

# Caterham blat lures sports car owners from U.S., England

BY MURRAY CRAWFORD

**ADVOCATE STAFF**

Getting sports car owners to ship their pride and joy almost 7,000 km for a 10-day drive through some of Canada's most picturesque regions was not a tough sell.

Terry Johns, a race car driver and instructor at Fort Saskatchewan's Stratotech Park, is one of two Alberta owners of a Caterham, a sports car that is rare in Canada but is popular and beloved in Europe.

"When you look at cars like the Corvette or the Viper, the Caterham will eat these things for breakfast," said Johns, who moved from England to Red Deer in 2005.

Costing anywhere from \$50,000 to \$120,000, Caterhams were never officially imported to Canada by the manufacturer, leaving people who wanted the vehicle having to import them individually.

"Most of us English people think North Americans buy cars by the pound, the bigger they are the better value for money they are," said Johns. "The Caterham is a very small car, weighs just over 1,000 pounds (453 kg) and when you stand beside it, it comes up to the top of your knee."

But what the Caterham lacks in size and mass, it makes up for in performance.

He and 15 other owners of Caterhams are going on a blat, called a cruise in Canada, from Red Deer out to Vancouver Island, by way of Jasper.

Six of the owners and their wives have had their cars shipped from England. They arrived in Calgary with their cars on Tuesday and will spend two nights in Red Deer before they embark on their journey. People are also coming from Texas, California, Alaska, Florida and other parts of Canada to



Photo by ASHLI BARRETT/Advocate staff

John McCallum shows off his Caterham 7 in the Red Deer Advocate Parking lot on Tuesday afternoon. The vehicle, which has only been on the road for a month, will be part of a rally featuring many foreign vehicles.

participate in the drive.

"It is going to be the biggest gathering of Caterhams ever in Canada," said Johns. "It is a very rare car here in Canada."

Caterhams were first made in 1957 and Johns calls them the performance yardstick for sports cars.

Johns bought his first Caterham in 1975 when he still lived in England. He had wanted one for a few years and sold his Jaguar to raise the money for his first Caterham. On top of racing, he helps people in North America who are trying to acquire Caterhams.

They start their journey from the

iHotel in Red Deer, at 6500 67th St., on Thursday at about 10:30 a.m.

"Many of the people coming have never been to Canada before," said Johns. "We're driving amongst the wildlife and we're going to warn them about Canadian drivers and their observation skills."

Originally they had planned to start in Wetaskiwin and go through Edmonton to get to Jasper, but Johns changed his mind and decided it would be more scenic to start in Red Deer and head to Nordegg before going north to Jasper.

[mcrawford@reddeeradvocate.com](mailto:mcrawford@reddeeradvocate.com)





Photo by MURRAY CRAWFORD/Advocate staff

Ten Caterhams and their owners and drivers left Red Deer Thursday as part of a 10-day drive to Vancouver Island. The rare sports car is a favourite of many drivers.

# Brit wheels roll through Rockies

## CATERHAM CARS SET OUT ON 'BLAT' DRIVE TO VANCOUVER ISLAND

BY MURRAY CRAWFORD  
ADVOCATE STAFF

Ten sports cars — six imported from Great Britain — embarked on a 10-day trek through the Rocky Mountains from Red Deer on Thursday morning.

More than 20 enthusiasts of Caterham cars from all over North America and England gathered in a corner of the iHotel parking lot in Red Deer for the blat, or cruise as it is known in Canada.

They will drive to Vancouver Island over the next week and a half through the Rockies, a trip some are excited for.

"Last November my wife and I sat down and I said I really want-

ed to do this," said Angus Denny.

"I really like touring and camping. We take a tent normally and pack it through Europe. But this time I said I would really like to go to Canada for fantastic driving through the Rockies. It's going to happen, I have the time."

The trip started as an idea three years ago pitched by Red Deer resident Terry Johns saying "Anybody fancy the idea of a blat through the Rockies?" Johns came to Canada eight years ago from England and is passionate about his Caterhams.

Denny, from Guildford, England, said it took a while for someone on the British end of the trip to step up and organize it. When he decided he was committed to

going, he came forward and started organizing it from his end.

"It was more effort than I thought it would be because nobody does this sort of thing," said Denny. "You say 'I want to ship my car to Canada,' and they say, 'You want to do what?! Why don't you just hire a car on the other end?'"

But some people understood why Denny and his small group of Caterham enthusiasts wanted to do this.

"I'm here to have a great time, experience the country, the people and everyone I've met so far has been friendly and interested in the cars," said Denny.

Please see **CARS** on Page **C2**