

Buying Guide – Standard Vanguard Ph3, Ensign & Sportsman

Introduction

This is one of a series of buyer's guides on Standard Cars. The intended audience is someone looking at a prospective purchase, but does not cover looking at the usual issues one looks for when viewing any car, such as whether all the electrical items function, oil in the coolant, untoward noises, rattles etc when being driven.

Commission Numbers

To be found on a plate under the bonnet on the o/s inner wing panel

Vanguard Phase 3 Oct 1955 V300001

Vanguard Phase 3 Vignale Oct 1958 V350001 - Aug 1961 V400210

Vanguard Sportsman Aug 1956 TDD1 - Mar 1958 TDD 905 (Some Sportsman, mostly Estate Cars, were built to special order subsequently TDD1069 being a Vignale saloon built to Sportsman mechanical spec in Aug 1960)

Ensign Mk1 Oct 1957 EN1

Ensign Mk2 Oct 1958 EN10001 - Aug 1961 EN26044

Ensign De-Luxe Feb 1962 EL3 - May 1963 EL2318

Vanguard 6 Vignale Oct 1960 W1 - May 1963 W9953

Suffix's. DL applied to all models. L = LH drive (eg LDL) BG = Automatic, O = Overdrive

A small number of Commercial vehicles were produced for the home market from Sep 1958 built on a separate chassis, but were a very rare sight . A large number of Vanguard Ph3 & Six saloons and very stylish pick-up trucks were assembled in Australia from CKD kits, differing from UK spec cars in matters of colour scheme and exterior chrome trim arrangements. A few pick-ups have recently been imported from Australia back to the UK & may thus also be available for sale in the UK.

Brief History

The Phase 3 Vanguard was launched at the London Motor Show in October 1955 and replaced the previous Phase 2 saloon model (the Phase 2 estates continuing in production until Aug 1956). It was a radically restyled version of the famous Vanguard model and featured unitary construction and front suspension based on the Standard 8 & 10 design. Only the famous 2088cc wet liner engine & 3 speed gearbox being carried over from the previous model.

In August 1956 an Estate car was introduced, which was basically identical to the saloon except for the estate style rear end featuring a very sturdy split tailgate arrangement. Also introduced at this time was the Vanguard Sportsman, which as the name suggests was a sportier version of the Phase 3 using a version of the 2088cc engine tuned to Triumph TR2 spec with twin SU carbs and overdrive fitted as standard equipment. Externally it was identified by a traditional style radiator grille in the Triumph style(it had been originally intended to be sold as the Triumph Renown), a wide choice of two tone paintwork separated by a bold chrome trim along the lower door panels and rear wing. The interior was trimmed to a high standard with individual front seats an option. Sadly this model wasn't a strong seller, probably owing to its high purchase price of £1231 which was higher than Ford's Zodiac and Wolseley's 6/90 (both 6 cylinder cars)

At the 1956 London Motor Show a deluxe version of the Phase 3 saloon was also offered, featuring two tone interior trim, an exterior waist level chrome strip and 5.90 x 15 tyres instead of the 16" wheels fitted to other models.

At the London Motor Show of October 1957 the "basic" Vanguard Phase 3 was replaced by the Ensign (at the same £899 selling price) which featured a smaller 1670cc version of the wet liner engine, a 4 speed floor gear change (similar to the Triumph TR3 box), more basic interior trim, Triumph Mayflower style hubcaps and a simpler plain mesh radiator grille. A new range of colours for all models was also offered at this time. During 1958 the Sportsman was quietly discontinued from the range.

A major revision to the range occurred at the 1958 Motor Show in London, when the Phase 3 was visibly restyled in the then popular "Italian" style. The restyling had been carried out by Michelotti (who styled the Triumph Herald) in conjunction with the Italian coachbuilder Vignale by which the new model henceforth was called. Mechanically the Vignale Vanguard remained much as before, but externally featured a revised brighter range of 2 tone paint finishes, (separated by a thin chrome side strip), full width chrome & polished aluminium radiator grille, revised rear lamps and stylish wheel trims. Another major revision, shared also with the Ensign, was a revised roof pressing giving larger front and rear window apertures giving a more modern appearance. The Ensign also shared the chrome side strip and revised rear lamps. Additionally, the Vignale was also offered with the 4 speed floor change as an option.

The range carried on unchanged through 1959 and 1960 until the Motor Show in October when the Vanguard Luxury Six was added to the range. In appearance this was virtually identical to the Vignale apart from discreet chrome scripts front & back indicating that the 6-cylinder engine was fitted. This new 6-cylinder engine was of 1998cc, based upon the successful 8,10 & Pennant engine, fitted with twin Solex semi downdraught carbs of a new design. The interior was trimmed to a higher standard and featured a revised instrument layout and matt black padded vinyl dash top.

Although Standards now had a silky smooth 6 to offer the buying public, the purchase price of £1051 was still higher than the arguably more stylish Ford Zodiac (£1012) and Vauxhall Cresta (£1044) with which the Vanguard competed, and sales failed to take off. Following the Leyland takeover, the range was trimmed down in August 1961 to just the Vanguard 6 and Estate cars.

A possibly surprise addition to the range came in May 1962 with the Ensign deluxe saloon and estate car, which brought a 4-cylinder model back to the range. This introduction was probably to satisfy a sales order from the armed forces who had purchased a large number of Vanguards for many years. Externally this new model was similar to the previous model apart from larger Vanguard style hubcaps, a discreet Standard emblem on the grille and deluxe script on the boot/tailgate. However, the interior was trimmed to a more luxurious spec with a revised dashboard layout and padded dashtop similar to the Six. The familiar 4 cylinder wet liner engine was now bored out to 2138cc, as on the Triumph TR4, which gave the car a good turn of speed up to a heady 90mph! Sadly, this new model was only in production for a year for on May 1963 production of all Standard Vanguard & Ensign models ceased, to be replaced by the new Triumph 2000 in October 1963.

Chassis Description

All models are of unitary construction incorporating "chassis rails" at the front & rear to support the suspension. The gearbox was supported on a cradle bolted to the central structural members of the body, but the Sportsman had a tubular cross member bolted to sill brackets to support the gearbox. This design of cross member was adopted for later Phase 3 Vanguards and all Ensigns. The rear springs are semi elliptical mounted to the rear box section "chassis" members. The front suspension is fully independent using upper & lower wishbones & trunnions, similar in concept to the 8 & 10 models, which is generally long lasting if regular greasing has been carried out as per the servicing schedule. Rust is the main enemy of the chassis, look very closely at the gearbox cross member attachments to the sill which can give way leading to the gearbox to drop & foul the handbrake cable with nasty consequences (many cars have been converted back to the original central cradle arrangement). Also check the front & rear spring hangers, the inner & outer sills & rear wheel arches.

Engine

The famous 4-cylinder wet liner (removable cylinder liners which allow coolant to surround them) engine is a long lasting unit, with mileages of over 100,000 being common even in the fifties when lubricating oils weren't as effective as modern oils, use a reputable 20/50 grade oil & change the filter regularly to ensure a long life. Other than general wear & tear the main problem is with engines which have been standing a long time which may seize. Oil pressure should be over 50psi during normal running at speed. It is advisable to use an additive when using unleaded fuel, although the engines aren't prone to valve seat recession. The 6-cylinder engine is also robust if maintained correctly & went on to power many subsequent Triumph models. The Solex carburettors fitted to the Six proved to be somewhat troublesome in service, so you may find a Six has been fitted with Strombergs from the Triumph 2000 which is no bad thing.

Clutch & gearbox

A hydraulically operated 9" clutch is fitted, the Ensign & Vanguard 6 having an 8" one. These are long lasting unless abused, any visible problem may be due to issues with the hydraulic system which can

be easily rectified. Clutch judder may be caused by worn engine or gearbox mountings, which together with hydraulic components are generally available from the Standard Motor Club. The 3 speed all synchromesh gearbox is robust and is operated from the steering column control, problems with gear selection could be caused by wear in the linkage. The 4-speed box is also long lasting & many parts are common to the Triumph TR3/4 boxes. The overdrive (if fitted) is operated by a steering column control linked to a solenoid. Any faults with engagement are often due to poor electrical connections, or low gearbox oil level. As with most old car gearboxes worn synchromesh may be evident, but can be overcome by double declutching. On 4 speed boxes look for noise from the unsynchronised first gear which can be caused by crunching the gears regularly over the years when selecting the gear from rest (selecting 2nd prior to engaging first at rest usually avoids a crunch). The Standard Motor Club generally has a few second-hand gearboxes in stock.

Steering

Either Burman or Cam Gears steering boxes are fitted, play at the steering wheel should be minimal. Replacement steering boxes are hard to come by if free play can't be adjusted out. The cars generally handle reasonably well albeit with some body roll, but any knocks or thumps from the steering or suspension should be investigated. The Vanguard 6 was fitted with an antiroll bar.

Ignition & Electrics

Lucas 12v equipment is fitted, much of which is common to other cars of the period so is readily available. Starting is by key switch and operates a conventional " Bendix" type starter motor. Headlamps are conventional double dip 7" units as fitted to most cars of the period. Round rear lights fitted to the earlier cars are available from the SMC, but the later Vignale style ones are becoming hard to find, but the SMC has a number of second-hand ones in stock.

Brakes Wheels & Tyres

Lockheed drum brakes are hydraulically operated and are of the twin leading shoe type. Early cars & Ensigns had 9" diameter drums, Sportsman & later cars having 10" diameter drums (Ensign deluxe had 10" front, 9" rear). Some Vanguard 6's & Ensign deluxes were fitted with Girling disc front brakes & smaller diameter rear brakes but these are rare. Most brake components are available from the SMC if trouble is experienced, leaks from the hydraulic system or sticking wheel cylinders being the most common problems. Regarding tyres, early cars up to 1957 and all estate cars had 5.50 x 16 tyres which can be obtained from specialists, or can be replaced with London Taxi radials. Later cars had 5.90 x 15 tyres which again are available from specialist classic tyre suppliers, or replaced by 165 x 15 radials which are easily obtained from Firestone. Handling is much improved if radials are fitted.

Bodywork

The integral bodyshell is of welded construction with bolt on front wings. As with any car of this age rust can be a major problem. Areas around the headlamps, bottom of front wings, door bottoms, inner wing splash panels, rear panel below bootlid, inner & outer sills, rear wheel arches and the curved panel behind the rear wheels are all vulnerable. Also check floors under the carpets which

may suffer if water has ingressed through poor window seals or rusty sills. The SMC occasionally have new or good second-hand panels in stock, but reproduction sills & repair sections for vulnerable areas are also generally available from the club. An unusual feature of the cars is the anodised aluminium extruded side window surrounds.

Interior/ Chrome trim

New interior trim is very rare as it was made to order when the cars were current. Chrome parts such as headlamp surrounds are available from the club, other chrome trim occasionally turns up but is generally rare nowadays. New hubcaps are currently being remanufactured and should be available from the SMC fairly soon.

Cooling System

Generally, these cars run cool, but radiators and cylinder blocks can clog up if hard water has been put in, try & use clean rainwater and all year-round antifreeze if possible. The Vanguard 6 had cooling problems from new and 3 different cooling systems were tried before a solution was found. The club have recently had all coolant hoses remanufactured, so are freely available, and second-hand radiators are generally available from the club also. New old stock thermostats are becoming very hard to get, but Triumph specialist Moss have recently remanufactured them but they are quite pricey!

Prices

These cars have tended to be overlooked by the classic car press, but they are a very worthwhile buy, prices for a good one is generally about £2500 to £3000, with some exceptional ones being offered by dealers for as much as £6000, which is probably cheaper than a full restoration would cost. Vanguards are well able to keep up with modern traffic, particularly if fitted with overdrive and are a good bet if you plan to cover long distances to shows. Insurance can be had for around £100, but they are not the most economical of cars, expect to get between 25 & 28 mpg for 4-cylinder cars, slightly lower for the 6. Buy the best you can afford and you can also count on full support from the clubs "fellow owners" and spares officer. Many mechanical parts are also common to the Triumph TR sports cars so are available from triumph specialists such as Moss or Rimmers if the club hasn't got the part in stock. For more information go to www.standardmotorclub.org

Further Information

The Standard Motor Club caters for all Standard owners. It has a number of "Fellow Owners" to offer advice to members and a Comprehensive Spares Scheme for its members. For more information and a picture gallery go to www.standardmotorclub.org

Please note that this buyer's guide only highlights certain facts and is not exhaustive. If you intend to buy a Standard car, whether as a running vehicle or a restoration project, always ensure that it is inspected by a qualified person before driving it on the road.

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