


English Motoring Club

P.O. Box 5263
Jackson, MS 39216-5263
(601) 442-8684

President: Terry Trovato
Contributing Editor: Pat Cashman

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



'Tops Down Party' April 1!

JACKSON, MISS. — To celebrate the arrival of the spring driving season, on the morning of April 1st English Motoring Club members and guests will traverse the beautiful Natchez Trace Parkway in their British cars with the tops *up* to the Rocky Springs Rest Area, approximately 40 miles south of Jackson. Each participant will pack a picnic lunch and, after the meal has been consumed with its related conviviality, the EMC's famous tops-down ritual will take place.

On cue from Social Chairman Keith Anderson, all attendees will lower their cars' tops simultaneously, a club tradition, as a salute to the vernal equinox.

All British car enthusiasts within our geographic location are invited to join us for this enjoyable and entertaining event. For details contact Terry Trovato at (601) 442-8684.

(TRIP TO NATCHEZ CONT'D)

Chesney and I spent several hours just reading and talking in the very cozy downstairs rooms. Unlike many of the homes that have been converted to B&Bs, Cedar Grove has always been lived in, and has that patina that only 170 years of history can create.

After settling in at Cedar Grove, we loaded into the Jaguar for the drive into town. The host club had arranged for dinner at Biscuits and Blues, and for a spectacular fireworks show which could be viewed from the restaurant's balcony. Both the dinner and the company were wonderful. The dinner crowd seemed larger than in '98 and was an event not to be missed.

Terry asked us to be at the show site for 9 a.m., but since John wasn't serving breakfast until 8:30 a.m., I told Terry he would just have to save us a couple of spaces. We spent the night in the Valerie Bedroom, named after a daughter who died in an accident at too young an age.

The next morning John and his very entertaining staff served a delicious Southern breakfast in the formal dining room and told us the story of the plantation. At breakfast we discovered that some of the other guests had also come for the car show, driving a Morgan Plus 8 and an Austin-Healey 3000 all the way from Dallas, with the sunburn to prove it. We all left together, but our poor TD was no match for the others on the twisties and in the hills, and was left to motor on properly but alone.

When we arrived at the show site, Terry had indeed made good his promise and reserved our spots. Our TD was parked next to Tom Schmidt's beautifully restored TF. They were, in my humble opinion, the two best looking cars in the show. Tom's TF won a well deserved Best

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of Show and we won first in class. There were 53 cars in the show this year, and the site could easily accommodate several more.

Saturday night we ate dinner at the King's Inn Tavern. The food was great, the service was friendly, and the ghosts were very entertaining. The building is the oldest in Natchez, complete with a history of intrigue and murder — which accounts for the ghosts. Paul and Michael were so scared that they wouldn't stay long enough for dessert. If a pair of 11-year-old boys can be scared out of dessert, the ghosts are undeniably real! After dinner we returned to Cedar Grove for a quiet evening in the old house, which the boys also believed to be haunted.

Sunday, the boys and I were up early to explore the grounds and enjoy the solitude of the early morning. We were again served a great country breakfast which included pancakes made with fresh blueberries. As usual, I was the last to finish, but I didn't want to insult our hosts by leaving anything uneaten. We then packed the cars, and after a brief delay for photos in front of the house with our hosts and new friends from Dallas, we were off. We made a short stop at the Natchez Indian village to tour the grounds, and then headed home about 11:30 a.m.

The weather was again too good to believe. Chesney was in the TD and I was following in the Jag. We had planned to stop every hour, but Ches kept on driving. Finally, about 2:30 p.m. Chesney and the boys got hungry (I could have gone on for quite a while on the breakfast), and we stopped at Mindendorf's for a late lunch. After again stuffing ourselves to the point of barely fitting in the TD, we were back on the road for the last leg of the journey, arriving home without incident at about 4:30 p.m.

This is one of those events that should simply not be missed. The October weather is as good as it gets, the hosts are extraordinary, and Natchez at that time of year offers a variety of entertainment. This year, if enough of us would make the trip to book all or most of one of the B&Bs, I am sure we could convince the inn to prepare dinner as well as breakfast. I will be more than happy to handle the arrangements.

Because this is a very popular time of year in Natchez, we will have to make our reservations early, probably no later than April.



MARDI GRAS T's

**A Chapter of the
New England MG T Register**

President: Marvin Dupree, (504) 835-0170
Contributing Editor: Richard Wolf, (504) 892-1574

Our trip to Natchez

MARCH 2000

by Dave Loeb

In 1998, the Lewis and Loeb families made the trip to Natchez for the 2nd Annual Brits on the Bluff British Car Show. The event is held in downtown Natchez, in conjunction with the hot air balloon festival and the Fall Pilgrimage. That year, approximately 34 cars attended, including a rather eclectic collection from the host British Motoring Club of Jackson, Miss.

We had such a good weekend there we decided to attend again last year. Our planning began early.

Natchez has the finest collection of pre-war mansions in the South, many of which are in use today as very elegant bed and breakfast inns. In '98, when we tried to make reservations for a B&B in September for the October show, we were disappointed to find that everything had been booked — and we were lucky to get a room in the host hotel. While that hotel was okay, it was a rather typical Days Inn sort of place that could be found Anywhere, USA.

Last year, however, we made reservations in July and even then there was only one inn with vacancies. So I booked two rooms for the family at Cedar Grove

Plantation on nothing more than the recommendation of the reservation service, and the fact that it was the only B&B available. The choice turned out to be fortuitous, but more about that later.

In 1998, our TD won Best of Show in Natchez, but we have driven it a lot since then. The miles and a rather significant fuel leak took their toll, requiring a bit of work to get back to our prior condition.

As is usually the case, the work didn't progress on schedule, and the Monday before the show found us with a long list of things remaining to be done. I was not particularly concerned because I had planned to trailer the TD and not take either the MGB or the 3.8S type. But on Monday evening, Chesney announced that the weather would be magnificent and that she wanted to drive both the TD *and* the Jaguar. So, instead of having to prepare just one car for a trailer ride, I now had two cars to prepare for a 400-mile road trip. So much for prior, "proper" planning.

By 1 a.m. Friday, the cars were ready for an 8 a.m. start. Mike Lewis met us at our home and, after a brief delay caused by having to deliver the dogs to the kennel, we were off at about 8:45 a.m. Mike took the lead in his Y-type, Chesney was in the middle in the TD and, along with my son Paul and his friend Michael, I brought up the rear in the Jag.

The weather was just what Chesney had ordered

and we enjoyed a flawless ride to Natchez, arriving at 1 p.m. We and Mike split up at that point, Mike having reservations at the host hotel, and we heading to Cedar Grove after a brief stop at the reservation center downtown.

What we didn't know was that Cedar Grove is about 15 miles from downtown. Initially we thought that to be a negative, but when we turned onto Kingston Road for a seven-mile ride we found a most memorable drive. The road traverses gentle hills and is almost never straight. The trees form a canopy over most of its length, with bright sunlight filtering through. Just about the time one begins to try to decide whether it would be better to stop or to keep on driving, the sign for Cedar Grove appears on the left, directing you down a gravel drive that is just long enough to make it difficult to see the house from the road.

As we parked in the circular drive in front of the house, we were greeted by a pair of dogs and the innkeeper, Mr. John Holyoak. John of course noticed the cars and mentioned that he had friends with a peculiar antique British car. When he told us the car was a Singer, we knew immediately that he was referring to our event hosts, Meredith and Terry Trovato.

My first thought was how small can this world be, but then I realized that we were discussing the famous Trovatos. Over the weekend, I learned several interesting things about our dear friends, the most printable of which is that Terry is an accomplished drum and banjo player. I also understand that they have been dinner guests at Cedar Grove on several occasions and always liven up the party with unusual costumes, automobiles and libations.

The house itself is magnificent. Built in 1830, it once farmed over 900 acres of cotton. Today it retains about 150 acres, with a lake, biking and hiking trails, swimming pool, a family cemetery and several acres of manicured lawns and gardens. Downstairs, the main house contains a large entry foyer, dining room, kitchen, breakfast room, living room, TV room, library, bedroom and veranda. Upstairs contains three more bedrooms, and there are an additional three bedrooms in an original outbuilding surrounding the pool. The entire house is beautifully furnished in period antiques. It pre-dates the Greek Revival period and has a much more comfortable atmosphere than some of the more imposing mansions.

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