

Wynes & Tyres



www.memphisbritishcars.org

The British Sports Car Club, LTD - Memphis, Tennessee

August, 2020

2020 BSCC Officers

Terry Roberts	President
Jeb Blanchard	V. President
Jerry Farrar	Treasurer
Jim Hofer	Austin Healey Marque Leader
Tom Wilson	Empire Marque Leader
Dave White	Jaguar Marque Leader
Paul Burdette	MG Marque Leader
Jon Brody	Triumph Marque Leader
Chris Irving	Lotus Marque Leader
Joe Reed	Historian
Jim Duke	Secretary

Membership Meetings

Coletta's Italian Restaurant, 2850 Appling Rd.

3rd Monday of each month
6:00 p.m. if you wish dinner;
7:00 p.m. for our program

Mark your calendar

August 17th, 2020 ??????
September 21st, 2020

A Year Without A Summer

Jim Duke

A glance at the calendar shows August is beginning!

August? That's the earliest part of autumn, isn't it? Where did summer go? Did we have one?

Yes, we've had of lots days with blistering temperature and summer showers; we've had fresh green beans and cucumbers from the garden.

Still, it isn't summer unless we take our British cars on outings, tops down, sunscreen slathered on and gather up with other club members for a fish fry, a poker run, or just a trip to a baseball game.

The British Sports Car Club has had a paltry summer this year because of Covid-19. Only one club organized driving event, and no monthly meetings or programs. Meetings and programs remain uncertain as we try to wait out the virus.



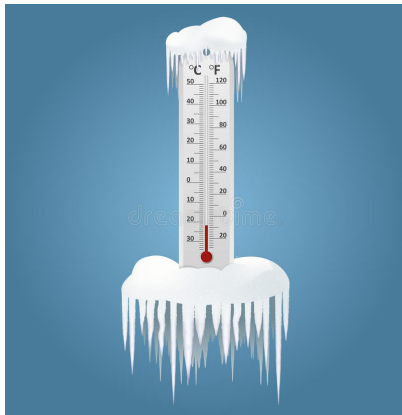
We aren't the only ones affected. The virus canceled or postponed major car events throughout the world. They postponed the Indianapolis 500 until late August; held under a legal cloud, the Carlisle show and swap meet was small and ended early. No one went to Monterrey this year, and the plague disrupted most local or regional gatherings.

Auctions have been online, primarily, too.

Somehow this year's dearth of summer amusement made me reflect on an earlier summer that resonates in history.

1816 - Often termed The Year Without A Summer.

From Massachusetts in 1816, "It is now the middle of July, and we have not yet had what we could properly call summer. Severe cold occurred every month; snow fell on June 7th and 8th, and it was so cold that it cut crops down, even freezing the roots." People saw lake and river ice as far south as northwestern Pennsylvania in July and August. The Norfolk, Virginia newspaper complained of the cold in mid-July, while on September 13, another Virginia newsman reported that corn crops would be one half to two-thirds short and lamented that "the cold and the drought has nipt the buds of hope".



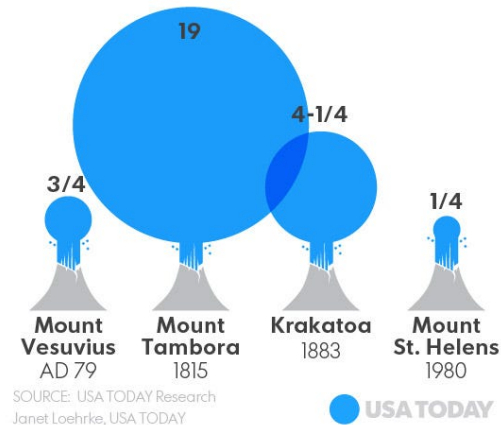
People in parts of New England saw frost every month of that year.

We now believe the cold to have resulted from a major volcanic eruption that happened in early April 1815 from Mount Tambora on the

VIOLENT VOLCANOES

The eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815 was the biggest in recorded human history.

Cubic miles of ejecta:



island of Sumbawa, Indonesia. The eruption's ash cloud spread worldwide at high altitude and cut off sunshine for nearly three years.

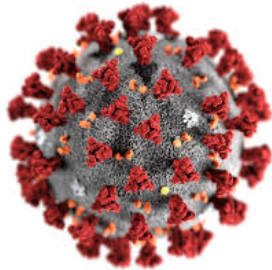
This from Wikipedia: Europe, recuperating from the Napoleonic Wars, suffered food shortages. Poor people especially suffered. Frigid temperatures and heavy rains resulted in failed harvests in Britain and Ireland. Families in Wales traveled hundreds of miles begging for food. Famine was prevalent in north and southwest Ireland following the failure of wheat, oat, and potato harvests.



In Germany, the crisis was severe. Food prices rose sharply throughout Europe. With the cause of the problems unknown, hungry people mobbed in front of grain markets and bakeries. Later riots, arson, and looting took place in many European cities.

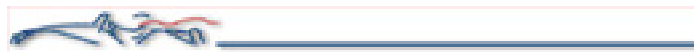
On some occasions, rioters carried flags reading “Bread or Blood”. Though riots were common during times of hunger, the food riots of 1816 and 1817 were the highest levels of violence since the French Revolution. It was the worst famine of 19th-century mainland Europe.

Between 1816-1819 major typhus epidemics swept over parts of Europe, including Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, and Scotland, precipitated by malnourishment and famine caused by the Year Without a Summer. More than 65,000 people died as the disease spread out of Ireland and to the rest of Britain.



The Covid-19 plague has been both deadly and restrictive.

But things have been worse. Maybe we’ve been lucky?



A Tale of Two Sprites

David Brand

While I was born in Washington, DC, our house was in the suburbs of Virginia, across the Potomac. Six kids, two dogs, assorted cats—and an excellent assortment of LBCs! In the mid-1950s, my late father drove an MG TC all the way from his home in Altadena, CA to law school in Cambridge, MA.

He never went back to California, and I never got a chance to see his TC. I’m a 1962 model and the third of six kids. At that point, it seems that my Dad’s TLC was all spent on his burgeoning family and not his other (automotive) passions.

In 1970, when I was eight years old, Dad brought home a slightly used blue 1969 Austin-Healey Sprite and used it as his commute-to-D.C. daily driver for five or



six years. During this period, every time he changed the oil or adjusted the brakes, I was there. While my siblings enjoyed riding in the Sprite, they didn’t seem as interested as I in the care and feeding of his “funny little car”. I learned how to deal with that pesky cloth oil filter, and how to use that square-ended wrench to adjust the brakes. I even knew what a 1/4W (Whitworth) wrench was!

In 1975, when I was 13 years old, he was no longer using the Sprite as his daily driver, so he occasionally let me take it on short drives around the neighborhood and to the local grocery; “just don’t get caught”. This was way more fun than the Chibi motorcycle I had been driving in the woods behind our house every



day. Sometime around my 16th birthday, we did a full rebuild of the 1275 cc engine. Having no garage, we pulled the engine and

transmission by stringing a cable between two trees in the front yard and using a chain hoist to lift it as a unit out of the engine bay. I will never forget seeing the trees bend and sway under the weight of that drivetrain!

My father said that I had been spending so much time working on the little car that it was only right for me to have it. I think perhaps another reason might have been that he had become a little too large to squeeze into the

seat of that car. “You don’t really get into a Sprite, it’s more like putting on clothes!”

He got a Jensen-Healey for himself, followed by another Jensen-Healey driven by my older sister, an MGB (my older brother), an MG Midget for my younger brother (never really got that one going, but it sat in the yard for a long while.) Eventually, he followed up with a canary yellow 1976 Jensen Interceptor.

That was the car I took to the Virginia DMV to

take the road test for my driver’s license. I think that poor official was a little



nervous to get in the passenger seat when he heard that classic big-block 440 Chrysler rumble!

It was all good British fun until Dad decided that he needed to have an “Italian Toyota”. This was the name he gave to his Maserati Bi-Turbo, a splendid car that didn’t look like anything special but was.

Between the Bi-Turbo and the Interceptor, I should have gotten into a lot more trouble than I did.

Between 1970 and 1994, my father and I put almost 200,000 miles on the little blue Sprite. I drove it up to Martha’s Vineyard to my grandmother’s house each summer and used it as a daily driver to my summer job as an HVAC, plumbing and appliance repair guy at some luxury condos on the south side of the island. I remember driving back from Cape Cod at the end of one summer and having my throttle cable snap while I was on I-95 somewhere around Providence, RI. I was a little distraught until I realized I could just re-

route the choke cable to the spot previously occupied by the throttle, and I could use my hand instead of my foot to control speed. With a 90° twist, I even had cruise control!

That little blue Sprite took me all the way through high school in Sheffield, MA, College in Williamsburg, VA and grad school in Georgetown. For my new Post-Doctoral fellowship at the institution then named the University of Tennessee, Memphis, I dragged the little Sprite behind a Ryder moving truck from DC down to Memphis. I used it as my daily driver for the first two years of my fellowship from 1992 to 1994. I even joined the BSCC at the suggestion of the late Grant Bales who had a very nice bit of British Iron himself.

In early 1994, at the suggestion of someone in the BSCC, I took my Sprite to the fine folks at “Imports and Sports” on Jackson for a repair I couldn’t take care of myself. They used an acetylene torch to convince my parking brake pivot (atop the rear axle) to work again.

While the car was in their shop, they noticed the tired condition of my SU carburetors and suggested they would sell me a used Weber which would perform much better, and they would even install it for me at no charge. What a bargain!



Unfortunately, one day in November the tiny little nut used to hold the choke butterflies on fell off and got sucked into the intake. It made a horrendous noise rattling around in the combustion chamber until (I think) it was unceremoniously spit out through an exhaust valve. Or eaten up. I’m still not sure.

I removed the cylinder head to investigate. One thing led to another, and I started taking more parts off until I was down to sheet metal and had replaced the floor pans so I wouldn't have "Fred Flintstone" brakes anymore. Mother Nature decided that I should start a new chapter in my life in December when my oldest son was born. That was the last time I drove the little blue Sprite.

For a quarter-century, that poor little car rusted under a tarp in front of our home. My wife was unhappy about that and asked me to think about parting with it. All I could think about was how my father used to lament having gotten rid of his old MG TC.

I would not let that happen to me!

My work colleagues chided me occasionally about never getting around to repairing the little Sprite, but I never seemed to find the time. Meanwhile, the condition of the engine and the car's body panels deteriorated to where I didn't think I'd be able to salvage them. This got me to thinking that perhaps I could find a similar Sprite that I could use to get started again.

In 2019, the LBC gods were smiling on me because I found a little red Sprite on Craigslist. It was on the outskirts of Birmingham, AL, but it had several features that were undesirable. I decided to check it out anyway. When I arrived at the location outside of Birmingham, I noted that the VIN was less than 200 digits from the one on my little blue Sprite! That car was destined for me.



After paying far too much for the car, I then towed it back to Memphis, where I realized that

it was missing several items like bumpers and sway-bar, etc.

Fortunately, I had a parts source.

Most of the pieces from the blue Sprite were up in my attic in boxes. At least they were dry! I've spent the last couple of years restoring bits and pieces of this little red Sprite. I even re-joined



the BSCC! I've replaced most of the gauges in the dashboard and re-worked a good bit of the mostly melted wiring harness.

One of the car's mechanical issues, however, has been an ongoing problem. This brings me to my current project.

They made our LBCs to drive on cold, rainy isles in northern latitudes. But Memphis is hot. I mean really, really hot. Even with a new water pump and new radiator, summer heat keeps the temperature up near the top of the normal range when in traffic.

After you shut off the engine, it pegs up to the too-hot range after the coolant circulation stops. It will cool back down to the top of the normal range when restarted, but if parked and left for ten minutes, it would not restart. I noticed that the heat from the exhaust manifold would transfer to the



intake manifold and then to the Weber carburetor. Unlike the original SU carbs, which are laterally displaced a bit and mounted atop a thin metal heat shield, the Weber 32/36 DGV sits directly atop both manifolds and thus is in

the heat path. The heat was so great that I noticed the fuel in the filter was bubbling rapidly from the carburetor end. It appears that if left long enough, the heat will rise from the exhaust manifold and eventually reach the float bowl in the carburetor and begin to boil the fuel. As the fuel vaporizes, it appears to move backward through the fuel supply line.

Trying to start the car in this condition is futile. I've learned that roll-starting the car works, but that's a major annoyance. Memphis isn't endowed with many hills, and I'm getting too old for that. I did some internet research and learned this is a common issue with Weber carburetors installed on 1275 cc engines.

Suggestions for a cure include a 3/8" phenolic spacer inserted between the intake manifold and the base of the carburetor. (see photo)

I bought a spacer on eBay, along with two gaskets, and they arrived quickly. I began to install them right away.

One immediate problem was that the studs threaded into the intake manifold were not long enough to accept the addition of a 3/8" spacer. I was worried that backing them out enough to make installation possible would leave too few threads within the aluminum intake manifold, so I opted to find new studs.

My trips to local hardware stores were less than successful, but I found some bolts that I could

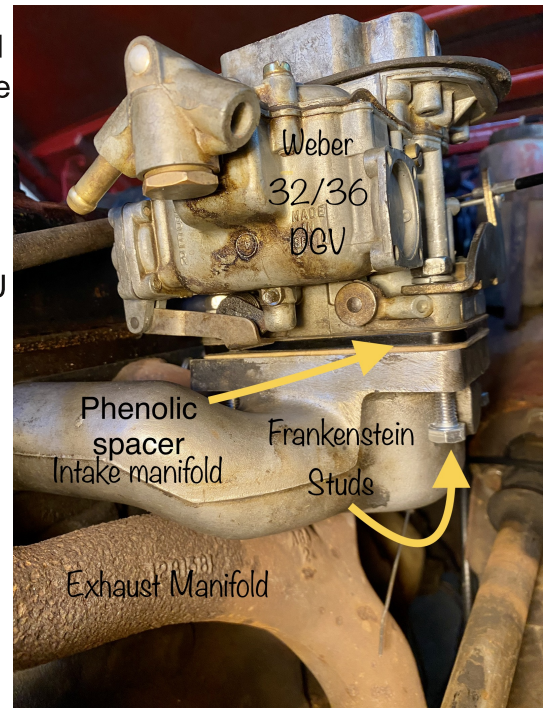


modify with a die so threads go farther down the shaft of the bolt.

I left the heads on the bolts so it would be easier to turn them into the manifold to get the necessary height. I wanted them to

have enough additional height to leave room for a future heat-shield like the one originally installed between the intake and the SU carbs.

I gave the phenolic spacer about as much chance of working as the longevity of an ice cube on the hot pavement on a Memphis July day.



It was time for the test! I drove the car around the block and it heated up quickly as expected, since it was a scorching July day.

I shut off the engine and confirmed that it would restart easily right after shut down.

After shutting it off again, I let the temperature climb until it pegged on the overheat range, and I left it there for about ten minutes.

With crossed fingers I turned the key, not expecting it to work. But it did. Not perfectly, but much better than before. On the second crank, it sprang to life with no pushing or rolling involved!

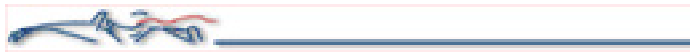
I would have bet good money that the spacer alone wouldn't make much difference. What do I know?

After a celebratory cruise around my Red Acres neighborhood, I decided that there was only one task left to do... install the shiny new BSCC



grille badge!

My little blue Sprite remains under a tarp, but many of its bits and pieces live on in its slightly newer little (red) brother.



Anything Goes

Joe Reed

A unique New Orleans restaurant, named Anything Goes, was open from about 1975-1982 in the spot once occupied by the Playboy Club. Anything Goes had costumed servers, and each dining area decorated differently; some outrageously different. Run by the Brennan family, the food was excellent, but one aspect of the space made me, an MG lover, a little sad. That was the salad bar. Actually, they called it the "Salad Car" since they had made it from a 1952 MG TD.

The car had several modifications, including holes cut in the bonnet to hold the soup and salad containers. As I recall, it appeared to be a real TD, not a fiberglass replica. I thought it a shame to treat a classic MG that way. This black-and-white photo showing it just



prior to being installed in the restaurant (or possibly just as it left the premises) is the only image I found. I seem to remember the TD being a bright, non-original yellow, but I could be mistaken...that was over 45 years ago!

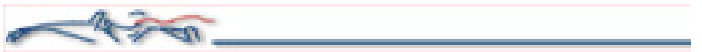
Similar "Salad Cars" are in Magic Time Machine restaurants in Texas, one in Dallas, another in San Antonio. They appear very similar to the



one in New Orleans, but with some additions - and with bright red paint. I don't know which restaurant used the MG "Salad Car" first, nor if one of the Texas cars might be the New Orleans car.

They could be replicas.

I hope so!



What's it worth?

Charles Wells, Oxfordshire, England

Does the following story strike a responsive chord with other members?

Some old friends tell you that their elderly Uncle Fred has died. He had an old car. "You know all about old cars, could you advise us?"

You drive to the Ozarks and the doors of a garage beside a dogtrot house are thrown open. A Mac n' Cheese "Fayetteville" saloon is exposed to view. This is renowned as a

disastrous model, built well below the



company's standards in an abortive attempt to stave off the Liquidator. The upholstery is rotten, woodworm has almost finished its meal on the ash frame, and the fenders are full of rust holes. There are no headlights or instruments.

Faces full of pride and hope turn to you. "How should we sell it?"

You say that you have a friend who has the much more desirable "Jonesboro" tourer who might be interested in it for spares. "How much do you think he would pay?"

You murmur that he might be prepared to part with \$500 if pushed hard. "What, \$500, our cousin Ethel has a son who reads the motor magazines, and he said a Mac n' Cheese sold for \$250,000 last month".

In vain you explain that it was in superb condition, it was the rare SuperSport model of which only 10 were made, and that particular example had come third at Indianapolis in 1936.

"\$500 indeed, you must be in league with your friend. You should be ashamed of yourself, we always thought of you as a friend. We shall get some proper advice from experts."

With that, they slam shut the garage doors and you realise that the meeting and probably the friendship are over.

Months pass, and one day whilst touring in the Ozarks you see that a "Sold" sign has appeared outside Uncle Fred's dogtrot. You enquire of a mutual connection the fate of the Mac n' Cheese. "Ah, they went to RM Sotheby's, who said it was only worth \$500. There was a huge row, and they accused them of being in cahoots with the trade. Another auction house gave the same verdict, then they lost interest."



They had to clear the house for sale, so the car went to the junkyard three weeks ago."

OK, an apocryphal story, but I have recently come across two similar real-life stories.

ed. note - Charles isn't the only one, is he!



A goldfish goes into a bar and flops onto the bar. The bartender asks, "What can I get you?"

The goldfish gasps, "Water!"

Wyres & Tyres is a publication of the British Sports Car Club, LTD
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