

# The Morris Gazette

British Motoring Club - New Orleans

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Published Monthly

***BMC-NO is  
affiliated with:***

North American MGB  
Register (NAMGBR)  
and  
Vintage Triumph Register  
(VTR)

If you are a member of  
these or any other national  
register or club, please let  
us know.

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## President's Message


Although the rains have been  
overwhelming at times, they have kept the  
temperatures down. Our last event was a  
big success with a good turnout of cars  
and people, and no rain. Everyone  
enjoyed the route and the rides on the two  
ferries gave us more time to socialize. I  
did not hear of anyone getting seasick on the boats or in the  
"Sicilian Room".



The board will work on some more fun trips like this, but in  
the meantime the calendar is full of our regular events: Un-  
Car Show, Rally, car shows. If your car ain't running, you  
better get to work on it. Harold O'Reilly

### 8-Step Guide for the Home LBC Mechanic by Rodger Talley

1. If you can't find a screwdriver, use a knife. If  
you break off the tip, you now have a  
screwdriver.
2. Above all, if what you've done is stupid, but it  
works, then it isn't stupid.
3. If it's electronic, get a new one...or consult a  
twelve year old.
4. Stay simple minded: Get a new battery; replace  
the bulb or fuse; see if the tank is empty; try  
turning the switch.
5. Always take credit for miracles. If you dropped  
the fuel pump while taking it apart and it  
suddenly starts working, you have healed it.
6. Regardless of what people say, kicking,  
pounding, and throwing sometimes DOES help.
7. If something looks level, it is level.
8. If at first you don't succeed, redefine success.



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## June 24 Minutes

June was a month of daily showers and thunderstorms, but clearing skies in the late afternoon brought forth several British cars and two Triumph motorcycles to meeting at the Italian Pie. Harold O'Reilly opened the meeting with a weather note, advising that while rescheduling and dark clouds scared off some participants in the recent Catfish Charlie's run, the Saturday event (closed Sunday) was unmarred by precipitation.

Songs of praise for national and regional conventions followed a report by Bill Harris on the 2003 NAMGBR {info at <http://www.mg2003.com> } These multi day events provide options for non-stop participation in: Tech Sessions, shopping trips, tours, parties till midnight, rallies and other driving competitions, in addition to a great showing of British vehicles: in this case 228 MGB's from around the U.S. and even from Canada. Bill brought home a second place trophy in his class.

**Upcoming Events:** The club would like to promote participation in these events planned for the summer. July 13 is the club's mystery cruise originating at Joe's Crabshack. Cliff Hughes brought up the possible July/August club event of attending a Zephyr's game previously discussed in May meeting and newsletter. August 17 is the Un-car Show in Covington and September 21 is the Haydens' Funkana. The MG's are meeting in Chicago for the Abingdon Summer Party. In Slidell there will be an antique car touring Slidell, then to the Stennis Space Center and ending at the Lion's Club in Picayune, MS for a banquet. This will cost \$45 for car & driver and is scheduled for mid September. Roger Gibson mentioned a All Car Club Gathering either Sept. 7th or 14th meeting at the Kenner Welcome Center and driving to Middendorf's and then on to Pontchatoula.

**Past Events:** 10 British cars attended the Back to the Beach Show. 240 cars participated and two of our club members received trophies. Was it just coincidence that both cars had wire wheels and chrome bumpers?

**Members' Projects:** Harold O'Reilly talked about his vacation in the Caribbean on his sailboat. Fliers from Dr. Vinyl were made available by Jennifer, our waitress during the meetings. Dr. Vinyl can repair all our vinyl parts. Bill Harris brought business cards from British Racing Green located in Delaware. They use Moss numbers for their inventory. Keith Vezina is looking for a smog pump for his MGB. Bill Breithoff mentioned that a '64 MGB, is available in Morgan City. This car has been totally restored. Owner's investment is about \$11,000, but will sell for about \$8900. Mike Brown was looking for a vacuum pump and suggestions included using one at Lubriport Labs, renting from Auto Zone and purchasing from Harbor Freight. Cliff Hughes was asked to bring his Austin Healy to the International House during the Gala for Audrey Hepburn. In her movie it was actually a Nash Healey, but all were

impressed with Cliff's car.

**New Member:** Bill Blast was introduced as the proud owner of a 1988 XJS 12 cylinder.

**50/50 Drawing:** The \$23 pot was won by Jim Elston. A Triumph book donated by Roger Gibson was won by Butch Frutos. He in turn gave the book to Anne Friloux. T-shirts were won by Mario Messina and Karen Vezina. §

**Catfish Charlie's**

Only four British cars came with the 19 people who made it to Catfish Charlie's. Between being rescheduled from Sunday June 22 to Saturday June 21, and the threatening rain, it was a very light turn out for this event. In the past we have gone to Catfish Charlie's on a Sunday evening, but the restaurant is now closes after lunch on Sundays. Food was still great and the drive still pleasant, even if it was, for most people, "the GM, not the MG" (or Toyota)!

**Mystery Cruise**

Twelve British and four non-British cars and 33 people left Lakeshore Drive across from Joe's Crab Shack for the July Mystery Cruise. Club President Harold O'Reilly passed out maps then we took a drive down Canal Blvd / Canal Street to the Canal Street Ferry, and took the ferry across the river to Algiers. On the ferry we found that none of our members had brought a camera, but the cars were photographed by several tourists. It's a shame we can't get a print!! We cruised down to Paterson (River Road east of the Navy base) and followed it to the Chalmette Ferry. On the other side of the river, it was less than a mile to Rocky & Carlo's. Their baked macaroni and cheese was a real hit! The weather cooperated for the first time in weeks and there was no rain during the cruise.

**NOTICE TO MGB OWNERS!**  
 Our club is affiliated with NAMGBR, the North American MGB Registry. This affiliation provides our liability insurance for events. BMCNO must maintain 8 registered NAMGBR members in our club to be affiliated. If you own (used to own, or would like to own) an MGB, please join NAGMBR, then tell the newsletter editor, Cathy Greensfelder. (She's the keeper of the membership list.) NAMGBR dues are \$25 and the newsletter *MG Driver* is worth it. Cathy will have NAMGBR membership applications at the next meeting.





VINTAGE TRIUMPH REGISTER

### ATTENTION TRIUMPH OWNERS!

Our club is a Vintage Triumph Register (VTR) zone. We need 10 VTR members in our club to become an affiliated chapter. There are insurance and other benefits to becoming a chapter. If you own (used to own, or would like to own) any type of Triumph, please join VTR, then tell the newsletter editor, Cathy Greensfelder. (She's the keeper of the membership list) or Harold O'Reilly, the VTR liaison. Cathy will have VTR membership applications at the next meeting.

### NAMGBR 2003 Convention By Bill & June Harris

The St. Louis MG Club held the 12th annual NAMGBR convention on June 18-21, 2003 in St Louis, Missouri. We represented BMCNO with our 1980 MGB Limited Edition.

On Friday, June 19, tech sessions at the Sheraton Westport were offered but we decided to partake in the Gastronomical Bus Tour instead. The tour started at Soulard Farmer's Market for fresh produce then went to Gus' Pretzels for pretzels stuffed with Saliccia (Italian sausage). The tour then



15 LE's in a row!

toured the Anheuser-Busch brewery where we were allowed to sample some of the fresh product (outstanding!). The stables were part of the tour and we got to see the Clydesdales in their fabulous home surroundings. The next stop was at St Louis Union Station. Since it doesn't service trains anymore, it was converted into a shopping mall filled with many small shops. Lunch was at Amighetti's, a famous restaurant on the Hill (Italian section established by immigrants in the late 1800's). After lunch the tour headed for Ted Drewes (a famous Route 66 stop since 1927) for one of their frozen treats.

The rest of the afternoon was filled with afternoon tech sessions, walking rallies, road rallies, wine tours, and self-drive tours until it was time to leave for a barbeque at Love Park. The entire park had been reserved. After a delicious meal, the highlight of the event, valve cover races were held. There are always some unusual entries. On entry (from California) surprised everyone, including the judges. They had to have a conference to determine if it was legal. It ended up being the winner. We were lucky enough to place third out of ten entrants. Later that night, there were parking lot parties, a nightly Hospitality Room, and "Parties in the Plaza" at the Westport Plaza adjoining the hotel. There were numerous restaurants, bars, nightclubs with live music, and partying in between.

Saturday, the day of the car show, started with a lineup at the nearby Creve Coeur Park. The



show had 228 MGs, and for us, there were 15 Limited Editions. There were vendors, walking tech sessions and plenty of friendship. The show ended with several of us driving to nearby Creve Coeur Airport to see vintage planes that were flown in for an American WACO club convention. These vintage planes were built in the 20's and 30's.

Later that night, the awards banquet was held at the Sheraton in which everyone who attended (over 300 people) enjoyed the food and the awards presentation. As the winners were announced, pictures of their cars were shown on a large screen. . We were awarded second place in the Limited Edition category and received our third place award for the valve cover races. The 50/50 raffle was given away. (\$1000 was split). The remainder of the night was filled with attending the Hospitality Room, parking lot parties, and saying our good-byes.



MGB-LE with an antique airplane

One thing that we learned was that the cars do not make the convention. The people do! Even though it was great seeing all of the MGs' together, the camaraderie of those attending made the convention successful, enjoyable and worthwhile. We are already planning on attending next years' convention, NAMGBR 2004 to be held near Morristown, New Jersey on June 24-27. Hope to see you there! §

### So What Ever Happened To The Bakers? Part I By Mike Baker

**The Sad Story:** As some of you may know, the Jag had an engine failure a few weeks before the Acadiana Cruise Event. I had parked the car to do an errand and 20 minutes later, when I started the car it belched white smoke and sounded like a bag of marbles had been sucked into the intake. Initially it was thought that the Extra Air Valve had failed, allowing the engine to suck coolant, which caused the 2B cylinder liner to split from a hydraulic lock.

**What Happened Next:** The first thing that John and I did was pull the left cylinder head. That was no small feat. We had to "walk" the head up the mounting studs using a crow bar, blocks of wood and a bottle jack. Two nights later we had the head removed and saw that the liner was cracked and that metal from the top of the 2B piston had transferred to the underside of the head, building up the surface about 1/8". The Head gasket was badly deteriorated. This engine, which I had installed just a little less than nine months before had about 80,000 miles on it. I was appalled at the condition of the head gasket and concluded that the antifreeze had not been changed regularly in the engine's earlier days.

No simple fix here! We next decided to fix the spare engine that had been pulled for the crankshaft seizure (another long and sad story), but the local machine shop advised that the damage to the block from

the seized thrust washer was too extensive for them to fix. I found another engine for a 1990 in Georgia and had it trucked down. Learning from our past experience, we decided to overhaul the engine rather than risk another failure from installing an engine of unknown condition.

**The Rebuild:** We had the heads done at a local shop and then went through the time consuming task of shimming the valve clearance. For those of you unfamiliar with Jaguar engines, the shims consist of different thickness "buttons" that go on top of the valve stem, sandwiched under the bucket tappet that the cam lobe rides against. First, you record the letter on the button, which corresponds to the thickness, install the cam, measure the clearance and change buttons until the correct thickness is obtained.



Baker's V12 with the engine removed. Sad looking isn't it?

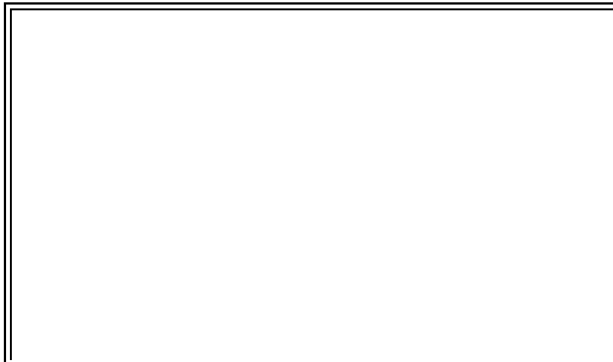
We removed pistons, cleaned them and installed new rings and bearings, new timing chain and new head gaskets. We installed the engine and transmission as a single unit. We strongly urge anyone rebuilding an engine to soak the pistons in carburetor cleaner to loosen the carbon in the ring grooves.

**Attempt to Start – Number 1:** It turned over well, but would not start! Verified the valve timing. Checked the ignition timing with a timing light. So, we went on a British car chat room and started asking questions. Each night we had a new suggestion and checked that out.

Why wouldn't it start? There are 720 degrees (two crankshaft revolutions) for each cycle of intake, compression, power & exhaust. The distributor was out of phase. The timing light indicated that #1A was firing at TDC, but the crank was one complete revolution off. We turned the distributor 180 degrees, and it fired right up.

**Not So Fast Buddy:** The engine started to pull coolant. So we pulled the fuel injection rail, pulled the intake manifold and re-torqued the head. After reassembly, we started it again. As the engine started to warm up, it started pulling coolant, again. Re-torqued the heads, again. We were getting good at this. Four hours start to finish. The target date was the 2003 British Car Day.

**The Car Show:** As you probably figured out, we did not make it. After pulling the fuel pump relay in order to bleed of the fuel pressure before pulling the fuel rail so many times, We did not take the time to disconnect the battery this last time. You can see this coming right? The relay would not come out of the connector, so I pried it out with a screwdriver, just in time to short out the contacts.



After several nights tracing wires with a multimeter, we concluded that the short had damaged either the power resistor or the Fuel Injection ECU. We had power to the injectors, but they are not receiving the signal to open. Back to the chat room. The ECU was sent to Houston to Corsaro Electronics to be checked out. Nothing was found to be damaged in the box. We put it back in the car, but the problem still exists.



Baker's block waiting for the crankshaft.

Part II to come in a future issue. §

## MGB-V8 Conversion Part 2 by Rick Huber

*(Continued from July 2003)*

OK, enough talk about getting information. Let's start into the fun part of the subject by describing the changes made to the MGB through the years and how the differences affect a conversion project. Some cars are much easier to convert than others. I've categorized these changes into five groups, and I'll address them starting from the earliest (hardest from a conversion standpoint), to the latest (easiest) and give some of the reasons why. Please excuse me if I've missed some of the historical points, I tend to be a somewhat lazy historian.

### 1962 - 1967 Roadster and GT

These early cars with such popular and desirable features as chrome bumpers, metal dash, pull-handle doors (62-64), original height suspension, and a minimum of external paraphernalia like reflectors and back up lights are the most difficult to prepare for installing a larger engine. The early 3-synchro transmission was narrow and so is, consequently, the transmission tunnel. Cutting and welding is necessary to get a new transmission to fit. Yes, the original transmission can be retained, but it just isn't tough enough for the service.

All early roadsters through 65 and many through 67 were outfitted with the "banjo" style rear axle, which is less robust for handling the additional horsepower imparted by the V8 engine, and would need to be changed. The "tube" style rear axle is much stronger, and if you don't mind the tall gear ratio, can be retained. No GTs were fitted with the "banjo" rear axle.

In the engine compartment, several metal work modifications are necessary. The panels that hold the brake / clutch master cylinder on one side and the windshield washer bottle on the other side must be moved backward to clear the valve covers of the V8 engine. The inner fender wells have to be cut, pushed outward, and rewelded, or less elegantly just moved outward with a large blunt instrument. The radiator bracket has to be removed and a late model bracket installed several inches forward in the engine bay to accommodate a late model (77 to 80) or other type of radiator. The steering shaft has to be modified to clear the exhaust header, typically done with two u-joints instead of one and some cutting / welding of the steering shafts. Once all those things are done, you're ready to put a big engine in your MGB and enjoy the extra

horsepower.

### **1968 - 1973 Roadster and GT**

While this era of the MGB still had chrome bumpers, gone is the metal dash, and in each year or two, more external gadgets are added like back up lights and sun visors in 68, side reflectors in 69, the third windshield wiper in 70, and the rubber inserts on the bumpers in 71 (I think I got those changes right). However, from a V8 conversion perspective, the larger transmission tunnel that housed the 4-synchro transmission is much more accommodating to a new transmission to fit with the V8 engine (again, this later transmission will be rapidly worn out due to the extra torque). Only some extremely shoulder tiring metal pounding is required to make the Rover 5-speed transmission fit, and some other common transmissions require even less work. All cars in this era were fitted with the Salisbury "tube" type rear axle, which is very durable and capable of handling the additional torque supplied by a larger engine. The gear ratio is a bit tall once the engine is swapped, at 3.9 / 1. Some people prefer to change to a lower ratio rear end, either by re-gearing the MGB differential, or installing a different one, but mechanically the tube type axle is up to the challenge. The other engine bay metal work and steering modifications described in the early model section are still necessary for cars of this era.

### **1974 Roadster and GT**

The factory began installing the Rover 3.5 L V8 engine in GTs destined for domestic (UK) markets in late 1973 (the 74 model year), a total of 2,591. Consequently, the engine bay and steering geometry were changed to accommodate the larger engine. The factory decided that roadsters didn't have sufficient structural rigidity to withstand the additional torque and only put V8s in the GTs. I don't believe British Leyland was really committed to fully deploying the V8 in MGBs, somewhat due to the extra effort to meet the US emissions requirements, but mostly due to the added competition for the TR6, the new TR7, and later, the TR8 models. But, for those of us who would like to put the bigger engine in ourselves, the 74 model year offers the modified engine bay, except for the radiator brackets, and revised steering geometry. An added bonus for this year is that it's the only one where these engine bay modifications also come with chrome bumpers and the original suspension height, so very desirable for the chrome bumper purist who wants more power without too much work.

### **1975 - 1976 Roadster (GTs imported from the UK or elsewhere)**

As most people know, MGBs got their rubber bumpers and revised suspension height in the 1975 model year. These cars are similarly less difficult to modify due to the revised engine bay and steering geometry just like the 74s, but if one wishes to return the car to the original ride height and / or chrome bumpers, modifications are significant, time consuming, and expensive - you know, a pain in the neck - but the methods are well known and documented as many people have done the conversion. If you're a GT aficionado, there were only 1,247 rubber bumper left hand drive GTs made in the 75 model year and shipped to North America, after which they were discontinued.

### **1977 - 1980 Roadster (and GTs if imported from the UK or elsewhere)**

In the 1977 model year, a larger radiator (the V8 radiator from 74/75 GTs) was added to the MGB. It was moved forward in the engine bay and the electric fans were added. The radiator itself is large enough to cool the V8 engine, so if it's in good condition, a



new one doesn't have to be purchased or an old one modified. The only work needed to fit a Rover V8 engine / transmission in these cars is some transmission tunnel pounding and in some cases, depending on the headers chosen, some inner fender well pounding / modification. If you're happy with the rubber bumpers and higher ride height, these three model years will be the easiest, quickest, cheapest to turn into your dream V8 MGB. §

[PART 1](#)

[PART 3](#)

[PART 4](#)

[PART 5](#)

## For Sale

**61 MGA 1600.** Stored in garage, covered for 10 years. In fair shape, very restorable. Asking \$3,000 Bryan LaHaye, Opelousas LA, [blahaye@communicom-inc.com](mailto:blahaye@communicom-inc.com) (8/03)



**74 MGB (chrome bumper)** Ground up restoration. New paint, leather interior, wood dash, Mini-lite wheels, stereo, more. 106,000 miles. Asking \$8,900. Mike Swiber, Morgan City LA, 985-385-0482 (8/03)

**56 MGA.** Wire wheels, Red. Engine & mechanicals redone with no miles on them. Frame & body sound. Interior in bad shape. Has been stored awhile. Tim Shrewsbury, Louisville, KY. (757) 623-3635. [timshrewsbury@juno.com](mailto:timshrewsbury@juno.com) 7/03)

**67 Triumph GT6 Mark 1.** Solid California car plus similar parts car, lot of parts. Recent brake and clutch rebuild, runs good, purchased from the original owner. Fuel tank still out after cleaning. New fuel pump. Clear title on the good car. Bill of sale only on the parts car: good glass, good suspension, some decent sheet metal, no transmission. In Harvey, LA. \$2,500 package deal. Dave Johnson H:(540)368-1733 W:(504)362-7373 Cell:(504) 416-3710. (5/03)

## Parts:

**MGB 68-74 brake master cylinder**, \$130, John Roper (985)893 2413, [scjohn@bellsouth.net](mailto:scjohn@bellsouth.net) (5/03)

**77 MGB rolling chassis.** Free! Good floors, steering, rear end. You come get it. John Roper, (985)893 2413, [vscjohn@bellsouth.net](mailto:vscjohn@bellsouth.net). (5/03)

## Wanted

**MGB smog pump**, must be in working condition. Keith Vezina (504)443-5056, [tkvezina@cox.net](mailto:tkvezina@cox.net)

## Newsletter Submissions

Electronic submissions are greatly preferred. Email to [MorrisGazette@cox.net](mailto:MorrisGazette@cox.net) or bring a diskette to the meeting. (MS Word or plain text preferred.) Bring written articles to the meetings, or mail to P.O. Box 73213 Metairie LA 70033

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