

RICK'S RENDEZVOUS - MOSPORT 2014

Photos by Rice Middleton / Text by John Pharr

It all started with a magazine ad that Rick saw..., the 2014 VARAC (Vintage Automobile Racing Association of Canada) race meet at historic Mosport racetrack in Ontario was featuring 'the Battle of the Brits', Triumph versus MG, with Bob Tullius of 'Group 44' fame the guest of honour. It meant a long and ambitious trip, over 6,000 km and 15 days, but Rick planned it out to perfection..., and with the aid of his in-dash GPS we did it and got back to Saskatoon only 6 hours late! Oh, and minus one car..., we had to leave my Aston Martin in Thunder Bay with a suspect blown head gasket. Also, the only reason we WERE late was that Rick's TR8 munched up its right front wheel bearings 5 km east of Langenburg and we..., well, mostly Rob..., had to replace the bearings before we could motor on.

The trip down..., Rick, Morris and me..., was long and fairly uneventful. The TR8 was running a bit rough when cold in the mornings and the Aston was using 1-2 litres of coolant per day, but nothing serious. Sampling local beers and delicacies like pasties whenever possible, and generously put up by various friends and relatives of Rick and Morris for some nights, we ended up in the Toronto area. There we split up on Wednesday, Rick going on to Mosport to secure us a camping site and Morris and I waiting to pick up Rob at Pearson on Thursday morning.

We picked up Rob, and for the first and hopefully last time crammed three people plus luggage and camping gear into the Aston. In the right rear Rob was bent almost double with his lower legs were against the back of Morris' seat and his back against the seat back, and not actually sitting on the seat. Meanwhile Morris' seat was so far forward that he could barely get his knees in behind the dash. While physically comfortable, I was driving the infamous 401 highway through Toronto so not exactly happy.

Still, we made it to Mosport and found that Rick had secured us a nice campsite near the end of the racetrack's long straightaway, just short of the sharp right-hander that led into the esses. So we saw the

racers gear down from top speed to make that bend. Rick already had his neat little folding camper trailer set up complete with awning and chairs, so we had a 'recovery beer' before setting up the tent that Rob, Morris and I were going to sleep in.

VARAC Mosport was just GREAT! Super friendly people all around us, many drawn by our SBCC banner hung on the fence, and a well-organized and interesting event, well worth attending. Even with three days of races to set up the VARAC chief organizer, Bob De Shane, was really nice to us, answering questions promptly and pleased to have fans come all the way from Saskatchewan.

In addition to watching the many 20-30 minute races, we got to drive our cars ON the racetrack for paced laps during the Friday and Saturday lunchtime race breaks. On Sunday morning we also participated in the 'Field of Dreams' show-and-shine in the infield, after which about a hundred of the show participants got to lap the track. We expected this to be a parade, but once on the track everyone kind of took off, so we ended up lapping about as fast as we'd done previously..., resulting in Rick holding the Mosport track record for lapping with a trailer!

Sadly, the featured race on Sunday afternoon, 'the Coventry Kid versus the Abingdon Ace', was a little disappointing. It started with a restored Group 44 TR4 leading 3 MGBs, but the TR blew up on the second lap, spreading oil all over the track, and the race ended under a caution flag, never getting back up to racing speed..., so MG won the day kind of by default.

From Mosport we headed north to Lake Muskoka, where we enjoyed a couple of relaxed days with a couple of Rick's oldest buddies, one of whom owns a cottage on an island in the lake. Cars left at the marina and 'commuting' by boat, all we had to do was drink, eat, schmooze and help Steve do a little 'reconstruction' of the lakeshore. And Rick showed us his skill on his old reliable water ski, which had travelled the whole way from Osler.

Finally we started back... and the Aston's problems promptly began. We were barely out of Bracebridge at Muskoka when it overheated because the cooling fans had quit. Limped back into town and Rob fixed the problem with advice from Bob via my cell phone and parts from Canadian Tire. So we motored on to Sudbury to see the 'Big Nickel' and on the next day to Wawa to see the 'Big Goose'. The third day, though, the Aston's problems returned and got worse and I finally decided that enough was enough. Got it hauled into Thunder Bay, rented a car, and we continued on home. At least our car problems happened AFTER we'd completed all the stuff we went to do, so this trip qualifies as great in my book. Thanks, Rick.