

The British Car Network - October 1, 2009

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"No matter who you vote for, the government still gets in." - - George Harrison

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Dear Readers,

Lots going on this month..... The Brisbane Meet, some new Mini concept cars, an old BMC military concept car, letters and more. Enjoy the thoughts and images.....

Best,

editorRick

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32 years in the San Francisco Bay Area!

The Brisbane Marina British Car Meet 2009  
By Rick Feibusch

More photos of this year and last years Brisbane Marina Meet can be viewed at:  
<http://allcarcentral.com/thebritishcarnetwork.html>

The Brisbane meet, though greeted by thunder and lightening the night before, was quite a success, despite gloomy skies. The British Car gods were looking out for the Sons (and Daughters) of Lucas with clear skies and mild temperatures during the events on both days.

We were awakened by thunder early Saturday morn, followed by a light but continuous English-style rain. As the cars started to arrive for the Saturday tour, we watched as participants assembled their hoods and fitted side curtains, that is, the people who had brought them. It never rains in California in September!

Others were getting out or borrowing warm clothing for the soggy trip to the sea. We all laughed at the weather, kicked tyres and had a sort of pre-meet, meet until the skies opened up and we retreated to our respective cars. Then at exactly 9:00AM, the rain went away as quickly as it came and stayed away until an hour after the meet was over on Sunday.

The cars left in groups of eight or so on two possible routes. There was a large group of Jags, mostly E-Types, and a fair number of Healeys, both Big and little. We had a few Minis and Minors as well as John Quilter's Austin America. Other Britiron of interest was a Ginetta roadster, some Morgans and Lotus (Loti?).

Biggest car on the tour was Bob Nicholson's two-tone blue 1953 Bentley that performed flawlessly. Bob, always the Southern gentleman, offered to let two women riding in a four-place Morgan (you know, the kind with "theater seating" where the rear seat passenger's faces stand proud of the windscreen), but they declined saying that their husbands would consider them "weens." Euro machinery was represented by an older Audi Quatro, Bugeye owner Nancy McCrosky's Dad in a Lancia and a fellow who made the run in a late model Maserati roadster.

Some elected to make the shorter and more direct route directly to Cameron's Pub, but others braved the weather and back roads and took the longer sightseeing route with stops in the hills. Nancy McCrosky was the only causality on the tour, losing her clutch hydraulics in

the mountains and having to wait for the flatbed to pick up her Sprite and haul it to the shop down below. Lucky she had her dad along for the ride home. About 50 cars did the tour and took up much of the car park at Cameron's into the afternoon.

The Sunday show was a blast. Even though we planned on random parking, one of each marque seemed to arrive early, so we spread them out and the cars and clubs "clumped" in a way that seemed to work out like we intended it that way. Brunch was available from the Sierra Point Yacht Club all morning and a swell BBQ was organized by the Brisbane Loins for the afternoon. The Herb Gibson band, regularly featured at Brannon's up in Calistoga, played 'till 2:00PM.

There was a large contingency of Jags, a bunch of Morgans, lots of Loti, Triumphs for days, Healeys galore, and the MG Clubs came in force. There were more Morris Minors than last year and the Arcane Car guys brought some wonderful examples of odd, including a pair of really rare Austins owned by their fearless leader, Byron Brill. The A70 Hereford woody, imported and restored by Randy Williams in LA, was left outside for years by a subsequent owner and needs to be restored again, despite its low mileage. I once drove this beastie from LA to San Diego and back for the British Meet down there - a smooth runner that just hummed at 65 mph - it has a single carb version of the Austin Healey 100/4 engine.

Star car of the meet had to be Anthony Martinis' polished alloy Allard roadster. The car seemed to have a crowd around it all day. Built over a seventeen year period on an original chassis, Tony built the car to his own taste with a NASCAR Ford V8 and automatic transmission and a number of other modifications including headrest nacelles fitted with radio speakers and shrouded sidemount tyres. AMAZING!

Other cars of note were the Rover 3 liter Coupe' (actually a 4-door saloon with a lower "chopped" top like one of those new Mercedes with the low top), and the mid-1950s Vauxhall PA Cresta saloon, a car that brought "fresh American styling" to the UK at the time - Hmmmmmmm.

We would like to thank Ted Warburton, Harbourmaster of the Brisbane Marina, The Sierra Point Yacht Club, and the Brisbane Lions Club for covering the fees and helping to make this a winning FREE event for the car owners this year, AND our sponsors for covering the postcard mailing and the band:

The Brisbane Marina  
650-583-6976

[www.ci.brisbane.ca.us/html/cityDept/marina/index.asp](http://www.ci.brisbane.ca.us/html/cityDept/marina/index.asp)

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Officially Official:

Happy 50th - it's the MINI Coupé And Roadster Concepts!

by Sam Abuelsamid (RSS feed) - Images attached

[www.Autoblog.com](http://www.Autoblog.com)

The Coupe

Rumors have been swirling for months about what BMW would do on August 26, 2009 for its Mini brand. After all, that is the fiftieth anniversary of the public debut of Alec Issigonis' original Mini. With most of the speculation revolving around either a coupe or some kind of cropped windshield speedster, it turns out the reality was somewhere in between.

Unlike the original coupe of the Sixties that simply had a fastback replacement for the standard square-back roof, the new MINI Coupé Concept completely replaces everything from the beltline up. The upright windshield that has been part of the Mini look from day one is finally swept back and a truncated roof covers the remaining two seats.

All pretenses of being a four seater has finally been dispensed with for the new coupe. The shape of the roof indicates that should Mini move ahead with production, and it could easily be replaced by a folding fabric unit to create the anticipated speedster model. What's more, dumping the rear seats means Mini could theoretically add a hefty brace back there restoring some of the structural integrity lost in the standard convertible, or perhaps restore some cargo room as compared to the Cabrio.

Paul Gover of the Herald Sun adds:

The two-seat Mini Concept Coupe is all new but, like every Mini model since BMW Group brought the car back from the dead, has a solid link to the past. In this case it's to a car called the Broadspeed Mini, which was a cut-down racer with a low roofline and a bunch of go-fast gear developed by British tuner Ralph Broad.

The original Broadspeed GT Coupe was built in limited numbers in the 1960s as a road car, based on a Mini Cooper S.

It's a similar story with the Concept Coupe, which picks up the mechanical package from the regular Mini but wraps it in a cut-down coupe body with a much different look to the roof and tail. Mini began the Clubman push with a string of motor show concept cars and the Concept Coupe could easily go the same way.

The Frankfurt car is a genuine runner that uses the 155 kiloWatt turbo engine from the Mini John Cooper Works, as well as its tweaked chassis. The body has been substantially tweaked, from the laid-back windscreen and A-pillars to a new roof and a low-line tail with far more taper than the boxy four-seater. Predictably, there is a spoiler set into the rear end. Mini says luggage space is greater in the Concept Coupe because it takes up space from what is normally the back seat, with a lift-up tailgate.

The Mini Roadster Concept  
By Drew Johnson  
[www.leftlanenwes.com](http://www.leftlanenwes.com)

MINI took to the stage at the Frankfurt Motor Show to also unveil its Roadster concept, a sporty two-seater drop-top based on the existing Mini Cabriolet. Although the model looks production-ready, MINI will not confirm or deny its plans for the show car.

Essentially unchanged from a standard MINI Cabriolet below the beltline, the Roadster's cabin has been shrunk and a rear decklid has been added. The trunk grows from 5.7 cubic feet to nearly 9 cubic feet and a lockable trunk passthrough helps passengers reach the cargo area from inside the vehicle.

A new multifunction display adds a Nature Guard (which measures how eco-friendly your driving is), a Highspeed Shift indicator (think of it as the opposite of the Nature Guard), a Gravity Indicator (with lateral g-force measurement), Heart Beat (based on engine speed) and a Buddy Radar to indicate where other MINI vehicles are (though no production MINI features a tracking device).

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The 1950 Wolseley Mudlark - Austin Champ prototype,  
Queensland Newspapers (see attached photo)

The Wolseley Mudlark FV1800 was built by the Nuffield organization (later part of BMC) to meet a British defense force requirement for a 1/4 ton General Service truck to take the place of American Jeeps. Twelve examples were made in 1948 and sent for testing in the UK and overseas. The Mudlark was an advanced design, with fully independent suspension and a Rolls-Royce engine, and was close to the design used for the production Austin Champ in 1952. Note the bulbous mudguards of the vehicle in the photograph, the towing hooks and spring latches for the bonnet and folding windscreen.

A Wolseley Mudlark was loaned to the US Government in 1951 for testing and comparison to the MB & M38 Jeeps used by US Armed Forces at this time. 'According to the Report written in 1951/52 by the US Government and the Ford Motor Company, the vehicle suffered from transmission problems and also required a more efficient cooling system.

It was considered to be well built but needed modifications to make it strong enough for military use. The axles suffered from oil starvation in the differential due to the design of the half-shafts allowing oil to trickle down from differential to outer joints and hubs. Many of the faults were rectified on the preproduction Austin Champs in 1951 and the production models from 1952. Some of the faults were still "in production" in 1953/54 and required modification instructions to be issued to Army Workshops!'

Wolseley Mudlarks appear in the 1957 science fiction film "Quatermass", being driven by zombies!

From <http://www.austinchamp.com/extras/photogallery/mudlark.htm>

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## L E T T E R S

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Rubber Bumper MG Midget Tours The World For Charity

[http://blogs.thecarconnection.com/marty-blog/1035099\\_bridget-the-midgets-world-tour-for-charity](http://blogs.thecarconnection.com/marty-blog/1035099_bridget-the-midgets-world-tour-for-charity)

submitted by John Voelcker of NYC

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Rick,

Thanks for keeping the British Car Meets going. It gave us another excuse to get the Sprite and Midget out for a drive and we had fun seeing some new cars and meeting some new people (although were still trying to figure out the Allard). Smaller than in past years, but still just fine.

Rich & Kim Hill  
'58 AH Sprite  
'79 MG Midget

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Hi Rick,  
These are nice communications, thanks. At least now I know how to pronounce Kjell Qvale!

Best,  
Alan Grossman  
NorCal

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On Building the British Car Image:

Today I parked my Morris Minor tourer in front of the local post office and as I was returning to the car a young women, perhaps 25 years old came over to ask what type of car it was. I replied that it was a Morris Minor from England and that it was 49 years old. She was amazed and remarked that that was older than her mother!  
As I always do when someone comments or has questions about my Morris (49 years old), my MGTD (58 years old), or my Austin America (40 years old) or my Jaguar 3.8S (44 years old).

I respond that the British build cars that last a LONG LONG time. The British build quality products that provide great service for a lifetime. In this day of disposable throw away modern cars that often astounds bystanders but it serves to show that a quality British product well cared for can, in fact, still provide good service over half a century after it was made.

It is high time we English car owners start to tout the quality and durability of our cars to dispel the common perception that English cars are "always breaking down," and "always in the shop," etc.

John Quilter  
Brisbane, CA

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RE: British license plate restoration:

Rick - For the European plates the web site is <http://www.licenseplates.tv/> This guy will duplicate any number plate you want. He has done a few for me and the work is flawless.

Domenic Valentino

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RE: British license plate restoration:

TO: Rick and Robert Mickelson regarding British license Plates.

Question as to who restores British license plates? There's Ken King in Elverta, CA. (near Sacramento), who makes numbers plates. They are quality items and he uses the raised numbers & letters. The price is really cheap, (\$20.00 a plate). I met him at the all British show in Dixon, CA. I had previously had a set from Moss Motors with just the pressed numbers @\$50.00 each. I have 1949 Triumph 2000 Roadster, and did own a 1952 MG-TD. Here's his Info:

Ken King  
8970 Rio Linda Blvd.  
Elverta, CA 95626  
916-992-8600

Jim Rogers - Livermore, CA

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RE: On weird Healey modifications, previous issue....

Oh Healeys, you are breaking my heart. A friend in high school put a 283 (chevy) in one and destroyed the rear axle in the first 5 minutes. Then he cut down an Olds rear axle and put it in there and twisted the frame as soon as he got it on the street. Now, 40 years later, he still has the old Healey in his garage and is going to straighten and box the frame some some day, You know that aluminum center section between the tops of the front fenders, all wrinkly.

And I stuffed the front of a 100-4 into a cliff, shortened the car 4" and sent the owner, who was in the passenger's seat, to the hospital. Do not raise your legs in a head on, your knee will hit the dash board and cut the tendon that raises you foot. Bad.

Peter J. Smith - Carson City, NV

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Peter - My neighbor, when I was a teen on the SF Bay Area Peninsula, had an all-aluminium Healey 100-4 that he tried to make into a Cobra by putting in a 300hp Vette mill and 4-speed, flaring the wheel arches and fitting Cobra wire wheels - It was white with a dark blue stripe - was quite fast as well - a fuel leak caught fire (somehow in the boot where the battery was relocated) and the extinguisher was in the burning boot!!! It burned to the ground - the body melted!!!! He just had to sit there and watch.....Bummer! - editorRick

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RE: The demise of the British Auto Industry...

Readers,

This just in from "Just Brits Ed" and John Quilter of Brisbane (Home of the new Bay Area British Car Meet), CA:

The demise of the British car industry per Jeremy Clarkson of Top Gear on the BBC -

Check this link for an funny but true story..... It is broken into three sections - SEE THEM ALL!!!

<http://nz.youtube.com/watch?v=EAWH0EfMDfc&feature=related>

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RE: The demise of the British Auto Industry...

Obviously this man never owned a STAG. Second only to the Austin Marina as a rust bucket with just about every thing going wrong in your first year of ownership. Looked decent, that why I purchased one but after that it was a never ending battle to keep it running. Just to complete the picture I purchased an Austin Marina for my wife, its a wonder we stayed together! The demise of the British motor industry is simple they never understood the post war market even when they had it in the palm of their hands from 1945 to 1955.

Apart from the Americans no one else in the world, (Excluding the USSR) were producing cars so the UK had an open market that they simply threw away with poor design and mechanical junk. Remembering that the UK produced the first jet Airliner you have to ask why this achievement did not filter through to vehicles. With the exception of Jaguar with the 120 everything else was simply none competitive in the post war world.

Geoffery Wheatly

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RE: The demise of the British Auto Industry...

Important correction on the Jaguar-Land-Rover story about them approaching the British Gov't for \$3 bln in aid. Actually, Tata is looking for public assistance as it is trying to repay the \$3 Bln loan it took out in buying Jaguar and Land-Rover in April. It has repaid \$890 Mln so far, but the remainder is due June 2009 and Tata has not been able to float or sell the bonds and its own sales are down some 30% or so in India recently. Not sure that this was a direct request from the two British automakers themselves, or the parent Tata.

The auto industry ("Detroit" or otherwise) pretty much build what people want. Economy cars have always had lots of support from writers but little from actual BUYERS! I know, I have owned a lot of them getting them for very little sometimes. Some of what I have owned includes 5 Lloyds, an NSU Prinz, a Mini, a Minor (still have it), a 2CV (Still have it too), a Panhard, 3 Hillmans (actually, a Hillman, a singer Gazelle and a Sunbeam Rapier), a Subaru 360, a Skoda, a little Renault 12, and so forth.

The absolute LAST thing "Detroit" needs to do is put billions into "alternative technology" to build cars that are unpopular! However, part of GM, Ford, Honda, Toyota and Nissan's current problems ARE that they have refused to get out of the economy car category, just like Borgward or Glas. Hyundai is forcing the issue however. As with BLMC/BL Ltd. (and the Maxi and Metro), they keep pouring millions into this unprofitable category while their main business (mid-range sedans) needs more attention! History repeats itself completely in this scenario with even the "experts" advising the SAME failed solution for "Detroit" that was used to "solve" BL's problems. Why am I not surprised?

Jeff S. Savage  
AutoPhyle

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RE: The demise of the British Auto Industry...

Correction, (actually an elaboration) 524,392 MGB bodyshells were produced. Even if you discount the GT body (which you shouldn't), there were 387,184 bodies. Just FYI.

[http://www.mgnuts.com/gallery/index.php?action=show\\_custom&id=171&cat=5](http://www.mgnuts.com/gallery/index.php?action=show_custom&id=171&cat=5)

Steve Simons - Los Angeles, CA

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Triumph TransAmeriCan Charity Drive,  
San Francisco Bay Area, 9/24 - 9/30/09

You've heard about John Macartney's final weekend in the San Francisco Bay Area before Triumphest/VTR. The details follow. We have planned these events to be accessible to Triumph and other LBC enthusiasts throughout the Bay Area.

Come spend the entire weekend, or tour with us for a day, or just meet John Macartney at one of the meet-and-greet stops. Learn more here:

<http://triumphtransamerica.org.uk/>

Thursday evening, 9/24. John will be speaking at a local Lions Club meeting in Corte Madera (North Bay). There is limited availability for local guests, with a nominal fee to cover dinner. Contact me if interested (e-mail preferred) and I will refer you to the event host.

Friday, 9/25: Rest day for John & Liz in the North Bay. If we are

successful with scheduling any morning phone-in interviews with local radio stations, I will post the information in advance as best we can.

Saturday morning, 9/26: Meet at the Larkspur Ferry parking lot at 9:00 a.m. sharp for a San Francisco driving tour. The first departures for the tour will begin at 9:30 a.m., with a scenic route and scenic stops. Route maps will be distributed. There will be tour leaders, but the tour is considered self-guided. Drive across the Golden Gate Bridge, tour down Lombard Street -- the crookedest street in the world, see the view from Twin Peaks (if it's not fogged in), see Golden Gate Park and the Cliff House. Lunch at place of your choosing. The tour ends at the VA Hospital in Menlo Park. (NOT Palo Alto! The location was changed.)

Saturday afternoon, 9/26: Meet and greet at 3:00 p.m. at the VA Hospital in Menlo Park (NOT Palo Alto, the location was changed), the location of their PTSD center. Put on a little show & shine for the veterans.

Sunday morning, 9/27: Meet at the Blackhawk Automotive Museum in Danville (East Bay) at 10:00 a.m. John speaks at 11:00 a.m. Lunch at restaurants nearby. We will hang out at the museum until about 2:00 p.m. This place is fantastic.

Sunday afternoon, 9/27: Depart the Blackhawk Museum at 2:00 p.m. for an East Bay driving tour. Tour ends in Milpitas.

Monday morning, 9/28: Meet at Hobe's Restaurant in Los Gatos at 9:00 a.m. for breakfast. Tour over the Santa Cruz mountains to the Canepa Museum in Scotts Valley. See things that go fast, as the Canepa Museum is about racing. Lunch stop after leaving the museum.

Tuesday, 9/29: Rest day for John & Liz in the Monterey area.

Wednesday morning, 9/30: Meet at the Rio Road Shopping Center in Carmel at Highway 1 and Rio Road at 8:30 a.m. Final TTACD tour departs Carmel at 9:00 a.m. and proceeds down Highway 1 to Triumph/VTR at San Luis Obispo. Lunch in Cambria. We expect this caravan to get huge as we approach San Luis Obispo. If you don't make the 9:00 a.m. departure, it won't be difficult to catch up with us.

Please join us wherever you can! And please spread the word to Triumph and other LBC enthusiasts. Other LBC's are especially welcome at the Blackhawk Museum on Sunday.

Happy Trails,

Joe Cain  
Triumph Travelers Sports Car Club  
[JoeCainPE@aol.com](mailto:JoeCainPE@aol.com)