

“Old Brits” Saskatchewan British Car Club Newsletter



“Classic British Motoring “

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MiniMeet West 2010 By Matthew J. Toon



official entry photo – Hayden, matt & PUP

On 26 June my son Hayden and I left Prince Albert for MiniMeet West 2010 which was being held in Penticton BC. As it was the closest all-Mini gathering for a number of years I couldn't pass up the chance to attend. We packed up the PUP (1969 Mini Pick-up) with all the spares I thought I might need and headed West. The furthest I had taken the truck since its rebuild in 2008-2009 was to Saskatoon. I was about to take it on a 2800km round trip.

Getting gas in Saskatoon I noticed the truck was marking its spot a little more than usual, oops...down a litre..., so I picked up a 5L jug of 20/50 and carried on. The truck ran

like a top actually, making regular stops for fuel and topping up the oil on a regular basis..., on such a regular basis in fact that I needed to pick up another jug of 20/50 in Drumheller. I thought it was odd, as I wasn't blowing blue smoke and under the hood was relatively clean. It was then I noticed the tailgate and rear quarter was covered with a grimy, thin layer of oil. Oil was leaking from somewhere and making its way down the underside of the truck. We stopped for the night just west of Cochrane at a beautiful little lake called Ghost Lake. Turns out it was also attractive to the local party animals and we needed to move camp.



left – Drumheller [where else?] en route to BC / right – camping Mini-style

The next morning we headed down the twisty Bow Valley Trail avoiding the Trans Canada. It was about 6 a.m., quiet and peaceful. We came up behind a pretty red MGTD which we followed for a few miles before he turned to take the #1. I had been somewhat apprehensive about getting up the mountains, but I must say I was pretty pleased with the truck's handling of the inclines with its bone-stock 998cc engine. Even more so because the PUP's original 3.44 final drive had been swapped out for a taller 3.1 final drive. We reached Rogers Pass and stopped for a leg stretch and a photo op. It was then I noticed my almost new front tyres looked a little odd. Turns out that my home alignment wasn't so accurate. I had barely any tread left on the inside of both fronts. Luckily I had brought four, yes four, spares. I did a roadside alignment and carried on. It was early evening when we arrived in Penticton. We were tired, the truck was tired, and I had gone through ten litres of oil. After meeting a few other early arrivals at the host hotel (Penticton Lakeside Resort), I set out to track down where the slick was coming from. As it turns out it was spewing out past one of the tappet cover bolts. I fixed that and then had oil being pushed up out of the dipstick. Talk about blow-by! One of my vent tubes was plugged creating all the pressure. All fixed that evening.

The MiniMeet itself got under way the next morning with registration followed by a car show in a downtown park. I believe there were one hundred plus cars in attendance. Enthusiasts had come from as far as Southern California, several other states and provinces. I was directed to park over with the "modified" trucks and vans (must have been my non-original wheels). I was parked beside "Diddy Dave" and his radical Mini van. Dave is from Calgary..., Calgary, Scotland that is..., and is driving his Mini around the world. Quite a set-up he had indeed. I don't recall his mileage to that point, but I'm sure he was over 20,000 km. That evening we had a drive through vineyard country down some nice twisty roads. The next day consisted of an autocross event at the local racetrack and a "Funkhana" event. I opted not to drive the truck in the autocross as we had yet to make the 1400km return trip and I didn't want to risk anything breaking. We did, however, take part in the Funkhana. This

consisted of driving through a few pylons, arriving at a table at which both my navigator, Hayden, and I had to get out and crush enough grapes to fill two wine glasses. The navigator then had to hold the filled glasses on a tray outside the window as he guided me by voice around a circle in reverse ultimately into a parking spot. Oh, I was blindfolded for this by the way. I then got to remove the blindfold, drive through a few more pylons and after coming to a stop, rush to a table with the wine where we both had to have a seat and make a “cheers” to Penticton MiniMeet West 2010. Hayden did very well directing and we got 2nd place over all!



left – Hayden at Roger’s Pass en route to Penticton / right – PUP Toon next to “Diddy Dave’s” round-the-world Mini van



left – psychedelic gal / right – 100+ Minis of all varieties

Unfortunately we weren’t able to stay for the last day of the meet as we had a wedding to attend back in PA. We left Penticton around 6 p.m. with a heavier load as I couldn’t pass up a deal on 4 tyres from one of the show’s vendors. I knew we would be hitting the mountains in the middle of the night, but I had faith in the little truck. Again, the truck ran well through the mountains and my oil level didn’t drop much. The only fault I could find was the speedo light that only seemed to work when it wanted to..., but I could always tell the speed by the sound of that little 998. I ended up driving straight through to Prince Albert, about 18 hours. Surprisingly, my son was able to sleep about ¾ of the way. I was amazed by that, as the truck has no reclining seats and his head was leaning against the sliding glass window that didn’t close all the way.

That’s it in a nutshell. We drove 2800km and ended up not needing to use one of the many spares I brought along just in case (other than the spare wheels). It was a joy to be in the midst of other enthusiasts that lived and breathed Minis, not to mention the journey itself with my son. The 2011 MiniMeet West is in Lake Tahoe, but I plan on being fishing this year.

Interestingly, about a month later I went along with the SBCC on the drive to Waskesiu. On the way back to Prince Albert my crank bolt flew off the engine! I am so glad this happened when it did and not at midnight in the mountains!

**Here's a TD I'm working on in a kind of Joycean 'silence, exile and cunning.' Cheers,
Gordon Selkirk. Big River**



MGA Nostalgia - Happy 50th Anniversary Joyce & Karl! **By Dennis Billo**

It all started at last years Brits by the Bus event. The sun was shining, people were slowly making the rounds and admiring all the shiny LBCs. Occasionally someone would be brave enough to ask a few questions but generally it seemed folks were a little intimidated by their lack of knowledge about our cars. Oh, except for the perennial statement, "I had one of these ... sigh ... I wish I had kept it".

Late in the afternoon I had retired to my director's chair in the shade beside Johns Prime Rib when I noticed a young man walking around my 'A'. He appeared not to be interested in any of the other cars. He looked at me several times before finally asking if it was mine. When I replied in the affirmative he hesitantly asked me a question I had never heard before. "Would you consider renting out your car?"

My answer was immediate and perhaps a little harsh "Not a chance!" Regretting my tone, I asked him why he was interested in renting an old MGA. He introduced himself as John Lenz and explained that his parents were celebrating their anniversary. His dad, Karl, had courted his mother, Joyce, in a 59 MGA. "Wouldn't it be cool if we could surprise our parents with a ride in an 'A' on their 50th anniversary".

Because I am getting pretty close to that magic number myself, I agreed it was a very worthwhile endeavor. I took John over to meet Bob Burnyeat. "Maybe Bob would rent his" I said. Bob wasn't thrilled with the idea but we both agreed that we were certainly willing to give them a ride.

On the agreed date, Bob and I polished up our babies and headed over to the Lenz house. We had been instructed by John to give him a call on his cell just before we got there so that he could distract his parents as we pulled up in front of the garage.

The look on their faces as they came around the corner, seeing not one but two completely restored examples of their old car, was priceless. Even the color was right! John was intent on surprising them and the plan worked perfectly.

They eventually each sat in one and gazed at each other. I wanted to know what they were remembering but was afraid to ask in front of their kids!



After a lot of pictures Bob slid behind the wheel with Karl as co-pilot and Joyce came with me. We headed out from the Taylor and McKercher area and made our way down Eight St. In front of us Bob and Karl were yakking away, no doubt discussing the merits of the 1500 cc engine or the advantages of S.U. carbs.

I was more interested in the role the MGA had played in their courtship. I asked if they had gone ‘submarine watching’ at the dam parking lot and whether he had popped the question at the ‘Dub’? Joyce just smiled a coy smile.

It was a beautiful day as we headed downtown and up to the north end of the city returning along the river and College Drive. Conversation slowed as they enjoyed the ride and reminisced about their lives together with their little MGA.

Soon we were back and the kids took more pictures, no doubt to be placed in the album along with the single picture they had of the two of them in their ‘A’.

It warmed my heart to see how much their kid’s gesture meant to them. Bob and I were happy to be part of it.



“Hot-roddin’” an MGB

by John Pharr

As some of you know, ever since I got my TR-250 I’ve been kind of disappointed in the performance of my B-GT. I was a lot more disappointed in its glass ‘moon roof’, which I had grown to despise, but once that had been replaced by a proper era-appropriate sliding/folding sunroof the ‘need for speed’ bubbled to the surface again.

The process began in fall 2009 with me meeting Bob Forward over a scotch at Boffins one day after work. I came armed with a Moss catalog, a Victoria British catalog and the latest edition of Obsolete Automotive’s ‘newspaper’... with lots of items circled. Bob approved some items and added some others...and noted some items that could constitute a ‘Stage 2’ upgrade if I later craved even more oomph. The list was roughly equally divided between stuff to boost engine output... and suspension upgrades to keep it on the road! A couple of weeks later we put the B up on a hoist at Ens to look underneath to make final adjustments to the list, and then it was a matter of a couple of telephone calls and an overheated VISA card. The stuff I didn’t order from Obsolete I ordered from Octagon, and both of these Canadian vendors gave excellent service. As the stuff arrived I carefully labeled it (I’ve lost track of enough parts that I’ve learned my lesson!) and piled it in the basement, waiting for spring.

Ah, spring! One day Bob came over, we inspected and sorted the parts, and put the B up on blocks. As you all know several work bees followed, and my very grateful thanks to Bob and all the others who helped, only a few of whom are mentioned below. We didn’t finish last year for several reasons, some of which I’ll detail below, but I reckon it’s more than half done and the B-GT should be back on the road sometime this summer.

To begin with, the B had been running just fine for several years with no more than minor attention from Bob. Even so, as those who have followed the sagas of Len & Kelly’s B and several other cars know, this in no way guarantees that a British car has been properly repaired or maintained in the past... and my B-GT was no exception.



left – construction zone..., 0.60 kph maximum / right – “Parts-R-Us”

One of the first foibles that Bob discovered, upon removing the valve cover, was that a small lock washer was missing from the rocker arm assembly. Little tiny part..., but without it the final screw holding everything together could back out, with the result that the whole rocker arm assembly would become a live-action ‘exploded diagram’, wrecking the engine. The only time in the 27 years I’ve had this car that the valve cover was off was when I replaced the original steel cover with the cast aluminum after-market cover, so as far as I know this lock washer was missing when I purchased the B in 1983!

Next interesting discovery came when we were replacing the rear lever-arm shocks with the tube shock conversion. The last time this suspension had been worked on, again before I owned the car, the yobos who put it back together left out the pedestals on which the rubber suspension buffers rest..., so that the buffers were sitting right on the axle. Now, these pedestals are not little tiny parts..., which left both Bob and Ron Bland scratching their heads wondering how anybody could look around their garage floor, notice two big weirdly-shaped hunks of metal sitting there, and still figure that they'd done the job properly.

The most recent discovery solved a very old mystery. As Hugh and Don were preparing to refurbish the tranny mount with new bushings they found that the previous 'mechanics' had started the same job with insufficient parts. They had possessed the lower bushing, but not the upper. Obviously disciples of Red Green, they had improvised... by using a piece of rubber hose to substitute for the bushing. Bob laughed his head off, then observed that it actually wasn't a bad idea..., except that they'd only used one piece of rubber hose, to substitute for the lower part of the bushing. Above the mount frame there was metal-on-metal, which would result in vibration and noise... and guess what, there has always been a buzz from my tranny at speed that I could 'mute' by resting my hand on the shift knob. I'd just figured this was something you had to expect with an old car, but I guess this summer that buzz will be history.

Of course some of these discoveries mandated delays in the project while the missing parts were acquired, but the end result will be an even better, and in some places more original and 'cleaner', car..., like with the nifty OE brass tap for draining the engine block instead of the plumbing fixture that someone had put there.



left – improvised engine hoist..., sometimes hoarded junk comes in handy / right – masters at work

So what's done? The rear suspension and bushings have been upgraded and the tranny and engine mounts replaced. The old, rusted-out exhaust and header are off and the big-bore Peco system awaits installation. The new 'fast road' camshaft has been installed, although we did end up having to lift the engine and drop the oil pan to do this, which had not been anticipated; however, now the re-installed oil pan no longer carries a bottom layer of gunk. New timing gear and tappets have been installed and Bob has readjusted the rocker arm assembly after replacing numerous worn parts (also a late purchase..., bits which I received in my mailbox 25 hours after telephoning Octagon!), so the engine's almost ready to fire up. Since the engine was stripped Alvin urged me to paint it, and so I started doing that but the cold weather stopped me before I finished; that'll be my first job come this spring.

What's still to do? Final reassembly of the engine, reconnecting the electrics and rad, and putting on the Peco header and muffler, then doing the front suspension and fixing the leaky rear brakes. The front lever-arm shocks are good, so only doing the bushings on this end. I do have a set of the larger HS-6 SUs, acquired from Rob Svoboda, such as MG used on

their factory racing Bs, but first we may just put the HS-4s back (for which I do have air cleaners) and see what kind of performance we've got without the big-bore carbs.

This has been a great, exciting and interesting project, and I've learned a lot even though my contribution has mostly been limited to holding, cleaning and fetching parts and providing donuts..., although I did remove the rad myself, a first for me. When it's all done the B still won't be a concours car, which was never my intention, but it ought to be a lot more fun to drive!

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Saskatchewan British Car Club Minutes – December 9, 2010

Members present: approx. 42

Location: Boffins Club, Innovation Place

Saskatchewan British Car Club Minutes – January 12, 2011

Members present: 35

Location: Boffins Club, Innovation Place

Saskatchewan British Car Club Minutes – February 9, 2011

Members present: 48

Location: Boffins Club – Innovation Place

**Flashback: February 2005
Ray Anderson's Triumph Herald waits for paint – photo from Bill Rafoss**

