

BRITISH Jan 2025



Just a few members and cars from our Jan 1st gathering. Be sure to read page 3.

BRITISH

>Well worth reading some of the time<

January, 2025 Issue

**The monthly publication of the British Iron Touring Club of North West Arkansas.
Dedicated to the preservation, touring, towing, racing and discussion of British cars.**

Contact Us

- Our website: www.britishironnwa.org

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Membership and Treasurer: Elaine Briggs eb88cs@cox.net

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Monthly Meetings:

At the *All American Steak House and Sports Theater* at 3492W Sunset in Springdale. The second Thursday of every month except for December. Business at 7:00, but arrive near 6:00 for socializing and supper,

Other Meetings:

As announced on Meeting Nights or on our BI-List email server.

Meeting Night, Jan 9th:

**The notes from our January Meeting Night
will be in the February newsletter**

BEHIND THE WHEEL (from the right-hand side) by Bill Watkins

It was good to see everyone at the annual New Year's Day lunch at the steakhouse. And it was good to see that most of you brought your British cars. Well done!!

I'm still somewhat consumed by my new toy, so forgive me for writing about the Alvis again. We have now driven the car to Gravette for lunch one Saturday and to the steakhouse for our New Year's gathering. In 5th gear the car is quite happy at 70 MPH, turning around 2700 RPM at that speed. Now I just need to figure out how the heater (and, therefore, later, the AC) works. I cannot find vents anywhere, nor can I feel any warm air actually entering the cabin, despite hearing the blower fan running and the heater valve appearing to be open. I see more crawling around beneath the dash in my future.

I'm still trying to peddle our 1965 Jaguar sedan (forgive me, saloon). I have initiated the process to get it listed on Bring a Trailer and they immediately asked me if I would list it at no reserve. The Hagerty Valuation Guide lists a #3 condition care at a value of \$20,000. I think this car is condition 3 or maybe a little lower – 3.4??? I have asked for a reserve that is way lower than that and I think it is reasonable. I'm going to stick to my guns, I think.

I have had some individual inquiries arising from my few other attempts to get the car out there, but these have all be time wasters. Why can't people just tell me "thanks, but no thanks" if they decide they aren't interested after seeing the pictures, etc?? Bottom line is that these folks just served to delay my efforts to get with Bring a Trailer.

Some of you will remember Neil Crozier and his wife Bambi from when they were in the club. Others of you will know him from his business, The Car Clinic. Neil is an ex-pat Brit who was trained up on our cars and is therefore not afraid to work on them. After losing his lease at his Lowell location Neil relocated his shop to (or near to) some land they own in Cedarville. I know at least one or two of you have tracked him down there to have some work done.

The other day I received a message from Bambi through our club's Facebook page asking if we would like to participate in a car show in Cedarville as part of a fundraiser for a dog rescue she and Neil are involved in. Bambi will be at our meeting Thursday to pitch this idea. I think it sounds like fun to go somewhere new and expose these cars to a new crowd of people, most of whom have probably seen none, or very few, of our cars before. I like the idea, and I hope we can support Bambi's efforts.

Big thanks to Marcy Benham who has stepped up to volunteer as our new Events Coordinator. This really helps me out a lot. Marcy's first task was to contact the Roaring River State Park Lodge about hosting us for brunch on January 18th. Marci contacted them and will have details at the meeting. The main things you need to know are that we need at least 30 present in order to get the buffet and that we need a head count at the meeting. Marci will ask about whether they will give us individual checks or if it has to be a group check. If it has to be a group check Elaine will write a club check for the meal and then collect from each person present. So, please, be prepared to BE THERE, OR SEND A SUBSTITITUE, if you say you will attend and bring whatever money Marci tells us will be required to reimburse the club. Since it is only about an hour up there this is usually one of our more popular drives. I hope you will plan to attend.

Lastly, since we are talking about money, DUES ARE DUE! Please bring a check or \$45 in cash to the meeting Thursday or, if you prefer to mail it, use the membership form that I will send out separately. If your address, other contact information, or personal information has changed please also use the form so that Elaine can maintain an accurate roster.

I'll see you all at the meeting on Thursday, the 9th.

Club Staff

President – **Bill Watkins**

1st Vice President – **Doug Schrantz**

2nd Vice President – **David Ferrell**

Membership and

Treasurer – **Elaine Briggs**

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Webmaster – **Malcolm Williamson**

Editor – **Wil Wing** briton4@cox.net

Events Coordinator – **Marcy Denham**

Coming Events

Jan 18th – Roaring River brunch

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Although the January 1st meeting was fun, let me tell you how Charles Wells described the Oxford area car club Jan 1st meetings in the UK. Naturally, it was a bigger turnout – after all, it is the home of British cars. *They would meet early in the morning on the parking area for the local sports club... (was it soccer or cricket? Forget) The cars would be grouped for viewing. Then standing around in the cold talking about the latest with family and cars. To ward off the cold, hot tea and 'bacon butties' (hot bacon and butter sandwiches) would be available from the clubhouse kitchen. Many cars were open.* Is that something we could embrace? I don't think so. Our Jan 1st gathering was similar only because Mark and Judith drove their topless Sprite, brave souls.

It was announced at that meeting that Marcy Denham has volunteered to be our new Events Coordinator. Thank you, Marcy.

Yr. Ed. apologizes for the blank spaces on some pages. Somehow I didn't have my usual backlog of material on hand this month. Thank goodness for Mark Cory's contribution!

Mark Cory's '*My life as an addict*' story conclusion

The hobby ticked on as a weekend therapy exercise for a few years. Happy, happy, until former club member Tim Webb talked me into racing. He in his Mini, I in another Bugeye I bought in 1998. Great years, years of learning, problem solving, gradual improvement, and of course increasing outlays of \$++. Along the way, I convinced my brother to also race, so he bought an MG Midget, essentially the same as my Sprite so we could share parts, etc. Living in San Francisco, he would fly in on Tuesday, I would have both race cars ready, we would load the cars on Wednesday and start hauling to one of the tracks in Nebraska, Michigan, Wisconsin, Kansas, Ohio or wherever, only to return on the following Monday or Tuesday. Obviously, this was only possible once I retired from my first career at the UofA (2004).



Retirement also meant that I had time to work on other projects. And the racing meant that I needed a little more money. I had good tools. I had a good shop (by then much improved by heat and air and light). And I had valuable experience maintaining and restoring the Bugeye, the race Bugeye, the MGB GT, the Mini, and another MGB (this one purchased for \$325). So when people began stopping by to ask whether I could do this or that, fix that or this, maybe bring a car stored for decades back to life, I thought, why not?

The first "commercial" project was a 1972 VW Beetle. Then another Beetle. Then a vintage Vespa scooter (!). Then a Sprite. Ah, much better. Then followed Sprites, Midgets, MGBs, Triumphs, Spitfires, a Morris Minor pickup truck, and ultimately a Jag. The money (very little, actually – I began charging \$15/hr, then increased to \$25, finally stuck at \$50) – paid for the heat, air and electricity, and went partially towards the costs of running a vintage race car. Since other shops (for a while there were other shops) were charging twice that, my accountant said I was silly; but I work slowly, listen to classical music and opera, and try only to send cars out that I would feel good about driving myself).



The racing ended in 2015 when my brother's Midget was turned upside down by an aggressive Mini driver. He escaped unscathed, but his wife decided the racing was over. It had been such a great ride, racing together and against each other, including at that iconic track Laguna Seca one year, that I decided to sell my race Bugeye as well and to concentrate on restorations. Since then, I've continued to learn, thanks in large part to those of you who have entrusted your LBCs to me. I've learned not to trust our suppliers always (although without them we would be stuck with museum pieces), not to trust workshop manuals, certainly not to trust YouTube videos (although John Twist's series is fabulous), and above all to keep calm and carry on when confronted by a seemingly intractable problem. There will be a solution, and if not

– call Wil Wing!



So at the current moment, twenty years after retiring from my principal career as a Germanist, I will retire from my encore career as a restorer of LBCs. Wil suggested I mention a project of which I am particularly proud, and one that I would rather forget. Actually, I remember all of them fondly, but there was one I am a bit ashamed of. At one of our fall shows more than a decade ago, our President-for-Life introduced me to a fellow desperate to find someone to take over the restoration of a Jag MK II sedan. I demurred, saying with no false modesty that I knew nothing about Jags. He persisted. The other shop owner was a nice fellow I knew down in Maumelle, someone I had raced against. I went down and looked at the project. The

bodywork had been done, the engine had been rebuilt by a local “specialist,” the upholstery and wood had been finished – all that was needed was a bit of assembly. Right. More than a decade later, I had to have the engine done properly up in Kansas City. I had painted the entire car again. The upholstery had been gnawed on by moths in the Maumelle shop. The owner decided to add AC and a 5-speed instead of the original automatic. And, and, and. The car, beautiful as it was, had become a fixture in my shop, an albatross. Sadly, I could not finish it. Trim pieces fell off, doors would not close properly. I felt defeated. Still worse, the owner’s wife, for whom the car was to be a gift, had passed away. Finally, admitting defeat, I towed the Jag to a large restoration shop specializing in Jags in St Louis, where it was finished and sold. Ugh.

On the bright side, there have been projects of which I am particularly proud. The best have been legacy cars – those with some family history where a current family member wants to revive a car with a memory. There was a TR 4 that belonged to a local physician whose parents drove off in it on their honeymoon. Or a VW Bug whose owner had learned to drive on it and had in turn taught her daughters to drive on the same Bug. And then there were club members Shannon Lewis and husband Mike who approached me five years ago. Their MGA had languished for decades after an uncle had passed. Another shop had started the restoration but gone out of business. Always wanting to tackle an MGA, I said OK, not knowing then that soon Mike would retire and become actively involved in the process. This is the best of the best. Together, we worked to produce what is now a beautiful, fully functional family treasure.

As my shop doors close, I want to thank all those members of Brits in the Ozarks who have flattered me by bringing problems they really could have solved, just so that I could feel good about showing them the obvious. Those who have brought real problems I thank for their patience with my slow practice. The best reward for a restorer is to see the products out on the road. I love it that that MGB GT father-daughter project is used by her regularly in Munich, Germany. I love it that the 1974 MGB project is flogged about town by our local daughter. I love it that our middle

daughter who (wisely) declined the classic Mini drives a modern Mini. I love it that I can still take my 1959 Bugeye out for a fall drive in the Ozarks. I love it that my wife celebrates my retirement in the hope that now I will have time to finish her 1952 MG TD. Wish me luck!

In the meantime, I remind fretful folk who ask “but who will help me,” that in this club there are abundant resources: a shop, willing workers, tools, a huge inventory of experience, and beer...

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Despite the old saw about a picture being worth a thousand words, this photo needs eighty words of explanation.

QUESTION - Would the piece of broken metal in my hand pay for the Rolls-Royce sedan in the small photos?



The broken con rod came from a customer's exploded R-R engine.

We removed his engine.

We waited a month plus for the engine the customer ordered to come from England.

We installed it.

That replacement engine had a cracked water jacket.

We removed it.

The customer bought the 1934 R-R 20/25 in the photos to get a good engine.

We removed the '34 engine and installed it in the customer's car.

I accepted the engineless '34 as payment for my work.

ANSWER: Sort of, if you add on about eighty hours of professional labor costs.

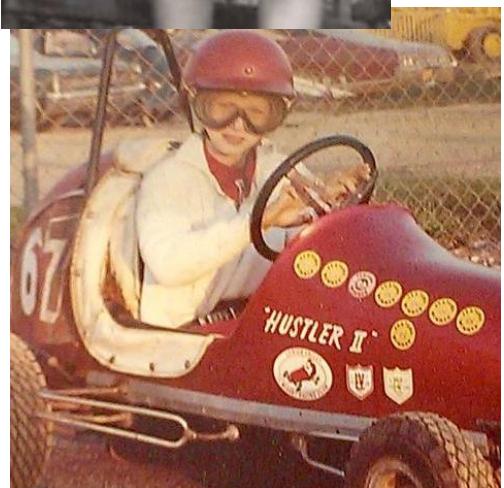
And then, of course, the '34 needed a few years of restoration and building a new original engine in my spare time. Not the bargain everyone would want, but I liked it and my customer was happy.

The orange metal sign, now just ASE – Automotive Service Excellence, is the National testing and certifying organization for mechanics. The large map posted to the left is the Isle of Man.

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Member photos

If you can name more than two members, other than you and yours, you are a winner! Answers Below.



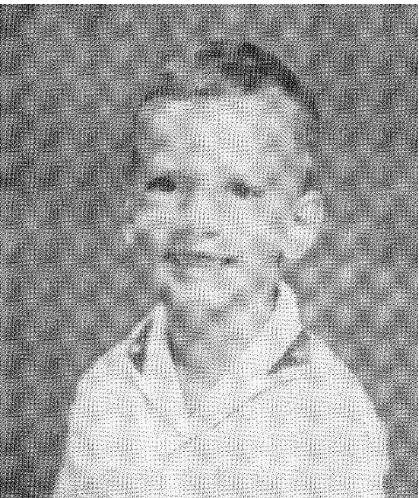
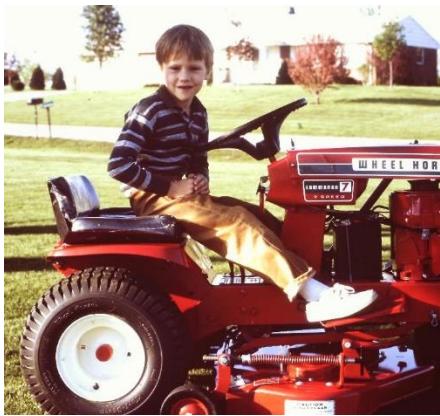


Photo identifications below

Rita Carney

Ron Shrum

Bill Watkins

Dr. Hess Kooistra

Linda Kooistra

Barbara Coffee

Bill Fitzgerald

Doug Gutekunst

Mark Holzer

Shirley Wing

Wil Wing

Tom Padgett

Alicia Padgett

Brad Esslinger

Robert Storey

Random notes:

Ron Shrum now drives a white pickup

That's our Bill?

Hess still owns the same air rifle

Bill Fitzgerald takes 'classiest dresser' award

Tom Padgett, second best dressed

Doug G. drove those – not just posed

Shirley – very cute

Wil – life was happy before computers

Robert Storey – the supercharged Chrysler Hemi was edited out

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Wishful thinking

Yr. Ed. has been looking at lots of Alvis videos and ads lately. The mid-late 'thirties cars especially intrigue me. Something from the 'sixties would probably be much more practical, but have slightly less personal appeal; it's my age, no doubt, but the 'thirties seem romantic and ripe in Classic choices.

During the late 1930s Alvis offered a 4.3 liter engine with 3 SU carbs – it looks very sporty. Whether it makes more power than the post-war 3-liter engines I don't know.

Looking at the engine photo below, I see some thoughtful engineering: note that the exhaust pipes are wrapped with asbestos tape heat shielding. Note that the hood side panels are louvered to allow hot engine air to escape. Finally, there is a screened exterior air scoop to provide some cooler air to the carbs. Those three details would have eliminated many of the problems found in later production British cars.

Let's see if we can "borrow" a couple of photos of 'thirties coachwork that appeal, but aren't 'protected'.



Most will agree that this is a handsome roadster with the 4.3 engine. Alvis didn't build their own bodies then.



But of course I prefer closed cars and this looks quite tasty – especially as I love very dark reds. A 1940 car and the last one built before turning over to war production. How could it be better? By being a two-door saloon, which would have made the front doors longer and provided easier access. And, (2) from experience, getting the weight of that spare wheel off of the front of the car. And, (3) some fool cut a hole in the roof! It was working on cars with 'sunroofs' from this era that we coined the term **leakroof**. Well, they all leak eventually, but on the other hand, the hole does weaken the wooden body structure.

Still, what a beauty! I'm tempted to run more photos!

I did say this was all wishful thinking, so please don't ask if there is sufficient headroom! *Wil*

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It occurs that we must have some single-marque only or even single-model only enthusiasts in the club, tired of reading about old stuff. Yr. Ed. welcomes suggestions and stories for YOUR newsletter.