

‘BRITISH’ Jan 2026

Tell a story month?



Know the brand? Then you can guess whose car we are featuring this month.

No, there isn't enough headroom in this magnificent old car for Yrs. Trly, but one can still admire it.

This is an appropriate time and place for a big ‘THANK YOU’ to every member who contributed to our newsletter in 2025. We appreciate you.

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

‘BRITISH’

>Well worth reading some of the time<

Jan, 2026 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.**

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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.

Other Meetings:

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

‘Meeting Nights’ in December are, of course, our annual Christmas party. We’re too busy eating and having fun to write down notes. We will have the January Meeting Night notes for you in February.

And an extra helping of thanks this month to Bill Watkins!

The cover car is a 1940, and the last one made before the company switched to war production.

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

Well, that was a fiasco. As has become our custom, we had a New Year's Day lunch gathering planned for, well, New Year's Day, at the All American Steakhouse in Springdale. About 9:15 that morning Roy from the All American called me to advise that the restaurant was without power (someone hit a power pole overnight) and that he did not yet know when it would be restored. After some discussion, Roy and I decided to wait and see what transpired over the next couple of hours. Around 9:30 Roy called again to tell me that the power company was estimating that it would be 1:00 PM before the restaurant had power. Given that, we had no real choice but to cancel the event.

Trying to get the word out to everyone in the club reliably is a bit of a chore but doable. I immediately posted the cancellation to the BI-List and to our Facebook page. I also asked Elaine to do the same on the separate club email list she maintains, and she promptly did so. Lastly, I sent some texts out to a few folks and asked them to pass the message along. All of this took about 20 minutes to accomplish.

So, of course, within 15 minutes of finishing up the work to get the word out (probably 10:30 or so) Roy called again to tell me that – Surprise!! - he had power back. At this point I thought that now trying to reinstate the gathering would just cause whiplash and confusion so decided to just call it good and move on.

I knew there would be some that would not get the message but didn't know what else could be done. A little after 1:00PM I received a pretty funny text from Marcy Benham stating that she and Richard Davies had won the car show, accompanied by a forlorn photo of their XJS all alone in the empty parking lot. Marcy and Richard reported having a nice lunch with Mark Brewer and Marguerita. So, I guess if only 2 couples didn't get the message that is probably pretty good. Sorry about any confusion - and what a pain in the . . .

I really appreciate Roy's diligence in keeping me updated on how things were progressing at the restaurant. The All American Steakhouse has just been such a great fit for us as a meeting place. In my 30 years in the club it is the best space, the best food, and generally, the best service we have experienced. They really seem to like having us, and Roy said as much to Marcy and the table while they were there.

New Year's Eve was interesting in that Alan Johnson, the owner of WORD Coffee House in Fayetteville, invited us to participate in his New Years in London promotion. With limited parking, he had asked us for 3 or so cars to display at his business during the hours of the promotion. We had a nice turnout with Richard and Marcy bringing their XJS, Barbara with her MGB (that is another story if you ask her) and Lisa and me in the Alvis. Brandon Rooks volunteered (!) one of his Astons, so Alan Meyer and his wife Patricia were there with their MINI and with Brandon's recently acquired Aston Martin Vanquish. What a gorgeous car. Free tea and coffee were provided to us, which was nice, and Alan Johnson was very grateful. Alan is a recovered Jaguar owner and has enjoyed coming to our car show in the past. Nice guy. It appears to me that the shop was turning over a nice business during that time.

The appearance at WORD Coffee made me think. In these situations, we are helping someone promote their business and, you would hope, make money, which is fine. But I think it would be reasonable in these situations to ask that the business contribute \$50 to the British Iron treasury for the privilege of our presence. What do you all think, is this out of line??

I expect to hear from Tim Suddard next week to see if he can confirm his appearance as our guest speaker for BITO 2026. I expect him to confirm as he is already thinking about how to make his presentation and has suggested a Fireside Chat format with the two of us in chairs (on a riser, I would think) engaged in a loosely scripted conversation. I like the idea since it would be fresh and different for our event. If he can have some Power Point slides to go with it, I think it would be great. Along those lines, Brian thinks he has a way to efficiently organize the pictures of the class winners to display during the show as well. I'll let you all know how this progresses. Let's plan on having a car show committee meeting in February.

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Coming Events

To soon be decided at a Meeting Night.



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Dec 13th at the Brit Stop: Ron Shrum and Mark Holzer came by to help Yrs. Trly determine the source of my oil leak – since I had an oil change a month ago at Walmart. Yikes! As I feared, we found there was a small leak at the oil pan drain plug. Worse, the area around the plug had blue gasket sealer smeared around. Evidently, some ham-fisted ‘technician’ cross-threaded the plug and then tried to solve it with goop. Some guys will say, “That’s what you get for going to Walmart.” But I had a similar mishap at the dealer with our new Toyota Venza years ago. The car leaked oil after an oil change. There was a hard plastic adapter between the engine block and the spin-on oil filter. Their mechanic over-tightened the oil filter until the plastic adapter split on the side! Good Grief! At least that one was covered under warrantee. I don’t think there is a way to eliminate the unthinking gorillas from this world, who believe every threaded part, no matter how small, is a challenge to their strength and manhood.

We were out of our Prairie Creek shop in less than an hour. Story to be continued next month.

Don’t forget our regular January Meeting Night, in just a few days, **Thursday, 8th**.

A History of my 1964 Alvis TE21 – Bill Watkins



It is my experience in this hobby that most of us have a limited history of the British cars we acquire over the years. I knew next to nothing about the TR4 I acquired as my first toe-dip into the hobby. I later found out that it was an early car – 1962 I think – rather than a 1964 as I was told (and as it was originally titled). I knew a little bit about the 1965 Jaguar 3.8S we owned but there was a big gap from 1968 to 1982 that I could never fill in. The same for my Jensen as I know parts of its past but there are big gaps.

I am fortunate that I have the history of my Alvis pretty much from the date of its birth. As many of you know, I found and arranged the purchase of the car at the Hershey swap meet in Hershey, Pennsylvania, in 2024. Talk about an impulse purchase . . . The Alvis Owner (no “s”) Club always has a booth at Hershey and I spoke to the guys manning it about the car when I first found it. One of the two gentlemen present, Wayne Brooks, was (is) a 90+ year old man who had owned the car previously. Wayne also maintains a registry of every Alvis in the U.S. So, a gold mine. From Wayne, I was able to learn the history of my car and obtain a few artifacts like the original factory brochure,

the cover of which appears above. I like that the car pictured on the cover looks just like mine in the original factory “metallic beige”, minus the Webasto sunroof. I would call the color gold, but I guess that is why I am not in marketing. Here is the car as I found it at Hershey.

Alvis was a bit of a high-end brand in its day, considered on a par with Bentley for quality, if not performance. The target market for Alvis was always the executive class. In those days as a person (almost always a man) moved up in an organization he would get a company car. The higher you got up the food chain, the nicer the car. So, it was no surprise to me to learn that the first owner of my car was the firm of Lavy, Hancox & Carter, Imperial House, Dominion Street, London. A Google search reveals this owner was a large insurance company that no longer seems to exist – probably bought out if I were to guess. The name of the executive who enjoyed the pleasure a new Alvis at that time is not known. The car was completed October 1, 1964, and dispatched to Brooklands of Bond Street, as the dealer, who then sold it to Lavy, Hancox & Carter. It is now in its original color, if not original paint, and the interior is original but for the carpet and shape of the transmission tunnel (more later on this).

The next owner was someone named K. F. Crook of Garth House, Littleton, in Chester, England, who acquired it in 1971. Mr. Crook kept the car until 1977 when it was sold on to Mr. G. F. Smith of Cheshire who owned it until 1981. In 1981 the car was purchased by Martin R. Bury in Lancashire who kept it until 1984.



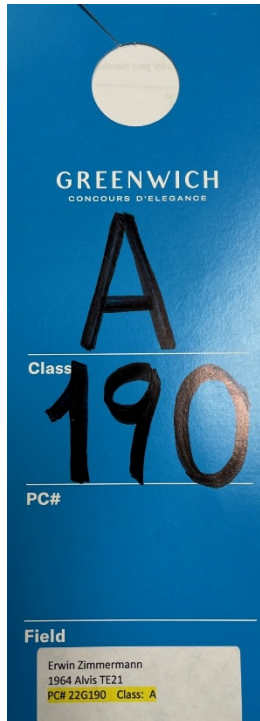
Neil Ernest Frost bought the car from Mr. Crook in 1984. Sometime shortly thereafter Mr. Crook seems to have had some problems with the car. In 1985 he ran an ad with the Alvis Owner Club Bulletin looking for parts for the original output shaft and 4th gear for the factory installed 5-speed ZF gearbox. This parts search appears to have been unsuccessful as Mr. Frost

installed a 4-speed before selling the car in 1985 to Norman E. Cartwright-Brown. Mr. Cartwright-Brown is the person who imported the car to the U.S., as he was living in Virginia at the time. In 1989 Mr. Cartwright-Brown sold the car to Wayne Brooks, whom I mentioned above, along with a Jensen CV8 and a rhd fintail Mercedes originally built in South Africa. Wayne explained that the only way he could buy the Alvis was to take all 3 as a package deal. He sold the Mercedes to a rural mail carrier (it was rhd, think about it).

Wayne told me that when he got it the chassis and mechanicals were in good shape, as was the floor pan. Wayne stripped the car, replaced the sills, had repairs made to the rear wings (fenders to us), rebuilt the front suspension, and repainted the car from maroon to its original “metallic beige”. He had intentions of keeping the car but, with 11 Alvis on hand and a pending move to a house with only a 2-car garage, lots of inventory had to go. Wayne sold the car to Donald McKenzie, an orthopedic surgeon in McKinney, Texas, in 1991.

Dr. McKenzie is a bit interesting in that he was an apprentice at Alvis from August 1961, to September 1963. He then immigrated to Canada in 1969 where he received his medical training. Disliking the winters there, he moved to Texas. Dr. McKenzie had the 4-speed removed and installed the Getrag 5-speed that is now in the car. The Getrag case is a much different shape than the original ZF case and this necessitated a custom fabricated transmission tunnel. As a result, the carpets do not fit ideally over the tunnel, but it is close. Dr. McKenzie also had air conditioning installed (it is not clear when, in the life of the car, it acquired the Webasto sunroof).

Dr. McKenzie sold the car to Erwin Zimmerman in June of 2021. Within a few months of acquiring the car Mr. Zimmerman developed health issues and was confined to a wheelchair. As a result, during his ownership he never actually drove the car himself. Erwin (who lives in Maine) has a nephew (Greg) with a restoration shop in New Hampshire. The nephew had reported to Wayne that he needed to do quite a bit of initial recommissioning since the car had been sitting for about 7 years. With Greg’s help, Erwin was able to get the car out and about a little during his ownership. One event that Erwin did enjoy was an entry in the 2022 Greenwich Concours de Elegance in 2022. The entry was accepted and the car was displayed. After taking possession, I found the mirror hanger for the event (see below left) in one of the door pockets. I love these sorts of artifacts.



The car had not been used much over the preceding 12 years. I have written before about the work I had to have done on it. This included:

1. Valve adjustment
2. Rebuilt fuel pump (may not have been needed)
3. Replace bad ground strap
4. New door hinges, adjust the doors and boot lid to fit properly
5. New windshield seal
6. Addition of a third high brake light

I still need to get into the dashboard and replace some bulbs. I’d like a more powerful generator or to replace it with an alternator as the weak current output makes the AC about useless.

It is fun owning something weird and different. Here are some facts and figures:

21,500 - Total number of cars built in Coventry, England by Alvis during its existence from

1920 to 1966

352 - Total number of TE21 models produced 1963 through 1965

- 298 - Number of TE21s currently known to survive worldwide
- 5 - Number of TE21s known to be in the United States
- 2 - This is one of 2 known standard TE 21 Park Ward Saloons in the US (of the others, 2 are convertibles, 1 is a custom bodied Graber Super Coupe)

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Old Age and Worrying

Wil Wing

I've got to tell you, when you get way up there in years, it ain't just the physical pain; you start worrying about losing what little brains you ~~had to start with~~... with which you started. Lately, I'm a little alarmed about my not being quite so prejudiced as when younger. Could that be an early warning sign of dementia?

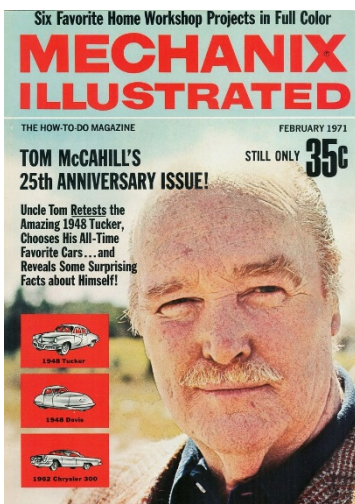
Particularly, I find myself not as revolted by the 'Detroit Dream Cars' of the 1950s and '60s. Or at least, not the very idea of them. I realize most of you aren't old enough to have experienced the horror of those cars when new, but you must have seen some photos. I mean, I had friends who thought they were wonderful and they were perfectly nice guys, otherwise... well, not really perfect, but okay. I had to limit my opinions severely to grunts or 'hmm' while they went into rapture about the latest garish atrocity.

No sense spoiling a friendship by pointing out their poor taste, you know? Some part of the population craves attention by the ownership of land yachts, rating that even above personal driving ability. Really!



For instance, I could easily knock out a paragraph or two about this Cadillac (I think) abortion. A great wallowing whale. And there were many even worse! But I just don't have heart for it any longer. Some folks might agree with my opinions, but why make new enemies of others? See – I'm afraid I'm losing it. But I've got a good story about a car like this I gotta share.

In 1950 I went the fall races at Watkins Glen, NY for the first time with my older brother in his Ford. In 1951 I drove up after work on a Friday on my Harley '74 cu. in. Panhead', found my brother's Nash about 1:00 AM and used it to sleep for five hours – until things got noisy. In 1952 I drove up after work in my new MG TD MKII. Well - I've still got some working brain cells.



This incident happened when they used public roads, stopped the trains on the back of the course and the start-finish line was in the middle of town.

General Motors wanted to get some free publicity from the new American fascination with sportycar racing. So they shipped a car much like the one in the photo above to the Glen to use it in the same way Detroit provided a different car every year to do a pace lap at the Indy 500. They also had a fashion model dressed as if she were headed to the Monte Carlo Casino for an evening, which was pretty funny pretty funny in the morning in a rural up-state NY village. Best of all, they had Tom McCahill acting as announcer, host and driver of the 'dream car' while the fashion model was supposed to wave at the peasants during a slow lap,

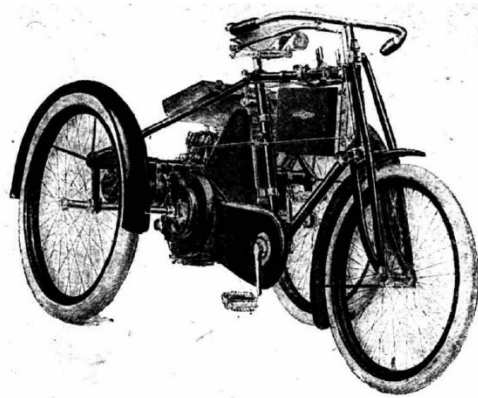
So, with much fanfare the big tank – excuse me, ‘dream car’ – was pushed to the start-finish line. A professional photographer took shots for GM. Then, with a wave of the starting flag, Tom McCahill pushed the starter button... and nothing happened. Dead battery? Disconnected cables for shipping? Who knows? GM’s ‘Great Moment’ ended when McCahill loudly announced, “**Get this piece of crap out’a here. We’ll use my Jag!**”

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I enjoyed featuring Bill Watkins Alvis this month, and we have room to also highlight a British marque, so far unmentioned here, I believe



Discontinued: 1967
Previous owners: Private investors
(1868 – 1932)
Rootes Group
(1932 – 1967)
Chrysler Europe
(1967 – 1979)



Beeston Humber Tricycle, 1899



Humberette 5 HP, 1904



Right: Motorcycle 2 ¾ HP 1904

And so on. Let’s jump up to the ‘twenties.



Left: 14/40 touring car, 1928

1919–1939

There were postwar slumps in the early 1920s and in addition the public were moving from pedal cycles to motorcycles as well as to cars. Rover, Singer, Swift, Triumph and Riley all gave up their manufacture of cycles.

The chairman, Stanley Brotherhood, told a special meeting of shareholders of the exceedingly good performance of one of

the 14-40 cars driven by J W Fitzwilliam and his brother who had just returned from traversing 4,500 miles in central Europe including the worst roads in the Balkans. He then reported the "drastic redesign" of Humber's cars which together with improved appearance and performance and revised prices were expected to improve the products' performance in the marketplace.

Mention of the drastic redesign at that special meeting was followed by another meeting to discuss the amalgamation of Humber and its partly-owned subsidiary Hillman Motor Car Company. Hillman, the chairman explained, made one of the most popular medium priced cars and would provide a suitable partner to the distinctive Humber products. Shareholders were unanimous that the amalgamation should go ahead on the proposed terms.

In 1929 Hillman, under the control of the Rootes brothers, was amalgamated with Humber—the combine was not under the control of the Rootes brothers—but William Rootes' marketing skills had been immediately brought into play when Rootes Limited had been appointed "World Exporters". In December 1929 reviewing the 1929 year the chairman told shareholders Humber had now introduced three new models named: 16-50,¹ for the 1928 Motor Show, Snipe and a seven-seater Pullman both for the October 1929 Motor Show. For the time being the 9-28 and 20-65 hp models would continue but at a reduced price.



16-30 Coupe. 1930.



Humber Snipe 1934.

They were not cheap cars!
More the executive or banker class.

Sorry, some of the fuzzy photos didn't like being enlarged.

Near left and below: Rootes years.



Perhaps you recognize the Snipe MK IV..... or the Hawk Series IV , 1965?

During their long history, Humber also produced trucks (Commer) and military vehicles. And if they had made beach buggies, they could have called them 'Humbugs'! I know you just can't wait to hear how many Humbers were serviced by Yrs. Trly. Okay, it was exactly one. But was a good one.

Where Rt. 1 ran through Linden, NJ, it wasn't straight north / south – more of a northeast / southwest orientation. Less than a mile east was Elizabeth Ave., running parallel. Woodside Foreign Auto Service was about a mile out of Linden center, on East (north is also accurate) Elizabeth Ave. On the same street, but only a few blocks from town center was a famous men's tailor shop – which name I've forgotten, of course. Something Italian. Why was it famous? Because Frank Sinatra used to fly in from California every so often and have his custom suits made there! Don't forget, Mr. Sinatra was a Jersey boy.

The owner of this custom tailoring business was the owner of a nice big Humber, and we took care of it for a couple of years. Something like this, but with better color.



If you were interested in owning a quality British car, almost unknown in the US, you could do worse than buying a mint, late Humber.

Buying one to restore would be a mistake.

They aren't close to being a sports car - most of the later cars fitted are with automatic transmission, but are very pleasant to drive. (Wikipedia edit)

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Happy New – DRAT!

Talk about things going wrong at the last hour! The story is that on New Year's Eve a driver – safe, slow and sober, I'm sure – took down a utility pole on Sunset Ave. in Springdale and left, among others, the American Steakhouse without electricity until after lunch. I'll edit this short as Bill has already covered it on page 2. These 1st of the year car gatherings were initiated here maybe 5 (?) years ago after our former English member and contributor, Charles Wells, made us aware of the English tradition. I wonder if the Oxford area car club ever had to cancel their traditional gathering because someone eliminated the electricity in their area? Possible, we suppose.

But could it be contagious? Yrs. Trly went down to the Brit Stop on Friday, Jan 2nd and there was no electricity to open the door! Frank James was contacted and that problem should be settled in days

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