

TOP GEAR MAGAZINE
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 1963
The Motorsport News of Delaware Valley

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Walk up to just anybody and say: "What's new BMC?" Chances are he'll say, "Huh?" or he might be moderately well-informed, and say, "Well there's the MG-B." Or he *might be equally well-informed*, but from somewhere around Wilmington, Delaware. In this case, the British Motor Corporation is *not* the first thing he thinks of; he may well say, "Auto sprint next Sunday," you have uncovered one of the 250-odd (aren't all sports car enthusiasts a little odd?) members of Brandywine Motorsport Club.

The year 1952 isn't such a staggering reach into the past if you're talking about national history, but when it comes to sports car activities, its way, back! There wasn't any Brandywine Motorsport Club; in fact, if our memory is correct, there wasn't even a British Motor Corporation. The precious few sports car events of any kind were mostly races such as Watkins Glen and Bridgehampton, but there was a rapidly burgeoning group of independent thinkers who found that driving *could* be fun. In that year, with most such non-conformists driving MGs, a group of Wilmingtonians established the Wilmington Sub-Centre of the' MG Car Club.

Other makes of sports cars began to pop up, though, and some of these early members defected and bought them; so in February, 1954, the Club was re-organized as Brandywine Motorsport Club, with the stated purpose of promoting the sport and pastime of Motoring. The term "sports car" was deliberately omitted from the name, since many members were enjoying keen motor sport in small sedans as well.

How successfully the Club has lived up to its purpose is best judged by its almost 10x growth from the 29 original souls. BMC isn't trying to see how big it can get, but it has such a varied menu of activities that nearly anyone can find something appealing. The generous membership fits BMC's policy of Thinking Big. In 1953, while it was still the MG Car Club, it staged a rally which can only be compared to present day SCCA Nationals; a 2-day, 600-mile dash which started in the middle of Wilmington and spent the night at Kingston, N. Y., with city police at both ends smoothing out the traffic for the contestants.

Another of BMC's early successes was a hill climb, in a state with very little to offer hillwise. An event was concocted at a small private slope, which has remained popular through 18 semi-annual performances. The trick was to introduce a gymkhana-like stop - reverse - and restart station, which keeps the final speeds from being too high, and separates the men drivers from the boy-drivers.

In the early days, just tooling about in a sports car was something of an event all by itself - there were so few of ,them, and everybody gawked most rewardingly'. So a simple tour, a group proceeding nose-to-tail from someplace to someplace else with eats, was quite a thing. BMC's swan song for this kind of event was the Schnooks' Tour in 1958, and this one was definitely non-stock. Each participant was given a brochure wherein were noted various historical tidbits

and information pertaining to points of interest along the route. The only difficulty the Tour organizer found was that there was very little history or interest to be found on the route; so he was obliged to invent some, and in this case, fiction was stranger than truth. "Uncle Tom" and Mrs. McCahill attended the dinner, and he subsequently used the map of the route in his book "Today's Sports and Competition Cars."

Probably BMC's Biggest Thinking has been its two (so far) charter plane trips to Europe, known as Projects BEE (for Brandywine European Expedition). The first, in September of 1960, was sparked by a Triumph Tour movie shown at a club meeting. A group of Triumph purchasers flew to England by chartered plane, received their steeds there, and toured Europe together. The travel scenes were so enticing that BMC decided it should do it too. The first trip was so successful that a repeat performance was staged in the Spring of 1962, with an even bigger participation.

In the early days, with occasional grand exceptions, Brandywine kept its rallies pretty much on a club basis, and left the invitationals to other groups. But with the improvement in communication with other clubs, which began with BMC's invention of the Interclub Contact officer, practically all rallies have become more or less invitational anyway. BMC now has a liberal slate of invitational rallies each year. Two of these are annual staples - the Rose Bush, a half-night winter rally, is invariably scheduled one week ahead of Rose Tree's All Nighter, to serve as a sort of brush-up course; and the Shad Moon, a March, championship type event, has attracted BMC's biggest rally turnout.

Experimentation with the various types of speed competition (not including outright racing) has been carried out with vigor. Gymkhanas were expanded into complete auto shows, staged at the Greater Wilmington Airport, with spectator admission fees benefiting the Jaycees. Autocrosses, both dry-weather and frozen, have been most well-attended at several members' farms. But the formula that is the most spectacularly successful is the auto sprint. Begun this year as a series in collaboration with BMC's neighbor organization, the Delaware Auto Sport Club of Dover. (See September TOP GEAR.)

The proper functioning of an ambitious program, such as BMC's, depends upon an adequate supply of both people and equipment. While it cannot be said that all the members are equally energetic, the large membership makes it relatively easy to muster the necessary manpower to make the events go, and also does wonders for the treasury, which is thus able to keep the club outfitted with whatever equipment it needs. This includes public address systems, telephones, crowd control equipment, pylons, and such necessities, for the speed events; for rally check points, there are shortwave radios, split-hand watches, and recording/timing devices.

Some of the members are enthusiastic well beyond the call of duty, and represent BMC in the Race Communications Group of the Philadelphia Region, SCCA. This organization has a counterpart within BMC, in the growing group of Qualified Check Point Operators, a sub-organization which can supply personnel to rallymasters as required. Its business is to optimize check point technique, and make sure the group knows its job. Although any human can err, these people, well trained and well equipped, have reduced mistakes to a minimum, contributing heavily to the smoother running of BMC rallies, and having fun at the same time.

In every field of motorsport competition, BMC can point with pride to the performance of its members. In racing, several Brandywiners are consistent class winners; one has been Formula III National Champion, and one has earned the title "King of the Ice" at ice-racing in the Poconos. Last year, one rallying couple tied for second place in the National Rally Championship; another couple won first place in both Appalachian Trail and Pennsylvania Rally Championship Association series. And in driving contests, BMCers are dependable winners; for instance, they have brought their Club to first place in the New Hope Show Gymkhana for four straight years.

But the most valuable trophy a Brandywiner can "win" is one which everybody dreads! Named the "Lon White Memorable Goof Trophy," after its first recipient, its sterling Silver stein about the size of - well, let's be frank. - a john. One earns it by making a spectacular goof in an event, and one passes it along as fast as one can. The goofer, on receipt at a Club meeting, must fill it with potables for the benefit of the members (it holds gallons and gallons). While retained, it is to remain available to refresh any member who may call.

Brandywine works hard at keeping a reputation for good citizenship. Safety is the prime consideration in all events, and the club's record is outstanding. And BMC has assisted in countering the impression that motorsport -fans are all irresponsible delinquents, by cooperating with the State Police and charitable organizations like the Jaycees and Boy Scouts, frequently supplying parade groups which, in their unusual motor cars, have the desired attention-attracting property.

Some years ago an interesting such episode was entered by the back door, so to speak. The singer Connie Francis was to appear at a Heart Fund drive in Wilmington. A member of another club mentioned to a reporter that his club might provide a sports car motorcade to transport Miss Francis to the scene from her previous engagement at Allentown. On the basis of this chance remark, the reporter not only put in his paper a big spread to the effect that this would take place, but also mistook the club for BMC. None of the Brandywiners had heard a word about this until they found themselves committed by the press. Meanwhile, the other club failed to respond to the challenge. So, not to let the Heart Fund down, a group of BMCers burned ~ little midnight oil lettering placards, and assembled an impressive string of cars to fulfill the story. Miss Francis rode in 'a Mercedes 300SL; the letters on the cars spelled out "Connie Francis" and "Heart Fund"; the Governor met the motorcade, and everyone's honor was upheld. If BMC sounds proud of itself, it is; but it remains a friendly club. Having outgrown two meeting places, it now meets on the first Thursday of every month at the Delaware Officers' Club at the New Castle Air Base, south of Wilmington. Y'all crone!