heck, I thought, just put your boot down and keep her above 3000 rpm!

We arrived at the Neuadd Fawr Arms at the prescribed meeting time of 10am and as I pulled into the car park, I could see a gleaming silver 911 and a lovely blue TR5, both being lovingly polished by their respective owners. "This is going to be serious" I said to Sarah my wife. We all introduced ourselves and then I asked where was the journalist and the photographer? Not here yet, was the reply, which was handy as we were in desperate need of a coffee. The friendly staff in the pub duly obliged and we settled down for a chat with the opposition. Actually both Martin (TR5) and Gary (911) were really nice guys and definite petrol heads.



The photographer (Tim) and journo (Rob), who both had a long journey to get to Cilycwm, turned up about 10.30 and so off we all headed up into the hills towards the Lynn Brianne dam. First stop was on a twisting mountain road, where Tim set up his photo kit and did a whole series of static and moving shots against a beautiful autumnal backdrop of the steeply wooded Towy valley. We then moved on to the dam itself, where the cars were positioned with the racing torrent from the dam in the background. The weather began to close in, gale force winds and intermittent driving rain but this did not deter Tim, who was looking for that "perfect shot". At this point Rob announced that he would like to take each car off in turn to get some "driving impressions".

First up was the TR5 and I was pleased to note that it seemed to have the same cold starting issues as my own and required lots of revving to keep it moving until warmed up. He was gone for an eternity and I began to feel for the other Martin, in case his pride and joy had disappeared over one of the many steep hairpin bends! After about 20 mins we could hear the unmistakable tones of the 2500 straight six coming back and next up was mine!!! I warmed her up to 140F on the temp dial and reluctantly let the stranger take my place in the driving seat, quickly explaining the knack for intermittent wiper control, in the driving rain. Amazingly she did not stall as he took off but I knew that if he was going to get anything out of her he needed to keep the revs up. Again about 20 mins later the Bertone returned and Rob climbed out, poker faced, giving nothing away about his "driving impressions". Hopefully the nimble handling on the mountain roads some what made up for the lack of pulling power! The Porsche went last, not without Gary the owner impressing on Rob the twitchy nature of her rear engined handling on a narrow wet road! Again I admired his bravery in letting a complete unknown take her off for a 20 min trashing in such dodgy conditions!



Whilst each car was away for a test drive, Tim the photographer concentrated on photographing the details of the other cars, interior, engine bay, wheels etc etc. My wife Sarah, who by this time was showing signs of the onset of hypothermia, busied herself buffing up the Alfa to keep warm, which earned much plaudits from Gary and Martin. In all honesty, I think it was by now a lost cause, as even the engine bays and interiors of both the Porsche and Triumph had clearly been spared no expense in their immaculate restorations.

As the light began to fade and the rain set in permanently, Tim announced that he wanted some close up driving shots of each car. This involved him hanging out of the open tailgate of a Vauxhall Zafira, as it hurtled around the mountain roads, as we each took turns trying to drive as close as we dare to the tailgate! It would only have needed a random sheep to jump out into the road unannounced for an expensive 4 car pile up.

Finally the light went altogether and we retired to the pub for a drink and a recap of a thoroughly enjoyable day. Sarah and I bade our farewells and made the 1 hour long drive back to the coast in driving rain. As we pulled into the cottage, the wipers on the Alfa seized (overheated motor) and I thought to myself, she surpassed herself to keep going in such adverse conditions but now needs some well earned TLC.

Martin King

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nb. Feature should appear in Feb issue of "Classic Cars"

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