

JOLON IMP 2013 – Overland from South Africa to England

Terence Tracey, Gauteng, South Africa

The following is from club member Terence Tracey's Blog, the link (sent in by Roy McBride) is <http://jolonimp.wordpress.com/2011/06/03/trans-africa-hillman-imp>

The Hillman Imp will be turning 50 years in May 2013. To celebrate the fact that there still remains a sizeable number of the original 440,000 that were built, the Imp Club is arranging a massive celebration in Coventry where the engine for this wonderful British car emanated from.

To coincide with this gathering of worldwide Imp owners I am planning to present one of my Imps for display at the event. However, getting it to the event is going to be the interesting part as I intend driving it from Johannesburg to London, hence the name JOLON IMP, and from there on to Coventry.

I will complete the trip with Johan Meyers, a good friend of mine from Johannesburg. As luck would have it, Johan is a full-time mechanic who specialises in old British motor cars. He and I have been planning how best to prepare the car for the arduous trip. We are acutely aware of the misfortune that befell the two chaps who attempted the England to Mongolia rally in another Imp some time ago. Sadly Olly Rowland and Frank Claydon of 'Team Badger – Mission Imp-possible' had to abandon their beloved Imp in some God-



forsaken country in central Asia. We are hoping to touch base with them to compare prep notes so as to minimise potential problems during our trip.

Since I have carried an eyesight challenge since an early age, we have decided that we will use the trip to raise awareness for sight-challenged people and at our final destination we would like to be able to make a monetary donation to the RNIB.

Our intended route will be through Botswana, Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Germany, France and through the Chunnel to England. However, this might quickly change depending on the political situation of the various countries we plan to traverse.

I hope to be joined in Paris by two of my brothers who were inadvertently responsible for my becoming an Imp collector, they both owned Imps when I was still a lazy schoolboy in Ireland. So Ciaran and Sean will drive the final kilometers with us from Paris to Coventry.

Our journey will begin on Valentine's Day 2013 when we head north out of Johannesburg and

cross the border into Botswana by nightfall.

I am dedicating the entire trip to our late brother Gerry who passed away last year.

And the following from Terence appears on Roy McBride's Blog (<http://royckdboats.blogspot.co.uk/2012/03/terence-will-drive-over-land-to-england.html>)

Finally I have managed to get a tiny bit of momentum into the preparations of our Jolon Imp.

Suspension parts are now sandblasted and nicely painted. The interior is cleaned up and ready for painting. Exterior bodywork also now well in progress. And what's exciting for me is the fact that through Johan's teaching I am learning how to panel beat, body fill (see photo!) and also to spray paint. It's hot and hard work but I'm lovin' it and, no, I DON'T EAT MCDONALDS!

I am still needing some good sponsors to assist us in some finance for the trip!

If anyone can help with sponsorship please reply to Terence via his Blog. GP

End of an era

Gary Henderson, Lower Hutt, New Zealand

I recently read an article in the *Hutt News* (dated 12th June), detailing the demolition of the site of the famous Todd Motors. The article is reproduced opposite and is self-explanatory.

I am grateful to the Editor of *Hutt News*, Simon Edwards, for his permission to allow us to reprint the article in *Impressions*. In my e-mail to him I pointed out that I own (and still use) a light-blue 1964 Hillman Imp which was one of the 200,000+ cars assembled at Todd Motor Industries' Petone plant. I also have ties to the TMI plant in that my late father (Eric Henderson) worked there from 1936 until it closed in 1974, interrupted only by his war service in the RNZAF.

In the 1971 picture in the article, the three-storey square glazed building at the north end is the staff cafeteria and Admin; the gabled-roof alongside is Unboxing department where the production process started; the dense cluster of ventilators marks the Paint Shop (which from 1962 included phosphate-dip baths etc); the standing building in the demolition photo was Rectification bays at the south end. As you can see, Plant 1 (the main assembly) was squeezed tight between the Western Hutt Road (now SH2) and the railway. The yard in the foreground has 'car-cases' of parts – probably held because they had arrived out of sequence. Plant 2 housed service functions such as tool-room, maintenance, a large standby power plant, Paint Rectification for minor line damage or defects, etc.

By 1973, this complex was producing 75 cars per day: Hunters, Avengers, (Aussie) Chrysler Valiants (including the potent Charger coupé) and Mitsubishi 16L (ancestor of the Lancer). To achieve this level, body assembly had been moved to Plant 4 on another site nearby, which also assembled Commer trucks and vans.

There is a copy of the book *The University on the Hill* at the ARCC Archive Centre and another copy at the Coventry museum which includes the Petone 'pre-history' as part of the story of the Porirua plant opened 1974, later sold to Mitsubishi.

Todd Motors did a good job for Rootes, Chrysler and Mitsubishi – they achieved far greater market-share and profile for their marques than did the parent companies in their home markets.