

Redding

British Car Club

Dec 2020

Compiled & Edited by Charles Laurence

From your editor – The idea of holding our meeting in the afternoon seems to have been a good one as 10 members showed up at 2:00 on Monday, Dec 14th.

First order of business was Evert's announcement that dues are due. They remain at \$10.00 and your check should be made out to Charley Fitch and mailed to him at 1112 Coggins St Redding, CA 96003.

Evert announced that as the weather worsens, he is going to just cancel meetings for a couple of months or two. Watch your e-mail for announcements as usual.

We also discussed future drives and got several suggestions for when it warms up a bit: Burney Falls, Feather River Canyon, Chico Air Museum and Thunder Hill Raceway.

Of course all of this depends upon Covid vaccinations which are thought to be happening in the first & second quarters.

As some of you know, I lived in Alaska for 35 years and started a British

Sports Car club in 1993. When I left in 2010, we had 85 members representing 9 marques. As you might imagine, there is no driving for at least 6 months of the year and to keep us involved the members would send me stories about their adventures in their BSC's.

I am inviting you to do the same. As George Rogers has done with the restoration of his MG-TD, it could be work you've done or are doing on your British Car or a memorable drive you made or are planning to make. Any thing you would like to share will be appreciated. To get us started, I'm including a story about my drive from Seattle to Anchorage in my TD.

My search for an MGA is back on. I'm looking for a pre 1960 roadster in either red or blue (not black or white) and preferably West of the Mississippi. Not looking for a beautifully restored car, just a good solid driver. If you have any suggestions call me at 530-782-0546.

Recent Events

Bowman Road Run – The weather wasn't at all what Evert had been selling with temps in the high 50's under cloudy skies as 7 cars met on Saturday, Dec 5th at 1:00

in the afternoon. There were 4 Triumphs (2 TR6's, a TR4 and a Spitfire), an MG and a Mini along with my daily driver. Shortly after 1:00, we headed west on Bowman Rd and I must say the British cars were really enjoying the cool crisp weather. We followed Bowman for about 20 miles to Hwy 36 where we turned East towards Red Bluff. From Red Bluff we caught Jellys Ferry Road which we followed to the bridge at the Big Bend Boat Ramp where we made a pit stop. We kept good social distancing as we discussed world events.

Charley Williams showed off his new instrument lights on his MG-TC. He adapted LED lights which he installed behind the instruments which gave them a back lit affect which was ingenious.

After a half hour or so, we continued on Jellys Ferry Road across the old bridge which is one lane to Ash Creek and then Parkville to Dersche where we began to split up and go our separate ways. All told I put on about a hundred miles and was home by 4:00.



From the Members

From George Rogers - Reward offered for arrest and conviction of the Gremlin(s) that continue to unscrew the light bulb in my drop cord. One orange sodypop will be given to the first person to solve this problem. George Rogers

North to Alaska

The idea of driving a 45 year old open sports car 2,600 miles up one of the most remote highways in North America first came to me sometime in March. I had called a company here in Anchorage, which specializes in shipping cars via ocean freight for a quote on shipping our 1953 MG TD back to Anchorage. We had shipped the car to Seattle nine years before, for \$425 and I had expected the cost to be somewhat the same. I was shocked to learn that the cost of shipping north was almost three times that amount. I knew the cost of gas to drive would be much less than the \$1,100 I was being quoted, and it was a trip I had always thought about making.

I crossed the border and connected up with British Columbia's highway 1, which is a beautiful four lane divided highway. I followed this to Hope, where it turns north and continues as a well maintained two lane road. It follows the Fraser River through steep canyons with snow capped mountains on either side.

While it was only two lanes, there were passing lanes on all uphill grades which helped to keep me out of other driver's way. I tried to be up and on the highway each morning by 7:00, and drive for two hours before stopping to eat. I'd continue on until 7:00 or 8:00 that night, stopping every two hours or so to stretch my legs, check the oil and have a cup of coffee. The scenery that first day was the most beautiful of the entire trip and I found myself in the town of Quesnel that night, having covered 436 miles. I had run into a few light sprinkles along the way and was dismayed to find that the windshield wipers were not working. So after filling up with gas, checking and adding a half quart of oil, I started to work on the wiper motor. Luckily, the motor was just frozen slightly from lack of use and I was able to get it running again by removing the cover and turning the rotor with a screwdriver. While I had good weather for most of the trip, the wiper motor never again failed to work when it was needed.

The weather and roads were good again the morning of the second day as I was up early and on my way north following B.C. highway 1. I stopped for breakfast in Prince George and had a decision to make. I could turn West along highway 16, which is known as the Cassiar Highway, or continue North and slightly East on what

is the original route to Alaska. Both roads connect up with the Alcan, but the old, original route connects up with the Alcan at Mile 0 in Dawson Creek. The newer Cassiar route is shorter and doesn't meet the Alcan until just outside of Watson Lake which is over 600 miles from where the Alcan actually starts. After talking to folks in the restaurant, I was told that motorists coming down from Alaska, had reported a good deal of construction along the Cassiar. So for that reason, and for the historical significance of driving the entire length, I opted for the longer original route. This took me from Prince George, several hundred miles North and then about a hundred miles East before turning North again to Dawson Creek. I was surprised to find the terrain in this part of British Columbia to be rolling hills with a good deal of farmland. I passed through one area where raspberries were growing everywhere I looked. In others, there were dairy farms and fields of hay. Living in Alaska, one hears horror stories about Canadians taking advantage of helpless tourists along the Alcan. I saw nothing like that, in fact I found the exact opposite to be true. People everywhere were very helpful and courteous, and the prices for food and lodging were very reasonable compared to costs in Alaska. Gasoline seemed a bit high, but considering the distance it has to be trucked, I think the prices are probably reasonable. I made it to Dawson Creek that evening, then turned West on the Alcan. I pushed on to Fort St. John about 50 miles up the road and after the usual evening maintenance, I had dinner and went to bed having covered 400 miles that day.

Weather on the third day continued to cooperate as I followed the Alcan North and West. Later in the day, beyond Ft. Nelson, I ran into the first unpaved section of the highway. It was a ten mile stretch consisting of compacted gravel, which actually was quite smooth and easy to drive at the slow speed I was maintaining. The problem is, vehicles going the other direction kick up rocks, and in a low slung car like the TD, the windshield and headlights are particularly vulnerable. It was on this very first section of gravel that I took the first of what would eventually be three hits on the windshield. The rock, which was thrown by a truck going the other direction, left a silver dollar sized "star" on the passenger side of the windshield. It is interesting that all three hits I took, were within 3 inches of each other and none hit the drivers side or headlights. I have no idea why. A good deal of the day was spent driving through mountain passes as the highway climbed into the northern reaches of the Canadian Rockies. The mountains are beautiful, but the foliage had given way to the stunted spruce trees which we have in Alaska as well. The extremely long, cold winters do not allow them to grow into the big trees which I had seen two days earlier in the Fraser River Canyon. It was on this day, that I saw most of the critters I was to see along the road. The Canadian highway folks seem to know about this concentration of wild game, as there are warning signs every few miles. Moose, caribou, elk, mountain goats and even bears became common sights along and sometimes on the road. It was also on this day that my only brush with tragedy

occurred.

A truck and trailer hauling gasoline came up behind me on a level, but twisting stretch of road. He hung back until we reached a long straight away and I waved him by. I then pulled to the right to allow as much space between his tires and my head as possible as he rolled past. Once clear, he pulled back into the right lane and we had covered another quarter of a mile, when suddenly a black shape came out of the underbrush on the right side and up onto the road. As there were no cars coming the other way, the trucker swerved to the left as much as possible and fought to maintain control of his rig. Unfortunately, the right rear wheel rim struck the black mass and sent it spinning in the middle of the right lane directly in front of me. I realized at this point, that this was a black bear. A very big black bear, and it was now laying in the road directly in front of me. I slowed down and watched for any sign of movement as I approached, but it lay still. I was concerned about the bear suddenly getting back up, being in a very bad mood and me with no where to go. It would have been a different story had I been in a 3,000 lb sedan with roll-up windows and doors I could lock. I would have stopped and helped flag down other motorists until someone arrived who could help pull the carcass off the road. But under the circumstances, I downshifted and pulled out to go around it, all the while trying to remember how fast a black bear can run. The rest of that day proved uneventful and I spent the night in a beautiful lodge at Muncho Lake, 462 miles along the Alcan.

The morning of day four put my "top down" credo to a test once more. I awoke to find it absolutely pouring rain. I quickly threw my bags into the car, fired up and started down the road. Once underway, most of the rain was blown over me so I was fairly comfortable despite the need to wipe off my glasses occasionally. The windshield wipers worked perfectly and the rain soon began to let up. Within an hour it stopped completely and by the time I pulled over for breakfast, the sun was beginning to shine. The rest of that day went very well, with intermittent sections of unpaved road. I did take another hit on the windshield, but that was of no consequence as it was going to have to be replaced when I got home anyway. About mid day, I passed from British Columbia into the Province of Yukon Territory and I began to feel like I was getting close to home. It is in this area that the Cassiar Highway joins the Alcan and in talking to drivers who had taken that route, they confirmed that the construction areas had been numerous and long. That evening found me in the bustling tourist town of Whitehorse. This was one of the centers for gold mining activities back in the 1890's as miners would come through here to get to the Yukon River for their journey into interior Alaska. The town has done a good job of keeping the goldmining spirit alive and is a popular destination for travelers from Alaska as well as the Canadian provinces.

My luck with the weather held as day five started out with bright sunshine. I was

now traveling almost due West and by mid day, found myself on the most enjoyable bit of pavement I was to encounter. With the St. Elias mountain range on the left, the highway winds along the shore of Kluane Lake and you find yourself on about 50 miles of the most beautiful undulating hills and gentle corners in the Pacific Northwest. They seemed to be designed with the TD in mind and I just couldn't help letting the car stretch its legs a little. One of the real pleasures of making this trip is the relative lack of traffic I encountered. It was not uncommon to drive 10 or 15 minutes without seeing another car. Towards the end of the day, I crossed the border out of Canada and into Alaska. My plan was to spend this last night in Tok which is about 100 miles beyond the border crossing, and an easy one day drive from Anchorage. It was in this area that my mechanical good fortune came to an end. I began to notice a "raspy" sound in the exhaust note which I attributed to a baffle beginning to burn out in the muffler. Then I began to feel an occasional sputter, particularly when I was climbing a hill. Eventually, the sputter became constant and I limped into Tok under greatly reduced power. That evening, I removed the sparkplugs which had a lot of carbon build up, and replaced them from my box of "spares". The engine still ran rough. I then replaced the points and condenser and it still ran rough. Next I replaced the spark plug wires with no change. I finally did what I should have done in the first place, which was to remove the spark plug wires one at a time and quickly found that it was the #3 cylinder which wasn't firing. After pulling the valve cover to insure I did not have a stuck valve, I came to the conclusion that I had in fact burned the exhaust valve in the #3 cylinder. I toyed with the idea of flying home, picking up a tow dolly and coming back for the car, but as I was now only 350 miles from home, I decided I could make it on 3 cylinders if nothing else went wrong. I slept well that night but was awake at 4:30 thinking about the long slow ride ahead.

By 6:00, I was on my way. Luckily, the sun comes up about 3:00 in the morning at this time of year so I had good visibility and the weather gods were kind to me once more. The Alcan itself, continues on from Tok about another 200 miles to Fairbanks. But to get to Anchorage, you turn south for a 150 mile run to Glennallen and then another 200 miles in to Anchorage. The car ran rough but cruised along at 40 mph with no trouble. Any hill encountered would immediately slow me down to 25 or 30 mph and necessitated shifting down to 3rd gear. But this was all familiar territory as I had driven this route many times before, and the ride into Anchorage was uneventful.

Financially, the drive ended up costing me about \$660, which broke down to \$140 for gas, \$340 for lodging and \$180 for meals. This works out to almost half of what I would have paid to have the car shipped via ocean freight, however those savings would have quickly disappeared if I had had to have the car towed, and/or worked on for any major repairs. I also have to consider the cost of the valve job, but I figure

I would have burned the valve eventually anyway. I also had to replace the windshield, but it was badly pitted and scratched and I would have done that also. As I look back on the trip, I can honestly say I had a wonderful time. I covered a total of 2,607 miles in six days averaging about 435 miles per day. I drove about 10 hours per day for an average speed of 43 mph. I found that an open sports car is a great way to travel the Alcan, for all the reasons we already know about touring in these little wonders. Fresh air, 360 degree visibility and the friendships you form as a result of traveling in these happy cars. You do have to be prepared with a few spares as you would on any long trip. You also have to stay alert to keep yourself from making contact with some kind of wild critter which may be laying claim to the highway just when you want to pass by.

Would I take a car fresh out of the restoration shop with a \$10,000 paint job? No. But if you have a daily driver, and feel the need to add a little adventure to your life, the Alcan may just be the trip to take. You'll find the Canadians to be very helpful and friendly. You'll meet a lot of interesting people driving some of the most elaborate motorhomes you'll ever see. And you'll come away with a new sense of pride in the durability of that little British automobile with which you spend so much time.

Classified

This section is for you. It's meant to list anything (British Car related) which you need (parts or cars), or have for sale.

MGB Starter - I have a brand new starter for an MG that I don't need any more. Got it from Moss Motors and it's still in the box. Good one for having around. \$50. Bob Logan 227-6479

Wanted – Pre 1960 MGA. Not looking for a show car. Just a good solid runner. Paint, body & interior unimportant. Charles Laurence 530-782-0546