

Spark & Spanner

The Official
Publication of
the South
Alabama British
Car Club

June 2024



From the President

Ben Cummings

Why do we love British cars? What is it about British cars that captivates us? Is it their racing history? Or perhaps it's their styling. Maybe a British car was your first car. Or maybe you treated yourself to the car of your dreams when you left the service. Most of us grew up seeing MGs, Triumphs, and Austin Healeys. There were many more British cars on the road in our youth. Maybe we love them because we saw them, often.

1980 was a bad year for the British car industry. A lot of badge names were lost and some of the badges and manufacturers were bought by companies outside of Britain. But there are still British car manufacturers (or at least British car-named manufacturers) today. However, except for Mini Cooper, most of the British cars available in the U.S. today are not affordably priced to the average guy. In the 70's a twenty-something could afford to buy an MG. The Lotus, McLaren, and Land Rover [and Jaguar-Ed.] are beautiful, well-constructed cars, but not too many twenty-somethings can buy one. They may love them but can't own them. With fewer young people able to afford a British car, how will this have an impact on our club?

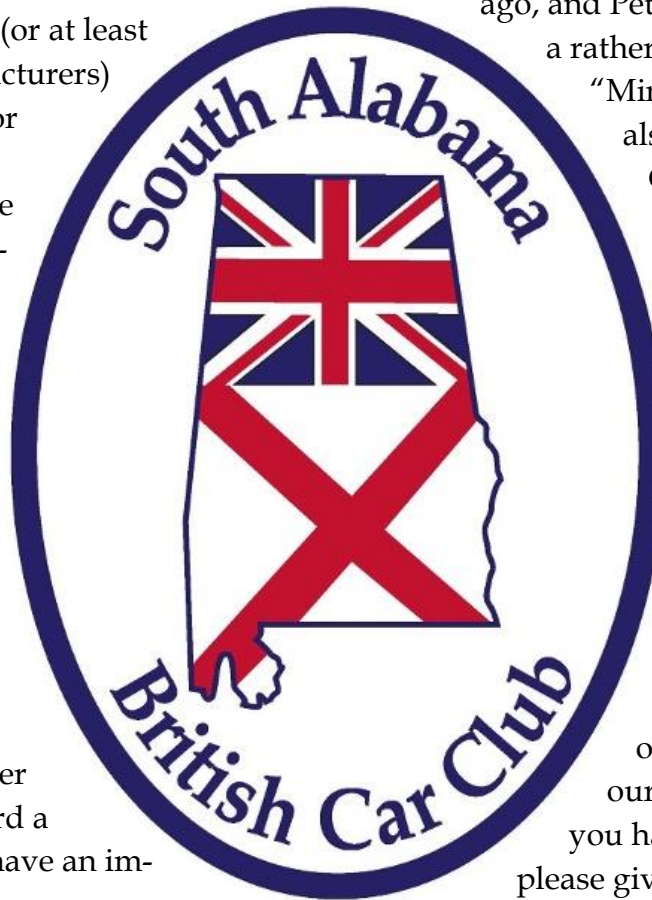
The theme vehicle for the festival this year is the Mini. It was selected because it has a special an-



niversary. The Mini was introduced 65 years ago, and Peter Lee's team came up with a rather funny slogan for the show, "Mini Gets Medicare." But it was also selected because the Mini Cooper is the British car that many young people drive. Hopefully, we can get a lot of young Mini Cooper owners to register their car in the show. And maybe we can encourage those young car owners to join our club. So, if you see a Mini or Mini Cooper and have the opportunity to talk to the owner, please tell them of the festival. Tell them of our website (sabcc.org). And if you have a flier about the festival, please give it to them.

Safety Fast,

Ben



On the cover: **Michael Bertagnolli** fills Donna **Jarvis's** plate at the annual club picnic (photo by **Donna Eagleson**).

SABCC Club Officers

President	Ben Cummings
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VP-Activities	Max Menaker
Secretary	Peter Lee
Treasurer	Donna Eagleson
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Member at Large	Don Blosser
Member at Large	Tom Renick
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Spark & Spanner is the official publication of the South Alabama British Car Club and is published monthly for the benefit of SABCC members. Permission to use this material by other British car club publications is granted provided credit is given to *Spark & Spanner*. Address comments or submissions to SparkSpanner@gmail.com.

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! Well, at least until 2025, perhaps-Ed.*].

British Car Festival is Supported by



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Want a Club Shirt (or Jacket or Hat)?

SABCC uses Queensboro, which offers a large variety of embroidered shirts, jackets, hats, and other items, in men's, ladies, and youth styles, all of which can be embroidered with the PBCA logo. Here's it works:

1. Visit the [Queensboro site](#), find a shirt (or other item) you like, and note the style number, size, and color name (make sure the item is available in your size and color). We can usually get items at half retail.
2. [Send Ed. \(Michael King\) an email](#) listing what you want, including quantity, style number, color name, and size for each item.
3. When Queensboro runs one of their sales, I will place a group order – **but we need at least five to get the best pricing.**
4. Once the order is placed, I will send you an email with your total, which will include the price of your items plus shipping and tax.
5. When I receive the order (usually a couple of weeks) I will let you know.
6. I'll deliver your items at the next club meeting or event, and you'll reimburse me.

Simple, right? So, start shopping, and send me your list! If you have any questions, call or text Michael at 251-689-1040.

Around the Bend

Upcoming Club Activities



June 25, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting

Join your fellow members at Don Carlos Restaurant, 29699 AL-181, Daphne, at 6:00 to eat and 7:00 to meet. The meal is on you.

June 29, 2024

Baldwin Loop Rally

Starting at Fairhope Coffee, 505 Fairhope Ave (Fairhope, AL 36532) we will take a tour through Baldwin County, culminating with lunch (place to be determined). Our VP of Activities, Max Menaker, plans to make this an open event and invite other car clubs and car enthusiasts, so this will be a great time to show everyone why British cars are so special! Watch your email for more details.

June 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	25	26	27	28	29
		Club Meeting				Baldwin Rally
30						

July 21, 2024

Tri-Club Pig Roast

Held at **Tom Schmitz's** home on Soldier Creek (9609 Soldier's Creek Dr, Lillian, AL, 36549), the event starts at noon and the "guest of honor" usually arrives about 1:30. Bring a side or dessert to share and whatever you like to drink.

July 23, 2024

Monthly Club Meeting

Yep, Don Carlos Restaurant, 29699 AL-181, Daphne—6:00 to eat and 7:00 to meet. You'll buy your own dinner again.

Hold the Date

- [Dillard, Ga. Show](#): Sep. 12—15, 2024
- British Car Festival: Oct. 18 and 19, 2024

July 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	25	26	27
Pig Roast		Club Meeting				
28	29	30	31			

Sparks

Club and Member News

2024 SABCC Picnic

The place – Oscar Johnson Memorial Park in Silverhill, Alabama – and the time of year – early June – were familiar to frequent attendees of the SABCC annual picnic. Also familiar was the informal car show by members who drove their British motors to the event.

What was not familiar, but certainly very welcomed, was the menu. **Andrea** and **Michael Bertagnolli**, with able assistance from **Frank Stabler**, prepared a traditional coastal feast of boiled shrimp and all the fixings. With other members providing appetizers, side items, and desserts, none of the 47 attendees left hungry. Of course, considerable credit for the success of the picnic goes to **Donna Eagleson**, who made, edited, and checked her lists to ensure everything needed was on hand.



Top, enjoying feasting and camaraderie; bottom, enjoying the British cars (photos by Donna Eagleson).



The club photo (by Ron Wolverton) is a longstanding picnic tradition.

Silverhill Show

May 25 was the Saturday before Memorial Day this year, and that meant the annual Silverhill Veteran's Memorial Car show, held smack in the



One of the Top 50 trophies (photo by Tom Renick).

middle of a small town in central Baldwin County, Alabama. Due to the leadership and hard work of the Mardi Gras MG club, the southeast quadrant of the show field is always claimed by the British. This year saw more British cars than ever, 29, comprising a sixth of the field.

Jack Steinmetz took the top British class award with his 1967 Jaguar E-Type. SABCC members whose cars placed in the Top 50 were **Andrea Bertagnolli**, 1974 MGB; **Stewart Reisinger**, 1966

MGB GT; **Tom Renick**, 1965 Sunbeam Tiger, and **Tom Schmitz**, 1955 MG TF.



Top, Stewart Reisinger's MGB GT was a Top 50 car, and Jack Steinmetz's E-Type, parked next to it, won Best British Car. Bottom, a look at the British car area (photos by Dick Bishop).



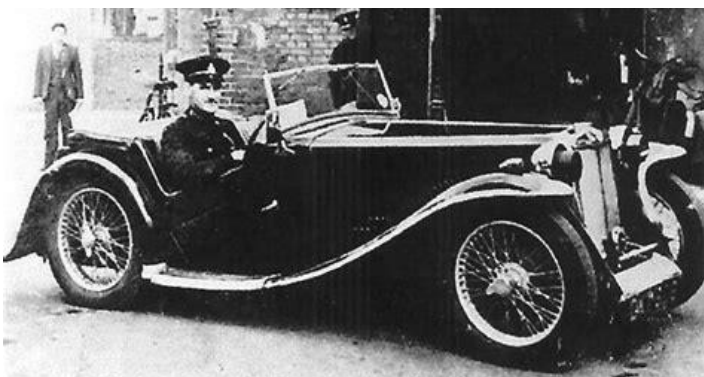
British car enthusiasts enjoying the shade of the MGMG canopy (photo by Dick Bishop).

Witnesses to History

story by *Tim Garrold*

photos courtesy the author

Recent events commemorating the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, France highlighted and honored staging operations that boggle the mind throughout the British Isles in the months, weeks, and days leading up to the channel crossing and invasion. All over Great Britain, allied troops were massed and trained and vast amounts of equipment and logistical materials were stockpiled and readied for the return to the continent in what would become the largest and most successful invasion in world history. Playing no small part in the herculean efforts of that time were undoubtedly untold numbers of period British cars of all types, but specifically MG automobiles procured by local constabularies and purposed as police cars.



An MG TA in constabulary service.

One of these vehicles, TA 3076, a 1939 MG TA, served in the Lancashire Constabulary throughout World War Two and is currently owned by a member of the Panhandle British Car Association [*specifically, the author of this fascinating story-Ed.*]. Various battalions of the South Lancashire Regiment were quartered and trained in, and deployed from, the constabulary throughout the war. Their service included participation in combat operations that ranged from deployment to France in 1939 and evacuation from the

beaches of Dunkirk in 1940, to spearheading landings in 1944 at Sword Beach on D-Day and continued engagement to include the eventual invasion and occupation of Germany. TA 3076, as were so many other MGs all over England in those days, was an active and contributing witness to history.



Tim's TA, "Maggie," at the Rhode Island Veteran's Cemetery.

Anyone associated with large groups of young military members sequestered in barracks in close proximity to civilian population centers, and all of the allure held therein, can easily imagine that the local constabulary was almost surely and frequently engaged in "keeping a watchful eye on things" in addition to managing and supporting Civil Defense, coast and air watch, rationing and black-out, and traffic control functions as unimaginable quantities of men and logistics moved about the constabulary. So it is really no stretch whatsoever to picture the central role that MGs played in the overall war effort.

Additionally, it was the dashing image of MG "sports cars" employed throughout the countryside in numerous roles and seen by U.S. GIs that played no small part in MG's decision to produce TC, TD, and TF automobiles for export all over the world—but especially so to the United States—in the post-war years.

If only these Little British Cars could talk - imagine the stories of the Greatest Generation they would surely tell.

Spannering

Advice on Repairs, Parts, and Services

I'm not competitive. I swear. No, really.

story and photos by Peter Lee

So, this year we will again feature valve cover racing at the SABCC British Car Festival (BCF). As the defending "Top Gun" award-winning 2023 BCF invitational grand champion [*sounds like something on a boxer's belt-Ed.*], I am looking forward to defending my crown against the tough competition. But I have gotten a few questions about the thoughts behind building a valve cover racer. Therefore, I am going to put on my rarely-worn engineer hat and hopefully clarify some valve cover racer items so more will get involved with building their own racer so they can ultimately fall to my total race domination.

First are the size limitations: 30 inches maximum length, 10 inches for height and 15 inches on width. I am building a box to these dimensions and the first test to qualify to race is will your car fit in the box with the lid closed [*Who's measuring the box?-Ed.*]. Let's think about these dimensions and their importance. A longer valve cover makes a longer racer. Our track is basically a declining plane. The longer car allows the weight to be started higher up that plane and develops more energy as it falls from a higher point than a shorter car would. But there is a danger. If you put all 10 pounds of mass as far back as you can, it will pop a wheelie at the first bump and chaos will ensue. So, you want the center of that mass to be just forward of the rear axle, so you have a more stable car. As for width, a wide car is more stable. But a wider car also has a better chance of hitting the edge of the track if it does not head in a straight line. And

we all know the straighter the line the shorter the run. The track will be leveled prior to racing so be sure to test your car ahead of the actual race and see how straight it runs. You will then see how straight you should line it up on the start. I used my driveway to get my first cars going straight. If that is a struggle for you then maybe you should put the wheels inside the valve cover so it has a narrower track and will have to be further off center before it strikes the wall and robs you of energy. Car height is also as impactful as length when considering the energy in falling. A slightly higher weight will also fall a bit farther on a declined plane and generate extra energy.



Wheel selection is a tough one. Our rules include no metallic wheel surface touching the track and no wheel larger than 6 inches in diameter. Tall skinny wheels get you an easier

(story continues next page)

I'm Not Competitive, continued

wheel to roll due to the high moment arm around the center. More serious racers started using hard drive disks out of old computers as the bearings were super smooth and the wheels were thin. But determining what they are composed of can be an issue as they can be glass,

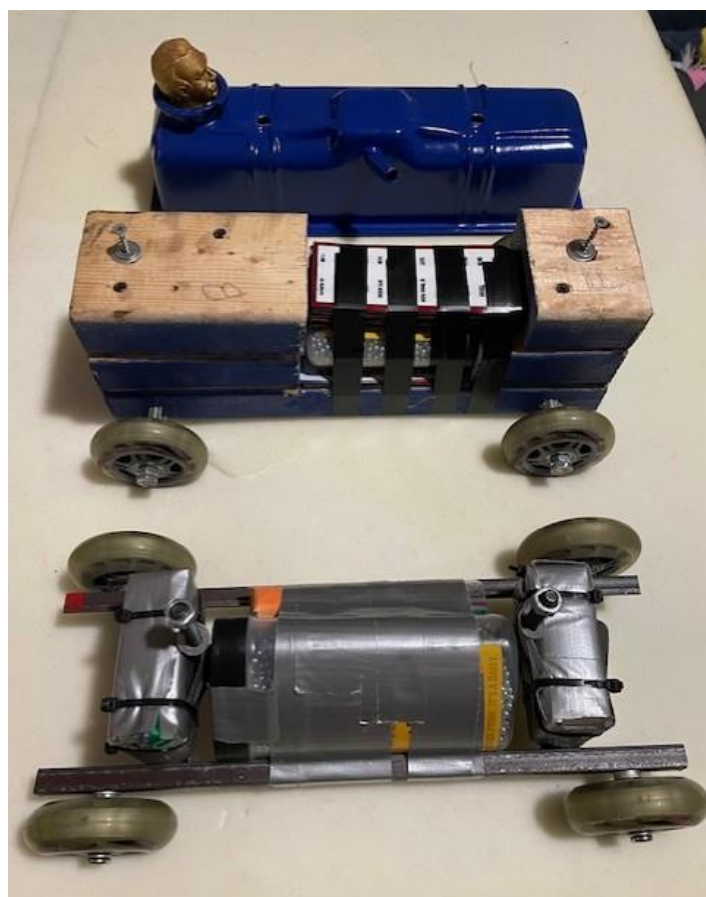


Wheel attachments must be solid and straight.

aluminum, or ceramic, coated with a magnetic material which is usually a cobalt-based metal alloy. Hence we have the “no metal on the track” rule to keep the arguments from erupting. One trick is to lube the center of a solid wheel with a graphite powder or other lubricant and polish the opposing axle/wheel surfaces. This was a trick carried over from the pinewood derby days. But the risk with thin wheels is slipping so the car skews to the side and going straight is suddenly out of the window. An easy choice is to use roller skate, skateboard, or inline skate wheels as they are plentiful at the Goodwill and I am by all accounts a cheap person. Ask my wife. But the bulk of the wheel work should go into the alignment and mounting to make sure they are straight, solidly held, but loose enough to freely turn. One item to watch with skate or skateboard wheels on their original axle setup – you turn those devices by leaning your weight to one side or another, so a car that is off-balance may induce a consistent turn

to one side.

Weight: the total car weight restriction is 10.000 pounds on the club's testing scale. This is an energy development and conservation game. You want your car to be at max weight to develop the most energy. You also must be careful that the scale at home you have been using may not match the race day scale. So, plan on checking your car's weight the night before at the Friday dinner or on race day. And be ready to add or take away a smidge if needed. Good weight options are fishing weights, fish tank rocks, or BBs, since these are of small size but with a heavy weight that can be packaged up safely on the underlying car chassis where you want it positioned.



Chassis examples

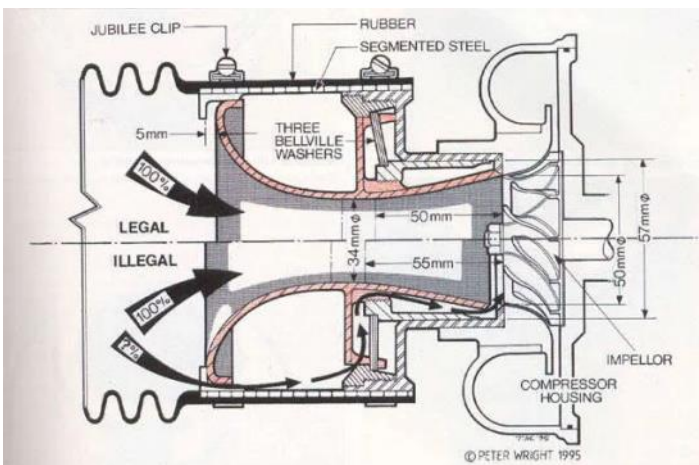
Chassis: OK, I used to do a lot of shooting events in Kentucky. There was an underlying

(story continues next page)

I'm Not Competitive, continued

rule that whoever showed up with the most expensive, rarest, most tricked-out gun couldn't hit a barn door. Same in car racing. All you need on the chassis is something that supports the weight, attaches the valve cover on top of, and keeps the wheels straight. The KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principles apply. You can use a 2x4 wood piece that fits under the cover and screw the wheels to it. The more weight you waste on the chassis that does not help you have a stable and straight run is weight you could be repositioning for energy.

Rules. If it's in the rules then it is clear. If it is not, then it is open to interpretation. Evil example: you are required to have four wheels by club rules but if only three are touching the



Toyota's cheating turbo

track you now have reduced rolling friction versus a 4-wheel car. But it still needs to go straight. Toyota won a lot of rallies in the '95 WRC season with an engineering marvel that moved the required turbo restrictor cone on acceleration so the air could bypass it, which was good for another 50 hp. When disassembled for inspection it closed so that the bypass area was not visible. It was finally caught when they couldn't figure out how the car was so much faster and looked more closely. Someone had polished the area behind the cone to smooth the airflow. Smokey

Yunick refueled with almost freezing gas so it was denser, and he could fit more in the car requiring less pitstops. He also dipped his body panels in acid to lighten them. Rules are created when someone finds an interesting way around them. But remember that our rule sheet states that rules may be made up on the spot by race officials if needed. So, if your really clever and figure out cold fusion to power your car, don't be upset when you get disqualified on the spot for lack of radioactive shielding.

Final thoughts – It's not just about the fastest. There are two other awards for best looking and best engineered. The "Top Gun" is maybe just a little more prestigious in my humble recent "Top Gun" award winning mind. But it's really about having fun. Talking smack. Getting off the sidelines and jumping in. Lastly you should also build your car with some thought to making it through the races. No one wants to build a nice car and then have a wheel fly off on the first attempt. Like the fully suspended monster truck I built for Mattie (photo below) the first year that was supposed to soak up the transition from the ramp to the concrete. It ended up in at least two large pieces. Sometimes great ideas fail spectacularly. It does make for a fun race though.



Pierre's Wisdom

Pierre Fontana



All photos courtesy **Pierre Fontana**

Ignition Point-ers

Just a reminder that for peak points and condenser ignition there is a rule, NO RESISTANCE, It still is the most dependable way to go, if you follow the rule.

Your distributor is a fancy grounding switch, nothing else. So, it must be clean – no paint or dirt. Metal to metal contact is important, the reason being that as the points open and close is timed in milliseconds, which is not much time to load the coil and collapse it to make 10.000 volts for the spark plug,



Lucas distributor

Using quality points and a rubber-sealed condenser is advisable, along with a new lead wire. The contact plate needs to be clean and you need a well-grounded small wire. Lubricate and check mechanical advance; it is the adrenaline for get up and go, almost 30

degrees at speed. Vacuum advance only moves a few degrees.

Make sure you have no paint on the block or distributor where they make contact, and a nice, clean distributor clamp. Always use electric cleaner on new points and lubricate the cam. Set the points around 0.030 for street driving; the car will idle better.

The mechanic's way of setting timing for your engine is based on condition of the engine, the type of gas you burn, and your way of driving. It is not based on the year your car was born or from some printed manual. Set the timing with a light if you have one, and leave the distributor loose enough to move it. Get on the road, and run in 4th gear at 20 mph. Accelerate, and if you do not hear pinging, advance the timing. Repeat until pinging occurs, retard the timing until it goes away, and lock the distributor in place. You then will have the best timing for your own ride, as well as the best fuel efficiency for 2024 fuel.

Next month, I will show you how to boost voltage at the plugs to 40.000 volts.

Pierre Fontana is a technical advisor for SABCC. At age 91, he's still working on cars and writing newsletter articles.

"MINI Gets Medicare"



Celebrating 65 Years of MINI
British Car Festival 2024

October 19, 2024
Fairhope, Alabama



British Car Festival registration is open! The form is available [here](#). The fee is just \$25 (\$30 after Oct. 1).

We also are signing up sponsors, and that form is [here](#):

- General Sponsors: \$250 (three classes, name on banner, recognition at the show and in 12 months of newsletters)
- Class Sponsors: \$50 (one class, recognition in 12 months of newsletters)

Auction Roundup: "Modern-est" MINIs

[This month we look at MINIs post-2012-Ed.]

2019 MINI Cooper JCW Int'l Orange Edition



Sold for \$35,250 on Bring a Trailer

The International Orange package was a \$8k upcharge over the base John Cooper Works Mini, bringing the original MSRP to \$42,450. The car had only 7k miles, so five-year depreciation was about \$1 per mile.

2014 MINI Cooper S



Sold for \$11,500 on Bring A Trailer

Would calling this car a bargain be fair? Compared to the orange one above, it was five years older, had six times the miles (which is still just 43K), but sold for a third of the price. Perhaps the lack of a sunroof and the automatic transmission hurt the price/

2019 MINI Cooper S 60 Years Edition



Not Sold for \$17,000 on Cars and Bids

British Racing Green over brown ("Maroon," per the listing) leather, and one of 500? What's not to like? This car only had 38,500 miles and other than some normal wear and tear, was in very good condition. The only nit I might pick is MINI's use of bright green piping on the seats, but that's a matter of personal preference. Fortunately, the seller was able to reach a deal after the auction closed.

Classifieds

Transmission

Borg Warner automatic transmission with torque converter. Trans. was removed from a mid '60s Jaguar Mk II. Asking \$200.



George Bruno
850-232-1762

1974 Jensen Healey

Two cars that turned into one with spare parts. Car has been at BMC Restorations in Kiln, MS with Peter Brauen who has done all of the structural metal work including new floor pans. Have several parts including a hard top and a Dellorto manifold, good set of front fenders and rear quarter panels, brand new aftermarket seats and adjusters. Has complete A/C system installed. Car currently needs light bodywork and paint. Car ran and drove when restoration started but hasn't operated in over 10 years.

Over \$5,000 invested – asking for best offer.

Cortland A. Musgrave
504-559-4960

HeyTony9999@hotmail.com

1978 MGB

This 1978 MG MGB has been with the seller for over 15 years. Repainted in original white and equipped with a new black vinyl convertible top over a black vinyl/leather interior, this garage-kept MGB is available now and comes with a car cover, receipts, vehicle documentation, owner's and shop manuals, a box of additional parts, and clear Alabama registration in the seller's name. 175/70 Pirelli radial tires mounted on 14-inch Mini-Lite wheels with chrome center caps. California car, always garaged. Won best in class at 2023 SABCC British car Festival. Rebuilt front and rear brakes, new brake lines, rebuilt master cylinder and parking brake. A valve job was done, and a stainless steel exhaust system installed. New shocks front and rear.

Offered at \$9,000.



Jack Steinmetz
713-851-7609

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.

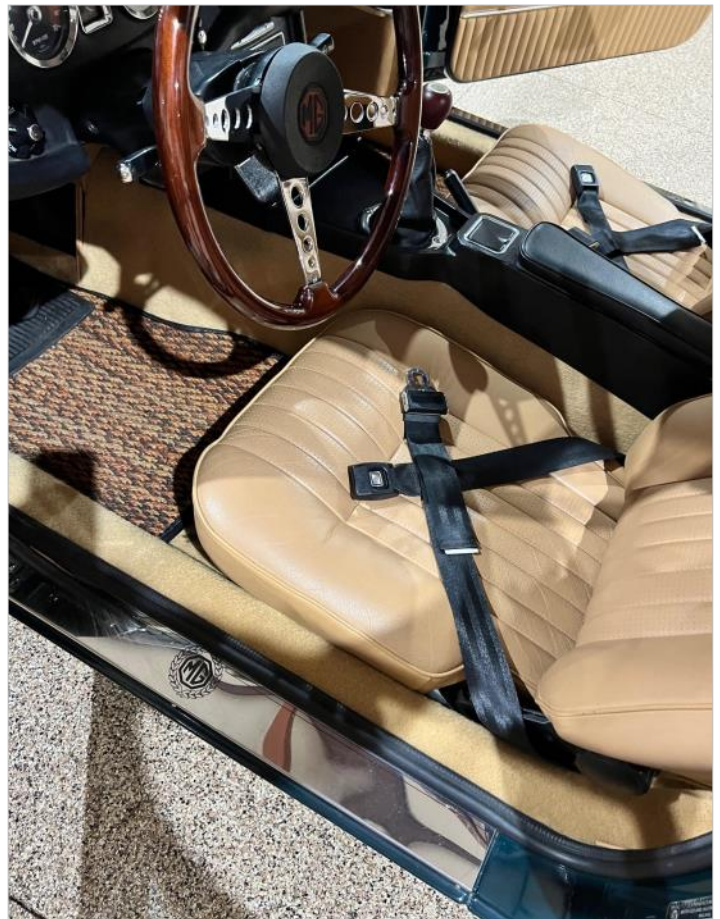
It is available for a test drive an inspection on an appointment only basis as a friend is allowing me to store it with his large classic/ antique car collection out near the airport.

Ken McElhaney, Jr.

251-401-4474

jekadad@hotmail.com or

Ken.mcelhaney@gmail.com



Miscellaneous Parts

After seven decades, I've started to clean my shop. I have boxes of small carburetor parts, to the smallest screws for butterfly shafts, dozens of carburetors bodies, old switches, relays, rectifiers, wheel bearings, and more.

Pierre Fontana

pierrefontana@bellsouth.net





Thank you Sponsors!



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memory of Patricia
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And now, for something completely different . . .



So when you hire a Jaguar enthusiast as Editor of your newsletter, and someone sends him a photo of an XJ220, you can expect him to run it. This brilliant blue example was photographed by SABCC member David Menaker in the vault of the Petersen Museum, Los Angeles. Maligned when new, they now sell for \$500,000 or more.

Spark & Spanner

South Alabama British Car Club

PO Box 18036

Mobile, AL 36618



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