



English Motoring Club

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



An impressive array of British rolling history — and one BMW — at the Old Country Store, circa 1875, Lorman, MS. Widely scattered showers did not dampen the enthusiasm of the entourage. Photo courtesy Terry Trovato & Pat Cashman

JULY 2000

“Drive Through History” attracts record number of participants!

JACKSON, MISS. — Not even the threat of inclement weather could dampen the spirits of EMC members and their guests as a record number of people and cars turned out for the club's 3rd Annual “Drive Through History,” which was scheduled in conjunction with “British Car Week” across the U.S.

The tour was led by Tour and Rallyemaster Supreme John Simmers, with able assistance from his wife, Florence. The Simmers were in their 1969 MGC-GT.

On hand to participate were the Adams Family (Al and Debbie in a 1977 MGB, and son Ray and wife Stephanie in a 1960 Austin-Healey 3000), Pat and Barbara Cashman (1974 TR6), Wilbert and Jean Easom (1968 MGB), Dennis and Mary Katherine Lofton (1969 Jaguar E-type Roadster), Joe and Cynthia Speetjens (1995 Morgan Plus 8), Cappy Stahlman (representing the U.S. in a Cadillac Allante), John Turbeville and Renee Cole (in John's 1977 MGB), the McMahan Clan (Charles and Marie in a 1960 Austin-Healey Sprite, followed by additional family members in two MGBs), J. T. and Audrey Seale (1977 MG Midget), Ed and Kay Alderman (representing Germany in a BMW 318i), Randy Thompson and Edie Hayes (in Randy's 1974 MGB), and Tom and Leine McNeely (1986 Jaguar XJ6).

Distinguished guests included Dave and Dianne Tietz (1970 MGB) and Jim and Sharon Alonso (1969 MGC), with both cars/couples representing the Florida Suncoast MG Car Club, St. Petersburg. They had driven 787 miles one-way to join up with the group!

Also among the guests was Charles Ake (1977 MGB), Vice President of the British Motoring Club of New Orleans.

The EMC Prez and First Lady, Terry and Merideth Trovato, brought up the rear of the stately procession in their 1958 MG ZB Magnette Sports Saloon.

Since a part of the tour involved War Between the States artifacts and sites, it was appropriate that the day began by splitting the entire group into two divisions

sions to journey along the picturesque Natchez Trace Parkway, with one heading south from Jackson and the other heading north from Natchez. They converged at the Old Country Store, founded in 1875, in Lorman, Miss., where they quickly attacked a fabulous breakfast prepared by Chef Alvin Davis and his staff. (Man, love those grits!)

Then, the entire unit headed north to the ruins of the Windsor Castle Plantation. The original house was built in 1861 (no, it was not destroyed by the “recent unpleasantness”), and all that is left are its fabulous columns. Unbelievably, also there touring at the exact same time the fleet of British cars arrived were Tom and Margaret Adams, of London, England! They were duly surprised by this impressive display of rolling British history (the Adamases commented they had fond memories of their Austin Somerset), and enjoyed viewing the cars.

Departing the Windsor Castle ruins, the group headed toward the town of Port Gibson, Miss., which Union General U. S. Grant deemed “too beautiful to burn.”

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Historical points of interest on Main Street, which the group traversed, included the First Presbyterian Church (1859), whose steeple is adorned with a gold hand with its forefinger pointing to heaven instead of the traditional Christian cross, and Temple Gemiluth Chessed, of Moorish-Byzantine design. Built in 1891, it is one of the oldest synagogues in Mississippi. The beautiful antebellum home "Oak Square" (1850) was also nearby.

Motoring to the outskirts of Port Gibson, the group headed for the Old Rocky Springs Methodist Church and Churchyard/Cemetery several miles away. Located in a wooded grove, the church was built in 1837 and its adjacent cemetery contains several 18th century graves.

Then, it was off to Vicksburg, Miss., the "Gibraltar of the Confederacy." During the War Between the States a pivotal battle and siege took place there.

The group's first stop was at the *Cairo*, a salvaged Union gunboat with its own related museum. During the struggle 137 years ago, the Confederates sunk the *Cairo* with electrically detonated mines, making it the first vessel in history to be destroyed in such a manner. The Yankee gunboat lay in its watery grave until an enterprising group of scientists found and raised it in the 1960s. It has painstakingly been reconstructed, to the extent possible, with all of its guns in place. An adjacent building displays all of the recovered artifacts found on board, including the officers' china and silver place-settings.

Leaving the *Cairo*, the group journeyed a short distance through town to Vicksburg's Old Courthouse Museum, which houses priceless artifacts from the battle and siege. The city's most historic building, constructed in 1858, it has hosted such distinguished visitors as Jefferson Davis, John C. Breckinridge, Booker T. Washington, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and U. S. Grant. It was at this site that the Confederate flag was lowered and the Federal flag was raised on July 4, 1863, after the city's inhabitants had been starved into submission.

Of course, all tours have to end on a pleasant note, so it was off to Duff's Tavern and Grille in downtown Vicksburg for fun and good cheer. As an additional treat, EMC members and Vicksburg residents Pat and Barbara Cashman invited participants to view their extensive car collection, which includes such British rarities as an Armstrong Siddley Star Sapphire Saloon and a Gordon Keeble.

As in the War, there were a few casualties (only mechanical, thank goodness) along the way. Barry and Patricia Schmidt's TR7 refused to start at 7 a.m. that morning, and Nigel Gardner's Austin-Healey 3000 developed fuel pump problems *en route* and had to turn back. J. T. and Audrey Seale's MG Midget developed electrical problems (melting fuses). Even the "presidential limo" had problems as, on the return trip home, Terry and Merideth Trovato's Magnette experienced engine bearing failure.

Those incidents notwithstanding, it was a great day to be enjoyed by all, and John and Florence Simmers are to be congratulated for again planning and hosting an outstanding and memorable event.

Houston's All-British Car Show

by Terry Trovato

The MG Car Club of Houston hosted its 11th Annual All-British Car Show and Competition in early June, and the EMC President decided to participate for the first time in this event.

The show was held in northwest Houston in a large open-air pavilion so all cars and their owners were out of the sun/heat. There were 106 vehicles, several British motorcycles, and a crowd favorite, a 1903 Raleigh bicycle, on display. The vast majority of vehicles were very high quality, with several real rarities on hand — including a 1952 Jowett Jupiter and a wonderful 1936 Standard Saloon with working trafficators and a large sunroof (it is the only known example of this particular vehicle in North America). Also on display were an ample supply of T Series MGs, MGAs, MGBs, Morgans, and Austin-Healeys, which were in very good to fine condition.

Voting was by popular ballot. Yours truly entered his 1949 Singer Nine Roadster, which was all dressed out in its new Signal Red respray. We were placed in the "British Specialty" class, which included a Daimler SP250 Dart and the previously mentioned 1936 Standard Saloon, among others.

The Singer, as usual, received a great deal of attention and was flying its newly purchased period accessory courtesy of a Memphis antique store, a red linen "God Save the King" flag (*circa* 1950/King George VI), which drew a lot of smiles. We placed second in class, a pleasant surprise.

Best of Show went to one of the pristine Big Healeys, and the equivalent of our "Show Stopper" award went to a 1958 MG ZB Magnette Varitone. The car looked like Cappy Stahlman's but was a duo-tone (dark maroon over light maroon, separated by a strip of chrome molding running completely down each side of the car). The Varitone also has a larger back window than the standard Magnettes.

First place in the Big Healey class (but not Best of Show) went to Martha and Robert Goodwin, 1956 100M. (Robert and Martha also won the Big Healey class at our 1999 Brits on the Bluff conclave.)

During a lull in the show I passed out 100 flyers on our Brits on the Bluff 2000 event. Robert followed me for part of the journey, telling fellow participants what a great show we host. I appreciated his kind comments.

The EMC congratulates the MG Car Club of Houston for hosting a memorable and interesting event.