

**Bikers Visit British Car Club's "Motorcycle Shop"**

By John Gunnell

This story involves ancient history, cars made in England and one of Central Wisconsin's newest motorcycle clubs. No one will blame you if you can't figure out how those pieces fit together. You'll have to read the story to find out.

The history lesson first. When the author was a kid in Staten Island, N.Y., in the late '50s (I told you this was "ancient" history), my dad took me to a Firestone store. Back then, Firestone sold more than just tires. Adults could buy auto parts, garden tools and hardware at the store. Of course, there was a large toy department for us kids. It sold everything from coaster wagons to toy cars.

Sports cars were popular then and one toy my father bought me was a '53 Corvette that measured about a foot and a half long and had an electric motor, working headlights and seats that you glued fabric covers to. It must be worth a fortune today. Another toy was an MG TD, which looked very old-fashioned.

The toy MG created a desire to own a real one, but real TDs were too expensive for me. After 9/11, my view on that changed. Life is short. You better do what you want to do before it's too late. The next October a '52 MG TD came to Wisconsin from Buffalo, N.Y. It wasn't the shiniest, but it was my "dream car."

About the same time that we transitioned to British cars, the Fox Cities British Car Club (FCBCC) was formed in Appleton. Jim Marks had purchased an MG and got sick of traveling to Madison, where the nearest British car club was located. He started FCBCC. He had perfect timing, because old British cars were starting to catch on big time. Within a year of so, the FCBCC had 150 members!

Jim Marks had a vision of what a club can offer enthusiasts. His model was the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in Oshkosh. Jim figured, if pilots could have a club that had its own buildings and museum, he could find a way to get a FCBCC clubhouse where cars could be stored and displayed museum style. Jim teamed up with a man named Tom McCrory and purchased an abandoned motorcycle dealership and repair shop on Sand Pit Rd. in Oshkosh.



**Tom McCrory (on right) welcomed VRA members to the FCBCC clubhouse, a former motorcycle dealership in Oshkosh.**



**VRA "members of all ages" came to Oshkosh to see the FCBCC and get ideas about what an active club can accomplish.**

To offset the cost of the building, the two men offered FCBCC members reasonably-priced seasonal storage of their cars. For a small monthly fee, the club also got to use the building as its headquarters. Two vehicle lifts were obtained and tools and equipment were purchased. Members who stored their cars could use the shop as part of the rent. Other members could pay an hourly fee to use it. FCBCC also set up a meeting room, library, kitchen and British pub.

The FCBCC clubhouse has been featured on local TV programs and has also been written up in national magazines. Jim Marks often tells members, "It will cost you almost as much to take your car to a commercial repair shop as it will to store it here all winter and work on it with the help and expertise of other club members." In the past five years or so, many cars have been restored there.

On June 23, members of the Fox Valley Area Vulcan Riders Association paid a visit to the Fox Cities British Car Club building. The VRA is a national organization for owners of cruiser-style Kawasaki Vulcan motorcycles. Kawasaki Vulcan models include the traditional Vulcan Classic, the smoothly-styled Vulcan Nomad and the Vulcan Drifter, which has the look of an old Indian with its deeply valanced front and rear fenders. Three members brought their bikes along.



**One of the rarest British cars to be seen is the 1950 Austin A90 Atlantic convertible of Jim Rugowski.**

Tom McCrory unlocked the clubhouse and opened the overhead door on the south side of the building to let the motorcycles to enter. There was plenty of room for three Vulcan Nomads. During the winter, the building is completely filled with cars that are being stored there. However, in the warmer weather sports cars — like motorcycles — are "in season." Many FCBCC members keep their cars at home all summer so they can hop right in them for cool evening cruises.

There were still about two dozen British cars to look at, including a 1952 MG TD, a rare 1950 Austin Atlantic A90 convertible, a pair of Triumph TR-3As, several MGBs and a couple of Jaguars. Several FCBCC members were busy working on a Triumph TR-6 owned by Steve Sturtevant. It was having an updated fuel-injection system installed. FCBCC member Jim Rugowski, also had some non-British cars stored away, including his Chevy Street Rod, two versions of the Fiat Topolino (one built by Simca of France) and a fiberglass-bodied Kaiser-Darrin which has doors that slide forward into the front fender.

After touring the clubhouse, the bikers held their monthly meeting in the British car club's Busted Knuckle Pub. They sat down to plan out rides, picnics and other events that they want to hold over the rest of the summer. Another big concern was coming up with a route for members to follow on their annual ride to JP Cycle's Open House, in Iowa, the following weekend.

The Fox Valley Area group is one of two VRA chapters in Wisconsin. The other is based in LaCrosse. The club is for anyone interested in meeting, riding and sharing tips with other Vulcan riders. It is a small, but growing organization. For information about the Fox Valley Area Vulcan Riders Association email dhermans3@new.rr.com or toddtrz@wildblue.net or visit the national Website at www.vulcanriders.us.

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**Two Kawasaki Vulcan Nomad 1500s met up with two British-made MGs inside the FCBCC clubhouse.**

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