

British – ‘First car’ edition



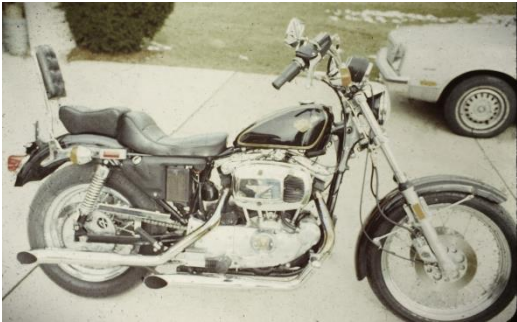
Far left: Lee Cowling, Sprite

Left: Jon Goodwin's '57 Firebird



Far left: Phil Warner, '53 Studebaker Commander Starlight Coupe'

Left: Gavin Bailey, '80 Morris Marina Estate 1.7 L.



Far left: Mark Holzer, '81 Sportster 1st vehicle, '84 Skylark, 1st car.

Left: Richard Roberts, like this but \$50 with a thrown con rod! '58 Rambler Ambassador.



Far Left: David Paul, '64 MGB in Colorado in '74.

Left: Tom Padgett, '71 Maverick Grabber, w/ 302.

(Continues on page 6)

Bill Watkins' report on the Hallet Speedway trip, March 16, 2024, will be in the May issue.

BRITISH

>Well worth reading some of the time<

April 2024 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.

**The BITC of NWA was started so long ago that no one can confidently offer a specific date of founding.
Or else they were too drunk to remember.**

Contact Us

- Our website is temporarily down.

-To contact our President: bwatkins@bwatkinslawoffice.com

-To contact the editor: 479-202-3235 or briton4@cox.net

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 having supper,

Other Meetings:

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

March 14th Meeting Night: Bad weather forecast, but clear roads and a nice turnout tonight. Our table, Brad E., Greg B., Tom and Alicia Padgett, Barbara Coffee and Yr. Ed., had lively discussions ranging from a Cuban restaurant to unpacking stool samples in a laboratory! Yikes! We were advised to avoid the margaritas, as they were undrinkable. Business stuff: Bill Watkins announced that The Kellogg's have increased their ALS contribution to \$50K for this year's car show!! Wonderful, generous people. **Bill paid a tribute to Jim Carney, who died on March 9th.** Jim was our faithful Treasurer for as long as we can remember. We offer our sincere sympathy to Rita and their daughter, Sarah. The Club will be making a \$100 donation to the NWA Food Bank, Jim's favorite charity. Wil thanked Malcolm Williamson for donating a Saturday afternoon to help send the Membership and Treasurer newsletter and to Mark Cory for his article. Elaine Briggs reported that at this point, 68 members have paid their dues for this year and 21 have not yet done so. As of this date, our treasury has something over \$5 K.

British Iron Membership and Treasurer

Starting in April, Elaine Briggs will be taking over all the membership duties including new member applications, receiving dues, getting badges made, and keeping the membership and email list up to date. In addition, she will act as treasurer for the Club only. All finance functions for the Brits in The Ozarks Car (BITO) Show will be handled by Hess Kooistra. A separate bank account has been established to manage the show funds. We have created a new membership application which will be loaded onto the British Iron web site in the near future. In addition to the new membership application, the Club will now require a reimbursement form, attaching any receipts, for a club related activity expense you incurred. Any show related expenses will be submitted to Hess or Bill Watkins. The BI-List will be used for club chatter, but will not be used to distribute the newsletter or Wil's excellent tech talk articles.

BEHIND THE WHEEL (from the right hand side)

In case you weren't there, the big news at the March regular meeting was that our presenting sponsors for the car show, Jeff and Lisa Kellogg from Omaha, Nebraska, have committed to increasing their sponsorship donation this year to a (frankly stunning) \$50,000. They were very pleased that last year we took their \$30,000 donation and turned each of their dollars into \$1.50 by raising \$45,000 for the ALS Association. As I said at the meeting, quoting Nolan Richardson, once you create the monster you have to feed it, so if we are going to maintain that \$1.00 to \$1.50 ratio we have to really increase the total revenue both from other sponsors and increased participation. We have gone back to the well with the same sponsors year after year - and I am HUGELY grateful to them - but we need to expand the sponsor pool. So, please, whether it is your employer, your company, or someone you know, please get out there and work to find some additional sponsors. Money, goody bag stuff, silent auction items, door prizes, it all helps.

Raising the level of participation is a matter of publicity and promotion. Please get our event on the calendar of every British car club or organization you are affiliated with. We can provide you with flyers, registration forms, and sponsorship solicitation letters. Just let us know what you need to be able get to work. We will discuss this in a bit more detail at the regular meeting next week. This event succeeds because of the buy in and huge effort you all make. Thanks and please keep it up!!

Last month I mentioned that a friend of mine was looking at buying back an E-Type that he has restored and sold 15 or more years ago. He has pulled the trigger and it is now back in his ownership. The car is presently in the hands of a guy Doug, Lee, and I use for work on our cars with hopes of having it back on the road soon. You hear us say it often, but letting a car sit for a long time is just terrible for it. This E-type is a prime example of that with work needed on the fuel and hydraulic systems and a good buff and color sanding on the paint. Don't let your cars just sit (he told himself harshly).

Speaking of which, I'm still waiting for consistent nice weather so I can back my Jag saloon out and take another run through the cooling system. I want to re-install the old mechanical fan,. Figure out why the electric fan has quit, probably replace the thermostat, and flush the system again. This is a messy job that I want to do outdoors so I need nice weather to boost my flagging motivation. Once I get that sorted it is going on the market for real. If you have an interest in a wonderful old Jag sedan let me know. Priced to sell.

Last week several of us went to the little car show in Huntsville to support the Huntsville High School chapter of Skills USA. I was able to spend some time talking to the director of that program there at HHS and was most impressed with what has been done. He, with the system's help no doubt, has taken an auto shop program that had no budget, little space, few tools, and little participation and grown it into a program with its own building and lots of resources. They are now placing interns and graduates in all of the major shops you can think of from J. B. Hunt to the car dealers plus lots of independent garages. What a great program.

In cleaning out Jim Carney's desk Rita Carney found and delivered to me a stack of club window clings that I either forgot or never knew we had. There are 20 or 25 of them. I'll bring them to the next meeting. With Jim's passing Elaine Briggs has stepped up as club treasurer and membership director (a new title I just bestowed upon her) and has things in order. Thanks Elaine!

Remember, we are planning a drive to Oark for lunch on April 20th. Plans will be set at the meeting Thursday. 2 Cars & Coffee events in Rogers the first Sunday of each month, the Heroes and Hot Rods Cars & Coffee at the Air Museum April 27th, and the Euro Motor Extravaganza in Sand Springs May 31. I hope to see you at these events.

See you at the regular meeting on April 11th.

Bill Watkins

Ye Olde Staff

President: **Bill Watkins**
First Vice- Pres: **Doug Schrantz**
Second Vice-Pres: **David Ferrell**
Treasurer & Membership:
Elaine Briggs
eb88cs@cox.net
Web Master: **Malcolm Williamson**
Editor: **Wil Wing**
briton4@cox.net

CLUB CALENDAR

APR 20 – Ride to the Oark General Store for lunch. A Club favorite.
MAY 18 – Club ride to Tahlequah, OK, for a Pizza lunch. Some nice roads.
May 31 – Euro Motor Extravaganza, Sand Springs, OK
JUN – Choice of two out of state cars shows to support – they support us!
JUL 8-13 – A chance to join the British V-8 Club for a week of activities. More later.
AUG 25 – Car Show Work Party at the Storey’s.
SEP 5, 6, 7 – Our Brits in the Ozarks Show at Agri Park, F’ville.
OCT 25-27 – Fall Retreat. Details as the date nears.
OCT 26 – Halloween Party at the Storey’s.
NOV – To be announced.
DEC 7 – Christmas Party at the Storey’s.



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> **Thanks to all who contributed photos of their first cars.**

> Judging from the number of original ‘1st car photos’ that couldn’t be found, photo albums must have gone the way of buggy whips?

> **Richard Davies’ black and white Mini photo wins Yr. Ed.’s vote as the best photo. It must have been taken with a good camera - sharp image, well composed with excellent tone and contrast. (Sorry, no prize, tho)**

> It was... interesting to group them all, but chaos was overcome. And we have two related stories for next month.

> **‘We’ were a little surprised that several of you bought British cars first. In 1952 the average American still knew little about ‘ferrin’ cars. I would get remarks like, “Oh, you bought one of those GM Jaguars. Aren’t American cars good enough for you?” (In 1952? No, they were not, for a kid obsessed with racing.)**

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Thanks to Elaine Briggs this month for helping Yr. Ed. Beat back the Technology Monster temporarily. It lurks forever, ready to strike down the uneducated.

About fifteen years ago I submitted an article to the English 'A 40 Farina Club', which I had just joined. I concluded that story by asking any interested British owners to contact me – Charles Wells responded and our email friendship began. At that time, Charles owned, among other cars, a French Senechal from the 'twenties. A few years ago, I asked about Salmson cars and, as usual, Charles came through with a thorough and interesting story. This is the last of Charles' articles I have to offer. I have added photos from internet sources. Wil

Salmson cars by Charles Wells

Hi Wil,



As there are too few Senechals still around to justify a discrete club most owners join the Amilcar Salmson Register instead, as I did myself. This, however, caters mostly for the owners of cars from the Vintage period (1918-1930), although French Salmson remained in production until 1957 and competed at Le Mans at the same time as your DB. The vintage cars have an enviable record of racing success. Therefore, I gave little attention to post-vintage French Salmsons and virtually none to British versions of the marque, which didn't appear on the scene until 1934. *Senechal race cars left – lightweight 'cycle cars'. Salmson cars of the 'twenties below.*



During the 1920s, nearly 2300 French Salmsons were imported into the UK through the branch company, SMS (Societe des Moteurs Salmson) London, which had been set up in 1922. The company itself was very active in racing and sporting events to promote its name, and about a quarter of their imports here were sports or racing cars which were widely campaigned by amateur British drivers up to about 1935.

In 1930 Salmson abandoned sports and racing cars to concentrate on the touring and passenger car market, and the lack of spares and the lightweight construction of the 1920s cars has resulted in a very low survival rate. Of the 2300 cars which came to UK, only about 47 can be identified today, with their original registration numbers. Compare this with the British Salmson survival rate of solidly built 1930s cars, about 20%.

The Martineau family, father and sons, had long been interested in Salmsons. Guy Martineau was an avid fan of the racing exploits of the cars in France and England and along with the rest of the family had competed in many events. Guy and his brother David had been educated at Cambridge and later in France and Germany and were looking for an outlet and a career and with their father's help found it in Raynes Park, London.

They obviously knew well Armand Bovier, a SMS director in England, and F.W. Berwick of the old Sizaire-Berwick car company. With these auspicious partners they identified a potential growth market for light aircraft engines. An agreement with the French Salmson Company, which had long been successful in the field, to manufacture Salmson models was signed. They set up British Salmson Aero Engines Ltd. (BSAE) in 1929.

However, just as SMS had had to venture into car manufacture via GN in anticipation of a reduction in demand for its aircraft engines three years after the end of the Great War, BSAE took up car manufacture "to fill the factory" three years after starting the manufacture of those aircraft engines under licence.



Two British Salmsons of the '30s.

In France SMS had decided that the very successful sporty Emil Petit engines of the early and mid 1920s needed redesigning to give increased power to haul bigger saloon bodies for the new marketable family cars. The S4 was conceived initially as a

1200cc, growing to 1500cc for the S4C (no-one seems to know what happened to S4A or S4B).

1932 saw the start of licensing the designs and tracing the French drawings, setting up the basics for the production of the engines, designs for gearbox, chassis and transmission elements, braking systems. The machinery was in place, techniques established and the first cars put together for registering for the road in January 1934.

The British Salmson S4C, as it was called, was closely related to its French counterpart. The idea of taking a French quality chassis and Anglicising it was potentially a good one. At this time there were very few small car chassis available for customers' coachwork. A few Rileys were so bodied, as were Alvis, MG, etc., but very few of each were not fitted with the factory bodies. The changes to the engine were minimal, just the adoption of BSF threads, all the actual components still being machined to metric sizes. By contrast the gearbox was an all new Raynes Park design; presumably the Cotal semi-automatic was assumed too much of an oddity for the British market. The back axle was modified for English sizes and proper Rudge Whitworth hubs and wheels fitted all round. The petrol was no longer gravity-fed but a tank was fitted at the rear with that most English of frustrations, the SU petrol pump. As many parts as possible were British-sourced, no doubt due to the exchange rate, and the end result was probably the highest quality small chassis available in UK at the time.



Note overhead camshaft is rear driven on the S4C Salmson.

Motor Sport of February 1934 commented: "One's first impression on raising the bonnet is the extraordinarily high degree of finish given to the engine and its components. Wherever possible the parts have been chromium plated, including all the carburettor and ignition controls, and the whole power unit bears the unmistakable stamp of its origin in an aero-engine factory."

I am greatly indebted to the British Salmson Owners' Club Jubilee Register (2003) for this insight.

Best wishes,

Charles

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Tough Question

Wil

I was talking to Malcolm Williamson about British cars at the Brit Stop on Feb 17th. We don't yet know each other well and he asked me which was my favorite car; he meant of those British cars which I had owned, I think. Hmm...

I was flummoxed for a few seconds because I couldn't think of one outstanding history/experience. To say something, I said, "Well, I had two Rolls-Royce cars. They were pretty good." That was obviously true but was meant to impress and wasn't a very honest answer. One Rolls was a 14-year project, and while it was a magnificent automobile, it also represented a back-breaking burden, the loss of countless weekends and, towards the end, resentment on my part. It was just too much. Besides, I only drove it, before and after restoration, less than 20 miles total. Call it a classy, long, learning experience.

The other, smaller Rolls was more pleasant to drive, but was also a multi-year project – a nicer project - and I had to sell it to get back to work on the P II.

As a 19-year-old I loved my new MG TD MK II, and I don't regret that introduction to sports cars, but it was a

mechanical disaster. I only had it for a year (Uncle Sam called), but then it was a disaster for my unsuspecting father.

There was a Jaguar XK 120 coupe in the mix, but that was first a major transmission project and then there wasn't enough leg room.

My second Austin A40 Farina sedan was a nice car – don't regret that one at all but driving 'briskly' made Shirley car-sick because of leaning in corners. And then I got to the age where I couldn't take the summer temperatures without air conditioning. Even with an upgraded 1275 cc engine, it wouldn't have had much power after installing A/C.

Here's the thing – after decades of repairing cars, it kind of takes away the luster of ownership. Name a popular British car and I could probably tell you all the things that go wrong with it, based on experience. It does have an effect. No big regrets about any of my former British cars, but neither would I want any back.

I don't want to end on a sour note, so I'll have to say that my new 1964 Mini Cooper S was the best. I had it for just a year, but it was dead reliable and achieved exactly what I wanted from it. And buying it at dealer cost (or less), I didn't lose too much money... not counting the weekend racing expenses, of course.

To go outside of the original question's intent, let me share my best (non-racing) British car experience. In the early 'sixties a friend loaned me his newish Aston Martin DB 4 (Mark unknown). Shirley and I, not long married, had a magical weekend up to New Hampshire, including taking a float-plane ride from Lake Winnepesaukee. Shirley's first airplane experience! The Aston Martin was long-legged, fast, comfortable, good looking, and quiet at steady speeds. Wonderful car. Best of all, I didn't own it! *That means I didn't have to buy it – entirely beyond my reach – and if it needed minor repairs, I made money, rather than paying it out.*

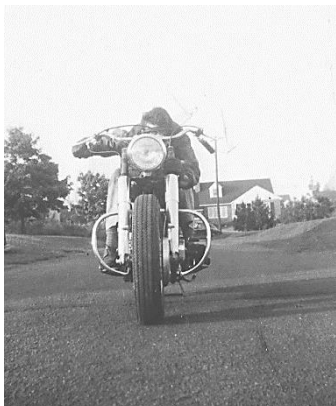
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More member's first cars



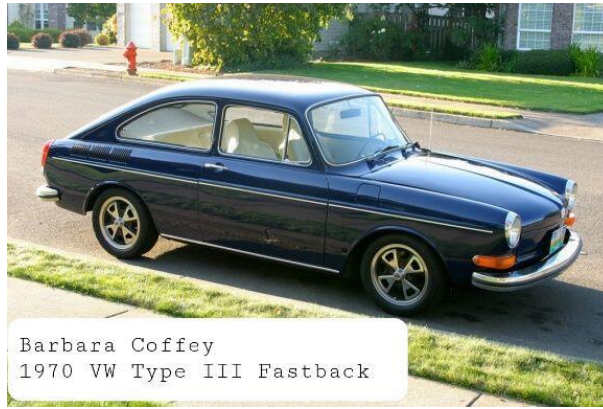
Far left: Don Wiseman bought a new '67 Sprite MK IV.

Left: Jim Mangold's MGB looked like this.



Far left: Wil Wing's 1st vehicle, pretending in 1951 that his 1950 H-D 74 Panhead was fast and racy (not). Reliable, though.

Left: Bob Cable with his '74 Plymouth Duster, purchased in Florida.



Barbara Coffey
1970 VW Type III Fastback

Far left: Richard Davies '64 Austin Mini.

Left: Barbara Coffey has done her own labeling. Thanks! "Just like this" she says. Nice looking car.



Far left: Larry Smyth bought a new '68 Camaro.

Left: Bill Watkins couldn't find his original teenage photo in shorts, but it was a '72 Opel Rallye – later 'Manta'.



Far left: David Ferrell bought a '70 Mustang fastback in '77, much like this.

Left: Clay Chenault first had an '85 Honda Civic CRX 1.5 L (stock photo)



Far left: Amazing. Randy Greenway's father bought this new '64 1/2 Mustang; they still have it! It passed through the siblings. Randy's turn in '78. Left: Larry Roe's '57 Renault Dauphine.



Far left: Roy Chinn had one of these during four years of college. Sold it for \$300 – a \$100 profit.

Left: Brad Esslinger bought a neighbor's '55 Ford Custom-line (\$100) in '72. (stk.photo)