

North West Alabama British Sports Car & Motoring Club

Monthly News Letter

April 2003

Finally we have had a little taste of sunshine, which puts the “rag top” crowd in a much better mood, as they now become the envy of the neighborhood.

There is something that stirs even the most conservative of persons to eye with a certain degree of envy the guy/gal who drives a car down the highway with the top down and hair blowing in the wind.

I tell the story of my first wife, when we bought our first Jaguar. She innocently remarked a week or two after driving the Jag, how much more attentive the local kids had become and how she never had to wait for the service attendants to pump the gas, (Ha! I’m old enough to remember when some nice person would show up at the “petrol pump” and pump your “petrol” and clean your windshield. “Oh those were much more tranquil days”). Anyway, after about a month of preening herself, figuring she wasn’t as old as she felt, I innocently remarked “do you get the same attention when you drive the Oldsmobile”? It hit her like a ton of bricks, right between the eyes, that she was as old as she felt and the kids/service attendant’s innate devotion to the automobile had turned their eyes towards the car not her. Poor girl never recovered from that fact of life.

Good news, our new Web site is up and running. Terry Geiger has made a great start, laying down the foundation and those who haven’t looked us up yet, log onto www.shoalsbritishcars.org. Next month we plan on posting our newsletter to the web, which will be our window to the world.

For those “off the net” I have enclosed a copy of our home page. The logo is a temporary image, which will be replaced when we have decided on our official logo. The nice thing about a web site is it can be changed and revitalized at any given time, SO FEEL FREE TO OFFER SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS at the drop of a hat or thump of a main bearing. (Much prefer the British terminology, main bearing read BIG END bearing)

This month I have included another segment of automobile interest, a segment we might call for the

want of a better term “little known British Car facts”. This month I have featured the oldest of the British Marques, the AC.

AC’s technology and expertise was integrated into the American muscle car fraternity by marrying up American horsepower with the handling of a true sports car. This marriage of handling with sheer brute force gave birth to the American motoring legend the “**Shelby Cobra**”.

Much debate has taken place over the last three meetings on a better place for our monthly meeting and we have spent much valuable time **relentlessly rehashing this subject**. We have one major difficulty in finding a new venue. There are very few alternatives (without having to resort to paying for space). Very few restaurants have private rooms where they could allow us to conduct our business in a private manner.

While the Tourway is not the ideal place, it does offer us a fair degree of privacy and it is FREE and they place no restrictions like minimum orders etc.

Some people have raised questions on the quality of the food, while not being up to the standards of a Dales/Outback/Ruby Tuesday/Georges Steak Pit/Logans/Cajans or what ever your favorite place to don your feed bag. It does offer good basic sandwiches and 24-hour breakfasts and last but not least the food is very modestly priced. We have some members who don’t mind spending “no matter what it costs” to make their cars (their pride and joy) run like sewing machines. If asked to pay more than 50 cents for a cup of coffee they drink water!

Princeton’s, on Cox Creek has a separate room and is available. It is proposed that we try that venue next month. A word of caution, we best not make it known that we are trying to relocate, as when we asked if we could move our meeting to a Monday night we were given a very explicit NO. Mondays are always reserved for some other organization and apparently they have similar functions in that room nearly every weekday night. If any change is made, it should be for the betterment of the club not someone’s personal agenda

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We made a good start with our thumbnail sketches but due to a family emergency our proposed thumbnail for April; he was unable to complete his story.

At our next meeting I would like to enlist at least four stories that we can put in the pipeline and as we use one story, get another one in the pipeline, giving me a constant source of material.

Another important segment to add to our newsletter should be a review of the various "marques" represented in the club. It is recommended we assemble a full list of the various marques and appoint a resident "historian" to gather the knowledge of the group and add a little research, to generate periodic articles for us to publish in our newsletter, these then could become valuable resources for our members and become part of the archives of the club.

Update on the Great Race coming to Florence Monday June 30th. It looks like it's all set; the finish line will be the intersection of Tombigbee and Wood Ave.

The initial plan is to block Wood to Tombigbee through Hermitage and the local auto clubs would be allowed to use Tuscaloosa from Wood to Walnut to feature their cars.

They are expecting 260 + participants plus several hundred "followers".

This day should be one of the highlights of the season for us dyed in the wool car fanatics. For us working stiff's better make sure you have vacation time/sick day, or arrange for your great aunt Lucy to die again and you have to attend her wake!!

The first drive out of the year occurred Sunday March 23rd. unfortunately not too many people were able to attend due to a multitude of excuses **MINE WAS I WAS WORKING**". However, those that did not go missed a wonderful day according to those that took the opportunity to view the Tupelo Auto museum.

Following is Terry Geiger's report and I think we should all take note of his opening remarks about his initial thoughts. **We are all prone to make preconceived judgments about things we have never experienced.** We should take every opportunity we can, to explore new sights and experiences, with no preconceived ideas, take the enthusiasm of a six year old to all these new experiences. It's surprising how much we can enrich our lives by being open-minded.

Over to you Terry:

Tupelo Trip: Sunday, March 23 2003

Sunday was a beautiful day and after going to the early service at church, I slipped down to the local Winn Dixie to meet up with members of our club. A drive-out to Tupelo Mississippi soon ensued as we headed to Elvis's birthplace to see the new Tupelo Automobile Museum.

I wasn't expecting that great of a treat at the museum and went mainly as an opportunity to run the "Petrol Princess" down the road on a beautiful day. After all, how big of a museum could be located in Tupelo?

By day's end, I found out just how wrong I was in my assumptions about this museum. It's not the first time I've been completely wrong... just ask my wife.

The Tupelo auto museum features over 100 cars from many different countries. Cars are arranged in chronological order and date from 1886 to 1994. Located at each car is a small audio player that will give facts and history about each car at the press of a button. This allows for a self-guided tour so you can view the cars at your own pace.

British motorcars included a '48 Jaguar, Triumph 2000 and an MG TA. I saw many marques I had not seen in many years; marques such as Auburn, Cord, Stanley Steamer, Maserati, DeLorean, Franklin, Messerschmidt and Edsel to name a few. And of course, since this is Tupelo, the collection would not have been complete without a car from Elvis, a 1976 blue Lincoln.

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After our tour, a discussion broke out as to which car was the favorite. I'll offer mine; it was the 1948 Tucker that did it for me. What a car! It was so ahead of its time. It featured a rear engine (a war surplus helicopter engine at that), safety glass, door openings that extended into the roof for easy entry/exit and a third center headlight that turned with the front wheels. Only 51 of these cars were produced and none were actually sold.

If you didn't make this drive out, you missed a great trip and I encourage you to make a trip to Tupelo to see this beautiful collection of motorcars.

Added note Terry mentioned the Triumph 2000, which brings to memory another little known British car from the same stable, the Triumph Roadster, built about 1950 (before the TR 2). This was my dream car, as I was getting to the age when one

looks at cars, one begins to notice how the graceful automobiles resemble the female form.

At this early age ones eyes begin to recognize how a graceful low slung automobile chassis becomes a lot like the female form: long legs followed by curves and the other niceties of the opposite sex. If you have the opportunity to see a Triumph Roadster look at its lines and curves. Its basic design was a transition from the pre-World War II big classic coach built touring car, to the small light sports cars of the late 40's to the present day. It came very nicely equipped with full windup windows, complete with as is referred to in Britain as a "Dickey Seat" which also housed one of those Victorian wickerwork picnic baskets.

It is not a high powered kick you in the butt kind of car but note how its subtle design can easily turn ones thoughts to a very sexy woman. Enough of my ramblings just consider it food for thought.

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Little Known facts of British Automobiles

The AC Car Company

(Often Copied Never Beaten)

Ask the average muscle car buff about the famed Shelby Cobra and he will claim it's an American car. Far be it from the truth. If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery then the AC cobra must be the most flattered. No other car has ever spawned so many copies, some of which use the same engine as the original car. Hence their motto as above.

The outstanding competition success of the Cobra of the 1960's tends to overshadow the fact that it is the product of a little known company from the other side of the Atlantic, namely AC Cars Ltd. If the Shelby Cobra origins are investigated, it shows it comes from one of Britain's oldest car companies AC, the company being founded in 1901



The international fame of the Cobra began in 1961, when Carroll Shelby with the backing of Ford Motor Company entered into negotiations with AC, to install a Ford V8 in the lightweight AC Ace chassis. This transatlantic liaison gave birth to one of the fastest sports cars of all times and a legend that will run for as long as people love cars.

One of my most memorable times in my youth was a trip to Le Mans in 1963, where a pair of 289 Cobras contested this very prestigious 24-hour race. That year AC was the first British car to finish. This was the era where Ferrari and Maseratti reigned so supreme. However, their reign was coming to a close, as in the not too distant future Carroll Shelby took the little known car to the winners circle.

So the next time you encounter a bigoted Corvette, Mustang, GTO or one of those reputable Muscle Cars owners, who looks down his nose at what he considers an inferior British vehicle. Just ask the question. 'What do you think of the Shelby Cobra. After he has waxed and extolled on virtues of this wonderful vehicle it truly is. Drop on him, "Shame it's a BRITISH car".