

Spark & Spanner

The Official
Publication of
the South
Alabama British
Car Club

February 2024



From the President

Ben Cummings

I had a great time conducting the first meeting of the year. The meeting was a little long. I apologize for that. I hope to be less longwinded at future meetings. But we had a lot to discuss.

The vice president of membership, **Rick Black**, passed out the printed directories and gave his membership report, and a new vice president of activities was introduced. We look forward to the fresh ideas that the young whipper-snapper, **Max Menaker**, will bring to the club. I am fortunate to have the help of two great VPs.

Treasurer **Donna Eagleson's** report was thorough and transparent. And **Peter Lee's** many reports as webmaster, secretary, and now chairman of the Car Festival were amazing. How does he do it all? Our past president, **Tom Renick**, even grabbed the microphone to pass out a few more awards from the Christmas Party. I think he must miss the presidency.

The members at large and historian were offered the opportunity to give reports. In the interest of time, they declined. But our esteemed newsletter editor, **Michael King**, did not pass on his opportunity [I *appreciated being recognized!*-Ed.].

Everyone was in great spirits and seemed to enjoy the meeting. I am pleased to say we had a large attendance. And I am also pleased that we had several new members in attendance.

After an hour-long business meeting it was time to start the program. Previous presidents were able to conduct business and have a program within one hour. Again, I apologize.

On the cover: **John Twist** explains the workings of an alternator at the SABCC seminar (photo by **Robb Ogletree**).

Rodney McDonald gave an informative narrative of the founding of the Club and passed out some articles written by Mike Thomason about the early days of the SABCC.



Then **Donna Jarvis** spoke of her experience from the viewpoint of a spouse. Her story of one of her sons burying his shoes at a car show got a few chuckles. Her husband **Keith** brought some items of interest. He has every dash plaque from every SABCC Car Festival. They were interesting to see.

Don Pritchett talked of the various activities. The activities in the early days looked fun. I'd like to have a Fun Khana again. But as Don said, "the cars and the drivers were much younger then." And then **Tom Schmitz** told a moving story about how his wife found close friends in the SABCC.

I enjoyed the program and learned a lot from it. As new president I needed to learn how we came to be and what we have done in the past 34 years. We have done a lot.

February's big activity was the **John Twist** seminar (see p. 5). He spoke on electrical systems, using a TF and a late-model MGB to cover all electrical components, both old and new. Our brothers and sisters at PBCA and MGMG joined us at the Garagemahal. It was a great event, and I enjoyed seeing you there.

Safety Fast,

Ben



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Membership in SABCC is open to anyone with an interest in classic or modern British cars, and dues are only \$20 per year [*Inflation? Not here! Ed.*].

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Spark & Spanner Submissions

Ed. needs for your submissions for *Spark & Spanner*.

Categories include

- **Activities Calendar:** SABCC events, car shows, and other events worth noting
- **Sparks:** news about club members, activities, and events
- **Spannering:** car repairs, restoration projects, tips and tricks, and prepping a car for a show
- **Spare Parts:** Auction Roundup, British car news, and whatever *Ed.* finds interesting
- **Gotcha!:** how members acquired their cars
- **Around the Bend:** Synopses of upcoming car shows and other events
- **Feature Stories:** Longer general interest items
- **Classifieds:** Sell your car or parts, or list what you need to buy

Submissions should be sent to SparkSpanner@gmail.com. Almost any text format is acceptable. Please include relevant photos.

Around the Bend

Upcoming Club Activities



February 21, 2024

British Car Festival Meeting, Beef O’Brady’s, 8495 Spanish Fort Blvd, Spanish Fort, AL, 36527, 6:00 – 8:00. This is the kickoff meeting for the 2024 show.

February 27, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting, Don Carlos, 29699 AL 181, Daphne, AL, 36526, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00.

March 2, 2024

Scottish Festival British Car Display, Frank Brown Park, 16200 Panama City Beach Pkwy, PC Beach, FL, 32413, opens 9:00 a.m. Free entry if displaying a car.

March 16, 2024

Fairhope Arts and Crafts Festival Car Display, sponsored by Mardi Gras MGs, Bancroft St. between Fairhope and Morphy Avenues, 9:00.

March 23, 2024

British Car Day, sponsored by the British Motoring Club of New Orleans, Covington, LA.

March 26, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting, Don Carlos, 29699 AL 181, Daphne, AL, 36526, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00.

February 2024

SU	MO	TUE	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
			BCF Meeting			
25	26	27	28	29		
		Club Meeting				

March 2024

SU	MO	TUE	WE	TH	FRI	SAT
					1	2
						Scottish Festival
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
						Fairhope A & C
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
						BMCNO Show
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
		Club Meeting				
31						

Sparks

Club and Member News

John Twist is Electric

story by Ben Cummings, president, SABCC

The South Alabama British Car Club hosted another **John Twist** Seminar on Saturday Feb. 10. The event was held at **Donna and Noel Eagleson's** "Garagemahal." Thank you to those that helped clean up and set up the day before.



On the seminar day, Donna made coffee and provided an ample supply of doughnuts. And lunch was furnished by my wife, **Laura**. She arranged for Jimmy John's sandwiches. And the afternoon snacks were King Cake and popcorn. Mardi Gras beads were furnished to celebrate the Carnival season.

John Twist conducted a most informative and entertaining seminar. He is an interesting storyteller. He started the day telling of how he became interested in MGs and how he became a trained MG mechanic at University Motors in London, England.

He began by saying he's not a "car guy"; meaning that his passion is only the MG. His lesson for the day was all about the electrical system of the MG. The Austin Healey, Jaguar, Triumph, and Sunbeam guys had to enjoy the day and likely (hopefully) learned something that related to their cars.



Above and below, participants listen intently (top photo by **Donna Eagleson**, bottom photo by **Robb Ogletree**)



Michael King provided his brother's late-model MGB and Bob Manske of the Panhandle British Car Association (PBCA) brought his MG TF from Milton, Florida. Thank you, Michael and Bob, for allowing John to demonstrate with your cars [*my sister-in-law, Jen, would want me to point out that the MGB is hers, not my brother's-Ed.*].

Fifty-three people were in attendance. The region's three British car clubs—SABCC, Mardi Gras MGs, and PBCA—were all well-represented.

Part of the SABCC Mission Statement is to promote camaraderie through British car-oriented events. The club succeeded on Saturday in meeting the obligations of the Mission Statement. There was socializing, eating, learning and sharing. The SABCC hopes to continue to host events like this, where all can enjoy the benefits of being a member and enjoy the passion of British cars with others.



The demo cars, with **Noel Eagleson** in the TF (photo by **Donna Eagleson**)



Caroline Brown helps with a wiring diagram (photo by **Robb Ogletree**)

End of an Era

story by **Noel Eagleson**

For over 30 years the name of **Darby Classic Restorations** has been very well-known to most British car enthusiasts along the Gulf Coast and indeed into Georgia and the Carolinas. Alas, all good things must come to an end, and due to ongoing health issues with both **Mike Darby** and his wife **Nancy**, he decided to close his restoration shop during 2021.

In December last year, their daughter, Stella, who was visiting from Yorkshire England, had to make a life-changing decision for her parents. During lengthy consultation with their primary care and specialist physicians, the decision was



Above (left to right) **Noel Eagleson**, **Dave Roloson**, and **Karen Roloson** run the sale (photo by **Donna Eagleson**); below, (l to r) **Rick Black**, **Eddie Toenes**, and **Tom Renick** with the lathe (photo by **Noel Eagleson**)



made that her parents would be much better in an assisted living environment.

Mike and Nancy are now located in The Brennity, an assisted care facility in Daphne, situated on County Road 13, Baldwin County. They would love for folks to stop by for an hour, or perhaps just a card saying you are thinking of them would be appreciated.



PBCA past president Bill Weeks riding high (photo by Noel Eagleson)

Selling property at any time can be a mammoth task. Couple that with the disposal of a mountain of British car parts, both new and used, and MGA chassis and engines plus attended drill presses, a South Bend lathe and other additional workshop-related tools, and some serious thought was needed.

This is where the three British car clubs along the Gulf Coast sprung into action. Members of SABCC, MGMT and PBCA arranged a two-day Autojumble for the weekend of January 27 and 28.

Pre-planning is everything. Members rallied to the call and were a tremendous help bringing heavier parts down from the loft and generally making things more assessable for folks to see and buy. Prices had to be decided and many hours were spent on cell phones checking part numbers from our bigger suppliers. Tom **Renick's** cell phone was so hot he had to wear asbestos gloves!

Saturday morning did not bode well, with heavy rain and colder than most southerners like, yet that did not deter the buyers who turned out by the truckload to buy up parts they may need for their restoration projects.

It's said that an army marches on its stomach.

George and Caroline Brown and **Karen Roloson** brought along enough food to ensure folks did not go away hungry over the two days.



PBCA current president Paul Reese and wife Molly find the Prince of Darkness (photo by Noel Eagleson)

While day two started slow, once folks got home from church the tempo kicked up another notch and some even came back for another look around and to find some treasure they missed before.

Over the two days Karen Roloson and my wife **Donna** were in charge of all money transactions. While we are still in the process of liquidating a few additional larger items, we were very pleased with the support and sincerely thank all who made the sale a great success.

You will be interested to know that Mike's 1956 MGA and this father's 1935 BSA motorcycle plus sidecar are now in the Garagemahal. The intention is that Mike will come over a couple of days a week and continue "swinging spanners" like the old days! Safety Fast!

Spannering

Advice on Repairs, Parts, and Services

Coolant: Cool it or lose it!

story by *Mac McNamara*

How long ago did you check your coolant, I mean, beyond the “yep! thar’s flewid’s init!?” It’s been a few years for me and my Anglia, and longer for a couple of other cars. With all the other “fun” I’ve had with the car this past year, I thought I’d get a jump on preventive maintenance instead of reactive maintenance.

The cooling system is one of the least-checked items on anyone’s list, and one of the many things that can leave you stranded in a bad situation. If you’re lucky, it will be for a short time and relatively inexpensive repair. Less lucky ones will lose an engine, or worse. As the diabetes commercial states: “Too much? That’s the point.” Spend about 15 minutes and check the coolant.

Tools needed:

- Anti-freeze and coolant tester (hydrometer) - under \$5.00 at your big-box auto supply location)
- Digital voltmeter - you probably already have one
- An assistant, safety glasses and water-resistant gloves

Let’s start with the hydrometer and a cold engine. The hydrometer tests ethylene glycol on a temperature scale from -51°C to 0°C (-60°F to 32°F), indicating whether the solution is properly mixed to prevent freezing. It also provides easy visual inspection that identifies if the acids or solutions are in proper state.

Here are the steps to follow:

1. Remove radiator cap and check the following with the hydrometer:

- a. Level in radiator is acceptable
 - b. Color of extracted liquid – there should be no rust, oil, gas or other contaminants
 - c. The anti-freeze mix will supply protection for the expected temperatures for your area
2. If you have a mechanical fan clutch, rotate the fan by hand to check for excessive noise, stiffness or looseness.
 3. Inspect the fan blades for signs of damage that could lead to imbalance and eventual failure.
 4. Inspect the fan belt (and any other belts) for signs of wear, cracking or glazing, and for proper tension. Make sure all pulleys are aligned.

Next, we’ll utilize the voltmeter to verify the condition of the coolant. The radiator cap should still be off for this test, which takes a while because your car must be warm, circulating the coolant.

1. Set the voltmeter to 12 VDC setting.
2. Connect the battery ground to your voltmeter. If you have a positive ground car (like mine), that’s the positive lead of the voltmeter, otherwise it’s the other way around. Shouldn’t have to type it, but better safe than sorry!
3. When the coolant begins circulating, rev the car to around 2,000 RPM and keep it steady for about 30 seconds.
4. Carefully place the other meter lead into the circulating water and look at the average reading over about 20 seconds. If the reading is above 0.4 VDC, it is time to change the fluid.

When you change the coolant on your vehicle, you need to verify the type needed, but most older cars will utilize the traditional green antifreeze. It is recommended you premix full-strength antifreeze with distilled water prior to filling the radiator. Most auto stores will take the used antifreeze [*call first, AutoZone doesn’t-Ed.*].

The Best of

Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana

Ever think of driving an “exotic?” Probably my most exotic car was a 1931 Lagonda super-charged low chassis, a mouth full. The same age I was, I traded with Pensacola’s mayor, giving him my

1931 Packard town car landau-let.

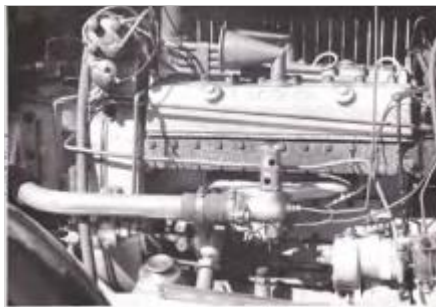
The car had an



Pierre with the Lagonda

aluminum body, was leather covered to the cowl, had a green leather interior, and a four-cylinder, dual overhead cam engine with a cross flow head. A big Roots supercharger was mounted vertical in front of engine which was a one problem. The car had no fan and no place to put one. In 1931, light traffic condition and a wealthy owner having other wheels to get there meant no problem, maybe. Really, the car was only good to get your picture in the newspaper.

The tranny was full non-synchro, and it took me a few days to master up and down shifting, if you missed timing, you might as well stop and



Lagonda engine

start over. That is why I ended up with the car — you had to learn how to drive it. The shifter and hand brakes were outside the car, and it no door on that side. With a four-speed slide type gear-box, all sorts of switches and gauges, and levers to control everything from spark to mixture, it was a mechanic's dream. It also offered no pro-



All photos courtesy Pierre Fontana

tection from the weather or engine heat. The clutch housing was open because of a clutch brake that could be used to help get it in gear when lost. I never figured that one out. The moral of the story: the exotic isn't always good, but it is nice to look at.

My second example of this is a 1914 French Leyat. A French “go-getter” named Marcel Leyat was nuts about airplanes; he designed,



1914 Leyat

built, and flew his own in 1909. He formed a company that started building cars at end of WW I and was selling them by 1919. Can you see the terror of French pedestrians looking at that thing coming at them? It was light, with no tranny or rear end. A young French student at University of South Alabama owned this contraption and we became friends while he was here. He later worked for the planning division of Peugeot. This is another exotic best driven on Sunday, away from crowds.

Pierre Fontana is a technical advisor for SABCC. This column is from January 2015.

Spare Parts

News from the British Car World

“Little British Cars” Top Hagerty’s List of “5 Fantastic First Project Cars”

An [article](#) on Hagerty Media put “Little British Cars” at the top of its list of best projects for the novice, noting:

A cheap British sports car can offer plenty of, uh, opportunities to bond with the mechanically inclined owner. The nice thing is that there were tens of millions of Austin-Healeys, Triumphs, and MGs produced during the 1960s and '70s that share much in terms of maintenance parts and techniques. The cars are relatively affordable, and thus, so are the parts. The biggest boon: support and knowledge provided by other enthusiasts. British car clubs are often large and helpful – perfect for a newbie to the genre.

While *Ed.* might argue with the “tens of millions” number, the rest of the article seems spot-on. Others making the list were the VW Beetle, the Ford Model A or T, trucks of the ‘70’s or ‘80’s, and “anything you don’t expect to daily drive.” {*Ed. thanks David Menaker for this lead.*}



[The Autopian](#) published a story Feb. 7 on the new gas-powered MINI Cooper S, whose styling is much simpler (no hood scoop or fender gills). Unfortunately, the manual gearbox is also gone.

Auction Roundup: Post-Abingdon

[Auction Roundup has been featuring a different MG series each month, to honor the MG Centenary. This is the final installment-Ed.]

1994 MG RV8



Sold for \$30,000 on Bring a Trailer

Most of the 2000 RV8s built were sent to Japan, and this car is no exception. With just 44k kilometers, or 27k miles, this green over ivory example had just minor flaws. The luxurious RV8 was powered by a 190 hp, 3.9L Rover V8, and offered leather seat covers, air conditioning, and a burlwood dash. The cars were built using modified MG Heritage body shells, but 75 percent of the parts were not shared with the original MGB.

1996 MGF



Sold for \$5,780 on Bring a Trailer

Finished in Volcano over black, this Japanese-market example had non-functioning A/C and various blemishes, but only 46k km (28k mi).

1997 MGF



Sold for \$9,688 on Cars and Bids

In British Racing Green over black, this 25k-mile MGF had some exterior scratches, wear on the seat bolsters, some loose upholstery, and 10-year-old tires, but otherwise presented quite well, and offered air conditioning – and a Japanese toll card reader.

Classifieds

1960 Triumph TR3

Stored in rear of my shop for the past few years. Too many new projects. This one needs to go.

- Frame clean, straight, painted a few years ago. no rust
- Tires, brakes, and wheel bearings new
- Engine turns free but has not been run in many years
- Gearbox shifts easily
- Body is off the car; floor pans and door sills are rough, but rest of the sheet metal is pretty straight.
- Lots of new parts included
- Carbs were rebuilt by Mike Darby a few years back

I also have a spare TR3 engine and two TR3 gearboxes that I will include or can sell separately.

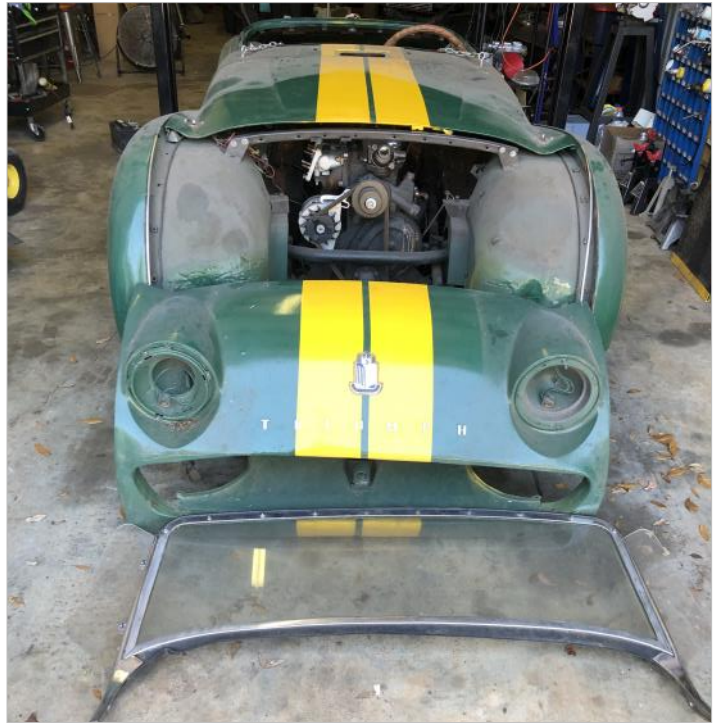
Car can be seen in Daphne. I have lots more photos if anyone is interested.

I'm asking \$2500 for the lot. Let's talk.

Laramie Dixey

251-472-6446

planetdixey@gmail.com



3 quarts of Redline MT90 75W90 GL4 manual transmission lubricant and one of high performance 75W90 gear oil for sale, \$10 each. They are old, but should be good. **Bob Bulfin, Bobbulfin@gmail.com**

1980 Triumph Spitfire 1500

Pageant Blue. Runs and drives, but needs restoration work. New mechanical fuel pump, rear brake parts except drums, seat belts and hardware, gas cap seal and gas filters, windshield wipers, and hood prop rods. Needs convertible top, rust area repair around the trunk lid corner and bottom, interior work. Rubber bumpers in bad shape, so started conversion to chrome; rear complete, front not done. Previous owners used older seats without headrests and a stripe on the hood with the "Triumph" wreath logo. \$3500.



Mike Japp, webmaster@pbca1.org

1948 MG TC



Matching numbers; less than 2,000 miles since frame-off restoration. Many upgrades to engine and drive train. \$29,000.

Text 251-752-4434

1993 Jaguar XJS Coupe

"Facelift" Jaguar coupe featuring smooth, durable 4.0-litre inline six and four-speed automatic. Full power accessories, "basketweave" alloy wheels, climate control, and trip computer. 138,000 miles. Boot lid requires repainting, and driver's seat and console lid need recovering. Good running and driving condition. \$2200.



Bob Henson, 251-962-4617



1972 MGB



I have decided to sell my waaaaayyy over restored 1972 MGB for a number of reasons, health being the main one. The car received a bare metal restoration in 2009. The body was done by Continental Classic Cars in Moss Point, MS with the engine, transmission and overdrive all receiving a full, complete overhaul by our own **Mike Darby**. It has always fired up quickly even after a few months of not being driven and has been very reliable. I wouldn't hesitate to do a trip with this car like Mike did a number of years ago with his MGA.

I have extensive documentation for this vehicle, including receipts for all work done, BHMC Certificate and photo documentation. The car is the original Mallard Green. This car was restored with no budget and an open checkbook and, while not a concours restoration in the strictest sense of the word, it has been restored to a level that is far beyond what the car was new. I'd like to offer it locally before putting it out nationally. The asking price is \$25,000 and while not cheap is far, far less than I have invested in the car. Many more photos are available.

It is available for a test drive an inspection on an appointment only basis as a friend is allowing me to store it with his large classic/ antique car collection out near the airport.

Ken McElhaney, Jr.

251-401-4474

jekadad@hotmail.com or

Ken.mcelhaney@gmail.com





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Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor, *Spark & Spanner*

Fun or Folly?

At what point does a car project become, well, pointless? When one spends more than the car will ever be worth? When the ravages of the tin worm are such that no amount of cutting, welding, patching, or (yikes) Bondo will ever result in a sound car? Or when one realizes that they have simply lost interest in ever finishing?

My first project car was a rolling refurbishment of a 1979 MG Midget. At the bottom of the British car “food chain,” the rubber-bumper Midgets, with their Triumph 1500 engines, will probably never bring the big bucks on the Barrett-Jackson stage. Nonetheless, possessed of a high level of interest, lots of support from my car club friends, and a decent financial situation, I proceeded to pour way more time and money into the car than it likely deserved. When I finally did sell it, I recouped less than half what I had spent, but I had fun, learned a lot, and, I’m proud to say, passed it on to **Mason Blosser**, who is still driving and enjoying it.

On the preceding page of this issue, I noted an article from Hagerty Media which suggests that a “little British car” is the first choice for a novice enthusiast (the accompanying photo is a square Sprite, the Midget’s close cousin). The other cars specifically listed – VW Beetles, Model As and Model Ts, and old trucks – all share a basic characteristic with the LBC. They are basic. Parts are cheap and generally available, systems are uncomplicated, and plastics are used sparingly.

But then Hagerty lists their last option: anything you don’t plan to drive every day. That’s obviously a broad category. I’ll suggest that some project vehicles would fall into another group –

cars that you, at some point, might not be able to drive, ever again.

As most of you know, I own three Jaguars – a 2001 and two 2011s. These cars are fiendishly complicated. All have dual overhead cam, four-valve-per-cylinder V8 engines, full electronic ignition and fuel management, electronically-controlled transmissions, climate control systems, “infotainment” systems, antilock brakes, traction control, and a full array of power accessories. Two have superchargers.

Writing for the website The Autopian, Stephen Walter Gossin, who loves to rescue old “beaters,” lamented the cost of parts on many newer cars. In his [article](#), Gossin cites some car price horror stories, including Cadillac XLR taillamps (\$1600-\$1900 each), Buick Reatta windcreens (\$1500), and 1993-2002 Pontiac Trans Am taillamps (\$1000 for a used pair). At what point does a DIY-er toss in the towel?

I’m facing a dilemma with the timing chain tensioners on my Jaguars. The 4-liter engine in my 2001 has a history of failed plastic tensioners, which can torpedo the engine. A midcycle upgrade was done before my car was built, but the final fix was not until the next model year. With just 61,000 miles and no noise on cold start, I’m hoping mine are OK, because replacing them could run \$2000 – \$3000. Even worse, the issue allegedly resurfaced with the 5-liter engines in my two newer cars.

So do we have any hope? In a word, yes. To paraphrase the Hagerty article, don’t have a car project you need to drive every day. Have a backup plan! Second, I’m encouraged by the development of new technologies, specifically 3-D printing, which could become a source of parts currently made of “unobtanium.” And finally, we can remind ourselves – *it’s just a car*. Don’t be afraid to walk away if the costs become prohibitive or the interest wanes. I won’t judge.

And now, for something completely different . . .



SABCC president **Ben Cummings** shared this picture of a TR3 (or perhaps a TR2, please correct me if I'm wrong). He says it might be a future "Diamond in the Rough" winner at next British Car Festival. Ben, Ed. is afraid this one is just an old lump of coal.

Spark & Spanner

South Alabama British Car Club

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Mobile, AL 36618



Find us on Facebook! Look for our Facebook page, **South Alabama British Car Club**, and our Facebook group, **Friends of South Alabama British Car Club**.