

## ELIZABETHTON COVERED-BRIDGE DRIVE

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Saturday, April 17, 2004, was one of the first weekend days that were warm enough and dry enough for perfect open-air motoring. It was lucky for our members that it was also the day scheduled for our annual drive over to Elizabethton and its historic Covered Bridge.

Our group began gathering at the Rush Street Grille in Kingsport around 9:30



A.M. Eventually there were nine “topless” British roadsters, three from Kentucky arriving about 10:00 A.M. The final group assembled were: Greg Cowen in his 1974 Triumph TR6; C. C. Goodson in his 1979 MGB; Ann and Paul Kern and their mellow chocolate Labrador, George, in their 1963 MGB; Judy and Eddie Penland in their 1975 MGB; Regina and Bud Shinall in their 1971 MGB; Becky and Gerry Mitchell in their 1958 Jaguar XK-150 OTS; Sam

Chandler and his friend Ricki Fields in their 1979 MGB from Jenkins, Kentucky; Larry Elswick in his 1976 Triumph Spitfire from Pikeville, Kentucky; and Randall Thomas in his 1978 MGB also from Pikeville. The group from Kentucky had traveled about a hundred miles, already a two-hour journey, to arrive at the meeting location to start the official portion of the drive.

Eddie and Judy Penland led our nine roadsters through scenic back roads and some unavoidable city streets, too, over to Elizabethton for our annual visit to the historic Covered Bridge. Because of major construction and repair, the usually traveled concrete bridge a block away over the scenic Doe River has been closed to traffic for some time, requiring that traffic be detoured around it. Because of this, the nearby Covered Bridge had been subjected to the increased stresses of unusually heavy traffic. Since it is a fragile historic wooden structure, not built for today’s heavy trucks and constant use, the city government has closed it to traffic while the other bridge is being repaired in an attempt to preserve it and prevent damage by too-heavy stresses of routine traffic. At first, our group was disappointed that we wouldn’t be able to actually drive through the bridge. But, this restriction actually proved to be a blessing in disguise as we were able to park each of our cars in turn at the entrance of the bridge for photographs without interfering with the normal flow of traffic. We were able to conduct our visit to the Covered Bridge, and take walks through it in a leisurely and enjoyable fashion without the worry of getting in the way of anyone else’s activities. Therefore, the fact that we couldn’t actually drive our roadsters through the bridge worked to our advantage.



After everyone had fully enjoyed the visit to the Bridge, we drove our British roadsters into downtown Elizabethton. There was insufficient space along Elk Avenue for all the cars to park in one location, so they had to be split up into various locations around town. But, we all found our way to the unique Duck Duck Goose Café and Bakery, which, interestingly, is located inside “Duck Crossing Antiques,” a fascinating antique store. The Café has a wide variety of delicious meals to choose from and our congenial group had a very enjoyable lunch and visit together. Even Becky and I had no problem finding delicious vegetarian sandwiches for our lunch from the vegetarian section of the menu. Elizabethton has a variety of antique and other shops to explore providing a nice diversion for our group after finishing lunch.



At the conclusion of our visit to Elizabethton, two of our roadsters (Penlands and Mitchells) made the short but very-much-enjoyed scenic drive along narrow and winding country roads—perfect for sports cars--over to the Wilbur and Watauga Dams. At this beautiful location, we made more photographs of our cars in this picturesque setting of brightly colored redbuds in bloom and Watauga Lake. This was a perfect day for a perfect drive—very warm and sunny with no rain and no car trouble—and was very much enjoyed by all who brought their open British roadsters. Becky and I drove 125 miles altogether.

Those who came from Kentucky had to drive a considerably longer distance but that just provided them with that much more time to enjoy their open-air motoring.

