



STAG NEWS



Magazine of the Triumph Stag Club USA
Spring 2020 | Issue 107



Aussie Stags

A Stag at 505,000km • My Stag Affair • More

Triumph Stag Club USA

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Submissions to Stag News

Submissions should preferably be non-formatted MS Word documents. Articles of 1,500-2,000 words are preferable but larger submissions can be accommodated. The Editor reserves the right to make changes to any submission for layout purposes. Photographs or diagrams should be sent separately as high-definition JPG files (>4000KB) with appropriate cut-line/caption descriptions. The author should provide a short biography. Send by e-mail to the Editor ahead of the deadline dates of March 1, June 1, September 1 and December 1 for inclusion in a future issue.

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Our website URL's are:

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NEW MEMBERS

Since Winter Issue #106

Jay DeJong, Pella, IA

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James Horsch, Fort Meyers, FL

Amy MacFarlane, Southampton, ON

Jim McKenzie, Sioux City, IA

Tim Mikovsky, Gilbert, AZ

David Munson, New Braunfels, TX

John Norcross, Hope, NJ (Rejoined from 2017)

Scott Reeves, Decatur, GA

Brian Smith, Mulmur, ON

Mike Theis, Oakdale, MN

George Wallace, Fajardo, PR (Rejoined from 2019)

Brad Wik, Cheboygan, MI (Rejoined from 2017)

STAG TECHNICAL RESOURCE

Honorary Club Member, Tony Hart of Tony Hart Stag Parts, has kindly agreed to act as a technical resource for any TSCUSA members who may have a problem with their Triumph Stags. Tony has extended an open invitation for Members to reach out to him at **E-mail:** triumphstags@aol.com or by **Phone:** 011 44 783 620 2347. When contacting Tony, please remember his time zone is 5 to 8 hours ahead of the continental USA.

PLEASE CONSIDER CONTRIBUTING

Producing a magazine dedicated to a single classic car model issue after issue, as we do at Stag News, can be challenging. In order to keep providing interesting articles and stories, we need to hear from more of our membership. Thanks to those who have already stepped up to the plate and prepared a once off submission or have become regular contributors.

Please consider sending us an illustrated article about your Triumph Stags; the hunt for a suitable model, the restoration projects completed or underway, the modifications you have made, the difficulties faced, why you still love them, the outings and trips you take, the shows and events that you attend, the friends and associates with whom you share this passion.

We would like to hear from members in as many different States and Provinces (and internationally) as possible in order to keep the content regionally balanced.

Renew your membership ON-LINE at
www.tscusa.org/join.asp

DEADLINE

The deadline for the next issue of
STAG NEWS is:

Jun. 1, 2020

To submit material for publication
refer to details on inside front cover

On the Cover

Steve Ellis' 1976 Inca
yellow on Black Stag
Queensland, AUS

Photo: Steve Ellis



Like to have your photo on the front cover? Send high resolution JPG files to the Editor at Publisher@TSCUSA.org

Stag Celebrations



The TSCUSA-sponsored Triumph Stag 50th Anniversary Gathering in Vancouver, BC around the All British Field Meet was coming up shortly (May 15-17). We were really pleased with the interest shown by Stag owners in western Canada and the USA but the organizers of the ABFM car show have advised us that because of the COVID-19 situation, they have postponed their event until August or September (date to be announced) and we have decided to do likewise. We will confirm the new dates once finalized.

Meanwhile Tony Fox's annual TSCUSA Bronte Stag Weekend (September 18-20) remains on schedule at which an expected 50 Stags will participate from Ontario and adjacent States and Provinces. This has all the makings of an exceptional event with more Stags in one place anywhere in North America, barring BL's Baltimore dock-side off loading area in the early 1970s.

In this issue, we have added a bit of an antipodean flavor with some stories from Stag owners in Australia. It must have taken quite a leap of faith to purchase a Stag new in the mid-1970s when the nearest British Leyland dealership could be 1,000 km away! These stories of Stags in regular, long-distance usage, under high ambient temperatures, now clocking 375,000, 510,000 and a whopping 750,000 kms show that the Stag, if properly cared for, can be a reliable trans-continental grand tourer as originally conceived by Triumph. John Powell of the Australian Stag Registry advises that the Stag only had a couple of full import seasons there with perhaps 1,500-2,000 total imports. He knows of six original owners and another hand-me-down from father to son. It's certainly turning out to be an *annus horribilis* for our Australian friends coping with such widespread wildfire devastation. Elsewhere in the issue, John Howard recounts his experience of bringing some boxes of Stag parts and a bare metal body shell through a complete rebuild to a gold award winner at last year's Triumphest in Santa Maria, CA.

Terence McKillen

Left: Some of the special Stag Anniversary badges that we have spotted so far this year

Founder's Corner

It's Spring

As the typical winter snow and ice slowly melts in northeastern Pennsylvania, I am busy finishing about six or seven projects with our machine shop and transmission rebuilder. All these projects have taken up most of the winter and spring, hopefully to return back to their owners by the end of April in time for the 2020 driving season. I must convey my pleasant surprise at the volume of engine, heads, transmissions and differentials sent to Triumph Stag Parts USA for restoration! Thank those of you who have entrusted these projects to us and I assure you that we will do the utmost effort to complete all projects to your satisfaction.

As your club Founder I am very happy with our club membership now standing at around 325 from the USA, Canada, U.K, France and Australia. Thank you all for your support of our efforts, without which we would not be able to continue the preservation of our beloved Triumph Stags!

We hope you enjoyed receiving the TSCUSA 2020 Calendar and the 50th Anniversary windshield decal for your Stag. We have received numerous notes of appreciation of these club gifts which we are delighted to receive.

Our Canadian Director Tony Fox and Stag News Editor Terence McKillen, among others, are making plans for major events in Vancouver, British Columbia in May (now postponed until a later date) and at Bronte Park, Ontario at the British Car Day on September 18-20/2020 celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Triumph Stag. Many of us from the USA have already agreed to come and we encourage all who can visit not to miss these milestone events. Have a great 2020 of Stag driving and I look forward to meeting many of you later this year.

Michael Coffey - Founder

Are You Still Driving That ****ing Thing!

By Steve Ellis

Brisbane, QLD, Australia



The title to this story was actually a question yelled across the street to me by a guy I hadn't seen in more than fifteen years. A similar question was posed by another bloke who phoned me a couple of weeks later. It seems that a 6'2", 120+kg, red-faced guy in a 1976 yellow Triumph Stag is recognizable!

Perhaps it is not so surprising as the Stag has been my every day drive for the past twenty years; well except for almost two years when the timing of an engine rebuild blew out. The car was 23 years old when purchased, with 8,752 km on clock at first service in April 1999. Since then the odometer has been 'round the clock' three times right now reading 83,780 km – or 375,208 km under my ownership.

For years I did a 60 km round trip to Brisbane from Bayside, plus other trips around southern Queensland and often the 1,800 km round trip to Sydney, NSW. For much of the Stag's life I have done between 1,000 and 2,500 km a month.

The car has always been a business tax deduction for me, so I have detailed information relating to operating costs, etc. While there are a host of parts used over the time, ball joints and bushes feature prominently, the following list gives a sense of what it has taken to keep the Stag viable as an everyday driver.

- Filled up with fuel 1,146 times between Jan 2001 and Jan 2019
- 107 Invoices from the mechanic. Visits would be at least 25% more than that
- 828 labour hours (110 days) on those invoices
- 55 Services since first one in April

1999, plus services when doing other repairs

- Recently installed the 3rd set of replacement seat belts
- On the 5th viscous coupling; the last one being a warranty replacement for one that lasted just 6 weeks. Fortunately it failed within sight of home on the drive back from Sydney recently
- Heads have been off and reworked five-times, which includes for a minor rebuild in April 2001 and a full rebuild in September 2013. The rest were because of overheating
- The minor rebuild comprised cleaning the bores, new pistons and rings + head gaskets – lasted nearly 240,000 km
- Auto transmission (Borg Warner 65) has been overhauled three times
- New soft top (2008) which is still in pretty good condition
- 3 touch-up spray jobs; once following some body work for a small amount of rust
- Speedo, accelerator and kick-down cables each replaced twice
- The driver's seat has been restuffed 4 times and recovered once
- Driver's seat runners have been replaced twice

In addition to ongoing maintenance there has been renovation/upgrades:

- Hybrid axle (2005), to get rid of the axle hop
- Reskinned dash/console (2005) and new timber set (2010)
- Air-con (2005); necessary if car to be used for work
- Modern Holden (GMH) brake callipers with BMW rotors (2006); as kept 'blueing' standard rotors. Remember the car is in Brisbane, 32°C+ in summer, and is often driven in peak hour traffic
- Carpets throughout and (period) cloth seats (2006). The door and pillar trims and T-Bar covers are original and still serviceable. The rear seat, which is badly cracked on the top, was redone in Jan 2020
- Triple core radiator (2013), which required 'squeezing/shortening' in the fan/pulley areas. Also now has digital engine temperature readout, low water warning and thermo fan 'on' light
- 350 Holley carb. (2013), on which the settings now seem very close to right. Stag factory HP output was nominated at 114. On Dyno before recent carb re-jet was 108.5 HP
- Cruise Control (2018), a real treat on long drives; like to Sydney and back in Jan 2019

As you can imagine, driving lots of

kilometres in an old car in a sometimes hostile environment has had its challenges. Some 'crazy' things have occurred – accelerating when braking into a roundabout; unable to turn the engine off and then having it actually starting when no one was in or near the car – none of which the mechanic would believe at first. The car has been towed at least a dozen times; a really character-building and patience testing exercise!

All that has cost a pile of money, nearly AUD\$160,000 (US\$110,000); just for routine maintenance and servicing (excluding fuel, registration/ownership or insurance). I paid AUD\$9,000 for the car and it is now probably worth around AUD\$30,000. Even though AUD\$160,000 is a lot to spend on a car, it works out to be probably comparable, or even a little better, than what I would have spent on a mid-size 2 litre vehicle, if replacing every 5 years.

On top of the standard features that made me choose a Stag – power steering, independent rear suspension, V8, convertible – sorting the brakes and cooling + better carb and shocks + air con and cruise control mean 'The Stag' is now an even better/great drive. It now goes quite hard and the exhaust note (new exhaust 2006) is still sensational.

As I'm now working from home, the 'now very old Stag' will have an easier life. The plan is to keep it until I can no longer get in/out of it anymore; and to keep on enjoying it every day until then.

Everyday Driver +

The Stag is the only car I've owned for two decades, so it gets used just like any other commuter vehicle - for work, to the shops and to social events, if it's my turn to drive.

The back of the driver's seat sits about 1½" in front of the rear seat, using a plate insert to set the runners back. This means my legs are pretty much straight out to drive - great at 6'2" but my 5'2" partner, The Boss, can't touch the pedals unless she is sitting on the edge of the seat with a cushion behind her.

There is little point owning a convertible if you don't use it; which is where a Stag becomes more than 'the ordinary' everyday drive. The open-top driving experience is great in and of itself, but when combined with a scenic drive; well that's at another level.

So we've done a heap of trips in the 350 km radius around Brisbane and the occasional longer one. It ranges from there-

and-back drives for lunch at the beach or a country pub, through to weekend and longer excursions. It's common to do 300+km on a day trip.

Those trips have taken us along the coast, through rainforest and various types of produce growing/grazing areas, and lots of just 'bush and ant hills'; driving some pretty dodgy sealed roads and various quality dirt ones; a lot of very steep windy stuff and the ferry to islands/across rivers. On the day and longer trips, when we don't have to be anywhere in particular, there is a 'no map' rule; just choose a general direction then left or right, or straight, if that's an option. If accommodation is booked you can still only use the roadside signage; them's the rules.

Unlike some places, the top-down experience is not for the daytime in summer here, you just get fried. But if it happens to be a bit too warm, put the windows up and turn on the air conditioner! We generally won't go for a long hike if the temperature is going to get above 28° C, although we have raced thunder storms a few times; let's say 'generally' successfully!

The comfortable 'open top' speed (top and windows down so you're 'in it' and can hear the exhaust) is around 70 km/h (45 mph). So we pretty much use only back roads on the trips, finding some really interesting places; including pubs and people in pubs. The Stag is generally a good conversation starter, and unusual in many of the places we end up stopping. I can't tell you where (no maps allowed) but we found a vineyard where the South African owner was an ex-'Trophy' hunter. Stuffed lions, tigers, leopards etc. filled the tasting room. He was interested in the Stag and we were interested in his story; fair trade.

On the same trip, the small country pub emptied (of only about a dozen people) as 'The Stag' drove in via the dirt road; dust trail behind us; the top down on a beautiful moonlight autumn night. "Haven't seen one of those for years", "why didn't you use the main road", "how old is it" etc., before joining them in the bar. The local cop was there and, after a few questions regarding the Stag and our route home, he told us where he'd be doing breathalyzer testing.

Obviously I'm not that bothered about the bumps and chips from diving on dirt roads as well as the carparks, so no concourse/show and shine; but I still try and keep it on the nice side of

presentable. Even if I don't wash it enough normally, I always (strangely) give it a proper clean and tidy before going out on 'a drive'.

So from my view the Stag is a normal, if a bit unusual, commuter vehicle most of the time, and with the air-con it does that job well. It's an old piece of machinery so R&M is important and, therefore, it's serviced every 5,000 km and has been since purchase.

That means we can do the fun, top down scenic drive stuff with (relative) confidence. Despite running out of fuel a couple of times, we haven't had to be towed whenever 'The Boss' was in the car, or it might not have been such a pleasant story!

How'd I End Up Driving a Stag Anyway

I think I've always had a preference for the flowing European styling over the squarer US designs. A few years living in Leeds (UK) in the late 1970s/early 1980s was another influence. In any case, in the mid-1990s I got a job running the Sydney Ferries' operation. It was a 5-year contract that required me to provide a vehicle. The appropriate vehicle was specified as a less than 4 year old Fairmont Ghia (Ford) or Holden Calais (GM) or equivalent; or (weirdly) a classic or collectable. Go figure! I lived in the northern suburbs of Sydney, near a station that serviced two of the major rail lines. The office was in the centre of Sydney (on the wharf at Circular Quay). I got free Public Transport and a duty car was available for after-hours requirements. There was no way I'd be driving, so I spoke with the HR people. They told me what qualified and that the 'classic/collectable' clause was often used.... so what were the options?

At the time I was in my mid-thirties,



married with two young kids. We had a relatively modern Ford station wagon, a good fit for a family with two large dogs. So yea... let's also get a fun machine that we could use to go to the beach; which we did often.

And let's make it a convertible, provided we can get a couple of baby seats in the back. Reverse parking is mandatory in Sydney and my wife would also drive the car, so this added power steering to the list. I'm not actually a petrol head/car nut, but a V8 would be great!

To fit into the 'classic or collectable' mould, the car had to have some age; 15+ years. More modern Jaguar, Porsche, Mustang, etc. would have been OK, and that's actually what the clause was about, but couldn't afford those and they wouldn't fit my spec anyway.

Commence the search. Wanting a four or more seat convertible narrows the field dramatically. Also, we often used very windy roads through the National Parks, as short-cuts, and I'd grown up driving the older family sedans/wagons, flat-6 Fords mainly. They were a wrestle even for someone my size, so modern steering and suspension was preferable.

Well that eliminates anything from North America as, while floaty power steering was a thing at that time, the steering rack (not box) plus independent rear suspension combination didn't get into production cars until the mid-80s; and

they were too young to qualify.

In our price range that pretty much left just a Stag. After trying a few differently engined options – P76 & Rover V8s – bought a 'standard' red one and spent quite a bit getting it reliable. Drove that happily for five years, but it went in the marriage split. Bummer!

Forward to 1999. I'm 40, single, getting back on my feet and was looking through the premises of an exotic car dealer, Ferrari mainly. They were moving and I was looking to see if the showroom area could be used as storage for a client. In the corner was a yellow Stag. Q: What are you doing with that? A: Traded. Not our type, will move it through the auctions. Q: How much? A: You can have it for what we traded it for, which turned out to be \$9,000.

Quick call to the mechanic. Q: Do you know this car? A: Yep, an old guy who got some work done by them. Overall in pretty good nick but needs a bit of sorting. Q: 9k? A: Do it.

So I paid the AUD\$9k + the card fee. Don't know why, but I'd always wanted to buy a car on a credit card (maybe the answer is 40 and single!) Straight to the mechanic for a 4-hour look and 'spanner' check. Make a starting repair/maintenance plan, then... ..all the joy (and related 'character building') of driving a British classic; for 20 years so far. 🚗



Steve's Stag at a State Park in mid-northern New South Wales not long after a bush wildfire event. Steve was 2,500 km into his Stag summer vacation at the time

Tech Tips

Why is the oil pressure light on the warning cluster so dim?

The reason is simple. The PDWA bulb and the oil pressure bulb are connected in series (see drawing of circuit from the ROM). This makes the PDWA bulb light dimly with ignition on, and the oil pressure bulb is thus also lighted dimly. As soon as the oil pressure comes on, the PDWA bulb goes out and the oil pressure bulb goes out.

This is effectively a bulb checking circuit for both the PDWA bulb and the oil pressure bulb. The drawback is that the oil pressure bulb never receives full voltage - in case of oil pressure failure, this could be unnoticed until it is too late. LED bulbs are available to replace the standard bulbs, I bought mine from www.classiccarleds.com.

If you fit an LED bulb for the oil pressure (green) the oil pressure bulb now glows brightly but the PDWA bulb does not light with ignition on. Substituting an LED for the oil pressure bulb causes the following:

- The current draw is now so low that the resistance of the PDWA bulb does not cause a noticeable voltage drop and the oil pressure bulb glows at full brightness and extinguishes as soon as there is oil pressure.
- In case of oil pressure failure, the oil pressure light will come on at full brightness.
- In case of brake failure, the PDWA lamp will come on at full brightness. And we still have a kind of a bulb checking circuit.
- If the PDWA bulb fails, the oil pressure light will not come on before starting.

Conclusion: I'd rather have a full brightness oil pressure warning, and even with this, knowing the change, still have a PDWA bulb check indirectly if the oil pressure light does not come on before starting.

Henri Van Triest

A Stag at 505,000 km

By Ron Mills

Noosa Beach, QLD, Australia

Insofar as my Triumph Stag is concerned I have now owned it for 40 years and have travelled just over 505,000 km or 310,000 miles on the same engine. In many respects it has had a hard life although I have always serviced it regularly and kept it in tip-top condition. I would term it as being largely 'all original' and in excellent condition, but not in concours.

Very few Stag owners in Australia can accept that my vehicle has never had any mechanical problems such as overheating or multiple breakdowns during the period I have owned it. I have replaced quite a few parts myself due to wear and tear over forty years and have also used a really good experienced mechanic (I should add that I have only found two such people in forty years) when I did not have the expertise or time due to work and business commitments.

My Stag had a bare metal respray about eight years ago due to weather damage and the engine was stripped down due to a worn oil scraper ring. I now treat it with a little more respect after many years of 'foot flat down' and taking on all and sundry who have believed the Stag lacks the power and performance.

My wife Denise and I and two daughters arrived in Australia in 1979 via the United Kingdom, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK once again, NZ also once again and Canada. We once lived in Senneville, Quebec in 1978/9. Originally, I intended to start my own consultancy in Sydney but after some consideration decided on Melbourne due to the proximity of the greater number of businesses that would require my particular expertise.

We bought an acre in Park Orchards on the outskirts of Melbourne and built a Spanish-style house complete with swimming pool and a four-car garage. The decision then was what to put in the garage besides a new Rover SD1 and my wife's Mini Clubman. It was not too difficult to decide what type of vehicle I wanted as I was then approaching what might be termed as the age of male menopause – I



Ron's 1975 Mk2 Pimento Stag has covered 310,000 miles in 40 years on the same engine

wanted an exotic European sports car of some description with a soft top and one with a classic pedigree and probably with four seats with our two young daughters in mind; also one that would not cost an arm and a leg. My thoughts immediately turned to an E-Type Jaguar Roadster, but they were around AUD\$100,000 and only had two seats. I had found several years earlier that I could not fit my six foot-odd frame behind the early models due to the cramped space. Aston Martin DB5 and DB6 models were twice the price and out of my league. I then looked at nearly every other make of sports car from ACs to TVRs including German and Italian makes. Only two cars seemed to fit the bill – the 450SL Mercedes convertible and the Triumph Stag. The Mercedes rear seats were more like a parcel shelf without leg-room whereas the Triumph had proper upholstered seats that could easily take two growing children. But what did I know about the Triumph Stag? The styling was Italian by Giovanni Michelotti, it had a small V8 engine, came with a detachable

hard top and... and...what? I had never really looked at one, but had heard they were famous for overheating in the UK due to quality control problems caused by the bloody-mindedness of trade unions and probably were a damn sight worse in Australian conditions. On inspecting one or two I discovered they were a luxury two door sports car with many good features. Triumph looked as though they had tried to include as many features as possible into it, or in other words had crammed a pint into a half-pint pot. The vehicle had a monocoque construction with fully independent suspension, MacPherson front struts, semi-trailing arms at the rear and De Dion double wishbones, coil springs and Spax shocks. OHC 2997cc V8 engine with three speed automatic or four speed manual with overdrive in third and fourth gear, twin Zenith Stromberg carburetors. Also with power steering, front disc brakes and drum rear, a soft top that could be folded down under a tonneau cover, roll bar, detachable hard top, electric windows and a top speed of around 200 kph, or



Ron has now lightened up on his right foot but regularly managed to hit 200 km/h

120 mph. Air conditioning seemed to be reserved for Stags destined for the USA market only but that did not worry me when considering it was a convertible and I lived in Melbourne where a heater might be better throughout the long cold and wet winter. Anyhow, if Stags were prone to overheat the last thing I wanted was an additional item that could cause a further strain on the cooling system.

I started to look for one with the thoughts of stripping down the engine in an attempt to cure the overheating that I was certain I would encounter. I looked for nearly one year throughout all States for a manual model. They were very difficult to find and as rare as hen's teeth and so I spoke to Kellow Faulkner who had been the main importer in Victoria and they told me they had imported 98 in total, but only two of them were manual – 96 were automatic! I accepted what they told me, but I doubted most people who want a true sports car with 'grunt' would order an automatic. I later discovered 25,939 were made in the UK between March 1970 and June 1977 and 8,124 had been exported of which just under half were manuals. No figures were available for Stags imported to Australia.

Each time one was advertised in newspapers, especially Victorian ones, they disappeared within minutes and usually long before I could get to a newsagent to buy the paper and make a phone call by 7:00 a.m. and on occasions before 6:00 a.m. Eventually, I saw a red one advertised

with the comments of 'no calls before 9:00 a.m.'. I drove to the approximate area of the address by figuring out where the suburb might be by the telephone number (there were no mobiles to speak of in those days) and phoned dead-on 9:00 a.m. Within ten minutes I was talking face-to-face to the seller while his phone rang constantly with eager buyers offering to pay more than the asking price but I beat them to it by waving cash under the seller's nose and paid him what he asked. The Stag had 33,000 km on the clock and appeared in excellent condition. The only strange thing about it was it was fitted with a tow-bar and used for boat, caravan and trailer!

In those days I caught well over one hundred international and domestic flights a year on business, sometimes totaling around 400,000 km and also drove or was driven near to 50,000 km by road. A number of times each year I drove the Stag to Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. Petrol consumption was excellent on long hauls and the best I got was somewhere around 40 mpg even at a constant 100 kph. For all that time I was waiting for the overheating that cryptic car magazines articles, sneering critics and doomsday-sayers had warned of. It always ran fairly hot according to the temperature gauge, but never overheated even when crawling along in Melbourne traffic at 40^o+ C.

Main BL Dealers

The main dealers in northeast Melbourne were Fiske Bros of Box Hill and they

told me there was only one thermostat available at one setting and I had to live with it, but after a couple of years I could not stand the suspense any longer of watching the temperature gauge hovering near the red warning section and decided to drill two small holes in it in an attempt to increase water-flow and lower the temperature. I went back to Fiske to buy a new thermostat for a spare in case my attempts to lower the temperature were not successful and then they told me there were three thermostats available with different settings from cold to standard to hot. It had taken them several years to discover this! I later discovered all earlier model Mk1 Stags were built with smaller radiators and 6-vane impeller water pumps whereas the later Mk2 models were built with a larger radiator and 12-vane impellers. The more research I did I came to believe all Stags were supplied with a cold setting thermostat of around 88°C whereas they should have been supplied with a standard setting of 82°C for the UK market and 74°C for Australia and the US markets except for the cooler climes. Mechanics in Australia who thought they could cure a Stag from running hot usually, if not always, made them worse through believing any thermostat of a different make would do the job without knowing the correct temperature settings. They were all disastrous as far as I know.

Servicing

Servicing always seemed to be a problem as various mechanics walked around the Stag as though it was the first horseless carriage, shook their heads, spoke of bloody Pommie cars and peered at the engine as though it was the first combustion engine ever seen and most, if not all, advised replacing the engine with a larger V8 Chevrolet, and later Rover engine, adding Holley carburetors, a thermofan and changing this, that and everything that was British. Much of this was an anathema to me because I had once owned a brand new Chevrolet 6.9 L Caprice Classic when living in Canada that broke down 17 times in six months and was eventually awarded the 'Lemon of Lemons' in national newspapers. Needless to say I got rid of it as soon as possible because we had six weeks of 40 below zero temperatures and there was a good possibility of dying of hypothermia when an engine will not start to produce hot water for the heater to function.

When I heard a slight knock on the front end of the Stag when turning the

steering after servicing, I asked my local garage if it could be due to grit being pushed into the rack during servicing. They asked me what a rack was and I replied I was referring to the rack and pinion steering. They said they did not know it had one after servicing it for a couple of years! I went back to Fiske with the problem and they hoisted the vehicle up and remarked they had never realized it had a rack and pinion steering either! I abruptly told them to lower the car down and took it to a Jaguar specialist I was recommended to and who I found was not too bright either. I found the knock was due to a dry socket on the radius arm that had never been greased after the Jaguar specialist had spend eight hours trying to find it by removing all the front suspension except the radius arm. I then went through some other horror stories with motor mechanics that were beyond belief from a point of downright frustration and anger to hysterical laughter. Fortunately, somebody then told me of a mechanic in Ringwood, Keith Harvey Motors, who knew about Pommy cars and I found him to be excellent at servicing and repairing any make of vehicle to a point that the local main Ford dealer took their cars to him when they could not rectify or diagnose faults.

Driving

I have always believed in using or showing something exotic or unique rather than storing it away in a bank vault or stuck on a pedestal without being used like a couple of people I have met with E-Types in their houses and sports rooms. I used the Stag as a business car during the week and thrashed it on many weekends. This seemed to attract 'yobs' in big V8s on the open road and nothing gave me greater delight than letting them get within a few meters of my tailpipe at speeds of 140+kph and flicking the car out of overdrive and sticking my foot down on the accelerator at the same time. This produced the revs to leap around 1,000+ rpm in a split-second and the speed by a further 20+ kph or so. It was worth watching the face of the driver in the rear-view mirror because their eyeballs nearly fell out of their head or they frantically looked around them to see if their engine had stopped or blown. However, I stopped that stunt after a few years due to punching a hole in my differential casing through stripping a tooth off an internal gear. It was not only expensive to replace a differential or



Ron and Denise with their Stag

crown wheel, but difficult to find them locally too. I also had to act more responsibly because road laws were tightening up and if I had been caught driving at high speeds, I would have lost my license. The final inducement and perhaps an omen to slow down in the Stag might have also been due to winding up in a cemetery; quite literally! I had been travelling at fairly high speed when a motor cyclist came alongside me around 150 kph and given me a casual look as though, 'Is that all you can do?' and accelerated away with a cocky and exaggerated swerve in front of me. I took off after him and did the same around 180 kph without the swerve and frightened the living daylight out of him. I went on to 200 kph with my foot flat down and noticed he had backed-off considerably. I immediately slowed to within the speed limit as I was approaching a built-up area and a battered truck carrying sand or earth. The truck driver seemed to indicate for me to overtake or that he was turning left by leaning out of the cab and flapping his arm in circles. Just as I nearly came alongside him he turned right and I had nowhere to go except right too to avoid a collision. Only then I realized he was turning into a driveway of a cemetery and I had no option but to go through the gates first with my right foot firmly on the brake and leaving long black skid marks. It was not the thing to do with a crowd of mourners silently waiting in remembrance for a slow hearse with bunches of flowers and then being scattered by a madman in an open-top bright red sports car coming to a

skidding halt and the profanities of an irate truck driver ringing in their ears. They must have thought I was Beelzebub himself and I rapidly backed out and was gone before anyone could take my number plate or see if I really did have two horns protruding from my head and a long red pointed tail.

The Stag has been highly reliable and survived on routine servicing and minimal repairs for over thirty-five years. Any parts needing replacement were obtained from Rimmer Bros in the U.K, so it is still 100% Triumph except for the aerial, windscreen washer pump and paintwork. The only item that has ever failed more than once is the German made Keinzle clock, on four occasions, and the only item non-British. The Stag has now done around 505,000 km after having the engine stripped down about 30,000 km ago and a bare metal respray. It has given me immense pleasure, especially when towing home a neighbor's broken-down new Mercedes on two occasions. It has been a great car, greatly admired and has now slowed down, just a little, like its owner. 🐉



September 18-20, 2020
 Join 50+ other Stag owners at TSCUSA's Bronte Stag Weekend. More information at https://www.tscusa.org/bronte_weekend.asp or Tony Fox - tonyfox@sympatico.ca.

Owning a Stag in SE Queensland

By Brett Smith

To the best of my knowledge there are currently about 480 Stags on the Australian National Triumph Stag Register. That is for the whole of Australia and does not mean that we have 480 Stags up and running. As I understand it, the register is an historical record of Stags purchased or sold in Australia and gives the relevant chassis and engine numbers, colour, etc. It's terrific that the information is available. I think that includes subsequent UK imports but I'm not sure [John Powell, Registrar of the newly established Australian Stag Registry has recently confirmed to me about 1,500 Stags were imported to Australia, mainly in the 1975-1977 period and he is still assessing how many remain on the 'active' list – Ed.]

I think those of us who own Stags absolutely love them. Southeast Queensland may not have the same volume of cars in the numbers exported to the USA or sold in the UK but everybody here who drives a Stag to whom I have spoken, enjoy their car immensely.

Of course, in the USA and Canada, you drive on the wrong side of the road. I'm only joking but it is helpful that UK cars are also RHD. I find that most Stags here now have had all the bugs ironed out.

Currently there are three Stags listed on CarSales Network, Australia's #1 on-line classified network (www.carsales.com.au). CarSales are not the only avenue to advertise the sale or purchase of your Stag across Australia but it is the one I use. I have seen the occasional Stag come up for sale on Triumph club sites, but they are not numerous.

To find a good reliable Stag here in southeast Queensland that has been looked after and had the major restoration work done is a time-consuming exercise. On my current Stag it took me about two years to find a good one at an appropriate price. I think that a realistic figure to pay for such a Stag would be around AUD\$25,000 to \$30,000 (US\$17,000-\$21,000). I have flown to Melbourne (a 3-hour+ flight) to inspect a magnificent Stag that was advertised at AUD\$40,000 (US\$27,500). More

recently there was a fully restored Stag advertised for AUD\$45,000 (US\$31,000). Both are beautiful cars on which the owners seemed to have spared no expense.

There is also Tasmania to consider. 'Tassie' is the Island-State of Australia; a short jaunt across Bass Strait, from Melbourne in Victoria. I have seen one or two nice Stags there. For that matter, Australia itself is an island.

To my mind the biggest issue of Stag ownership in Brisbane or southeast Queensland generally, is the relentless summer heat. Secondly, the simple reality that we don't have the number of Stags needed to justify and support all the necessary ancillary businesses that we would like to have, such as mechanics who are familiar with the Stag, parts suppliers, trimmers, etc., etc. In southeast Queensland an average summer's day temperature will reach the high 30s to low or mid-40s Celsius (100° - 113° F). We have been in drought for years and have been plagued lately by extensive bush fires.

In winter, it's a pleasure to drive with the hard top off. Winter temperatures in Brisbane will drop down to about 2 to 5 degrees C (35° - 41° F) at night. However, during the day it's pristine blue skies and a midday temperature in the range of 12 to 18 degrees C (54° - 64° F). We have beautiful beaches at both the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. The Gold Coast is an hour's drive south and the Sunshine Coast is two hours to the north. Surrounding the city, we have magnificent mountain ranges and driving the Stag up a winding range road on the weekend really cannot be surpassed.

We don't have snow and hence no salt on the roads and therefore rust is not really a big problem.

As capital of Queensland, Brisbane has a population of about three million. It was, and perhaps still is, one of the most widely spread out cities in the world. I use a very good Triumph mechanic here but his workshop is about a one-and-a-half to two-hour drive from my home. Doing that trip in peak hour traffic on a summer's day does have me watching the temperature



gauge every minute or so.

I am also a member of a few UK Stag clubs and I get the impression on reading their magazines that every Shire club has a fleet of Stags. Every Stag owner in North America will, by now, know of Rimmers, E J Ward, Robsport and the list goes on. There seems to be a healthy supply of mechanics and parts on tap in both the USA and the UK. I would like to put air con in my car but that's proving to be quite difficult. I have exchanged some information with fellow North American owners on the TSCUSA Forum.

The new rag top I imported from the UK. The new roof liner the same. Thank heavens for eBay. No such thanks to the Australian dollar exchange rate.

I have only seen about five Stags on the local roads in the last twelve months. However, I have spoken to a few owners who have their Stags tucked away in the garage and whose Stag is their pride and joy. There's a local Triumph club but I don't know of any dedicated Stag clubs. The ad-



ditional problem (if it can be called a problem) is that in North America and the UK, fellow Stag club owners are asleep when I'm under the car and vice versa. We are not only down under but we are also on the other side of the globe. So, the postal service is ringing our doorbell regularly to bring me the parts I need. My wife is quick to remind me "more Stag parts have arrived."

We were courting when I owned my first Stag. I purchased it in 1977 - an

automatic, in Mimosa yellow. It had about 12,000 km on the clock. In those days I don't recall there being any BL or Triumph dealerships in the city. Also, in the early 1970s I don't recall seeing many Stags on the road. I don't have any recollection of using anti-freeze. I don't think it was even available. I may be wrong? Petrol stations provided water for topping off radiators [I recall that petrol station attendants often asked whether one wanted the radiator water level checked back in the 1960s and

70s in the UK and Ireland as well as cleaning the windows. Michael Link confirms a similar service offered in the USA until the mid-1970s - Ed.] I used water and hence it didn't take long before I had an engine rebuild with a warped block.

Obviously, there was no internet, no dealerships and it was very much a case of learn as you go. I can remember talking to a lass at the time (she also owned a Stag) and she asked if I'd had any problems with mine. When I replied "no" she responded, "you will." But that was all over 40 years ago.

My current Stag is now armed with a Tony Hart radiator core and a massive 16-inch Craig Davies thermo fan. I use Penrite anti-freeze and drive my Stag nearly every day. I love and enjoy driving it. I have always thought that the Stag has the most memorable and distinctive lines of any car on the road. A Stag owner can pick out the V8 sound from two city blocks away! For the poor souls who don't own a Stag they still turn to look. I don't see people doing that for an E-type Jag?

Oddly enough here in Southeast Queensland air con was not really an available option on Stags. In more recent years as UK imports have become more common, I see more Stags with air con. I notice on USA Stags air con seems to be the norm. In the 1970s air cons here were thin on the ground on a lot of cars. My late mother purchased a new RHD 1955 4-door Chevrolet Bel Air. I drove that car for over 40 years without a problem. However, again no air con, so I had to put a unit under the dash.

In closing there is only my contest with the Stag being in Imperial measure. Australia switched to metric measure on the road, I think in 1974, and Stag imports conformed by sporting a metric speedometer and odometer (the K suffix on the Commission Number). The new Stag has needed me to restock my garage with new tools. I did not for example have any



Brett's Stag is now armed with a Tony Hart radiator core and a massive 16-inch Craig Davies thermo fan



Brett has tidied up the engine bay



Australian Stags have a metric speedometer and odometer



.... while sporting a RHD driving position

My Stag Affair

By John Howard



I'd been into Triumphs since 1981, with both TR6s and TR4s, the latter two being rolling restorations with full engine rebuilds. But I knew nothing about Stags until I answered a call from the Red River Triumph Club for funding to buy a Stag for a charity project. The car was to be prepared for John Macartney's 2009 drive across America as "Uncle Jack" to benefit PTSD. I chipped in a few bucks, then was pleased to host John here in northern California for a two-day rest. His car, restored by the Illinois Sports Owner's Association led by John Pawlak, was gorgeous and I was smitten – an attraction that was doomed to be unrequited for far too many years to come.

So I began to pay attention to Craig's List and other possible sources and soon surfaced an "opportunity" about 150 miles

away near Mendocino, CA. So, one Sunday my wife and I drove over to check it out. Now Lee has long humored my Triumph obsession, but my position that day was particularly strong. I was about to go into rather serious surgery and she was taking every opportunity to lift my spirits. What we saw could only lift the spirits of an ordained Triumph crazy person.

The car sat in a barn stuffed to the rafters with a jumble of boxes and shelves of parts and was kept company by a Mark 1 – not for sale – and an early post-War Jaguar sedan of some rare model. What I saw was the shell of a 1973, LE 24045 UBW, which the seller had stripped bare with the intention of repainting in one of the Stag blues and converting to manual overdrive. I never got a straight answer to how long it had sat there or where it had come from or even when it had last been driven, although I did learn that it was last registered in 2006. I was assured that

all parts were at hand and needed only a few months for assembly. Saddle Tan seats hung high on the wall and looked very nice. The body was only fair, with a bit of rot at one rocker panel and some rust needing repair underbody. "We'll fix that", he said. The engine stood on a stand nearby, looking to be properly sealed for storage. "Its good to go and we'll get it in." The owner clearly knew his way around old English cars – there were a few Triumph and MG carcasses lying about outside – but the state of his organization left much to be desired. Nevertheless, casting good judgment and my well-seasoned incredulity aside, and accepting key promises and assurances at face value, and making myself believe I could get it on the road for \$12,000, I handed over my check and went contentedly home looking forward with some excitement to a happy affair.

All that was in August 2009. In November, fully recovered from surgery, I began

to spend a few days at a time in the barn with the aim of getting the car on wheels so it could be trailered home. Most of the suspension parts were new, so their installation was a pleasure. Other pluses included stainless steel tubular exhausts (which I didn't know had to be modified for LH drive), all pieces needed to convert from automatic to manual with overdrive, a Holley carb with the necessary manifold adapter and a vintage air cleaner, a TR6 air scoop and a nice new carpet set. But far more downers would regularly appear over the next few years, enough to sour my budding relationship with "Red Ryder," as I hopefully dubbed my crippled steed after a remembered childhood heroic comic character and anticipating returning him to the original Carmine Red.

Finally the day came when I appeared at the barn with trailer in tow. By then the seller and I had installed the engine with its transmission with more assurances of their readiness. The suspension was in place and the wheels on. He had painted the engine bay, but the full paint and body repair never happened. I was anxious to get the project into my garage so the fun could really begin, so off we drove with the van stuffed with all the Stag parts I could find. And then the fun did indeed begin!

The overwhelming reality was that I knew absolutely nothing about the Triumph Stag and embarked upon the project without the marked baggies and snapshots and notes that should have accompanied the car's disassembly. Virtually every step had to be researched in the ROM, the official Parts Catalogue, and the Rimmers catalogue. I also joined the Stag Owner's Club and got much excellent advice from those dedicated British

members. My guiding rule was when in doubt about a part, get a new one and I quickly learned – again – that there was no place for a budget in a Triumph renewal project; at least not for an amateur like me. Still, my goal was to get it driving as soon as possible and not to build a concours winner. As it happened, the process was the opposite of quick and the car eventually did seem to please the judges.

An early move had been to get a full set of stainless bolts for the suspension pieces from those Brothers in the UK, rather than rooting around in the cans of used fasteners in the barn. So while there why not add to the basket a hi-torque starter which had been so effective on my TR4s? And new rear-end light sockets. Then there was the steering rack, which got professionally rebuilt, as did the distributor and brake booster. And the clock! I bent new Cunnifer brake lines into place and eventually installed LEDs in the tail and brake lights, and those nifty green LED dash lights. The seats that looked so nice high up on the wall were cracked and deflated, so new foam and covers were sourced from Aldridge. A header tank from a TR7 was adapted, the radiator was scoured and pressure tested, and of course a big pusher fan from Summit was added. I tore down and rebuilt the Holley. The Stag-Weber belt driven water pump relieved my water pump anxieties, and Chris Weber's CoolAir Filter and PCV units are recent nifty additions. Neither of the two drive shafts fit, so a specialty shop cut one down to my exceedingly careful measurement and balanced it. I pulled apart the hood frame and fitted a new cover with fresh fasteners; it works OK.

And then came the day when I tired of

the bare metal, half primed body so hauled it off to a recommended paint shop. After four months of no action, I recovered it from deep in his storage space and hauled it again to another shop. This fellow did a nice job, but of course blew far by my \$12,000 cap. But now it was home in fresh Carmine and ready for the final assembly. At the end of year four all was set: lights all working, gauges in order, all systems go. Spin the distributor to raise the oil, power is to the plugs, a brisk turnover by the key and nothing. Spray in some starter fluid. Still nothing. Check the compression. Cylinder #5 -0; #4 and #8 – 40. Serious groan. So the engine has to come out, but first we need to remove the heads to see what's up. Then followed the dreaded struggle. The LH head came off fairly easily, but the RH was a bear. Glenn Merrill graciously lent his head removal tool and with that I managed to lift the head just far enough to get a hack saw blade in there to cut the final two studs. What was revealed was a badly corroded RH head surface and four bad cylinders, so a complete rebuild was needed for this "very good" engine.

Fortunately there are still a few old-timer machine shops around, and one agreed to repair the head corrosion and perform a valve job, while another accepted the block for a hot bath and clean-out. Working with new parts from those Brothers again, I rebuilt the engine over the rest of 2014, and by December it was reinstalled. We also rebuilt the gearbox and overdrive with the guidance of master mechanic Rich Gibbon, of the Triumph Travelers Sports Car Club.

I was heavily occupied with volunteer work through most of 2015 so didn't get to give it another try until November, at



The barn find



Arriving home



which time - lo! - he fired up immediately! All right! The end is in sight! I can see the open road ahead and hear the Triumph V8's classic rumble! But wait, there's more. The Holley needs to be tuned and the windshield installed. The coil springs are crazy and have the car sitting way too high. Was the PO planning to lower the car? Who knows? So back to the Brothers for new stock springs. The differential is leaking so a new front seal is called for; an opportunity to install a drain plug. The wiper motor is fluky, likely because I'd force-fitted a Mark I wiring harness into these '73 parts, and that gets resolved.

Now we're into 2017. About mid-year Michael Coffey hooks me up with Michael Link as a Stag owner in my California time zone, and Michael becomes my go-to advisor on most of my work thereafter. The seats get rebuilt, new door cards hung, new basic radio installed, settling for speakers in the rear cubbies as I couldn't manage to squeeze the RetroSound into the dash space.

I had planed to drive to Flagstaff for the September Triumphest and had talked the son-in law into going with me, BUT, returning from a short test drive and close to home I came slowly around a corner and the left front wheel departed, rolled across two opposing lanes, up an embankment, but before disappearing into the marsh, was captured by a passing bicyclist who happened to be a friend. Of course the left front panel was crushed as it dragged across the concrete. I had failed to torque the wheel studs down properly. I shall never forget again.

Red's and my relationship warmed as we turned into 2018 and we began to enjoy each other. Some uneventful short

drives, one or two requiring a AAA carry home, and one aborted long drive limping home with the Holley misbehaving. Replaced the front hubs as the wheel studs holes would not take the proper 100 lb. torque. Entered the car in a local car show and was not the shabbiest on the lot. Finally, come September, I chance it and Lee joined me for the Sacramento Triumphest, a drive of 100 miles in 100° F plus temperatures. Un- eventful, save for a header hose severed by the alternator pulley and shift lever stuck in reverse – twice.

But overall, our relationship normalizes in 2019 and by September we think we're ready for the 275-mile drive to Santa Maria, CA, and the 2019 Triumphest. I join a small caravan – led by a 1949 2000 Roadster – and Red and I enjoy a smooth and trouble-free drive, again in 100° F plus heat. I find myself stopping to help other Triumph owners and what a good feeling that is! To cap off the weekend, we're presented with a gold award, and in mutual appreciation, we travel home together in high spirits.

What's next? Well, he's up on stands now accepting a new Wizard radiator to put to rest forever any residual overheating concerns. While there, new headlamps with proper relays have been installed. The heater needs repair and I'll have to learn how to do that. Of course, I should have purged the heater core when it was accessible, but what did I know? The hardtop needs to be rebuilt and probably painted. The differential is whining that it needs an overhaul and various oil drips should be attended to. But none of that is urgent, so maybe, just maybe, Red and I will get to meet some of you in Vancouver in May!



John took a Gold Award at Triumphest

[John lives in Corte Madera, in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. He has long admired English cars, starting with those driven by schoolmates that he could not afford. His first British car was a 1949 Ford bought in 1957 for \$100, just out of high school. Then came a 1973 TR6 purchased off a Massachusetts used car lot in 1981 for \$1,800. Another TR6 and two TR4s followed until bitten by the Stag bug. John now admits to being a fully-fledged 'Stagman' - although he admits his final TR4 was more dependable - **hopefully things will improve going forward and we'll see you in Vancouver - Ed.]**

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