

THE TUCSON BRITISH CAR

REGISTER

April 2021

Volume 27 Number 4



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View from the Windscreen

by Ben Cohen

Finally, spring has arrived in the desert (if you don't count the snow on March 12th). We're seeing perfect driving weather, enough early and late shade to wash a car or two in a single day and soaring gas prices – nothing is perfect, but it beats the \$\$\$ in California. You'll note that after considerable discussions with my "Doppelganger," (aka Driving Events Coordinator)

we have a series of actual drives in April. If all goes well, and our members are considerate, there will be lots more drives before the summer heat.

Continuing my theme this year of what's going on in my garage with all the different cars, March was the month for the two cars from 1959 – both race cars that are tamed or semi-tamed for the road. The '59 Elva Courier Mk1 was treated to a new clutch slave cylinder and needs a carburetor rebuild. The '59 Lotus Eleven Series 2 had some fine tuning to lower the need for high octane 110/108 racing fuel, as well as a complete change of all fluids.

Since I think I'll be selling the Elva this year I decided it needed some maintenance update. The usual valve setting, plugs, points (yes, points!), condenser, "red" rotor, cap and wires. It made a big difference in starting, warming up and driving. The only problem was then, the dreaded carb leaks.



Most likely this is from lack of use and the bane of ethanol fuels. So what do racing carbs from 1959 look like..? The Elva was a racer from new with 2 SoCal owners before me. It raced until 1977, then put away for the day to be restored by owner #2. Fast-forward to 2004 – 2007. The retired SoCal racer

completely redid the car - strengthening its weak points, putting in an onboard fire extinguisher system, modern fuel cell and correct spec roll-bar. Back in the day racers would use any trick they could to increase HP. Here are H6 SU carbs that have had the throats ported to increase the Venturi effect for increased airflow. Even the SU pistons are curved to mimic the opening to add to this

effect. Did this work for the weekend racer trying to get a few tenths off his lap time? I can't say but it sure looks cool. To add to the strangeness of this setup the car runs with no air cleaners or cold air box to lessen the possibility of road debris getting sucked into the intake system. Additionally, here is a picture of the two piston dampers used in this setup. These seem only useful to plug the hole in the top of the chamber,



while proving nothing in the way of damping (and no oil in the pistons, either. If you goose the accelerator pedal, you can see the pistons rapidly rise and sometimes “chatter” about. I have never tried to add different ones to see if there is a change in smoothness. Might be something to do...or not. So, after cleaning all the parts it's time to get a rebuild kit, finish the job and get the Elva back on the road.

With the weather getting better it's also time to run the 1959 Lotus Eleven. Springtime calls for a complete change of fluids, some detuning the Webers a bit for lower octane fuels and lots of good grease (red this year...black last year, so you can tell when the old grease is out of the fittings). Springtime calls for a complete change of fluids, some detuning the Webers a bit for lower octane fuels and lots of good grease (red this year...black last year, so you can tell when the old grease is out of the fittings).



My '59 Eleven is the ex-factory Team Lotus 1959 Sebring racer. It was raced most of its life until I purchased it from the estate of ex-F1 driver Pete Lovely. Other than making the car road legal – generator, headlights and passenger seat belts (oh, and AZ Title and registration) – the car remains in full race form. It has a larger 1500 cc Coventry Climax engine with 45 DCOE Webers dyno'd at 143 bhp (I still have the original engine – 1100 cc dyno'd at 123 bhp using 40 DCOE Webers). It runs a

“dog box” 4-speed and a centrifugal locking differential. While it is a handful in local traffic, it is a dream to drive down to Sonoita on SR83 and gets over 30 mpg. This later is important, as the fuel-cell is only 5 gals (yes, I carry extra). You can see how nice and tidy the engine compartment is.

While most of the fluid changes are easy, bleeding the brakes to get good pedal are tricky. In racing it's important to be able to adjust the braking efforts – front or back – to match the requirements of different

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Calendar

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TBCR Drive #1*

Saturday, 9:00am April 3. A mid-town start, south and west drive (exploring some of our Pasqua Yaqui Reservation) ending just inside the Tucson Mountains on the west side. **Begin at Park Place Mall on the north side near Starbucks.** Leave the parking lot east bound on Broadway...follow along and pass me (please) so I don't have to lead. After following the directions the event ends as you head east back toward Tucson on Ironwood Hills Drive.

TBCR Drive #2*

Saturday, 9:00am April 10. west side start, then north and west (exploring some of rural Marana) ending just back in Tucson on the west side. **Begin at Albertson's parking lot on the NW corner of River Rd and la Canada.** Go west bound on River Rd. After following the directions the event ends as you head east back toward Tucson on Ina Rd.

**Please contact Ben to get a map of the routes: Rct2bnc@aol.com*

Tuesday Zoom Coffee

TBCR has not resumed in-person coffee, but the next best thing is on Zoom. Every Tuesday at 8am. Watch for the weekly email reminder or contact the Editor.

Tucson Classics Car Show

October 16, 2021 Registration is open:
<http://www.RotaryTCCS.com>

From our Events Coordinator:

We are Driving!

After one year of "lone wolf" driving we are going to get back on the road in April.

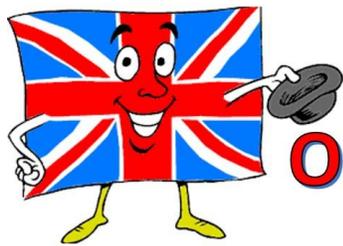
There will be some COVID-19 rules to follow, no official food, drink or restroom stops but plenty of open roads to enjoy.

In order to reduce TBCR concerns for your health during the COVID19 era, we will not gather at all on these first drives...they are simply DRIVES. To avoid complications with city, county and CDC guidelines, here are the guidelines for TBCR:

The TBCR DRIVE begins when you start your engine and move into line to begin. However, if you are joining the group somewhere in the route, you begin in the same manner. Likewise, when you reach the noted intersection at the end of the drive, the TBCR DRIVE is complete. Simple!!! However, in coordinating these upcoming events, I implore you to follow all guidelines for safety for you, your passenger and fellow attendees.

There will be NO maps at the start, so either print this or copy it onto paper. There will be NO driver's meeting. There are NO scheduled stops, restroom breaks, gas stops, etc., so plan accordingly. Let see if we can enjoy are cars, drive those less used roads and smile for a change...

Club News and Notes



Welcome Our New Members

A new feature of the *Register* – each month we will note our new members. All new members have name tags. Take time to welcome them to our events as we reopen for driving. For 2021, in spite of restrictions, we have 3 new members. We now have 138 members.

Dave Stewart is in central Tucson and drives a Green 1974 MGB in good order.

Ken and Cheryl Kriederman are also in central Tucson they currently have no car, but leaning toward an MGB and looking for advice.

Ron Brainard is on the southwest side of Tucson Mountain Park. He drives a fully restored Gold 1975 Triumph TR-6.

Be on the lookout for our new friends. – *Dave Germain, Treasurer*

Growing Up in Tucson

By Mike Morales

MG TD 1952 English cars have been a part of Tucson since the hay day of Western movies that go back to the 1930's and 1940's. I want to give you my perspective of what it was like being raised in Tucson and finding my way to enjoy the British influence on those fun cars that we work to preserve.

I wasn't just born in Tucson. My family has been here since the days when the Spanish flag flew over the town at it's founding back around 1776. When your family has been in a town that long, you are related to just about everyone. It was fun to find out through 23 and Me that my DNA predates the coming of the Europeans. I'm 16% Native American so you add that to my 1% Ashkenazic Jew and I am a typical American with a little bit of everything.

My journey with British cars starts with my dad trying to interest me in the stock market. He asked me if I would like to put some money in a stock called Beckton Dickinson. I had no idea what they did but I trusted his judgement and put down \$500.00 for shares of that company. It wasn't a lot of shares but it was a start and I didn't think much about it after that. Shortly after that I graduated from Catalina High School here in Tucson, one night I was driving down Speedway with a friend. Something we used to call cruising. Anyway, I looked over to my right and there on the South side of Speedway was a used car dealership. Today it is a new car dealership that sells GMC vehicles. There at the front of the lot was a truly amazing sports car called an Austin Healey 3000. It was a 1963 Healey with wire wheels, a brand-new convertible top. Otherwise it was quite plain inside, not even a radio. I eventually took the time to check out the Healey and began negotiating with the owner of the lot Jack Rowe. Jack would eventually become a major car

dealership owner in Tucson. He started selling Toyotas at a time when American cars were beginning to fall out of favor. He hit the market just right with vehicles that are probably the best made today. Jack and I talked price and I finally got the price down to \$1,600.00. The only problem was I didn't know where all that money was going to come from. I was sure my dad would never give me the money for it. Remember that initial stock market plunge? Well, the stock somehow soared to a value of \$1600.00. My dad agreed to accept the stock in exchange for the check necessary to buy the car. I'm not sure that what I was proposing was what he had in mind for my lesson in the stock market, but he could see that I was intent on that car.



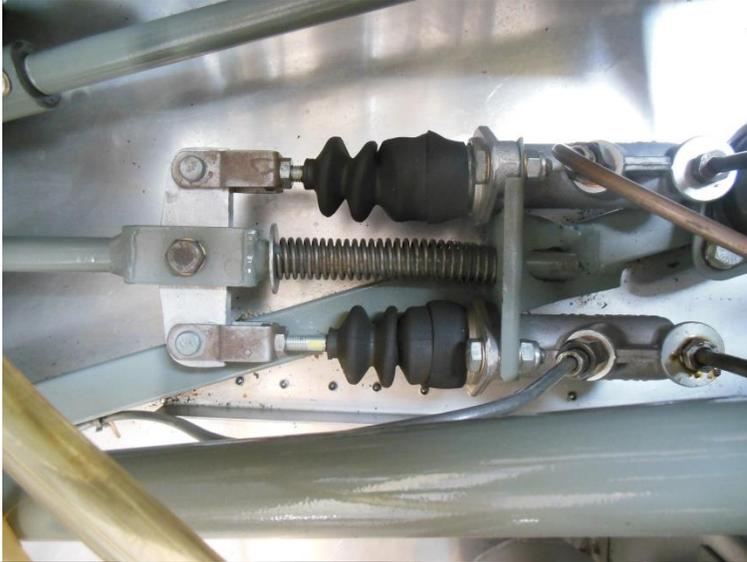
The Healey and I became fast friends and I learned a lot from a guy named Bud at the local foreign sports car repair shop on 22nd Street and Alvernon. He had a lot of patience with me given the number of things the vehicle needed. But I learned that I really didn't need to change the oil very often because, as the mechanic joked, I had one with a continuous oil change. In fact, I'm not sure using straight 40

weight oil did much to help that situation. Changing the oil filter was another thing that would be a challenge. I had a few choice words for that bell shaped mess. Anyway, no self-respecting teenager in those days would have a car without an 8-track player. I quickly learned all about the fact that I had a car that was positive ground. Eventually I got that problem sorted out and was soon hitting the highway with Credence Clearwater Revival blasting "Born to Be Wild."

So How did I get from a Healey to an MG TD? Just chance. After several Healeys, a Triumph motorcycle and a Land Rover, I got a family, so we ended up with a Plymouth Voyager. Once the kids grew-up I mysteriously purchased a 69' Plymouth Roadrunner. It was a beast and a throwback to my high school days but not very practical. I had a friend who bought and sold cars and he wanted my Roadrunner because it had a monster Wedge engine. I spied a small covered vehicle in his garage and asked him if I could see it. It was my red TD. I traded the Roadrunner straight across for the MG. Ernie at the former British Cars and I had a great time working together on that MG. Ernie and I replaced a lot of parts, fixed the brakes and re-chromed what needed work. It was a great time. The MG is fun and everything but, I'm still looking for that stock that can get me back into a Healey. The only problem is the value of a Healey today may take some Bitcoin.



Still dreaming about a Healey



track configurations. Modern cars use different methods for proportioning fluid flow using valves that can send more fluid to the front or rear as needed. As this is a vintage racer, it does not use these modern types of valves. Instead, you get a setup like this...the flat crossbar is moveable, so that you can increase the length of the pushrod or decrease the length of the pushrod. In this way you can send more fluid to the front or back depending on your adjustment. It's a pretty clever and yet quite simple system. However, it makes getting all the air out of the system tricky. It takes a bit of effort, lots of Castrol and a patient wife.



One skill I have learned owning the Eleven is "safety wiring." When the car was delivered almost everything in the engine compartment and on the brake calipers was safety wired. You can see some of my skills in this picture of the cover of the Weber carb. I did buy a proper tool and with practice, I have fewer mistakes. Even the dipstick is wired to the block, so nothing gets lost on the track – or street in my case.

Lastly, here is a picture of what happens to this car when you take too many short trips around the neighborhood, rather than those early Sunday morning runs on open roads. These are Champion C57 racing plugs with a "wire" center electrode. Yes, under all that soot is a thin wire electrode.



These are not an expensive plug to change and for \$16 at O'Reilly Auto Parts (and 3 day wait) all is running great. So, new fluids, hard brake pedal, clean jets in the Webers and some 108 racing fuel, she...purrs!! Now I'm slowly stepping down to 100 octane, watching my adjustments and how they affect engine temperatures. The fuel is at 50:50 now and warm up time is excellent, running temps are still only 95° C and acceleration can be neck-snapping if one is not careful. So, that's what's doing this month.

How about some of you tell us in a few words (yeah, fewer than this)...what's doing in your garage. Thanks, and I'll keep you posted, as I get the 1960 Austin-Healey 3000 ready for our April drive.

From the Archives

I was going to run this a few months ago, along with some snarky comments. I lost the comments, so I'll let the ad speak for itself. —the ed.

BRITISH LEYLAND ANNOUNCES

The Great British Car



AUSTIN MARINA: The British know how to breed greatness in cars. And into this remarkable Marina have been bred some of the nobler traits that make the British Leyland family so renowned. For instance, Marina has the sporting heart of our MGB — the race-proven 1800 c.c. engine! Marina has positive rack and pinion steering like our Jaguar. A 4-speed sports car transmission like our TR6. And a tough body shell whose torsional stiffness is actually greater than our rugged Land Rover's. Marina gives you all this *plus* plenty of room for a family of four; 20-plus m.p.g. economy, and surprising luggage capacity. Amazing? Not from British Leyland!





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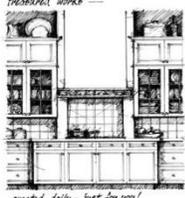
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