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LIFELONG DREAM
California bound
British tourists make stop in Lewisburg

By **Chuck Koons**
For The Daily Item
August 28, 2006

LEWISBURG — On Sunday, in a less than inconspicuous way, a group of British tourists arrived in Lewisburg on their way across the country, bound for California. In a scene that was better suited for the opening backdrop from Hound of the Baskerville's, the group arrived at the Day's Inn; soggy, wet and tired, but not dispirited.

While most trips from coast to coast would not include a stop in Lewisburg as part of the itinerary, this is one trip that is more about the journey and not the destination.

The trip is the fulfillment of a lifelong dream of one of the leaders of the group. Diana Garside spent many magical moments being squired around Europe, as a child, in the back of her father's 1932 Austin Seven. In 2000, while working in California, Diana had her parents (Ron and Veronica Garside) over for a holiday. During that time, they had the opportunity to drive a portion of the legendary Route 66. The experience had made quite the impression on them and they vowed to someday drive the entire length in the future. Unfortunately, last fall Ron Garside fell ill and died.

At Mr. Garside's funeral, his wife and daughter had occasion to discuss their hopes of driving Route 66 in Austin Sevens. This trip is the result of those plans, and the fruition of those dreams.

The group arrived in Newark, New Jersey and prepared their Austins, all of which were manufactured prior to 1940 for the journey with a special crew and guides for the tour. Their trek will include stops at Butler, PA, home of the American Austin Bantam Company, also the "child" of famed Austin Founder, Henry Austin.

Sunday evening the group will be staying at the Days Inn in Lewisburg overnight and departing Monday morning along Route 45 toward Butler, and throughout Central Pennsylvania.

With many side trips and events planned along the tour, the group anticipates arriving in Barstow, Calif. on Sept. 22.




Members of the American Austin Bantam Club have taken the initiative

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to "adopt" the travelers along the route and are encouraged to escort them along in their own pre-war American Austins and Bantams.

With a bit of luck the weather will turn for the better as the pre-war tourers continue on their journey. But for Sunday night, the Lewisburg Day's Inn provided the backdrop for the group's first Pa. stay, with dry lodging and warm friendly patter with local AABC members.

- Chuck Koons is a long time car, motorcycle and motorsports enthusiast. He can be reached at ckoons@ptd.net .

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