

THE OFF-SIDE UNDO



Volume 27

June 2013

“A gentleman does not motor about after dark” Joseph Lucas

Official Publication of the English Motoring Club of Mississippi

On the web at www.msemc.org

DRIVE THROUGH THE DELTA

By Steve Whitlow

As owners of British cars we've all had these moments. The moment when you look at your car and realize something is wrong. Perhaps your initial reaction is denial, 'that can't be leaking out of my car.' I know mine was, but peering underneath the car the drip of coolant was undeniable.

Whilst lifting the bonnet I was checking off the list of possibilities. All coolant hoses were replaced slightly more than two years ago. An inspection of the engine bay this morning found all was well so this must be the radiator or the water pump, either of which would ground me for the weekend. I was staring disaster in the face.



The EMC Gathering at the B.B. King Museum Photo Courtesy EMC

I'd had a good feeling about the car's reliability until this moment. A recent oil change, brake fluid and clutch fluid change addressed necessary maintenance issues. The Midget was packed and ready to go. The weather was perfect, warm and balmy with enough cloud cover to shield us from the worst of the

sun's heat. I'd left early enough to stop and top the tank before arriving at the Beagle Bagel, the starting point for our trip to the Delta.

But now I was stranded, the rivulet of coolant was meandering across the pavement. As it turned out, I was fortunate. The leak was from the water pump bypass hose. I had used the emergency type instead of removing the water pump to install the proper reinforced hose. As the water pump was working fine, I had decided to leave well enough alone.

At this moment fortune smiled on me, rummaging through the boot I had a spare emergency type hose-but no tools! A quick phone call and Keith Anderson and Gene Johnston came to my rescue bearing tools. Being far superior mechanics to myself, I graciously allowed them to work on the car while I provided necessary encouragement.

A titanic struggle ensued, each man in turn wrestling with the little hose until at last, weary of the struggle, it surrendered, meekly slipping into place. It's amazing how little really good mechanics swear, no matter how trying the circumstances. Clamps tightened, coolant added, the Midget was ready to go.

'Pick your beer, whatever you want' I offered. But Gene had other ideas. 'You need to write an article for the Newsletter, not just about this, but the entire weekend.' 'Yes, single-spaced, three pages.' Keith chimed in. And so my fate was sealed.

Twenty-three travelers in thirteen cars would participate in this year's 'Drive through History.'

The Mississippi Delta has long history as rich as its dark soil. This vast swath of flat as a board land stretches in all directions as far the eye can see once you're north of Yazoo City. It remembers a time when Cotton was King, suffered the Great Flood of 1927 and gave birth to the Blues.

Roads in the Delta are generally quite good with long, straight stretches and gently sweeping curves.... you can see for miles. Being accustomed to the woods and hills of central Mississippi and relatively short line of sight, the flat, open terrain is a novelty and somehow unsettling. There's just so much wide-open space here!

Tommy and Kathy Hart joined our club during 2011 and were enthusiastic from the start. They'd talked about wanting the club to tour their 'neck of the woods' for some time. We didn't know the treat we were in for. They provided each of us with a packet containing an itinerary and timeline. Fact sheets were included with the history of the roads we'd be travelling as well as towns we pass through. Lastly, they provided information about our major points of interest. No detail was overlooked. They could not have done a better job!

Those of us travelling Hwy 49 North rendezvoused with the rest of our group at The Crown Restaurant in downtown Indianola. EMCers were joined by New Orleans Club members Allen and Sue Bradley and Blake and Kathy Sonnier, both couples driving MGBs. Blake and Kathy won the long distance travel award coming all the way from Lake Charles.

Our Club's newest member, Hilliard Williams made his debut outing in his Big Healey, which he's owned since 1974.

The Crown Restaurant had first opened in a cotton field north of town thirty-four years ago. The present location certainly offered improved parking compared to a dusty cotton field and gave passersby a chance to stop and inspect the LBCs lining Main Street. Among the spectators was the Mayor of Indianola!

Plenty of Southern iced tea quenched our thirst after several hours on the open road and the menu did not disappoint. Catfish Allison, Berry Bar B Que Chicken, Creole Catfish Cakes, Po Boys, and a selection of six homemade pies made certain all appetites were satisfied. Feeling the urge to ‘walk it off’, several wives in the group made purchases in the Crown’s Art Gallery, which also has regional books and gifts. It was now up to the husbands to find a safe corner in the boot to safely store their newfound treasures.

Browsing completed, we headed to our next stop in Indianola, The B. B. King Museum. For the next two hours, our tour guide, Jim Abbott, enthralled us with the life story of Riley B. King, the man who would become the foremost ambassador of Delta Blues. This fourteen million dollar facility rivals the World War II Museum in New Orleans for the quality of its interactive exhibits, Hi Def films, and displays of personal and historical items. In the end, it was Jim’s stories of his personal interaction with B. B. King that were the most poignant. Whether you’re a Blues fan or not, this incredibly uplifting story is not to be missed if your travels find you in the Mississippi Delta.

Our next tour stop would prove to be a marked study in contrast as we headed west to Greenville and the river known as ‘the Father of Waters.’

Greenville was once a prominent port town, built on the highest point between Memphis and Vicksburg. In the 1940s and 50s Nelson Street, its vibrant club scene the home of jazz, blues and big bands, was the equal to Memphis’ still active Beale Street.



LBCs at the 1927 Flood Museum

Photo Courtesy EMC

Our last tour stop of the day was the Great Flood Museum of 1927, housed in the oldest structure in Greenville, most of the town being burned to the ground during the Civil War. The Museum housed numerous period artifacts, some used during the actual flood. The documentary film was sobering. The natural disaster was on a scale unprecedented in its scope. Unstoppable, the waters did not recede for four months and the area never truly recovered as large segments of the population migrated north.

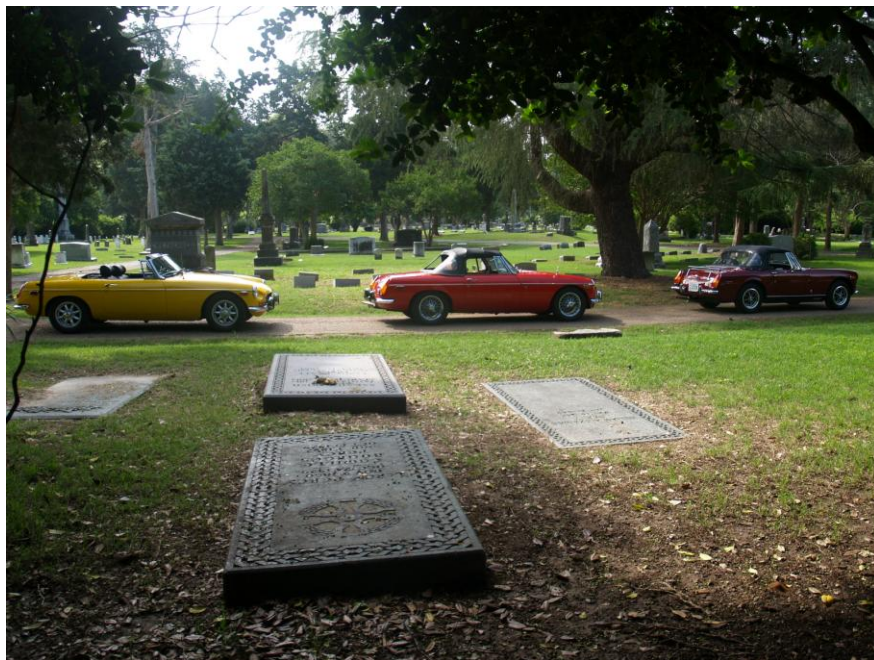
Dusk was approaching as we filed to the cars. It had been a full day of adventure and now it was time to head to the hotel and relax. But first, Mike Glore’s Lotus Elan sought to be the center of attention as it

was reluctant to crank in the late afternoon heat. Successful at last, we headed to the Greenville Inn, housed in the old Levee Board Building. Looking at Lake Ferguson from atop the levee it seemed so peaceful, docile. A very different river area than the one we had just seen in the film.

After a quick shower and change of clothes we were whisked via shuttle to Doe's Eat Place, not much to look at as we pulled up in the parking lot, but the little restaurant has quite a reputation. We were about to find out why.

Established in 1941, winner of numerous national awards, Doe's is always jam-packed and does a frenetic take out business. Amazingly, Tommy and Kathy had arranged for our group to be seated together. We feasted on four-pound porterhouse steaks, fried jumbo shrimp, hand cut fries and of course, hot tamales. The evening was made all the more special, as it was Tommy and Kathy's wedding anniversary. It's fortunate indeed we traveled by shuttle, none of us would have managed to get in and out of our LBCs. We were stuffed.

The next morning the group at large said our good byes, but a few of us decided to continue on with a 'mini tour' on the way home, which included the old Greenville Cemetery, driving on the levee and Martha Johnston's childhood home built on top of an Indian mound.



LBC Haunting Greenville Cemetery

Photo Courtesy EMC

Heading south for Vicksburg we stopped at the Onward General Store, the site of President Theodore Roosevelt's famous bear hunt and the origin of the Teddy Bear. Original versions of the Teddy Bear were on display along with carved horn objects, old fashioned candies and other memorabilia, but the real find was an old zinc beverage cooler which housed import, craft and high gravity beers sitting in iced water. As it was still some distance to Vicksburg, we reluctantly closed the lid on these frosty treasures and headed back to the cars.

It was in Vicksburg following lunch at Walnut Hills in the old part of town that we finally parted with our Louisiana friends and headed east for home. Thanks, Tommy and Kathy for a most memorable weekend.

Other Exhaust Rattles

As noted above, Steve's temporary solution for the water pump by pass will be scheduled for a real replacement during upcoming months. Stay tuned for the EMC's tech schedules for this one and thanks for the Drive Thru History article Steve! You're owed a tech session.

Club Pres Charles During has big plans going on down in Magee. No, that's not a giraffe pen that's being constructed behind the house. He and Donna are involved in a significant garage expansion down there. Room for more toys! Wheeeeeeee.

The EMC acquired two returning members since our last update. Keith and Jennifer Turner have returned I along with their MGB GT. Welcome back Keith and Jennifer, we hope to see you at one of the upcoming EMC gatherings. Thanks everyone for upping and re-upping with the EMC for 2013. Membership now stands at seventy two members at midyear!

In early June I passed along a note that Roger Allard of Allard motorcars continues to production of the Allard J2X MKII. You can visit the Allard web-site at <http://www.allardj2x.com>. Past club President Terry Trovato and First Lady Meridith passed along a little history and a clip from the 1956 movie "Written on the Wind" starring Rock Hudson and Lauren Bacall. Terry received a note back from Roger indicating he'd not seen the clip before and would be looking for a place for it to be included on the web-site.

Attention! The EMC photo search is underway. We're in the process of publishing the Brits on the Bluff brochure for 2013 and we're looking for your photos. Don't forget that the 2013 show will be held in conjunction with the American MGB Association's 36th annual show. All submissions regardless of marque will be considered with a focus on MG's of all makes and models. The cut-off date for photo submission will be June 30, 2013. If you have any saved back in your camera please forward them to Gene Johnston at jjohnst2@msemc.org.

The summer showers have set in but a careful eye on the weather allows for plenty of time to get your LBC out to enjoy the smell, sounds and feel as you travel the back road of Mississippi or wherever you're located. Enjoy the ride.

Happy Motoring

The EMC

Upcoming Events

June 23, 2013 – Renaissance Euro Summit / Ridgeland MS

Euro automobile owners from around Mississippi and surrounding areas will gather at the Renaissance Center between the hours of 5:00pm to 7:00pm to celebrate all cars European and share a great meat at The Mint beginning at 7:00pm. If you plan on attending this gathering please e-mail Mike Marsh at mike_marshall@bellsouth.net.

June 27 – 28, 2013 – The Great Race / Vicksburg – Natchez MS

The Great Race sponsored by Hemmings Motor News and Hagerty Auto Insurance will be making an overnight stop in Vicksburg on June 27, 2013 and a lunch stop in Natchez on June 28, 2013 on their way

from St. Paul MN to Mobile AL. You can check out the schedule for the Great Race at <http://www.greatrace.com>.

July 20, 2013 – EMC Lotus Weekend / Braxton MS

I'm sure we'll find some interesting roads on our way down to the beautiful burg of Braxton. Come and join the drive and the visit with Mike and Alice. Bring a dish and enjoy lazing on a sunny afternoon in the summertime with the EMC. Lunch starts at 12:00pm. Details: Mike / Alice Glore (504) 231 – 5801

August 17, 2013 – EMC Tech Session II / Brandon MS

David and Jo Ann have added a few square feet and we're all looking forward to see what is filling the space during our visit. David has always got lots going on in his garage and it's always of interest. This will be the pre-Brits on the Bluffs gathering so bring along a dish and enjoy the fun. Lunch starts as 12:00pm. Details: David / Jo Ann Bailey (601) 992 – 8566