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Andy Moss is incredibly loyal to Triumphs – and he's pretty good at restoring them, too. Just check out his Stag.

Photos: Mike Key Words: Ted Connolly

MARQUE OF RESPECT

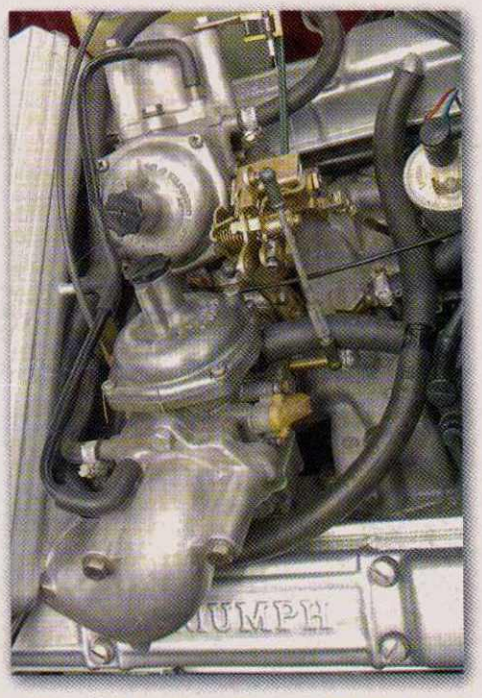
ANDY Moss is the kind of guy you need to have around in Triumph circles. It's the dedication and loyalty of enthusiasts like him that keep the name alive. And if that sounds like a load of patronizing rubbish then forget it because it's true.

He's just 40 – ah, a mere stripling compared with the ageing author – and yet has owned nine Triumphs. I do know a fair few classic fans who have actually owned a lot more cars in number, but it's usually the case that half of them are lying around as unfinished projects or for spares. But not Andy because each and every one has been bought to drive – in fact, he was the custodian of one particular Dolomite twice.

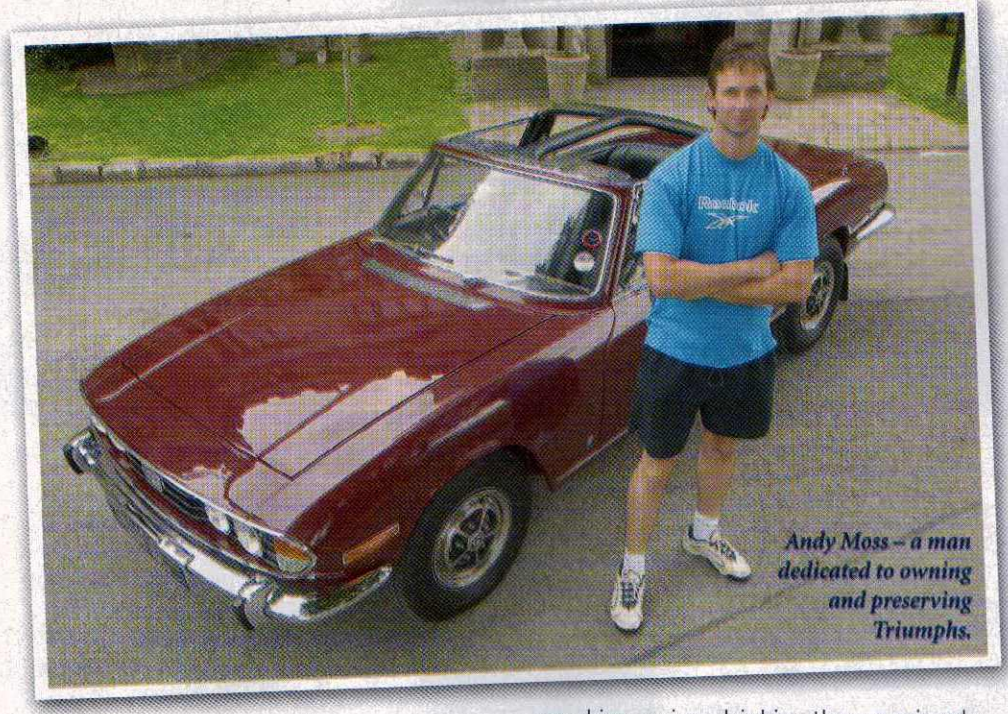
The fact that he's a motor mechanic by trade – spending a few years working in a bodyshop along the way – is, of course, a very real advantage. And the fact that he is so dedicated to Triumphs is also a very real benefit to fellow enthusiasts because for 14 years, he was the south west area rep for the Dolomite club and he's also a most active member of the Stag Owners' Club. Like I said the kind of guy it is most certainly important to have around.

Whenever I speak to owners, one of the first things asked is exactly how and why they got into Triumphs in the first place ▸▸

The Stag outside of the original dealership through which it was supplied, albeit now with a name change (see main text).



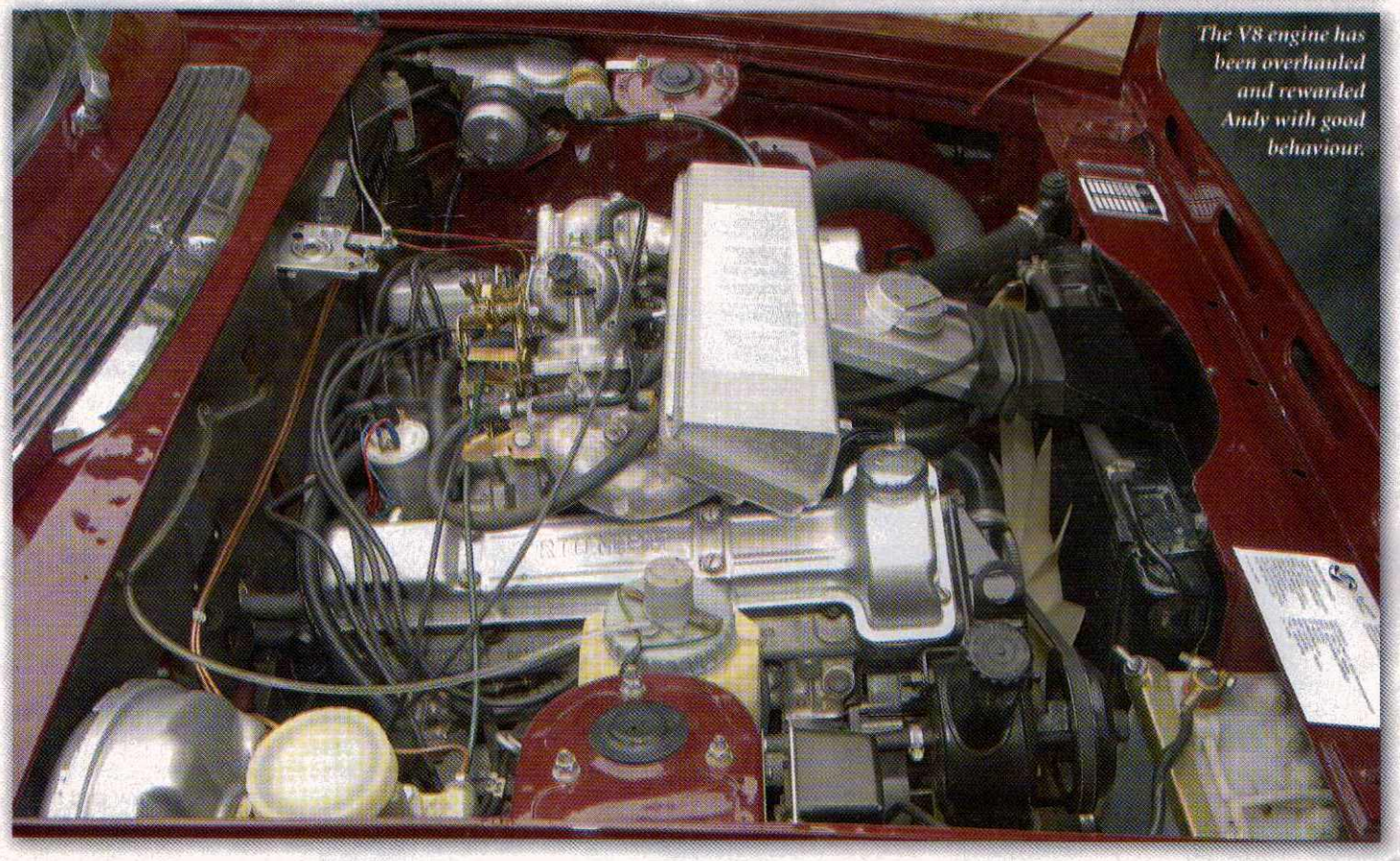
The twin Strombergs are mounted at a jaunty angle on the Stag motor.



Andy Moss – a man dedicated to owning and preserving Triumphs.

and it usually boils down to impressions gained during formative years. In other words – and in rather plainer talk – memories of youth-hood. That's the case with Andy. When he was but a mere lad, his granddad bought a brand-new mallard green Toledo in 1972. Andy was taught the value of patience and dedication and allowed to wash it only if the job was done properly – that is, under the wheel arches, inside the doors shuts and so on. What you could rightly call a proper job. He was similarly encouraged to wash his dad's 1850 Dolomite to keep it looking good (I couldn't help a moment of reflection here and if I had been influenced by my granddad, I'd now be smoking a pipe, drinking the occasional tot of rum as an ex-sailor and been washing a wheelbarrow rather than a car – oh well). By 1992, Andy was in his early twenties and he bought his first Triumph – a 1978 russet brown Dolomite Sprint. You've got to bear in mind that the Dolly was a fairly unusual choice because even then, it was starting to gain rarity value and, for somebody in his age group, could have been regarded as a curio. If you cast your minds back, the tools of choice for the young blades were the likes of the Astra GTE – particularly the most potent 16-valve version – and Golf GTi. Anyway, Andy kept the Dolomite for three years and in that time, it was treated to a head overhaul and body restoration which included new wings, second-hand doors, replacement rear arches and lower valance and the suspension was overhauled. Andy's efforts were rewarded when the Triumph took second place at the Dolomite national meeting in 1993.

He then bought and partly restored a 2500S estate – which he used as his main car – plus a Dolly 1300. Again, casting your minds back, that estate was an unusual choice and was yet another reflection of his taste in cars. In the summer of 1995, he had his eyes on a Stag and that meant making the difficult decision to sell the Sprint. There was a financial and time limit on just how many cars he could run at any one time. The Stag was a 1977 Mark 2 auto in Tahiti blue and over the three years that he



The V8 engine has been overhauled and rewarded Andy with good behaviour.

owned the car, Andy fitted a new boot lid, door skin, hood and carpet set and treated the Triumph to a full respray. He then bought a 1500TC as a second car with a part restoration.

Time to move on again and the Stag and TC were sold through the big Triumph show at Stoneleigh (which, incidentally, should be regarded as a definite annual must for any fan of the marque). I say move on, but perhaps the term should be move back because he used the money to once again buy the Sprint that he had originally owned. He'd kept in touch with the car through the club. Filled with new enthusiasm, Andy fitted a full-length sun roof (that's actually quite a brave thing to do on any car because it means attacking good metal) and stainless steel exhaust system. The engine was in need of attention and, thus, got a bottom-end rebuild.

Andy also bought a tax-exempt Mark 2 Triumph 2000, which had a part restoration and also benefited from a power steering conversion. It was practical enough to be put into daily use. The Sprint had by no means been pushed out of the limelight and in 2002, it was stripped down, given a second-hand driver's door and sprayed in Tahiti blue, which Andy figured suited it a lot better than its original russet brown.

Time, tide and Triumphs wait for no man and Andy sold the 2000 and also a wedding car he had at the time. It was a ... I hesitate to say it ... but it was an S-Type Jaguar, the old shape, of course, but as un-Triumph as you can get. Still, I reckon that the big cat had enough presence to hold its own in mixed company. And I would say that because I used to own one. With the 2000 and Jag gone, it was quite obviously time to buy another project so in September, 2003, he bought a sad and neglected Stag Mark 1 and that finally brings us to the car that is the subject of this feature. And just when you thought that I had finally lost the plot and forgotten the pictorial focus of this piece. Some work had been carried out on the Triumph and the shell had been shotblasted, a few new panels fitted, the suspension had been overhauled and there was a variety of parts in boxes ready to be fitted.

Instrumentation is comprehensive and gives the fascia a busy feeling.

Not everybody likes an auto box, but its suits the Stag's relaxed cruising stance.

Andy welded in a new rear seat pan, a second-hand screen panel, floor sections, outer sills, rear outer valance, outriggers, top deck panel, front wings, repair sections to the rear quarters, a top front panel and repair sections to the boot lid using a donor lid. In other words, a pretty comprehensive exercise.

The underside was sprayed in two-pack – that most durable of materials – and Andy was really intent on taking as few chances as possible regarding future corrosion so he went to amazing lengths, such as pouring paint into the sills until it spilled out and using a variety of bamboo sticks and other implements to make sure paint and preservative was present in every hollow section. Overkill? Not a bit of it and anybody who has seen a Stag rust will agree with that.

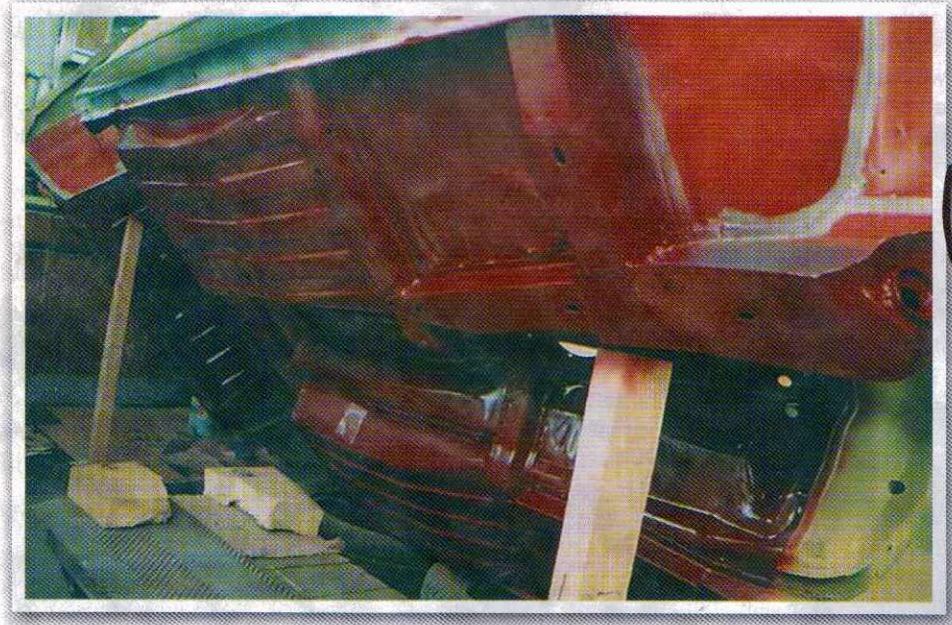
The Stag's exhaust has what some trendy types would call attitude.

The engine was given a rebuild and the auto box overhauled. The original Stag wheels are – I think, anyway – most attractive items and always worth preserving. Andy felt the same and had them blasted and sprayed. Re-chromed bumpers were sourced and the Stag also got new carpets and hood and fresh foam was fitted in the seat backs to restore appearances and comfort. The project was completed in just under two years and the Stag took to the road once again after standing idle since 1984. That was a lay-off of more than 20 years. It is now a ▸▸

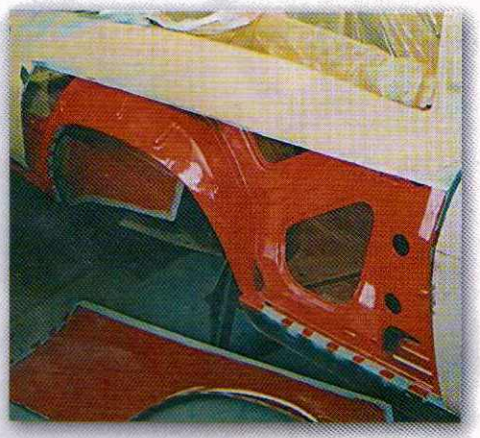
delight to drive and has proved trouble-free apart from one problem that really, you couldn't blame the car for. When Andy initially got it back on the road, the auto box was reluctant to change gear correctly and that's was hardly surprising considering how long it had been out of action. So it was overhauled and refitted. But an oil seal then developed a leak in the torque converter so the box had to come off again for the converter to be sorted.

Andy has since sold the Dolomite and is no longer the club rep for his area, nevertheless he remains most active in the organization. He obtained a Heritage certificate for the Stag and documentation from the DVLA and discovered that it has spent all its life in the Plymouth area and was originally sold new by a garage in Plympton – not far from where he lives – that was called Evans and Cutler. That garage still exists, but is now called Mumfords and is a Renault main dealer. Andy thought it would be a rather poignant touch to photograph the Stag outside of the showroom to sort of bridge the gap between then and now.

Well, I must now report that the Dolomite has been sold and he is down to just one Triumph – his well-presented Stag. But don't forget that there is a bit of a time lapse between my writing this and the feature getting into print. So you never know, eh? ■

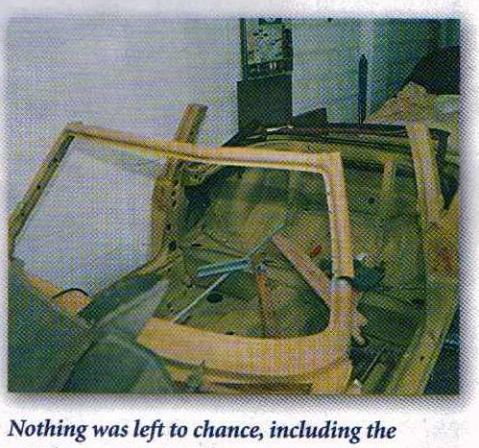


The body was rolled over to deal with the underside.



Great attention was paid to the inner wings and wheel arches.

Andy welded in various repair sections to the bodywork.



Nothing was left to chance, including the windscreen surround.