



Ottawa MG Club

Newsletter

January 2002

Volume: 2 Issue: 1

MG FOLKS

The January 17th meeting is at Louis' Restaurant on Cyrville Road. It's video night! And "Mr. Prez" will have some announcements to make. Join us for some "Spring" wishful thinking and preparation.

The Ottawa MG Club event calendar, technical information and event photos can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.omgc.net>
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Monthly Meetings Held On 3rd Thursdays

Jordan Jones (President)	jordan@compmore.net	839-1821
Debi Fortin (Past Pres)	dfdesign@passport.ca	821-3140
(Vice President)		
Len Fortin (Newsletter)	fortinl@passport.ca	821-3140
Mike Daniels (Treasurer)	mike.daniels@sympatico.ca	726-7038
Dave Moore (Technical)		836-1381
Doug McClure (Regalia)	dkmccclure@travel-net.com	824-0168
Mary Attwell (Social)	mary2friends@yahoo.com	836-3133
Ken Duff (Webmaster)	kduff@magma.ca	729-6976

In This Issue:

- 1) Great Christmas Party
(Thanks to all who attended)
- 2) The 'Improved Production' Class
(Part 1 of a 2-Part Jack Hughes story)
- 3) Parts Wanted
(Work continues even in Winter)
- 4) Put A V8 Engine Into An MGB
(I'll e-mail this 15 pager if you want it)
- 5) Cars For Sale
(Buy two and have twice the fun)
- 6) Shannon Finds Her Calling Car(d)
(To B or YB, That Is The Question)
- 7) A Miniman Update
(A change of location and focus)
- 8) A Financial Report
(The annual dollar review)
- 9) The Event Calendar
(A first peek at year 2002)

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT JANUARY & FEBRUARY MEETINGS

January 17th. The regular meeting will be held at Louis' Restaurant at the usual 7pm start time. Jordan will have several announcements to make to all attendees and after that is all done (and quickly we hope) there will be a video or two for all to enjoy. Some snippets of other videos from a variety of events and special occasions – and as you can expect, it will focus on two of our most favourite things: MGs and good weather! Be sure to join us and share in the good thought preparations for the year 2002 driving season.

February 21st. The regular meeting is at the Cock & Bull Eatery in Bells Corners, but the start time is at 6 pm as this meeting includes a special tour of the Engines Extra workshop close by. Here is our annual opportunity to see various "works-in-progress" and get a close-up view of what really does happen and what really can be done in a professional engine shop. Drivers & Navigators are very welcome to attend and see what it's all about. The meeting will continue at the Cock & Bull Eatery after the tour. There will be no tests after the tour.

Welcome to new members:

Dave Stringer & Michelle Carmichael	Alfred	'78 B
Bob Baxter	Ottawa	'61 A
Jim Howse	Ottawa	'74 B
Dean Hilts	Deep River	'68 C GT

WANTED

Radiator support panel for late model MGB (77-80).

This is the metalwork that holds the radiator to the body.

Contact Jordan if you have one for sale! (613) 839-1821 or jordan@compmore.net

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FOR SALE TO GOOD HOMES(s):

1978 MGB. 4-speed. Carmine. In good shape. Runs very well Starts and stops perfectly. Has about 86,000 miles on it. Second owner of this car and a 1974 Super Beetle (baby blue) Need to sell both to add a fine new steed to the stable. (See article about falling in love with a MG-YB) Both cars \$12,000 or \$2,000 for the MG, \$10,000 for the Beetle or vice-versa but you have to take both! Need only one? MG is \$7,500 and the Beetle is \$6,000. MG comes with a tonneau cover and a bunch of stuff collected over the years. Same with the Beetle, including manuals and spare parts. Beetle toy collection, etc. The MG is in Barrhaven and can be seen at any time. Buy now - will store free until April or May. Beetle is in Rockland and can be seen there. Please call Shannon at 594-9128 or email at slmannion@intranet.ca

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SPECIAL PARTS

I am forcing my brother to clean his stuff out of my basement where he has stashed some parts for a 1972 MGB including a set of 4 wheel trim rings-part #HAC680 for 14" MGB/MGB/GT.

In the original box - unopened after 25 years. Wendy

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MINIMAN UPDATE

Miniman has changed locations. They are no longer on the Walgreen Road. Their focus at this time is not Retail Sales although they will do telephone orders. They will be concentrating on working on vehicle restorations at this time. Further information can be obtained by calling Rob or Eric.

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CONVERSION OF AN MGB TO A V8

I have a 15-page write-up on this topic but I cannot remember who provided the document to me. It is quite a hefty read and has a lot of good informative points for consideration, but it's just too extensive for the newsletter.

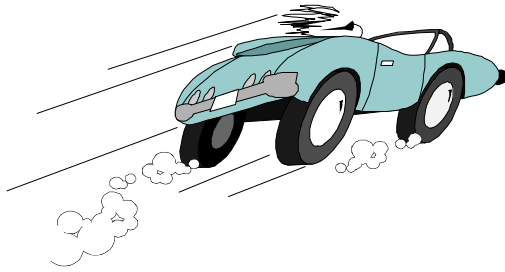
If you have thoughts of doing such a conversion, I can e-mail the document to you for your reading pleasure (MSWord or WordPerfect). Len

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THANKS TO ALL FOR A GREAT CHRISTMAS PARTY

To Mark & Heather for the house! To Dave and Helene for the food prep! To those that helped donate a huge pile of stuff for the Ottawa Food bank. To everybody for making the evening a great one! While winter has not been it's normal fierce self so far this year – and we have enjoyed some pretty reasonable weather, I'm sure you will agree that the Christmas Party is the place to meet in the middle of December and talk about cars and kids and grandies and all that stuff that makes MGers who they are... simply great folks!

Cheepo CheepOh 2



When: Saturday May 11 and Sunday May 12, 2002
Where: Chateau Logue, Maniwaki, Quebec
How Much: \$194.00 per couple
\$150.00 single (All taxes and gratuity included)

It may still be the middle of winter, but the harbingers of Spring are arriving daily. Seed catalogues! The Victoria British sales and **Cheepo CheepOh2!**

Berny and I have mapped a route and secured a block of reservations for up to twenty couples. This year we will be starting in the west end, at Bells Corners, beneath the internationally known Twin Arches on Robertson Road. From there we will proceed north on a road named for an attitude to a road named after a brewery. Then to another road shown on the spring calendar. Then, a pleasant drive to the jetty for a short boat ride across the river. Once on the other shore, we proceed through the area named after an American Indian Chief. About noon we will stop at the house of a lady named Smith for lunch. After the break, we will continue through the area watching for yogi BEAR, bull MOOSE and BAMBI. A short while later, we will enter a picturesque area of a small ocean the colour of a summer sky and end the drive at the Chateau Logue in Maniwaki. Do you now know the route? All joking aside, this has always been an enjoyable Spring outing and we think you will find this one equally enjoyable.

If you have not already signed on and wish to join us please contact Bob Stark at 258-4636 (if long distance from your area, try 230-0000 wait for a dial tone then dial 258-4636)

Reservations must be confirmed by February 28, 2002

TO B OR YB, THAT IS THE QUESTION

It happened this way. Life was progressing with no thought of acquiring another vehicle, unless that perfect Model "A" happened my way for free.

I was headed home one day on the Queensway and decided to swing by to see Eric Mason at English Motors. Eric has been taking care of my MG since I bought it 15 years ago and whether I have anything for him to fix or not, I often stop by to say hello and to see what fascinating vehicles he's got in his garage.

Not disappointed this time, there was the burgundy "shop Jag" off to one side, a BRG late-model MG that needed a little TLTC, plus Ron S's white E-type. But on the hoist was a car the likes of which I'd never seen. It looked old, from the thirties, but Eric said that it was only 50-years-old. In fact, not even that. It was a 1953 MG-YB, a car I'd never heard of, let alone seen.

It was on the hoist, wheels off, getting brake work done. Eric told me a client had recently brought the vehicle to his shop. The client had received the vehicle from his father. It was a tough decision to have the son get the car prepped for sale. In storage for twenty years, it needed a going-over. But wait a minute, for sale? Those were magic words. Did he mean that this car was available?

I feasted my eyes. Although most of what I could see was the undercarriage, standing back I was afforded a rather odd perspective that exaggerated the rounded bottoms of the doors so that what I saw looked more like Cinderella's pumpkin coach - in black and BRG. I could see that it had large fenders in the front culminating in a squarish MG-TD look, with concomitant narrow bumpers, back and front.

A louvered bonnet with stand alone potty headlamps and some after-market fog lamps mounted low, completed the saloon so that instead of a Great Gatsby look, Bonnie and Clyde Barrow would have been better suited to this car. Since it is a four-seater (five, if the three in the back are thin) the whole gang could have been accommodated. And the roomy trunk, with a hatch that folds down, held in place with chains, perfect for on-the-run supplies and gun-moll garb.

The car has since come down from its perch and I have sat in it, front seat and back seat. It is right-hand drive with a skinny but large steering wheel through which octagonal instrumentation is set in a burnished wooden dash. There is an ashtray on either side for driver and passenger and two more in the back seat; what dashing smokers those Brits must have been! The interior is tan leather and contrary to what someone sniffed, "Ooo, it smells musty." I say, 'Darling, that is the heady smell of a leather interior. It's just that you're used to vinyl.'

Recall from the beginning of this dissertation, I entered Eric's that day with no thought but to say hello. What happened is that I saw the car and was captivated. Content with what I've driven and currently drive, I had no idea of changing the status quo. However, when one falls in love, rationalization ceases.

Fortunately for me, the owner is kindly holding over the car until spring while I sell two cars to acquire one (see ad on classified page.). Not only will this solve some of my parking problems, but also I am convinced that this is the car I want to drive into my old age.

I think, also, it's something Eric said as I admired the car that first day. He said, "It will be your calling card." How could I resist? My calling car(d). Yes, this is what the YB will be.

Improved Production and the Poprivet Special

(part 1 of 2)

Several months ago, I had the pleasure of hearing an address by Bill Brack, one of Canada's best and best-known racing drivers. Among other topics of discussion was that great disaster, the Abolishment of Improved Production. Improved Production was a unique racing class that consumed about 85 percent of my waking hours and 110 percent of my worldly fortune for several years. This will be the story of my first-born child, an Improved Production MGA.

My first racing had been tackled in my road-going MGA 1600. A day of open practice at Mosport in 1963, when one could use the track all day for the princely sum of ten bucks, convinced me that racing was the only way to live. It seems odd now in the day of the three hundred dollar racing ensemble, that wearing any old tee-shirt, armed with a basic license earned with a written test (written in the club competition chairman's living room) and topped off with any old helmet and lap strap, one could amuse one's self to one's heart's content through the tree-lined high-speed curves of Mosport. To actually race, it was necessary to add only a leather hood strap and a rickety roll bar.

My first race was in May of that year at Mosport. Still without the benefit of a driver's school, I raced in the National race against E-Type Jaguars and Porches and even a 289 Cobra. What an initiation! It was October before I could scabble together enough money for another foray into the heady world of rubber dust. This episode was at glorious Harewood Acres and not only did we race in the sprint races on Saturday, but we entered the 4-hour relay race on Thanksgiving Monday. Saturday got me my first TROPHY and Monday got me my first (and last) shunt when a TR-3 spun in front of me, but the team still finished and I drove the car all the way home, 240 miles pretty much flat out with the top down, the little racing windscreen and open exhaust. What splendid idiocy!

The upshot of all this was a determination to (a) go racing as often as possible and (b) to go faster. It would seem a simple task to create something that would go faster than a stock MGA but the picture was clouded by the facts that I was earning about two dollars an hour and that it was necessary to keep eating periodically. Many hours were spent mulling over the situation and analyzing various alternatives.

Finally, inspiration! I witnessed an astounding performance by the great John Cordts in one of the most "improved" improved production cars around; the car was a pushrod MGA and the venue was a frozen lake near Orillia. Cordts' car in ice-racing trim was utterly astounding, albeit a set of Michelin X tires shot full of two-inch pointed Ramset studs probably helped. While lapping the second-place car on the third lap (!), John was blinded by ice chips and departed the scene through a large and rather solid snow bank which neatly removed the front suspension and most of the back. But the seed had been planted in my mind - MGAs could be made to go quickly indeed!

The old original Improved Production rules stated roughly, "the vehicle must retain the original block, and the camshaft location must not be changed. The original gearbox and differential housings must be retained. The bodywork must resemble the original. Period". I added the underlining for the slow-witted who may not have immediately grasped the poetic ring to these rules when contrasted to the endless pages of legalese that govern "straight" production racing. With Improved Production, there were so many things one could do to the car, that as long as one had the ambition and the time, one could make the car go a hell of a lot faster without the gross outlay of money required now. It's a lot cheaper to cut a few hundred pounds off the car than it is to increase the horsepower enough to give the equivalent decrease in lap times. Remember that weight reduction helps in braking and cornering as well as in acceleration. With very little money, I couldn't go as fast as the people with (a) enormous amounts of money or (b) lots of money and the same amount of ambition as I had, but I could sure go as fast as the boy racers and rich kids who just bought a car and bolted on all the goodies in the modern manner. So, the great project began.

I bought a '55 MGA 1500 which had been partly customized, then abandoned, and then repossessed by a loan company. It's engine was in rusty pieces in boxes, and nothing on it was really much good. I then bought a 1961 MGA 1600 which had been driven briskly into several guard posts with disastrous consequences for the frame and body, but with no ill effects upon anything mechanical except the steering rack. Then, in an operation similar to the old pea-under-the-walnut-shell routine, we removed the rebuilt and slightly modified engine from my original road-going 1600, along with the gearbox, and substituted the rather more tired units from the wrecked 1600. The frame and most of the body of the wrecked 1600, less all removable parts, were scrapped, and the mechanical parts of the old 1500 were scrapped or stockpiled for sale.

In the "good" pile, we then had an embryonic racing car consisting of the frame and body of the old 1500, all the running gear of the wrecked 1600 (which included such goodies as disk brakes) and the engine and gearbox of the road-going car that I had raced before. If you're confused, fret not; there were times even then when I had to stop and consider whether I was throwing away something I was supposed to save or vice versa. The total tab so far, not counting the road car which was of course still saleable, was about 200 bucks, plus what I had done to the engine already, which didn't amount to a hundred. And then the fun began!

At this juncture, some acknowledgments are due. I had, at the outset of this ambitious project, no tools, no garage, no mechanical experience, and not a bloody clue. During the construction of the car, Vince Murray, manager of Edwards Ford Body Shop, provided space, supervision and equipment, and many hours of his highly skilled assistance. I simply couldn't have considered the project without him. Gord Montgomery, co-owner of Performance Motors in those days, always gave me invaluable help in the engine and transmission departments. Vic Yachuk of Canada Class, Lotus Super Seven and Lotus XIX fame, provided much assistance in the design phase, and, as the project advanced, Tony Polivka became an indispensable source of help and advice, as he is to this day on other mechanical projects.

So, with no bread and no brains, but lots of good help, I set to work. This was early in February, and I hoped to make the drivers' school in early May (laughter backstage.)

I stripped the frame and spent many hours chipping rust with an old spring leaf sharpened to a chisel point. We rebuilt and reinforced with 12-gauge steel a couple of rotten places in the frame. (MGA owners may inquire, nay, should inquire, if they don't know where these places are) Then, stretching even Improved Production rules slightly, though we honestly didn't think so at the time, we cut off the ends of the frame behind the front suspension mounting points and ahead of the centre portion of the frame and reattached them 2" higher, adding suitable reinforcements at the areas of the incisions. The body would retain its original relationship to the centre of the frame, and the effect thereby would be that the entire car would be lowered 2" around the suspension without alteration in suspension geometry and no reduction in wheel travel.

Then, using the old 1500 engine block and transmission as dummies, we moved the motor mounts back 5 inches to get more weight towards the rear of the car, decrease the polar moment of inertia (ahem) and get the engine to the rear of the main front cross member which was now (relative to the engine) 2 inches higher than before. The lateral frame member at the top of the cowl area had to be cut out and replaced with a higher one made of pipe to clear the rear of the engine.

A hoop-type (one-side) roll bar was installed at this stage with one brace running back from the outboard side to the frame kick-up and two braces from the inboard side, one running to each side of the rear of the frame. The whole frame was then painted with rust-penetrant paint, as were all the suspension bits, and new steel brake lines were installed.

I dismantled, inspected and reassembled the steering rack and reinstalled it, then had to do a great deal of monkeying about reinstalling the steering column to line up with the rack, now 2 inches higher than before. I completely dismantled the front suspensions and hubs and reassembled them with new swivel pins, bushes and seals. I had the brake calipers rebuilt at the same time, being reluctant to try this myself. These were reinstalled with new hoses. Similar rebuilds were carried out with the rear axle and brakes, and these were reassembled with a long leaf removed from each spring. Initially the stock differential was retained along with stock gears.

At about this point the body reconstruction and fitting began, a very lengthy and tedious process due to the antiquity of the body and the modifications to the frame. All interior body panels were discarded - firewall, trunk floor and partitions, inner fenders, the whole lot. This was probably the greatest weight reduction. The original body mounting points were retained on the centre part of the frame, but of course new ones 2 inches higher had to be made on the end sections. The worst rusty places were chopped off of the body and replaced and all extraneous holes, for example those for the windshield posts, were filled with new metal.

At this point, drivers' school was long past; I had attended with the road-going MGA 1600 with no roll bar, no hood strap (and no shock absorbers to speak of) by being very persuasive and by agreeing not to partake of the mini-races which are the final "graduation" ceremonies at these things, but that's another story.

As the summer wore on, I installed a larger, lighter gas tank salvaged from a Porsche 1600. This was slung behind the axle as a matter of expediency. I would rather have got it in front of the rear axle, but I never did. A Bendix electric fuel pump was installed behind the passenger's seat location. Aluminum floors were riveted in to replace the original plywood ones, and I fabricated a new firewall out of aluminum, nearly bleeding to death several times from cutting myself, and inspiring the name, "The Poprivet Special" for the car. (This supplanted the earlier name earned at the body re-building stage, "The Bondo Special".) The panel behind the cockpit was also made from aluminum (and installed with pop rivets); except for a small splashguard by the distributor, and some radiator ducting, that's all the interior body paneling there ever was.

The radiator was installed on fabricated aluminum brackets angled back at the top to clear the lowered body. The brackets later caused problems from fatigue. The real engine and gearbox were then installed and the drive shaft was shortened 5 inches and re-welded (not by me, I hasten to add!) The oil pan was cut off just below the flange and reversed to put the deep end at the front to solve a clearance problem, and a horizontal baffle was added at the same time. Fabrication of a steel drive shaft tunnel completed the basic body. The hood and trunk lid were lightened by removal of all internal bracing and installed, as were the doors. The latter were permanently fixed in place, contributing (a bit) to the (fairly negligible) stiffness of the chassis.

A trip to the wrecker produced a pair of Cadillac wheels with six-inch rims and a pair of Packard (!) wheels with 5-inch rims. These rims were welded to MG wheel-centres for the back and front respectively, and the budget gave a huge convulsion and produced four Dunlop R7 "Green Spots" at about \$45. apiece.

Racing steering wheels were not the big fad then that they are now, so I settled for an Austin Healey Sprite boy-racer wheel with a wood rim and had to have Sprite splines welded onto my steering column. (Add that to the list of welding jobs I wasn't dumb enough to try myself.) Since it was getting towards time to get in, I scrounged a mangled TR4 seat from a wreck, stripped off the upholstery, cut the steel shell full of holes to lighten it, welded up some legs for it from the tubing from one of my scrap MG seats (nearly burning my hand off) and had it upholstered in natty blue leatherette. With most of the weight alterations now completed, the suspension geometry came under scrutiny. With so much weight gone, the front of the car was riding extremely high, so after careful measuring and some chalk-doodling on the garage floor with ratios and proportions, Vince lunged under the front fenders with his torch and zapped just enough off the front springs to restore the lower wishbones to their natural horizontal position. We hoped that the reduced weight and shortened springs would stiffen the front enough to make a sway bar unnecessary. The rear springs had already had leaves removed, and the rear ride height turned out to be exactly right.

OTTAWA M.G. CLUB

Financial Statement January 1/ 2001 - December 31/ 2001

	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
RECEIPTS					
2001 Dues (91 Members)	\$1,836.00	\$1,835.51	\$1,930.00	\$1,555.00	\$1,665.00
Regalia	\$1,123.00				
Gift from Member	\$115.00				
Total Receipts	\$3,074.00				
DISBURSEMENTS					
Newsletter, Postage	\$615.13				
Social (food)	\$754.07				
Regalia	1,023.15				
Insurance	\$215.00				
Misc.	\$57.86				
Total Disbursements	\$2,665.21				
SURPLUS	\$408.79	\$(407.74)	\$178.75	\$(633.37)	\$(89.99)
BAL FWD LAST YEAR	\$933.57				
BANK BALANCE	\$1,342.36	\$933.57	\$1,341.31	\$1,162.36	\$1,796.23
REGALIA INVENTORY at Dec 31	\$1,103.30	\$1,303.68	\$771.00	\$900.20	
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,445.66	\$2,237.25	\$2,112.31	\$2,062.56	

Mike Daniels Treasurer Dated: 31 December 2001

OTTAWA MG CLUB EVENTS CALENDAR 2002

✍ MG Club Highlight and Feature Events ✍

✍	Month	Date	Day	Event	Time	Contact
	Jan	17	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Video night)	7pm	Jordan
	Feb	8-10	Fri-Sun	OMGC Ski Weekend community dinner / \$125pnpp for 2 / \$96pnpp for 4		Jordan
		21	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Cock&Bull Eatery (Tour : Engines Extra / Bells Corners / early start)	6pm	Jordan
		23	Sat	VW Pool, Beer & Pizza Day not yet confirmed	2pm	VW
	Mar	21	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Photo night)	7pm	Jordan
	Apr	7	Sun	OVTC Darts Match / not yet confirmed	1pm	OVTC
		7	Sun	All British Car Club Auto-jumble in Kingston	10am	B'n'B
		18	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Cock&Bull Eatery (Tire kicker topic not yet confirmed)	7pm	Jordan
		27	Sat	OMGC Spring Tune Up / location to be announced	9am	David
	May	11	Sat	Duck Race for CHEO @ Hartwell Locks	10:30am	Len
		11-12	Sat-Sun	Cheepo-CheepOh 2		Bob
		16	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Tire kicker topic not yet confirmed)	7pm	Jordan
		26	Sun	OMGC Run To North Lancaster	9am	OMGC
	Jun	2	Sun	Byward Market Auto Classic Car Show	9am	Shannon
		9	Sun	OMGC Croquet Match in Greely	2pm	Debi
		11	Tue	Brit Cruise Night @ Snack Shack / to be confirmed	7pm	Dalton
		15	Sat	Gumball Rally 2002	9am	Joy
		20	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Cock&Bull Eatery (Tire kicker topic not yet confirmed)	7pm	Jordan
		23	Sun	Sporting Classics Richmond Car Show	9am	OVTC
		28-30	Fri-Sun	Boot'n'Bonnet Prince Edward County Tour		B'n'B
	Jul	1	Mon	Canada Day Car Show in Arnprior	10am	?
		2-5	Tue-Fri	NEMGTR GOF in Nova Scotia		Mark
		3-6	Wed-Sat	NAMGBR 2002 in Grapevine Texas		Len
		7	Sun	Evolution of Wheels @ Science & Tech Museum	9am	Shannon
		14	Sun	OMGC Route 66 Run	1pm	David
		17-21	Wed-Sun	NAMGAR 2002 in Charlottesville VA		Len
		18	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Tire kicker topic not yet confirmed)	7pm	Jordan
		27or28	Sat-Sun	White Lake Splash		J&J
	Aug	4	Sun	VWfest in Embrun	10am	VW
		15	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Cock&Bull Eatery (Pit Stop Rally IV)	7pm	Jordan
		18	Sun	B'n'B All Brit Car Day @ Kingston	10am	?
		18	Sun	OMGC Monte Carleton Run	9am	?
	Sep	7-8	Sat-Sun	Watkins Glen Racing		?
		19	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Tire kicker topic not yet confirmed)	7pm	Jordan
		20-23	Fri-Sun	British Invasion @ Stowe, VT		?
	Oct	6	Sun	OMGC Fall Colour Run	9am	Jordan
		17	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Cock&Bull Eatery	7pm	Jordan
	Nov	21	Thr	Ottawa MG Club Meet @ Louis' Restaurant (Annual General Meeting)	7pm	Jordan
	Dec	7	Sat	OMGC Christmas Party	6pm	?