

Buffum's TR7 Wins 1977 Pro Rally Championship

In its first pro-rally season, Triumph TR7 gains SCCA Championship and US/Canada North American Rally Cup: John and co-driver Vicki win 7 out of 16 rallies.

Winning smile from John Buffum and co-driver Vicki, seat-belted into their TR7 coupe. On the following pages John comments on many aspects of performance rallying and a complete run-down is included of the team's rally record.



LEONIA, N.J.—“In 1977 we won two of the three professional rally championships we set out to win and came as close as we possibly could to winning the third,” says Graham W. Whitehead, President of British Leyland Motors Inc. “We consider this a major achievement considering that this was only our first year in this very demanding sport.”

John Buffum, Burlington, Vt. won the Sports Car Club of America U.S. Pro Rally Championship and the North American Rally Cup driving a Triumph TR7 for British Leyland. The Cup is awarded to the competitor with the best record in Canadian and U.S. events run by the SCCA and the Canadian Auto Sports Club. Buffum won both titles before, the Cup in 1976 and the SCCA Crown in 1975. His co-driver, Vicki, won her 1977 championship and British Leyland was runner-up in the manufacturer's section of the competition.

Buffum finished the Castrol Canadian National Championship in second place with British Leyland second in Manufacturer's Standings.

The British Leyland team cars (Walter Boyce's TR7 competed for British Leyland Motors Canada Ltd.) won eight events during 1977. In addition, Buffum's fourth place finish in the Sept. 17, F.I.A. World Championship Criterium Rally in Quebec was the best placing by a North American in the event.

The rally TR7's are specially built by Leyland S/T in Abingdon, England. They use the potent four-cylinder, 16-valve, overhead cam engine proven so successful in the Triumph Dolomite Sprint sedan. Tuned for competition, it develops well over 200 horsepower. Other preparation includes full roll cage, Minilite wheels with special Pirelli rally tires, fuel cell and heavy-duty components throughout. The North American team cars are prepared to the same standard as the UK/European factory team cars and sport the same distinctive red, white and blue paintwork.

British Leyland intends to continue in professional rally competition and will announce 1978 plans shortly.

The 1978 rally season starts January 27 with the SCCA's Borax Bill Memorial Rally in California City, California.

Buffum's TR7 Wins 1977 Pro Rally Championship (Continued)



The rally TR7 at speed. Some sections are covered at over 100mph. Note the oil sump shield and high ground clearance.

JOHN BUFFUM TALKS ABOUT HIGH PERFORMANCE RALLYING

On Changes In The Sport: "Performance rallying in America has changed for the better. Not only are there more events now but they are different. A few years back, they didn't have much to do with driving ability or true performance. They were car busters run over the worst roads the organizers could find. They didn't even really test a car's durability; they tested your luck, that's all.

"Today, the roads are still a long way from superhighway perfect but they're better and this has made performance rallying more like road racing; less like off-road racing. The hazards are still there, the Rim of the World and Rocky Mountain rallies last year both had roads with thousand-foot drop-off cliffs.

"There's more and better competition now — Taisto Heinonen (Toyota) and Jean Paul Perusse (Saab) in Canada and Hendrick Blok (Dodge Colt) in this country. They gave us a real run for the money.

"There's also more running during the day, meaning that there are more spectators and more publicity for the sport."

On The Dangers: "Any form of high-speed competition can be dangerous for the competitor. In rallying, there's the extra hazard of the unexpected. An overturned rally car ahead of you around a blind turn. A tree limb across the road. A washed-out bridge. A patch of glare ice over the crest of a hill.

"I stress competitor because there is no danger to spectators, local residents or non-rally vehicles. All the high speed special stages are sealed off to non-rally traffic. Spectator areas are policed. Rally traffic between special stages proceeds at speeds well below posted limits."

On Race Drivers vs. Rally Drivers: "The two kinds of driving require different skills. The race driver is a precision driver who can take a corner 30 or 100 times taking exactly the same groove each time with virtually no variation in

time through that turn. In rallying, we rarely see the same turn twice.

"However, both the rally driver and the race driver have to possess certain characteristics to be good. Good eyesight with well above average peripheral vision to spot trouble and quick reactions to avoid it in time. Endurance and the ability to pace yourself. Raw competitiveness. My co-driver Vicki broke four ribs in one of last year's rallies when her seat tore loose from the floor pan. She gritted her teeth and somehow managed to navigate for the next three hours. Responsiveness to the condition of your car. The ability to concentrate 100 per cent is an absolute necessity."

On The Preparation of a Pro Rally Car: "You start by tearing a car to pieces and completely rebuilding it, strengthening and reinforcing wherever possible. This goes for the engine, running gear, chassis and body. Everything. It's no less exacting than building a stock car for the super speedways.

"In U.S. and Canadian performance rallies, there are no classes based on engine displacement or performance



A replica rally TR7 was an attraction on British Leyland displays at 1977 auto shows. The real thing is due to go on exhibit at the Detroit auto show January 14 and at Chicago February 25.

potential. This means that the serious competitors have their cars prepared right up to the hilt and they keep them that way. You've got to go this route to be competitive. British Leyland's certainly done it with the TR7 I drove. The interesting thing is that it's got so many stock components.

"In terms of the standards of preparation, performance rally cars represent a combination of the toughest off-road racers and IMSA All American GT cars."

On The Status Of American Drivers In World Competition: "We're going to have to play catch up to the Europeans for quite a while yet. They are years ahead of us in experience. No American and only one Canadian has won a world championship rally.

"I have as much experience as any other American in the sport and the best I was able to do in the 1977 Criterium rally in Quebec, North America's only world championship event, was fourth. Maybe I could have been third but there was no way I could have won this year.

"We have a long way to go but at least we've made a start."

ABOUT THE RALLY RECORD

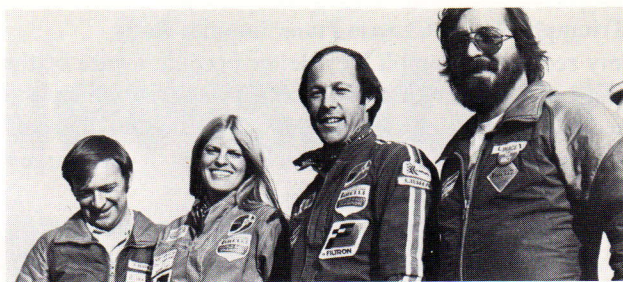
Listed here is the formidable record of John Buffum and co-driver Vicki's record of sixteen rallies, in which they competed during the eight months from April through November 1977.

They got away to a disappointing start, failing to finish the first four events and they only won one rally in the first half of the year. Undaunted, they then proceeded to win five in a row, four in Canada and one in California. One of their best efforts was finishing fourth in the big international rally in Quebec last August, the highest placed North American entrant against the seasoned professional teams from Europe. This is the first year John Buffum has driven the TR7.

This list clearly shows the many difficulties Buffum had to overcome and the early failures reflect the extremely rough road conditions of some of these rallies, involving him in several off-road incidents!



The first rally victory did not come until June, in the Piston les Wapitis in Quebec. All concerned celebrated with a victory cake at the prize giving. (L to R) Vicki; John Buffum; John Davenport, manager Leyland S/T from England; Kevin Best of Leyland UK; Den Green; crew chief Leyland S/T; Robin Tyler, Canada crew chief; and Walter Boyce, Canadian team driver.



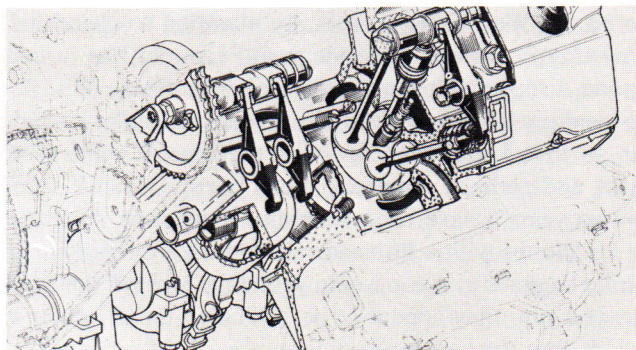
The 1977 British Leyland Triumph TR7 American rally team (L to R) Norman Busby, crew chief from England; 'Vicki', champion navigator; John Buffum, champion driver; and Jim Sottolano, mechanic.

JOHN BUFFUM TRIUMPH TR7 1977 RALLY RECORD, U.S.A. and CANADA

- April NARRA Olympus Rally, in Washington. DNF. Running first at the time.
- May NARRA Rim of the World, in California. DNF. Was first at the time.
- May SCCA Susquehannock Trail, in Pennsylvania. DNF.
- May NARRA 20 Stages, in Michigan. DNF.
- June CASC Piston les Wapitis in Quebec. First place.
- June CASC Baie des Chaleurs, in Quebec. Seventh.
- June SCCA La Jornada Trabajosa, in California. First place.
- July CASC Nova Scotia Highlands, in Nova Scotia. First place.
- July CASC Lobster Rally, in New Brunswick. First place.
- Aug. CASC Mountain Trials, in British Columbia. First place.
- Aug. CASC Rocky Mountain, in British Columbia. First place.
- Sept. FIA Criterium world championship rally, in Quebec. Fourth. Best North American.
- Sept. SCCA Sunriser, in Ohio. DNF.
- Oct. CASC Forest Rally, in Ontario. First place.
- Nov. SCCA Press on Regardless in Michigan. Finished third and clinched SCCA championship despite off-road excursion.
- Nov. CASC Tall Pines, in Ontario. DNF.

Note: The three organisations running 1977 high performance rallies in the USA and Canada were the Sports Car Club of America (National Pro Rally Championship), Canadian Auto Sports Club (North American Rally Cup), and North American Rally Race Association (America's Rally Cup).

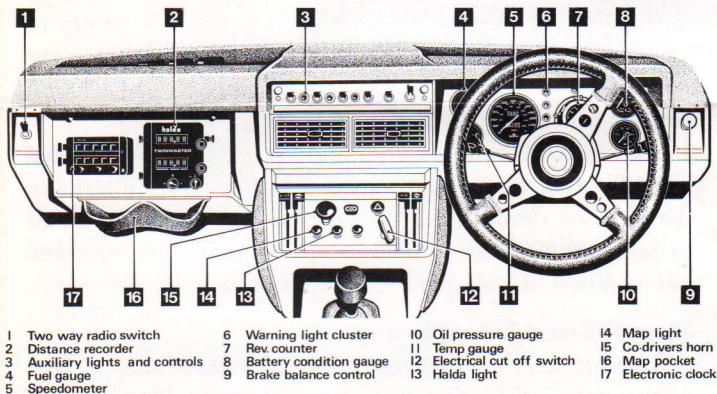
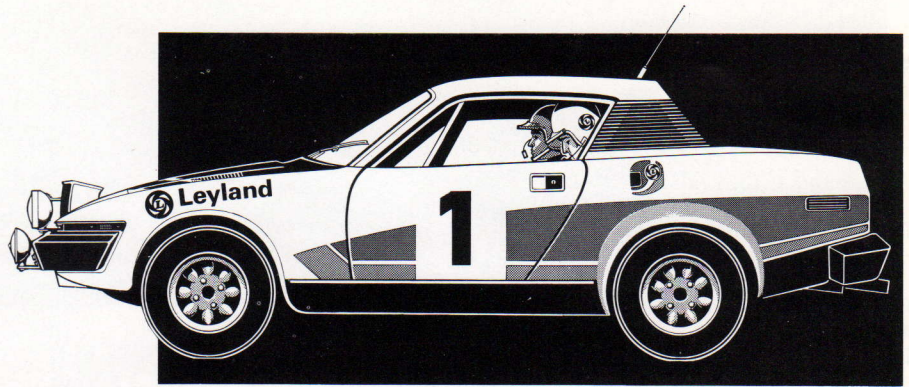
John Buffum's Triumph TR7 won the SCCA Pro Rally Championship and the Canadian club's North American Rally Cup. He gained some points at the beginning of the season when driving for Porsche in two events. He pulled out of the NARRA events to concentrate on the other two.



The rally TR7 uses the 16-valve 1,998cc 4-cyl. Dolomite Sprint racing engine from England. Inlet valves are operated directly by a single overhead camshaft, with the exhaust valves actuated by rocker arms. This is a Design Award-winning cylinder head, which helps develop an output of approx. 220bhp at 7000rpm.

TR7 Rallying in Europe — Success on the International Scene

Special equipment for high performance rally TR7s is very similar in both the European (shown here) and North American versions. Two-way radio connects the car to its service vehicle. Intercom radio is built into the crew's helmets. In case of accident all electrical systems can be cut off with one switch.



Out of the 70 finishers, Tony Pond came eighth overall, a creditable performance in this important international rally. TR7 during the 1977 season achieved two outright wins in the International Boucles de Spa rally in Belgium (February) and in the National Raylor Rally in Yorkshire (October). On both occasions the driver was 31-year-old Tony Pond from Marlow-on-Thames. In the RAC Rally in England the main competition came from Ford Escort and Toyota Celica.

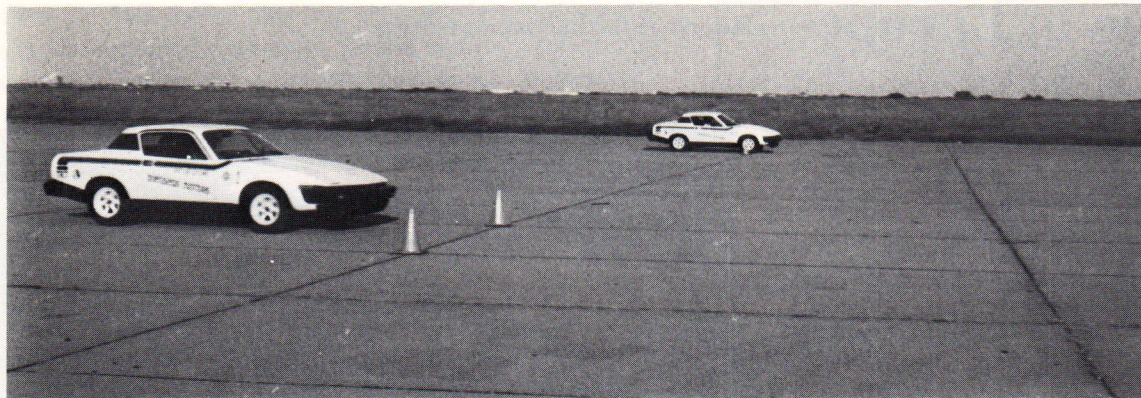
In Britain, Leyland Cars has had an extensive 1977 competition program with two Triumph TR7s prepared at their Abingdon, Oxfordshire, Motorsport operation and crewed regularly throughout the 1977 rally season by Brian Culcheth (team captain) and co-driver Johnstone Syer, plus young Tony Pond and his co-driver Fred Gallagher.

For the end-of-the-season Lombard-RAC Rally, run November 20/24, two other TR7s were added, one for Finnish rally ace Markku Saaristo from Helsinki and another for the Pat Ryan/Mike Nicholson combination. The Lombard-RAC Rally is regarded as one of the world's toughest. It covered 1,000 miles over five days and two nights through the North of England, Wales and Scotland.



(Above) "Brighter rallying by Leyland" reads the English announcement of the latest line of "eye-catching Leyland rally wear . . . natty and very practical!" Three types of quilted anoraks are offered in red, white and blue; lightweight for summer; heavy, quilted for winter; and a tailored ski-jacket. (Not yet available in USA.)

(Left) This is Brian Culcheth, Leyland team leader, driving his TR7 in the International Manx rally in the Isle of Man. The European program involves competition in many different countries.



The British Leyland Identical Car Championship was run using specially decorated TR7s. Two cars ran at once on identical, parallel courses. Then the drivers switched cars and courses to make sure everyone had an equal chance.

'SOLO II' NATIONAL RUN-OFFS
 —perhaps the fastest growing amateur racing

Whether a late Texas heat wave stimulated cars and drivers or whether the well-laid-out courses and spacious facility inspired every entrant to do his/her best, the competition in the 1977 Solo II Run-Offs was hot. At Great Southwest Raceway, Grand Prairie, Texas, from Sept. 30 thru Oct. 2, 360 entrants dashed among the pylons in a variety of cars ranging from full-race formula types to street-weary, bone-stock economy sedans.

British Leyland's participation consisted of overall sponsorship for the meet, plus staging of the Identical Car Championship, a "champion's run-off" in which the 21 class winners all drove Triumph TR7s on a special course. The winner of this event is, unofficially, the top cat in national Solo II competition.

Top man for '77 was Steve Davis of Marietta, Ga. Steve won the C-Stock class in a Jensen-Healey, then handily toured the IC course a second or so ahead of the competition.

Solo II competition is one-car-at-a-time racing over a pylon-marked course. It takes at most a couple of minutes and the waiting time for your turn is usually hours but it is a fast-growing part of the racing hobby. Tom Duval, executive director of the SCCA calls it the backbone of membership competition. It appeals to all types of enthusiasts and

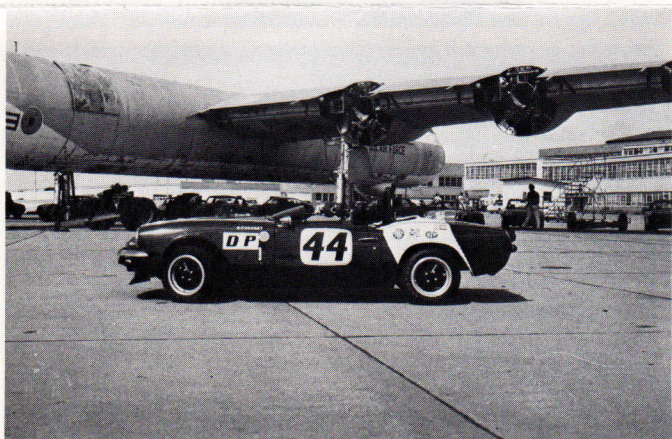
allows speed competition on the sort of budget which would never cover road racing. Actually, many road-racers go into solo events on off weekends. You will see plenty of women as well on their own or frequently sharing a car with husband or boy friend. Event officials set up the competition schedules to allow for shared cars.

Sharing a car reduces preparation time and expense but it also means that one blown engine puts two entrants in the pits. At Grand Prairie, when this happened to a pair of Sprite drivers, two other competitors offered rides and one resulted in a national championship!

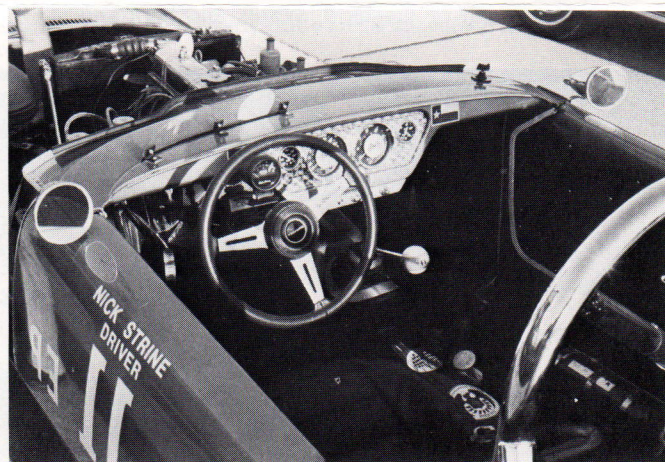
Many Different Triumphs Entered

Triumph entries at Great Southwest totalled fifteen. Best known was Jeff Garber who was last year's Identical Car Champion and who drove his street TR7 to Texas to compete in D-Stock. Jeff did not repeat his '76 performance and, sadly, no TRs were class winners. However, virtually every model was represented, including a TR4, 4A, several Spitfires, a GT6, TR6 and two TR7s.

Some of the Solo II statistics illustrate dramatically why it is called the fastest-growing part of amateur racing. Over 1000 local events, entered by 50,000 drivers, led up to the seven divisional championships in 1977. There will be more in '78 and, when they're weeded out, they will travel to Hutchinson, Kansas for the run-offs. We're looking forward to another great event.



A feature of the unused old Dallas-Fort Worth airport where the '77 Solo II Championships were held was a huge B-36 bomber. Left over from active duty in the 1950s, the craft is being disassembled gradually and transported by road to a new air museum. D. Guendet's Spitfire is in the foreground.



Nick Strine brought this very sharp, newly-prepared Spitfire. He and car were both quick but tough competition kept him down in the standings.

CLUB NEWS (Continued)

Big Triumph Club in Canada Plans Summer Rally

Only recently Triumph Newsletter became aware of the Triumph Autosport Club of Ottawa (TASCO) which was formed on St. Patrick's Day 1977. Yet already the club claims membership at 197, which makes it the largest Triumph marque club in Canada.

The club is already sending out flyers to attract a big entry for a Canada/USA International Triumph Rally, scheduled to be held Thursday through Sunday, June 1 to 4, 1978. The rallying point will be the very well equipped and generously sized campus of Carleton University at Ottawa, Canada's capital city in Ontario province. For instance there is a covered 500-car park (for rain conditions), Olympic swimming pool and indoor track, and ample dining facilities.

There will be auto slalom, hill climbing, radar speed testing and Concours, plus plenty of get-togethers and even a city tour by London double-decker bus. Prices are moderate at \$16.75 single and \$12.25 double accommodation per person, including breakfast. Pre-registration fee is \$35 payable to Triumph Autosport Club of Ottawa, 1300 Pinecrest (Suite 2109), Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2C-3M5.

Unfortunately the Canada rally is planned for the same dates as the Triumph Register of America's national meeting near Davis, West Virginia, as announced in Triumph Newsletter, Oct/Nov 1977.

New Triumph Club in Indiana

A new Triumph owners club based on Marion, Indiana, is in process of forming. Preliminary meeting was due January 28th at the Chantecleer Restaurant, Upland, Marion, Indiana at 1 pm. All interested Triumph enthusiasts in the area should contact James Dickey, 1017 Plainview Drive, Marion, Indiana 46952 (317-674-8337).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Triumph Club Visitor from England

"I propose taking a short holiday in the U.S.A. late in 1978 and while I am there I would like to visit some Triumph owners clubs, meet the members, give a short talk on the club I belong to (Triumph Sporting Owners Club) and generally fly the flag for British Triumph clubs and cars.

I would like club addresses in the New York area and also on the West Coast as it is my intention to spend half of my stay in each of these areas and I would like to correspond directly with the various club secretaries. Will you also send me details of your competition calendar for next year so that I can time my visit to coincide with some events, and perhaps compete if I can borrow a car. For the last two years I have been running a Spitfire in Autotests and Hillclimbs with a little success and a lot of enjoyment. I would be grateful if you would define the types of competitions you run; they appear to be similar to those I enter in the U.K. but the names are different."

Keith E. Redhead, 1068 Bury Road, Brightmet,
Bolton, Lancashire, England

(Clubs interested, please write direct.—Editor)

Readers Welcome to Advertise

"Thanks for a really good newsletter. I enjoy reading each issue, especially the technical tips and new product bits. How does one make use of your classified section? —This is also an interesting bit to read."

Robert Cook, Brooklyn, N.Y.

(Triumph Newsletter readers and members of Triumph clubs are welcome to submit short Classified Advertisements of items 'For Sale' or items 'Wanted'. However, we cannot accept responsibility in these transactions and publication is intended only as a service, for which no cost is charged. Commercial advertising from dealers, parts manufacturers, etc., is not accepted.—Editor)

CLASSIFIED

WANTED

TR250 in good running condition. Body must be whole, but need not be immaculate. Also, a surrey top, complete. Kent & Joan Martin, 551 Lakelawn Blvd., Aurora, IL 60506. (312) 896-9239.

Factory hardtop for Triumph TR6. Will travel to make pickup if necessary. Call or write anytime. Ray McIver, 1319 N. Hobart St., Philadelphia, Pa. 19131. (215) 877-8450; Work (215) 293-0550.

One 15"x5", 4 bolt, 4½ bolt circle, eight spoked mag wheel. Looks similar to a minilite, but was made by the American Racing Equipment Co. John J. Busick, Box 191, West Park, N.Y. 12493. (914) 384-6743.

Fender beading for Triumph TR3A rear only. 2-long beading part No. 553925; 2-short beading part No. 554172. Must be like new condition, original only. Marlin Dale Bell, P.O. Box 405, Shepherd, Michigan 48883. (517) 828-6161.

TSOA SUPERMARKET

The following items are to be ordered from TSOA Leonia.

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| Local TSOA Club "Calling Cards" | FREE |
| List of Triumph Dealers and Distributors | FREE |
| Replacement TSOA badge | \$2.50 |
| TSOA Handbook, 2nd Edition | \$2.50 |
| Supplement to TSOA Handbook, 1973 | \$.75 |
| TR-4/TR-4A Competition Preparation Manual | \$3.00 |
| SPITFIRE 1500 Competition Preparation Manual | \$3.00 |
| TR-250/TR-6 Competition Preparation Manual | \$3.00 |
| GT-6+ Competition Preparation Manual | \$3.00 |
| Competition Parts list (Specify model) | FREE |
| TSOA Jacket Emblem | \$1.00 |
| (Club Discount—1 Dozen) | \$10.00 |
| Official Triumph Jacket Emblem | \$.50 |
| Triumph Sportscar Champions Jacket Emblem | \$1.00 |
| British Leyland Competition Stickers, Mylar | 2 for \$1.00 |
| British Leyland Competition Patches (Helmet) | (12 for \$10.00) \$1.00 |
| British Leyland Patches | (12 for \$10.00) \$1.00 |
| Triumph history 34-page reprint ("Automobile Quarterly") | \$1.95 |
| "Triumph—50 Years of Sports Car" history poster | \$3.00 |

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Please make checks payable to British Leyland Motors Inc.

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EDITOR: JOHN F. DUGDALE

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We shall be pleased to consider for publication any reports, photos and results of newsworthy Triumph events submitted by readers. Original articles, illustrations and technical notes will be paid for at our current rates. Six issues are published each year, bi-monthly.

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