



Almost a Year Already

As preparations continue for the next BMTA Conference, I've been considering what has happened with the BMTA and its members in the past year. We are clearly off to a good start.

I have to admit I've been nervous during this year, very nervous. While our first conference those cold days last March was a success, there was a great amount of unfinished business to be done. The diversity of the businesses within the BMTA makes it hard to set priorities: Do we focus on issues that matter the most to shops, to manufacturers, to event promoters and media, to retailers? Do we focus on quality issues? Where do customers, club members, and employees fit into our mission? Do we focus on growing the organization? Are we too big already? Many more questions come up, all important, and all hard to answer.

You folks have been kind enough to trust me to work on these issues and I appreciate that. I've been careful to work in a balanced manner, putting a lot of energy looking ahead one year, three years, and five years. I'm trying to keep the various perspectives and needs of the membership in mind—I clearly recognize that some of us depend on each other while others of us are in direct competition with each other.

Over the past year, I've talked to almost every one of you in person, on the phone, or via e-mail. In the past three years, I've visited more than 20 shops or suppliers. It's been exciting to have these conversations and I'm continually amazed how much similarity there is in the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of our diverse membership. I encourage everyone in the BMTA to talk to other members as frequently as possible, whether it is to ask advice, to give advice, or just discuss the weather. As the word spreads of the BMTA and inquiries come in, I'm also amazed at how many businesses and enthusiasts have been watching us from the sidelines to see what we'll do—and if we'll survive.

Which is why I've been nervous. If I've had one main goal for the BMTA this year, it's that we still exist in one year and three years and five years. More than that, we can't just exist—we need to provide tangible benefit to our members and the customers we serve. We need to move slowly in some areas to make sure we don't make mistakes and move quickly in other areas so that we can start making that tangible difference immediately.

To this end, I think our #1 goal right now has to be to get to know each other. I've been fortunate. I know all of you, at least a little bit. When someone calls me with a question I can't answer, I know who in the BMTA to refer them—one of you will surely be able to help (and hopefully make a profit from it!). I've talked to members who have taken time to get to know other members who work in nearby cities, or members who have taken time to get to know other members who have similar businesses. They all say they've benefited from it. Call each other, visit each other, or at least drop some e-mails to each other. You'll benefit.

Moving forward, we need to do more than just get to know each other. We need to work on the harder issues. I'm not very good at delegating and I've probably been carrying too much BMTA business by myself, slowing our progress. Over the next year, I'm going to work to tap more of the talent of this group to help us make that tangible difference. I haven't added up the cumulative work experience of the BMTA membership, but it's got to be something way over 1000 years. Please think about your experiences and how they may benefit this group. Think about what's important to you and what's important for our industry. Think about your talents and where you can share them. We'd all like the help, and we'll all benefit.

--Carl Heideman

BMTA Message Board

We've put up two message boards on the BMTA website (www.britcar.org). One is public and anyone in the world can see it. The other is private, and only BMTA members can see it by logging in.

The only trouble is, we've had very little use of the message board. Please check into the board at least once a week. Post information about you or your shop. Ask questions. The board won't be useful until we all start using it regularly.

So far, we've had postings about specific parts sold by vendors (mainly quality issues), tool reviews, members selling parts at garage sale prices, and discussion about the conference and use of the member database. There's plenty of interesting stuff to talk about—let's use the board!

Living Up to Our Responsibilities

There is a hard core of very knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and ambitious British sports car owners in this country. They will always be there. We tend to take this for granted. And, you know, we might as well because, frankly . . . they regard us with a somewhat skeptically ambivalent eye. The fact is they don't need us. These folks, in many cases, know more about the particular make/model to which they are vocationally devoted than we are likely to. They'll do their own work, source their own parts (or make them if needed) and when it comes to media, if they read it you know they'll criticize and nitpick it to death. What does this have to do with us and our level of commitment to quality?

The vast majority of classic Britcar owners fall into a category wherein they'll do between none and some of their own work, order/purchase parts through a mail order service or a shop, and usually have some variable interest in magazines and other media. These are our people. If I seem to have described them as less than diehard types, then you have gotten the correct impression. As I said, these people are the audience to which we play. They are involved for loads of different reasons, ranging from nostalgia to vanity, but they are involved because they are enjoying themselves. It is up to us to see that they go on doing so. The fact is, whether you publish a magazine or put a clutch into a TD, you are, in a very real way, in the entertainment business.

People do not feel entertained when they believe themselves to have been dis-served for their money. Not a very startling statement, I suppose, but an important thing to keep in mind when considering what constitutes acceptable work, satisfactory parts, and up-to-date, enjoyably presented information. Because this "hobby" is a bit pricey in the first place, it is easy to lose folks, and I mean permanently, if we do not serve them to their satisfaction. I believe, by the way, that their satisfaction depends **far** more on quality, than it does on price.

It is for these reasons that the BMTA will seek to develop some "standard of excellence" guidelines. These standards will allow us to become, as a group and as individual members of that group, more than just self-promoters and advertisers. We seek to assure that when the service/parts/media-buying public deals with businesses who are BMTA members, they can rest assured that they are purchasing honesty, quality, competence, and knowledge at the same time.

What's more, we want them to be able to come to us when they feel they have gotten less than that for which they have paid. The open-ended question here is "What will we do with complaints?" (or kudos for that matter). Is this beginning to sound a bit sticky? When then, get involved. Put in your two cents, or perhaps a nickel. (Any more than that can be sent directly to me in check form). We will be forming a committee to look into this area. Carl Heideman has asked me to prepare a workshop dealing with this subject and to initially head up this committee. I hope we can get people from each of our primary areas involved. The workshop will take place during our upcoming Spring 2004 Conference. Please plan to attend and participate. Meanwhile, feel free to address your comments or suggestions to me directly. I will use them (assuming good taste) for the preparation of that presentation. I can be reached at:

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124 Racquette Drive
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(970) 472-8141 (phone)
billwardlow@peoplepc.com (Email)

--Bill Wardlow

Feedback Needed

Here are some of the Hot Topics that the BMTA board needs feedback about from the membership. Please use the BMTA member message board or contact a board member with your thoughts.

--Are you satisfied with the BMTA ad campaign? Have you seen the BMTA ads?

--Is the website and message board useful? What would help make it more useful?

--Should the newsletter have advertising?

--Do you have presentation suggestions for the conference? Can you make a presentation?

--What shows and events should the BMTA try to promote more heavily? Do we need larger shows, smaller shows, less shows, more shows?

--Should we grow the membership? If so, how much?

--Are there businesses we should invite to join?

Stand Up and Show Off

The BMTA has been formed around a triangle of businesses: Shops (Dealers, Restoration, Service), Suppliers (Retail, Wholesale, Manufacturing), and Media (Magazines, Clubs, Event Organizers). The more we work together, the better we all do. This is especially true when the Shops and Suppliers help the Media promote the British Car Hobby.

The past year has been a good one for the promotion of our hobby. Some brand new British cars have excited the general public: Jaguars, Aston Martins, and new MINIs (argue whether they're British or not, but they're helping us) have all been in movies, on magazine covers, and have been selling well. New British cars bring about nostalgia for older British cars, and that offers us a larger market.

But we can't just wait for this market to come to us. We need to follow-up on this excitement and bring people in. The past year has been a good one for this kind of follow up. Consider this:

--The relaunch of British Car Magazine as Classic Motorsports Magazine. (I admit I'm a little biased about this.) By moving from a British-only magazine to an inclusive classic sports car magazine, this magazine has more than doubled in size and continues to grow. Since the much of the content is still very British, many more people than before are getting excited about British cars.

--BMTA Members offering their displays and tech sessions at events all over the country this summer. From Carlisle to the NAMGBR convention to club events in Chicago, California, and the South, BMTA Members like Dick Lunney, John Twist, Charlie Key, John Mangles, Carl Heideman, Kelvin Dodd, Jeff Zorn, Gary Anderson, and many more showed that British cars are fun and reliable, that they can be restored to perfect or improved upon, and that BMTA members are the leaders of the industry.

--Kent Prather's back to back wins in SCCA racing with his MGA. Kent is proving it's not just a fluke that a British car can beat the competition on the track. He's been featured in numerous magazines and even on the Speed Channel on TV, bringing a whole new audience to see the beauty and finesse of an MGA. A whole new group of people are realizing British cars' reputations as unreliable and slow are undeserved.

--Moss' new superchargers for MGAs and MGBs. (Many of you may know I'm a bit biased about this one too.) This isn't as significant for MGs as it is for the hobby. What Moss has done is put a new market into focus and to the forefront: Vintage Performance. Moss hasn't created this market, but they've definitely brought it up a notch. While "concours" restorations will continue to be

a large part of our businesses, Vintage Performance is going to be a growth area. Vintage Performance isn't for racers, it's for people who want their British cars to keep up with (and away from) the latest crop of minivans and SUVs. It brings another type of customer to us. If you look at the enthusiasm (and competitiveness...) in the group of people interested in updating their cars, you'll agree this is a market we want to encourage. I'm sure we're going to see more and more products available to enhance our cars without detracting from their charm or requiring irreversible changes.

Has the BMTA done any of this work? No. But we have helped bring attention to it and used it to remind people that British Cars are enjoyable. It's really easier than you think. If you're involved in something that can bring excitement to the business, stand up and talk about it. Offer press releases to the media, offer tech sessions to event organizers, and get out there and be seen. Show off a little bit. People want to see you. People want to hear you. If you do it like these guys above, we'll all profit from it.

--Carl Heideman

BMTA Trade Conference March 5-7, 2004 Santa Barbara/Goleta California Information at a glance

- Tour of Moss Motors
- Saturday Night social outing at XKs Unlimited
- Session Topics (more to come):
 - Setting Quality Standards
 - What does Rebuilt Mean?
 - Using the Internet: Low buck and effective
 - British Marque History
 - Selling cars: How good dealers help us
 - Hiring and retaining staff
 - Magazine and Media roundtable
 - Leveraging Events and Club meetings

- We need you to attend!
- We need you to make presentations!

- Hotel Reservations:
 - Santa Barbara/Goleta Holiday Inn
 - (805) 964-6241—Tell them it's for the BMTA
- Conference Info: Call or e-mail Carl Heideman
 - (616) 355-2850 shop
 - (616) 335-3000 home
 - carlheideman@yahoo.com
- A complete conference mailing will be sent in early January
- Watch the BMTA website for more information

Current BMTA Members

Dave Anton	Advanced Performance Technology	909 686 0260
Cecil Boyd	Apex Motorsports	919 363 8515
Craig Bolton	Autodynamics	304 823 3799
Tucker J Madawick	Autosport Inc	812 334 1700
David Nock	British Car Specialists	209 948 8767
Sheila Nock-Huggins	British Car Specialists	209 948 8767
Charlie Key	British Cars of America	314 428 9335
Greg Sherick	British Parts NW, Inc	503 864 2001
Robert Nortier	British Tool Company	616 363 6666
Dan Canada	British Wire Wheel	800 947 3943
Lesley Cehelnik	British Wiring	708 481 9050
Chris Roberts	Christopher's Foreign	601 391 1696
Robert Clark	Clark & Clark, Inc	616 396 4157
Todd Clarke	Clarke Spares	215 348 0595
Gary Anderson	Classic Motorsports Magazine	650 949 9680
Jim Chamberlain	Coveland Motorsports Inc.	518 580 8549
Daniel Kruze	Conventry Import Auto	908 526 4401
Bob Connell	Connell's MG	317 545 6108
Mike Edgerton	Dayton Wire Wheel	937 438 0100
Carl Heideman	Eclectic Motorworks LLC	616 355 2850
Gary Ilcyn	Engel Imports	800 900 2496
Corky Swanson Jr	English Motors	309 788 2572
Glenn Lenhard	Glenn's MG Repair	727 521 9890
Dick Lunney	Grand Prix Graphicx	704 948 1746
Keith Gustafson	Gustafson Machine	978 281 2012
Guy St John	Guy's Garage Inc	248 349 3649
Allen Hendrix	Hendrix Wire Wheel	336 852 8909
John Mangles	Hi Tech Collision Repair	314 426 1600
Jim Allen	Jim Allen & Associates	jba68@epix.net
Joe Curto	Joe Curto Inc	718 762 7878
Kip Lankenau	Kip Motor Company Inc	972 243 0440
Dennis Tobin	LaFox Auto	847 931 1555
Bob DeShane	Little Britain Motor Co	705 878 5422
Jeff Zorn	Little British Car Co	248 489 0022
Richard Miller	MG Drivers Club of NA	908 713 6251
Kelvin Dodd	Moss Motors Ltd	800-667-7872
Peter Cosmides	Motorcar Garage LTD	856 313 7523
Dave Wiss	New Life to Classics	507 387 2277
Rick Ingram	North American MG Council	217 366 1278
Norb Bries	Northshore Sports Cars	847 247 0447
John A Gunnell	Old Cars Weekly / Krause	715 445 2214
William Whitmoyer	Old Sportscar Garage	440 543 2280
Steve Chivington	Omni Specialties	216 251 2269
Mike Pierce	Pierce Manifolds	408 842 6667
Kent Prather	Prather Racing	785 836 2265
Cliff Pulis Jr	Profitware Inc	970 622 9733
Mark Brandow	Quality Coaches Inc	612 824 4155
Michael Engard	Ragtops & Roadsters, Inc	215 257 1202
Eric Jones	Riverside Motors	740 363 2203
Ron Shimek	Ron Shimek Auto Service	512 454 2047
Ron Stock	Ron's Service	920 726 4327
Lew Palmer	Roundabout Motors	651 436 7436
Cecelia Bruce	Scarborough Faire	401 724 4200
Rod Hahnemann	Spridgetech, Inc	810 229 8639
Bob Stockton	Stockton Communications	734 261 7300
Carl Strohm	Strohm Automotive Inc	317 787 0822
Bill Farr	Surrey Motorsports	269 684 0362
Bill Terry	Terry's Jaguar Parts	800 851 9438
Gordon Strickland	The B Hive	864 656 3606
Bill Wardlow	The Motorway, Ltd	970 472 8141
Charles Runyan	The Roadster Factory	800 283 3723
Dave Giorgi	The Winner's Circle	216 221 4666
John H Twist	University Motors Ltd	616 682 0800
Susan Berkowitz	Victoria British Ltd	913 541 1525
Pam Shatraw	Victory Lane Magazine	650 321 1411
Duane Bailey	West Michigan Imports	616 878 5774
Craig Seabrook	Whitworth Shop	440 338 5950
Hayes Harris	Wire Wheel	772 299 9788
Peter Caldwell	World Wide Auto Parts	800 362 1025
Jason Len	XKs Unlimited	805 544 7864