



Gateway Relay

Vol VI, No. 5

St Louis Sports Car Council

February 2017

Council News & Notes

- The Council's now into its sixth year (the first issue of *Gateway Relay* came out in September 2011) and, for the third year in a row, we can report all seven member clubs re-upped. That indicates a good level of stability with the organization; as always, we here at StLSCC Central will continue to build on that stability with improvements to the joint club calendar and coverage of member club events.
- And holy cow, what with the unseasonably warm, dry weather, events have taken off locally in a major fashion. We suspect the weather played a role in the decision by the organizers of the St Louis Cars & Coffee gatherings to run two in February; both featured substantial turnouts (roughly 500 cars at the early-start Westport event). The Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis did a driving event in early February with strong turnout and St Louis Triumph Owners Association's annual Polar Bear run (obviously, with minimal "polar") turned out 38 cars and about 60 people.
- For these and other activities, see "Featured Events" elsewhere for the photo coverage. And, for the other car clubs in the greater St Louis/Metro East region who are getting their annual courtesy copy of the *Relay*, may your events prove equally fun.

Up & Coming

- 23 Feb 17**—MG Club of St Louis February **RUBCO** (Retired/Unemployed British Car Owners) breakfast, at Denny's, 11266 Midland Blvd, St Louis, 9:30 AM.
- 23 Feb 17**—Gateway Healey Association (GHA) February **RUMP** (retired and unemployed member persons) lunch, 12 noon at Cousin Hugo's, 3233 Laclede Station Rd, Maplewood. RSVP to Tom at tom@judyandtomevans.com or (314)973-8789.
- 25 Feb 17**—Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis **Coffee, Coffee & Cars**, at Just-Jags LLC, 7113 N Hanley Rd, Hazelwood, 8:30 AM.
- 25 Feb 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 17-18 Mar 17**—**Rally in the 100 Acre Wood**; Salem, Steelville and Potosi, Missouri. Welcome ceremony at Steelville City Park Friday, 12:30-1:45 PM, info at www.100aw.org.
- 18 Mar 17**—**JAGSL Coffee, Coffee & Cars**, at JustJags LLC, 7113 N Hanley Rd, Hazelwood, 8:30 AM.
- 18 Mar 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM (Note the one-hour extension). Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.
- 19 Mar 17**—Annual MG Club of St Louis **Pinewood Derby**, 2 PM at Llywelyn's Pub, 17 W Moody, Webster Groves. Prizes to the top three finishers in the each race, for the best looking entry and the entry which needs the most work. Cars must meet Cub Scout Pinewood Derby rules, kits available for purchase at the January MGCStL meeting.
- 19 Mar 17**—**Gateway Autocross Association** events 1&2, Gateway Motorsports Park, info at www.gatewayautox.com.
- 20 Mar 17**—MG Club of St Louis **Tech Session No. 3**, at Hi-Tech Collision Repair, 2618 Woodson Rd, Overland; topic TBD. 7 PM to 9 PM.
- 25 Mar 17**—JAGSL tour of the **St Louis Car Museum**, 1575 Woodson Rd (www.stlouiscarmuseum.com) followed by lunch at Square One Brewery, 1727 Park Ave. Details TBA, monitor www.jagstl.com and the online *Growl*.

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Note: Some club events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

In Print

March's *Hemmings Sports & Exotic Car* has a great cover article on the recovery and restoration of an Australian-market MGB GT. Also inside, a brief history of Innocenti of Milan, Italy, which license-built (and generally improved on) a number of British Motor Company vehicles, including the Innocenti 950 Spider, a heavily remade Austin-Healey Sprite. For double the fun, the magazine follows up with a large articles specifically on the Spider and the Innocenti Mini. March's *Classic Motorsports* offers up tech tips for Jaguar E-type owners or those thinking of acquiring an E-Type,

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- 25 Mar 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 9 Apr 17**—First **BSCC Autocross** of the season. Family Arena, show around 9:30 AM, six runs for \$35. Contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com for info or to get on the emailing list.
- 15 Apr 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM. Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.
- 15 Apr 17**—Gateway Healey Association Annual pre-Forest Park **Wash-Up/Tune-Up**, at Keith Bester's Garage, 115 N Sappington Rd, Kirkwood (314)821-2372. 10 AM until ?, please bring a dish to share.
- 16 Apr 17**—Annual **Forest Park Easter Concours**, hosted by the Horseless Carriage Club of Missouri in the upper Muni parking lot, Forest Park; event incorporates **MG/Triumph Challenge VIII** for the British Leyland participation Trophy. Details to follow, monitor <http://hccmo.com/easter-concours/> in the meantime. For Challenge commentary/preps/verbal and written abuse/brouhaha, monitor www.sltoa.org and www.stlouismgclub.com.
- 22-23 Apr 17**—**SCCA Majors racing**, at Gateway Motorsports Park.
- 22 Apr 17**—**Rockwood Summit High School 2nd Annual Car Show**, 1780 Hawkins Road, Fenton, benefits RSHS Biodiesel Club. Register at 7:30 AM, show ends at 2 PM, dash plaques will be handed out along with four ceramic trophies made by art students, more than 30 attendance prizes, 50/50 drawing benefits the Biodiesel Club. Info (314) 306-0289 or (636)399-9153.
- 29 Apr 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 30 Apr 17**— St Louis Region **SCCA Autocross No. 1**, Family Arena, St Charles. Info at www.stlsolo.org.
- 5 May 17**—**6th Annual Union United Methodist Church Car Cruise**, 5:30-8:30 PM, dash plaques to the first 75 vehicles, food available. At 721 E Main St, Belleville, info (618)235-3959.
- 7 May 17**—**BSCC Autocross No. 2**. Family Arena, show around 9:30 AM, six runs for \$35. Contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com for info or to get on the emailing list.
- 14 May 17**—**SLTOA 35th Anniversary Soirée**. Start at the Lewis & Clark Boathouse, 1050 S Riverside Dr, St Charles at 10 AM, take advantage of a scenic drive and wind up at Hickory Ridge, 100 S Willow Grove Court, St Peters, for a buffet meal (BYOB) and celebration. Meal is \$15 per person, RSVP required to SLTOA VP Stephen Paur at Stephen.paur@att.net or (314)308-2564.
- 20 May 17**—**Cars & Coffee-Westport**, at Westport Plaza, 8-11 AM. Info at <http://carsandcoffeestl.org>.
- 21 May 17**— St Louis Region **SCCA Autocross No. 2**, Gateway Motorsports Park. Info at www.stlsolo.org.
- 21 May 17**—**Salute the Troops Car Show**, hosted by VFW Post 5077, 8500 Veterans Memorial (across the street from Ethyl's) in O'Fallon, MO. Starts at 9 AM, \$20 registration, trophies at 2 PM, proceeds go to the General Support Fund helping soldiers in need. Info (636)795-8268.
- 27 May 17**—**Gateway Cars & Coffee**, at Gateway Classic Cars, 1237 Central Park Dr, O'Fallon, IL, 9 AM-12 noon, pastries and coffee provided by Dunkin' Donuts. For information call (618)589-9952 or call up www.gatewayclassiccars.com.
- 4 Jun 17**—**Waterloo Optimist Club Youth Benefit Car Show**, 100 S Main St/Town Square, Waterloo. Registration 8 AM to noon, 26 classes, dash plaques for the first 50 entries. Info www.waterloooptimist.org/carshow/ or email kevin@v8tv.net. Proceeds including 50/50 benefit youth programs.
- 10 Jun 17**—St Louis Region SCCA nighttime **Monte Carlo-style road rally**, details to follow.
- 11 Jun 17**—**BSCC Autocross No. 3**. Family Arena, show around 9:30 AM, six runs for \$35. Contact Racer Steve at sshab@yahoo.com for info or to get on the emailing list.

St Louis Car Shows and Cruises: <http://clubs.hemmings.com/lakerscarclub>

NOTE: Cars & Coffee St Louis is still putting its schedule together, be prepared for possible changes in dates.

plus an update on the company's final nine XKSSs. For Triumph owners, the last installment of the TR3 vintage racer series, with emphasis on cockpit fittings.

Car & Driver's March issue has one of the magazine's big comparison road tests, pitting the new Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio against the BMW M3, Cadillac ATS-V and Mercedes-AMG C63 S. Elsewhere, a one-page report on the BMW-Alpina B7 ("BMW's quickest vehicle").

For February, **Thoroughbred & Classic Cars** has a lucky reader spend a day with the car of his dreams: a Sunbeam Tiger. Over at **Classic & Sports Cars**, same month, an interview with Steve Harper, designer of the MGF among other vehicles and a drive through the mountains in a feature on the Land Rover. Finally, **Octane** has an article on "The Most Famous Jaguar You've Never Heard Of," a fixed-head XK140 which competed at Le Mans in 1956. The car, privately owned and restored, is now a fixture in European vintage races.

Roadwork: Last of the Breed

On 23 October 1980, British Leyland closed the historic MG plant in Abingdon. In doing so, BL also ended production of the MGB after 18 years and effectively killed off the MG marque.

As was typical for British Leyland management, the announcement of the plant's impending closure was handled clumsily, a component of the corporation's desperate attempts to reduce costs and overhead, rationalize its product lines and fight off increasing competition from other manufacturers, particularly Japanese. An interview with former BL senior executive Geoff Armstrong, conducted by MG enthusiast Mike Losey, related the following sequence:

...the managing director of Austin Morris, which was the division to which MG reported, had a special late morning meeting scheduled in London on September 10th, 1979. This meeting was to give government ministers and the local Abingdon area Member of Parliament several hours advanced notice prior to announcing the decision to close Abington to the general public later in the day. Immediately thereafter that meeting with the government officials, Armstrong confirms that he was scheduled to have a meeting with national union officials where he was to also give them advance notice of the announcement to close the plant.

However, Geoff recalls the departure from this well laid out plan. He reports that "When the managing director met with the government ministers and the local Abingdon Member of Parliament, the Member of Parliament left the meeting, went straight to a radio station, and announced on the one o'clock news what he had just been told." Thus, before Geoff could inform the union or the employees, the Member of Parliament prematurely announced the decision to close the plant

That announcement to close Abingdon was also unfortunately made just two days after a carnival at Abingdon celebrated MG's fifty-year association with the town. September 10th 1979, became forever known as "Black Monday" amongst MG enthusiasts around the world.



Smiles everyone (well, almost everyone). The last MGB roadster rolls off the production floor at Abingdon. Photo via AROnline.

of 512,243 B-models which exited Abingdon's production floor.

But, were they the last MGBs? As it turned out, the design still had some life in it; efforts to preserve it included one rather off-the-wall attempt by another legendary British manufacturer which failed to come to fruition, followed by a short run of modified Bs built by the remnants of British Leyland.

As background, in the early 1970s British Leyland management showed a definite bias towards preservation of the Triumph brand, at the expense of MG. For a brief period during

the development of the TR7, senior leadership considered continuing MG production through the process of



The MG Magna mockup. Photo via AROnline.

badge engineering; one early Wedge styling mockup bore MG markings under the working designation of "MG Magna" (a reference to a six-cylinder model MG produced during 1931 and 1932). However, the proposal – which conceivably would've hit the road as the "MGD" – never made it past the "slap an MG badge on a lay model" stage. BL ended production of the TR6 in 1976 and bet the future of the Triumph brand on minimally updated Spitfires, the new TR7 and subsequently the TR8. MG staggered along, rolling out B-models through late 1980.

Surprisingly, towards the end Aston Martin stepped in and made a bid for BL and specifically the MG brand, with an eye towards continuing production of the MGB. The consortium which made the formal proposal included Aston Martin chairman Alan Curtis, David Wickens of British Car Auctions, businessman Peter Cadbury, former British Foreign Secretary Lord George-Brown and the Norwest Construction Group. William Towns, who'd designed the Aston Martin DBS, DBS V8, AMV8 and the Lagonda, received authorization to style the new, Aston



Putting the Aston Martin-MGB together. Photo via the MG Experience.

fabrication. Amazingly, they managed to get a rolling example ready for public debut in seven days.

The resulting car featured somewhat more integrated front and rear bumpers, lower side moldings done in black, a smaller yet still familiar version of the MG grill, a taller windshield



The finished prototype. Photo via the MG Experience.

and convertible top with only a single rear window, vice the B's three-window design (the latter item led to immediate comparisons to the Datsun 2000 with its "two-story top"). As-

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ton Martin announced its intent to produce the car in Abingdon, starting in 1981.

Unfortunately, the program quickly crashed. Aston Martin was having its own financial problems at the time and despite assurances by the consortium that the company could come up with the necessary financing of £30 million for the factory and production, British Leyland management didn't like what they saw. Eventually the proposed financing evaporated and BL pulled the plug. Aston Martin stored the one-off prototype at Newport Pagnell until July 1984 and then sold the car, which went through a series of private owners. Nutley Sports & Prestige Centre of East Sussex sold the car to its current owner, a member of MG Northumbria, in 2012 for £29,950 (about \$48,000 US).

Despite the corporate/financial flail, the MGB still wasn't quite completely dead. Remarkably, in 1993 it returned to production – albeit briefly – as the MG RV8, a much modified version fitted with the 3.9L Rover V8, produced by what was now designated The Rover Group.

. According to Jay Ramey of *Autoweek*, at the time the Rover Group (renamed from British Leyland in 1986) produced a fair range of vehicles, including saloons/sedans developed in association with Honda, but it lacked a small sports car. The immediate success of the then-new Mazda Miata convinced management it was time to get back into the game; per Ramey, "It was the sudden and overwhelming success of the Mazda Miata that awakened Rover to the realization that affordable roadsters were still a thing, and that, at one time, one of their brands was actually quite good at making affordable roadsters."

At the time, the only Rover products sold in the colonies were Land Rovers/Range Rovers and the Rover 800 series, a variant of the Acura Legend sold over here as the Sterling (anyone remember Sterling?). Putting a modified, V8-powered MGB into production conceivably would've allowed the corporation to put an affordable British sports car back into the lucrative US market.

Rover rounded up all of the former MG personnel it could find, authorized the grand sum of about £5 million for design and development, and moved forward with "Project Adder." Rover Special Projects (RSP) did up the design, modifying a stock 1980 MGB.



The RV8. Photo via BMC Experience

The resulting car featured several familiar design aspects: double wishbones up front, albeit with coils over Koni shocks, an anti-roll bar, live rear axle on leaf springs, disc brakes up front and drums in the back. The wheels were new design 6x15-in alloys. The exterior had flared fenders/wings, a power bulge in the hood for engine clearance, and heavily modified and faired-in front and rear bumpers; the bodies, fabricated by Rover subsidiary British Motor Heritage at Faringdon, Oxfordshire, were still recognizable as MGBs, but were arguably bet-

ter looking than the "crash bumper Bs" of the final years. The interior of car featured lots of leather and wood, quite luxurious... and yes, the steering wheel hub featured the sacred octagon. Finally, the 3.9L Rover V8 with Lucas fuel injection developed 190 bhp/234 lb-ft of torque, delivered through a Rover 5-speed transmission and limited-slip differential; the RV8 could do 0-60 in 5.9 seconds.



Photos by Jay Ramey/*Autoweek*.

Final assembly of the cars took place at the Cowley factory in Oxford. According to Hemmings' Mark McCourt, the finished products featured 5% stock MGB components, 20% modified MGB components and 75% new parts. Each car was effectively hand made.

The MG RV8 made its public debut on 20 October 1992 at the British International Motor Show in Birmingham, with the first examples released for sale five months later. The price came in a tad high: £26,000, about \$42,500 US, which put the car between Jaguar and Aston Martin and undoubtedly contributed to limited sales in the home islands. A number went to Europe but Japan provided the largest market, with nearly 1600 RV8s shipped.

Despite the high price and obvious MGB underpinnings, the cars received generally good reviews. A reviewer for London's *Independent* stated the car put on "...a lot of style and muscle" without losing the original MGB's identity. He added Rover saw the car "...less as a raw driving machine for boy-racers, more as a recreational pursuit for the mature." Conversely, he knocked the car's high seating position and "...puny instruments that most 50-year-olds will need reading glasses to see." But otherwise, the reviewer loved the interior, which provided an "...ambience that would not disgrace a Jaguar." He finished by stating the car exuded "...personality, presence and driver appeal," and suggested Rover should attempt a similar update of the Triumph Stag.

In the end, The Rover Group only built 2000 RV8s and it never made it to the States (although the type is now legal for import under the 25-year rule...if you can find one). With the end of production after only one year, the MGB well and truly rang down the curtain and joined the choir invisible; for its part, Rover moved on to the mid-engine MGF.

Interestingly enough, two RV8 GTs exist, both kit-bashed by individuals in England and Australia. In each case, the owners acquired wrecked

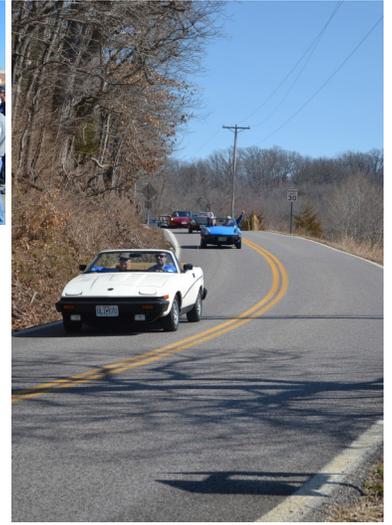


The Australian RV8 GT. Photo via The MG Experience.

RV8s and modified MGB GTs. Research didn't turn up any RV8s in the United States, although one was sold at the end of

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St Louis Triumph Owners Association Polar Bear Run
19 February 2017



Last of the Breed (Continued from page 4)

October in Surrey, British Columbia, for \$32,000 Canadian. The car, imported from Japan in 2009, featured Canadian-spec daytime running lights, had 53,000 km and was overall in very good condition.

Fortunately, while RV8s are hard to come by, classic MGBs remain plentiful, in a wide range of conditions. Justifiably, the cars remain highly popular and constitute an easy way for an individual to get into classic British sports cars. And, as has been demonstrated by several MG Club of St Louis owners, there is most definitely enough room in the engine bay for a V8, assuming you'd like to create your own "RV8."

As Mark McCourt of Hemmings put it,

Until Mazda created its wildly popular MX-5 Miata...the undisputed champion of mass-production sports cars was Great Britain's proud export, the MG MGB...Are you ready to experience some of that famous MG magic? Put an MGB on your list.

Sources: Nutley Sports & Prestige Centre, "Aston-Martin MGB Prototype," *The MG Experience*, www.mgexp.com/article/aston-martin-mgb-prototype.html, 2 June 2012; Keith Adams, "Aston Martin MGB," *HonestJohn Classics*, 21 June 2013; Adams, "For sale: One off Aston Martin-MGB prototype," *AROnline News*, 7 September 2011; Mark McCourt, "Superlative MGB!," *Hemmings Sports & Exotic Car*, June 2011; "Last MGB Roadster Ever Made Returns Back Home Through the Window," *Carscoop*, 2 December 2011; Orin Harding, "MGB Production Modifications, Sep 1977-End of Production," 24 May 1994; Michael R. Losey, "The Closing of Abingdon: End of the MG Era," *MG Classics of Jacksonville*, n.d.; Mark McCourt, "Superlative MGB!," *Hemmings Sports & Exotic Car*, June 2011; Jay Ramey, "One last hurrah: the 1994 MG RV8," *Autoweek*, 22 May 2014; Mark J. McCourt, "The Shape of Things to Come," *Hemmings Sports & Exotic Car*, October 2006; "RV8 Specials," www.mgrv8.com/rv8specials.php, n.d.; Roger Bell, "Retro-rocket with more charm than ability," *The (London) Independent*, 1993.



Cars & Coffee-Westport

18 February 2017



Can you identify the supervisors?



The probable hit of the show: 1972 Chrysler Town & Country "Shaggin' Wagon"





JAGSL Memory Lane Rallye

4 February 2017



28 January 2017



From left: Dan Kuhn, tied 3rd, Ford Maverick; Rick Wingerter, 6th, Subaru WRX Sti; Josh Mason, 2nd, Subaru WRX Sti; Rob Zander, 1st, Nissan 350Z; "Racer Steve" Shabansky, tied 3rd, Subaru WRX Sti; Tom DeYoung, tied 9th, Chevrolet Corvette; Rob Kammerer, tied 9th, Mazda MX-5; and Sam Lee, 7th, Mitsubishi Evo.

ST Louis Chapter BMWCCA Holiday Party

28 January 2017



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BMW Car Club of America St. Louis Chapter

