

Road Trip 2013

I had heard that the annual British car “Gathering” in Dobson, North Carolina was a very worthwhile event to attend, so for my 2013 ‘road trip’ I decided that Dobson would be it. A quick check of the events calendar showed that the VTR South Central Regional meet would be in Waco Texas on the following week of April 25th thru 27th, so I added that show to the route. I plotted the route on Google Maps, and filled it out with stops for both work and pleasure, as well as a run on the “Tail of the Dragon” along the way. It looked like I could break 10,000km (6100 miles) on one trip!

Spring refused to come before my planned departure date of April 14, so I had no opportunity to take the car out for a decent test run after sitting most all winter – I even had to wash it in near freezing temperatures the day before leaving.

Sunday morning started out fine. There was snow (and deer) in the fields, but the roads were clear and dry.



Then, around Minot ND, the road conditions deteriorated a little.



Then they deteriorated a little more! (The whiteout got significantly worse after this photo was taken)

A view out the front windscreen you should NOT have while driving your TR8...



...because it's all too likely to lead to this:

In spite of trying to be very careful, the TR8 slid into the ditch – fortunately it was at a pretty slow speed, so no damage (at least not due to the ditch...).

Good thing there was cell coverage and CAA!



The nearest tow truck that AAA could find was over 60 miles away, and it took him more than 3 ½ hours to get to me! By then there was so much snow that even if we had pulled the car out, we would not have been able to either drive or tow it, so we agreed to try again the next morning after the snow ploughs had done their job. It was after 3:00AM by the time the tow truck driver dropped me off at a motel in Jamestown, ND. By late morning, we were back at the TR8. The ploughs had done their thing clearing the roads, as well as further burying the car, AND putting a couple of stone chips in the drivers' door. Grrr! I was keeping a fellow Wedge enthusiast in Los Alamos, NM up to date via texting, and he put the word out – there were several offers of assistance from Wedge owners in Minnesota and Wisconsin. By this time, though, I was OK and back on the road. I didn't completely leave snow behind until Tuesday when I was well into Wisconsin. Overall, it could have been a lot worse, and the experience becomes one more chapter in the history of the TR!

Tuesday evening I stopped in Pandora OH to visit Ted and Doris Schumacher and see the TSI shop. Quite a history there! Wednesday I stopped at The Roadster Factory in Armagh PA and chatted with Albert Runyan (the owners son) about Wedge stuff. Then off to visit a work customer in Harmans, MD and try some famous crab cakes at G&M Restaurant. On Thursday I visited the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum at Dulles airport. This was my second visit to this museum (I was here in 2006 when I arrived at The Roadster Factory Summer Party a day early -it's only a few hours extra drive.) There is always something new to see here!

Friday morning I arrived at The Gathering and got myself registered. Time at last to look at cars and chat with like-minded enthusiasts! In addition to hooking up with some old friends as well as meeting a host of new people, I finally got the chance to put faces to many of the names that I had previously known only by email.

There were 295 British cars at the Participant's Choice car show on Saturday! There was everything from an absolutely gorgeous 1934 Rolls Royce to brand new Jaguars; not to mention 24 Wedges (22 TR8's and 2 TR7's!). As I pretty much expected, I won the

“Long Distance” plaque, but the real surprise and honour was being presented with the “Spirit of Adventure” award! Something about persevering through blizzards and such!



1934 Rolls Royce



A whole lotta Wedges



A really cute little MG



A few Morgans

The auto cross was held on Sunday morning, where I managed to place second in the Wedge class, behind a very smooth Jack McGahey in his wife Caroline’s TR8. After helping pack up the autocross equipment, I followed Jack and Caroline to their home in Charlotte, NC. (Dining and staying with friends beats motels any day!)

Monday was Dyno Day!! Imagine my good luck that I happened to be in Concord, NC while '42 Dyno Services' was having a special for TR8s driven from Canada! Thanks Jack and Steven! I have wanted to get the car dyno-tuned for a long time, and I jumped at the chance when offered. They did a fine job of tweaking the Megasquirt EFI which improved the driveability significantly. This session also showed that there is a significant restriction in the air intake system. Might be good for a few more horses if I can reduce the restrictions in the air cleaner. This is the kind of info you just can't get from driving on the road.



Oh, by the way: 181 hp & 206 ft/lbs at the wheels. I'm happy with that.

Back on the road by afternoon and on the way to the “Tail of the Dragon” – an interesting section of road at the western tip of North Carolina. It is advertised as “318 curves in 11 miles, America's number one motorcycle and sports car road.” Need I say more? Then on to Atlanta to visit with a friend and his family. He was one of the many friends I made on my first long trip in 2006 when I drove to The Roadster Factory Summer Party. The

next day I stopped for a quick visit with another TR driver: another “Summer Party” friend living in Atlanta.

The remainder of the drive to Texas was uneventful. Almost. Somewhere in Alabama, I passed a Highway Patrol car. Sure enough, he pulled out after me and turned on the lights. I hoped it wasn't for speeding, as I was careful to keep the cruise set pretty close to the speed limit. After asking me to step out of the car, he pointed to the rear licence plate and said that he “couldn't run those tags”. He let me be confused for just a couple of seconds before slapping me on the shoulder and saying “I'm just messing with ya. Of course we can run those!” He claimed that he had clocked me at 72mph (in a 70 zone). I really think he only wanted to see TR8 and what kind of lunatic would drive a 30 year old sports car that far from home! It was one of those rare interactions with the police that didn't hurt the wallet, and was actually enjoyable!

The next visit was with Joe and Ruth Mahoney in Athens, Texas – a couple whom I had not previously met. They have a collection of British cars including 3 Jaguars, a super-charged MGB, two TR8s, and a couple of others that were out having work done on them. Each car is absolutely immaculate! One of the TR8s is a very nice coupe (in black) that could be a twin to my car!



The last leg to Waco only took an hour or so. As soon as I checked in and got my ‘event package’, it was time to go look at some more Triumphs, and make some new friends. I was warmly welcomed by everyone I met, and I even felt like a bit of celebrity! But then, I doubt there are very many who drive their Triumphs several thousand miles to this regional event! This time, I did manage to get the ‘fastest time of day’ during the Autocross event!



A lovely 1935 Gloria



Tech Inspection at the Autocross

On the way home, I wanted to drive a bit of the old Route 66, so I went up to Elk City OK, and drove the old Route as far as Amarillo, TX. I stopped at a museum in Elk City, where I met a couple from California who happened to own a couple of Austin Minis, so they were familiar with LBC's and of course the TR8. From there it was an uneventful trip up through Denver and then home.

It seems that every trip that is NOT during August has an obligatory covering of snow on the car on the last morning!

By the time I got home, I had driven 10,100km (6275 miles); pumped 1093 litres (289 US Gal) of gas into the car; and only had to add 2 litres of oil. Except for the afore-mentioned excursion during the blizzard, the car performed flawlessly and gave me zero mechanical or electrical troubles. In addition to meeting up with a several old friends, I made a bunch more, and overall had a great time.



Bill Derksen
Saskatoon, SK
1979 TR8 Coupe