



smoke in the wires

February '26

From the President

Tim Witzigreuter

Greetings all,

The executive committee has been busy last month and this month with preparation for the Annual Brits on the Bay car show, among other things. We now can accept membership dues, car show registration fees, and other payments electronically thanks to **Monica Bachmann**, and numerous members have used this method to renew their membership. The webpage has been updated with the electronic payment options as well. I talked with **Ben Cummings**, president of the South Alabama British Car Club [*and a new PBCA member-Ed.*] and we are working on coordinating some joint events, for example, rallies and other types of meets. We all need to try to get sponsors for the car show. Sponsors make our car show less expensive to the club and also exposes our club to the public which draws new members.

In closing I want to thank everyone for their support, involvement and ideas for the Club as a whole.

Tim Witzigreuter, Sr.

President

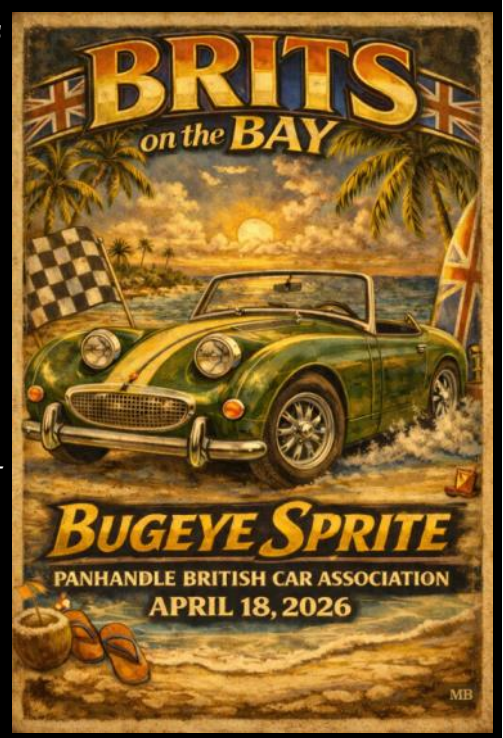
Panhandle British Car Association

The show is less than two months away . . .

Register your car by clicking [here!](#)

Pay your registration fee by clicking [here!](#)

Download a sponsor form [here!](#)



Cameron Leonard took, and sent **Ed.**, this photo of (L to R) **Jack Cowsill** with his TR6, **Doug Basiger** with his TR6, and **Sarah Cowsill** with Cameron's TR6, saying "Tuesday, February 10th was International Drive Your Triumph Day in honor of marque founder Sir John Black's birthday. What better way to celebrate our favorite little British cars than a fine Italian dinner at one of our favorite restaurants, Bonelli's." **Ed.** agrees.

On the cover: Who is that guitar-playing chili pepper? Why, it's **Bob Manske**, who hosted the PBCA Chili Cookoff!

Activities Calendar

February 20 and 21, 2026

Monthly Tech Session

Manske Garage, 6129 Dutch Way, Milton, 10:30-ish.

February 28, 2026

Shrimp Boil

Bear Lake Pavilion, Milton, details soon.

March 7, 2026

John Twist Rolling Tech Session

Michael and Andrea Bertagnolli's home, 31399 Shambo Rd., Spanish Fort, 9:00 – 1:00.

March 16, 2026

Monthly Club Meeting

Ace's Hangar Southern Grill & Bar, 3966 Avalon Boulevard, Milton; eat at 6:00, meet at 7:00

March 20, 2026

Monthly Tech Session

Manske Garage, 10:30-ish.

March 21, 20236

Fairhope Arts and Craft Festival Display

Informal car display on the grounds of Coastal Alabama Community College, just a couple of blocks from the Festival. Organized by Mardi Gras MG Club. Arrive around 9:00.

March 28, 2026

BMCNO Car Show

Covington Trailhead, Covington, LA. Details and online registration [here](#).

February 2026

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

TECH SESSION (Feb 27)

SHRIMP BOIL (Feb 28)

March 2026

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	30	31				

JOHN TWIST (Mar 7)

CLUB MEETING (Mar 16)

TECH SESSN. (Mar 20)

FAIRHOPE ARTS (Mar 21)

BMCNO SHOW (Mar 28)

smoke in the wires

is a publication of the Panhandle British Car Association and is published monthly for the benefit of PBCA members. Permission to use this material by other British car club publications is granted provided credit is given to **smoke in the wires**.



Address comments or submissions to **Michael King**, Editor, at smokeinthewires@gmail.com.

Membership in PBCA is open to anyone with an interest in classic or modern British cars, and dues are only \$20 per year. To join, visit www.pbca1.com.

PBCA Executive Committee

President	Tim Witzigreuter
Past President	Paul Reese
VP/ Activities Chair	Michael King
VP / Membership Chair	Joe Stephens
Secretary	Angela Fink
Treasurer	Monica Bachmann
Show Chair	Fred Veenschoten
Communications Chair	Gail Sanders
Member at Large	Paul Salm
Parliamentarian	Taber Tompkins

Appointed Offices

Webmaster	Mike Japp
Technical Director	George Bruno
Newsletter Editor	Michael King



North American MGB Register

P.O. Box 876
Downers Grove, IL 60515-0876

Thank you for your inquiry into the North American MGB Register. We are the official register for MGB, MGB/GT, MGC, MGC/GT, MG V8, Midgets, MG 1100/1300 sedans, and all Post Abington MGs.

As a member of NAMGBR, you will receive:



The MG Driver

This bi-monthly magazine is packed with over 60 pages of useful information with the right mix of Technical and Member information.



Mutual Aid Directory (MAD)

Many members list their contact information to help fellow NAMGBR members in the event they break down in their area.



Club Insurance

Does your club sponsor a car show, driving event or meeting? Many venues require insurance to hold the event on their property. If your club has 8 NAMGBR members and is a Chapter of NAMGBR...you're covered for free!



Member Classified

NAMGBR offers a free classified section in both the MG Driver and the website. Have an extra MG or parts you want to sell? Target your advertising to the people you know are buying MG.



Technical Help

NAMGBR has assembled a group of technical experts to answer your questions



Annual Convention

In conjunction with a NAMGBR Chapter, we sponsor a convention highlighting a different part of the United States or Canada. This 4 day event features driving tours, a car show and a taste of the local food and drink. In 2026, MG2026 International will take place in Sandusky, OH



Regalia

We have a number of ways you can show your NAMGBR membership to the public.



Car Insurance

NAMGBR is the first MG Register to offer members the 5% Hagerty Collector Car Insurance Discount. Being a member of NAMGBR can save you money on your insurance



Dash Plaque

To commemorate your membership in NAMGBR, you receive a dash plaque to display in your car, home, office or where ever.



100,000/200,000 Mile Register

Has your MG gone the distance, and traveled over 100,000 or 200,000 miles? NAMGBR honors this achievement with a dash plaque your car can wear with pride.



Window Sticker

Proudly proclaim your membership in NAMGBR with this attractive two sided window sticker.

Do you want to know more about the North American MGB Register? Check out our website at: www.namgbr.org

Do you want to be a member in the largest club in North American dedicated to the MGB, MGB/GT, MGC, MGC/GT, MG V8, Midget, 1100/1300 Sedans and Post Abington MGs?

Go to the website and either download a PDF membership form and mail with a check or instantly join via Credit Card



We look forward to having you as a member of NAMGBR!

Tight Connections

Club and Member News

Chili Cookoff

photos by Gail Sanders

PBCA held its annual Chili Cookoff Feb. 7, 2026 in the expansive and commodious garage of **Bob and Risa Manske**, and more than 40 members and friends sampled the creations (concoctions?) of seven chefs. At the end of the day, most participants reported no severe gastric distress, and **George Bruno** once again took top honors with his “Flame Thrower” chili, with and **Russ Pascoe** second and **Terri Toenes** third.



Above, a banner welcomes guests (with the sign below providing fair warning); below, **Bob Manske** announces the winners.



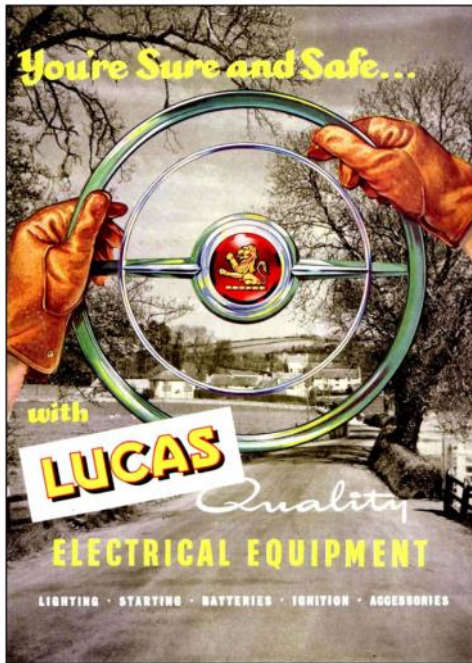
Top, **Keith Sanders, Tim Witzigreuter, and Tom Matsoukas** middle, two group shots; bottom, **George Bruno's** winning entry.

Spare Parts

The Taillight You've Seen Everywhere

story by Rodney McDonald, SABCC

As British car enthusiasts, we know that a lot of the parts that went into our cars came from a few specialized suppliers on the green and pleasant isle. Nearly all classic British cars sported SU carbure-



tors and fuel pumps, Triplex glass and Smiths instruments. Of course, they nearly all had electrical equipment supplied by Lucas. If you've ever changed a tail or parking light bulb, you probably noticed that the lens itself was also a Lucas product.

Most car makers in the post war era really did not have the budget to create specialized lighting equipment for their autos, and it was not as much of the overall car design as it is nowadays. With the notable exceptions of Ford and Vauxhall, the British auto industry chose "off-the-rack" for things like taillight lenses, parking lights and so forth for their lower-priced offerings. Lucas could provide a standard design for these lights at a low cost since they were used on so many cars.

Case in point: the Lucas part number L549 tail

light. You've seen them on many British cars, but did you know how widely used they were? Here are a few snaps of the cars that utilized this light at least during part of their production lifetime. This small taillight is designed to be mounted on either a plinth to make the top of the lamp horizontal or directly on the rear sheet metal of the car in question, provided it was designed with the correct angle.

Of course, there were many more models that sported the L549, so keep an eye out for them at your next classic British car event.



From top, L549s on an MGA, a Morris Minor, a Morgan Plus 4, and a Bugeye Sprite

PBCA Mourns the Passing of British Car Legend, Mike Darby

Mike Darby, a member of PBCA for many years, and past president of SABCC, died January 30, 2026.



A native of Leeds, England, Mike and his wife Nancy were married in 1977. Besides his wife, Mike is survived by daughter Stella (Asaf Karagila), stepson Kevin O'Flaherty (Mary Bolster), a twin sister, a brother, and other family and friends.

Mike and Nancy moved to Silverhill, Alabama in 1980. In 1998, he launched Darby Classic Restorations, completing more than 30 restorations along with countless other projects. He was awarded the *Tony Wilson Memorial Historic Preservation Award* by SABCC in 2024 to honor his many contributions to our hobby.

A memorial service will be scheduled at a later date. To commemorate his life, please consider a donation to the [Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research](#), or [Parkinson's UK](#). Please do not send cards or notes of condolence to Nancy, as her Alzheimer's disease could mean these increase her distress.

[Stella Darby's Facebook post provided many of the details for this article-Ed.]

Auction Roundup: MGAs

In memory of Mike Darby.

1957 MGA Roadster



Sold for \$51,000 on Bring a Trailer (Feb. 2026)

Stunning. No other description fits. Pull this up on Bring a Trailer; you will see why it brought this money..

1959 MGA 1600 Mk I Roadster



Not Sold for \$10,500 on Cars and Bids (July 2025)

Cars and Bids was probably the wrong site for this car, which had some patina but was really quite nice, and worth more than the high bid.

1957 MGA Coupe Mk I



Sold for \$22,050 on Hemmings (Dec. 2025)

A very nice version of the very pretty MGA Coupe, this green over tan car was said to have no needs.

1961 MGA 1600 Roadster



Sold on Bring a Trailer for \$9,300 (Oct. 2025)

Was it the "Old English White" (or perhaps just plain white) color? Or the fact that the purported car number was nowhere visible on the car itself? This nice roadster was the lowest sale price for a complete MGA on BAT in almost two years.

Everyone Loves an Oddball – Episode 2: AC 3000ME

story and photos by *Peter Lee*

Being born in the 70's, I missed the heyday of the classic British car. But I am gaining an appreciation of the cars that lived in the 70's and 80's when the materials were changing and the styles were, shall we say, distinct?



If you're a halfway fan of British cars, you probably know of the AC Ace that morphed into the Shelby Cobra. But a lot of people don't know that AC motors soldiered on until failing in the '80's. And one of their last cars was the 3000ME. It mixes just the right amount of weirdness, rarity, and failure to get my attention.

Sold from 1979 to 1984, the AC 3000ME boasted a 3 liter Ford Essex V6 that showed up in a wide variety of British cars from the Reliant Scimitar to TVR's and, of course, a pile of Fords.



It's also funny to me that the TVR 3000M and 3000S both used the same engine as the AC 3000ME. Strange, that they couldn't come up with a different-sounding name but then again there were also the Mitsubishi 3000GT and the Austin-Healey 3000.

The similarities dropped there as the AC was mid-engined and the body was glass-reinforced plastic, bringing the weight in at just under 2,400 pounds. The motor put out 138 bhp and

192 lb.-ft of torque.

AC planned to bring out a turbo version of the car, but an outside manufacturer beat them to the punch with an add-on kit boasting 200 hp. Only 19 of the cars ever received that system. One kit was made for a twin-turbo system get-



ting 300 hp but it required a much more extensive engine internal upgrade to keep up.

But what about the rarity? AC only made 80 original cars. The car and name were then licensed to a Scottish company who made and additional 30 cars to a later spec. That spec is visibly different with body-colored intakes and grilles distinguishing them.

I don't know about you, but the 3000ME gives me a little Lancia Stratos feel with its styling. But this car is really obscure because it is an example of striking when the iron is hot, or actually not striking, and rolling itself into the world of classic failures. It debuted in 1973 and the company received over 200 orders immediately. AC was just about ready for production when the car failed a critical crash test, necessitating a redesign of the chassis.

When AC finally started production of the 3000ME in 1979, those interested buyers had moved on to new designs and technologies. Also, AC wanted a car with a price point around £3,000-4,000 and got a price of £11,000 that continued to rise over the production years to almost £14,000. By comparison, the Lotus Esprit

(story continues next page)

AC 3000ME, continued

S2 was £14,000 and the Fiat X1/9 was just £5500. Obviously this was not a good price point for the car.



Note the body-colored grille on this Scottish version.

Well, the rest is now history and the AC 3000ME is consigned to it. I don't think you will find one in a local Alabama barn awaiting discovery. If there is one, I'll be looking to snap it up.

[Thanks, Peter! I was curious about the interior of the AC 3000ME, and I found this photo on the Interwebs. Gotta say, that dash was pretty spiffy, even if it does have a bit of a kit-car look. Note the lack of a drivetrain hump, due to the mid-engine layout, as well as the very wide and tall door sills, and how close the seats are to each other, leaving barely enough room for a handbrake lever and the seat belt receptacles. – Ed.]



A Classic Ad from the Heyday of AC Cars



ACE-BRISTOL



**NEW CARS DIRECT FROM
THAMES DITTON ENGLAND TO YOU**

DELIVERED SHIPS ARRIVAL

EAST COAST PORT	\$3850
WEST COAST PORT	\$3890

plus U.S. Taxes

Your Choice Colors

SPEEDY SPARES SERVICE

★ Mail, Cable or Phone us
NOW For BROCHURES.

A.C. CARS LIMITED,
THAMES DITTON, ENGLAND
Cables, Autocarrier, Thames Ditton, England
Phone EMBerbrook 5621

Here's an investment that beats inflation. if you had purchased an Ace-Bristol in 1959 for \$3850 (the equivalent of \$42,500 today), you probably could now sell it, based on current average market values, for \$300,000. Meanwhile, you got to enjoy the car all those years.

Wire Nut

Michael King, Editor, "Smoke in the Wires"

Drive Your Cars

This is part two of the story of my 2011 Jaguar XFR breaking down in a parking lot. I'd been to church, and afterwards I decided to stop to get a pizza to

share with my longsuffering spouse, who was with her mom at the nursing home. I reversed from the pizza place parking space, tried to put the car in Drive, and that was that.

I had the car towed to a local shop, and the trouble codes indicated a problem with the gear selector module. I'd already learned on the Jaguar Forum that such failures are not uncommon, and a company in Canada could rebuild my unit for just \$400 plus shipping – and since it was the original unit, reinstalling it would not require reprogramming it (the start/stop button is part of the module).

The shop removed the module, and replaced a faulty brake switch, and I had the car towed home. I ordered the repair service, and sent the module to Ontario. It was back just a few days later, repaired and warrantied for life. Reinstalling it, and all the surrounding bits, was not overly difficult, and the car fired up and operated as Coventry intended.

So why is this column entitled "Drive Your Cars?" Well, from breakdown to fixed, the car was out of commission 30 days. Even in that short period, the battery discharged to the point that the remote would not unlock the doors or trunk (where the battery lives). The brakes clunked at first, as the pads were partially



seized to the rotors. The bonnet thought it was opened, and only by shutting it briskly a couple of times did the warning on the dash go away. And so on. Gradually, everything cleared up.

I also see issues with my 2001 Jaguar XJR when I do not drive it for a while. Examples include the obvious battery discharge, but sometimes the power-adjusting steering wheel gets stuck and the ABS/traction warnings are on (yeah, those are both luxury car first-world problems). These problems both resolve within a few minutes of driving. A few weeks ago, the car showed false (low) fuel readings, but again, this seemed to fix itself.

I guess I've been rather fortunate with these issues – none has been major – but extended periods of non-use simply are not good for cars. Ironically, the car I drive the least, my 1979 MGB, is less susceptible than the Jaguars, probably because it's about one thousand times less sophisticated, but even it will pop and sputter when I've not driven it for a while, despite having non-ethanol fuel in the tank.

I've not so far mentioned my Jaguar XK convertible, which did have an extended downtime when its throttle body failed. As long as I keep it on a battery tender, it's pretty happy, perhaps because it has a place of honor in the garage. I do notice, however, that its tires flat-spot a bit in cooler weather.

So, the maxim bears repeating: Cars Need To Be Driven. We are fortunate to live in a part of the country where year-round operation of even an open car is not out of the question, unlike our poor neighbors in the Frozen North, who pickled their "LBCs" months ago and won't be able to use them for several more weeks (thanks, Mr. Groundhog).

So, drive your cars. It keeps them (and you) happy.

[By the way, Kristine did come get her pizza.]

Classifieds

1974 Jensen Healey



Two cars that I turned into one with spare parts. Structural metal work, including new floor pans, completed by BMC Restorations in Kiln, MS. Includes hard top, Dellorto manifold, new aftermarket seats, and installed, complete AC system. Needs light bodywork and paint; ran when restoration began but not operated in over ten years. \$5,000 invested, asking best offer.

Cortland Musgrave

504-559-4960

heytony9999@hotmail.com

MGB Chrome (and other) Bits

Need something for your MGB? I've bought a few boxes of assorted parts for my 1967 project, and have more than I need, including map lights, door handles and pulls, seat recline levers, trunk locks, and more. Email me and I'll let you if I can help – prices very negotiable.

Michael King

sparkspanner@gmail.com

1961 Triumph TR4 – PRICE REDUCED



This TR4 underwent a comprehensive restoration and modernization by the late **David Roloson**, a dedicated club member. The frame-off restoration was completed over four years, from 2011 to 2015. Below are the details:

- Rebuilt 2,138cc inline-four (from 1965 TR4A)
- 4 Speed (from 1965 TR4A)
- Front disk brakes (Toyota 4-piston calipers on TR6 Brackets)
- 10 1/2 Inch drilled and slotted brake rotors
- Stainless steel brake lines
- All suspension pieces are new
- All glass is new
- Lights are LED or Halogen
- Battery relocated to trunk with cutoff switch
- Custom paint is 1993 Porsche mint green and Boulevard Black base/clear coat – 3 coats color & 3 coats clear
- Custom interior by River Rags Coden, AL



The TR4 is now available for purchase at **\$14,000**, or best offer.

Miller Roloson

(615)-332-1787

1951 Jaguar XK 120 FHC

The time has come for me to try to sell my 1951 Jaguar XK 150 FHC. It was fully restored 1988 – 2005 and was in storage from 1990 – 2005. I purchased it in 2009 (see full story in July 2024 *Spark & Spanner*). It has been repowered with a 5-liter (302 ci) Ford V8 engine and has a 5-speed manual transmission. I have added air conditioning (heat and cool), disc brakes on front, 60-spoke chrome knockoff wire wheel with hubs, bushings, seals and bearings. It has black leather seats. The car is in great shape and ready for a new home. Asking **\$100,000**; highly negotiable!

Bill Cashion

704-500-4843



Car Hauler Trailer – **PRICE REDUCED**

16 foot Dual Axle Steel Trailer with Electric Winch. Measures 74 inches wide (inside measurement). Includes 4 tire hold down straps. Electric Mile Marker 8000 lb. winch and battery are included. Also includes one spare tire. **Price reduced: \$2,000 or best offer.**

Monica Bachmann

(850) 217-1765 (call or text)



1979 MG Midget Parts

For sale is an assortment of parts for a 1979 MG Midget:

- Top Bows: \$90
- Top Tonneau Cover: \$40
- Glove Box Door: \$15
- Radio with Console: \$30
- Pair of Tail Light Assemblies: \$30
- Intake with Stromberg Carb: \$40

I am willing to consider offers for any of these.

Steve Albrecht

251-533-7917

stevealbrecht451@gmail.com

Fiberglass "Bugeye" Bonnet

I have for sale a fiberglass replica of an Austin-Healey "Bugeye" Sprite bonnet from the collection of the late Bob Lembcke, a noted vintage racer and technician. This bonnet is suitable for installation on a car or as wall art. \$400.

Keith Sanders

850-529-7601

britcarguy202@gmail.com



PANHANDLE BRITISH CAR ASSOCIATION

2025 "Brits on the Bay" All British Car Show

PLEASE PATRONIZE OUR SPONSORS

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American Concrete Supply

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AutoZone – Pensacola Blvd.

Batteries Plus

Bavaria Pensacola Restaurant

Cannon Automotive

Cigar Factory Social Club

Cub's Crawfish

Friend of PBCA

Frontier Motors

Gary Sapp Automotive

Gary's Brewery & Biergarten

Hoods Discount Center of Foley

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Home Grown Claremore

In Memory of Franz Bachmann

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Root's Rod Shop

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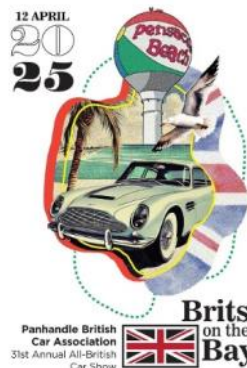
Security Engineering

The Paint Mart

Tim and Cindy Witzigreuter

Victor's Gym/Max Fit Nutrition

Willow Studios



Just one more thing, please . . .



If you are going to tow an E-Type, I can think of no better way than with this custom-built Series I XJ6 rig, which includes "LS V8 power, air suspension, and a host of other modifications." [Yep, that's a host-Ed.] This was posted on the "Best of British" Facebook page.

