

THE STAG — AT LAST

The Editor Belatedly Road-Tests
British Leyland's New V8 3-litre
Triumph Stag Convertible

The Triumph Stag photographed outside the Buckley Arms Hotel at Dinas Mawddwy, not far from Bwlch-y-Groes, the once-popular 1-in-6 test hill. It was here that members of The Autocar's staff stayed 46 years ago, when reporting the RAC Small Car Trials. They naturally tried their 12/50 Alvis up the famous pass, ascending it in 1st, 2nd and 3rd gears. (The Stag went up fast in 2nd and 3rd gears.) This Welsh hotel still serves trout fresh from the Dovey river but its tennis court and private golf course have gone with the passing of the years.



LAST MONTH I felt obliged to explain in an editorial why MOTOR SPORT had not published a report on the controversial new Triumph Stag convertible. I have since driven this new Coventry car, but it was touch and go, inasmuch as on the appointed Friday when I was to drive it, the telephone rang just before 1 p.m. and Simon Pearson of the S-T Press Office enquired when would I like my Stag? "Oh, by 3 p.m., to beat the traffic congestion, would be fine", I replied, "or 4 p.m. if that would be more convenient." "I'm afraid it will be more like 5.30", said the distant voice, "because there has been a hitch and we are still working on it." "Where is this stricken Stag?" "In Coventry." Apparently a lock had failed. I said I practically never lock a car, especially other people's. But it wasn't that kind of lock which had gone wrong; apparently either you could have ignition but couldn't steer, or could steer but not run the engine. . . .

I felt they had left it rather late to discover this, the test having been agreed some three weeks beforehand; eventually I left London at 10.30 p.m., arriving home in the early hours of the Saturday morning. It's all part of this road-testing job, of course, but I wonder how often the BLMC PROs hang about of an evening waiting for motor cars which haven't arrived? If Lord Stokes thinks my September editorial was spiteful, he should now think again! As I waited I contemplated testing a Saab 99 instead, which would at least be driving behind half a Stag power unit, and I wondered how this Coventry Alfa/Mercedes-eater would impress one who has named the Stuttgart products as the best-engineered cars in the World and who enthuses over those from Milan, although I have yet to drive an Alfa Romeo with power steering.

The late arrival of this long-postponed Stag at least enabled me to have a good preliminary thrash in it over empty night roads. But taking over an unfamiliar car in the dark isn't the most pleasant of motoring experiences, especially when you discover that, because of changed arrangements, you haven't sufficient money to fill the tank. However, I contrived to get the petrol tank about $\frac{3}{4}$ -full, sank gratefully into a reasonably comfortable but spongy driving seat, was faced with a generously-stocked fascia and a multiplicity of controls, found the

wiper blades worthless, cleaned the screen with my handkerchief, and set off. Very powerful Lucas dual quartz-halogen headlamps were obviously going to make light of my darkness but the cut-off was an alarming contrast. I found substantial left and right stalks, the right one doubling up for turn-indicators, flashers, a muted, shrill horn, and the lamps-dipping, which I don't altogether approve of on expensive cars, and which on this one had a long reach when in the full-beam setting. The 16-in. dia. steering wheel had a laced-on leather-covered rim, a gale of air blew at me from universally-adjustable central fresh-air grilles, until I later discovered how to turn them off, when the dribble of air from the additional gimbal vents at the fascia extremities was quite inadequate. Interior trim is in non-dazzle black and the screen sill has a tray for picnic cups.

I thrust my way out of night-life London and was skirting Oxford satisfactorily soon, without seeming to have driven very hard. The Stag's V8 2,997-c.c. five-bearing engine is very reasonably smooth, but without the exhaust "wuffle" characteristic of its type. No need to discuss why a two-plane instead of a single-plane crankshaft is used, but worth noting that it is drastically over-square, at $86 \times 64\frac{1}{2}$ mm., and that it develops 145 (net) b.h.p. at its peak speed of 5,500 r.p.m., which is only 8 b.h.p. more than Ford's push-rod o.h.v. V6 gives at 750 fewer r.p.m. There is a chain-driven overhead camshaft above each cylinder bank, and twin sidedraught Zenith-Stromberg 1.75CD carburettors. An 8.8-to-1 c.r. provides for 4-star fuel.

Fumbling about in the dark I found a slide on the gear-lever knob which brings in, or cuts out, overdrive in 3rd and top gears (it is an optional extra). Later I found that this slide uncovers legends "In" and "Out", which would be appropriate to some cars which have to be rowed along on the gear-lever but not to the Stag which, although it is outpaced by almost all the comparable GT cars such as the Ford Capri 3000 GT, Reliant Scimitar GTE, Alfa Romeo 1750 GTV, Porsche 911T and Mercedes-Benz 280SL, somehow feels faster than it is and decently disposes, smoothly and quickly, of the slower-moving traffic. In fact, a 0-to-60-m.p.h. time of 10.7 sec. and a s.s.

A TELEGRAM FOR LORD STOKES FROM A READER

To: Lord Stokes. Disgusted no road test Stag September issue MOTOR SPORT. Are you ashamed of Stag? Dare not order until Boddy reports. Am currently owner of five BLMC vehicles, all bought new.

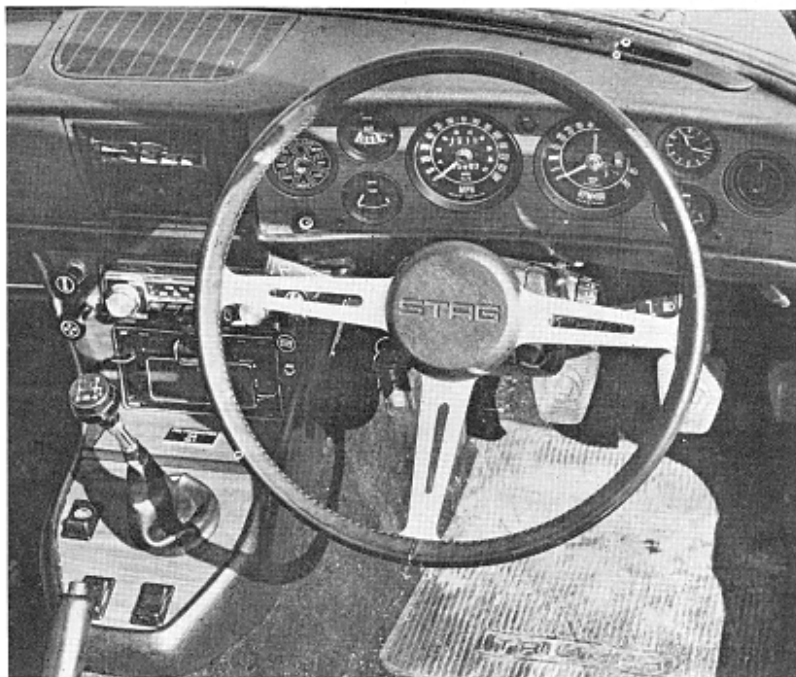
3-mile time of just under 18 sec. is not impressive for a 1970 3-litre car; the product of 145 b.h.p. and a kerb weight of 26 cwt. puts the Stag in the fast-tourer rather than the GT category.

As the traffic thinned out I was able to go faster and it was then that I added a third dislike to two others already evident, and one which makes the Triumph Stag quite unacceptable to me in its present form. The too-notchy gear-change controlled by a tall central lever I had put down as typically Triumph, and an irritating rattle coming from my left was traced later to free movement on the part of the empty passenger's front seat. This third misfortune relates to the power steering. The action is fairly light and smooth but with no feeling whatsoever of what the front wheels are doing, to the extent that they feel all the time to be about to break away their road grip. This prompts the driver to apply correction, and as the steering then becomes lighter, to over-correct, with the result that cornering becomes a very ragged business, feeling as uncomfortable as it looks. I tried to get used to this inconsistent power-assisted steering and in sober driving it is just about acceptable and reasonably geared (2½ turns, lock-to-lock), with a very small turning circle. But as soon as I drove fast, or anticipated having to chuck the car about, the lack of positive feel to the steering became horrid. The sensation of the front wheels tucking in as lock is applied to combat what is actually understeer, is most disconcerting. Another peculiarity is that when the throttle is backed off after accelerating hard, as when changing gear, the back-end of the car gives a slight lurch.

Power-assisted rack-and-pinion steering is standard on the Stag—there is no option. This was presumably deemed necessary to woo the American customers but it is a great pity that something better isn't used. I would put up with strong-arm parking for precise manual control. I recall how the 4-litre Rolls-Royce-engined Vanden Plas Princess was ruined by light/heavy/light power-assisted steering, and the unfortunate Stag seems to have inherited something of the same sort. There is no excuse, for ZF and others have shown how effective good power steering can be. The column is adjustable to suit different requirements.

The Triumph Stag sent for appraisal was Pre-Production Car No. 7, but I assume catalogue cars are identical. The horrid steering apart, what can one make of it? It is a convertible after the style of a Mercedes-Benz 280SL, with very nice Michelotti styling reminiscent of a Fiat Dino, and it was conceived for release in 1968. It is nicely finished, is a reasonable 2+2 coupé for which an optional hard-top is available to cover the fully-disappearing hood which has the protection of an elaborate (detachable) roll-over frame and would have been an excellent substitute for the late-lamented Sunbeam Alpine which Chrysler UK had to put down because of its 4.2-litre Ford V8 engine. It is, alas, not an easy hood to stow or erect—see pictures.

The interior of the Stag is essentially Triumph, which I have never much liked. The simulated dull-wood facia has a rather restricted lockable cubby on the left, complete with map-cum-interior lamp, dials to the right. The latter comprise expensive-looking, closely-calibrated Smiths speedometer and tachometer, a clock, fuel gauge, water thermometer and voltmeter but, curiously, no oil-pressure gauge. As my early-morning journey progressed I had not only a blue full-beam light shining in my weary eyes but an intermittent flashing from Triumph's all-services-light-up cluster, saying "Fuel". As petrol supplies scarcely exist in darkest Radnorshire after dusk and I was skint anyway, this ruined what pleasure I was trying to obtain from flinging the Stag in untidy lines round the corners. I need not have worried, for this unwelcome warning starts when the tank has nearly seven gallons in it—and is consequently ignored, dazzle apart, until the thing runs dry with the fuel gauge indicating just above empty! The lamps are switched on by a rotary switch to the right of the steering column, as if Spencer King or one of his team had been driving a Hillman Avenger, although the Stag's rotator is smaller and provides for parking lights as well as side- and headlamps. The controls are well endowed with symbols or lettering; there was one small knob with a mysterious inscription on it, which turned out to be the rheostat panel-lighting control. Down on the console you get



"The office" of the Stag, showing leather-rimmed, padded steering wheel, layout of instruments, long central gear-lever and press-buttons on the console for the electric window-lifts and interior lights.

the tumbler switches for the window lifts, rather close set to the central hand-brake, with its man-sized grip, when this is off; a similar switch which brings in two forward-facing interior lamps, and on the upright wall of the console there is a Triumph press-button radio, some well-contrived heater controls, and a pull-out ash-tray. The facia has a brake-failure warning light directly before the driver and other lights, in the cluster, for brake on, choke in use, high temperature, etc. Big knobs on the console wall pull out to bring in the choke, effective Triplex rear-window heater (with tiny in-use light), cigar-lighter and 2-speed fan. The l.h. stalk control provides for two-speed screen wiping and washing. The electric window lifts are excellent in themselves but as they require the ignition to be on before they will function, and the ignition key is needed to open the fuel-filler flap, the uncomfortable situation arises where the driver has to wait in driving rain with his window down while the car is refuelled.

British Leyland have really tried to make this the Mercedes-Benz/Alfa Romeo slaughterer they claim it to be. The doors have convenient grabs-cum-arm-rests, locks actuated by convenient small handles below the door-opening handles, knob-operated quarter-lights, and red warning lights on the doors. Opening them brings in courtesy lights, one each side of the transmission tunnel. The external lift-up handles, however, were stiff and not pleasant to use. The rear compartment side windows have good toggles for opening them as vents. The three-spoke steering wheel has a padded boss. The front-seat passenger has an under-facia shelf and there are elastic-edged pockets on the doors and backs of the seat squabs. The front seats have conveniently-placed release knobs for tilting them to give access to the deeply-welld back seat, and they can be raised by winding a crank handle, as well as possessing squabs easily adjustable by operating the long, plated side levers. These seats are of decidedly generous size but the upholstery is, alas, p.v.c. The doors have effective "keeps". The very deep, if shallow, 9 cu. ft. boot has a clear floor and is illuminated. Reversing lamps, and the heated back window if a hard-top is ordered, are fitted as standard. There is a

A LETTER TO LORD STOKES FROM A READER

As a small shareholder in BLMC may I say how interested I was to read the attached editorial from last month's MOTOR SPORT. I will be interested in your comments and whether you intend to reply to what appears to be very constructive comment on behalf of the Editor of MOTOR SPORT.

wobbly anti-dazzle mirror. The wheels have stainless-steel trims and are shod with 14-in. Michelin XAS tyres. There are two keys, the long one for ignition/steering lock, the fuel-filler flap and the doors, the smaller one for the boot and glove box. An instruction book covered in imitation leather has been prepared for the Stag. The shape of the back seat well suited the Motoring "Dog", who, after having had her first puppies at the age of nine is now travelling again, and far more comfortably in the Stag than on the bouncy shelf of a Triumph TR sports car in which she once rode. But for adult humans head-room is somewhat restricted.

The conservative iron-block, alloy-heads, cross-flow engine of the Stag fires up promptly if given a little choke and runs smoothly from idling speed to its peak of 5,500 r.p.m. It will pull away from 500 r.p.m., or 10 m.p.h., in the 3.1-to-1 top gear and, trying to conserve fuel on my initial nocturnal acquaintance with it, I used top and o/d top gear satisfactorily for most of the journey. At 2,500 r.p.m. in top gear the accurate (at this speed) speedometer shows 50 m.p.h., or 60 if o/d is engaged, and at the legal maximum permitted on British roads the engine is running smoothly at less than 3,000 r.p.m. It will give just over 100 m.p.h. in o/d 3rd gear, and achieve 117 m.p.h. flat-out in its highest ratio. Two tail-pipe extensions which look like something from a battlefield probably assist in muffling the exhaust note so that Stag motoring is accomplished quietly, yet with a satisfyingly purposeful exhaust note when you open up. A good deal of exhaust heat is exuded under the car.

The gear-lever has weak synchromesh and a long travel, the clutch is heavy and a trifle sudden, and the servo-assisted disc/drum brakes are satisfactory without being outstanding; they tended to squeal under light pressures. The ride is soft but well-damped, roll being well controlled except when cornering very fast. Rear-wheel adhesion is apt to be lost on slippery surfaces when accelerating, but the ultimate cornering ability is high.

The fuel tank holds 14 gallons and in fairly gentle motoring I obtained a m.p.g. figure of 22.5 m.p.g. Driving harder, this decreased to 20.8 m.p.g., an overall figure of 21.4 m.p.g. The petrol gauge is unhappily optimistic.

The exterior *decor* of this handsome, compact fast-tourer is confined to the name "Triumph" in the rubber-tipped bumpers and a stag badge, although zoologists will not recognise the depicted animal as a stag, with its unnatural, overweight antlers. The name "Stag" is engraved on the steering-wheel boss, and name and motif appear on the sides of the tail. A clever feature is angling of the o/s wiper blade so that it sweeps right to the edge of the screen.

Turning to details, some of the luxury aspect of the Stag rubs off when gear-lever rattle between about 3,300 and 4,300 r.p.m. in 3rd gear (I thought this was a thing of the past, but met it again recently on the smallest Opel and now on the Stag) and wind noise, even with the hard-top in use, intrude. The pedals, labelled "L" for Leyland, are large but off-set to the o/s, which brings the brake pedal rather close to the accelerator, but gives room for a clutch-foot rest. There is not a lot of elbow-room and the padded anti-dazzle vizors are rather tricky to clip back; the driver's carries the five-stage sequence for lowering and raising the soft-top. The self-propping forward-hinged bonnet is light and lifts to reveal the V8 engine with its Stanpart

THE TRIUMPH STAG CONVERTIBLE



Engine: Eight cylinders in a 90° vee, 86 × 64.5 mm. (2,997 c.c.)

Overhead valves operated by single overhead camshafts. 8.8 to 1 compression ratio. 145 b.h.p. (net) at 5,500 r.p.m.

Gear ratios: 1st, 11.08 to 1; 2nd, 7.77 to 1; 3rd, 5.13 to 1; o/d 3rd, 4.2 to 1; top, 3.7 to 1; o/d top, 3.04 to 1.

Tyres: 815 × 14 Michelin XAS, on bolt-on steel wide-rim wheels.

Weight: 26 cwt. 0 qtr. 0 lb. (Empty, but ready for the road with hard-top on and approx. half-a-gallon of petrol.)

Steering ratio: 2½ turns, lock-to-lock (power-assisted).

Fuel capacity: 14 gallons. (Range approx. 300 miles.)

Wheelbase: 8 ft. 4 in.

Track: Front, 4 ft. 4½ in.; rear, 4 ft. 4½ in.

Dimensions: 14 ft. 5½ in. × 5 ft. 3½ in. × 4 ft. 1½ in. (high—hood up).

Price: £1,602, plus £491 15s. 10d. purchase tax. Total, as tested, £2,173 18s. 5d.

Makers: Standard-Triumph International Ltd., Canley, Coventry, England.

Performance Data

Acceleration:

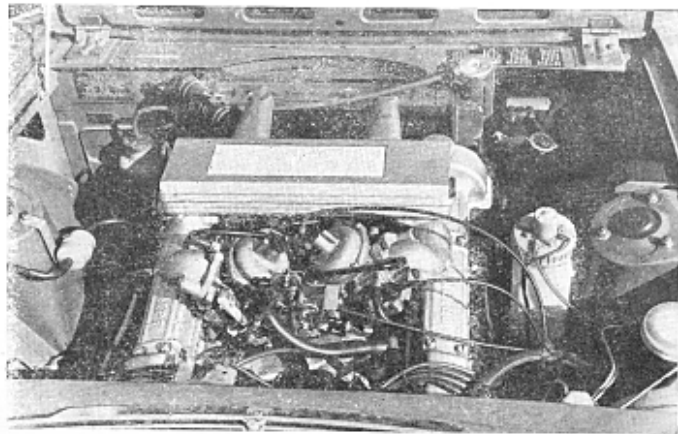
0-30 m.p.h. ..	3.8 sec.	0-70 m.p.h. ..	14.2 sec.
0-40 " ..	5.5 "	0-80 " ..	18.2 "
0-50 " ..	7.5 "	0-90 " ..	23.4 "
0-60 " ..	10.7 "	0-100 " ..	33.9 "

Speeds in the gears:

1st ..	41 m.p.h.	O/d 3rd ..	101 m.p.h.
2nd ..	60 "	Top ..	114 "
3rd ..	92 "	O/d top ..	117 "

Overall fuel consumption: 21.4 m.p.g.

Views of the Stag's V8 power unit and, right, its luggage boot.





Hard-top to soft-top in 1 min. 36 sec. L. to r.: hard-top fitted; top off, hood down showing roll-over structure (42 sec.); erecting the previously hidden hood (54 sec.); soft-top erect.

alloy manifolding, the angled plugs accessible with the right tool, as is the dip-stick, which showed that the sump had lost none of its eight pints of oil in more than 1,100 miles. Oil changes are scheduled every 6,000 miles and there are no greasing chores. Visibility forward is good but reversing is less easy.

I tried to like this Triumph Stag, to please Lord Stokes of Leyland, T.D., D.L., LL.D., D.TECH., D.S.C., C.ENG., F.I.MECH.E., M.S.A.E. It needs better steering, power or otherwise (say ZF), a better gearbox, for those who do not specify the automatic transmission, and more poke—

like Eartha Kitt's Englishman, the Stag takes time to get going. (The makers quote a 0-to-60-m.p.h. acceleration time of 9.5 sec. and one journalist got 9.9 sec. but mine is closer to the average figure.) Given these changes, and a more easily erected top, the Stag could be a great success, for although its engine isn't quite as silky as I anticipated, vibration being felt through the gear-lever, the Stag is a very nice-looking 2+2 coupé/convertible, reasonably priced at £2,173 (as tested) for an eight-cylinder car having (save the mark!) power-assisted steering, electric windows, a concealed hood and Italian styling.—W. B.

CAN-AM 1970

LEXINGTON

AFTER an interval of four weeks, the Can-Am circus returned to the United States for the fifth round of the series at the Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. All the usual entrants were in attendance, though with a number of significant changes to their cars. Both works McLarens were using their larger 7.6-litre Chevrolet engines, the overheating that has plagued these units in previous races having been cured by the modified radiator outlet tried for the first time in the previous race at Edmonton. The rear suspension of George Eaton's BRM had been redesigned to eliminate the rear-wheel steer that produced such diabolical handling characteristics. This was accomplished by eliminating the lower radius arms and replacing them with shorter arms running back diagonally from the base of the uprights to a plate attached to the rear of the transmission. The radical AVS Shadow, which had not run since the second round at St. Jovite, reappeared with Vic Elford at the wheel but Elford soon found that there were far more drawbacks to the ultra-low design than there were advantages. The severe overheating which afflicted the car in the first two races had been overcome by moving the twin radiators from their position inside the wing to exposed locations on top of the rear fenders. Unfortunately, this exposed position location, combined with the extreme angle of a new wing (which made it more of a spoiler than a wing) almost doubled the frontal area of the car and completely negated the original concept of a car with such low frontal area that its high speed down the straights would more than offset any cornering disadvantages imposed by the miniaturised suspension. Two drivers joined the series for the first time this year, Pedro Rodriguez in a NART-entered, open-cockpit Ferrari 512S and former US road-racing champion Chuck Parsons in an older but well prepared Lola T160. The car was updated with a T163 body but it was handicapped in the power department by having only a 6-litre Chevrolet engine.

Qualifying developed into the usual battle between the McLaren team and "the rest" and this time "the rest" did quite well. Not well enough to win the pole position, which went to Denny Hulme quite comfortably, but well enough to keep Hulme's team-mate Peter Gethin back in fourth place. Lothar Motschenbacher qualified second fastest in his ex-works McLaren M8B and Peter Revson was third in his Lola T220. Rodriguez was fifth fastest, just ahead of the similar, semi-open cockpit Ferrari 512S driven by Jim Adams, while Elford and Parsons occupied the fourth row.

The Mid-Ohio circuit crams 15 turns into its 2.4 miles and is really much too tight for the big Can-Am cars because there is virtually no room to pass except on one medium length straight. As a result the race tends to become a procession and it is vitally important to make a good start. Hulme certainly realised the importance of this as he jumped into the lead at the first corner and then pulled away relentlessly to lead every single lap of the 80-lap, 192-mile race. Behind him, however, there was a real dogfight between Motschenbacher, Revson and Gethin (whose engine went sour with a worn camshaft lobe before

the start and proceeded to get worse and worse as the race went on). Motschenbacher had a slight edge on Revson and was able to hold down second place for the first one-third of the race but then he began to lose his brakes and dropped to fourth behind Gethin. Revson then pulled away easily from Gethin's ailing McLaren and he held second place to the chequered flag, which he reached 77 sec. behind Hulme. His Lola was the only car not lapped by the winner. Gethin's engine became progressively worse and he was passed by Motschenbacher before it finally quit for good with eight laps to go. Motschenbacher then finished third, one lap down, with Parsons fourth in his older Lola. Eaton's BRM had started from the back of the grid as a result of engine trouble during qualifying but he really flew when the race began, climbing from 26th to seventh in seven laps before he retired with a sudden loss of fuel pressure. Elford went only nine laps before retiring the Shadow with at least one front wheel badly out of balance.—D. G.

Results:

CAN-AM—Round 5—Buckeye—Lexington		
1st	D. Hulme (7.6 McLaren M8D-Chevrolet)	2 hr. 1 min. 23.3 sec.—55.163 m.p.h.
2nd	P. Revson (7.6 Lola T220-Chevrolet)	2 hr. 2 min. 19.2 sec.
3rd	L. Motschenbacher (7.6 McLaren M8B-Chevrolet)	79 laps
4th	C. Parsons (6.6 Lola T160/3)	77 laps
5th	G. Wilson (7.6 Lola T163)	76 laps
6th	R. McCraig (7.6 McLaren M8C)	75 laps
7th	D. Duran (7.6 Lola T163)	74 laps
8th	J. Adams/R. Boschwart (5.0 Ferrari 512S)	73 laps
9th	P. Gethin (7.6 McLaren M8D)	71 laps
10th	R. Neust (7.6 Lola T70-Ford)	70 laps
Fastest lap: D. Hulme (7.6 McLaren M8D-Chevrolet), 1 min. 28.8 sec.—67.30 m.p.h.		

ROAD AMERICA

WITH only a week between the fifth and sixth rounds (and less than that to overhaul the machinery), a number of cars appeared at the Road America circuit in Wisconsin in far from perfect mechanical condition. The Shadow did not appear at all, although Elford did obtain a ride in an older but unsorted Lola T70. Another English driver making his second Can-Am appearance of the year was David Hobbs, who was invited to drive the ex-Chaparral McLaren M12 now owned by Canadian Terry Goddall.

There was considerably less practice and qualifying time than usual at Road America and among the victims of this shortened timetable were Peter Revson and Peter Gethin. Revson had only one hour on the Friday to qualify his Lola before flying out to the Ontario Motor Speedway to qualify the works McLaren for the California 500 on Saturday (report in American Comment) and then returning to Road America for the Can-Am race on Sunday. Nonetheless, he quickly got down to the job at hand and at the time he left for California his Lola was on the front row next to Denis Hulme's pole-winning McLaren M8D. Motschenbacher's M8B was the third fastest qualifier but Gethin was a victim of the very short interval since the Mid-Ohio race. His M8D lost almost all its oil pressure as soon as it went out and he had to wait while the mechanics changed the pressure relief valve before he had another go. When the oil pressure again disappeared almost immediately, the mechanics knew the entire plumbing system