


English Motoring Club

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"A gentleman does not motor about after dark." -- Joseph Lucas, attrib.



The Prez goes racing (sort of)

by Terry Trovato

INDIANAPOLIS, IND. — During the weekend of October 8-10, your Prez attended the Vintage Sports Car Drivers' Association (VSCDA) race meet at Indianapolis Raceway Park (no, not the famous site of the Indianapolis 500; this is a separate raceway). This was via the kind invitation of an old buddy, vintage racer Jim Wilson. Here is my account of what transpired.

Setting the field

For this type of three-day event, the VSCDA groups cars for competition as follows:

Group 1 — All pre-war sports and racing cars. Includes T Series MGs, HRGs and post-war Series 1 Morgan 4 Plus 4s. *Class A*, pre-war moderate speed cars. *Class B*, pre-war higher speed cars.

Group 2 — Modified vintage production based cars. *Class A*, cars through 1963 over 2 litres. *Class B*, cars through 1963 up to 2 litres. *Class C*, cars through 1963 up to 1600cc. *Class D*, cars through 1963 up to 1300cc. *Class E*, cars through 1963 under 1000cc.

Group 3 — Sports racing cars. *Class A*, over 2 litres, pre-1961. *Class B*, over 2 litres, post-1960. *Class C*, over 1650cc to 2000cc. *Class D*, over 1300cc to 1500cc. *Class E*, under 1300cc.

Group 4 — Monoposto cars through 1972. No *Class A*. *Class B*, Formula B, Formula II and pre-1966 Formula I. *Class J*, 1962 and 1963 Formula Junior, Formula III and Formula C. *Class JE*, pre-1962 Formula Junior, rear-engine. *Class JF*, front-engine Formula Junior and 500cc Formula III. *Class F*, pre-1973 Formula Ford. *Class V*, Formula V through 1969.

Group 5 — FIA, World Manufacturers Championship cars, F5000, FA and prototype cars. *Class A*, FIA, WMEC over 2 litres. *Class B*, FIA, WMEC under 2 litres. *Class C*, prototype cars over 2 litres. *Class D*, prototype cars under 2 litres. *Class E*, F5000 and FA cars.

Group 6 — Historic production GTO (Gran Turismo Omagolatto). *Class A*, production based cars over 5 litres. *Class B*, production based cars 3 to 5 litres. *Class C*, production based cars 2.4 to 3 litres. *Class D*, production based cars 2 to 2.4 litres. *Class E*, certain production based cars under 2 litres.

Group 7 — Monoposto racing formula "70." Includes all types of single-seat race cars equipped with wings and slicks from the late 1960s through 1979. *Class A*, Formula 5000 and cars with monocoque chassis from 1971 to 1976. *Class B*, flat-bottom Formula Atlantic 1970-1979, early 1600cc Formula II. *Class C*, Formula 5000 and Formula "A," up to and including cars raced before December 31, 1970, plus Formula Super Vee and Formula C/Formula III cars.

Group 8 — Historic production GTU. *Class A*, production based cars under 1275cc. *Class B1*, production based cars 1275cc to 1500cc. *Class B2*, production based cars 1500cc to 2000cc. *Class C*, production based cars over 2 litres.

Vintage racing not for the weak-of-pocketbook

The collection of cars assembled for the race meet was truly awe-inspiring. One of the most interesting was a 1937 Morgan Four-4, which historically was one of only three cars outfitted with the Standard Special engine before the war. This particular car was built by H. F. S. Morgan for his son, Peter. Shown at Pebble Beach three weeks prior to the Indianapolis race meet, the car is signed by Peter Morgan, his son, Charles, and mechanic Maurice Owen, who worked on it before and after each race when owned by the Morgan family.

Other interesting vehicles included a 1938 Morgan F-type trike; a 1953 Allard which was one of two team cars 46 years ago, the other being driven by Sidney Allard, the car's designer; an exquisite 1939 Jaguar SS roadster, a 1957 Jaguar XKSS roadster (the car which became the prototype for the E-type), and one of 15 known survivors from Jaguar's infamous factory fire of that year; an MG-TC piloted by Carroll Shelby en route to his first racing victory; a 1926 Brescia Bugatti; and my personal favorite, a 1938 Riley 2-Litre "Special" that resembled an Allard J2X.

Striking up casual conversation with the Riley's owner, I inquired, "Is this yours?"

"Yes," he responded.

"How many of these were produced?" I continued.

"One," he smiled.

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The Press Goes Racing (part of)

by [Author Name]

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The weatherman creates an English bog for the entire weekend

The first day: Friday was the designated day for practice runs and, regrettably, it was raining. And it kept raining, and raining, and raining. Although the competition cars are covered by basic to quite elaborate tents, to say that the rain put a damper on the weekend's peripheral festivities was an understatement.

As a usual thing, on Saturday the local British marque-specific car clubs come out to the course, set up their exhibition areas and pack picnic lunches. But not on this day, nor the next, nor the next.

Four ducks did fly over on Friday morning (there is a pond in the race course infield), and truly it was an omen: The weekend belonged to the ducks. Indianapolis had seen 100 previous days with no rain, so the area's farmers were most appreciative for this Gift from God. But it did not bode well for the cars.

The Indianapolis Raceway Park's vintage sports car racing circuit is two and a half miles in length with various twists, turns, and a lengthy straightaway. During an early practice run, a Morgan spun out and smacked a wall with its right rear fender, knocking the entire rear end of the vehicle out of kilter. It was done for the weekend.

Wilson races a 1962 tri-carb Healey 3000. His car contains many special features, such as Jag disc brakes all the way around, straight exhaust with twin pipes protruding out from under the driver's door, and various engine modifications to boost performance. When he went out solo to practice in the rain with his designated group, things were going well until Turn 15. He came in a tad too fast and the Healey did a triple pirouette and then gently kissed the wall, smashing its front end.

The damage was not fatal, but bad enough that a jack had to be used to pry the right front fender away from the right front wheel.

All broken glass (headlamps and driving lights) had to be removed and the area where the light fixtures were located had to be covered with duct tape before the car was allowed back onto the course. Chief Tech Steward Bill Langston (more about him later) inspected the car and deemed it suitable for racing, but this adventure with the wall would end up costing Wilson a chunk of dough down the road.

The zanies of "Team Thicko"

Friday afternoon Wilson advised, "Let's go visit Thicko Village."

This, I was to learn, was the hangout of the Team Thicko racing team, a bunch of great folks and zanies who take vintage racing with tongue firmly planted in cheek. It seems as though Team Thicko was more or less founded in the spirit of the original "Healey Works" team.

Geoffrey Healey, Donald Healey's eldest son, was the company's Chief Engineer, and ran their racing program (not to be confused with the rallye cars, which were generally campaigned and prepared by British Motor Corporation). Roger Menadue ran the Experimental Department that fabricated all the prototypes and Healey race cars. These efforts were on a limited budget and yet were quite successful, considering the humble origins of the machinery.

Roger and Geoff were good friends, and Roger's relationship with Donald Healey went way back. Roger's deal with Donald was that only Donald could fire him, and Roger's hours were his to set. Geoff referred to those who complained a lot, or those who didn't understand Roger's contributions, as "thickos."

Hence the name of this august group of racers, who campaign bugeyed and square-rigged Sprites.

Having fun with their more affluent racing colleagues, the drivers of the Team Thicko Sprites adorn the rear ends of their cars with slogans such as "Driver carries no cash" and "Drive it like you stole it!" Jim Donato, Bill Thompson and Gary Speckman are the guys who lead Team Thicko, and getting to know them a bit was a real treat.

Donato is great guy and cook extraordinaire, and carries the nickname "Elmo Mancini, the Meatball Magnate from Logantucky." (He is from Logansport, Indiana, but somehow, his fellow team members must think the town is in Kentucky; no matter). His nickname is based on that of Elvis' suave arch-rival in the movie *Viva Las Vegas*, a Team Thicko favorite.

At lunch Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Donato cooked up meatball sandwiches for everyone, and I mean *everyone*, who cared to stop by to visit, and always served them with a smile and a word of good cheer.

When not practicing or racing, Bill Thompson rode around during the weekend on a moped, offering help to fellow racers and advice if needed. He is considered by his fellow team members to be one of the original founders of the organization — but again, in Team Thicko fun, he is referred to as "Flounder," which also is plastered on the back of his Sprite. He was also a professional musician for several years. (We'll get to that later.)

Gary Speckman, who pilots a black Bugeye with a wide white racing stripe, writes up the Team Thicko race reports for the group's website. He also was the designated Barbecue King for the Saturday night Team Thicko extravaganza, which featured free music and free food (more on *that* later).

Saturday: More rain. Wilson went out to practice early that morning, his first time out since the experience with the wall on Turn 15. He went nice and slow.

I spent the day meeting people and gawking at what has to be an assembled million dollars or more worth of European engineering. There were lots of Lotuses, including one which graced the cover of *Road & Track* in the early '60s. As I found out later when real racing began, these Lotuses were very well suited for this particular course — they can rip through the turns and hold their own on the straightaways.

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Meeting of the 'Magnutts'

I had figured at some point I'd be asked if I owned any English cars, so I had pictures of the Singer and Magnette with me to show to all who cared to ask.

I was showing my picture of the Magnette to someone when a second guy blurted out, "Is that your ZB?"

"Yes," I answered.

"What's your name?" he continued.

"Terry Trovato," I replied.

"Terry... it's Jeff Powell!"

Powell is the Z Magnette Registrar for North America, and although I have talked with him several times on the telephone and corresponded with him in writing, I had never met him. What a surprise!

We were joined by another "Magnutt," Jack Heist, of Largo, Fla. All three of us stood there laughing. What a small world. Jack got a fellow race driver to take our picture for the Z Magnette newsletter.

Powell and Heist race MG TCs, which they brought to the race meet, and I had a great time chatting with them and seeing their cars. The rain kept falling, but everyone stayed in good spirits, which carried over into Saturday night.

Saturday night: Fun and frivolity

Team Thicker's Thompson had brought along speakers, microphones, amps, and his guitar for the Saturday Night Extravaganza, which started around 6 p.m. and took place in a large tent that, conservatively, could seat 100 or so.

"Need a drummer?" I asked, since I had played drums for most of my junior high, high school and college life.

"Sure," Thompson said. "Got any drums with you?"

"No," I answered, "but I can make a Conga drum out of an empty 5-gallon plastic spring water bottle," which was laying nearby.

"Fine with me," Thompson replied.

We were joined by Bill Langston (who had inspected Wilson's dinged-up Healey). He also had a guitar. Listening to Langston warm up, I could tell he'd been around.

"Sounds great," I offered.

"You know, he wrote the 1950s hit 'We Like Short Shorts,'" Thompson explained, adding, "and he sat in with Buddy Holly on occasion."

Some Tech Steward, I thought. Then, Jon (pronounced *yahn*) Forsberg, Wilson's mechanic and Spridget racer, showed up carrying a small cloth bag. Out of it Forsberg produced several harmonicas, quipping, "I play the blues."

"All right!" I grinned. "This is going to be fun!"

We broke into our first impromptu tune, a blues number with Forsberg on vocals and harp. The crowd couldn't believe it sounded so good (which it does, considering we'd never played together before). We finished to alcohol-enhanced applause.

"You people will settle for anything," Thompson offered dryly.

We faked our way through a whole 40-minute set and, in attempt to keep everybody happy, even threw in a few country and western tunes.

I got my show-biz break when I asked, "Wanna do 'Act Naturally?'"

"Go for it," Thompson said.

I did the vocal and Thompson and Langston laid down rhythm guitar licks to make it as toe-tapping as possible.

Then it was break time, and we waded into our crowd of appreciative admirers, who are in high spirits by this time. Since they asked for more, we went back in 15 minutes or so for a second set, and were even joined by an audience member who did a great job of singing a song he had written — "The Road Atlanta Blues," which described all of his bad luck encountered on that course to the cheers and guffaws of the audience.

Soon, we were out of ideas and songs, so we quit. Langston shook my hand and said, "The next time you're with us, bring a drum set!" A nice compliment from a Top 40 songwriter!

The Prez goes "touring"

Sunday: More rain, but it's race day. More practice runs and, miraculously, the rain slowed down to a drizzle, then a mist. By noon, a tiny patch of blue sky appeared. Cheers from all.

At noon, the race drivers were allowed to take their guests on a "tour" of the course. "Want to go?" Wilson asked. "You bet," I replied.

Of course, I brought my RAF leather helmet and goggle set for just this moment. I donned it, and off we went. There are only a few folks out "touring" with us, so Wilson said, "Hold on." The Big Healey's six emitted a roar through its straight exhaust and we went flying out of the chute and onto the track. Wilson had a Brooklands Aeroscreen on the driver's side; there was nothing on my side. Glad I've got my goggles, I thought to myself.

The Healey was outfitted with a monstrous tachometer. The speedo didn't work. No matter, there were no cops to give speeding tickets out here. In fact, the rear end of Wilson's car is adorned with the slogan "The last open road," the title of a book by the same name written by a racing driver.

I learned later we are doing approximately 90mph down the straightaway.

We headed into the turns and the Healey, fitted with special tires and wheels, happily bounded through each, displaying the marque's famous scuttle shake. I started laughing. As a former Healey owner, I had experienced this characteristic many times in the past. All too soon, we covered the two miles and my ride was over. What a thrill.

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The feature race was held in the early afternoon. Fifty-five vehicles lined up "Le Mans-style" on the starting grid. Those excluded from this feature race were the Group 1 cars, which were a bit too slow for this assembled throng. The entourage included Sprites, MG Midgets, MGAs, Porsches, Big Healeys, Jaguars, lots of Lotuses, a couple of Kurtises, a Lister Chevrolet, an AMC Javelin, a Volvo 120 sedan, a Sunbeam Alpine, and a couple of Corvettes, among others — 55 cars in all. When all fired up their engines, it was a wonderful sound (many of the drivers were wearing ear plugs). A new Ferrari led the group on a pace lap, and then it was off to the races.

Right away two Lotus Elans, which were placed one-third back in the pack, sprinted to the lead. These two guys could drive, and they made the bigger cars look like clumsy teenagers at their first cotillion dance.

Total race distance was ten times around the course. Yes, I know it's not that long a race, but most of the drivers were 45 to 65 years old, which is a consideration in this type of vintage event.

Wilson was playing it safe in the Big Healey. He stayed in the middle of the pack. On about Lap Eight, the lead Lotus started emitting white smoke. The driver saw it, and headed for the pits, finished for the day. His compatriot was still out on the course and took over as the leader. He hung on to capture the checkered flag.

Only one car got seriously damaged — another Lotus Elan, which banged its entire right side against a wall. The driver's fine, though.

At race's end it's back to the pit area for reminiscing and good-byes. I profusely thanked my buddy for a great time, and headed for the airport. Rain or no rain, it was a weekend to remember.

Brits on the Bluff in Natchez

by **Richard Wolf**

British Motoring Club of New Orleans

NATCHEZ, MISS. — The English Motoring Club of Jackson, Miss., held their 3rd Annual "Brits on the Bluff" Car Show on October 16th in lovely downtown Natchez. It was a gorgeous Saturday and about 48 British cars showed up to fill the field on the bluff overlooking the mighty Mississippi River.

This event coincided with the Natchez Hot Air Balloon Race Weekend festivities, which drew thousands of people to the area. The car show, a Concours d'Elegance (points) judged show, was located right in the middle of all of these festivities. There was also a "Show Stopper" Award voted on by the individual attendees, and a Kids' Award, selected as the favorite car of all of the children in attendance.

Everyone at the show was friendly and the English Motoring Club members put on a very organized event, with all parts of the show and competition taking place right on time and according to schedule.

In attendance were British Motoring Club of New Orleans members John Boudreaux, Mike and Phyllis Delacerda, and Richard and Barbara Wolf. John won first place in his class with a 1969 Triumph GT6 — and also won the award for biggest oil leak.

The Mardi Gras T's were well represented by David and Chesney Loeb and Mike Lewis. The Loeb's were first in their class with their 1952 MG TD, and Mike captured third in his class with his 1950 MG Y Type.

The Panhandle British Car Association had the largest club participation.

After the car show, it was very exciting to watch all of the balloons over Natchez as they raced above the river. Everyone had a great time and we are all invited to attend their event next year.

State of the Union in 1861

January 3, 1861

Washington, D.C.

The President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, delivered his first State of the Union address to Congress on January 3, 1861. The address was a significant event in American history, as it was the first time a President had addressed Congress since the signing of the Constitution in 1787. Lincoln's speech was a call for unity and a warning of the dangers of secession. He spoke of the "great principles of liberty and justice" that had guided the nation since its founding. He also spoke of the "great wrongs" that had been committed against the people of the South, particularly the institution of slavery. Lincoln called for a "firm and unshaken" government, one that would stand for the principles of liberty and justice for all. He also called for a "firm and unshaken" government, one that would stand for the principles of liberty and justice for all. He also called for a "firm and unshaken" government, one that would stand for the principles of liberty and justice for all.

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