

Spark & Spanner

The Official
Publication of the
South Alabama
British Car Club

August 2022



From the President

Tom Renick

Time's Growing Short

Walking out of the Garagemahal late the other day, it occurred to me that the days are getting perceptibly shorter. Seems just yesterday that I was rejoicing that the days were getting longer and brighter and portending the coming of summer and more time to do things. Drat!

Now we have the threat of the heightened hurricane season upon us and cold, darker days. But wait! (as they say on TV), a big bright spot still remains on the calendar. Planning for our British Car Festival is in its most energetic phase and things are shaping up. Only two more months left before the big day but there's still time for you to contribute toward the festivities.

More nice door prizes are needed—the kind of thing you would like to win—so take the opportunity to pick something up and take it to the meeting (there are only two left before BCF), or drop it off at the Garagemahal.

Also, check with BCF Chairman **Brian Daly** if you would like to participate in some supporting capacity, or **Donna Eagleson** if you wish to assist with the Friday night dinner.

Activities VP **Don Pritchett** came up with a day trip to the Barber Museum near Birmingham for us for this month. This had been popular the last two times we went up and several club members indicated a desire to return. Apparently, scheduling got in the way of a lot of folks and there weren't enough going to be able to go to get the necessary guided tour early Saturday afternoon the 27th. So we have to pass on the trip for this round. It's really an amazing



Photo by Noel Eagleson

place to visit if you're up that way. Motorcycles galore.

At the same time, our enterprising BCF Publicity Chairman, **Ben Cummings**, using his high-level contacts around town came up with an interesting club participation activity. A local business is having a ladies clothing advertisement appear in the next issue of *Mobile Bay Monthly*. **Ben** saw publicity value in it for SABCC so arranged with individuals to have their British cars on Saint Louis Street for a photo shoot.

Three of us went and got our cars immortalized by a professional photographer with a fetching model in stylish attire. I plan to be the first at the newsstand to see how this develops. As it turned out, on the appointed day **Ben** was over yodeling in the foothills of Scotland and **Brian Daly** voluntarily stepped in and did a splendid job of coordinating with cast and crew. Great jobs from both.

Time to start cleaning your spokes and polishing your bumpers. And if you haven't registered your car yet, print the form from www.sabcc.org and send it on in.

Tom Renick is the president of South Alabama British Car Club. He claims he does not yodel, but he does sing in his church choir.



On the cover: *Mattie Lee, 14-year-old daughter of SABCC secretary Peter Lee, may not yet have her license, but she has a British car. See story, p. 5.*

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Secretary	Peter Lee
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Member at Large	Ben Cummings
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Membership in SABCC is open to anyone with an interest in classic or modern British cars.

Activities Calendar

August 23, 2022

SABCC Monthly Meeting, Don Carlos Restaurant, Daphne, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00, Dinner is on you.

August 27, 2022

NO EVENT—Barber Day Trip Canceled

September 15-18, 2022

Southeast British Car Festival, Dillard, GA, details [here](#).

September 24, 2022

Back Roads Tour, starts at Village Point Park, 27717 Main St., Daphne. Meet at 9:30 and depart at 9:45, followed by lunch at Cozumel Mexican Grill.

September 27, 2022

SABCC Monthly Meeting, Don Carlos Restaurant, Daphne, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00, Dinner is on you again.

Oct. 21 and 22, 2022

British Car Festival, details and registration form (yes, we are taking registrations) [here](#).

November 12, 2022

Tri-Club Auto Jumble, Darby Classic Restorations, 13823 Roberts Rd, Loxley, AL, 36561, 9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. No charge to shop or sell.

September 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	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	Road Tour
25	26	Club Mtg.	28	29	30	

British Car Festival is Supported by



Jaguar/Land Rover of the Gulf Coast

Sparks

Club and Member News



British Car Festival Update

SABCC president **Tom Renick** gave some updates on the British Car Festival in his column, but some points bear repeating. So, please indulge *Ed.* while he rehashes part of what **Tom** shared, and perhaps provides some additional information.

- The show is only two months away. *Ed.* is writing this on August 21st. The show is October 22nd. If you think you have plenty of time to get ready, *Ed.* suggests you do the math.
- Please welcome our new title sponsor. David J. Maloney, lead partner of Maloney-Lyons Attorneys at Law, is a British car fan and has stepped



up [*and you thought he just practiced personal injury law and made funny commercials-Ed.*]

- Sign up class sponsors. Besides Maloney-Lyons, we also have eleven General Sponsors (a new record) and as of this writing, 25 class sponsors. Four classes still only have one sponsor, and only three have more than two sponsors (on the signs, we can accommodate up to four per class).
- Donate a door prize. Have you ever spent all afternoon the day before a show getting your car ready, gone to a show, and come home totally empty handed. *Ed.* has! If nothing else, we want everyone who comes to our show to at least get a door prize. That can only happen if you donate something [*and as Tom suggested, make it something you would like to get-Ed.*].
- Register your ride. *Ed.* is your friendly (?) BCF registrar, and he really needs as many cars pre-

registered as possible. Doing so allows those who arrive Saturday morning unregistered to get through the line much faster. It also allows *Ed.* to print and laminate windscreen cards in advance. We have less than 25 cars registered now, and need to have 75 or more signed up before the day of the show.

- Volunteer. As **Tom** noted, **Donna Eagleson** is recruiting help for the Friday night dinner, and show chair **Brian Daly** and his committee chairs are handling all show day duties. Check with **Donna** or **Brian** if you need something to do, or even if you don't.
- Spread the word. If you think we are only doing this show for ourselves and other British car owners, you are sort of missing the point. None of are getting any younger (physically, at least). We owe it to the cars and the hobby we love to get the next generation of British car fans excited about what we do. Tell folks about the BCF, and invite them to attend.
- Get your car ready. As the past winner of a Hard Luck Award (Pensacola, 2018), believe *Ed.*: you do not want to be the person whose car goes home on a flatbed.
- Have fun. If you don't enjoy the show, you really are missing the point! You might even want to build a valve cover racer (see p. 11).



Mattie's MINI

story and photos by Peter Lee

So, you're a parent with a daughter that needs to start practicing driving. It's gotta be a manual so she develops all the skills required to escape the coming zombie apocalypse. Only a British car will do. But it also needs to be small and zippy so maybe we can do some auto-crossing under the guise of training.

So, a Mini quickly becomes the correct choice. And only a first gen supercharged model will do. Not the larger turbo models that came later. Facelift 2004-2006 models would be the best, but they are in high demand. Some will scream "money pit" from the highest tower, but if you are into British cars then you are already into frustration and disappointment. Yes, I know it's a BMW Mini but hey, it's better than a Ford or Chevy.



The proud owner with her new motor.

Nowadays you have to jump on a car when you find a deal, or it is gone in minutes. I had already missed a few good candidates because I wasn't the first, even five minutes after it was posted. Also, the plan was to find a car to keep Mattie going through high school. Then it would be led to my stable and find something better for the college drive. My wife didn't necessarily agree to this part of the plan, but she'll find out soon enough.

The final choice was a 2003 Cooper S, about five minutes from the house, where the guy in line ahead of me didn't show up to look at it. Bonus Dad points

that it was Mattie's first color choice of British Racing Green.

It has 98k miles, but the main issue was ridiculously fast overheating where it could barely get down the street before gurgling. It had been parked immediately when it happened and on my first test drive at home it overheated before the end of the driveway was reached. The previous owner had a shop put a new thermostat and water pump on for a cost of over a grand. The mechanic that did it must have failed to realize the PTO gear was free-wheeling. So, it turned out to be the water pump drive on the supercharger having failed its bearing allowing the gear to carve every tooth off its mate. It's easy to overheat a car quickly when the water isn't even being pumped.

I sourced a later 2004 model supercharger with the improved vane Teflon coating from north Alabama and assembled our underdrive pulley onto the replacement housing. I also completed the supercharger service while it was out of the car. After that it was running like a champ.

So far, we have attacked any leaks we could find with the valve cover gasket, oil pan gasket, crank position sensor o-ring, and oil filter housing gaskets.



These taillights are much better!

These are regular culprits and easier to do together. Fresh oil and filter went in, of course. Also new rear lights to get rid of the odd whiteout models.

(story continues next page)

Mattie's MINI, continued

Mattie is getting her hands dirty (sometimes). We sat down and went through all the systems we could to note everything we needed to attend as well. It is quite a list, but the highlight of that process was the initial opening the sunroof and having one of the plastic attachments break and fly off the roof; hitting Mattie in the cheek! Yeah, now it won't close completely, but that's okay. We had a new adventure at the salvage yard today and the replacement sunroof goes into the car tomorrow at the meager cost of 150 bucks.

We've also polished the yellow out of the headlights, cleaned the entire interior and exterior, and replaced the electric power steering fan and low speed cooling fan resistor. The next big job is getting the AC up and running.

We also have on the list to convince my wife that a cold air intake and exhaust is a necessary mpg boosting modification. Plus, Mattie wants a flag sticker on top. Truly, a Dad's work is never done!

Side note: my wife recently requested finding leather seats (front and rear) for the car, too. So, I'm on the hunt like a bloodhound tracking a scent. But I honestly think she is trying to steal the car for herself after Mattie finishes with it. Let the battle begin . . . [Editor's Note: No offense, **Brandi Lee**, but Ed. is rooting for Mattie in this battle.]



Does this get your juices flowing? **Ben Cummings** spotted this electric MG at a charging station in Scotland.

The Tale of Two MGs

story and photos by Bruce Mackey

Youngsters seem to develop favorites early in life. Frosted Flakes vs. Fruit Loops; Coke vs. Pepsi; Nike vs. Adidas and Chevy vs. Ford; are just a few examples. Another example is the children of parents who owned a British sports car, was MG vs. Triumph.



The author, at age 5, poses in his cowboy duds with an MGTD.

Every British car fan remembers those wonderful MG TC's, TD's and TF's! Those classic swooping fender lines literally defined "the sports car look" of the early 1950s.

However, after a somewhat slower start, Triumph hit the U.S. market in the late 1950's with the TR2 and the very popular wide-mouth TR3. Triumph followed up with the TR4 and the more powerful 6-cylinder, TR6.

MG answered the challenge with the MGA, MGB and the MGC. Plus, we all remember the economy sports cars; the MG Midget (Austin-Harley Sprite) battling the Triumph Spitfires. Motor Trend magazine did a [brief piece](#) on the competition between the two marque's in 2009.

I will unabashedly admit to being a Triumph guy. My first was a TR3A, a gift from my father; followed by a more powerful TR6.

(story continues next page)

A Tale of Two MGs, continued

However, like so many British car fans, I learned to embrace both brands. And despise the mechanicals of each without prejudice for one over the other.

This column focuses on two MGA's I owned during the 1980s. One car was deplorable! It barely ran,



Bruce's red roadster, which he rapidly sold.

was missing many parts and only looked good from about 50 feet or more. I purchased the red convertible from a neighbor and quickly decided the restoration was beyond my abilities and finances!

The other car was wonderful! It had been meticulously restored, was a rare coupe and drew attention where and when ever I drove it. An employee came to me, knowing my interest in sports cars, saying he really needed cash and could I help him out. One look at this blue coupe and I bought it!



Bruce's beautiful blue coupe was a keeper.

Although technically, the MG brand is still in business; the end for both vehicles really came during the early 1980's. I'm pleased to see so many of both brands have been restored to their original glory.

[Bruce invites your feedback at sbj1095@aol.com –Ed.]

On the Road to Recovery

photos courtesy Caroline Brown

SABCC member **Caroline Brown** does not limit her transportation interests to just British cars, or even to cars for that matter. She acquired a horse last year, but was seriously injured while riding. After a long and arduous recovery, she's back in the saddle, as shown below (with husband **George**).



Caroline also sent *Ed*. this photo of her sanding her old Subaru in her college days. She says she had it painted for about \$150 and used it a year before trading up to a Chevrolet Citation . . .



The Best of

Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana

Problems with Seldom-Driven Cars

Kit cars are not always built for ease of maintenance. They can be cute and fast, and some are dangerous. This MG-looking Midget is on a VW chassis, and I



have maintained it for many years. It is surprisingly well-built, runs nice, and handles well, but the only problem is the owner never drives it, so once a year or two, it refuses to start and it limps over here.

This time it came on a tow truck after a couple years of sitting. The battery took a charge, and it almost cranked up with a prime, but it would not stay running. It had fuel and had fire, but no cigar on staying running. I removed the distributor and replaced points, mostly to feel good about the ignition, and tested it on the bench.

No way, no how could I see the gas tank, or get a hose in it. It is trapped in fiberglass under the cowl, and the filler cap is where a radiator cap is normally. I bet he gets stared at filling the "radiator" with gas at a local station. A pipe goes to the gas tank from there.

I removed the carburetor and it was full of rusty brown gasoline. I cleaned it and soaked it overnight. Since I could not drain the tank, I used a fuel



All photos courtesy **Pierre Fontana**

injection high pressure pump to suck out the old rusty fuel, and flushed it with fresh gas, until it ran clear. It is an exercise in futility, as rust will form again and constipate the system all over again. To postpone problems, I installed two filters, one before the mechanical fuel pump, and one before the carburetor. The car has a German engine, and a Mexican carburetor. . . mixed-up world.

The moral of the story, is use Stabil, drive them once in a while, and shake that brew. If you know it is going to be immobile for a long time, add an ounce or two of oil to gas tank, and shake it up. In two photos of the same jar you first see gas and rust mixed, which looks brown and cloudy. By the next day, rust and mud have settled at bottom of jar, and that is what your carburetors will try to digest.

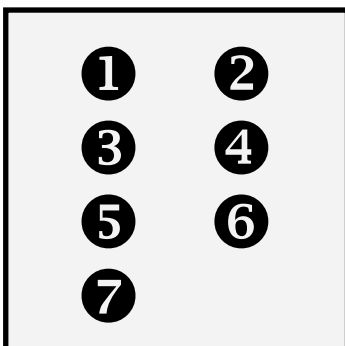


Pierre Fontana is a technical advisor for SABCC. This column first ran in May 2013.

Spare Parts

Cars of Scotland

Ben Cummings snapped these pics of car logos he saw on a recent trip to Scotland. Using the key below, how many can you identify? Send your answer to [Ed](#). The first correct entry gets a free grille badge!



Auction Roundup—Low Miles

[The four cars below average less than 1000 miles per year—Ed.]

6,200-mile 2000 Jaguar XK8



Sold for \$22,950 on Hemmings

With only a scuff on the passenger seat, and a clean Carfax this platinum over charcoal XK8 is as new.

16,000-mile 2005 Lotus Elise



Sold for \$33,500 on Bring a Trailer

Finished in Arctic Silver Metallic over red leather, this Elise's only imperfections were a few rock chips and some scraping under the front bumper cover.

12,000-mile 2007 Jaguar XKR Convertible



Sold for \$33,500 on Bring A Trailer

Another Jaguar convertible in excellent condition, this Porcelain over Ivory car has a supercharged V8..

9,000-mile 2002 MINI Cooper S 6-speed



Sold for \$20,000 on Bring A Trailer

Low mileage Jaguars and Lotuses are one thing, but a 20-year-old MINI Cooper with 9,000 miles? What would it have brought if not for some paint chips, and surface corrosion on the exhaust tips?

Cars and Parts for Sale

1979 MGB

White with black interior, only has 13,000 original miles.. I have had it for over 6 years. This car has been gone through and pretty much anything that is thought to need replacing has been done,, New tires with new beauty rims, fuel pump, sending unit for fuel gauge, Slave and master clutch cylinder have been replaced and anything under the hood also has been changed if needed. It also has a new battery.

There is some small damage to the right front fender and you can see where someone before me has tried to touch it up. Car is in Gadsden, AL.

Asking \$7500.00

Bill Monk, wmonk1944@comcast.net
Cell 256-490-0761 (text me on this #)



1977 MGB

Sebring kit. Good condition. Asking \$7500.



Barrett
251-402-8800

1959 Austin-Healey Sprite

I have decided to pass my 1959 Bugeye on to someone else to complete. Old age and other projects have stalled this one. The good part: it has a 1275 motor and ribbed transmission. It has also been converted to front disc brakes. The bad: it needs floors, lower A pillar repair and lower rear quarters. Many spares are included. I am in Birmingham, Alabama. Please message me if interested. \$3,800.

Ray Reese (see Friends of SABCC Facebook page)



VALVE COVER RACING – SABCC British Car Festival 2022

Official Rules pilfered from the Panhandle British Car Association for our competition.

The Cars

- No engines or propulsion system. No moving weights. No store energy devices. Wheels can be attached to the car in any manner but must not extend beyond the front of the valve cover.
- Nothing can extend beyond the front edge of the valve cover.
- Cars shall be based on an actual rocker cover from any British automobile engine. Cars must have four wheels, each no more than six inches in diameter. Wheel must have a non-metallic surface contacting the track.
- Critical Dimensions:
 - 30-inch maximum overall car length.
 - 15-inch maximum overall car width.
 - 10-inch maximum overall car height.
 - 10 pounds maximum weight by official scales.



Make no mistake—Mattie is in it to win it!

Track Dimensions

- The course shall consist of a launch incline eight feet long, followed by a level run of twenty feet.
- The launch incline shall be divided into two lanes, each 18 inches wide. The incline shall be three feet high at the rearmost part and level with the course at the front edge. The front edge shall be mitered to provide a smooth transition from the incline to the run-out area.
- The official "Starting Line" shall be two feet from the rear edge of the incline. A mechanized starting gate should be provided.
- The run-out section of the course shall consist of two lanes. The lanes shall be clearly marked.
- The finish line shall be marked twenty feet from the front edge of the launch incline. The finish line will have a race official judging the winners.
- The official who judges the winners should be provided bodyguards and whisked away at the end of the races to a safe and secure location. Their decision is final and there will be no bribes or gifts accepted.

Running the Race

- Cars will be presented at a designated time for weight verification and judging of the style and engineering awards. Cars failing the weight verification will be allowed to adjust and reweigh once to not hold up the competition. No car will be allowed with a weight greater than 10.000 pounds by the club approved scale.
- Cars will be run in heats of two cars each and will be randomly drawn by race officials. The cars are to be launched with their front wheels on the starting line. The first car to have its front wheels cross the finish line is the winner. If neither car makes it to the finish line, the car going the furthest in its lane wins.
- If the wheels of a car should cross over the lane marker the car shall be disqualified. The competing car immediately becomes the winner.
- Winning cars will advance to the next round until all are eliminated except one car. That one car will receive all the praise and adoration due it.

Any rules not explicitly called out here will be up to the race officials on the race day, and their ruling is final.

Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor, *Spark & Spanner*

Buying a Low-Mileage Car

You might have picked up on a bit of a theme in this month's issue. In the Auction Roundup, I chose to feature cars that had been driven an average of less than 1,000 miles per year. Then, I found **Pierre Fontana's** May 2013 article on an MG T-series replica that was rarely driven, and the mayhem that ensued. Finally, I was sent a classified ad for a late MGB which, according to its owner, has just 13,000 original miles (or **310** miles per year).

In March 2021, I decided to sell my own rarely-driven car (a 2019 Corvette) and pay cash for a used car for myself, so that we could buy my wife a new vehicle. As previously reported here, I found the 2011 Jaguar XFR pictured above on eBay with less than 26,000 miles—not quite as low as the cars in the Auction Roundup, but quite rare given the low production numbers of this particular model. While the car has some minor blemishes, it has largely been trouble-free and drives as new.

Similarly, my 2001 Jaguar XJR was a low-mileage example. Owned by an older lady for most of its life, the car had 51,000 miles on it when I bought it in April 2019. It too has been largely trouble-free, only needing some maintenance issues addressed. I've added less than 9,000 miles since I bought it.

Conversely, my 2011 Jaguar XK, while still in very nice condition, had nearly 65,000 miles when I got it in May. While still in quite nice condition, it does have a bit more wear and tear than the others, even though less than 6,000 miles per year is low compared to the national average of 12,000 per year.

So, do I have any regrets about buying a low-mileage car? In a word, no. With these cars, I've not seen any issues that would indicate the relative lack of miles has caused any issues. I have vehicle history reports on each, and they show a slow but steady accumula-



tion of miles, and importantly, no accident history. This tells me the cars probably were not out of service for long periods of time due to major mechanical issues or collisions. Also, since I bought these cars with the notion of showing them, the low miles and lack of deterioration were important.

I did a little research on the Internet, and the articles I found made a few good points:

- Do not buy a low-mileage car without verifying the mileage. In my case, I had Carfax reports which proved the mileage to be correct.
- Have the vehicle inspected. Now, let me state that I have never had a vehicle inspected, but I know enough to spot most potential issues. However, if I had any concerns, I would pop for a pre-purchase inspection before closing the deal.
- Remember that cars are made to be driven, some components (especially rubbers gaskets and seals) deteriorate over time even if the miles are low, and long periods of non-use can create their own problems. **Pierre's** article pointed out the problems with old gas, which have gotten even worse with ethanol.

What's been your experience? Have you had good luck buying low-mileage cars, or have you been burned? Send your thoughts to [Ed](#), and if I get enough good material, I'll publish a follow-up in next month's column.

31st Annual British Car Festival Celebrating the MGA



October 23, 2021 • Fairhope, Alabama

Thank you Sponsors!



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SABCC Grille Badges

The South Alabama British Car Club commissioned a grille badge featuring our fabulous club logo. These heavy enameled, 3-1/2 inch high badges on chrome plated metal are the perfect companion for your British car. The club has subsidized the cost so that the member price is only \$20.00.



Noel Eagleson is the keeper of the box of badges and brings them to club meetings, so look him up. Or, you can send an email SparkSpanner@gmail.com and we'll make arrangements to get one to you-.



The only MEMBER-RUN organization for MGB, MGC, Midget, 1100/1300 and Post Abingdon Car owners.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP \$30 (\$45 overseas)

- *Dash plaque • Membership card • Window decal*
- *Six bi-monthly issues of The MG Driver, a 68-page informative magazine.*
- *Annual national convention - a four-day MG party!*

North American MGB Register

PO BOX 876 • Downers Grove, IL 62897-0876

Toll-free phone: 800-NAMGBR-1

www.namgbr.org

SABCC is a Chapter of NAMGBR

Spark & Spanner Submissions

Go ahead: make *Ed.*'s day. It's as easy as typing an email. That's right, *Ed.* is looking for your submissions for Spark & Spanner.

Every issue will include some, most, or all of the following:

- **Activities Calendar:** SABCC events, local and national car shows, and other events worth noting
- **Sparks:** news about club members, activities, and events
- **Spannering:** stories on car repairs, restoration projects, tips and tricks, and ideas on prepping a car for a show
- **Spare Parts:** Auction Roundup, news items on the British car industry, the collector car hobby, and anything else *Ed.* finds interesting
- **Gotcha!:** stories of how members acquired their cars
- **Just Around the Bend:** Synopses of upcoming car shows and other events
- **Feature Stories:** Longer submissions of general interest
- **Classifieds:** Sell your car or car parts - or let other members know what you'd like to buy

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

Resource Directory

Our guide to automotive resources has been released! If you have any other parts suppliers, mechanics, upholstery shops, machinists, or any other business, service, or vendor which might be helpful to SABCC members, please send these to *Ed.* at SparkSpanner@gmail.com.

Thanks!

And now, for something completely different . . .



Ed. regrets having to share this, having had a Brooklands Green Jaguar XJ-S, but if he's going to be true to the spirit (?) of this section of "Spark & Spanner," he must. This monstrosity of a monster truck fortunately uses only the body of the Jaguar grand tourer; the chassis is from a Chevy Blazer and the engine is a Chevy 350 small-block (what else could it be?). The thing was built by Rob Corddry of "Top Gun America," who had the gall to christen it the "XJ-Yes."

Spark & Spanner

South Alabama British Car Club

PO Box 18036

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**.