

historically speaking

Triumphs in Rally Competition – Part 2 1945-1960

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Vanguards and other Standards...

The Triumph company's assets had been liquidated in 1939, and the factory which had produced cars was turned to the production of war materiel. In 1945 the factory and the rights to the Triumph name were purchased by the Standard Motor Company at the instigation of managing director Sir John Black, who later became chairman of Standard-Triumph.

Initially post-war production was of models already in production before the war started, but by 1947 the new Vanguard Mk.1 was put into production. For its day this was a reasonably modern car, with pontoon fenders and coil spring front suspension. Its aerodynamic lines later earned it the name "the humpy Vanguard" for its sloping rear profile. The later Phase 2 Vanguard was much better looking from the modern perspective! The Standard Company did enter Vanguards in rallies on the continent with modest success.

By 1953 a new small car, the Standard 8, was put into production and the similar but slightly more powerful Standard 10 became available the following year. By now the Triumph division, a much smaller entity, was manufacturing the Renown and the faintly ridiculous Mayfair, a pretentious

little car which looked somewhat like a tiny Rolls Royce. (see story p. 24 - ed)

However, a new series of Triumph Roadsters, starting with the TR2 of 1953, was to lead the way to a new sporting image for the company. The story of Ted Grinham sourcing suitable mechanical components, Walter Belgrove working on an impossibly tight budget to design the bodywork of this parts bin special and of Ken Richardson and Grinham together transforming the performance and handling of the new model, is well known. The result was a car which filled the gap between the MG and the new Austin Healey, and whose performance and reliability were soon proved beyond doubt.

Rallying in the 1950s.

By the 1950s rallying increased in popularity and had evolved into distinct forms. A new rally was started in Kenya, in 1953, initially known as the Coronation Rally, for obvious reasons, but later becoming the East African Safari Rally, one of the most notorious car breakers ever!

The continental rallies were held on public roads, closed temporarily to normal traffic. A set route was to be followed, often with multiple starting points and

an extremely tight schedule must be followed. At the finish the competitors gathered, or "rallied", at a common finishing point. These events were held over rough roads, with checkpoints along the way to ensure competitors remained on time. Different classes of cars with different performance potential had to maintain different average speeds. The schedule was so tight the drivers and co-drivers were forced to take turns driving and sleeping in the car and the event was essentially a race on public roads.

In England the common law concept of a right of way prevented closing public roads, so rallies became navigation contests, often mostly at night to increase the difficulty, but driven at a relatively relaxed pace. This type of event did not hold much attraction for foreign entries and success did little to enhance a manufacturer's reputation, so the European events became far more prestigious. It was not until 1961 that the winding gravel roads through Englands' national forests, particularly the Kielder, became available for use as special "stages" and the modern stage rally format was developed.



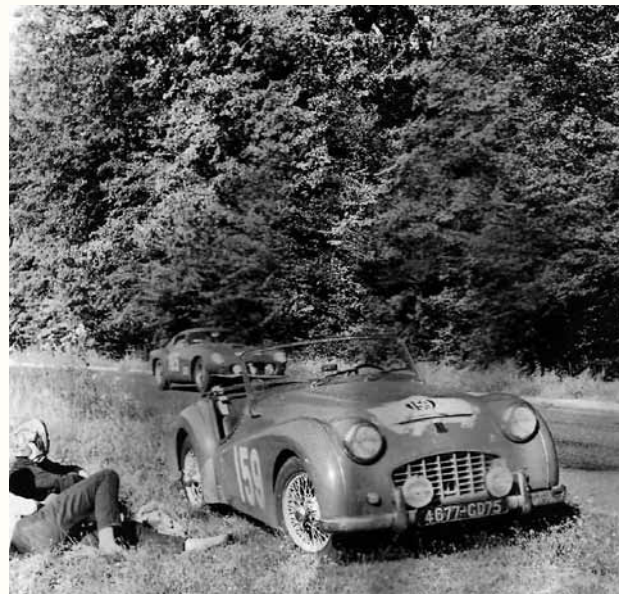
1959 Standard Ten



Standard Phase 2



Herald on Hillclimb



Annie Soisbault lets her TR3a cool down as Ferrari TDF passes



Hilman Minx – Australian Redex reliability run



Ann Wisdom 1950 Vanguard

A third type of event was the extremely long distance marathon rally. The Redex Round Australia Reliability Run was established in 1953, with a route that covered a vast distance, but allowed time each night for the drivers to rest and have a meal, so was more a test of endurance than speed. The first event covered over 10,000 kilometres of rough outback tracks, the intrepid teams contending with searing heat, choking clouds of dust, river crossings, punctures and broken springs from the rough roads. The next year the distance to be covered was increased to 15,000 kilometres! This type of event was to lead to the famous London to Sydney and World Cup rallies of the next decade.

The TR2 and TR3.

After the sensational speed trial in Belgium, the TR2 had its first success on the RAC International Rally in Wales. A car with no special preparation at all, privately entered by a Manchester garage owner, John Wallwork, won the rally outright, with second and fifth places also going to TR2s. This caused a bit of a stir, but more success was to follow.

Triumph hired Maurice Gatsonides, an experienced rally driver and a winner of

the Monte Carlo rally, as both a consultant on preparing the cars and as a driver. Three cars were prepared for the tough, 2,000 mile Alpine Rally. Two cars were British Racing Green, with consecutive registration numbers PDU20 and PDU21, the first being left hand drive for Gatsonides

and the other right hand drive for Englishman Ken Richardson. The third car was OVC 276 which had recently taken 27th place at the Mille Miglia, driven by Richardson. The engines were blueprinted, but to standard specifications, sump guards fitted and the overdrives modified. Front bumpers were removed and spotlights and extra loud external horns fitted. Finally, a searchlight and Halda Speed Pilot rally instrument for tracking time and distance completed the preparation. With this basic preparation and some determined effort by the drivers Triumph won the Manufacturers Team Prize, greatly enhancing the TR2's growing reputation.

(It is interesting to note that many car manufacturers commissioned publicity films of their rally efforts at this time. In addition some event sponsors such as Shell Oil, as well as Pathe, produced newsreels of the events that are of very good quality. Snippets of these can be found on YouTube and the TTC has VHS copies of some of the Triumph publicity films.)

The positive publicity gained from these early successes persuaded the directors to allocate funds for a competition programme and about 5 or 6 events per year were undertaken, for the remainder of the decade. These included RAC rallies in the United Kingdom, the Monte Carlo, the Alpine Rally and the premier Dutch event, the Tulip Rally.

Among those who purchased TR2s was a young woman named Pat Moss, the younger sister of Stirling Moss, who asked the company to reimburse her expenses if she com-

peted in rallies. Her request was refused and she took her offer to BMC who not only reimbursed her expenses, but provided an MGF for her to drive. She went on to have a very successful career driving BMC Minis and Austin Healeys, and even winning outright the Liege-Rome-Liege Rally, regarded as the toughest in Europe.

(Most events at this time had a "Coupe des Dames" or Ladies Cup for which female teams could compete. There were several outstanding women drivers at this time, fully capable of competing against men without any special consideration being given. Among them were Ann Wisdom, Gilberte Thirion, Jo Ashfield, who drove a Vanguard in the 1956 Monte, and the implausibly glamorous Rosemary Smith, who drove a Herald in 1961, before moving to the Rootes Group. In 1964 Triumph were to provide a works prepared Spitfire for entry by the SMART team of Stirling Moss, the car being driven by Valerie Pirie.)

In 1956 the TR3 replaced the earlier model, though with less success than Triumph had previously enjoyed. A notable result was achieved in 1958 by the new disc-braked TR3a, one of which finished 3rd in class on the Monte Carlo Rally, driven by Peter Bolton, a works driver and another, driven by Lt. Col. Crosby of the works supported British Army Motoring Association managed 1st in class, in the Liege-Rome-Liege.

By the end of the decade the sport was becoming more professional in its approach, the cars were more thoroughly prepared, commercial sponsorship was just around the corner and Triumph was soon to face competition from the Mini Cooper, Ford Cortina, Volvo 122 and other cars. **RAGTOP**



Richardson, Gatsonides, Slotemaker and Kat