

BRITISH

>WELL WORTH READING SOME OF THE TIME<

January 2019

BRITISH is the official publication of the not-officious
BRITISH IRON TOURING CLUB OF NORTHWEST ARKANSAS
casually founded in 1981.

Dedicated to the preservation, touring, towing, racing, discussion of British cars and...

National Oatmeal Month

Jan 10–Peculiar People Day

Contact Us

- Find our most excellent site in 'web-land' at www.britishironnwa.org
- To contact our President: bwatkins@watkinslawoffice.com
- To contact the editor: bcallier@cox.net

Members staying in touch:

We have our own **club email list-server** – contact Jim Carney carney1081@cox.net to sign up and stay up to date.

Our electronic (not Lucas) newsletter

In addition to member emailing, the complete newsletter may be found on our website.

Monthly Meetings

We meet for grub, grog and gab on the 2nd Thursday of every month, except December.

Other meetings

- The 4th Friday of every month is Social Night at our clubhouse and garage, the Brit Stop.
- Most Saturday mornings after the Monthly Meeting we gather at the Brit Stop for tech sessions or tinkering.
- Scheduled events and club activities are posted on last page
- Other Brit Stop activities as arranged. See your BI-List emails.

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December Meeting Minutes: No meeting in December. Next meeting January 10, 2019. Annual dues are due in January. Annual dues now at \$45.00.

January Thought: “ Everything is changing. People are taking the comedians seriously and the politicians are the joke,” Will Rogers.

November Contributors: Bill Watkins, Wil Wing, Mariner

Publisher's Note: 1) Member contributions are always given preference. **Send in something and test this statement!** Allow for one-week lead time. 2) Other clubs and entities, sufficiently desperate, are welcome to make use of material from ***BRITISH***. Please credit author and source.

BEHIND THE WHEEL (from the right hand side)

Our friends at Castrol continue to be generous to us. I received an email yesterday from Joe Lambert, one of the two guys who are our contact points with Castrol, stating that they had received an overshipment of 25 cases of Castrol GTX 20W50 and asking if we would like to have it. Well, yes!!! Mickey Smith, a member living in Garfield who drives a truck and, therefore, rarely gets to participate in club activities, promptly volunteered to pick it up and drop it off at the Brit Stop for storage. He did that today. Many thanks to Mickey.

So, we now have 75 five-quart jugs of oil sitting at the shop. An impromptu meeting of the Board of Directors (Ok, just me, Doug Schrantz, and David Farrell) met at lunch and the subject of how to split this booty up among the membership came up. One of the other two suggested that we use this as a bit of a fund raiser for the club - selling the jugs to members at a price that would be a big discount from what you could buy it for at Wal-Mart. Given the discussion of club finances lately, that sounds like a wise idea. We will investigate what these are worth and announce a plan to the club. I use a lot of this stuff so I will much appreciate the discount.

Many thanks to Sue Tennant for organizing the annual New Years Day gathering at Apple Blossom Brewing in Fayetteville. We had an excellent turnout of more than forty people and several of us (I drove the Interceptor) even appeared with their British cars. Imagine that. I did note a sprinkling of German and Japanese cars as well as the usual collection of pickups and SUVs. We did give the Apple Blossom folks a head count several days in advance but they were obviously understaffed as it took many of you one and a half to two hours to get your food. We may look elsewhere next year - its probably time to do something different anyway.

My Jaguar 3.8S Saloon has always had a leaky power steering system. The day I brought the car home after a front end rebuild - which included the steering box - it leaked. So I have just accepted that as part of the program. Now, suddenly, it has decided to just puke the entire contents of the system out into the tray beneath the car. I am hoping that it is just a loose fitting or a split hose - I really don't want to try to get into the steering box as it is full of ball bearings running in races case into the box. When Ben Dowling rebuilt this box 17 years ago he had a struggle with it and he was fully trained and had a long career in the business. Not for me, I hope.

With the turn of the New Year I have started thinking about Brits in the Ozarks. Mark Brewer tells me that he is working hard on another potential major sponsor - that would be great! If you know of a person or company with a heart for helping the ALS Association please reach out to them and see if they would be willing to be a sponsor. Now's the time! I am working on our guest speaker and hope to have someone lined up in the next few weeks. Watch this space for announcements.

Our monthly meetings resume on the 10th so I hope to see you there.

Bill Watkins

Random quotes, factoids and comments on the 1955 Le Mans race, mainly

By Wil Wing

This will have nothing to do with the tragedy of that year. Anyone at all interested in sports car racing has read about that accident.

1955 was the first post-war year that several British factory teams turned to Le Mans to promote their smaller displacement production cars - that is, teams not capable of winning outright. MG, after an absence of 20 years, ran three of their prototype 'A's, Triumph with three TR2s, and Bristol with three cars - the latter had been competing since 1953.

As you probably know, Triumph paid a film crew to record and immortalize - they hoped - their efforts at Le Mans. At our Garden State Sports car Club in Linden, NJ, in the late 'fifties, a regular attraction to the weekly Friday night meetings was watching rented 16 mm racing movies. Watching the Triumph version of the race was slanted a bit - they finished all three cars and deserved full credit for that. The 1,991cc TR2s finished 14th, 15th, and 19th. I don't recall them mentioning that a 1,490cc MGA finished 12th. That car was driven by Ken Miles and John Lockett. One of the MGs crashed and burned, so only two finished; the second car ended in 17th position, just behind a 745cc DB, but still ahead of the last Triumph. The British *Autocar* magazine of June 17 proudly proclaimed in a sub-title "British Cars First, Second and Third". That is, Jaguar, Aston Martin and Jaguar.

The reliable 1,979cc Bristols finished 8th, 9th and 10th and won the newly instituted team prize. New records were set in five classes: 3,500cc - Jaguar, Hamilton and Bueb, overall winners. 3,000cc - Aston Martin, Collins and Frere. 2,500cc - Bristol, Wilson and Mayers. 1,500cc - Porsche, Polensky and Frankenberg. 1,100cc - Porsche, Duntov and Veuillet. 750cc - D.B., Cornet and Mougin.

With seven of the first ten finishers British, they had good reason to be proud. The three non-British cars in the first ten were the 1,498cc Porsches, finishing 4th, 5th and 6th. That was undoubtedly the most over-achieving team effort. My father, proud owner of a new Porsche Continental, was walking on air.

Road & Track reported on the race in the September, 1955 edition. Under 'General Conclusions' Bond wrote, *"Other wonderful news for Americans is to know that they will be able to buy the lovely Le Mans MG shortly, as it is soon going into production. This refined car was clocked at 117.62 mph which is really terrific for a car not having much special equipment and quite heavy."* Really? The MGA is lovely, but if there was ever a Le Mans version available I somehow missed it. And I'm very sure no dealers ever offered 117 mph pushrod models.

From the same source, after 2 hours of running: *"The 1100 class, amazingly enough, was being lead by the small 850 Panhard, which was running ahead of the Porsche, Lotus and Cooper."* That didn't last through the night.

Gregor Grant wrote in the *Autocar* of June 17, *"The Dickson / Sanderson and Richardson / Hadley (TR2) machines were extremely reliable, but failed to make any impression on the surprising Miles / Lockett MG. With a maximum of nearly 120 m.p.h., the Mquette-powered machines were several m.p.h. faster than the Triumphs on the straight - probably due to a more efficient aerodynamic shape - certainly not to more power!"* Yes, the advantages of a bit of streamlining were well understood in the mid-'fifties, yet Triumph continued with their basically brick-shaped sports cars for another 20 years! American tracks were generally slow and body shapes were less important. And when Triumph finally offered something more aerodynamic, traditionalists hated it! Shades of Harley-Davidson!

Prelude to a personal note about the D.B.s and also from *Autocar*: *"Their getaways are incredible owing to the high bottom gear. The drivers slip the clutch, falter off towards the Dunlop Bridge and lock up the faces far away.... yet, one lap later they are blue streaks flashing by the pits at around 100 mph."* Four years later Yrs. Trly was racing one of the three factory team cars (#57, driven by Bonnet / Storez, which DNF'ed due to accident). When purchased, my car came with a spare gearbox/differential unit. One box was way too tall and the other was taller. I also made painfully slow starts, but worse, I'm sure I never saw the redline in fourth gear. Bridgehampton and Road America had long enough start/finish straights, but both were/are steeply uphill for the first half. I did OK with my two years of racing the car, but would have done better with shorter gears for our US SCCA tracks.

Gearing and aerodynamics are just two important factors in sports car racing, yet in this time period many Americans youths still proclaimed that **"You can't beat cubic inches."** A quote from *Autocar*, covering the 1954 Le Mans race: *"After all, Cunningham was using 5.5 liters in his big cars, and they were well driven, but Cunningham could not beat the Jaguars of 3.4 liters. Likewise, the little Panhards and Renaults, at 747 and 611 c.c., were making rings round cars of much bigger capacity. These things are best said bluntly. When it comes to making tiny engines work hard and to good advantage, the French are terrific these days."* To be fair to American 'sports car guys' of the day, the dopey "Bigger is Better" attitude was more likely to be heard from guys interested in drag racing - guys who thought there was little difference between *going* 100 mph and *maintaining* 100 for an hour.

If you think I'm focusing too much on the small cars, did you know that the prize money for the various 'Index of Performance', 'Index of Thermal Efficiency', etc., was a big deal in those days? Those handicap classifications - instituted so the French could win something, you might say - paid approximately the same as winning outright!

Perhaps you are aware of the continuous friction between Colin Chapman and the French organizers. They disqualified him once because, after digging his car out of a sand bank, he hopped in and rejoined the race without waiting for the observing marshal's permission. At scrutineering they gave his cars a hard time and demanded changes. And there was more. But no one ever said that Colin Chapman wasn't smart.

In 1957 he entered a de-stroked Coventry-Climax engine of just under 750cc in what looked like a standard Lotus 11. The smaller engine made power in a narrow band of 6000-8000 rpm, reported variously as 59 or 65 h.p. (very unlikely) from 45 cubic inches. The car weighed less and had more power than the other class entries. Driven by Cliff Allison and J.K. Hall, it easily won its class and the Index of Performance prize money. Now the French must have *really* hated Chapman!

In the 1955 race 58 cars started and 21 finished. No Ferrari completed the race. Mercedes withdrew at 2:00 AM.

Le Mans 750cc class winners from 1953 through 1957 and their finishing position:

1953 - D.B. Panhard - 17th, out of 26 finishers

1954 - D.B. Panhard - 10th out of 18 finishers (wet race)

1955 - D.B. - 16th out of 21 finishers

1956 - D.B. - 10th out of 14 finishers (wet race - 3 D.B.'s included in the 14)

1957 - Lotus - 14th out of 21 finishers

During those years, the total starters varied between 60 and 55. Not too shabby results for 45 cubic inches!

Regarding racing, I'm tempted to write my version of "**You can't beat ----**". But, it would be a long paragraph describing all the attributes needed by the car and priorities might change from one track to another. Then, we would have to introduce things like good luck and driver determination and ability. Plus other things I'm no doubt forgetting.

It sure as hell wouldn't fit on a bumper sticker!

PS: About name confusion - the factory cars were DBs, (frequently written as 'D.B.') founded pre-war and they almost always used Panhard engines. Some years they were entered as DB Panhard - we assume that Panhard provided money for the team effort. Then, Panhard itself also entered cars some years that were somewhat similar. And then there was Societe Monopole, with Panhard engines. Confusing, perhaps, but worth knowing, just as we try to remember that the Ford GT 40 was first based on Eric Broadley's Lola and Carrol Shelby didn't invent AC cars!

Perforce Road Trip

By: Mariner

"Mariner, report to personnel when dismissed," the Master Chief called out at Quarters for Muster, Naval Station Annex, Key West, FLA, March 29, 1968.

"Seaman Mariner, you have good news and bad news," said the Personnelman. "The good news: You have orders transferring you to a carrier out of Long Beach, CA. The bad news: You are to be transferred in March. This is Friday, the last working day of the month and we close at noon. You have four hours to check out. At noon your leave and travel time commence."

Two hours later, using an expedited check out procedure, forged initials, I commenced packing my personal effects. Time was not available to efficiently pack a sea bag, so using a navy supplied sheet as a wrapper, I made a hobo bundle in which was thrown every thing I owned. I placed it on the passenger seat of my 1959 Bug Eye Sprite and prepared to leave for St. Louis, some 1400+ miles away.

The Sprite was definitely a Florida Keys car. What wasn't painted was rusted. What was painted was sun bleached. All chrome work was pitted. The side curtains and rag top kept out the rain but the backs of my legs got wet from water penetrating the rusting floor. It must have been used as an off road vehicle early in its life which caused the front end to be woefully and permanently out of alignment. Its top highway speed, 52 MPH. After 52 it shook and danced all over the road way. No radio either. But in Key West, all 25 square miles of it, 150 miles of bridges and small Keys from Miami, 90 miles of gulf from Havana, it was the perfect get around car. To drive it to St. Louis, my home, was maybe a stretch. Oh the courage of youth.

At 1030 that Friday morning, with the sun out and a strong on shore east wind, I headed North on US 1 for Miami. Travel plan: Drive north through Atlanta to Kentucky than east through southern Illinois to St. Louis, letting the road route develop on the fly. Back up plan: Swap the title for a tow, when and where, the Sprite self destructed and finish the trip in a Grey Hound. The road trip that followed was an experience of a life time. Never to be duplicated. Never again to be attempted.

Even with 250 pounds of sailor and luggage on board, the Sprite was a light car. The east wind on the Keys that morning was strong enough to cause white caps on the ocean and the gulf. The Sprite had to be controlled like a plane on the open road. It had to be crabbed into the wind to maintain a straight line but the crab had to be taken off the second a bridge threshold was crossed. The bridge sidewalls blocked the wind and with the crab on the Sprite headed for the wall. When leaving a bridge the wind pushed the Sprite toward the oncoming traffic until the crab was back on. Crab on, crab off all the way to Miami.

With a maximum speed of 50 MPH, the Interstate system, as little as existed in 1968, was to be avoided. In Florida this meant traveling on orange grove roads between Miami and Orlando. The rag top on the Sprite is held down by a metal batten that fits under a lip on the windshield frame then secured with two clips on the backside of the frame. Going north at 50 mph, the first meeting of a south bound, blunt nosed semi doing 70+ mph was unnerving. The semi's pressure wave ballooned the rag with a bang causing the batten to exit from under the retaining lip and popping both ears. The ballooned rag top then acted like a drogue chute with an instantaneous lose of 10 mph. Luckily the clips held. On the next meeting, I slowed down. Slid forward on the seat as far as possible. Snaked my left arm out the side and then fully across the top of the windshield frame. Grabbed the batten and held on. The pressure front hit. The rag top stayed in place, hearing remained and sprite continued on at 50 mph. And so it went, arm out arm in, again and again to Orlando.

Sometime after midnight and just across the Florida-Georgia state line, the sprite and I pulled into a rest area so this tired driver could grab a needed nap. It is impossible for a moderately flexible, athletic 21 year old man of slightly above average height to find a comfortable sleeping position.

After a few fitfull naps and a short drive, we, sprite and I, pulled into a truckers diner for a quick of breakfast. The car and I are now one, but only I experienced Georgia diner hospitality. "Wha chu want honey? Don't have hash browns honey. Home fries neither honey. Honey we got grits, no potatoes." Ok give me grits. Well, when breakfast showed up, all I can think of was why was cream of wheat on my plate. Waffle House where were you. Seven years later, my Hawaiian born, Mississippi raised wife of three months put grits in front of me. Same reaction.

Four AM, gas up, check a Georgia map and on the road again. Decided to take the Interstate through Atlanta since it will be early of a Saturday morning, traffic should be light. It turned out to be the right decision. What a sight. The morning sun reflecting off the state capitol's gold dome.

With the dome behind me, I head NNW for Bowling Green, KY. The Tennessee hills are in the way. Never expected a hill to challenge a car. Those hills put the Ozark Mountains to shame. Head up, 4th gear, 50 mph. Crest in 3rd gear, 30 mph, temperature gauges red lined. Up shift to 4th, coast down the hill's back side, temperatures back to normal, speed back up to 50 mph. Do over again at the next hill.

Been on the road now for over 24 hours with no radio. The boredom and pain of driving is setting in. I can no longer entertain myself by singing MoTown, Country Western, or Broadway Tunes. Reciting poetry and Shakespeare memorized in high school was a bust. Next best thing, talk to the car. It needed to be complemented on staying together. Lastly, say hi to the farm animals. Arrive Bowling Green, KY, with a stiffening neck, tight shoulders, cramping back and numbing below the waste. For better or worse, the Sprite and I are joined at the hip. Gas up and on the road again.

Next stop Owensboro KY, some 70 miles away. Stop in Owensboro long enough to stretch, look at a map and do some calculations. It turned out I was stopping to gas up about every 150 or so miles. Averaging 33+ mpg and 1 oil qt per stop. Now, the sprite was not using or leaking a qt every 150 miles, but I topped off the oil as an insurance measure and had been since leaving Key West, discarding the unused part of the qt. To get to St. Louis you have to cross the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. I knew where most if not all the Mississippi River bridges were but not where any of the Ohio river bridges were. Determined I needed to take US 60 to cross the Ohio. I was off.

Now, I have had about two hours sleep, if you could call it that, in the last 36 hours. Somewhere between Owensboro and St. Louis my whole being went into a torpor state. I was a zombie driving. I have one memory between Owensboro and my parents drive way. Don't remember either river, either bridge or any community except Carmi, IL. I remember Carmi because it was the center of oil production in IL. I had been a roustabout before the Navy and had visited Carmi in 1966. It maybe of interest to know that wells in and around Carmi were being fraced in 1966 without any resulting earth tremors. I remember Carmi because once I saw the city sign I thought, "I could have a friend flat tow me from here if my partner, Sprite, gives up the ghost." My mind was numb. Next memory, it is 4 AM. Forty-two hours and 1400 + miles since Key West, the Sprite is parked in my parents driveway. I am searching for the energy to amputate myself from the Sprite, climb the steps to the front door, and wake the family up.

Postscript

I flew to California. My father sold the Sprite for me the next year. The carrier was decommissioned in 1970. While still onboard during the decommissioning process and waiting on orders again and just knowing I wasn't leaving California, I bought a TR3. Mariner your orders are in. Shore duty, Yokosuka, Japan. I flew to Japan. No road trip. No TR3. Six years later, stationed at the NROTC Unit, University of New Mexico with a wife and three cars, "Mariner you have orders, sea duty, a destroyer, homeported, Yokosuka Japan." I surrendered.

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COMING EVENTS

Club Meeting	January 10, 2019
Tech Session – If Requested- Brit Stop II	January 12, 2019

MEETING NIGHT- January 10 at Jim's Razorback Pizza, etc, in Springdale on Sunset , next to Lowe's home center.
Grub, grog and gab about 6:00 on, business at 7:00.

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