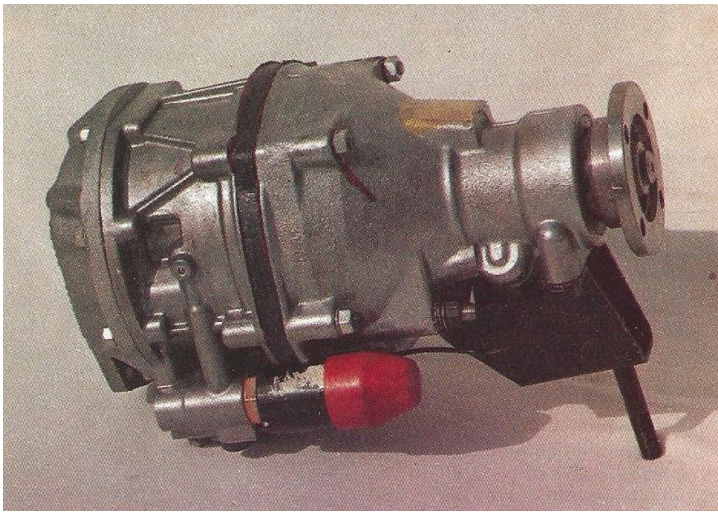


# BRITISH

**Heavy. Unreliable. Bulky. Expensive. Depended on Lucas electrics. Contains pumps and friction surfaces. Necessary?**

Some facts and some opinions. *Wil Wing*

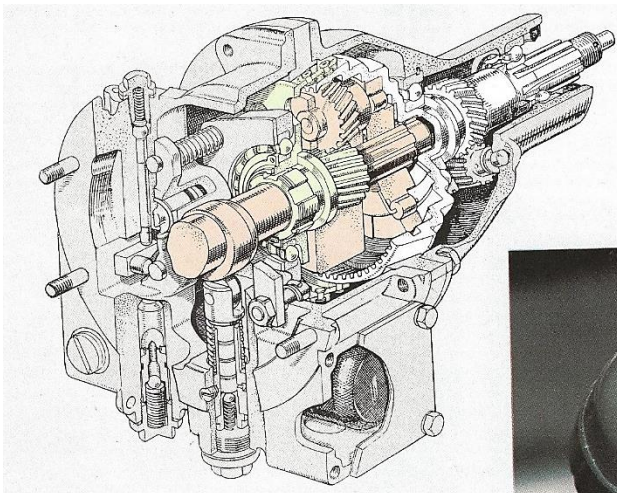
One might summarize the history of British automobile manufacturing in two words: Losing Money. Oh, I know very well – they produced endless fascinating, exciting and even winning cars. But running a business successfully seemed beyond them. Generally, they were perpetually short on cash and endlessly put off updating designs. From this side of the Atlantic, it seems their management was usually incompetent, and the factory workers cared little about doing their best, especially if there was an opportunity to go on strike! In the USA, union workers were also happy to strike, to get a bigger share of the profits. In England, the workers seemed to strike because they didn't want to work. (Ask for my backup on that statement)



## **The object of my discontent, a Laycock De Normanville overdrive unit**

You are looking at a British Laycock De Normanville overdrive unit, which was an optional extra on many British cars of the 1950s - '60s, and standard on a few. I drove many cars fitted with them and repaired several of those units. This one was designed for Triumph Dolomite cars and looks smaller than others, such as those on Austin-Healey sports cars.

Check the complexity below!



I suppose you could say most owners were satisfied with their overdrive unit if it was working. But I had to fix them. If lucky, I'd find that Mr. Lucas was the problem, either a faulty switch in the cockpit or a reluctant shifting solenoid on the side of the overdrive unit. Pulling them apart for major work was... a major pain.

Taking one of these big ugly units out of a car or reinstalling them always forced one thought in my mind, **"This absurdly big, absurdly expensive lump should have been just another gear set in the gearbox!"**

< (please ignore this flaw)

*Images from 'World of Automobiles'*

# ***BRITISH***

>Well worth reading some of the time<

**June 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.**

*Although it would explain the muddled situation, we have no proof the first club meetings were conducted in a Chinatown opium den. Repeating those consistent rumors is quite irresponsible.*

## **Contact Us**

**- Our website: [www.britishironnwa.org](http://www.britishironnwa.org)**

**-To contact our President: [bwatkins@bwatkinslawoffice.com](mailto:bwatkins@bwatkinslawoffice.com)**

**Membership and Treasurer: Elaine Briggs [eb88cs@cox.net](mailto:eb88cs@cox.net)**

**-To contact the editor: 479-202-3235 or [briton4@cox.net](mailto: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 supper,

## **Other Meetings:**

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

**Meeting Night, May 9:** Leaving Bella Vista 10 minutes early was fruitless, as there were still countless stoppages heading South on I 49. Lots of members were already at the Steakhouse and we had a good turnout - we didn't get a count. Doug Schrantz kindly gave Yr. Ed. a copy of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter 1980 *Automobile Quarterly*, which had a feature story on French D.B. automobiles. Thank you, Doug. On the chance that there are still members who have not seen my former 1955 Le Mans D.B. ex-factory team race car, a photo is below\*. We learned that Barbara Coffee is a nationally ranked fencer! At our table there was talk of college reunions, rusty crap Brit cars that were *not* purchased (!), and explanations of the numbers on plastic containers – for recycling purposes, etc. Elaine reported about \$5,090 in our treasury. Elaine brought up some problems with our BI-List email server, but it was decided to 'fix', rather than 'replace'. She is working on ordering a new stock of Club grill badges. We now have 74 paid-up members. A tech session



was scheduled for Sat 11<sup>th</sup> – reported elsewhere in this issue. Bill Watkins encouraged our participation in the GOBMC British car show on Jun 28,29, in Springfield, MO. The subject of a MG TD for sale came up and it was described as “a nice one”. So *that's* where Yr. Ed. went wrong! Mine was new in 1952 and it wasn't a nice one at all. **I should have waited 72 years and then bought an old TD!** No, that's a stupid notion.

\* (Same car, better paint job)

## BEHIND THE WHEEL (from the right hand side)

The people in this hobby in general and British Iron in particular, are terrific. As you all know, at about 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, May 26th, a series of tornados hit Northwest Arkansas and downtown Rogers in particular. That is where Lisa and I live. Huddled in an alcove at the bottom of our stairs with our bicycle helmets on, it was an experience I would not care to repeat. We were fortunate in that our house only suffered light damage. We did lose all but one of the big, pretty trees in our yard (the one still standing may not make it) and two trees landed on my garages, one of which is the home for the Jensen



Interceptor. The little garage now has a 15 or 20 degree list to the East but it still stands. I have not yet tried to get the car out because the sliding door (barely visible in this picture) is jammed into the ground and I am concerned about moving it since it may be what is holding up that end of the building. You can also see here more trees lying down which block our driveway. That Sunday morning, I sent a text to Doug Schrantz asking to borrow his chainsaw and Lee Cowling texted checking on us. By mid-morning Doug and Lee were both on scene with chainsaws and a 4-wheeler to help our neighbors and us cut up the trees and clear the driveway. Hard work for

about 5 hours. I really appreciated the spirit of community and generosity displayed by these two guys - Doug could have been at home clearing up his own mess. He also loaned me a car since ours was still blocked in the main garage by the remains of the tree that were too big for us to shift. I know both of them went on to help others around town. What a great pair and Lisa and I and our neighbors are very grateful. I know others in the club, Brad and Rita in particular, also suffered significant damage. We are very fortunate that property damage in general, and loss of life in particular, were no worse than they were. I have read reports by scientists postulating that “tornado alley” will shift East due to climate change. If that is true we had better get ready.

Now, let’s talk about cars and club activities. We had a very good car show committee meeting with Amber Clark from the ALS office in mid-May. Amber has some good ideas about how we can grow participation in Brits in the Ozarks. I would love to see us start to get around 200 cars each year. There is no reason that we can’t do this if we really get word out and promote the event. I know that some of the committee members probably need material from me to help in that regard and I will get that out ASAP (forgive my delay, the office was closed for a week due to lack of power after I returned from vacation). On a related note, Lisa and I put in an appearance at the Euro Motor Extravaganza in Tulsa last weekend. This event is hosted and organized by the Jaguar Club of Tulsa. They seemed to have done a very nice job putting on the event - couple with food trucks, nice facility with restrooms, big silent auction, but for some reason they only had 35 or so cars turnout. You would think that with the active Jaguar, MG and Triumph clubs in Tulsa they would have a better turnout. It’s a mystery to me. We did hand out some Brits in the Ozarks material while we were there.

Related to that, the GOBMC all British show is set for Springfield on June 29th. I’d really like to organize a group of us to go up to this event and support them. They always turn out a good group for our show.

**(Continued on page 6)**



#### Ye Olde Staff

President: **Bill Watkins**

First Vice- Pres: **Doug Schrantz**

Second Vice-Pres: **David Ferrell**

Treasurer & Membership:

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Editor: **Wil Wing**

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**vintage cars of mutual interest**

**Mark Cory Fayetteville, AR**

**479-530-7228**

#### CLUB CALENDAR

**Jun 28-29** – GOBMC British car show at  
Springfield, MO.

**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.

SALES • INSTALLATION • SERVICE



Linda Young, long-term and outstanding editor of the  
Jaguar Club of Tulsa newsletter has retired, but  
forwarded this this news release from Moss Motors:

*"Moss Motors is pleased to share the  
attached Press Release and product photos. We  
recently developed and produced a replacement  
(and improved!) timing cover for a host of 6-cylinder Jaguars. This has been an important and  
difficult part for which to find a replacement. We would greatly appreciate it if you would help us share  
this news by including the press release and photos (there are three to show different angles, but what  
you display is up to you) in an upcoming publication.*

*Thank you for considering this request. We hope your members/readers find this information  
beneficial. And when new and/or improved products reach our shelves in the future, we will keep you  
updated."*

++++

**We are once again grateful to Greg Bunch, 'The man who put touring into the British Iron Touring  
Club'. See page 9 for our trip to Tahlequah and Sam and Ella's Pizza.**

**The May 25<sup>th</sup> tech session featured a beautiful XK 120 roadster, but the session was a bit of a flop,  
as we didn't have the necessary SU parts in hand to cure the flooding.**

**Your 'For Sale' ad** could have been here.

## Lotus Elan – their best road car ever? *Wil Wing*



OK, I'm not qualified to make that judgement because I've never driven the latest cars such as the Evora or Emira, but those newer cars would be my choice. Anyway, it is no good comparing devices made 60 years apart. It is like an apples and oranges argument. Much better to judge the merit of a device in the context of its own era. That I

can do.

Early in the 1960s, in business with my partner, we had a few Elan customers. This was still in the days when Lotus sold kit cars as a tax break, but sports car enthusiasts said that "All Lotus cars are kits cars." It did seem that Colin Chapman was content producing cars where the customers had to act as the 'final inspection and repair' facility – instead of doing that at the factory. Why then did people buy them? ... because they provided an unparalleled driving experience.

Even today, watching YouTube videos where drivers had no first series – 1962/75 – Elan experience, it is amusing to hear all the generous adjectives in the English language pouring forth. It is like an American driver of the period, used to only our clumsy domestic products being shocked with his first Porsche driving experience. Except that the Elan had even better roadholding and steering. Even today it is a wonderful experience.

So, I must be a big fan, right? Ahh, no. I was a guy who had to tune and repair them, and I was big. Too big to fit comfortably behind the wheel and definitely too big for hanging upside down with my head under the fascia panel and my legs out somewhere on the rear deck. They had lots of electrical issues.

Surprisingly, our business, Woodside Foreign Auto Service in Linden, NJ, was the Lotus official Metro area service center for about, oh, ... two or three weeks? This was something my partner must have arranged. He was 'average in stature', as the old Piel's beer ad said, or a little shorter. Fine for him! But I imagine that owners around NYC and Connecticut weren't happy about having to take their cars to NJ (or have them towed) and leaving them for service. The Lotus distributor in NYC must have quickly found a location in Manhattan for in-house service.

That suited me fine. It was just one more sports car that required tuning and service while on my knees. No wonder I started getting arthritic so early.

Despite my moaning, I was also thrilled with the Elan driving experience.

In later days, trading as Dyno-Motive Services, I still got a few Elan tune-up customers. In one instance, I made the mistake of joking with a customer, who was a clinical psychologist, while he was paying his bill. I said, "This is a rare experience for me, cleaning big oil spills up off of the floor after servicing a sports car, but you have to live with that!" He replied in an annoyed tone, "What makes you think I would let something like that concern me?" Oh, oh. He didn't think their reputation for leaking like a sieve was at all funny. My big mouth.

Ah – I just remembered something peculiar to Elans that many of their owners didn't know. I would have a customer come in and complain that it was due for a tune-up, because it would no longer pull up to the red-line rpms. The dual-cam models, especially, revved so freely that in the lower gears it was easy to over-rev the

engine if not paying attention. Lotus and Lucas found a 'pre-electronic era' rev limiter solution. The rotor contained a sliding piece that was retained by an internal spring. Lotus wanted 6500 rpm to be the safe limit. At that speed centrifugal force would overcome the internal spring and the rotor would ground the high-voltage spark to the distributor shaft. But like the Lucas springs restraining the centrifugal weights inside the distributor, the spring steel was not of the best quality. They would become fatigued after a few years, or less, and the top rpm of the engine would steadily decrease. I always keep a new original rotor in stock. On the other hand, wise racers prepared their cars with heavier valve springs to allow super high rpm and then removed the stock rotors.

#### Let's have a little Lotus Elan history and technical facts:

The early series of Elans are today referred to as the 'sixties Elans', although they were produced from 1963-75. This is to differentiate them from the later front-wheel drive Elans, the M100 series, 1989-95

#### Two seater sports cars:

- Lotus *Type 26* drop head coupe (DHC) marketed as the Elan 1500, Elan 1600 , and Elan S2 (Series 2)
- Lotus *Type 36* fixed head coupe (FHC) marketed as the Elan S3, the Elan S4 and lastly, in a higher performance model, the Elan Sprint.
- Lotus *Type 45* drop head coupe, replacing the Type 26, delivered in parallel with the Type 36 in the S3, S4 and Sprint form.
- Lotus *Type 26R* racing version of the Type 26.

#### Four seater sports car (rear seats suitable for children)

- Lotus *Type 50*, fixed head coupe, marketed as the Elan +2

After the S2 was released the original Elan 1500 and the Elan1600 models were typically referred to as the S1 (S1 Series) although the car was never marketed as such. Today, all models (S1-Sprint) are often collectively identified as the '1960s Elans'.

(Note that all the 'coupe' words in this article should have the accent mark over the 'e'. People have "coup-ays", chickens have "coops".)

#### **Overview**

- The Lotus Elan was the first Lotus road car to use a steel backbone chassis with a fiberglass body. This style of construction was repeated in the subsequent Lotus model for nearly three decades. The Elan weighed approximately 1,500 pounds, complying with Colin Chapman's goal of minimum weight. It had 4-wheel independent suspension and was technically advanced. Gordon Murray, designer of the McLaren F1 supercar, reportedly said that his only disappointment was that he could not give it the perfect steering of the Lotus Elan. *An example of Elan weight-savings for people who have never had a chance to study one: The front bumper is just a shape molded into the fiberglass body and then painted silver. Shoddy? Irresponsible? Not really. My 1931 R-R Phantom II Continental and other sporty models had no bumpers, and the wheel spokes were exposed. It was racy looking and hinted that with their superior skills, sporting drivers didn't need bumpers. Most saloon-bodied R-R cars of that era used bumpers fitted by the coachbuilders as protection from damage when left parked in public areas. And spun aluminum wheel covers looked more formal.*
- With rigorous attention to cost control, the Elan became Lotus' first commercial success and contributed to the funding of its achievements in racing for the next ten years. The earlier, beautiful Lotus Elite, with fiberglass chassis and body was a financial loser.
- The original Elan 1500 had a production run of only 22 cars in 1962 before the engine was enlarged to 1600cc (Elan 1600).

## **Production** (approximate)

- S1-3: 7,895, S4: 2,976, Sprint: 1,353.

## **Engine**

The 1,558 cc “Lotus Twin Cam” engine was based on the Ford Kent Pre-Crossflow four-cylinder 1,498 cc engine, with a Harry Mundy-designed two-valve alloy chain-driven twin-cam head. The rights to this design was later purchased by Ford, which renamed it the “Lotus-Ford Twin Cam”. It would go on to be used in a number of Ford and Lotus production and racing vehicles.

Lotus reported different power outputs for the twin-cam engine during the production of the Elan. It varied from 105 HP to 115 with various performance options... or with whatever Colin Chapman thought advantageous as time and models changed. Late models suffered from conforming to US emission standards.

I did dyno test several Elans during the late 1960s and early 70s, but regret that the true road horsepower is now forgotten. The important fact is that they were exceptional competing in their production class even after the SCCA juggled the ‘Production Class’ rules on the theory of equalizing track times lap regardless of displacement or vehicle cost. So, you might see Lotus Elans carving up Corvettes around tight tracks like Lime Rock.

When you look at Tim Webb’s magnificent Elan, don’t think it is anything like the Elans that were racing during the ‘60s or ‘70s. At that time the SCCA enforced the Production classes strictly – ‘mods’ were very limited.

*For the tech specs above I’m indebted to Wikipedia, the writer’s resource.*

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## **Behind the Wheel – conclusion**

No progress on the Jaguar since the last newsletter. With vacation and the storm I simply have not had time to address the mysterious “overheating” issues that may or may not be real. I was talking to Scott Young with the Tulsa Jag Club about my issues and he suggested sourcing an instrument voltage stabilizer for a 1960's Chrysler since the new transistorized ones sold to us in the British car hobby don’t work well. NAPA to the rescue (I hope).

See you at the meeting on the 13th. *Bill Watkins*

++++

***This half-page was originally reserved for a promised story contribution. But I was indisposed last week and never got back to the contributor. It was too late to rearrange the pages.***

***Maybe we will have the story next month.***

**Quiz:** On page 1 is a photo of an old race car. In what way, from the driver’s standpoint, is it like Jay Leno’s McLaren F1 hyper-sports car? Answer on meeting night, if anyone cares.

**Sat May 11, at the Brit Stop:** A beautiful sunny morning and the work performed did nothing to spoil the day. Ron Shrum, Brad Esslinger, Bill Watkins, Doug Schrantz, Todd Maberry and Yr. Ed. turned out. Brian Lea brought in his A-H Spriglet to test for an oil burning problem – roughly 1 quart in 150 miles. We did a compression test and that turned out to be excellent. The spark plugs were very sooty and were cleaned. We did a cylinder leak-down test, utilizing the proper sequencing to minimize pushing the car. And all cylinders had less than 20% leakage, with 15% average. Not bad! Brian's car has some oil leaks and we recommended he fix those first before worrying about the engine internals. Generally, over 30% blowby leakage would be the point of considering spending tons of money on engine rebuilding.



**Left:** Some of the guys absorbed in helping. Thanks, Todd, for the photo. (The other photos just showed old-guy butts)

At 11:00 we checked a Spitfire owned by Justin that would rather stall than idle. Off with the air filters to access the SUs. This one was very easy – the carbs needed balancing and the rear carb was too lean. A few simple adjustments and the idle was restored.

Did I mention that it was a beautiful morning?

**The Club should really buy an inexpensive compression gauge for our shop.**

++++

## **1962 MGA MKII "Love of the Process"**

*Mike and Shannon Lewis*

**Shannon writes:** Back in 1963, my uncle Jimmy (on my Mom's side) purchased the 1962 MGA MKII from a gentlemen in Rogers, AR; the original owner of the car. The story was that this gentleman was getting a divorce and needed to sell it ASAP! Jimmy fell in love with the car and asked his dad (my grandfather) for help buying it, and he agreed.

Jimmy drove that car until his unexpected passing in 1986. At that point, my Mom took possession of the MGA, already needing some restoration. While "we" tried to keep it running, life gets in the way of many well- intended plans and the MGA began to take its long nap. During this time, around 1991, my folks moved from Kansas City to Fayetteville.



Although my mom had gotten it running while living in KC, once they moved to Fayetteville it was parked in the driveway and covered with a tarp. Staying like this for many years, the elements took advantage and the MGA started to deteriorate. After sitting for over 20 years (and with a lot of convincing) we received permission from my folks to try and restore the car.



We were still living in Omaha, NE while we tried to find someone who would take on this huge project. Well, our first attempt failed miserably - - after 6yrs of work (2014-2020), the gentleman who we hired from Springdale (not part of the British Car Club) decided to file for bankruptcy and leave the state unannounced. We received an email that the MGA, in parts and pieces, was in a storage locker in south Fayetteville.....key was left at front counter.

So, frantically we started calling (again from Omaha, NE) to all the body shops in Fayetteville looking for recommendations. It wasn't until we found an advertisement for the British Car Show in the Arkansas Gazette that saved the day. We called every number on that page and every time only one name was recommended: Mr. Mark Cory of *Nostalgia Racing and Restorations*.

We contacted Mark and explained the situation. To be honest, Mark was not in the market to take on a full restoration... but when we described it as a MGA MKII....Mark was "curious". We took a vacation down from Omaha, met up with Mark and headed to the storage unit. As we opened it up.....the magnitude of the project presented itself.



Mark looked meticulously over every piece and after some meditation and soul searching, he decided since he had never restored an MGA, this "could" be fun.

Over the next few years, as we took vacations down here to Fayetteville to visit the family, Mike would work as many hours as possible with Mark. Slowly but surely, the MGA started to come together. In 2022, we decided to move to Elkins: that is when the project really gained momentum.



To date, after sitting for over 20 years and after 10 years of restoration....the MGA is on track to be revealed at this years (2024) Brits in the Ozarks show as a completed project. (continued on pg 9)



**Mike writes:** I can't thank my wife enough for understanding the time needed; the patience with the struggles; and giving the funding approval to restore this MGA. ☺ To Mark Cory we say, *"We have no idea what we would have done if you had said no to the project."*

As this was our first real car project, Shannon and I found out quickly that if you do not "love the process" of restoring and taking care of a British Car, don't ever start down the path. We both thank Mark for his guidance, knowledge, encouragement, enthusiasm and his friendship!

See you in September!! *Mike and Shannon*

++++

**May 18<sup>th</sup> Club ride to Tahlequah for lunch:** Looking below, you might ask, "Why is Mark



Brewer playing a pink guitar?" It ain't so. Some folks who passed up on the ride will be surprised that there was little "too fast" driving. Our biggest problem was heavy traffic and folks who drive 38 mph in a 50 or 55 mph zone. There were few passing zones. It was a case of "We have nothing to fear but fearful drivers themselves."

We admired Greg's new Jaguar coupe and Mark Holzer had his first long run in his restored MGB,

which looks wonderful and ran very well. It was a splendid morning, hence all the traffic.

Yr. Ed. was surprised that we ate out on the sidewalk, but there was just enough breeze to keep the flies away. The pizza itself was an experience, with thick mozzarella cheese and almost everyone went with the loaded 'Supremo' heart attack special. Three large pies satisfied the hunger of most everyone. Mark Brewer once again picked up the tab for lunch. How do we pay Mark back?

In no special order, we had Mark Holzer, Greg Bunch, Margarita Arreguin, Mark Brewer, Dale Flowers, Carol Chamberlain, Marcy Benham, Brad Esslinger, Zoyla Trujillo, Richard Davies and Wil and Shirley Wing. Yup, the pizza was good, and the center of town was very pleasant. *Photo by Shirley*