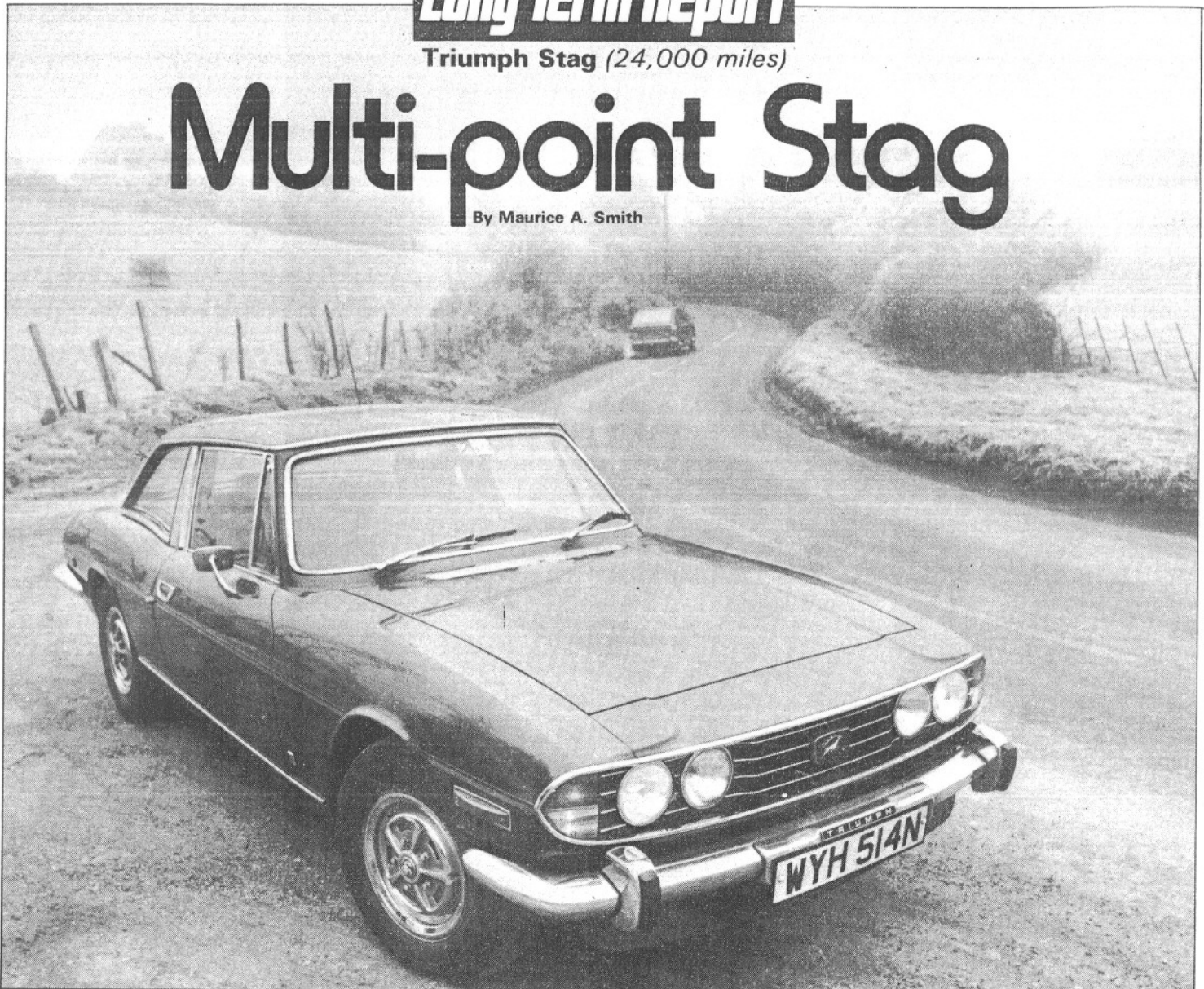


Long Term Report

Triumph Stag (24,000 miles)

Multi-point Stag

By Maurice A. Smith



STAGS HAVE CARVED a definite niche for themselves in the diminishing list of out-of-the-ordinary British models. Whether it is the niche originally foreseen for them is open to question. The fortunes of the model have swung around as a result mainly of external influences by no means peculiar to Stags. They came on to the market late in June 1970 at what now sounds a very modest price of between £2,000 and £2,500 according to equipment and extras. Now you have to pay nearly £6,000 for the same thing which seems expensive.

On seeing their first Stag some people said "ah, a big TR" which Stags are not, and they went on to complain about handling and performance shortcomings by 3-litre sports car standards. The jumble of speed limits, high petrol costs, road congestion and anti-motoring propaganda in the intervening 6½ years have taken some of the steam out of performance appeal and the majority of those who operate Stags found, and still find, the

acceleration, speed and handling very adequate. Whether Triumph knew they were introducing a car which would also have real woman appeal is another question to be considered. Certainly it is a very popular "wife's car" for those who can afford it.

What a pity that British Leyland did their too familiar trick of introducing an attractive new model and then failing to produce them. Very many sales in Europe and the UK were lost through failure to deliver or even to quote a firm delivery date, and now it is too late since the production days of Stags must be numbered.

Turning from the general to the particular, I have heard of a few Stags that have "blown up". Cylinder head gaskets, bearings, pistons, even a broken rod have been mentioned as causes. Looking closely at these, it seems more than coincidental that a few of the owners have been the sort of "out-to-prove-something" drivers who might be expected to blow up cars and put rods through crankcase sides. Let's say it is just good

luck that our two Stags have stayed together, the second one now on 26,000 miles, remaining sweet and responsive and always starting at the second short churn, whether sun-baked or ice-covered.

Oil consumption is negligible but the oil looks dirty by the time a change is due. The pressure water cooling system needs topping up most months and one wonders where the water goes. Like Jaguars and sometimes other large cars such as Rolls-Royces and Mercedes, the Stag has a steamy exhaust most of the time, said by some to be owed to condensation in long and elaborate exhaust systems. I wonder whether the suspect Stag cylinder head gaskets are allowing slight seepage of water into the cylinders. Would this occur more when the engine is hot or when cold? Such small quantities, if they exist, do not show up in the oil or on the plugs.

It seems likely that failure to check water level or notice symptoms of shortage may have led to the engine overheating reported by a few owners. If water

is short the heater matrix goes cold before the temperature gauge gives any indication of abnormal temperature. Overheating is first indicated when idling or crawling in thick traffic and there is a return towards normal as soon as the engine and water pump are revved up. This may not be noticed by a driver concentrating on the traffic and obscuring the gauge with his left hand on the steering wheel. It is cured when the expansion bottle is replenished.

Talking about climatic extremes, the Stag's heater will really cook you if you want it to and can include plenty of face level cold air while your legs are being toasted. Full air conditioning was an option on early models but was not well regarded. Last summer in Britain was a real Stag summer and the soft top was folded away in its neat flush fitting box for months on end. The soft top has a zip round its rear window allowing it to fold open and flat. The rear quarters are blind and special care is needed when moving into and across traffic lanes.

The detachable hard top comes

as near to being a coupé conversion for the winter as you can hope for and includes a heated rear window which plugs itself in when the hard top is attached. Extractor rear quarter lights are fitted.

Like Harold Wilson I have said it before and I will say it again; the worst sin on the part of one's car is to pack up suddenly and leave you stranded. There are degrees of sin depending on where, when and how it does it: Our Stag sinned a little bit. Petrol starvation leading to momentary instances of cutting out gave a hint of trouble to come. I chose not to take the hint at once and did not pull into the next Leyland garage. As a result while I was driving into London to get service on the following day, the electric petrol pump in the boot finally died and left me stranded on the Albert Embankment. I had to be towed in and the replacement unit cost £16.50. Otherwise we have enjoyed over 24,000 miles in 2½ years without any trouble of note. The car has had regular services more or less at the specified times, there have been a few minor adjustments and bulb replacements.

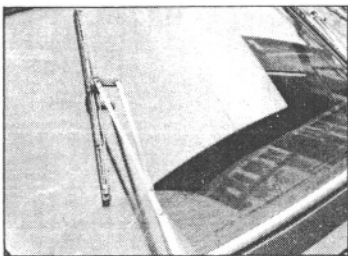
The most expensive trouble to date was with the alternator which wore down its brushes last August at 22,580 miles, causing minor internal damage by the time the red no-charge warning light came on. Strictly speaking this might have been anticipated and a check made at the 18,000 miles service. In addition a repair rather than a replacement alternator should have been possible except that there is a built-in regulator which suffered and there was the time out of use to be considered if a repair were to be made. The cost of new parts, plus labour charges was a reasonable £22.54 from Autocar Electrical, who are good friends but in no way connected with *Autocar* magazine.

At the very beginning of August

(21,036 miles) a minor but illegal fault occurred — you have guessed it, electrics again. The indicator flasher unit became sluggish and sometimes gave up all together. A replacement for this small sealed unit cost £5.40 trade price. Perhaps they are gold plated. The battery is still good and very seldom needs topping up.

Checking back on the maintenance records I see a note of eight new sparking plugs at 16,098 miles. This could have waited until the 18,000 mile service but the earlier time was convenient for sparing the car. Otherwise the entries are routine.

There are lots of good points about this Stag, some already mentioned in two earlier stories but worth summarising in what might be a final report on this particular car (although we don't plan to sell it yet). First there is the high degree of comfort in the broad sense, owed to good quality, properly shaped seats with three modes of adjustment and in addition to the two-way adjustable steering column. The very effective heating and fresh air supply have already been mentioned. Forward view is above average and aided in rain by the two speed and intermittent wipers which sweep full arcs, the



blade on the driver's side being articulated to move parallel to the screen pillar and wipe the last sector. Head room is adequate for people up to about 5ft 10 in but limited for those over 6ft. It always amuses me to watch an "anti" chap

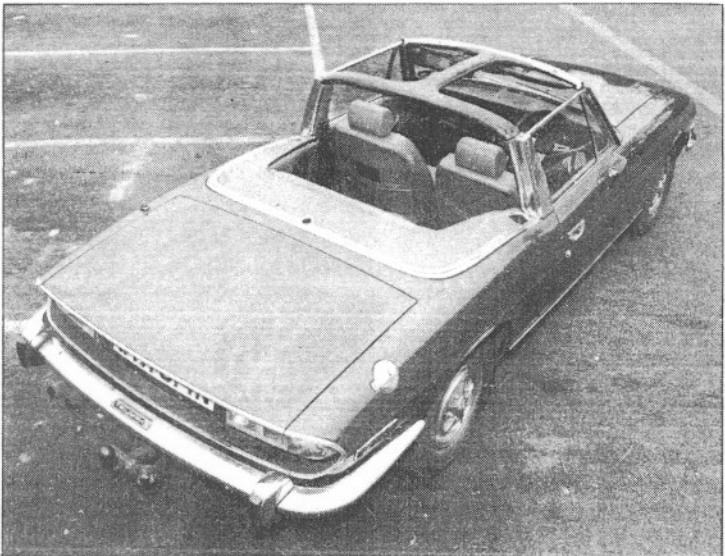
of 6ft. proving his point that he cannot sit in a Stag at all and then next day another "pro" chap of similar size proving that he can tuck in perfectly comfortably with a bit of careful seat adjustment. As my aunty used to say "there is none so blind as those who do not want to see".

Touches of convenience and class are provided by screw-opening front quarter-lights (or ashtrays as some might say) and electrically operated windows — which reminds me that the mechanism on the driver's side is getting a bit lumpy in operation, which may be ominous.

The original Michelin tyres are still fitted having been rotated corner to corner when scuffing was becoming obvious on the outside

treads of the front wheels. Stags have a good lock and light, power-assisted steering so drivers tended to turn abruptly when manoeuvring — as tyre squeal on dry tarmac or ruts in gravel drives indicate. Long tyre life must be owed in part to the big wheels which of course carry more rubber than small ones as well as having a larger footprint on the road.

If I can afford eight (or more) cylinders I shall continue to do so. The smoothness, the idling, the starting, even the exhaust note are, or should be, that bit better than with a four or six. Thinking of exhausts, here is another good feature of the later Stags: To date there have been no leaks or rattles and no section has needed replacement in 2½ years.



Above. The roll-over bars do not detract from the open car feeling, and front seat passengers are well protected from wind buffeting. Above right. Comfortable, three-way adjustable seats with good shoulder support and compact head restraint. Just enough room at the back (right) to call it an occasional four seater, and reasonably easy to climb in

Triumph Stag

Pictures may indicate that this long-term car has non-standard brushed nylon covered seats "borrowed" from the Triumph saloon line and not usually fitted to open models. I have preferred sitting on this material having experienced the alternative vinyl on my earlier Stag, and it has stood up well. It is more prone to picking up dirt and fluff but has not been difficult to brush clean. Another non-standard feature on this Stag is the black air dam under the nose. It was fitted ex-TR6 for four reasons; to improve appearance (the Stag nose appearing too high); to improve top speeds by reducing drag; to reduce front-end lift and improve directional stability at high speeds (Stags get lighter in front at around 100 mph or over and are then more susceptible to gusts, having little keel surface); to try to increase air flow through the radiator and engine compartment (Stags have been known to overheat in extreme conditions, particularly if towing a trailer). The first point is a matter of opinion, the other three seem to have been modestly effective. Some 3-5 mph higher than average top speed was recorded when the car was fully run in at about 12,000 miles. The 123 mph best figures indicated should be about 116 mph true. This compares with the Autotest Stag automatic maximum of 112 mph.

Luxury fittings obviously cost money and when included as standard items cumulatively account in part not only for the attraction but also the high price of the Stag today. Steering column adjustment, opening quarter lights, electric windows, three-speed wipers with articulated blade — these have already been mentioned. Some other details are the indicator repeaters on the sides of the front wings; the powerful twin halogen headlamps, viscous fan coupling; lockable flush petrol filler cap; red door-open warning

Maximum speeds							
Gear	mph		kph		rpm		
	LT	RT	LT	RT	LT	RT	
Top (mean)	115	112	185	180	5,750	5,660	
(best)	117	113	188	182	5,850	5,710	
Inter	89	89	143	143	6,500	6,500	
Low	54	54	87	87	6,500	6,500	

Acceleration					
True mph	Time (sec)		Speedo mph		
	LT	RT	LT	RT	
30	4.2	4.1	31	29	
40	6.0	5.8	41	39	
50	8.1	7.9	52	50	
60	10.7	10.4	62	61	
70	14.7	14.2	73	72	
80	19.2	18.6	84	84	
90	25.7	24.9	94	95	
100	35.7	34.5	105	107	
Standing 1/4-mile	LT 18.3 sec	RT 17.9 sec	77 mph	78 mph	
kilometre:	LT 33.7 sec	RT 32.6 sec	97 mph	98 mph	

mph	Top		Inter		Low	
	LT	RT	LT	RT	LT	RT
10-30	—	—	—	—	3.1	3.0
20-40	—	—	—	—	3.2	3.0
30-50	—	—	—	—	3.8	3.7
40-60	—	—	5.5	5.3	—	—
50-70	—	—	6.1	5.9	—	—
60-80	8.9	8.6	7.6	7.4	—	—
70-90	10.2	9.9	—	—	—	—
80-100	15.3	14.8	—	—	—	—

Consumption		
Overall mpg:	LT 20.8 (13.6 litres/100km)	RT 17.2 (16.4 litres/100km)

Note "RT" denotes performance figures for Triumph Stag Automatic tested in Autocar of 10 June 1971

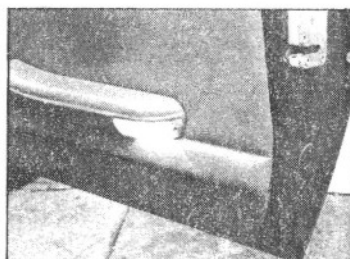
the design and position of the segmented warning lamps dial which I find ugly and usually obscured by the driver's left hand. The upper seat belt attachments (or guides) are dreadful. They cause the straps to rub the seat back; they tangle and jam and seldom take up tension.

The rear head room in the hard top is too limited and if even another inch could be found it would be valuable. The soft top could do with transparent quarter panels for better rear vision. The styling strips along the side of the Mk 2 car should be replaced by proper rubbing strips with rubber inlays. A second filler cap on the port side would often be convenient. The plastic clips intended to hold down the floor panel of the boot are miserable fragile little objects which should be improved.

I would expect that with some better dampers the initial harshness, often felt when the car is rolling over coarse road surfaces, could now be improved. This is not to be regarded as a serious shortcoming and the ride in general is very comfortable and quiet.

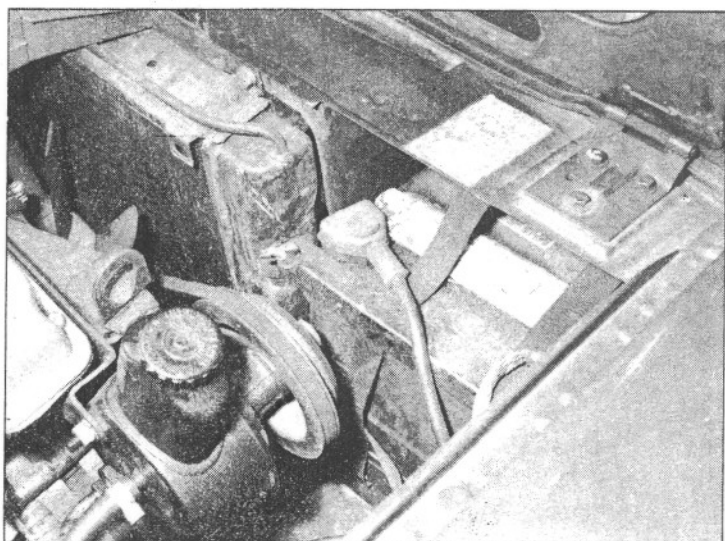
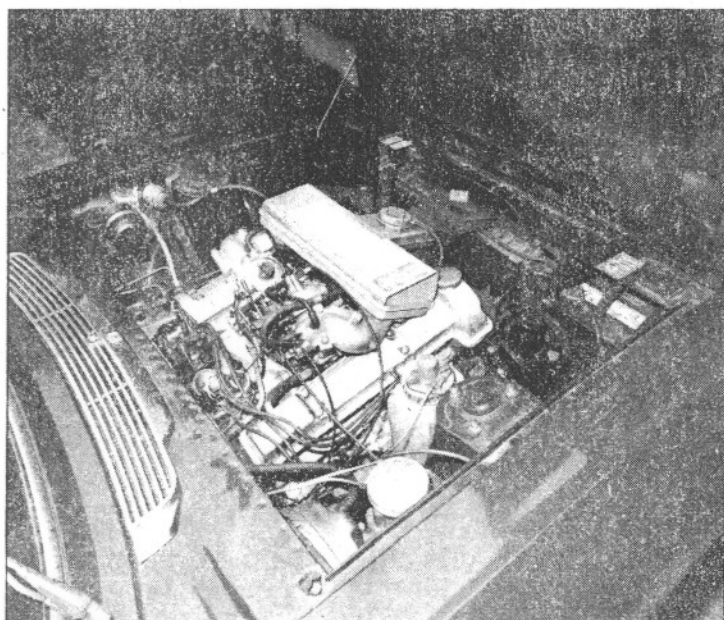
There are no complaints about the way paintwork, trim and carpets are standing up, and so far there are no rust pocks like the two or three which came through the paintwork on our first Stag. In fact, after a clean and polish the car can still look practically new.

Good, low mileage secondhand Stags can now be had for between £3,000-£4,000. This may sound a lot but compared with other cars of a broadly similar type — 3000 Capri, Scimitar, Datsun 260Z — and including lesser models bought new in this price range, they are well worth considering. In my experience Stags will provide very pleasing and versatile driving with, of course, the additional rare pleasure for those that want it, of open-car motoring. □



lamps in the arm rests; dipping day/night interior mirror; thick rubber inlays in the bumper over-riders and framed front number plate; and independent boot lamp and an electric clock which continues to keep good time.

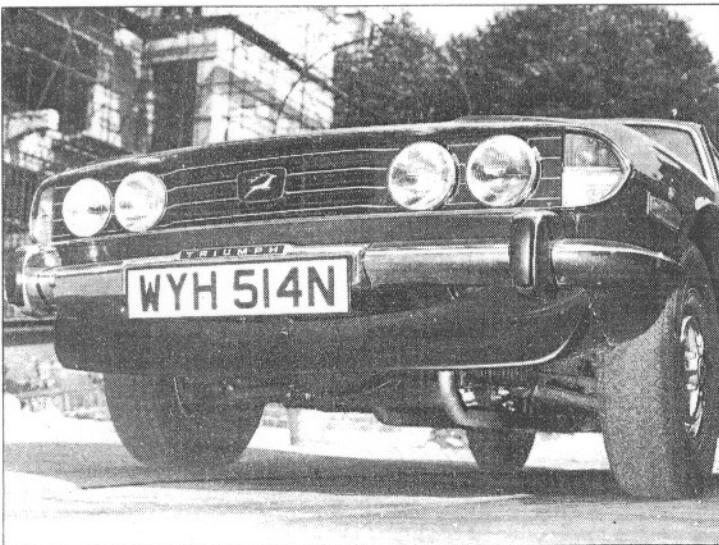
What would I now want included if there were to be a Mk 3 Stag, assuming that only details could be changed at this late stage in its life? In no special order, I would change



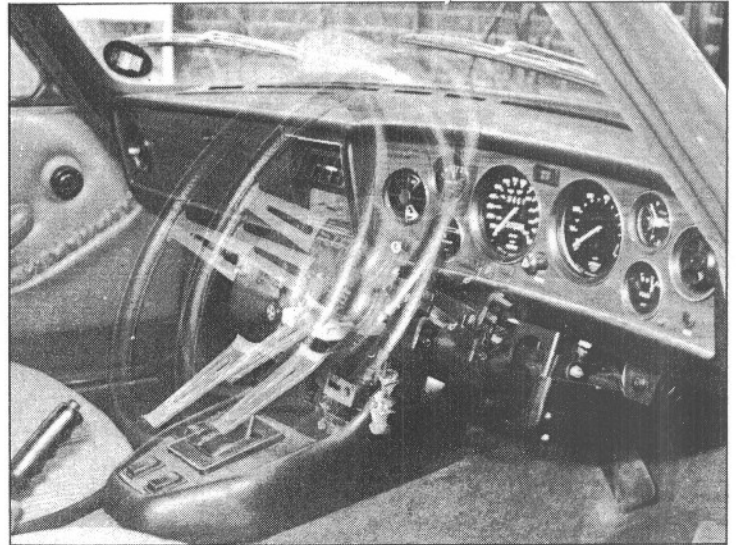
Left Engine compartment keeps pretty clean and the equipment is accessible. Above a battery mounting in the nose is inaccessible but cool. It seldom needs topping up. Power steering pump may need to move before battery can be removed, but luckily this has not yet been necessary



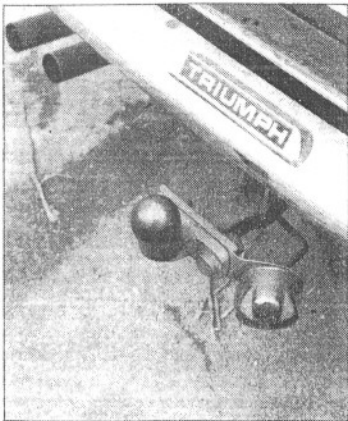
Left. The hard top gives closed car comfort but there is some extra wind noise from the screen top joint. Below. Four-way adjustment of the steering column, in-out and up-down



Above. Specially fitted TR6 air dam, which apparently brings aerodynamic advantages



Below. The official Witter tow attachment is convenient but prominent. Not the solid bumper section



Cost of ownership

Running costs	Life in Miles	Cost per 10,000 miles
One gallon of 4-star, average cost today 80p	19.2	416.66
One pint of top-up oil, average cost today 38p.	4,000	0.95
Front disc brake pads (set of 4)	35,000	2.54
Rear brake linings (set of 4)	16,780	5.88
tyres (front pair)	30,000	9.56
tyres (rear pair)	30,000	9.56
Service (main interval and actual cost incurred)	6,000	22.99
†Repairs		47.54
Total Running cost per mile:	5.1p	515.68
Approx. standing charges per year		
Insurance		89.50
Tax		40.00
Depreciation		
Price when new (less soft top and radio)		£3,158.00
Trade in cash value (approx)		£2,800.00
Typical advertised price (current)		£3,250.00
Total cost per mile (based on cash value)	10.0p	

†Insurance cost is for 60 year old driver, living in Surrey

†Repair costs include alternator, fuel pump, indicator flasher unit, bulbs and one wiper blade

Specification

Engine: 9 deg V8, 86x64.5mm (3.39x2.54in.), 2,997 c.c. (182.9 cu.in.); CR 9.3 to 1; ohc; 2x Stromberg carbs, 146 bhp (DIN) at 3,500 rpm; max torque 167 lb.ft. (23.1 mkg) at 3,500 rpm.

Transmission: Front engine, rear drive. Automatic, overall ratios 3.70-8.51, 5.37-12.36, 8.84-20.40 rev 7.73-17.80. Top gear mph/1,000 rpm 19.8.

Suspension: ifs, MacPherson struts, lower links, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear, independent, semi-trailing arms, coil springs, telescopic dampers. Steering, rack and pinion (power assisted).

Brakes: hydraulic dual circuit (servo), 10.6in. front discs, 9.0x2 3/4in. rear drums.

Dimensions: Wheelbase, 8ft 4in. (254 cm); front track 4ft 4 1/4in. (133 cm), rear track 4ft 5in. (135 cm). Overall length, 14ft 5 1/4in. (441 cm), width 5ft 3 1/2in. (161 cm), height 4ft 1 1/2in. (126 cm). Turning circle 34ft (10.4 m). Unladen weight 2,720 lb (1,235 kg). Max payload 1,000 lb (454 kg).

Others: Tyres 185HR-14 in.; 5 1/2in. rims; Fuel 12 3/4 gal (58 litres); service interval 6,000 miles. Warranty period 12 months/unlimited mileage.