

Wyres and Tyres

June 2023



North American MGB Register



www.memphisbritishcars.org

British Sports Car Club, LTD

Memphis, TN



Membership Meetings

*Coletta's Italian Restaurant
2850 Appling Road*

*Mark your calendar—Mon., July 17th
6 pm for dinner—7 pm for our program*

Above Artwork-- "Mr. Bean's Wild Ride," by Brent Hale

BSCC Officers 2023

President

Al Ross

Co-Vice Presidents

*Chris Irving/
Paul Burdette*

Treasurer

Jerry Farrar

Austin Healey Marque Leader

Jim Hofer

Empire Marque Leader

Tom Wilson

Jaguar Marque Leader

Dave White

MG Marque Leader

Paul Burdette

Triumph Marque Leader

Jon Brody

Lotus Marque Leader

Chris Irving

Club Historian

Carolyn Shepard

Webmaster

Chebik Kehouk



FROM THE PRESIDENT

NAMGAR GT-48- Congratulations to Hiram and Carolyn and all our team members for a very successful show. Hiram thanked all our volunteers and presented our club with a plaque of appreciation from NAMGAR. Thank you, team. Show photos are already on face book and will be uploaded to our web site.

The annual Indy fish fry hosted by Jim Hofer was well attended and it continues to be one of our most popular events. Thank you, Jim. Our club was invited to a UK trivia night at the Brass Door Pub in downtown Memphis. The event was hosted by the British consulate from Atlanta. About 13 of our members attended and we all had a good time. Photos of these events have been uploaded to our web site.

Upcoming- The Jaguar Marque planning a drive event for July or August with plans to be announced.

Our EURO Show on September 23 at Youth Villages. Please distribute show posters and the show flyers to all interested participants and sponsors. Posters and flyers will be available at our meetings.

Happy Motoring and Safety Fast,

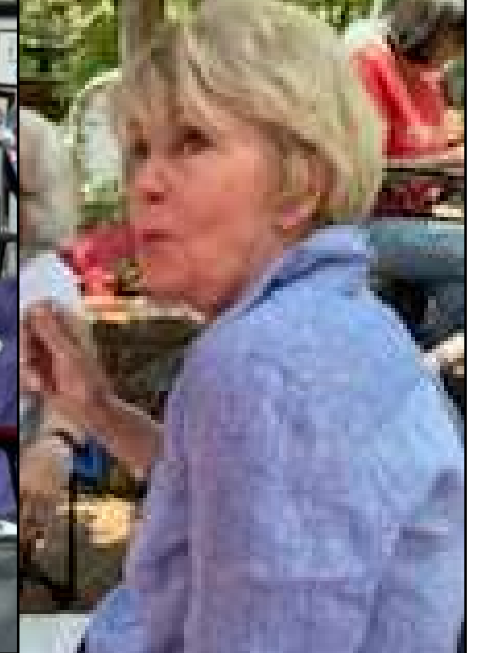
Al



*Photos from
JIM HOFER'S ANNUAL INDY 500
FISH FRY*







BRITISH TRIVIA NIGHT - BRASS DOOR PUB



I wanted to make members of the BSSC aware that I wrote an article about finding and restoring my grandfather, Mel Gibbs's, old Austin Healey Sprite and it got published in the most recent issue of Moss Motoring. Mel was a former member of the Memphis BSSC, and the article features current members Jim Hofer and Steve Feltman.

I presume most members have bought parts from Moss and have probably received the magazine, but might not be aware the article features a BSSC mention! Thank you! I hope you all enjoy it! Best Wishes, Matt Hunter



HOMECOMING

By Matt Hunter

The title was transferred to me on a bright November day, outside a dusty airplane hangar in middle-of-nowhere Mississippi. But my guardianship started as a little boy whose feet barely scraped the floor mats in the passenger seat of grandpa's car.

As little kids, my big sister and I played "drive-thru." We sat in grandpa's parked car while our grandma

played the "car hop" and brought us Pecan Sandies to eat. It was the plastic sliding windows that gave us the idea.

The car was a 1959 Austin-Healey Bugeye Sprite MkI. It had a BMC A-series 948cc engine and was painted Iris Blue with an all-black interior. What it lacked in power it made up in personality. The Sprite was a treasure awaiting me as the garage door creaked open. It smelled of oil and worn leather

infused with pipe tobacco. Gas leaked and it routinely broke down, but it was a prized family possession and an annual Christmas parade tradition.

My grandfather, Mel Gibbs, was a gentle, dapper man with a calming charm. He served in World War II in the Army Air Corps and went on to proudly work for years at Inland Steel outside of Chicago, a plant that produced automotive metals. He was happily married, golfed, smoked a pipe, cooked burnt hot dogs, and made things by hand. One time I said, as kids do, "I wish grandpa and grandma's house had a jungle gym." The next time I visited, a modest swing set greeted me in the shaded nook of their backyard.

Like many young boys, I dreamt of an automotive inheritance. But one day, without warning, my grandpa sold the car. He said it was because he'd gotten too old and weak. I hate to think of him struggling to take care of the car he loved so much. And then in the summer of '05, my grandfather passed away unexpectedly. Out of love and nostalgia my mom and I pondered the idea of searching out the Sprite's owner, but time carried on.

In 2019, on a whim, I wondered if the old British Sports Car Club in Memphis, of which my grandpa



Helping pick up the Sprite at the airport are Steve and Jim on the left of Matt, and Maggie, Pete, and Matt's dad on the right.



was once a member, was still around. A quick Google search revealed it still existed, and I decided to join the club to—at the very least—honor my Grandpa with a financial contribution. Included with my application form, I provided a letter explaining why a young guy from Los Angeles was looking to join a Tennessee-based car club. I told them about Grandpa Mel, his beloved Bugeye Sprite, and my goal to one day find the car and buy it back. Expecting very little to nothing in return, I snail-mailed the letter and application form. I've come to find that most car clubs don't have the most up-to-date communication systems.

One week later, the head of the Memphis British Sports Car Club emailed to welcome me to the organization. He also, to my surprise, sent an email to the entire club, explaining my search for my grandfather's car. Within an hour, a member responded with fond remembrances of my grandparents and information about who had bought their car! Just like that, I had a name, number, and address of the buyers: a couple named Pete and Maggie, who now lived in Mississippi. The power of the internet is wild. (I apologize

for my previous statement about "up-to-date communication.")

I called the number the following day. It didn't ring. Just beeped. Feeling hopeful, I tried again later when I had better reception. Again nothing. Presumably a dead or disconnected line. My heart sank. While the situation was unfortunate, I can't say it surprised me. I reasoned that the buyer might be dead or in a nursing home. (I apologize to Pete and Maggie—these presumptions were far from true.) Regardless, I still had a mailing address. Without another option, apart from wandering around Mississippi screaming "Maggie! Pete!", I wrote the buyer a letter, sure to mention every way they could get a hold of me.

A week later I was at a bar with friends when I received an email from the buyer's husband, Pete. Although Pete and Maggie had kept the car in dry storage, they hadn't run it in six or seven years, so they couldn't swear to its condition. Perhaps for that reason alone (and the obvious personal connection), they offered to sell me the car for an amount of money so low that it made me cry. \$1000. The quality of the vehicle made no difference to me. I immediately agreed to buy the car.

Going forward, the plan was to retrieve the car in November when I

had time to fly home. That meant I had about three months to prep myself, like an expectant dad waiting for his first child, an old rusty metal child. Overall, I was ecstatic but scared. I had not intended for this "life goal" to happen at this point in my life. I didn't have the knowledge to restore a car, let alone the means to even own a second car. I can barely find parking for my daily driver at my apartment building, and I sneer at paying 99 cents for upgrades on iPhone games. Furthermore, prior to this experience, I wouldn't even come close to calling myself a "car guy" or "proficient with cars." In my research to care for the Sprite, I would look up car parts and their function as I came upon them for the first time in blogs and manuals. Did you know a carburetor combines fuel with air? Because I didn't.

Two local members of the Memphis club, Jim and Steve, offered to help me retrieve the car from the buyer in Mississippi. I'll be forever grateful to these two effortlessly nice, mild-mannered Southern gentlemen for their help, endless patience in answering my basic questions, and enthusiasm to get the car running.

I met Jim and Steve in person for the first time on the morning we retrieved the Sprite. With the rest of my family



trailing in a separate car, we set off for Mississippi and arrived at a small rural airfield around noon. It was there, as we rounded an old plane hangar, that we laid eyes on Grandpa Mel's Sprite for the first time in decades. It looked so small sitting alone on the tarmac, like a toy that had escaped its packaging. The Sprite had since been repainted Olde English White, but otherwise it was exactly as I remembered it. I have a low bar for judging the quality of classic cars, but it seemed to be in good shape. The first thing my sister noted was that "it still smells the same," which is remarkably true. After years it held onto its characteristic aroma—a mix of petrol, leather, and smoke—that I loved so much as a kid. Later that night I would find myself ducking into our garage to sneak a whiff just to indulge in the memories.

Jim and Steve loaded the Sprite onto the trailer. Again, I didn't know enough about cars at the time to help very much here, and we traversed the flat Mississippi landscape back to Memphis. On the way, Steve asked me when I'd be returning from California to work on the car. I answered vaguely that I'd be back at the end of December.

"No, when exactly?" He pressed. "We could trailer it over to my garage, and I'll have it running in a day."

He wasn't wrong.

When I returned to Memphis for the holidays, Steve hauled the Sprite to his home, as promised. Once situated on jack stands, and with the Sprite's 35-pound bonnet vaulted up, Steve peered into the aged engine bay and remarked that "some idiot" had cut my fuel lines. I couldn't discern what he was talking about, and with a wink Steve drove a box cutter through the cracked rubber lines. We were off to work. Also, let's be clear that when I say "we," I 100% mean Steve was off to work. He was a man on a mission: to revive the spirit of this sleeping Sprite. I kept myself busy shuffling around his garage, relocating the same box of spare parts, and fetching tools like a nurse assisting an old-hand doctor at surgery. By 4pm, after the gas, oil, coolant, and various rubber lines had been removed and replaced, we were ready to ride the lightning, spark the solenoid, gas the gussey. (One thing that Steve did not teach me was automotive slang.) After a few false starts, Grandpa's old Sprite whirred to life with a throaty

growl for the first time in nearly a decade.

A few days later I returned to Steve's garage to address a leaking wheel cylinder. This day was my true indoctrination into working on the car, as I vowed to change the parts myself. Steve later confessed that he would let me silently struggle for a little bit before he would come over and effortlessly solve my problem. The second day was less successful than the first. Despite some attempted revival, both the brakes and clutch yielded a weak response, a clear sign of a leaking this or loose that. Did I mention I'm new to this?

I returned the next morning to Steve's to bleed both the brakes and clutch again, but this still didn't fix the problem. In a panic that the brakes only worked after several pumps, Steve calmly replied, "Well I guess just be extra careful when driving home." The Sprite's problems were now exclusively my own. But taking on the burdens of the Sprite is exactly what I wanted. Anything to get me closer again to my childhood hero, Grandpa Mel.

Look, I know I'm not alone when it comes to experiencing the overwhelming feelings of regret and



confusion when taking on a large project. I constantly questioned why I'm burdening myself with a seemingly endless stream of problems, in an area outside my usual realm of knowledge. I found solace one day when I was emailing with a local British parts dealer and in thanking him for offering me a deal said, "I'm just a poor kid trying to restore a car." To which he responded, "We all are just kids! And since we are car guys, we are poor! But boy do we have fun!" I guess he's right, but that still didn't stop me from falling into an automotive existential crisis every few days.

I returned to California, and a week later I had the car shipped across the country. I breathed easy once it was safely in my newly acquired garage, after it nearly fell off the car hauler while being unloaded. 2020 provided an unexpected amount of time indoors, which allowed me the opportunity to get my knuckles greasy and actually learn how to work on the car. Since then, I've installed an electric fuel pump, cleaned and rebuilt my carburetors, restored the gas tank, converted the drum brakes to disc, removed one dead mouse, and replaced

the master cylinder. In the past few years, the Sprite has remained healthy, met with the twisty back roads of LA county, and even garnered praise from discerning car enthusiast, Jay Leno.

Now I'm at the endless frontier of restoration. I'm always fixing something. But I take the opportunity to imitate my grandfather's ability to quietly address an on-going list of problems

without fuss or complaint. Routinely I find myself calling the Sprite "our car." It was once grandpa's and, in my mind, will always be that way. I haven't taken mental ownership and maybe never will. I'm merely a guardian of the car. Watching after it and carrying on the maintenance in way that would hopefully make my grandpa proud. *MM*



Wants & Gots—

Note from the editor—back at the beginning of the year, I was concerned that I had no classifieds for the newsletter. You know that old saying, “be careful what you wish for”—I’ve got enough classifieds to almost make an entire newsletter! There’s some really neat cars and items in this issue, so play close attention to these ads and you might end up with a great bargain!

Jaguar racing pennant, suitable for garage, workshop, or ??

FREE to a good home
Jim Duke,
901-428-6905



2nd Note from the editor—I have a dear friend in the U.K., Alan Mortlock, who’s a serious car collector. He recently sent me info on a very special (perhaps one of a kind) MGB he’s offering for sale—a research and development vehicle from British Leyland! This is probably as close to a brand new MGB as one will find!

Hi Bob--Here is all the information and photos of the MGB that we have decided to put up for sale and see what happens, would love to keep it as it's an incredibly interesting and significant car.

Besides, this car belongs on that side of the pond as that is where it was intended to go but instead never left England!

The price we're going to ask may sound high for a rubber bumper model but given its incredible history, condition and genuine low mileage it may not be enough! We Live very close to Southampton so getting it to the port for shipping would be no problem.

You'll have to forgive the lengthy description but there is a lot to tell about it!

1978 Left hand drive US spec MGB roadster,
Brooklands Green, just over 18000 genuine miles
4 speed very rare non overdrive.

This car was pulled from the production line and sent to the British Leyland research and development team and used as a test car for the 1979 US spec model year.

I have the original log book (British Title) that Lists BL Cars Longbridge as the first registered owner; after its time with the R&D department its second registered keeper was Brian Hoare who was the British Leyland Company secretary. It was in his possession in dry storage for over 40 years and I have a letter from him verifying its history. I also have the original factory build card which apparently is almost unheard of in the MG community and its heritage certificate from the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust.

It appears that the majority of its time with the R&D team it was used to test emissions equipment and adjustments.

It is the only MGB to exist that has what was at the time an experimental steering wheel that was never put into production on MGB's but was later used on SD1 Rovers, all of which is fully documented in the hand written Ledger from the research and development department.

It spent some time at MIRA (Motor Industry Research Association), Champion (spark plugs), Lucas and Pirelli tires, all of which is documented in the research ledger. It was very well maintained during its time with BL, again all documented with regular servicing and oil changes. There are still some R&D notes hand written inside the glovebox door.

The next owner who purchased it directly from the BL Company secretary and from who I purchased it, had done considerable recommissioning work to it.

All of the US spec Stromberg carb and smog equipment (all of which is boxed up and is with the car) has been removed by the previous owner So it now has UK spec twin HS type SU carbs.
 New brake calipers and brake pads, new braided brake hoses, new wheel cylinders and shoes, new original type fuel pump and gauge sending unit, new water pump, new motor mounts and new plugs, points, oil and filter.
 The body is absolutely rust free and has never been welded anywhere, with just light surface rust on components such as springs, axle, brackets etc. as would be expected from a 45 year old car. The underneath and wheel wells still have most of the green factory paint on them. All of the factory spot welds on the wheel arches and rocker panels are very clearly present. The factory paint under the carpet on the floors is as nice as the paint on the body and has not been painted!
 The paint itself is as far as I can tell mostly original, it has had some minor remedial paintwork to the rocker panels and front edge of the hood but this was done only in the interest of preservation to take care of some rock chips that that had become unsightly from the previous owner getting a bit carried away with some red oxide primer that he had dabbed on every single stone chip! But absolutely no rust! Panel gaps and shut lines are as they were the day it left the factory.
 It still has the original yellow wax crayon markings on the inside of the hood.
 It still had the original US spec tires on it when I got it which I still have and can go with it if needed. It now has a brand new set of tires on it. The spare wheel and tire are original to the car with the original jack and wheel brace.
 The top is new and was a new old stock top that was supplied with the car. The tonneau cover is the original, perfect, dated May 1977.
 Dash is perfect and the seats are near perfect with just two small places that have been repaired. We have fitted new drivers side footwell carpet and new door panels (we have the originals if needed).
 It runs and drives absolutely without fault and I'm sure with only just over 18,000 original miles on it, it is as close to driving a brand new MGB as you are likely to get!
 We are asking 18,500 US Dollars.
 If anyone is interested, they can either contact me through you or my numbers are:
 Cell 01144 7985281524
 Home 01144 1983717034
 Both numbers should dial direct but remember we are 6 hours ahead of the States!
 Alan Mortlock



Leslie Dale's 1972 350SL

Leslie Dale's daughters Stella Templin and Susan Dale are offering for sale this sharp 1972 Mercedes 350SL hard- & soft-top convertible, proudly owned by Les Dale, longtime member of the Memphis British Car Club, who bestowed on this car several ribbons for an "unrestored" car. He kept it maintained and garaged... and only drove it on a pretty day... This car is being offered for 22k... According to Hemmings Nov 2022 Classic Car magazine it's a rare engine and a rare year for the 350SL, and if even a little restored, as of 2022 can be valued as high as \$43,500. Les once was published in a newspaper article in The Commercial Appeal saying, 'It's a fun car, and I'm a fun person.'



MEMPHIS, WEDNESDAY, 1979

Leslie Dale of South Central Bell says his 1972 Mercedes-Benz 350 SL reflects his personality because "It's a fun car, and I'm a fun person."

Name: Leslie Dale, district manager for South Central Bell.
 Type of car: 1972 Mercedes-Benz

BIG WHEELS
A weekly drive by

hop around the dial a lot. I don't have any favorite radio stations. But if something comes on that has a good beat

Les' daughters say that their neighbor in Oak Ridge TN... Mr. Yount, a scientist at one of the labs, purchased this beautiful 350SL from the Knoxville Mercedes Dealership in 1971 (see sales document) and their Dad had his eye on it for years from across the street! Les bought it from Mr Yount in 1979, moved back to Memphis in 1980... and drove it for 5 or 6 years as his daily driver, until he realized this was a rare model which would appreciate in value. Since that time, he kept it garaged and maintained and only drove it on a pretty day! Engine in excellent condition, Leather in excellent condition, very clean. This model has air conditioning. Asking \$22,000. Contact Les' daughter Susan for more info and to see the car—919-368-1545.

CAR INVOICE		KNOXVILLE MOTOR CO., Inc.		NUMBER	
		449-007-0111 Telephone 424-8091 KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE MOTOR COMPANY, INC. 4635 KINGSTON PIKE, S. W. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 37919		N# 2434	
NAME: T. L. Yount ADDRESS: 109 Canterbury Road Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37830		SALESMAN: Gaudle		No. 44	
MAKE	YEAR	MODEL	BODY STYLE	VEHICLE USE	KEY
Mercedes-Benz	1972	350 SL	C/R	new	
SERIAL NUMBER		ENGINE NO.			
107044-12-000775		117982-12-000763			
INSURANCE COVERAGE INCLUDES:		PRICE OF CAR			
DED. COLL.	MONTHS	PUBLIC LIABILITY	MOS.	TRANSPORTATION	
FIRE & THEFT	CO.	PROPERTY DAMAGE	CO.	PREPARATION & CONDITIONING	
OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT & ACCESSORIES		Discount			
FACTORY INSTALLED:		DEALER INSTALLED:			
181 Paint- Light Beige & 423 Tobacco Brown 883 Upholstery-Mahogany MB Tax Electrically Heated Rear Window Central Locking Europa AM-FM Radio A/C Conditioning Tinted Glass Dark Brown Soft Top.		EXTRAS: FACTORY INSTALLED \$10,900.00 DEALER INSTALLED USE TAX 389.00 TOTAL CASH PRICE \$11,289.00 COST OF FINANCING COST OF INSURANCE			



FOR SALE 1987 Jaguar XJ6

Daughter purchased this car while living in New York and invested several thousand dollars (new head gasket, exhaust gaskets, water pump, belts, thermostat) to get it to run reliably, she drove it 1,100 miles to Memphis late last year. She is now in a job that prevents her to continue the project so she has decided to sell it.

The body is rusty in several places (see pictures), and the left gas tank is rusted and not usable. Interior is in good condition, steering wheel appears to be a Nardi, good tires, brakes, AC works. Engine and trans in good working order.

The car has some positives, as I mentioned she had the car worked on in NYC before she drove it here, so mechanically it is all there, although it has now been sitting in a garage for a few months, I do not know if it is drivable. I also noticed the interior seems to be all there, no rips or tears in the leather. The body does have rust and paint bubbling. \$4000.

Sincerely, Carlos Madero Cell 901 827 3513



3rd Note from the Editor—Here's another car from a friend; 1952 MGTD.

The story I'm hearing is that the owner of this car had the engine out or apart to have some machine work done, and passed away before he could get it back together. His family doesn't want the MG and my longtime friend Frank Michael is presently storing the car for them and trying to help sell it. Supposedly an older restoration, the car is solid and straight, and machine work has been completed on a partially assembled engine. Except for the engine, the car is supposed to be ready to go, although it seems family members had a hard time putting up the top.

Anyway, it could be a bargain for a TD. The car is located about 100 miles from Memphis in Mississippi. Frankie is more involved with motorcycles than cars, and is just trying to help the family sell it. For more information, call Frank Michael at 662-457-5500. Price is \$6,000. Tell him Studebaker Bob from the Petit Jean show sent you.



It's pretty obvious that little has been mentioned in this issue concerning the recent NAMGAR show in Memphis- I'm waiting on more pictures and will devote a special issue highlighting an amazing show, so there's more to come soon!

-- the editor

