

BRITISH 9 / 24



Beautiful country roads and a good sports car is great fun... but not as much fun as on a good motorcycle. But we can't get into that now, because

This is 'Brits in the Ozarks' month!

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Bill Watkins frequently thanks us for helping to make our Brits in the Ozarks car show a success. He is right – most of us chip in and do what we can. But what asset do we have that makes us successful when many other clubs struggle or even give up on their car shows? How many guesses will you need?



BRITISH

>Well worth reading some of the time<

September 2024 Issue

**The monthly publication of the British Iron Touring Club of North West Arkansas.
Dedicated to the preservation, fixing, touring, towing, racing and discussion of British cars.**

Founded? Absolutely!

Contact Us

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Membership and Treasurer: Elaine Briggs eb88cs@cox.net

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Monthly Meetings:

At the *All American Steak House and Sports Theater* at 3492W Sunset in Springdale. The second Thursday of every month except for December. Business at 7:00, but arrive near 6:00 for socializing and supper,

Other Meetings:

As announced on Meeting Nights or on our BI-List email server.

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Meeting Night, Aug 8th: Bill Watkins asked for a large turnout tonight and he got it. The rear room was about filled, with no guests. Elaine Briggs and Yrs, Trly briefly discussed the few non-delivery of newsletters we get every month, and as we are both near-perfect, it must be the various internet providers who are guilty... or it could be that we just haven't figured it out yet. Elaine reported \$4,174 in the Treasury as of this date. The new car badges are selling well and we will probably sell some at our car show. Bill W. reviewed the show sign-up sheets, and we seem to be in good shape with lots of volunteers. I-49 was better than usual, with only one minor accident and not too many stop-and-go sections. Ron Shrum offered a stack of British tech manuals for our Brit Stop – he is only the second member to do so. So, did Yr. Ed. have a bad idea about a library of manuals at our Brit Stop for all the folks who leave them at home - or just didn't push hard enough? No tech session scheduled for Saturday, Aug 10th. Shirley and Yrs. Trly sat with Doug and Sharon Schrantz and had pleasant conversations. They are educated and nice people, not inclined to repeat salacious or titillating gossip. Too bad, as about six more lines of type are needed to fill this page.

Late note: If the type on the next page is a strain, you can always slide the 'scale' knob to enlarge.

BEHIND THE WHEEL (from the right hand side)

What a great event!! You all did a wonderful job with Brits in the Ozarks this year. I had so many compliments about the event that it was truly gratifying. Things people said to me were “you all are so well organized”, “the park is lovely”, “what a great mix of cars”, “I love the music”, “what a relaxed vibe”, “so much great camaraderie”. Whatever it is we are doing seems to be working. And the way you all came together Saturday morning was really interesting to watch. I told several people that while I was working with Malcolm to set up the sound you all just showed up and got to work. You knew what needed to be done and did it. No supervision (or drama) required. So great job to everyone.

Some statistics: 159 entries. 9 states represented. We made an amazing \$6100+ from the combination of the silent auction and concessions – that figure is roughly triple what we usually bring in from those sources. Total raised will be in the range of \$67,000 to \$68,000 when it is all over with. That is an increase over \$20,000 from last year

I had the pleasure of meeting our presenting sponsor, Lisa Kellogg, who came from Utah to join her brother, Jason Gibson (from Omaha), for the event (Jason had the classic Mini set up like a Rally car with the tires / wheels on the roof rack). She was very complimentary and said she had a great time. I think we built a good foundation for continuing with that relationship. She is going to work hard to get her husband, Jeff, to bring his Mini down next year.

Of course, no event is ever without “opportunities” for improvement: (1) We had a computer glitch with the class scoring so we will be mailing out trophies to the correct winners. Hess is taking this on but I imagine he could use some help. (2) there were a few mixups with registration as I was told some entrants had the wrong information in their packets, (3) we probably need some more “Square” modules in order to streamline concessions, silent auction, and pledge payment for those not wanting to use cash, (4) attendance at the dinner was down quite a bit – I suspect that cost has gotten to be an issue (5) and for the first time I had a couple of complaints about the hotel - rooms not updated, etc. These are all things we can work on for the future.

As usual, I had some requests that we show pictures of the class winners during dinner. I don’t know how we would do this given the time available to sort out scoring, get the pictures loaded and in order, etc. Plus the cost that the hotel charges for AV equipment. Let’s get a brain trust together on the Car Show Committee and see if this is possible for next year.

I want to give credit to Mark Cory and Brad Esslinger for coming up with both the idea for the Jim Carney Lifetime Service Award and the idea that the initial award show go to Our Esteemed Editor, Wil. Wil has given enormously of himself to this club over the years and is largely responsible for what this club is through his leadership at the shop and 3 terms as newsletter editor. Well deserved, Wil, and thank you.

As always, the question at the meeting Thursday will be “do we want to do this again?”. That is a serious discussion as if it is not fun we should not do it, and *vice versa*. One caveat: I have a lunch meeting Thursday with Amber Clark and her regional boss about the future (Brad is also joining me at this meeting). Amber is resigning from the ALS Association and does not think she will be replaced locally. That means my / our contact point will become the regional office. It is Amber who allows us the autonomy to run this the way we want to without a lot of interference from (or duty to account to) the Association. Amber has warned me that the Association may want to take more control. My position is that we would be opposed to that. I’ll let you know at the meeting on Thursday how that goes.

We have a couple of interesting opportunities to get out with our cars on September 28th. First is the Rogers Heritage High School car show at RHHS from 9:00 to 1:00. All proceeds benefit their Booster Club (which does not just support sports but all student organizations). Entry is \$25. Then the Lost Bridge Village Fly In at the LBV air strip from 11:00 to 2:00. I hope to do both and hope you will join me.

I’ll see you at the meeting Thursday, the 12th. *Bill Watkins* 2

Ye Olde Staff

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Vice President – **Doug Schrantz**

2nd Vice President – **David Ferrell**

Treasurer and Membership –

Elaine Briggs eb88cs@cox.net

Webmaster – **Malcolm Williamson**

Editor – **Wil Wing** – briton4@cox.net

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Coming Events

Oct 25-27 – Fall Retreat.

Oct 26 – Halloween Party at the Storey's.

Nov – To be announced.

Dec 7 – Christmas Party at the Storey's.



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Thanks to Ron Shrum, we have substantially added to the Brit Stop workshop manual collection. The most popular cars are now covered – MGB, TR 6, and most Jaguars. Still needed are shop manuals/owner's manuals for MG 'T' series, MGAs, Triumph Spitfire and GT 6 cars, or whatever else you can loan. Our Sun Electric manuals are now located in the bottom left of the big Sun cabinet.

Greg Bunch spoke about the Fall Retreat at our August Meeting Night. It sounds wonderful. But if you are not going, please plan on attending our Halloween Party at the Storey's on the same weekend. Robert and Bryce put a ton of work into decorating for that event and the potluck is fun. Last year only a handful of members attended. Let's have a big turnout this year – rain or shine.

This month's member newsletter contribution is from Elaine Briggs. If you haven't been paying attention or read our masthead above, Elaine has done a wonderful job organizing our membership list and emails and not just handles new memberships, but actively recruits. She is also our club treasurer. Thanks, Elaine, for your newsletter contribution. See page 7.

‘Forward to the Past’, (continued from last month)

Ed. note: ‘Forward to the Past’ makes as much sense as ‘Back to the Future’ – maybe more. Mark Holzer has taken a later version of an MGB, flawed jointly by US laws and MGs lack of money, and made it much better - lighter, lower with better handling, faster and certainly better looking as they were in the past. Purists will say, “But it isn’t original!” Fear not purists, there are still many thousands of original rubber-bumpered MGs out there.

SU Conversion

I continued to struggle with power issues and felt that installing a new carburetor would be a good idea, at least that would allow me to get a better exhaust manifold than the one that came with the ZS setup which has a 180 bend in it. But whenever I checked the timing, the mark kept jumping around a lot so I had the distributor rebuilt by Jeff Schlemmer of Advanced Distributors (<https://www.advanceddistributors.com/>) for \$200 to see if that would help. Not only did that make the timing mark very steady but the power increased noticeably! Jeff also had a rebuilt HS4 setup including intake manifold, heat shield and linkages that was rebuilt by Dave Braun (<https://dbraun99.com/>) that I was able to get for \$1,000.

The SU installation went pretty much how they are documented on the MG Experience blog for this kind of job. I was pretty sure most of the oil I had been seeing under the car came from leaky tappet covers so I wanted to fully seal them. I replaced the two separate covers with a single aluminum plate that covers both openings that Basil Adams makes and many people endorse (<https://www.mgexp.com/forum/buy-sell-and-trade-forum.42/fs-basil-adams-tappet-covers.4700061/>). To install that I needed to drill and tap a hole for the vent and install a flame arrestor as a “condenser” for the oil vapor to allow it to return to the block. That vacuum line is routed from the tappet cover, through a flame arrestor that has metal media in it and goes to a PCV valve attached to the intake manifold. I am still seeing a small amount of oil at the fittings after tightening so I am not sure I have this set up quite right yet.

I adjusted the carbs by listening to them with a hose. With a little adjustment to the enrichment mechanism and throttle cable the car was suddenly more fun than ever to drive!

What’s Next?

The wheels are not original, and I have not been able to find out where they came from (Datsun? Porsche? Other?), but they sure are hard to clean. I think vapor honing or media blasting is needed followed by a durable clear powder coat. I’m planning to keep them because I don’t see them often and they are from that period.

This winter, I plan to replace the carpet and rebuild the seats. Except for a mouse hole that appeared this summer, the seat covers are original, door covers are in good shape and so is the dash. After that – who knows?



BEFORE



Nice job, Mark!

AFTER

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Hoodlum Outfit?

~~Wuss Outfit?~~

Sensible Motorcyclist's Outfit.

Now a part of the Storey Collection

In late 1989 I sent in a deposit to the American Motorcyclists Association headquarters in Ohio for one of their 1990 tours. I chose the 3-week UK tour. This long vacation was only possible because I had retired from my business the year before. But I didn't think that my beat-up motorcycle jacket and jeans would be adequate for riding in the rain and on the 'wrong' side of the road.

There was a motorcycle accessory house in Lakewood, N.J. and I rode down there to order some good leathers. The owner's mother took my measurements and sent them off to Taurus in Canada. I think I paid about \$425 for the custom-made jacket and about \$350 for the pants. I also bought a nice, in stock, quality rain suit in H-D colors, but we were lucky, and it only rained for two days out of our 21 days in the



UK. The leathers took almost a month before they were ready, but I was very pleased with the quality. Note that the mannequin in the photo is shorter than Yrs. Trly.

In the months before the tour, the AMA sent much valuable info, such as photos and bios of the people signed up and tips on traveling. Most important was our new mantra, “Keep to the left and look right before entering the road.” This was especially important when entering the many roundabouts in the UK.

In May of 1990 most of us flew together from JFK in New York via 747 to London overnight. Our party of 20-some people were from all over the States. I had all my m/c stuff, bags and clothing, in two extra-long duffle bags we used on our sailboat – very lumpy, locked and secured with yacht cord wrapped around the bags. When retrieving my bags at Heathrow, one of them had been cut open, examined and duct taped shut by US Customs! I learned that they didn't like lumpy bags. This was not long after the 747 terrorist crash in Lockerbie, Scotland. We were charter-bussed to a large Honda motorcycle dealer on the outskirts of London for our rental bikes, which were 650 cc V-twin, shaft-drive models not sold in the US. The motorcycle dealer was HGB (Honda Great Britian) and as we were loading up our bikes one of the mechanics delighted in telling us that, to them, Americans were called GBH (Grievous Bodily Harm)!

After fitting our soft bags to the rental bikes we were off to an old hotel in the Cotswolds for our first two nights. From there most of us rode up to the Birmingham area to visit the National Motorcycle Museum – later it burned with about 200 motorcycles inside but has since been restored.

Each morning of the trip, we would receive a printed sheet of the day's ride with a map and things to see along the way, but we were on our own and only had to arrive at the designated location in time for supper or let the tour director know where we were.

We toured through part of Wales, northern England, way up into Scotland and then back down to be ferried over to the Isle of Man for the TT races for the last week. A wonderful vacation! None in our group had an accident – the AMA accepted only experienced riders and by that time I'd been riding for about 38 years.

After 3-plus decades the leathers are still supple and look almost new, thanks to a yearly treatment of Lexol, or whenever dry after getting wet. It also helps that I never took a long slide down the road while wearing them! I used them from 1990 to 2003, when I turned 70 and had to retire from two wheels because of arthritis.

At the time of the tour, back home in NJ I owned a BMW R75 in a gorgeous dark metallic Cadillac red (code U76), a Honda SR500 which I'd “Britishized” with a ‘thirties-style’ paint job and wire wheels, and a Kawasaki KLR 650 dual-sport bike. I brought the last two to Arkansas with our retirement.

Although the leathers were never subjected to ‘road rash’, I did have one ‘off’ with them. My brother from California and I were riding in Glacier National Park as part of one of our ‘ride the high passes’

tours. My brother was somewhere up the road ahead of me. Entering a 50-mph left-hand turn, the rear wheel on my Norton Commando came right around! I went off the road with a 'high sider', luckily onto mostly loose soil. But my helmet hit a rock while I tumbled, and I was knocked silly – conscious, but probably concussed. I didn't even know where I was for a minute and couldn't imagine what had happened. When my brother came back to find me, he discovered that my rear tire was soaked with oil. The damned felt oil seal had fallen out of the rear hub and all that oil was my downfall. My brother was never into old stuff, and he said, "Motorcycling is dangerous enough without riding old crap that falls apart under you!" Pretty smart. I did eventually sell my old bikes and bought a new year-2000 Honda VFR Interceptor sport bike in Rogers. It was the fastest and most capable bike I ever owned.

About the title:

Wuss outfit: Perhaps, because I could never accept that tattoos were sufficient protection for sliding down the road.

Sensible motorcyclist's outfit: Some will say that title is an oxymoron. *Wil*

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Why a car club membership is so important?

By Elaine Briggs

I have owned a British car since 1981. Back in Connecticut there was no car club near me. I had no help when I cosmetically restored my 1953 MGTD. The engine had been rebuilt 6 years prior according to the owner and the car had been sitting for a while, but it ran. The body and interior needed work however. Over 4 years, only being able to work on the car in summer – no heated garage – I worked on removing body panels, with practically every bolt needing to be hacksawed off. With an inch of mud on the frame at least there was no rust! Cosmetically the car needed work - interior removed – 3 layers of upholstery, paint stripped – 3 layers of paint! I had an 8 foot pool table that I didn't use for 4 years because it was covered with MG parts! I had a coworker at GD Electric Boat who was restoring a 1952 MGTD so we would collaborate but neither of us was a Brad Esslinger or Mark Cory! We had no car club!

Recently, my 1954 MGTF was not stopping as I thought it should. Carol and I had bled the brakes and the brake fluid that came out was cloudy – never a good sign. I had Mark Cory replace my master cylinder but the brakes were still soft, so I decided to replace my brake cylinders and shoes. Having done this task on my 1953 and helping others in my San Diego MG T-Type car club redo their brakes, I was confident in getting the job done. I jacked the car up in my garage back in early May. The first problem was the axle bolts had been tightened with a pneumatic wrench. I couldn't loosen a couple of the bolts even using a cheater bar and jumping up and down on it. I didn't own an impact wrench. So, I called Brad! Brad has every tool ever invented and his reply was where and when! He got the bolts loosened, but the next problem was pulling the drums. My 2-legged gear puller worked fine on a TD, but the TF had wire wheels and the legs of the gear puller were not long enough.

I tried a 3-legged puller from O'Reilly's but it wasn't long enough either. So, I called Brad! Of course, Brad had a long 2-legged puller and we got the drums off, except one of the front drums came off leaving the bearing and spacer on the axle stub, Ugh! During this time, Mark was on a European vacation and he is the MG guru. Brad was having cataract surgery and, oh, by the way, we had a tornado! I finally worked the bearing spacer away enough to allow a small gear puller to get behind it. But I couldn't hold the puller, turn the screw and keep it centered with just 2 hands. Hello Brad? Are you available? Brad again came to the rescue and between the two of us, we got the slightly rusted bearing and spacer off the axle. This was turning out to be the brake job from hell! I had replaced the brake cylinders and drums on 3 of my wheels, but this 4th was crazy. Parts were ordered. I had never packed a bearing before! Hello Mark, how was Europe and oh, can you teach me how to pack a bearing? Finally, the 4th brake was done. Carol and I bled the system, but the brakes were still soft. Big air bubble maybe? After the 3rd attempt, I noticed a trail of drips after my unsuccessful test drive with very soft brakes. The 6 month old master cylinder was leaking. Hello Mark? How do I remove the master cylinder? A short tutorial over the phone and the master cylinder was on its way back to Apple Hydraulics to be rebuilt under warranty. Chinese parts are not reliable!

The master cylinder was back and I reinstalled it into the car. Carol and I bled the brakes again. But still the pedal went almost to the floor. I could pump and get it to stiffen and hold. At least there was no leak, but maybe a huge air bubble still? Carol said, "I am not getting under that car again to bleed the brakes!" Hello, Mark? Once again, Mark came through and we bled the brakes and did a test drive. We were both stumped as to the travel of the brake pedal almost to the floor! The last thought was the free play on the brake pedal was too great and the brake push rod was not properly engaging the master cylinder. So once again I jacked up the car onto the jack stands, crawled under and opened the master cylinder compartment. Long story short, Mark had a stubby wrench to access the push rod adjusting nut and 4 months after what should have been a couple day brake job it was finally done! The car stops when it should without having to pump the brakes!

The moral of this story – like back in San Diego, my car club members were really important! In San Diego, we had tech sessions at our houses. We didn't have a Brit Stop. We helped each other out just as Brad and Mark did for me. But, you can't just take from your car club members without giving back! Volunteer to help out. Write a story for Wil and our newsletter. Help out at BITO. Lead a tour! Participate!

Our car club members are ready and willing to help. Especially British car club members. With Lucas "Prince of Darkness" electrical or SU carbs, to name just a couple of the British wonders, (we must be crazy to own these cars) we have all had problems which someone else has had or has some idea about what to do!

Don't just join a club, be a member!

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My first inclination was to not do this, as it smacks of immodesty. But Shirley pointed out that few members got to see the award at our car show dinner, and that I owed a big debt to Rita Carney and those who chose me.

I've had a very long retirement in NW Arkansas. I hope members realize that by being your newsletter editor for many years and contributing at tech sessions has been a big part of having a *happy*, long retirement. This is quite an honor. Best of all, it wasn't a posthumous honor!

Thank you,
Wil

