

The Triumph Stag

WHEN I tried the Triumph Stag as a new car, way back in 1970, I was disappointed with several aspects of the car. It has since had time for development, although it remains basically unchanged, so I thought I had better try it again, because it is an interesting concept—a very good-looking sporting car of two-seater size but with room for two more occupants should this be required, a good arrangement of hood when the neat hard-top is not in use, and a very refined vee-eight 3-litre overhead-camshaft power unit.

The British Leyland Press Office complied very readily with my suggestion and so, after a day which had embraced 1930 Bentley and 1973 BMW motoring, I found myself heading for home in a Pimento red Stag with chestnut vinyl upholstery which you could have fooled me was real leather. It was shod with Avon tubeless radial tyres with those smooth sidewalls that reminded me for a moment of the special track covers of the Brooklands days.

There is no need to describe this Stag in detail, because the specification has not altered since we did this fairly fully in the issue of October 1970. It is amusing that the very complete leather-bound Stag hand-book quotes nut-tightening torques but omits any reference to power output. This the catalogue gives as 146 b.h.p. at 5,700 r.p.m. and the red-area of the tachometer begins at 6,500 r.p.m., although only in some pretty brisk driving did I have to take the revs. that high.

For some reason the Stag prompts journalists to photograph it with the appropriate animal



STAG MEETS STAG. One of our contemporaries drove a Stag into Europe to try to photograph the animal with the Triumph, so we are rather pleased that this picture was taken economically without driving far from London.

beside it. My friend Philip Turner of a weekly contemporary once had this irresistible urge and I believe went far into Europe to try to satisfy it, but had to admit defeat. So I had been amused to learn that, before I took over the car, one of the MOTOR SPORT photographers had secured the picture which heads this article without going much more than about 20 miles from the London office. . . .

My initial impressions of the Stag were as unfortunate as before. The power-assisted

rack-and-pinion steering is far too light and the weaving effect of what seemed to be too-hard independent rear suspension constitutes handling which does not appeal at all. This is a pity, because the steering is very high geared 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ th-turns, lock-to-lock, from a very small racing-type wheel, with a really small turning circle. On longer acquaintance with the car I got accustomed to the lack of feel, the "in-built over-steer", at the wheel but this and the dodgy running damns the Stag in my view. Admittedly the steering is consistent, which that on the 1970 test-car was not. And Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow drivers have a similar light control to put up with. So perhaps there are Stag owners who do not regard their cars as sufficiently sporting to warrant better control characteristics. There is now only a faint sound from the power assistance via its belt-driven pump, but it is the end-product which distresses me.

That apart, the Triumph Stag is a nice motor-car. It has much of the tradition of the older sports-cars about it, but with all the very smooth power delivery and excellent bottom-end torque to be expected of a multi-cylinder engine of nearly 3-litres capacity. This adds up to very real and readily delivered performance. The ride is on the hard side, but comfortable, the gears are changed by a long lever with considerable across-the-gate movement, but one which functions very nicely, reverse easily obtained by slapping the lever to the right between the 3rd and top-gear positions. Its knob contains the switch for the overdrive, labelled IN and OUT, a selection which could not be more convenient. The hand brake lies between the front seats but its hefty hand-grip needed a good pull to make it hold. In torrential rain, no water entered car or boot.

The disc-drum servo brakes are efficient. The engine has a healthy exhaust note but with the electric windows up, there is scarcely any sound, either when accelerating or cruising fast—a veritable Rolls-Royce among sporting cars.



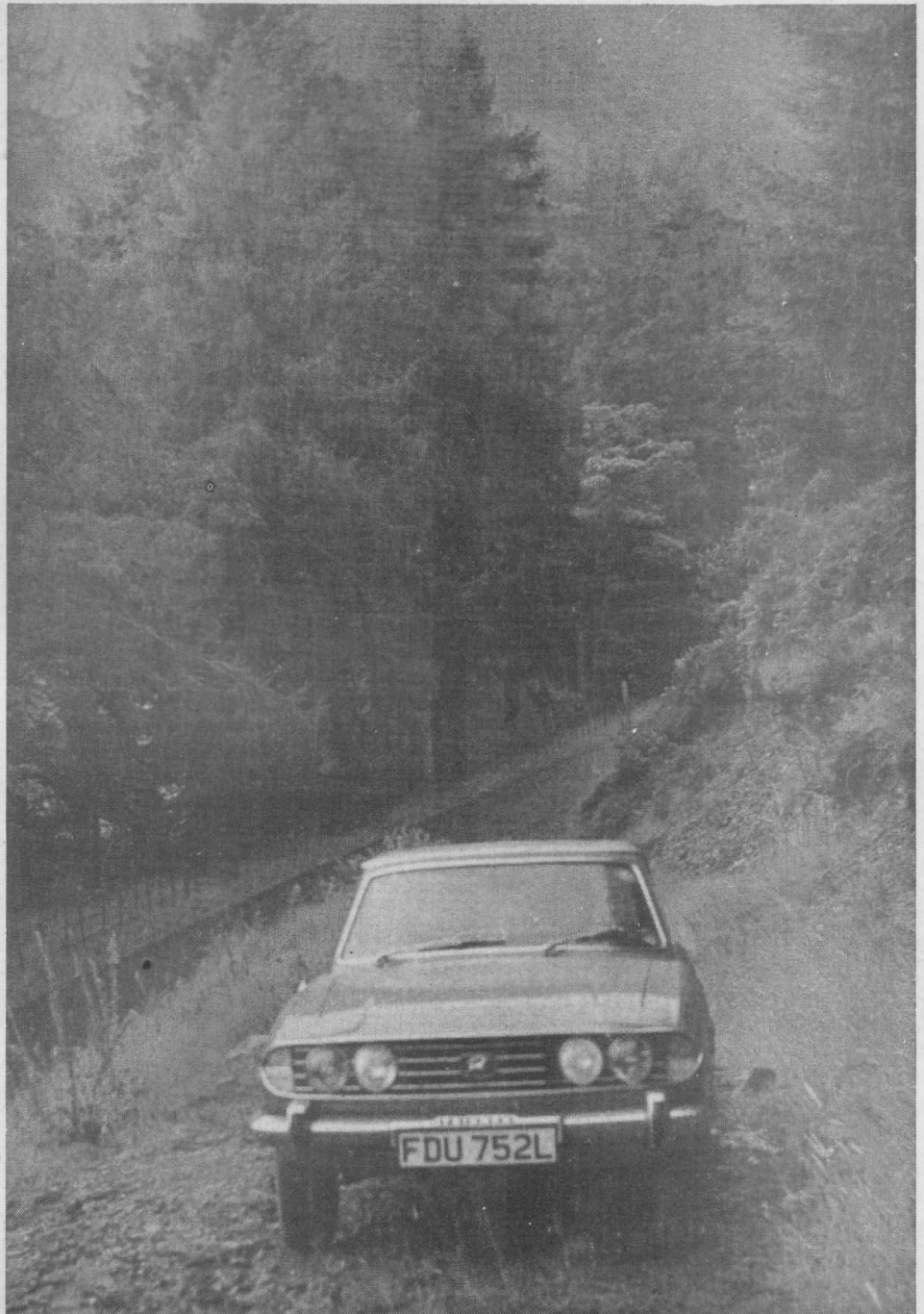
The V8 Triumph Stag has handsome lines.

Instruments – m.p.h./k.p.h., trip/total 140 m.p.h., speedometer, clock, heat, volts and fuel-level gauges, and tachometer – are set on a walnut veneer dash, all on the driver's side, and have been neatly recalibrated, with new green night-time illumination. The eight warning lights are in the grouped Triumph circular cluster, there is a variety of fresh-air vents, and twin stalks control the lamps, horn, turn indicators, two-speed wipers, etc. There are elaborate arrangements for heating and ventilation, including knob-wound half-windows and openable side windows, and refinements include the essential Triplex Hotline heated rear window, height-adjustment for the front seats, adjustable steering column, red lamps in the doors, boot illumination, lockable flush-fitting fuel filler, excellent door locks, etc. Before the front passenger are a generous-size lockable glove box and stowage shelf, and elastic-topped pockets provide extra stowage space. Altogether, then, this Triumph Stag is a very well-appointed and well-contrived car, with good door locks, stainless steel body mouldings and screen surround, etc. It has anti-dazzle visors not always found on soft-top cars and for safety in open form there is the T-shaped roll-over bar. Recent mods. include the smaller steering wheel, a rest for the clutch foot, the option of tinted glass, o/d as standard, and automatic transmission for a modest extra cost.

Realising that 25 years ago I road-tested an Allard in N. Wales and that it had a V8 engine of 3.6-litres but with side valves, and that the Stag has an o.h.c. V8 power unit of all but 3-litres, I set off to cover much of the same terrain. Alas, crawling holiday traffic has increased tenfold and what with congestion in Dolgellau and flooded roads outside this busy town, I had to cut out some of the route. However, the Stag did ascend and descend Bwlch-y-Groes, which anyway is child's play to a modern car, but the track away from Lake Vyrnwy on which I had got the Allard stuck (MOTOR SPORT, June, 1948) proved elusive.

One likely track petered out hundreds of feet above the road with a sheer drop on the right, calling for some careful reversing, and I am inclined to think that the decently-surfaced but narrow route to Bala was the one we had used previously, when as a rough track it caused us some mild adventure.

These excursions proved that the Stag has ample clearance under its twin exhaust pipes and plenty of controllable power. With judicious use of overdrive I got 20.5 m.p.g. of four-star petrol and no oil was needed after 600 miles. By the time that long day's driving was over I had almost come to accept the lack of feel in the steering and the odd running of the independent rear suspension. It is commendable that British Leyland offer multi-cylinder vee engines in Jaguar, Daimler, Rover and Triumph cars. I do not like the handling of the Stag or of the Rover 3500 V8, so I am hoping that the new MG V8, which eschews i.r.s. and a De Dion rear axle for a beam back axle, may suit me better. It is interesting to note that the price of the M.G.-B V8 GT at £2,294 compares favourably with that of the Stag, which sells for £2,615 in soft-top form, or £2,720 with soft-top and detachable hard-top; it should be remembered that this includes a well-designed hood which stows away efficiently and four Lucas halogen headlamps. I have yet to try the new M.G., but anticipate that this effectively two-seater, permanently closed coupe, will appeal to a more sporting driver than the Stag: the two V8 models should complement each other in British Leyland's extensive range. – W.B.



Stag in stalking country.

EUROPEAN LETTER –
Continued from page 1013

good, steady old ship. As there was some sort of strike going on at the Dover docks things were not flowing as smoothly as they should have been and I was very lucky to get on the boat at all. The Dover Harbour Board were very reasonable and were handing out an explanatory leaflet written in English, French, German and Dutch. The leaflet told us we were being unavoidably delayed "due to industrial action"; I do wish they would use more simple words and say "the workers are on strike", because to me the word "action" means that something is happening, which is the complete reverse of the truth, for when there is a strike, nothing happens and everything comes to a grinding halt. It is "action" that we need. However, the four-language explanation was most encouraging and raised my hopes for our off-shore island in its European outlook. It helped to pass the time reading the same thing in the different languages and it was fascinating to try and pronounce Shipping

Operators in Dutch, which is "schipvaart-maatschappij".

Recently I have been re-reading that motoring classic "Ten Years of Motors and Motor Racing, 1896-1906" by Charles Jarrott and I would recommend it to anyone who is getting disenchanted with motor racing as they get older. They will find little has changed, for Jarrott was getting disenchanted in those early days because the sport was going out of motor racing and commercial interests were becoming too oppressive. As I motored off from Calais, using some small back-roads rather than the main routes I realized, like Jarrott explained all those years ago, that it was the open road ahead that was the real fascination of motoring; even if you know the way and have covered it many times before, the inviting road stretching ahead still fascinates and attracts and you have to drive on to see what lies ahead, which seems a good enough point at which to stop writing, otherwise I might miss something that lies ahead on the Open Road.

Yours, D.S.J.