The Can Am CONNECTION

Vol. 23, No. 3 - Newsletter of the Windsor-Detroit MG Club - April, 2003

"In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of .... MGs"

Actually Tennyson was writing about love, not MGs but if he been through a winter like we have in Michigan and western Ontario when it was too cold to even work on an MG, let alone drive one, he would forgive our misquote. Anyway, many of us do love our MGs, we give them pet names, buy them gifts and pamper them, so maybe it is not such a distortion of his words after all.

There have been years when Ed Fleming has taken us on "stupid rides" on New Year's Day or winter runs "To Hell and Back" — the township of Hell Michigan that is — but not this year. This year it was not just cold, it was excruciating, penetrating knifelike cold and although we did not get really deep snow, it did fall frequently and that meant that the MG's worst enemy, the salt truck, was out extremely frequently. The only hope is that because the temperature was so low and the thermometer did not oscillate around the freezing mark, we did not get so many thaw-frost cycles and that should have kept the roads in better shape than in an average year.

So it's time to come out of hibernation. Get those batteries charged — they should have been on trickle charge all winter anyway to prevent sulfation — pump up those tires, check the fluids and get rolling.

In our picture, it looks as if Doug and Ailene Butcher are about to take their sparkling 1959 MGA Coup out for a dose of salts, but not so. Doug bought the car from Fran Lewis last summer and drove the car for a few weeks at the end of the season, but after driving Philip Wiltshire's "A:" decided that the gearbox was not all it could be. After being blown off by the "restorers" in Detroit, he went to John Twist who sorted the box and some other items for him. The car was then featured at John's January party in his shop. The picture was taken on a snowy Sunday morning in late February just as the car was freshly delivered by a University Motors covered trailer.

Doug and Ailene are ready to run it this year on as many events as possible. Let's join them; what better way to enjoy our all too short warm seasons.

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The Windsor-Detroit MG Club
The International Local Club

Rick Astley - Editor

Philip Wiltshire and I were recently discussing the articles he was writing for this Newsletter and he told me he would be mentioning some of the new MG cars appearing in almost all parts of the world with the notable exception of North America. I was quite disdainful, expressing the view that these new MGs shared little if any heritage with the cars we know. Basically I was asking, "Are these truly MGs?"

Then I remembered hearing that before. The TD feature on pages 4 & 5 of this issue points out that purists did not consider that a real MG roadster, why with pressed steel wheels and a bumper, how could it be!

The same people must have had heart attacks when the MGA was announced, that had a steel chassis and streamlined wings or fenders. I think it was in that era, when several cars like MGAs, Austins, Armstrong Siddeleys and even Rolls Royces had sweptback fenders that I first heard the term wing used in reference to a car, previously Britons had referred to them as mudguards like those things on my bike.

Horror of horrors, MGBs were announced and they had monocoque construction and wind-up windows while the Midget had the cheek to be of Austin-Healey heritage.

I am not alone in unfairly besmirching the new MGs, in reviews of the new MG Z series of sports sedans several journals put the cars down as souped-up Rover 75 cars. Well I suppose that's exactly true to MG heritage, as Philip points out elsewhere in this edition, Morris Garages (MG) started by doing the same thing to its big sister's Morris cars of the time. When I come to think of it, my wife bought a brand new MG Metro in the mid-80s that was really an Austin Metro with a Cooper tuned engine, we loved that car and were proud to point out that it was an MG and not an Austin.

The new MG TF

I was concerned, however, to read the response of an MG executive who was asked why the latest version of the MGF is called the MG TF when that name had been used before. He replied that they, his management team, did not know that until it was too late and the car had been announced. So much for their interest in the company's heritage.

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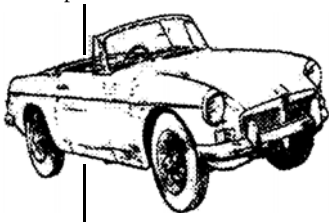

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Presidentially Speaking

By Philip Wiltshire — Club President

Think Spring, Think Spring…….

This is all I've been doing recently. I had the misfortune(?) of having to work in Georgia for a few days earlier in March and got a taste of mild nights and warm days. So, our first driving event of the year naturally comes to mind - the Kimber Birthday Bash– and it is fast approaching. l hope to see all of you at the rendezvous point on April 12th, ready willing and able to show Michigan what classic British sport cars are all about.

Elsewhere in this issue, I've written an article about the celebration of 50 years of MG's and Cecil Kimber's contribution that got us to where we are today. I hope this makes interesting reading for you and you can mull over our heritage as you wipe birthday cake from your lips at the restaurant after the movie on his birthday trip to Lansing.

The sad thing about the 50 years article is that it was written in 1975 and talks of how well MG's had done, were doing and the promise of great things in the future. Little did any of us know that it would be all over and the factory leveled in just a few years' time. For us enthusiasts in Europe, MG's only disappeared for two years between 1980 and 1982. Then a range of "tweaked" sedans were launched that heralded back to the beginning of MG when Cecil "breathed" on standard Morris vehicles and MG was born.

Of course 1980 was the year for you guys in the 'States – nothing since, although there has been talk of exporting cars here over the years. Today, the MGF and other MG derivatives manufactured by MG Rover are to be found all over the World except the U.S., and it is sad to remember that 1975 article, where it is written that 80% of MG's manufactured in the seventies found their way to the United States.

The new MG Express

The MG name is so synonymous with performance and good looks in the UK that MG Rover has just launched the MG Express – a van!!!!!

Of course this van is not your average tin cube on narrow wheels. I'm looking at a sharp looking hot hatchback with alloy wheels and performance to match it's looks. The comments in the text hint that they expect Company Presidents will be taking the MG delivery van home for the weekend and leaving their Jags at work just in case someone needs to make a delivery.

Hope to see you on April 12th

Safety MG Fast

Philip Wiltshire

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  1980 MGB Yellow

BUYING AN MG TD

By Richard Ladds

Reprinted, with permission, from *Enjoying MG*, August 1997

Production History

Production of the MG TD was started in 1949 and it made its debut in January 1950 as a replacement for the popular and successful TC. The TC had established very strong export sales and to meet the demands of the overseas market it was decided to produce a new model with a better ride, more interior space and more up-to-date suspension. To achieve this, the new MG Midget was based on a shortened version of the Y type box section chassis, although on the TD the rear rails passed over the top of the back axle instead of underneath. The new Midget featured independent front suspension, based on a system of coil springs and wishbones, a design that was to be retained on the MGA and MGB. Another new feature was the excellent high-geared rack-and-pinion steering.

Braking was by hydraulic 9" drums with twin leading shoes at the front which provided competent stopping power. The TD continued to use the XPAG engine of 1250 cc fitted with a Y type camshaft which improved its power range.

TD MK II

This was a competition version of the TD and was sold alongside the normal car. These models are now quite rare and were fitted with a stage II tuned engine which produced around 60 bhp. The MKII also featured bucket seats and extra front shock absorbers. The TD MK II competition model was known in the United States as the TDC.

First impressions

Although the TD was well received by the motoring press, the new shape of the car was not immediately popular with MG traditionalists who preferred the leaner more angular lines of the TC. The Y type drilled disc wheels were particularly singled out for criticism, in combination with the wider body they-made the car look lower and stockier. Despite this initial criticism the TD was a great success and during a three year production run it sold faster rate than any previous MG and was especially popular in North America. Total production of the TD was 28,643 with an additional 1,022 of the TD MK II competition version which was built at the same time.

Road tests

The contemporary press reviews of the TD were favorable, they found that the car performed very briskly and were impressed with its 60-65 M.P.H. cruising speed. A top speed of 78 mph was attained with the windscreen folded flat and only the driver in the car. The *Autocar* praised the steering for being light, accurate and direct, with only small movements of the wheel required to provoke a quick response. "On the open road it is necessary only to hold the wheel

very lightly and long fast bends are taken more by leaning the body into the corner than by steering round it." They summed up the handling of the car by saying that it was so well balanced that it inspired confidence and even an indifferent driver could make a good showing behind the wheel of a TD.

Driving a TD today

The engine is surprisingly quiet, flexible and extremely tractable, pulling smoothly away in top gear from speeds as low as 10 M.P.H. However, *Autocar* also acknowledged that for prolonged touring a slightly higher top gear would have been useful. This becomes very apparent when driving the TD on highways as the most comfortable cruising speed is not fast enough to keep ahead of the bulk of the traffic, especially the semis.

It is on county roads and twisty country lanes that the little sports car feels most at home, its brisk acceleration and nimble handling making it great fun to drive through the bends. The engine will rev enthusiastically and the gear change is excellent, provided you take your time over making the changes. Brakes are good and stop the car in a straight line but it is wise to allow a greater stopping distance for the TD than you would in a modern car. The hand brake is the fly-off type for a quick getaway, which is a charming period feature. The TD Midget acquits itself really well in town, where its

performance, maneuverability and excellent all round visibility with the hood down, make it 'a joy to handle in traffic' as the contemporary advertising claimed.

Weather equipment

The TD has a fully folding fabric hood and full set of side screens to provide protection from the elements. The large front side screens are attached to the doors and a pair slot into the side of the body behind the doors. When assembled the hood provides a surprisingly snug and reasonably water tight interior. However, there is the odd gap where the side screens do not quite meet the hood and this can cause the occasional draught Door mounted side screens have a hinged lower panel to allow you to make hand signals.

Living with a TD

The TD is at its best when driven in fully open form, affording excellent all round vision, this brings a sharp awareness of the road conditions and the proximity of other traffic. The open feel of the cockpit is exaggerated by the rakish cutaway doors which are hinged at the rear. This arrangement makes them sometimes unkindly referred to as 'suicide doors' because they will blow back should they fly open, although in practice the doors are sturdy, secure and the rear hinges make it easier to get in and out of the car.

The leather covered seats have individual bases combined with a bench type backrest, despite this the TD is very comfortable and there is adequate adjustment for all shapes of driver.

Driving with the top and side screens in place is quite cozy and

once engine is warm the absence of a heater is not a problem. However, not having any form of demisting system that it is necessary to always a carry wash leather to keep the windshield clear. The tiny wipers only clear a small part of the windshield but they provide more than adequate visibility for the performance of the car.

The most limiting aspect of the TD for day to day use or touring is the restricted amount of luggage capacity; this is confined to the area immediately behind the seats. To carry extra luggage it would be necessary to fit a rack behind the rear mounted spare wheel.

Buying a TD

TD Midgets turn up in the for sale columns quite regularly, usually they have been restored and are offered in good order. Currently prices are between £10,000 [$US16,000 - $CDN23,500] to £15,000 [$US24,000 - $CDN35,200] depending on condition. A top price car must be complete and original with a fully documented history. If a car is offered for sale as fully restored, then the work must be carried out to original specification and be backed up by receipts or a photographic record.

Beware of buying incomplete cars, as many parts are now difficult to find and therefore very expensive to buy even in poor condition. Occasionally re-imported LHD vehicles are offered for sale often requiring restoration, treat these with caution unless you really enjoy rebuilding cars as a recreation.

Generally, mechanical components are robust and engines, gearboxes and back axles last well and if necessary can be repaired but again this will be at a much greater cost than more modern MGs.

Restoration

Rebuilds can be a major undertaking, as the TD body tub is made from an ash frame clad in steel panels which are fixed in place with steel pins. The whole body assembly is then mounted on top of the steel chassis. The timber frame was not treated when the cars were new so some rot in the frame is inevitable. To rebuild a TD often requires completely dismantling the car in order to replace the timber frame and renovate the chassis. This type of complex refurbishment is likely to require specialist services and skilled labor which can be very expensive. The good news is that body frame parts and steel panels are available and can often be repaired. Replacement chassis frames are not readily available but they usually survive quite well and can be repaired or straightened if necessary. Leather seats and trim items can be replaced but may have to be specially made. When viewing a car to purchase it is important assess how much work is required and how much it will be necessary to spend to complete the car.

Traditional appeal

The TD has the traditional good looks of the pre-war MGs but is underpinned by relatively modern mechanical components. This combination produced a sports car with lively performance, a comfortable ride and good handling characteristics. On the right road the TD is a delight to drive with a positive feel that really does inspire confidence, so that however long the journey, the actual driving of the car is beguiling all the way.

Richard Ladds

Let's not forget our roots…….

By Philip Wiltshire

I was looking through my collection of MG literature and found several British Leyland Motor Corporation Limited press releases for MG from the early Seventies. At that time, BLMC owned the MG marque as nearly all British car manufacture was state controlled and funded or "nationalized" as we called it.

I read the following piece and thought you might find it interesting. For those of you new to our club, l hope this makes it clear why we celebrate Mr. Cecil Kimber's birthday every April. For those of you old hands, it's nice to remember our roots.

MG – HALF A CENTURY OF SPORTS CARS – Press release, issued 9 May 1975

The MG Car company was formed out of the enthusiasm and skills of Cecil Kimber, manager of William Morris's Morris Garage in Oxford. Kimber began re-bodying standard Morris models in 1922 and gradually established the MG- the initials of the garage – as a marque in its own right. He built his first two-seater sports car in time for the 1925 Land's End Trial.

By 1929 MG had outgrown its Oxford premises and moved to nearby Abingdon, with Kimber as Managing Director. The MG factory nestled unobtrusively between a churchyard and an orchard, and from it came the first of a long line of Midgets, the M-type. Within two years MG had established an unrivalled reputation as a racing equipe.

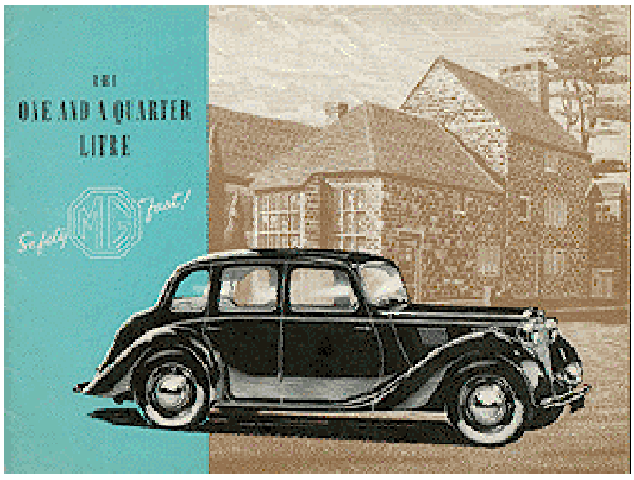
During the Depression when many small sports car manufacturers were forced out of business, MG embarked upon a racing programme which brought world-wide success – and many orders – for such models as the Montlhery Midget, J4, K3 Magnette and the R. The company withdrew from racing in 1935 – but the firm's reputation in the competition field had been kept high with the successes of many thousands of private owners who have won awards in all parts of the world.

Phil Hill and the XK 181

By 1932, MG had captured every Class H international record and the 750 cc Midget was the first car in its class to achieve 100 mph and cover 100 miles in an hour. From 1930 to 1959 – when the famous streamlined EX 181 was driven by Phil Hill at 254.01 mph – MG dominated record-breaking attempts in numerous international classes.

After the company withdrew from racing, the MG range was rationalized and the TA Midget announced in July 1935. Then followed the VA, WA and the TB before war broke out and Abingdon turned to military work. Kimber suddenly resigned in 1941 in a dispute with Lord Nuffield over the allocation of war work. He died in a railroad accident outside King's Cross Station, London, in 1945.

Immediate post-war production centered on the TC – a modified version of the TB. Then followed the Y-type, a 1250 cc saloon and the TD, which sold extraordinarily well in America from 1949 to 1953. The TD became the TF as a stop-gap until the MGA, a new model with a streamlined body, appeared in 1955.



The Y-type

MG had become part of a larger grouping in 1952 when the Nuffield Organization and Austin combined to form the British Motor Corporation (BMC). It was the BMC B-type engine of 1489 cc that provided the power for the MGA. MG had gone right through the alphabet for model designations and decided to start again. The MGA – despite criticism from traditionalists who disliked its shape – set a world record for production of one basic sports car type with more than 100,000 being built in seven years.

From 1957 Abingdon became the BMC sports car division and production of Austin-Healeys, including the Sprite, was transferred

there. An MG version of the Sprite was announced in 1961 and the name Midget revived for the model. The following year the MGB was launched and has become the world's best-selling sports car.

In 1973, a lightweight V8 engine went into the MGB GT to make it one of the world's great high-speed long distance expresses. For the 1975 season, deformable front and rear ends brought major differences in styling.

In 1968, MG became part of Britain's largest motor manufacturing organization, the British Leyland Motor Corporation (BLMC), which was formed with the merger of British Motor Holdings and the Leyland Motor Corporation.

The Abingdon factory continues to be a sports car manufacturer in its own right. More than 80% of MG's produced at Abingdon are exported with most going to the United States – where the MG has long been popular and forms the basis of many competition teams. The factory is also the home of Leyland ST (Special Tuning) which develops performance equipment for the British Leyland car range.

Philip's own MGB-GT V8

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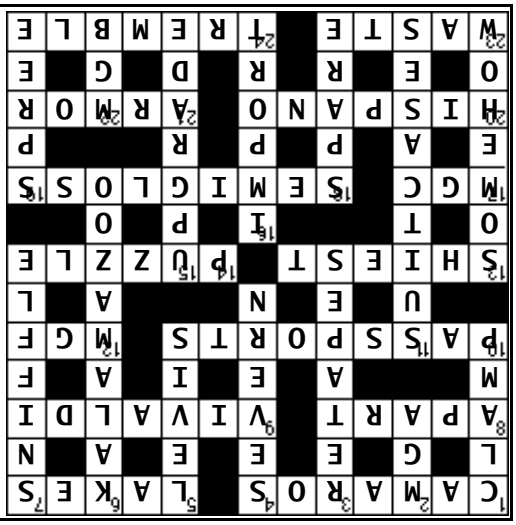
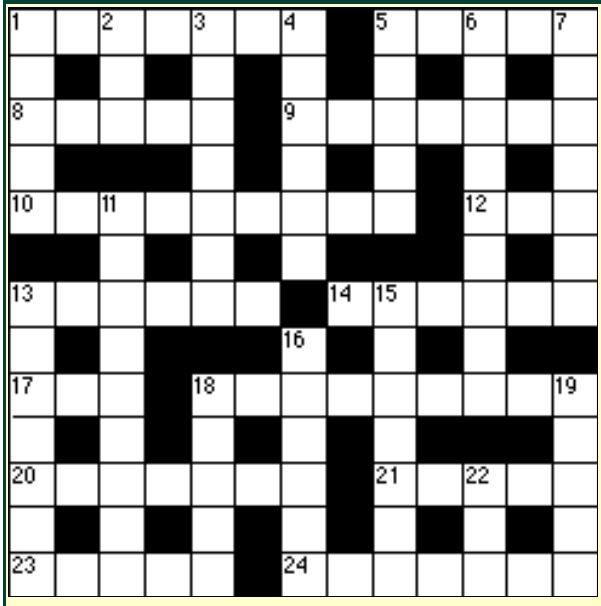


The Windsor - Detroit MG Club Crossword

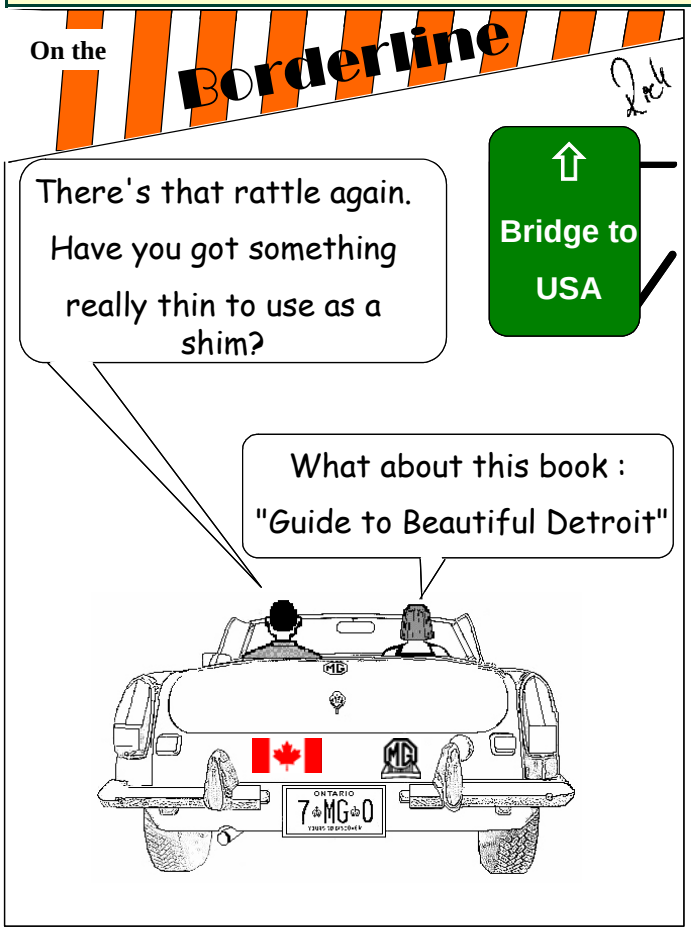


Across

1 Chevy performance cars
5 Michigan and Erie
8 In pieces
9 Four Seasons composer
10 You may be asked for them at the border
12 90's UK roadster
13 Least bold
14 You're doing one
17 Late 60's roadster
18 Not so shiny paint
20 Classic car —— Suiza
21 Defensive covering (US)
23 Effluvium
24 Vibrate

Down

1 Holding tool
2 50's roadster
3 Records again
4 Bristol UK river
5 Jeans brand
6 Michigan animal home?
7 Light cold
11 Trunks
13 By hook or by crook (4-3)
15 Improve
16 Non North American vehicle
18 Fifth wheel
19 Pub crawl?
22 60's roadster



Did you know? Early MGs had a simple numeric system for chassis numbering. In 1929 an alpha-numeric system was introduced, but not wishing to start at zero the first number was A0251. The number was chosen because the MG factory telephone number was Abingdon 251. The system continues even today, the VIN number suffix of the newest MG TF being 2101, the last 4 digits of the current MG plant phone number.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU'RE A CANADIAN

- You're not offended by the term "HOMO MILK".
- You understand the phrase "Could you pass me a serviette, I just dropped my poutine, on the chesterfield."
- You eat chocolate bars, not candy bars.
- You drink Pop, not Soda.
- You don't care about the fuss with Cuba. It's a cheap place to go for your holidays (not vacation), with good cigars.
- You know that a pike is a type of fish, not part of a highway .
- You drive on a highway, not a freeway.
- You have Canadian Tire money in your kitchen drawers.
- You get excited whenever an American television show mentions Canada.
- You brag to Americans that: Shania Twain, Jim Carrey, Celine Dion, Michael J. Fox and others, are Canadians.
- You know that the C.E.O. of American Airlines is a Canadian!
- You know what a touque is.
- You design your Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit.
- You know that the last letter of the English alphabet is always pronounced "Zed."
- You live in a house with no front step, but the door is one metre up from the ground. (it's a tax thing....)
- Your local newspaper covers the national news on 2 pages, but requires 6 pages for hockey.
- You know that the four seasons means: winter, still winter, almost winter, and road work.
- You know that when it's 25 degrees outside, it's the warmest day of the year.
- You understand the Labatt Blue commercials.
- You know how to pronounce and spell "Saskatchewan"
- You perk up when you hear the theme song from "Hockey Night in Canada."
- You're in grade 12, not the 12th grade. And you know that you're in grade 12, and not a "senior".
- "Eh?" is a very important part of your vocabulary, and is more polite than, "Huh?"

Submitted by Ralph Poupard

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Wanted Weber Down Draft Carb + Intake in good condition for 1975 M G Midget 1500. Also the letters Midget on both sides of the sills & an original ashtray
Wade e-mail at briscoe@nrtco.net.

British Car Posters & Ads
Jay Kollin 734-455-6949

Wanted 54 or 55 MGTF in good to excellent condition inside and out. No hint of rust. Wire wheels. Mechanically sound. Tom Parent (248) 650 0060. Email: tomparent@now2net.net

1980 MGB. White with black interior & top. Original owner. 34,000 miles. Very nice condition. $8,000
Doug Balsis 248-474-0470

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Don. 586-786-1187

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On October 4th, up to 50 vintage British cars will depart Marshall, Michigan for a demanding 36-hour, 800-mile drive, the "Michigan British Reliability Run" around the lower peninsula of Michigan to raise money for charity. Sponsored by the Detroit Triumph Sportscar Club, the event is open to any British marque vehicle including MG.

Teams will collect donations in an effort to raise $500 per vehicle to be given to the Hemophilia Foundation of Michigan to help send kids to "Camp Bold Eagle," the charity's summer camp. At the camp, children are able to connect with other children with the same disease and learn to grow more independent. Many kids earn their "Butterfly" during the camp by learning to infuse themselves with factor, a necessary blood ingredient they do not produce naturally.

Eliza Marroni, Fund Development and Special Events Coordinator, Hemophilia Foundation of Michigan said, "We're very appreciative of those who participate in this event because most families are unable to pay the registration cost to send their child to camp. With the help of the funds raised here we're able to keep our open door policy available to children living with a bleeding disorder in Michigan."

The route traveled will be a scenic one, on secondary roads, up the western coast of the lower peninsula and down the eastern coast the following day. The event is not a race, but merely a challenge to drivers to see if their vintage cars will complete the run. Most cars should finish the route at approximately 5:00pm, Sunday, October 5th in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the offices of the Hemophilia Foundation of Michigan.

To support the event or a specific team, donations may be made on the event website which has pictures of cars registered for the run: www.mibrr.com. The site also contains registration information if you have a vehicle you would like to enter in the run.

Sorry We're Closed

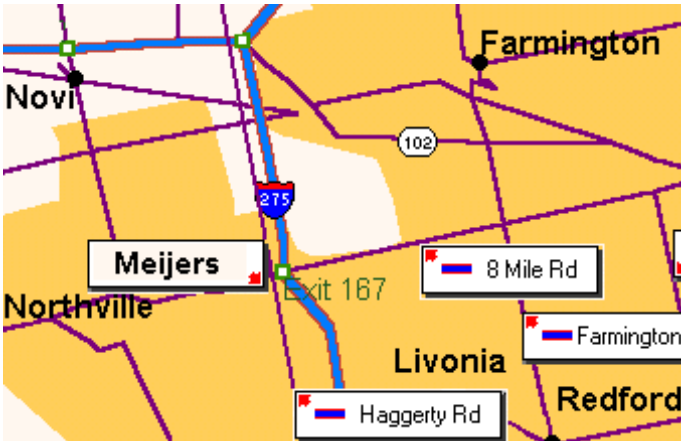
With a record 72 people attending, no more places are available for the club's Stratford Festival event in June.

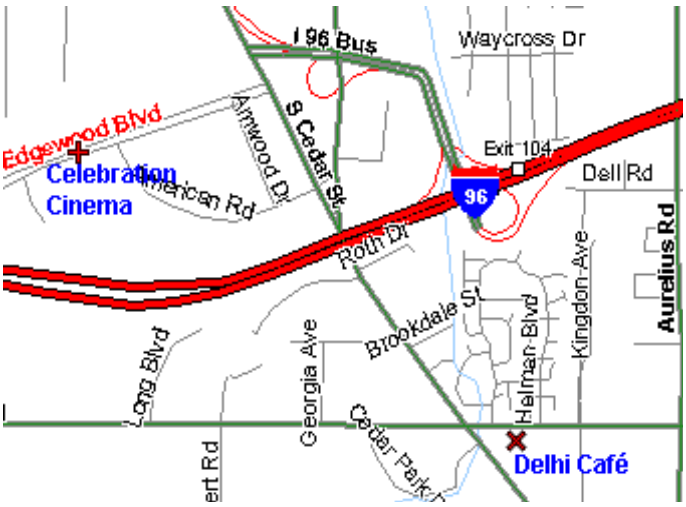
KIMBER BIRTHDAY BASH

Saturday, April 12th 7:30 AM for an 8:00 AM Sharp Departure

Each year, together with other Michigan British car clubs, we celebrate MG's founding father Cecil Kimber's birthday. This year we are lucky enough to be able honor him exactly on his birthday; Kimber would have been 115 years old, April 12th.

We will gather at our usual west side meeting point, in the Meijer parking lot at 8 mile and Haggerty and we will have to leave promptly at 8:00 AM in order to get to the Lansing area Celebration Cinema before the 10:00 AM start of the movie. This year we are seeing the 1971 Bruce Brown movie "*On Any Sunday*", a film you will enjoy even if you are not into its theme of motorcycles. Afterward we will decamp to the Delhi café to toast Cecil and to enjoy lunch and birthday cake.





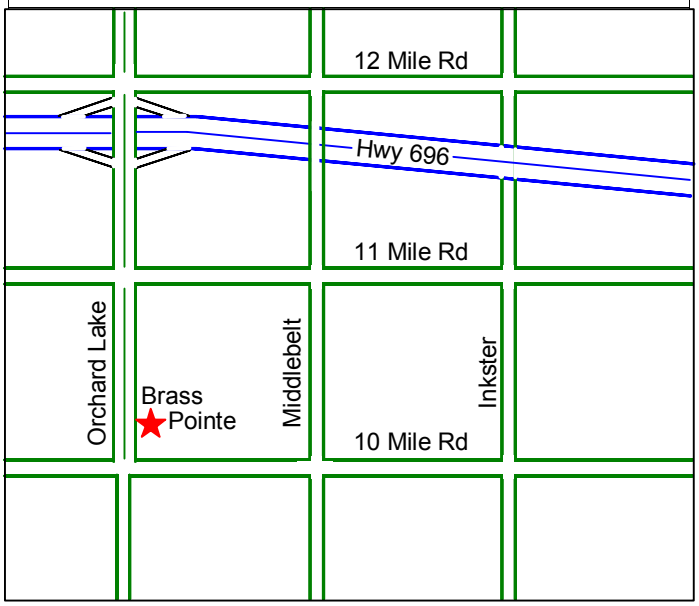
Calendar of Events

Bold Text Indicates Windsor-Detroit MG Club Events.

April	
Wed. 9th	**Monthly Meeting - Brass Pointe**
Sat. 12th	**Kimber Birthday Bash - Lansing, MI Details next month.**
Sun. 20th	British Sports Car Flea Market & Car Show - Ancaster, ON
May	
Sat. 3rd	**Run to Rivertech and Hudson Museum –Ypsilanti. Start from Meijers 9 AM**
Wed. 14th	**Monthly Meeting - Nisbet Inn**
Sun. 18th	British Car Day XIX - Easton, Colombus, OH
Fri. 23rd - Sun. 25th	Champagne British Car Festival Champagne, IL
Sun. 25th	Car Show & Auto Flea Market - Heritage Village, Kingsville, ON
June	
Sun. 1st	The British Return to Fort Meigs Rte 65, Perrysburg, OH
Wed. 11th	**Monthly Meeting - Brass Pointe**
Sat. 14th - Sun 15th	**Stratford Festival Weekend Stratford, ON**
Thurs. 19th - Sun. 22nd	MG 2003. North American MG Register Annual Convention, St Louis, MO.
July	
Sun. 6th	**Mad Dogs and Englishmen X111 Hickory Corners, Kalamazoo, MI**
Wed. 9th	**Monthly Meeting - Nisbet Inn**
August	
Sat. 2nd	British Car Day - Dayton, OH
Sat. 2nd	British Car Day XVII - Shaker, Cleveland, OH
Thurs. 7th - Sun, 10th	The Roadster Factory Summer Party - Armagh, PA
Wed. 13th	**Monthly Meeting - Brass Pointe**
Sun. 31st	Car Show & Auto Flea Market - Heritage Village, Kingsville, ON

April Meeting

The April 9th meeting will be held at The Brass Pointe Restaurant, 24234 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan. Tel: (248) 476-1377. The restaurant is located on the NE corner of 10 Mile Road and Orchard Lake Road.



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