

Triumph Newsletter



TSOA

TRIUMPH SPORTS OWNERS ASSOCIATION



VOLUME 27, NUMBER 1

600 Willow Tree Road • Leonia, New Jersey 07605

JAN.-FEB. 1981

Special 'Tribute to Spitfire' Issue

\$1,000 REBATES FOR TRIUMPH SPITFIRE SPORTS CARS

LEONIA, N.J.—A consumer rebate plan offering \$1,000 on 1980 Triumph Spitfires in all states except California was announced February 23, 1980. Triumph Spitfires were not available in California.

The manufacturer's suggested list price for the 1980 Spitfire, pre-rebate, is \$7,365 at ports of entry. The car is a two-seat sports convertible with a four-cylinder engine delivering 33mpg on the highway and 21mpg in the city, according to the EPA. Spitfire buyers may elect to have the rebate applied towards the down payment.

The company's last rebate program in 1980 more than doubled Triumph sales during the period the program was in effect.

At the time of going to press, the rate of sale in the first 30 days of the rebate program had increased nearly four times over 1980 and it was expected that remaining stocks at dealers nationwide would be sold out by June. So hurry if you want to be the owner of one of the last of the Spitfires.

WATCH FOR THESE ADS

In support of the 1980 Spitfire sales rebate program, Allen L. Taylor, national advertising manager for JRT has announced a strong advertising campaign with the headline, "Announcing the Great Triumph Spitfire Rebate" and appearing during March/April in Time, Newsweek, People, Sports Illustrated, Omni, Tennis, and AutoWeek.

Meanwhile marketing of the Triumph TR7 and TR8 models continues as actively, especially with the demand for convertible sportscars increasing with the spring weather. The former's advertising carries the headline, "TR7. Nothing less than the reinvention of the sports car!" For the TRs, magazines added are Ski, Car and Driver, and Road & Track.



SPITFIRE PRODUCTION ENDS AT CANLEY, ENGLAND

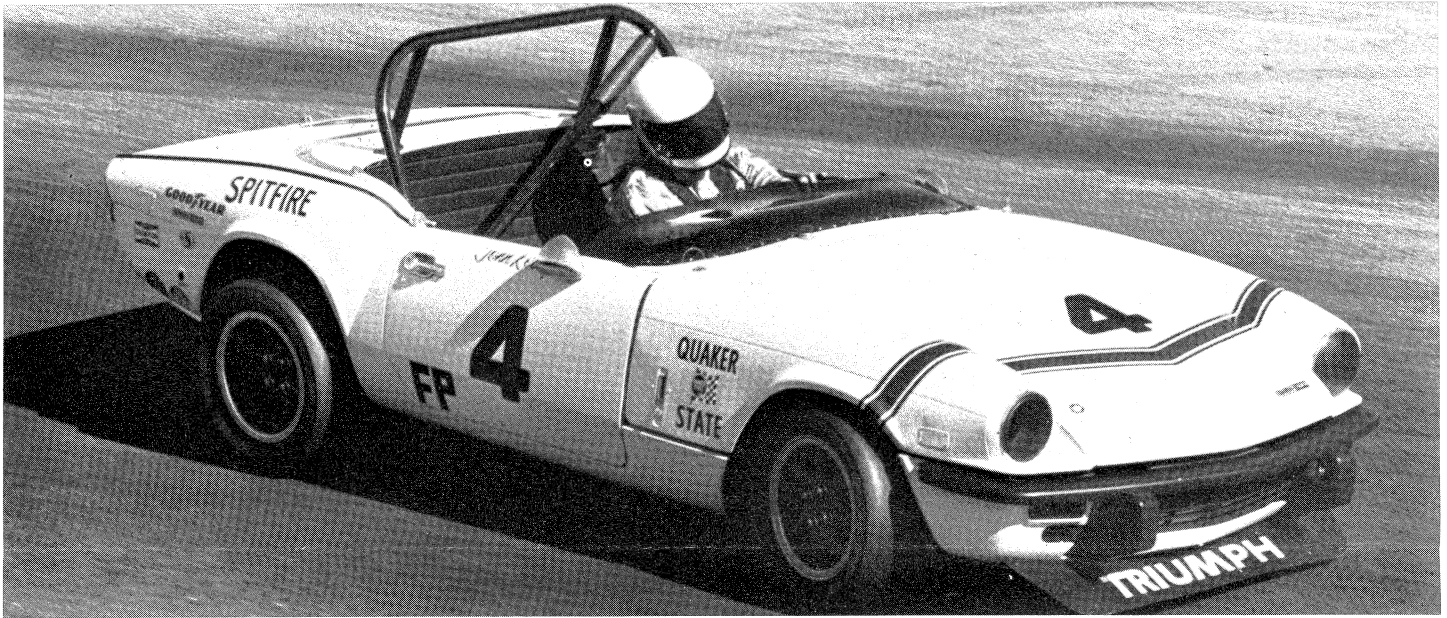
Production of all Triumph cars, including Spitfires, ended at the Canley factory in Coventry, last fall. The last Spitfire 1500, to UK specification, was coloured bright yellow and destined for BL Heritage's museum at Syon Park near London. Since it was launched 18 years ago more than 276,000 Spitfires have been built, the majority being bought by Americans.

The old Canley factory first opened in 1916 for WWI production of Sopwith fighter aircraft and after the war it was taken over by Standard cars. Following WWII, during which Standard was building Bristol aircraft engines, Standard took over Triumph cars, launching in 1948 the handsome 1800 Roadster and the popular Standard Vanguard sedan, under the vigorous management of Sir John Black.

Triumph took over the limelight at Canley with the introduction in 1953 of the TR2 sportscar and the pretty little Mayflower sedan. In 1959/1960 came the Herald with independent suspension, bolt-on panels, and forward-hinged engine hood, a very advanced car for its day and which provided the basis for the 1962/1963 Spitfire.

In 1960 Standard Triumph became part of the Leyland group, which in turn merged with British Motor Holdings to become BL in 1968. News that Canley might cease car production came as early as 1976 but TR7 production moved there first when the Speke, Liverpool, plant was closed. TR7 has since been moved to the more modern and efficient Rover plant at Solihull, Birmingham.

SPITFIRE IN COMPETITION



1970 & 1973: In both those years John Kelly drove a Group 44 Spitfire to an SCCA National Championship in its class.

by Richard M. Langworth

Recalling the days of 130 mph Spitfires at Le Mans 1964/1965

(This article is based on Dick Langworth's authoritative book "Triumph Cars: The complete 75-year History"; available from Dragonwyck Publishing Ltd., Box 385-T, Contoocock, N.H. 03229, at \$25.95)

With the Spitfire joining the TR4 in 1963, Leyland enlarged its competition department and made expensive plans to build a strong race and rally record. Key to the endeavor was the 70X engine, which included a full race cam, twin dual-throat Weber carbs, eight-port cylinder head and free-flow exhaust system—a veritable rocket engine for such a light sports car. 70X modifications were applied to either the 1150 or 1,300 cc Spitfire engines, depending on racing classes. They resulted in 109 bhp in the former, and no less than 117 hp in the latter. The 1964 Le Mans cars used an all-synchro TR4 gearbox, but subsequent versions and all rally cars had the Spitfire box, with an all-synchro first gear derived from the prototype GT6. A limited-slip differential, taut



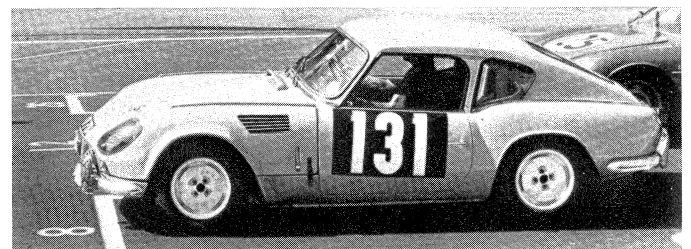
1964/1965: Probably the fastest Spitfires ever were the 130/140 mph versions run at Le Mans as coupes. Car shown was built for the Grand Prix of Macao.

suspension, 18-gallon fuel tank, oversized brakes and lightened frame completed the mechanical package.

Two of the three 1964 Le Mans Spitfires crashed, but the third finished 21st overall at 94.7 mph, zooming down the Mulsanne Straight at speeds up to 133 mph, well ahead of the works Sprites. One car later won its class at the Monthlèry 1000 km sports car race. When the cars entered Sebring the following year they finished 2-3 in class. Lightened for Le Mans '65, two Spitfires came in 13-14, averaging about the same speed as 1964 but clocking close to 140 mph on the Mulsanne.

Because Le Mans and the Alpine Rally had conflicting dates in 1964, a separate batch of 70X rally Spitfires was developed. Triumph also wanted to keep their much-modified Le Mans cars in the hands of the experimental department, whereas the rally cars were run by the competitions people along with TR4s and 2000s. Rally Spitfires for 1964 used the production hardtop and the stock body shell, with aluminum bonnet, doors, fenders and deck.

The Spitfires failed to do well in the '64 Alpine, but a few weeks later they scored a comeback in the Tour de France. All but one had dropped out by the end—but that car, driven



1964: A year after its 1963 introduction, the Spitfire became a racing coupe for the Tour de France and won its class.

“GOODBYE MICHO...”

by Terry Hunter and Rob Slotemaker, swept to a class victory, ahead of a gnat-swarm of Renault Alpines. And in 1965 Triumph made up its 1964 disappointment by finishing the Alpine 1-2 in the prototype category. Here the Spitfires outlasted all the Alfas and Porsches, which were favored but dropped out with a variety of mechanical problems.

In 1966, competition rules were altered to ban components like the 70X engine and light-alloy or fiberglass bodies, so the competition Spitfires became ineligible for additional work. Undoubtedly they would have continued to do well. Graham Robson best summarizes their achievements: “They proved once and for all that the swing-axle rear suspension could be made to work really well if a soft ride was not considered essential... They were cars which surprised their competition and they made many friends inside and outside the factory.”

And Success in America

In the U.S., where SCCA road racing was the most widespread form of sports car competition, the Spitfire also upheld the reputation of the marque. G-Production Spits won three of the ‘geographic’ national championships of 1965 and repeated as national champion in 1968 and 1971-73. Larger engined F-Production Spitfires also triumphed, winning the championship in 1968-70 and again in 1973, led by Group 44 drivers Brian Fuerstenau and John Kelly. They have missed only one year since (See List of Champions).

Whatever Spitfire you’re driving, there’s one distinction you can count on; being behind the wheel of a champion, with more race and rally wins to its credit than 98 percent of all the cars on the road. And in these days of computer designed people haulers that have come no closer to a race track than the parking lot, that’s saying quite a lot.



A personal memoir about Giovanni Michelotti, the famous Italian stylist of Spitfire and many Triumph cars including the Herald, TR4, GT6 and Stag

Stylist Michelotti, in 1957.

(We regret that the death of stylist Giovanni Michelotti last year went unrecorded at the time in Triumph Newsletter. Rather than publish the usual news obituary, we invited a colleague of his in styling—Bruce McWilliams—to write this more personal tribute.

For many years Bruce McWilliams held senior executive posts with Triumph and then BL companies, most lately as vice-president of product planning, based in Leonia, N.J. He recently left the company to take up another appointment.—Ed.)

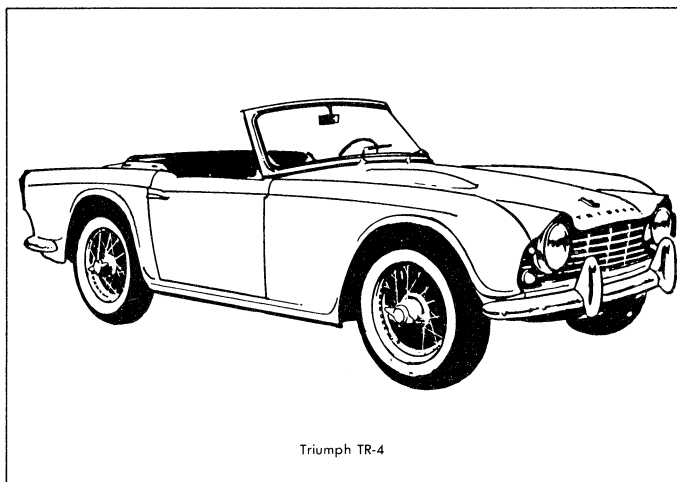
TRIUMPH SPITFIRE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, SCCA

G-Production

- 1965 Midwest: David Kiser
- 1965 Southeast: Donald Kearney
- 1965 Southwest: Donald Smith
- 1968: Don Devendorf
- 1971: Marshall Meyer
- 1972: Rick Cline
- 1973: Rick Cline
- 1975: Jerry Barker

F-Production

- 1968: Brian Fuerstenau
- 1969: Lee Mueller
- 1970: John Kelly
- 1973: John Kelly
- 1974: Rick Cline
- 1975: Ken Slagle
- 1977: Tom Collier
- 1978: Jack May
- 1979: Steve Johnson
- 1980: Jerry Barker



Triumph TR-4

I met Giovanni Michelotti in April of 1967 at the Triumph styling studio in Coventry. We had, at the time, an immense sales problem which I had proposed solving by clear designation of a new model in the TR series. The model was distinguished by a different and more powerful engine but the factory had intended leaving its appearance indistinguishable from the preceeding model. Their reasons were time and cost, neither of which could be ignored.

Remarkable appearance changes can be effected with cosmetic devices which cost little and can be accomplished quickly. While the factory was tantalized by such a simple solution and invited me to come to Triumph Styling and work something out, various senior executives harbored a lingering doubt about what sounded like a magic trick to be performed by a man they hardly knew. As a form of insurance, perhaps, they called their long-time styling associate Michelotti who had done a fair amount of excellent work for them and who was a famous stylist.

Micho arrived and I told him what I proposed to do. Now many a man in his position would have been miffed, but not Micho. He rolled up his sleeves, took a car while I went to work on another, and cut and pasted that as I worked on mine.

At the end of the day, Micho, dissatisfied with what he'd wrought—and understandably so, after all he was a purist, used to starting from scratch—tore off the tapes and stuck-on bits and pieces, rolled the whole lot into a ball, flung it in the air and strode out of the studio.

'His Enormous Contribution'

That night we all had dinner with Harry Webster, engineering director of Triumph, and his wife at their lovely old house in Kenilworth and roared with laughter about tape schemes and other ploys to make a new model.

It is a great pity that special recognition was not given to Michelotti by the Corporation when his critical illness first surfaced. The reason was, no doubt, that so many executive changes had occurred that those with whom he once worked closely had gone elsewhere and new people were less aware of his enormous contribution. Indeed, one could say that between the yeas of 1957 and 1966 Michelotti was the spirit behind the styling of almost all Triumph models, and their considerable acceptance underscored the skill of his many and diverse designs.

The Triumph Herald was a noteworthy success, bringing a very rationalized concept to car design and featuring easily detached body panels (owners could even convert their sedans into stationwagons by purchasing a few extra panels) and greater glass areas than had been typical until then. The

Herald, in its way, was a landmark car, even to a collapsible steering column long before this became a legal requirement. Triumph sports cars, such as the TR4, Spitfire, GT6, were enthusiastically received by sports car lovers for many years and the Stag is now becoming a collector's item.

Styled Ferraris

Michelotti, in his relatively small studio in Turin, was extremely productive and by no means confined his efforts to Triumph. Going back to a pre-Triumph era, while working at Ghia-Aigle and later Vignale, Micho styled some of the very early Ferraris. He is, indeed, credited with originating the recessed and elliptical radiator opening and egg crate grille, Ferrari trademarks ever since. At Vignale he produced designs for some of the greatest Ferrari models, particularly the 340 coupes and spyders of the early fifties. He also did considerable work on Lancia and Fiat models, among others, and even styled some of the cars built by Briggs Cunningham. His studio, at the time of his death, was completing a new Ferrari spyder, one of a batch of three, for his old customer in America, Luigi Chinetti.

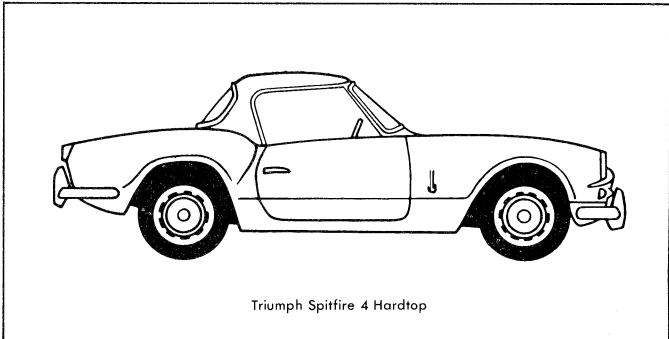
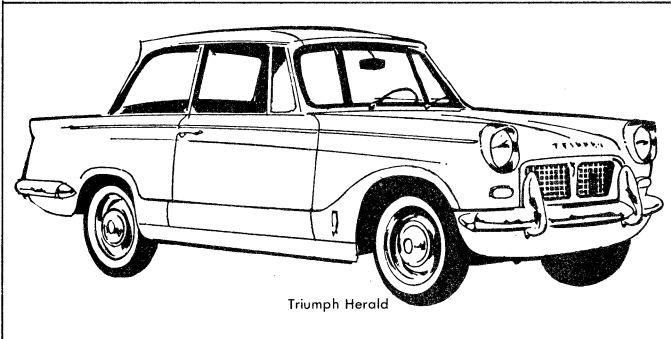
Once, while I was on a visit to Micho's studio, he showed me a marvelous scaled down version of a monoposto Cisitalia racing car. I was naturally interested and as best as I could recall, he told me that the Dusio family, proprietors of Cisitalia, had him build it for their young son. Years later, after Mr. Dusio had died, the car was returned to Micho by Dusio's widow for safe keeping at the studio. The various elements of the car, suspension, steering wheel, etc. were beautifully crafted, very much like a real racing car—a marvelously unique toy and by now, undoubtedly, quite valuable.

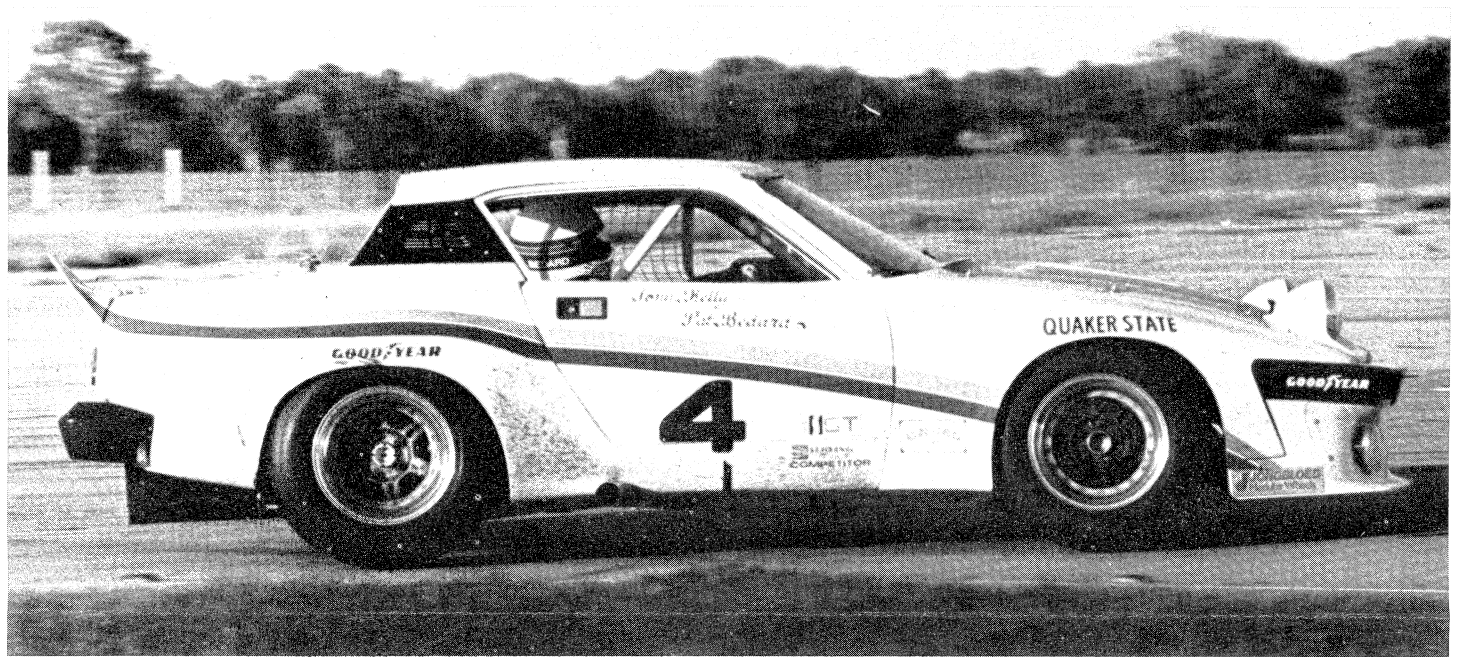
Micho also had a passion for doing so-called "beach" cars. In addition to various one-offs, his workshop turned out a series version called the Jolly on a Fiat chassis. This car featured delightful wicker seats and teak deck effects. Just the sort of thing to be used as a land-going tender for a millionaire's yacht at Monte Carlo.

It was very sad to learn of his death last year, bringing to an end an era of automobile styling brightened and distinguished by the designs of Giovanni Michelotti.

His son carries on with his work, a fact which had been a source of immense pleasure and satisfaction to Micho. True to tradition, BL continues to turn to the Michelotti Studios for various styling projects. Micho was a very practical man and I believe would regard this continued association as sufficient tribute to the many wonderful contributions he made over the years to the styling of Triumph automobiles.

J. Bruce McWilliams





TR8 in 1981 Racing Form: Here is the TR8 driven by John Kelly and Pat Bedard in the Sebring 12 Hour March 20/21. They were leading their class at the ninth hour but were then delayed by gearbox trouble. Bob Tullius drove the lead TR8 to 10th overall and fourth in class, despite time lost to damage by another car and mechanical problems.

Club News

The Portland Triumph Owners Association officers have been selected for 1981. Graden Davis is president, Terry Hildebrand vice-president, Ton McCoy treasurer, Kathi Crull, secretary and Don Chalmers, membership. This long-standing group has 85 members. They recently enjoyed their 9th annual banquet featuring a huge cake decorated with the PTOA logo. Provided by TR6 owner Kathee Woodward. For P.T.O.A. membership information, contact:

Don Chalmers
Rte 4, Box 442
Troutdale, Oregon 97060
503 665-2493

New Connecticut Club Progressing

The Connecticut Triumph Association, formation of which we announced in the December issue, has held a couple of meetings already and has elected officers. Those interested in joining should write to Membership Chairwomen, Marilyn Childs, Hill Rd., Harwinton, Ct. 06791.

Expanding Massachusetts Triumph Club

Another Triumph club in the Northeast mentioned in the December issue was the Triumph Owners of New England (TONE). They have recently become fully affiliated with TSOA, now having 50 members and putting out a club publication called "Trials, Triumphs and Tribulations". Official address is TONE, PO Box 64, Waban, Mass. 02168. President for 1981 is J. Jeffrey Garber, 34 Yetten Terr., Waltham, Mass. 02154 (617) 891-3730. The club puts on several rallies and outings each year and is aiming at SCCA Solo II racing. The club itself owns a GT6 which it is preparing for Solo II. All the officers are based in Massachusetts.

Early '81 Race Results

First results in from SCCA show some wins and some near misses for Triumph racers. AT West Palm Beach, Feb. 15, Ira Van Syoc's Spitfire was a winner in FP. Dennis Ritchie gained second place in GP with a Spitfire Mk 2. Reggie Smith's TR7 was second in DP.

At Riverside, California on the same date, national FP champ Jerry Barker had to be satisfied with second in class followed by Peter Law, also in a Spitfire 1500. Travis Duder was second in GP in his Spitfire.

We'll report the results as they come in... it already looks like a good season for Triumph.

Letters to the Editor

Wanted: Stag Clubs

Saw your Editors Note with the letter from R.E. Rogers Jr. of Little Rock (TN Oct/Nov 1980), about whether there are any Stag owners clubs. I believe at least one exists and the following name was given to me, Stag Club of America, (attention William Mayo), P.O. Box 26453, Tucson, Arizona 85726. Mrs. believed they were formed in 1975 and have a quarterly publication Stag Ramblings.

S.R.
Orange, CT

TR7 Canadian Fender Flap

"While visiting Victoria, Canada, recently I talked to Thomas Plimleys Ltd. BL dealers. They have very pretty Triumph logos (TR7 and TR8) on white, rubber fender flaps for front and rear. Does anyone know a source in the U.S. for these?"

Don Chalmers, Rt. 4, Box 442
Troutdale, Oregon 97060

(These are not a JRT Leonia item. Can anyone help Don?—Ed.)

Speedometer Surge

"The speedometer in my Stag has a bouncy needle. For example at 55 mph it bounces from the very low 50s to the high 50s, so you never know what your speed is. This is distracting and in my opinion a safety hazard. We tried lubing the cable and it did not work. Please ask your experts how to correct this deficiency?"

R.E. Rogers Jr.
13900 Cooper Orbit Cove
Little Rock, Arkansas 72210

(Ed. Note: If lubrication doesn't help there are several possibilities which can't be diagnosed by mail. The local dealer can help determine if the fault is in the cable, the cable run or the speedo head.)

Races for TR7 only

In Australia they have invented a successful form of motor racing restricted entirely to Triumph TR7s. There is a whole series for 1981, called the Barclays TR7 Pro-Am and the races are run at Amaroo Park in New South Wales. The first round one was won by Jim Richards, a professional. Colin Bond placed second and Bob Morris, third, are pros too. But fourth place Peter Hopwood represented the amateurs in the 10-lap event. The racing is close and exciting for somehow they claim "the cars are equal." One professional commented, "I get into the Pro-Am series because I thought it was a damned good thing. The fun has gone out of the other forms of racing but in the TR7s we can still *race*." We hope to tell you more about this unique form of racing.

VINTAGE TRIUMPH REGISTER NATIONAL MEET SET FOR POCONO MOUNTAINS, JULY 23-26

VTR, assisted by the Delaware Valley Triumphs, North New Jersey Triumph Association and the Long Island Triumph Association, will hold its National Convention at the Holiday Inn, Bartonsville, Pa., from Thursday July 23 through Sunday July 26. All Triumph owners are welcome and TRs of any age right through 1981 can enter and compete. VTR membership is desirable but not required.

There will be an autocross/gymkhana, concours, rally, photo contest and even a model car contest (Triumph models only). This is a low-key event, planned for maximum enjoyment and for the best utilization of your Triumph as an on-the-road vehicle, not just a showpiece.

Make your own motel reservations by contacting:

Holiday Inn

Rte 611 and I-80 Exit 46 N.

Bartonsville, Pa., 18321

Rates from \$30 single to \$44 quad.

For Convention information, write:

Doug Hitzig, Registrar

P.O. Box 81

Brightwaters, N.Y. 11718

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE

1973 Triumph Stag; Approximate 42,000 miles, White, with brown interior. 5-speed overdrive. Rebuilt engine with spare parts. Excellent condition. Contact, Don Lilly—home (513) 433-3326 or office (513) 227-7260.

NOS & used TR2/3/3A/4/4A parts. Some body and interior parts available. Gauges at cheap prices. Lots of NOS TR2 and 3 brake parts. Must sell—lost storage. Send SASE with request to A. Azcona 3737 Broadway, Gary, Indiana 46409.

1971 Triumph Stag, Burgundy with Black interior, all original equipment, excellent condition, 43,000 miles, power steering, power brakes, power windows, chrome wire wheels. \$5,200. Lt. Douglas E. Maxwell, 15415 Strollways Drive, Chesterfield, MO 63011.

1954 TR2, Serial No. TS1335. Gray re-paint (original color Geranium), wire wheels, 50,000 original miles. California distributor's personal car in 1954. Body excellent, battery box rot repaired, paint dull. Needs new top and upholstery. Stored several years, engine rebuilt prior to storage. Not running. \$3000. John Christy (213) 885-6567.

1973 Stag. Black 4 speed with hard top. Excellent throughout. 55,000 miles. All original. Trans whines in 1 thru 3 and needs shocks. \$6,500 or best offer as is or \$7,000 with a rebuilt trans to install. 1972 Stag body (white) complete with black vinyl hardtop. Excellent. \$2,000 or best offer. Arthur W. Schwank, 4 Warren St. 2A, Stamford, Ct. 06902. (203) 327-3005 ext. 241 days and (203) 327-1322 home.

Good 58 TR-3 frame with engine and driveline in place. Perfect beginning for a "ground-up." Gary Goodman, 520 E. Wenger Rd., Englewood, Ohio 45322. (513) 836-5637.

TR4, Herald, TR3A NOS Parts also TR3 used hardtop \$200.00, TR3 overdrive trans. \$150.00, rear o.d. TR3, \$150.00. S.A.S.E. for list or send your needs. E. Grochowling, 1620 Furnace Dr., Glen Burnie, Md. 21061. (301) 768-8981.

Pre-1969 Triumph engine parts. Miscellaneous TR3-TR4-Spitfire, Herald, Vanguard items from repair shop stock. Write for list to Brian A. Duka, Box 3, Plainfield, Pa. 17081. (712) 243-2563 or 766-8711.

1965 Triumph TR4. Restored 5 years ago including, top and interior. Since suffered damage to front fender. Will consider offer. Glenn Jurck, 512 Sheryl Lane, Glenview, Illinois 60025. (312) 729-4130.

WANTED

Hardtop needed for 1973 Stag V8. Please write with suggestions for finding this scarce item to, R.E. Rogers, Jr., 13900 Cooper Orbit Drive, Little Rock, Arkansas 72210.

BUY, SELL and SWAP! Sales brochures, advertisements, manuals and handbooks for all Triumph models including pre war. Terry O'Beirne, c/o Box 551, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

Copy of "Triumph Spitfire 4, Competition Preparation and Stage Tuning" by Standard Triumph Limited approximately 1965. Terry O'Beirne c/o Box 551, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

TSOA SUPERMARKET

The following items are to be ordered from TSOA Leonia.

Local TSOA Club "Calling Cards"	FREE
List of Triumph Dealers	FREE
Replacement TSOA Badge	\$2.50
TSOA Handbook, 2nd Edition	\$2.50
Supplement to TSOA Handbook, 1973	\$.75
SPITFIRE 1500 Competition Preparation Manual	\$3.00
TR-250/TR-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
Competition Patches (Helmet)	\$1.00
Competition Decals (Helmet)	\$1.00
Triumph history 34-page reprint ("Automobile Quarterly")	\$1.95
"Triumph—50 Years of Sports Car" history poster	\$5.00

Send Check or Money Order. No C.O.D.'s please.
Please make checks payable to Jaguar Rover Triumph Inc.

THE TRIUMPH NEWSLETTER—for Triumph enthusiasts (founded 1956)

EDITOR: JOHN F. DUGDALE

Published by Jaguar Rover Triumph Inc., in cooperation with the Triumph Sports Owners Association. Yearly subscription in US and possessions is \$3 for TSOA members and \$5 for non-members. TSOA is a factory sponsored national organisation co-ordinating approved Triumph owner clubs in the USA and Canada.

Address correspondence to: The Editor, Triumph Newsletter, 600 Willow Tree Road, Leonia, New Jersey 07605.