

BritishCarNetwork - November 12, 2008

British Car Network

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the next British Car Network. This issue we will be looking at the sad story of British Auto Industry and see why some feel that the American Car Manufacturers are headed in the same direction. There are also a few SoCal events coming up, the MG parts swap in Fullerton is always a winner. I've been going for years and had a great time because many of my NorCal friends make the trip to clear out some space in the garage.

Last week I found a dreadful modified 100/4 Austin Healey on craigslist with a cartoon-like Cobra grille, wheel arch flares and Pep Boys hubcaps - the ad said that it had a Dodge V8 engine! Yikes! So I put it on the Healey Autox.net list calling it, "The worst Healey, EVER!" Well, I was put on to others - and as a service to you dear readers, I have compiled the best of the worst. If you ever come across something REALLY terrible, email it over. We'll all get a laugh.....

Thanks for readin,' thanks for writin,'

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Worst Healeys Ever - Montage Attached

o The top is the one I found on craigslist that started it all...

o This white one with the "classic" prow was sent over by Ed of the Just Brits website:

<http://www.justbrits.com/contents.html>

Poke around the site a bit - there is a hot rod with a Spridget body that is a hoot!

o Big Bird on the Bret Blade's Healey Central website

http://twoblades.com/_wsn/page3.html

Check out the Caddy taillights!!!! Lincoln wheels... Checker paint job....

GOLDEN COVE ALL BRITISH CAR COFFEE MEET

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 16, 2008

THE AUSTIN HEALEY ASSOCIATION INVITES YOU TO JOIN OTHER BRITISH CAR ENTHUSIASTS FOR STARBUCKS AND CONVERSATION ENJOY A BEAUTIFUL WINDING SCENIC DRIVE OVERLOOKING THE PACIFIC OCEAN GOLDEN COVE SHOPPING CENTER

• RANCHO PALOS VERDES •

Plan on good weather and a pleasant drive to the ocean. Use MapQuest for the intersection of Hawthorne and Palos Verdes Dr. West. For the adventurous, coming from Long Beach you can catch W. 25th St. (at the end of Gaffey or Western Blvd. in San Pedro) which will turn into P.V. West. From Redondo you can take PCH to P.V. Blvd. which turns into P.V. Dr. West.
REMEMBER - - 9:00 AM • THIRD SUNDAY EVERY ODD MONTH

Contact: Don Newman2 <dnewman2@aol.com>

LETTERS

Greetings from Woodstock, NY – Morris Traveller Travels.....
(Photos attached)

Dear Readers,

Thought you'd enjoy a few photos I took this morning, while getting the Morris its New York state inspection sticker (for the first time since 1989 or thereabouts, ahem).

Jolly's is a local grocery/deli with a strong British tea-shoppe overlay. It's run by a 60-year-old transsexual British woman (I could not make this up) who emigrated with her sister many years ago and resettled on the Saugerties/Woodstock border about five years ago. It's my local source for chocolate biscuits ... and seemed like a good backdrop for a Morris pic.

The lawn is adjacent to the little garage that just barely holds the Morris and my Riley One-Point-Five. The dent in the right rear fender has been there since at least the 1970s and perhaps earlier. The wood is solid and has no rot, though it desperately needs sanding and revarnishing.

The seats are the original red leather, a bit cracked but still fine. The car was a European LHD export model, having no carpets, just a black rubber mat. The floorboards and underframe had to be rebuilt in the late 1980s.

And finally, the mileage of 53,293 is original (I added a dozen or so miles today). The car has been in my family since my dad ordered it new in 1961. As befits a 50K-mile Minor, it's actually fairly tight and everything works (except the right blinkers, due to a loose contact in the column switch). Second gear crunches on downshifts, as they all do, and it's fitted with Spridget front disc brakes and radial tires. Other than that and the rust repairs, it's all original.

Best,
John Voelcker, NYC

Smog test expansion bill defeated - BUT, they'll be back.....

California SB 1549-Vetoed, Legislative Matrix and Next Year's Strategy
Stop this Green Attitude vs. Car Collectors conflict with good legislation.....

Dear Readers,

Interesting comment below from a member named James of the ACCC

(Association of California Car Clubs). I think his comments are spot on and we need to get cracking on this now.

Send a message to <taznov1@netzero.net> who is the president of the ACCC urging support of a state initiative effort. I really think that if presented properly, most citizens would be in favor of leaving the classic cars alone. We are continually in the targets of the over zealous ARB whose legislation details do not always square with the common citizen.

John Quilter

----- Forwarded Message -----

Hi,

Given the current budget context, the Governors veto does make sense. What I am more concerned about are the many bills in the list you sent that one way or another talk about fee's for the amount of CO2 a car produces.

I have been through these bills since the early 1990's. We cannot keep beating down the flames with a blanket and expect to keep not getting burned. We need to blow the dam and put out the fire once and for all.

I am very seriously considering the possibility of state initiative as a preemptive strike against all these laws as they apply to classic cars. The car hobby is somewhat well organized. The fact that they have a lot of events from spring to the fall make it a natural for the collection of signatures and to drum up support.

A bill that would categorically remove all state, regional, & local government ability to mess with classic cars, trucks, motorcycles, aircraft, and boats unless they take it directly to the voters is the only way to stop the assault on our hobby. They will kill us off bit by bit unless we act while we can.

The growing sentiments for CO2 reductions coupled with the wish by the business community to have continued growth in California means that all hobby activates that generate CO2 are on a collision course. To sell more "new" cars and build more "new" homes, they will have to look into ever crack and crease to find CO2 sources to take out.

Those sources are our classic cars.

Any car club in the state will tell you that membership of young people is way down from 10 years ago. New folks are growing up without any connection to our cars. If we do not act now while there are still sufficient numbers to push an initiative through it is certain that in 5 more years it will not be possible to do so. Time and demographics are working against us and not for us. Delay is not an option.

I strongly urge that we have a big meeting with anyone and everyone that we can get involved to plan out and execute a pre-emptive strike.

Let me know what you think.

Best,
James

If this appeals to you and you want to get involved Contact Bob at
The ACCC <faznova1@netzero.net>

35th Annual Vintage MG Club Of Southern California MG Parts Exchange

Sunday, Nov.23, 2008. 7 a.m to 1 p.m.

College Park, College of Communications,
2600 E. Nutwood Avenue., Fullerton, CA (739 C6)
(across the street from CSU - Fullerton.

ADMISSION:

General: \$ 5.00

Vendors: \$20.00 (initial space)

\$10.00 each additional parking space.

Largest U.S. All MG Parts Exchange

Directions: Near 91/57 interchange. Exit Nutwood Avenue off the
57 freeway. Head west. Turn left onto Langsdorf Drive.

For more information:

John Seim - 949-786-5697
kingseim@earthlink.net

Don Kosup - 714-828-5688
dkosup@aol.com

Bob Christian - 714-998-7281
bob.christian@minarikcorp.com

LODGING:

Closest Lodging (across street):
Fullerton Marriott at Cal State Univ.
2701 E. Nutwood Ave., Fullerton
714-738-7800
FAX: 714-738-0288

The British Car Industry - Our Part in its Downfall
James Ruppert's biography
October 20 2008

Is the British car industry dead? I just wonder because when people
ask me whether they can buy a British built hatchback from a British
owned company, the very short answer is no.

However, if you want a 1930s throwback (a Morgan maybe) or a car with
no bodywork whatsoever (Ariel Atom) you are in luck.

And of course we still make cars over here, except they all seem to be
Japanese (Toyota, Nissan, Honda), or German (BMW MINI), or even
American (Vauxhall). That's a bit odd really as in 1945 we just
happened to have the second largest car industry in the world.

I thought that this needed investigating, so I sat down and wrote 'The
British car industry - our Part in its Downfall' to see if there was
anyone or anything I could blame, or was it simply our fault? And

instead of simply writing from an academic perspective I used a real British family to explain what it was like to buy and run cars over the last 50 years, my own.

In particular my dad who patriotically bought British even after he accidentally bought the worst car British Leyland ever made.

So was it simply the truly terrible cars that were on offer at the time? Well actually the Allegro could have been a lot better if the design had not been interfered with and then the final product poorly built. The Maxi was a bit half baked and underdeveloped, but had masses of room inside and should have outsold the 'Dagenham Dustbin', or Cortina as it was called in the Ford showroom, by a million to one.

Then when British Leyland tried to take on Ford with a basic car they came up with the dreary Marina. Even when we made cars as beautiful as the Triumph Stag, which also sounded so sexy thanks to the V8, it still went wrong.

Again it was an underdeveloped product that was badly built. Where we led the world in small car technology, like the Mini, not enough money was charged which meant it was always sold at a loss. Not a mistake BMW made with its own MINI. Blame the buyers?

Certainly the British car buyer was not nearly as loyal as the French or Italians, who also had to put up with some equally rubbish cars. The Lancia Gamma, Fiat Arna, Renault 9 to name just a few were truly horrible, but maybe the buyers were more easily pleased.

In the UK the climate and salt on the roads could kill most cars in just a few years, but reliability became something of a novelty unless you bought Japanese or German. Although Hondas and Toyotas of the time looked gaudy and awkward, at least they started every morning.

The Volkswagen Beetle may have been ancient and technically wrong, but again it didn't break down and when the Golf arrived it was the answer to everyone's dream, including my dad. In all he bought five and he was not alone as British buyers demanded better products and value than BL could ever give them.

However, even when the products were not that bad it was too late to win back buyers, as MG Rover discovered.

What about Her Majesty's Press?

We motoring hacks are a cynical old bunch of doom mongers hence the title of this piece. Few of us have ever designed a car, can barely drive and rarely have a constructive thing to say about anything. Mr Clarkson can possibly be credited with killing the Vauxhall Vectra as a brand, though even his power is probably exaggerated.

Actually most British car magazines and newspapers have been relentlessly positive about anything built in the UK. It was actually journalists who told British Leyland not to put a square steering wheel in the Allegro and to do something about the Morris Marina's wayward handling, but were ignored.

Criticism was very low level in the 50s and 60s and only the fiercely independent Car magazine ever dared to suggest that a car was not very good.

What about the workers?

Individually they were committed and decent people, but they were appallingly led. Union leaders thought they could create a socialist paradise in the car factories and related suppliers but only caused anarchy. British Leyland may have looked stupid for having half a dozen suppliers for exhausts, but their reasoning was that when one inevitably went on strike then they could still get them somewhere else.

While Japan was pioneering lean production and just in time techniques, the factories had to stockpile. Derek Robinson became the whipping bloke for union activities and quite right too. It was only when he was sacked could BL get on with the important business of building the Mini Metro.

The powerful unions sapped the work ethic, yet the clean, bright and we-are-all-in-this-together Japanese factories are conclusive proof that the Brit worker can bolt together a world beating car like the Nissan Micra.

And finally there's the government...

Here is conclusive proof that you should not let a politician run a market stall, let alone a massive industry. The constant meddling started post war when new factories had to be built in deprived areas. Areas that had no tradition of heavy industry which may have helped employment but did nothing for build quality.

Governments were also instrumental at prodding manufacturers to get into bed together and created BLMC. And when that ultimately started to collapse, BL then became public property, with politicians directly in charge of the means of production. There you have one very powerful reason why cars built in the mid 1970s were so terrible as my dad found out to his cost.

Σ This is an edited extract from James Ruppert's book The British Car Industry –
Σ Our Part in its Downfall

It could never happen here in the US.....

By Edward Lapham

Automotive News | November 4, 2008

The proposed merger of Chrysler LLC into General Motors has many of the same desperate elements that led to the creation of British Leyland in 1968.

Forty years ago, British Motor Holdings was a collection of storied English automotive brands that had been rolled into an unprofitable cluster through mergers, acquisitions and business failures. It was teetering on the brink of oblivion. Leyland Motor Corp. was a smaller -- but profitable -- manufacturer.

Back then, it seemed important for England to have a domestic auto industry. So someone in the Labour government reasoned that blending the two would make the new entity -- British Leyland Motor Corp. -- bigger, stronger, smarter and better able to compete with the likes of Ford and Vauxhall. And the government blessed the marriage.

It seemed a bloody brilliant move, except it never really worked.

Just too much

When stitched together, British Leyland had a whopping 40 percent of the market, but it couldn't succeed. There were just too many factories, too many dealers, too many troublesome labor agreements and too many foreign competitors.

There also were too many brands that desperately needed new products and too many models that competed with each other. So in short order, brands such as Austin Healey, Wolseley and Riley were jettisoned. Some, such as Morris and Austin, lingered. Others, such as Triumph and MG, were minimized to near extinction.

Factories were closed. Workers were made redundant.

None of it helped.

In 1975, British Leyland Motor Corp. slumped into bankruptcy and was reorganized as British Leyland Ltd., in which the British government became the biggest shareholder by virtue of its massive bailout funding.

Nationalization failed

But even the nationalized automaker couldn't make it. Along the way there were partnerships, joint ventures and more plant closings. Some brands, such as Jaguar and Land Rover, were hived off and sold. Some were resold.

What remained of BL morphed into the Rover Group in 1986 and was purchased in 1988 by British Aerospace, which sold the business to German automaker BMW. BMW soon cast off Rover and everything else except Mini. Eventually, the castoff MG Rover factory went out of business.

Several of the traditional English brands have been purchased and are around. Some of the vehicles are even produced in the United Kingdom. Heck, more than 1.5 million cars were built there last year.

But the big brands and factories are owned by foreign companies.. There is no English-owned auto industry to speak of.

But don't worry. That could never happen here.

We're too bloody brilliant!

Edward Lapham is the executive editor of Automotive News.

Submitted by John Voelcker