

# Spark & Spanner

The Official  
Publication of the  
South Alabama  
British Car Club

December 2022



# From the President

Tom Renick

## Wrapping Up 2022

Here we are in full swing of the season of Christmas parties. People like to have a reason to get together and have a good time. And in less than two weeks, hopefully the celebrations will be transformed into a recognition of the real reason for the season.

After the sputtering uncertainties of the past two COVID years, SABCC had a really great 2022. COVID didn't slow us down much, but 2022 normalized a bit and we came back strong. The annual picnic brought out a feed of delicious food and fine weather. Our Autojumble was well-attended with a lot of high-powered trading going on amidst munching donuts and sipping coffee. Best yet was this year's British Car Festival. It was the biggest so far with the number of cars on the field, and the weather was about ideal.

The Rock Creek Golf Club served up its usual delectable meal for us at our Christmas luncheon. "New" officers were installed (all carryovers), and well-deserved awards were given.

**Donna Eagleson - No Award Award.** After promising last year not to give her Member of the Year award anymore, I felt that she deserved some recognition since she probably does more for the club than anybody.

**Andrea Bertagnolli - Blue Light Special Award.** A natural-born shopper, she collected a multitude of door prizes for the Friday Night Dinner, BCF prizes, and club meeting prizes putting K-Mart to shame [*I thought they closed-Ed.*].

**Mardi Gras MGs - Friend In Need Award.** They are



Photo by Noel Eagleson

always there to help us when needed.

**Ron Wolverton - Ticketmaster Award.** Ron has carried a roll of tickets in his back pocket for years and is always divvying them out at club meetings. Additionally, he takes all of our BCF car photos, processes them, and delivers them.

**Brian Daly - Festival King Award.** Brian chairs BCF with royal precision and sees that everything goes just right.

**Peter Lee - Hot Wheels Techno Award.** Peter took on the successful valve cover race project after a period of inactivity, as well as being Webmaster and producing an extremely attractive website for us.

**Don Pritchett - Member of the Year Award .** After serving as VP Activities for years, Don is retiring. His inventive "Back Roads Tours" kept our cars rolling, and his construction of masterful awards kept us amazed. Thanks for those years of service.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all. See you at the next meeting January 24th.

**Tom Renick is the president of South Alabama British Car Club His award is that we have put up with him for all these years (just kidding, Tom).**



**SABCC Club Officers**

President	Tom Renick
VP Membership	Rick Black
VP Activities	<i>Vacant</i>
Secretary	Peter Lee
Treasurer	Donna Eagleson
Member at Large	Dick Bishop
Member at Large	Ben Cummings
Member at Large	Frank Stabler
Member at Large	Ron Wolverton
Technical Advisor	Pierre Fontana
Technical Advisor	Mike Darby
Webmaster	Peter Lee
Historian	Robb Ogletree
Newsletter Editor	Michael King

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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 [*no inflation here-Ed.*].

British Car Festival is Supported by



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## Activities Calendar

**January 24, 2023**

**SABCC Monthly Meeting**, Don Carlos Restaurant, Daphne, eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00. If your New Year's resolution is to lose weight, order carefully. Regardless, dinner is on you.

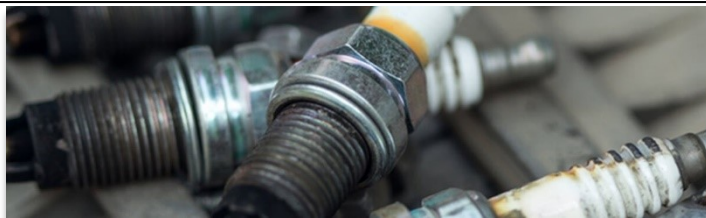
**Note: The Christmas Luncheon took the place of the December club meeting.**

## January 2023

Sun	Mo	Tue	We	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	24 Club Meeting	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

# Sparks

## Club and Member News



### 2022 Christmas Party

More than fifty SABCC members and guests attended the club's annual Christmas party, held again this year at the Rock Creek Golf Club in Fairhope. A highlight of the event was the presentation of club awards, as enumerated by our president, **Tom Renick**, in his column on page 2.

The party also serves as the official inauguration of SABCC's slate of officers, who were elected by the club at the November meeting. This year, with only one exception, each of the 2022 officers allowed themselves to be placed in nomination for yet another term; many have served several years in their current roles. The new (recycled) leadership team is pictured below.

The officer choosing to step down from his post is **Don Pritchett**, vice president activities. Don began serving the club in this capacity in January 1992 [Wow!-Ed.], so his retirement is well-earned. Don will continue to be an active [Parallelism intended-Ed.] member of the club, which is a tremendous relief for those hoping to earn one of his special awards at the car show [I almost want my car to break so I can get the Hard Luck Award-Ed.]. For his service, he was named Member of the Year.

Finally, the party is an opportunity to give back to our community. Members surrounded the base of the Christmas tree with unwrapped toys for kids in need. Thanks are due **David and Pat Couling** for hauling these to the Salvation Army Toy Drive.



2023 SABCC officers, L to R: **Tom Renick**, president; **Peter Lee**, secretary and webmaster; **Dick Bishop**, member at large; **Donna Eagleson**, treasurer; **Ron Wolverton**, member at large; **Rick Black**, vice president membership; and **Frank Stabler**, member at large. Not pictured are **Ben Cummings**, member at large; **Mike Darby** and **Pierre Fontana**, technical advisors; **Michael King**, [Ed.]; and **Robb Ogletree**, historian.

photo courtesy **Ron Wolverton**

## Christmas Party Photos

*courtesy Tom Renick and Ron Wolverton*



*Member of the Year Don Pritchett receives his award from Tom Renick.*



*Christmas gifts donated by members for needy kids.*

## Sex Appeal: My First Jaguar

story by **Bruce Mackey**

My first Jag was a 1972 series III XK-E, V-12, 2+2, coupe. The car turned heads wherever I drove it. The sleek lines, wide stance and long snout drew universal appeal.

I purchased the '72 model in the spring of 1974. I took delivery in the morning of a beautiful sunny Saturday. All car folks know it does not get much better, when buying a car, than a weather-perfect Saturday!

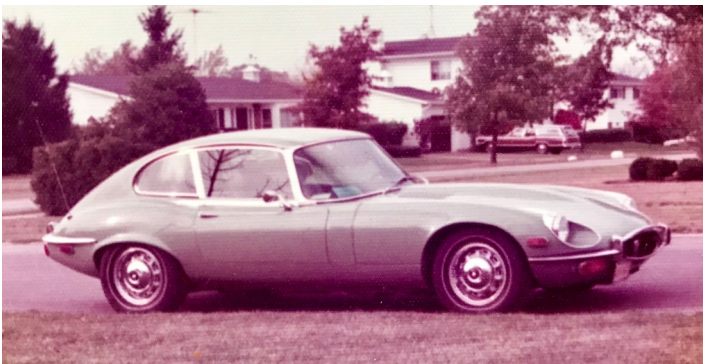
I lived in Libertyville, IL (about 30 miles north of Chicago) at the time. There was no plan where to drive, but rather let the Jag find the route.

After a few miles behind the wheel I found myself coming into the small village of Long Grove. Keep in mind, it was the early 1970s; free love, drugs and hippies abounded.

When I approached the only stop light in town, I noticed a tall, slim girl hitch-hiking. The light was red and I had turned on the Jag's left turn signal.

The hitch-hiker noticed the left blinker and took off running diagonally across the intersection. It left her in the perfect position to catch a ride in a British sports car.

No, I did not pick her up. But yes, at that moment I knew I had bought the right used sports car!



*Bruce's Jaguar E-Type 2+2*

*photo courtesy Bruce Mackey*

[SABCC member **Bruce Mackey** is a retired journalist living in Fairhope-Ed.]

## The Best of Pierre's Wisdom

**Pierre Fontana**

### Car Transport

Once you have sold a car that is not drivable, the new owner will select his transporter, so you never know who will show up until he calls you. Most professionals don't ask directions, they have GPS, or know how to read a map. They will call the day before to make sure you are awake and ready.

I have had the most prestigious movers, from Jay Leno's rented real F1 Formula race cars, with automatic lift gates, to this gentleman and his heavy duty diesel pickup and long twin-axle trailer, and his white boxer "co-driver" I fell in love with. Somehow he packed new and old cars, a four-wheeler, a Harley, and a pickup load of Triumph TR2, 3, and 4 parts plus the car. It was the most unbelievable overextended, latched-down set up I ever seen, and I hope it all makes it to California.



*photo courtesy Pierre Fontana*

Since his winch was not working, I used my old Mercedes wagon and a long rope to pull the Triumph all the way up front and beyond on a ramp he made to pack all this stuff in a limited space. It was the most ingenious rig I have seen, but not the safest. He must have used 50 heavy-duty tie-downs.

**Pierre Fontana** is a technical advisor for SABCC. This article first ran in December 2013.

## The MG Days of Christmas

★ On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, twin SU carbs for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a three-window hood for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, four chrome wire wheels for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, five Dunlop tyres! Four chrome wire wheels, three-window hood, twin SU carbs, for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, sixty pounds oil pressure in my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, seven ratchet spanners for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, eight pints of Castrol for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, ninety-weight gear oil for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, ten gallons petrol for my British Racing Green MGB.



★ On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, ethylene glycol for my British Racing Green MGB.

★ On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, twelve ounces DOT 4, ethylene glycol, ten gallons petrol, ninety-weight gear oil, eight pints of Castrol, seven ratchet spanners, sixty pounds oil pressure, five Dunlop tyres! Four chrome wire wheels, three-window hood, twin SU carbs, for my British Racing Green MGB!



*And a very happy Christmas to all!*



[And yes, if you like Ed's little rhyme, he might do versions for other marques in future years.]

# Spare Parts

## Ten British Cars to Avoid

[Note from Ed.: This article by Dennis Kariuki Njoki was published on [Hotcars.com](http://Hotcars.com) under the title 10 Beautiful British Classics That Will Bankrupt You With Maintenance Bills And Repairs. It's included in its entirety, along with a few comments from Ed., who thanks **Tony McLaughlin** for passing it along. No disrespect to the author, Fact-O-Bake, or Maaco are intended. All photos are from listings on Bring A Trailer.]

**10/10 Lotus Esprit** [see photo in Auction Roundup, p. 10 -Ed.]

Back in the day, owning a Lotus Esprit made you wonder why anyone would spend more on a Porsche or Ferrari when the Esprit [sic] was cheaper and offered incredible handling and blistering mid-range acceleration. Its distinctive wedge shape design and supercar looks are head-turners.

Surprisingly, the Lotus Esprit is still affordable today, but high service and repair costs are likely to be a pain in your wallet. The Esprit's [sic] 907 engine is the main culprit that contributed to its demise. Common problems included engine overheating and oil leaks [**Oil leaks**—say it isn't so!-Ed.]. Additionally, the fiberglass body was prone to cracks without forgetting the vibration and rusting of the steel chassis [What if the body did forget the vibration and rusting of the steel chassis?-Ed.].

**9/10 Jaguar E-Type**

The Jaguar E-Type reflects what British engineers can produce when they get down to serious business. It captivated enthusiasts' hearts around the globe for decades thanks to the car's gorgeous package and the marvelous inline six, or the V12 engine in the Series III. Even Enzo Fer-



rari couldn't hide his admiration of the E-Type when he called it "the most beautiful car ever made" [*and he was right*-Ed.].

However, amongst all the good things about the Jaguar E-type, reliability isn't one of them, especially in the Series I model. Owning one today isn't easy due to frequent repairs. According to *Road & Track*, more than 10% of the E-Type owners reported mechanical problems experienced in the cooling system, instruments, starter, clutch, fuel pump, and oil leaks [*Oil leaks, again?*-Ed.].

**8/10 Aston Martin V8 Vantage**

The 70s iconic Aston Martin V8 Vantage stands out as an impressive car, provided you can keep it running. This is due to the typical British poor reliability record combined with the fact that the model is over 40 years old [*Really?*-Ed.]. The finish lacks the crack resistance and durability of modern cars. The aluminum body panels also suffer from corrosion, especially on every part that comes into contact with the car's steel substructure.



Door sills, window pillars, door bottoms, and trunk floor are other problem areas that will have you put your mechanic on speed dial. Higher mileage units have mechanical problems in the ZF five-speed transmission, especially worn-out bearings and synchros. Finally, fixing the car's body requires specialized work and personnel, which is extremely expensive [*You mean Fact-O-Bake and Maaco can't handle a vintage Aston Martin?*-Ed.].

**7/10 Jensen Interceptor**

The Jensen Interceptor is popular not only for having one of the coolest names but because it's closely related to the Jensen FF – the first production car equipped with four-wheel drive and ABS



(article continues next page)



## Ten British Cars to Avoid, continued

in 1966. Impressive. However, you better look elsewhere when it comes to reliability and durability.

Well, the Jensen Interceptor has an American V8 engine under the hood, but don't forget it's still a British car [*Doom!-Ed.*]. Two main issues plagued the Interceptor. The first is rust which mainly affected the earlier Vignale-built Interceptors. Secondly, the car experienced severe electric faults [*No!-Ed.*] that prompted the automaker to fit fire extinguishers. And being a hand-built car, repairs are expensive and time-consuming. Simple changes like hood repairs will fetch you over \$1,000 [*So Fact-O-Bake and Maaco can't handle Jensens, either?-Ed.*].

### 6/10 Aston Martin Lagonda

During the 70s, Aston Martin was really in bad shape. The company unveiled the Lagonda in 1976, two years before the British automaker went bankrupt. The Lagonda was highly overpriced, and unreliable.



The car comes with amazingly modern [*for the 1970's -Ed.*] cutting-edge electronics waiting to break down anytime [*Did someone say Lucas?-Ed.*]. As such, the Lagonda is probably not a wise investment if reliability is what you want from a car [*Oh yes, reliability is a must in a nearly-50-year-old exotic-Ed.*].

**5/10 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow** [*see photo in Auction Roundup, p. 10-Ed.*]

At its launch, the Silver Shadow represented a striking change from its predecessor, the Silver Cloud. While it was smaller and less attractive, the Shadow dropped some weight; hence it was a better handler and faster than any Rolls-Royce that came before it. It captured the hearts of enthusiasts for over 30 years, something we can't say about its replacement, the Spirit.

However, owning one today comes with daunting repair bills. Its sheer size means any faults are more

expensive to fix compared to modern sedans. Sometimes the repair bill will exceed what you paid for this model [*giving credence to the statement that nothing is more expensive than a cheap Rolls-Royce-Ed.*]. *ClassicCarMag.net* reports that the car's biggest problems are rusting, as well as brakes, A/C, and suspension failure.

### 4/10 Triumph Spitfire

Launched in 1962, the Triumph Spitfire aimed to rival the Austin-Healey Sprite. Although the two-seater roadster lacked much power, its 1,477-pound curb weight meant the performance and handling were better than expected.



The Triumph Spitfire was dirt cheap, which we think is because of the abysmal build quality. Additionally, the frame looked weird [*a serious deficit at car shows-Ed.*] and wasn't rigid. Other common faults in this classic car include a problematic overdrive, crankshaft wear in the 1.5-liter engine, and worn-out thrust washers in the 1.3-liter engine [*but not oil leaks?-Ed.*]

### 3/10 Lotus Elan

The allure of the early Lotus Elans (1963-'74) stemmed from the simple yet elegant styling, its lightness, and exceptional handling. Performance on winding roads will make you question why other sports cars of the era were so large and heavy. But being largely hand-built, featuring many ingenious but lightly constructed systems, buying one is generally asking for mechanical maladies.



The most common issues with the Elan all require costly repairs. Its steel backbone chassis often rots, which costs about £4000 (\$4522) to fix because the brakes and other parts are usually overhauled at the same time. Additionally, repairing the cracking of its bodyshell will need the expertise of someone versed

*(article continues next page)*

## Ten British Cars to Avoid, continued

in working with fiberglass, also expensive [Add Lotus to the list of Fact-O-Bake and Maaco no-goes-Ed.].

### 2/10 MG Midget

Produced from 1961 to 1980, this two-seat roadster gained popularity among enthusiasts and buyers on a budget. Like the Miata, the MG Midget is a joy to ride thanks to its all-around performance.



When it comes to the Midget's reliability, corrosion is the main enemy. And although you can purchase new panels or shells, they are pretty expensive and require painting [Really? Perhaps Fact-O-Bake or Maaco are options.-Ed.]. Besides corrosion, earlier models with "smoothcase" gearboxes are generally weak, and spare parts aren't readily available.

### 1/10 Jaguar XJS

The XJS isn't as popular and desirable as the Jaguar E-Type but provides the best value for your money. The V12 models are surprisingly affordable, but after several months of ownership, you'll probably spend more time in the garage than on the road.



Like most Jaguar models, the XJS had problems like engine overheating, corrosions, water leaks, gear-box knocking, and stalling. In fact, between 1992 and 2001, Jaguar issued more than ten recalls citing mechanical faults. According to *Final Gear* forum users, early V12 versions could easily catch fire due to faulty engines and catalytic converters [Actually, they caught fire either because the rubber fuel rail hoses deteriorated, which led to fuel being sprayed on a hot engine, or failure of one of the coils on later models with the Marelli ignition system, causing unburned petrol to be dumped in the converters. The engines themselves are rather robust.-Ed.].

## Auction Roundup—Winter Projects

[If you need something to do over the next few months, perhaps these will give you some inspiration-Ed.]

### 1957 Triumph TR3



**Sold** for \$12,000 on Bring A Trailer

*In running and driving condition, this green over brown vinyl TR3 had "various chips, scratches, dings, and corrosion in addition to damage to the left rear," as well as wear in the interior. The seller recommended replacing the floors and sills.*

### 1987 Lotus Esprit Turbo



**Sold** for \$38,500 on Bring a Trailer

*Refinished in pearlescent white over black and blue leather, the modifications list on this Lotus is very lengthy; one commentor estimated the total investment at \$200k. Engine management issues are keeping it from running and a laptop computer was included in the sale.*

### 1967 Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow



**Sold** for \$12,000 on Hemmings

*Why is this Rolls-Royce, in dove grey and cream over silver Connolly hides, a project? Well, the description reveals paintwork issues, including "cracking at the beltline and flakes and chips visible, also jacking damage visible on the rocker panel and damage to the front apron." Corrosion is noted at the rear wheel wells and the undersides of the bumpers.*

# Weak and Rusty

Michael King, Editor, *Spark & Spanner*

## Workshop Essentials

Perhaps you still need to pick up something for that car nut on your holiday shopping list, or you have been asked for gift ideas by someone shopping for you. In the nearly 13 years I have been active in the British car hobby, I've had the privilege to wrench on three project cars of my own, complete various repairs on my other cars, and help friends with their projects. While I do not claim to be any sort of expert, I have found several items to be very important, if not essential, in the workshop.

### Screwdrivers

Get a good assortment of good-quality flat and Phillips screwdrivers in various sizes and lengths. Interchangeable bits are OK for Torx, hex, and square drives, but inevitably you will find that the bit falls out at the worst possible moment when you rely on them for basic tasks. Similarly, cheap screwdrivers always seem to break at the worst possible time.

### Socket Wrenches

Start with a 3/8"-drive set in sizes from 3/16" to 7/8" (SAE) and 4mm to 18mm (metric). Don't think you won't need metric tools because you are only working on older British cars—you never know what fastener some DPO (dumb previous owner) might have used. I also find 1/4"-drive ratchets and extensions to be very handy, since your smaller sockets are 1/4"-drive anyway. At some point, you might want to add 1/2"-drive for larger fasteners, and deep well sockets for hard-to-reach spots. Again, don't scrimp too much—a ratchet that doesn't ratchet will drive you nuts.

### Spanners (i.e., End Wrenches)

Traditional end wrenches with a box end and an open end are great, but why not step up to ratcheting wrenches from the start? You'll save yourself a



lot of time and frustration. Again, get a range of sizes in SAE and metric.

### Pliers and Cutters

I like to have several sets of pliers in various configurations at my disposal, including standard, electrical, needle-nosed, channel locks, and locking (Vise-Grip) types. A sharp pair of wire cutters is handy as well.

### Hammers

For jobs that require some gentle persuasion, make sure you have three or four hammers, including standard, dead-blow, and rubber mallets.

### Other Tools

Besides the categories above, here are some tools I find myself using over and over:

- ✂ A **scratch awl** or other pointed probe is essential for finding mounting holes under carpet or behind trim panels
- ✂ A **test light** is an inexpensive and easy way to find out if a circuit is hot (a cheap voltmeter works as well, if you know how to use it)
- ✂ **Wire strippers** will save wear and tear on your teeth
- ✂ **Light**, and plenty of it, is critical—I use trouble lights and/or flashlights depending on the project.

I've probably left off something—if you have suggestions, let me know and I'll include them next month!

# 32nd Annual British Car Festival Celebrating the **Triumph TR6**



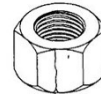
October 22, 2022 • Fairhope, Alabama

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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 email [SparkSpanner@gmail.com](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:SparkSpanner@gmail.com).

Thanks!

# And now, for something completely different . . .



*Have you grown weary of a certain Japanese luxury auto brand promoting “a December to remember?” Here’s proof that once again, the British beat them to the Christmas punch.*

## 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**.