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Mascot

The Magazine of the Midget & Sprite Club



www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk





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THE WHO, THE WHAT & THE WHERE of THE MIDGET & SPRITE CLUB

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Also see the Club Nights section on page 4 for new areas and contacts.

Compiled by Richard Flynn (richard.flynn@live.co.uk). Please advise me of any changes, errors etc.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL: IF YOU EXPERIENCE 'MASCOT' PROBLEMS UPON RENEWAL, PLEASE CONTACT THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY OR THE TREASURER STRAIGHT AWAY. The Committee

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You will have noticed (unless you've been in the Southern hemisphere for the last 31 days) that it has been a horribly wet month here. The fact that we're being told that we've got a drought just seems to be further rubbing salt into the wounds. Even so, just to be safe, I've considered building a recreation of Noah's Ark in the back garden. I'll say no more about the weather!

The end of an era

You will see in the pages of this month's magazine that I have paid a small tribute to two Motor Racing greats who passed away in May. Both were successful racing Drivers in their own right, who went on to change their sport as well as the wider motoring world in very different ways.

Carroll Shelby, who passed away, aged 89 on the 10th of May, married the chassis and body of the UK's AC Ace to the brute force of an American Ford V8 and created an instant icon revered, lusted after and much replicated over the subsequent years (it could have so easily been an Austin Healey rather than the AC Ace).

Les Leston, who passed away aged 91 on the 14th of May also a successful racing driver, went on to make and supply equipment, upgrades and enhancements which were bolted to thousands of cars in the 1960s and 70s. Not only the vehicles but their owners also wore his products, especially his early fireproof racing suits, driving gloves, helmets and caps.

Both men will be familiar to most if not all of MASCOT's readers.

A name not familiar to most of you is that of Jane Gundry (of Quorum Print Services) who has been putting up with the trials, tribulations and tantrums of the last three editors of MASCOT (myself included). As Jane moves on to pastures new, I want to publicly thank her for doing such a sterling job over such a long time. The fact that each month's magazine pops through your letterbox in a legible format is almost entirely down to her. On behalf of the editors (past and present), the committee and membership of MASC, I'd just like to say thanks Jane.

Next month's magazine may arrive slightly later than usual as I will be at the Le Mans 24 hours exactly at the time that I should be submitting the completed MASCOT filed to the printers. You can really help me by submitting your articles and reports as early as possible.

Have a great month.

Gary & Gaps



*Proof that Spridgets don't fly very well.
Gaps now wears a stick on front number plate*

The deadline for articles and reports for inclusion in next month's magazine is Tuesday 12th of June

The statements and opinions expressed in each and every issue of the MASCOT are not necessarily the considered views of the Midget and Sprite Club. The views expressed by the editorial contributors, letter writers and advertisers are their own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Club. The Midget and Sprite Club accepts no responsibility for the results of following contributor's advice, nor does it necessarily endorse the services or products offered by advertisers.

Cover image: Mike Youle's GT Sprite in the pit garages at the Masters Historic festival 2012
© David M Jones of DMJ, PHOTOGRAPHY www.dmj-photography.co.uk with thanks to David

Shocked (or just not surprised)

We seem to definitely be in a mood to question all failing parts these days so I will put this one up for consideration. The pictures attached illustrate my particular problem. Firstly have you ever considered how shock absorbers work? I had always thought that I knew how the telescopic variety operated but as for the lever arm type fitted as original equipment to the front of Spridgets – I couldn't take one apart so I didn't really know what was inside and how they did the job. Well that was until very recently.

Me and the Frog were out one sunny Wednesday with the Old Boys of Kent and on my return home I lifted the bonnet to just do the normal checks (you know how much oil has dripped from the rear main etc etc) when a glint of an extra bit of shiny metal caught my eye. The shaft to the n/side shock absorber arm was about half an inch out of the body. Bouncing the car up and down as you do produced a bit of creaking. Obviously the effect of this fault would be that the inclination of the king pin etc would be out of true and it needed immediate attention.

On removal the damper fell apart with the complete shaft pulling out of the body. On closer examination I worked out how it worked and it seems that the shaft is splined



into two cams which engaged with two horizontal pistons presumably controlling and damping up and down movement of the arm. I did in fact line up the cams and spacers within and re engage the shaft but it was obvious that the splines were stripped and the arm could be placed in any position. Contrary to my original belief there does not appear to be any form of locking – a nut or a pin to hold the shaft in within the core plug at the other end – and they are assembled only by an interference fit in the splines.

I now have to ask why? The shocker absorbers were new (not reconditioned) items and were fitted by myself 2 years/7000miles previously. They had been working normally as far as I can now tell. So why did it fail in this manner? Is quality falling or is it the quality of the roads? Needless to say I am not particularly happy at having to replace this expensive unit (if I can get another new one but that is another story).

Has it happened to you? Any thoughts anyone?

John Clark
Kent Member No 3583

Club Nights

- 1st Tuesday **Essex Area** – Now meet at **The Bell**, Beckenham Road, Tolleshunt Major, CM9 8LL.
For further details contact Jane Gates Tel: 01255830 509 or
email: jgjanegates257@googlemail.com
- 1st Wednesday **Devon Area** – **The Dartmoor Lodge Hotel**, Ashburton, TQ13 7JW 1930 – 2200. Please contact Dave Price for details, 01805 603133, daveprice@daveprice.plus.com
- 1st Wednesday **South Staffs & Birmingham** – Meet at **Whitacre Ex-Service & Social Club**, 66 Station Road, Nether Whitacre, Coleshill, Birmingham, West Midlands. B46 2EH, 8.30–8.45pm Contact: John Collins, Tel: 07970 213084 email: green _ mx5@hotmail.com
- 1st Wednesday **Oxford Area** – Meet at the **Blackhorse Pub**, Gozzards Ford, Nr Abingdon. 7pm for those eating or 8pm for those not.
Contact Grahame Gibbins at grahame _ gibbins@unipart.co.uk
- 2nd Tuesday **London Area** (Congestion Zone) – Meet at **The Ace Cafe** at 7:30pm. together with the Classic Cars Magazine night. Details: Gary Lazarus on 020 7700 5696, garyfrogeye@gmail
- 2nd Wednesday **Heart of England**, covers Worcs, Warks, West Midlands and surrounding areas – Meet at **The Green Dragon**, The Green, Sambourne, Redditch, B96 6NU, at 8.30pm as usual.
- 2nd Wednesday **North West Area** meet at **The Kilton**, turn off M6 at Jct 20 onto A50 towards Macclesfield. Pub 4 miles on left. Please note new venue.
- 2nd Wednesday **Bristol Area** will meet at **The Rose and Crown**, Pucklechurch at 8pm. All Bristol, Bath and surrounding areas members welcome. Contact Terry Horler on 01454 881770
- 2nd Thursday **Notts/Derby border Area** at the **Sitwell Arms** at 30 Wood Lane, Horsley Woodhouse, Derby, DE7 6BN from approx. 8.30. Just a mile north-west of the A608/A609 crossroads. Ian Cooke 0115 938 3838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- 2nd Thursday **East Anglian Area**. Previously the Cambridgeshire Area meet at **The Ferry Boat**, at Holywell, 8pm
- 2nd Saturday **Yorkshire Area** – meet each month at lunchtime from 12:30pm at **Ye Jolly Farmers Inn**, Dalton near Thirsk YO7 3HY – more information at <http://yorkshiremasc.blogspot.com/>
- 3rd Monday **Dorset** – Meet at **St. Peter's Finger**, Lytchett Minster, Poole, BH16 6JE 7.30pm
- 3rd Tuesday **Scotland** – Meet at **The Windmill Tavern**, 4 Thorniewood Road, Uddingston G71 5QQ at 8pm. Contact John Pardo on 01698 814791
- 3rd Tuesday **Surrey** – Meet at **The Blue Ball**, Walton-on-the-Hill, 7.00pm onwards. Contact Mike Gorman, mike@birchwood44.freeserve.co.uk Tel: 01737-552256
- 4th Thursday **Sussex** – Meet at **Bolney Stage**, Bolney, RH17 5RL from 19:00. Contact David Southcott at dandlsouthcott@btinternet.com
- 4th Thursday **Hampshire** – Meet at **The Fox and Goose**, Greywell, RG291BY. Please ring Terry or Harriet Langridge on 01252 626063 for details.
- 4th Sunday **Kent Area** – Meet at **The Angel**, Addington Green, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5BB at 12:00 for lunch. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050. alan.anstead@btoopenworld.com
- Last Monday **Wiltshire** – Meet at **The Barge Inn**, Seend, Nr. Devizes, about 7pm except on Bank Holiday Mondays when it will be the Bell Inn at Yatton Keynell near Castle Combe, 6.30pm. Contact Andy Cross on 01225 743554 or e-mail andy@cross743.freeserve.co.uk
- Last Wednesday **Home Counties North West** for members in Herts, Beds, Bucks, Berks, N. London or anyone interested! Meet at the **Chequers Inn**, Redbourn, AL3 7AD from 6:30pm. Please contact Mike or Sue Gahan on email mike@mgahan.demon.co.uk or on 07850 488636.
- Last Thursday **Somerset** – Meet at **The Lord Nelson**, Norton sub Hamdon at 7pm for those wishing to eat or at 8pm for those not. Phone Ray Darch on 01460 72040 with any queries and to ensure we will be there!
robertholmes25@hotmail.com. If enough interest, will arrange a meeting.
- Northern Ireland
South West Wales Non regular and occasional meetings and runs arranged throughout the summer months. Please contact David Hill on 01239 811307 or email: david@hill.be

Club Website

www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk

Members only pages Password: Kimber (which is case sensitive)

Events

Area reps please continue to make Richard Flynn aware of any events already in your diaries for 2012, so that they can be added to this "Events" section of the magazine and the website.

For the magazine Richard can be contacted at Richard.flynn@live.co.uk or 0121 559 3103

For the website Richard Mumford can be contacted at richardmumford@me.com

June

- 2-4 Notts & Derby Area, **Wollaton Park Autokarna and Diamond Jubilee** NG8 2AE. Probably the largest Classic vehicle event in Nottinghamshire. I plan to pre-book a club area for a fixed number of cars if enough interest. Call me asap! Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- Wednesday 6 Notts & Derby Area, **Renishaw Hall Classic Car and Bike Show** near Chesterfield – S21 3WB From 3pm. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- 10 East Anglian Area, **Luton Car Show** – Nigel 01954-789503
- 10 Somerset Area, **Ilminster Classic Car Show** further detail to be confirmed
- 17 Somerset Area, **WWMC Classic Car Run** entries via application form which no doubt Peter will send on
- 23/24 **MG Live Silverstone** (see ads in *MASCOT* for contacts)
- 28 Somerset Area, **Club Night**. Run to Beer for a Fish Supper
- 30 Somerset Area, **Yeovale Rotary- Auto Spectacular** at Yeovil Showground. We will attend as MASC Club with banner, gazebo etc?

July

- 6-8 Notts & Derby Area, **Le Mans Classic**, France. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- 15 East Anglian Area, **Kimbolton Classic Show** – Dave 01733-222810
- 20-22 **Silverstone Classic** (see ads in *MASCOT* for contacts)
- 29 Notts & Derby Area, **Ashover Rally** S45 0JP <http://www.ashoverclassics.co.uk/>

August

- 5 East Anglian Area, **Duxford Car Show** – Diane, Nigel, Mick & Tricia 01223-263697 or 01954-789503

September

- 8 Notts & Derby Area, **Bicker Steam Threshing**, Lincs on A52 SW of Boston (in the East Anglian Area) A great relaxing day out! Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk

October

- 21 Notts & Derby Area, **Stoneleigh Restoration Show**. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- tba Notts & Derby Area, **Donington MG and Triumph Day** in the Exhibition Hall. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk

November

- 16-18 **NEC Classic Car Show** (MASC stand)

New Members April – May 2012



The two Sebring Sprites of Jonathan Whitehouse-Bird alongside his white Mk11 Sprite

We extend a warm welcome to the following new and rejoined members

0449	Jonathan Whitehouse-Bird	West Midlands	Sprite	Mk 2 Sebring
4592	Clive Widdup	Surrey	Midget	Mk 2
4593	Nathan Hetherington & Leanne Boswood	East Sussex	Midget	Mk 3
4594	Simon Fowler	Norfolk	Sprite	
4595	Jill Kirk & Dennis Beadman	North Yorkshire	Sprite	Mk 1
4596	Edward Horsman	Yorkshire	Midget	Mk 3 RWA
4597	David Sothcott	Dorset	Sprite	Mk 1
4598	Bert Wiegman	Norfolk	Midget	1500
4599	Kenneth Mcgregor	Ayrshire	Sprite	Mk 4
4600	G Jenkins	S. Wales	Midget	Mk 3
4601	Adam Horne	Lincs	Austin	Sprite
4602	Richard & Julia Green	Yorkshire	Midget	1500
4603	Richard Griffith	Shropshire	Sprite	Mk 1
4604	Mark Wood	Cheshire	Midget	Mk 3 RWA



Clive Widdup with his MkII Midget

Nathan Hetherington & Leanne Boswood's MkIII Midget



Ed Horsman's MkIII Round Wheel Arch



David Sothcott's Sprite



And David's newly acquired Frogeye



Kenneth McGregor's MkIV Sprite



G Jenkins' aiming to put his MkIII Midget in for an MOT June-ish 2015



More about all the period modifications in a future issue



Richard Griffiths' highly modified Mk1 Sprite



Lee Clark in his MkIII RWA Midget

HOWSAFE is your New Club Regalia

Over the last 18 months (since I joined the Club committee) at every meeting and in many of the hundreds of emails that fly about cyberspace between the committee members and Club officials, regalia has been discussed. Over the past few years Mike Grout (one of the unsung heroes of our Club) has been negotiating with supplier, ordering in stock, storing our stock, advertising our regalia, taking orders from members, dealing with queries, packing and despatching items and banking the payments, and all this is voluntary time consuming unpaid work (well done Mike).

Now without taking anything away from Mike who has done us proud, there have been a few problems with the clothing side of the regalia, how it has traditionally worked is that we buy in a batch of each item (the bigger the batch the lower the price) and hold them in stock for the members to order from Mike. If you think about it if we wanted to sell sweatshirts for example, we would need to stock maybe four colours and four different sizes so we have to have a minimum of 16 shirts and one of each will never be enough so if we say five of each that's 80 shirts at maybe £20 each that's £1600. You can see how if we stocked very many lines we could soon be spending a lot of Club funds on items, some of which may be hard to shift. All this explains why we have always had to have a limited selection of clothing items available and then only in a limited range of colours.

The non-clothing items are not really any problem, things like MASCOT binders, car badges, stickers, key fobs and licence holders, since they only come in one size and one colour and don't really go out of fashion. My personal view is that we have not really made much money from selling clothing items (and maybe even a loss) despite all Mike's hard work. Regalia is great (and makes great birthday and Christmas gifts for Spridget fans) however it is something that has been done as more of a service to our members than an income stream for the Club. Everyone likes to have something to identify them with our Club and it's great to wear some regalia at events and shows, it shows a sense of belonging and marks you out as a serious classic car enthusiast as well as advertising MASC.

The reason for all the discussion at committee level about Regalia is that our stock is dwindling (both in quantity and desirability) so it is time to restock, especially as the Club logo changed a little when we became a limited company (not sure why as it was before my

time). Now since we can't afford a wide range of items and even restocking with just a few things could cost thousands (we are very serious about giving the membership the best value possible out of the money we collect in subs) so we have been trying to come up with some way of avoiding holding stock and at the same time offering a wider and more up to date range of clothing items.

We have identified a company based in Peterborough who sell a wide range of leisure and outdoor clothing (including Fruit of the Loom which we used for our old shirts and at least 10 other well known brands) through their shop, by mail order and over the net at competitive prices (www.howsafe.co.uk). What we have set up (at zero cost to the Club) is that their full range of clothing can be purchased directly by phone, mail or internet for the normal advertised price and delivered to your door (postage and packing charges may apply as per Howsafe's normal terms and conditions), however if you state MASC on your order it will be embroidered with the latest MASC logo at no extra charge. The only real downside that I can see is that obviously if you order an item and it doesn't fit correctly they will not take it back since it has our logo on it, so you need to be accurate with the size on your order. The upside is that you will be dealing with Howsafe directly so no Club mark-up and you have a wider choice of constantly updated items, prices, colours sizes and styles than ever before, so ladies **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR!**

I would expect that most people these days will find ordering over the net to be the most convenient method as this gives easiest access to photos of all available items however if you would prefer you can phone Howsafe directly (they will advise you on sizes and so on 01733 560669) or visit the shop in person. There is currently a packing and postage charge for orders under £40 so if you wanted a single item why not link up with other local members and put in a joint order. NOTE – all non-clothing items should still be ordered through Mike in the traditional way. We will still also advertise a small selection of clothing regalia items from the range from time to time in MASCOT (not enough room for the full range of available items) to give you an idea of prices and what is available and to remind you of how to order.

David Dixon

Letters

Seeking Sprite History



Was HFO 634

Hello,

I am the owner of a 1959 Austin Healey Sprite MK1 since two years. I live in France not far from Paris, not far from Monthléry too, I am a member of the French club "Amicale Spridget". Today I am looking for history of my car.

I request you to know if you have archives on the old members like photo or history,

The history of the car I know:

The car was owned by Jon Coshall. Registration in UK was HFO 634. I don't know if he was other owner before.

When I bought the car in 2010 there was a badge of your club on the front grille. I don't know if Mr Coshall was a member of the Midget and Sprite Club?

In 2005, he lived in France and sold the car in mid 2006 (now I know Mr Coshall returned to UK but can't find him) to a French man. Finally I bought the car in 2010.

The car was converted from RHD to LHD in 2005. Today the car is old white English but I think it was Iris blue before. (Found rest of this colour on the rear wheels arch panel)

I don't know if you can help me but it will be great.

Best regards

Christophe
France

Petrol Prices, have the AA got it wrong? (We think so.)

Hi Gary,

Concerning your editorial comparing 1961 prices with those of today. My first four wheel vehicle, a Ford Thames 300E van, was acquired in 1961, it had a five gallon fuel tank; I often reflect on the fact that I could fill the tank for £1. Four shillings and three pence a gallon springs to mind and that's about 58 OLD pence; so I think you were right to think the AA figure was too high. At 21 new pence per gallon the increase today would be about 30 fold (I think!).

All the best

Lawrence Langley, 2921

Hello Gary,

Quite an interesting observation, but I wonder if the AA had got their currency wrong. I had a "Frogeye" in the early 60's and kept a record of its fuel consumption on long journeys. One trip in July 1965 shows me purchasing 5.5 gallons of fuel at a cost of 28s/3d (28 shillings and 3 old pennies) which puts the price of fuel at approx 5s/1.5d (61.5d) per gallon, that's all in "old pennies" of course. My elder brother had a Mk 7 Jaguar in 1961 and I remember him buying 4star fuel at 4s/11d (59 old pennies) a gallon, i.e.; approx. 4 gallons for £1.

Bill Longstaff, Member No. 3378!

Dear Gary,

I was interested to read your comparisons between various items from 1961 and their equivalent prices today (I have always used Mars Bars as the yardstick!)

I don't know where the AA got its information from, but petrol was certainly less than 58.5 pence in '61. I began my motoring career in 1965, when the cost of a gallon was three shillings and four pence ha'penny – about 17 pence. So, the ratio for petrol should be about 38:1, which puts it above bread in the comparison – something about being just above the bread-line, perhaps?

Howard Worthington, 3553

Where are they now, Can MASCOT readers help?



Over three years ago, MASC member Chris Jackson wrote to me for information on his old Frogeye 1924 AD. After eventually finding the correspondence, I'm belatedly able to put the appeal into the magazine. The name of the resort makes me smile every time I look at the image.

Chris wrote:

Hi Gary

Please find attached two photographs of my old Frogeye 1924 AD taken on our wedding day 9th August 1986 and our honeymoon in Newquay. Do any of your members know where it is now?



Chris

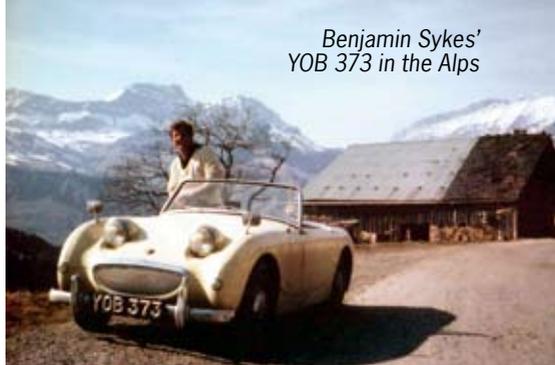


Julian's old Sprite UVB203, where is it now?

Dear Gary

Today I met some of your Midget and Sprite Club members and they suggested I send you a photo of a Frogeye, reg. UVB 203, I used to own (many years ago) and wondered if you knew of its whereabouts or if it has been scraped.

Julian Pears



William Sykes writes:

Hi Gary,

Just wondered if you can help or put me in the right direction of finding out if my father's beloved white Frogeye is still around – any info would be greatly appreciated!!

William's father writes:

It was a 1959 Mark 1 Sprite which I bought from the original Silver Street Motors in the spring of 1964. I bought a hard-top for it in Brighouse and replaced the original flap side-screens with perspex sliding ones. Later in 1964 I took it to France, to Etampes, and then skiing in the French Alps at a little village called Crest-Voland. On the way back we called in at Chamonix. The girl with me, hiding inside the car, who sadly died a few years ago, was Gaye Jarman, whose brother became a famous and slightly controversial film director by the name of Derek Jarman, who also died a few years ago. The family were keen sailors and members of Seaview Yacht Club on the Isle of Wight. It was while I was staying with Barry Stobart-Hook that I met her. I think the trip was too much for her and the liaison did not last long after that!

Jill, my wife and I used the Sprite as a 'get-away' car from our wedding reception on August 13th 1966, but firing on only three cylinders we did not get away from the pursuing posse! We swapped it, as planned, for my brand new Mark 3 Sprite in which we went through France to Sardinia and back through Italy, Switzerland and France again. The Frogeye was sold privately in the autumn of 1966 in Taunton for £150.

The number plate YOB 373 caused much amusement with the boys at King's who thought I had chosen YOB specially. It was great fun to drive, but not much good for 'courting'!

Benjamin Sykes



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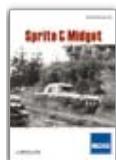
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Bonnet Swap and Hinge

The bonnet I had used was a second-hand one bought at the time of the car's restoration back in 2002 paying only £75 for it, it had some hairline cracks in the gelcoat (which were pointed out quite often to me at shows), that were persistent little b-gg-rs despite filing kept on coming back (the hairline cracks not the people at the shows!)

So the time had come to replace the bonnet with a new one. I had always wanted to do away with any form of outside clips like the ones I had used previously from a Triumph Herald, or the rubber bung/leather strap type fasteners often seen. After all, modern cars have bonnet catches so why not for a Frogeye.

That was the start of it, I sourced the appropriate catch and control flap from a company that made compartment catches

for the Truck, Bus and Aero Industry (if it's good enough for them, must be good enough for a Frog!).

I also wanted to do something different from the standard pivot hinge mechanism used with most fibreglass Frog bonnets. So after many hours of Googling came across an American site that featured a 2 Litre BMW engined Frogeye (<http://www.britishv8.org/Other/BruceUchida.htm>).

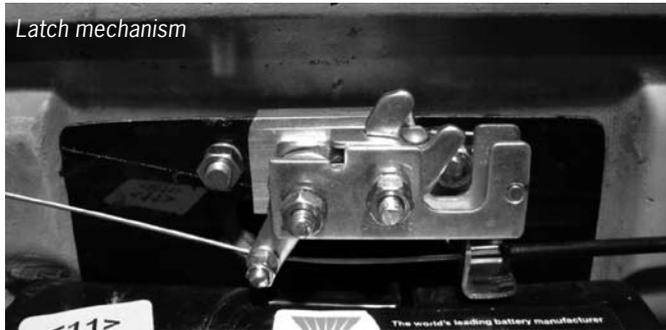
Apparently this hinge had been 'Custom designed and fabricated', I tried emailing for further information without success. The hinge is quite different from normal hinges in that the pivot point changes as the bonnet is opened and then comes to a sprung stop.

Although looking quite complicated I set about scaling the photographs from the web photographs and then transferred these to pieces of cardboard before finally making up

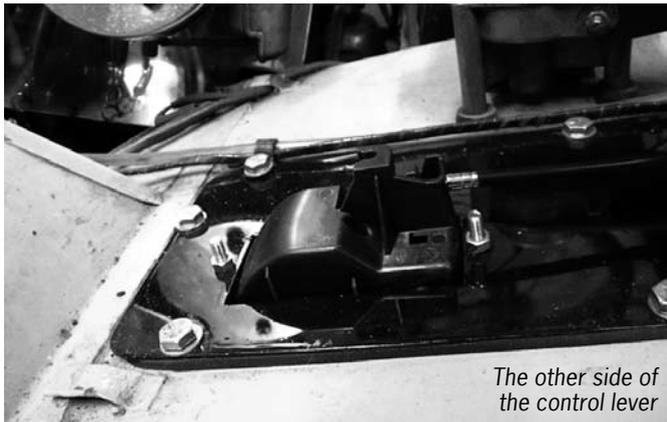
an initial prototype, so far so good. Although I had scaled the dimensions correctly scaling the angles was another issue that I found a little more complicated and had to modify my first prototype several times.

This weakened the mechanism which eventually fell apart (gulp!) after several weeks of in garage tweaking. I then bought 4 x 5mm thick pieces of steel plate measuring about 4-5" square from eBay (other on line auction sites are available!).

These were ideal, I was able to disassemble my first attempt and re-assemble using the much stronger back plates, in addition I used stainless steel nuts and bolts and a coat of indestructible POR 15 paint.



Latch mechanism



The other side of the control lever



First prototype

Panic struck! I thought what happens if the cable or catch breaks, I'm stuck unable to open my bonnet. Simple, I cut a small finger sized hole in the bulkhead, behind my battery restrainer (another story!) and then plugged it with a rubber grommet. So in an emergency I can operate the catch lever (situated directly above my battery) with my finger.

So here I am in the middle of April having taken probably 3-4 months, waiting for it to stop raining so that I can finally paint my bonnet and start going to some events again. Until then I am finishing off the preparation prior to painting.

Barry Green
Hampshire area



Oooops! – back to the drawing board

The company I bought the bonnet catch mechanism wanted £130 for the linking rod (from the handle inside the car to the catch).

Good old Halfords came to the rescue, from their bike department I bought a brake cable and clamping nut at a grand total of £6.

Ready for paint – if it stops raining!



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Les Leston 1920-2012

Les Leston – purveyor of motor sporting accessories, racing driver with Cooper, Connaught, BRM etc, Lotus Elite GT star in his famous 'DAD10', jazz drummer – passed away on the 13th May 2012

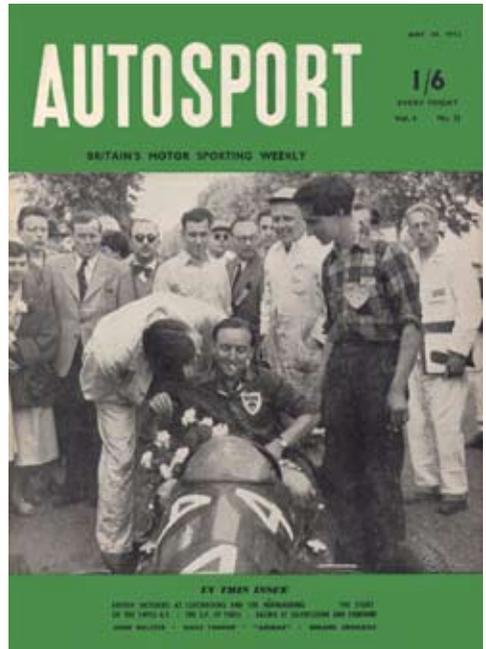


DAD10 image © Robert Grounds

Of all the accessory companies that thrived in the '50s, '60s and '70s probably the best known was "Les Leston".

Born Alfred Lazarus Fingleston in 1920, Les Leston, first came to prominence in the 1950's as a racing driver. He started racing in a Jaguar SS100 before acquiring a Cooper and later building his own Leston Special. He became a Cooper works driver in 1954 and took the national Formula 3 championship in that year. Les also participated in three Formula One World Championship rounds, but with no great success.

After he retired from professional motor racing he started selling accessories with a



Les Leston on the cover of *AutoSport* May 30th 1952

"Motorsport Theme". Lestons are probably best remembered nowadays for their range of beautiful after market steering wheels most of which were manufactured by "Walsall Wheels" but he was also instrumental in the adoption of many of the safety improvements seen during the '60s including the introduction of fireproof suits and crash helmets to motorsport.

Of all the accessory companies it was Les Leston who was probably the most successful in spanning the two very similar but also very different worlds of Motorsport and Motor accessories.



Period newspaper article

Rotor Arm Sends you Spinning and condenser removes your sparkle

On several occasions recently people have drawn my attention to, or asked my assistance with, faults concerning the failure of ignition system components. The two main problems concern the failure of rotor arms and condensers (capacitors).

Firms such as Aldon Automotive, Moss, and Distributor Doctor now are able to supply better quality alternatives to the commonly available reproduction rotor arms which have been routinely failing and leaving people stranded. Such is the problem of poor quality automotive electrical ignition parts that some classes of historic motor sport are, this year, to allow electronic ignition systems to be fitted to overcome reliability issues. This move removes the problem of condensers and contact breaker points completely but the rotor arm, depending on what sort of electronic ignition is used / allowed, will still remain.

Apparently recently manufactured rotor arms have been failing because the typical "mix" used in the injection moulding process, nowadays, contains more carbon blacking and is therefore more conductive. In conversation with a representative of Aldon Automotive, at the recent Race Retro exhibition, I was informed that it has been found that the rivet which holds the brass contact inlay into the moulding is slightly longer than the original, bringing it too close to the spring clip on the underside. The high tension current, averaging 30,000 volts, is always looking for the easiest route to earth and shorts out from the tip of the over length rivet, through the reduced thickness of more conductive plastic and the spring clip on the underside of the rotor arm, to earth out down the distributor shaft. This results in no spark to the spark plugs. The situation sometimes rectifies itself on cooling, but then reoccurs with increasing frequency until the rotor permanently short circuits.

Distributor Doctor offers "Lucas red rotor arms" which are modelled on the original, 1960's design, but made from modern materials on the latest machinery to very close tolerances and reputedly will not let you down. The integrally moulded brass inlay

dispenses with the troublesome rivet. The increased insulation properties of the body makes them suitable for use with high voltage coils and electronic ignition kits. The spring steel clip on the underside, in conjunction with a revised internal tolerance assures a really snug fit, even on old and slightly reduced diameter mountings.

Part number DRB101 for Sprite / Midget 25D type distributors,

A model for the 45D distributors will, apparently, be available shortly

Lucas number DRB104

These updated rotor arms retail at about £6.95 inc. VAT.

More detail re distributor doctor can be found at: www.distributordoctor.com

More detail re Aldon Automotive can be found at: www.aldonauto.co.uk

Kent based Swiftune Racing has developed an all-new Competition Condenser for all engines running with conventional ignition points. The Swiftune condenser replaces the existing Lucas unit which have proved increasingly unreliable in recent years due to poorer quality. Optimising the capacity of the condenser for the distributor points has resulted in a unit noticeably bigger than the previous Lucas item. The Competition Condenser is mounted outside the distributor, a significant advantage because condensers don't like heat! The Competition Condenser kit consists of a condenser, P clip and wires with heat shrunk connections for the coil and earth. These items retail at £27.60 inc vat.

More detail re Swiftune can be found at: www.swiftune.com

Electronic ignition systems can easily be fitted to Sprites and Midgets. Types such as the Aldon Ignitor or Petronix, which are available in either positive or negative earth configuration, fit within the distributor with no outward signs that they are installed. It is easy to carry a spare distributor base plate set up with points and condenser in case of the rare instance of the electronic system failing at the roadside.

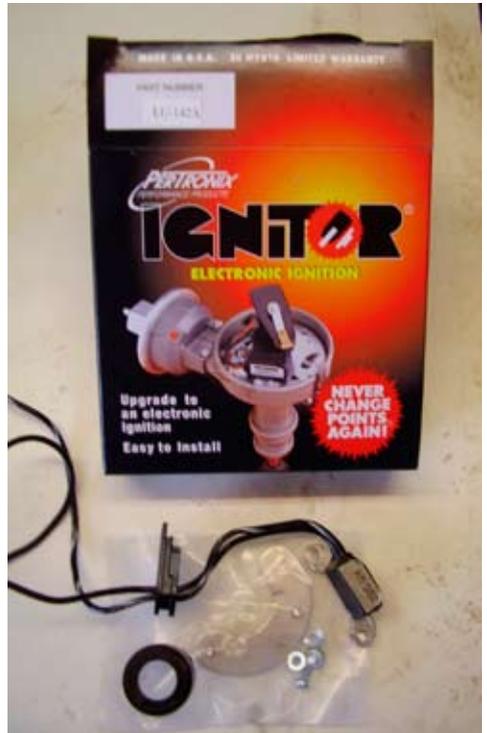
Alan Anstead



25D Dizzy with points and condenser



25D baseplate with points and condenser for roadside repair



Petronix kit

Carroll Shelby

1923-2012



Most of you by now would have heard about the death of former racing driver, car dealership owner and chicken farmer Carroll Shelby, who died in mid March at the age of 89.

Best known for building the iconic AC Cobra using a chassis built by AC Cars and powered by a US Ford V8 engine. The Cobra was officially homologated in 1962, and won its first race in January of 1963.

What may be less well known was his link with Austin Healey Sprites.

America's First Racing School

Carroll Shelby School of High Performance Driving

Carroll Shelby's racing career grew out of a trip to a drag race in 1952. Later that year Shelby got behind the wheel of an MG TC and raced in his first road race, determined to win, and that he did.

In November of 1954, while racing in the Carrera Pan Americana in Mexico, Shelby crashed, flipping his car four times. It was his first serious accident. In 1955, he raced with his arm in a cast due to follow-up surgeries

CARROLL SHELBY

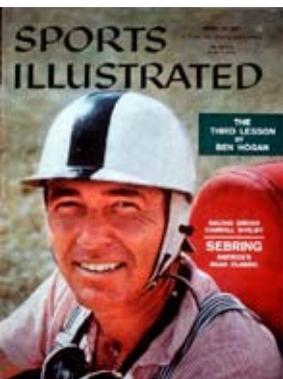




A Shelby Frogeye

as a result of the accident. Later that same year, at Torrey Pines, Carroll beat Phil Hill while driving a Ferrari. Nothing was to keep him down.

In 1956 and 1957 Shelby was named "Driver of the Year" by *Sports Illustrated* magazine.



He entered Formula One Racing in 1958, and in 1959 went on to win the prestigious 24 Hours of Le Mans with co-driver Ray Salvadori. His last race would be on October 23rd, 1960 at the Pacific Grand Prix for Sports cars at Laguna Seca. He finished 2nd for the day behind the wheel of a Tipo 61 Birdcage Maserati. He was in such chest pain

due to a heart condition after the race, that he called it quits.

Retiring from racing in 1961, he decided to open a Goodyear Racing Tire Distributorship and a driving school at a young Riverside International Raceway, called "Carroll Shelby School of High Performance Driving." He also called upon his friend, Pete Brock, to manage to operation. This school later became the Bob Bondurant School in 1968 at a SoCal drag strip and small road course called Orange County Raceway. When the Ontario

Motor Speedway in California was built the school was moved to a dedicated road race/oval track. However, when Ontario was to be demolished after several years, the school was moved to its present location in Phoenix, Arizona.

Here we see a couple more photos of the work being carried out on a Carroll Shelby School of High Performance Driving School Sprites.



MG Midget

1500

Year: 1977

Colour: Chartreuse Yellow

Mileage: 25,000



The Midget near Buxton

In the '70s, and being a fairly confirmed bachelor, I once bought a very cheap 1275cc Midget as a car to get around in winter. Being short of cash, and spending most of it on motorcycles, the car was something of a banger, with holes in the footwell, rust everywhere, but with the essential MOT, (the MOT man must have been a very generous and understanding sort of chap!). The car was quickly sold on as soon as I found out the likely cost of repairs for success at the next MOT. The strange thing was that I sold it within hours of putting it up for sale in the Birmingham Evening Mail, and the chap who bought it hardly inspected it at all.

And that was it for sports cars for me until October 2010 when I acquired a very low mileage, (22,000 miles) 1977 Midget 1500. The trail of ownership ending in myself starts in 1987, when I was telephoned by an old university friend living in Loughborough, who asked me to accompany him to pick up a Midget he had bought. When I first saw UPC393S it was clear it was in exceptional original condition, and had only done about 18,000 miles. We went out to Peterborough in his company car to pick it up on a rather cold and rainy day. The car was successfully driven back to his house, with me following driving his company car, and I returned back home.

At the time I was into classic cars with a Mark 2 Jaguar nearing completion after a seven year rebuild. Over the next few years my friend and I kept in touch and once we met up at Kedleston Hall near Derby with him and his wife in the Midget. By this time I was married, and the Mark 2 had been replaced by an XJ6.

All the service documents, even the original order form came with the car, which was originally supplied by Woodham Motors, Weybridge, to a Mr Davies of Woking, Surrey on 15th October 1977. The original order form shows it to have cost £1791.00, with extras of a radio at £55 and underseal for £15 giving a final invoice total of £2272.14



The MG arrives – Oct 2010 (a dull day)



Holme Moss summit – Club run April 2012

including VAT and one year road tax. In its early years the car's mileage built up quite slowly with Woodham Motors service stamps in the Service Book until 1980, then Fox Garage of Bisley in Surrey until 1985. The last service in Surrey was by Kennings in 1986.

In the early '90s, my university friend took a job in the USA, and only returned to the UK three or four times a year. The car was then used very infrequently, although it was always taxed and insured. Finally, from around 1993, he lived almost permanently in the USA only giving the car an occasional run when he returned to the UK. After 1996 the car was taken off the road, and laid up in his garage in the house in Loughborough where it stood until 2010.

In 2010, the house was sold and the car offered to me on first refusal. So in October that year the car was collected from Loughborough and transported to a local garage in Crewe where I had arranged to have the car re-commissioned. Surprisingly, little work was needed and the car passed its first MOT since 1995 with flying colours.

Once in my ownership, I decided I wanted to improve the car a little, so not liking the Rostyle wheels, these were replaced with a set of pattern Minilite alloys. This style of alloy wheels was a common accessory item when the Midget was in production and allowed slightly wider tyres to be used. It was also clear, once I had driven the car around a bit on crowded roads that the brakes were in serious need of improvement. Modern cars have powerful brakes and one gets used to this power. A brake servo has therefore been fitted and has made a major improvement to the brakes and also my mental well-being

while driving!! A new aluminium rocker cover was also fitted.

Everything else on the car remains the original, even the hood, but I have carried out some paintwork on a few panels due to scratches over the years. Also, this being a car of the '70s and very poorly protected against rust, a half outer-sill has been needed on the offside due to rust holes on the bottom face. This rust damage occurred even though the car has been very extensively Waxoyled. It is unknown when this waxoyling was done, but was probably by the second or third owner, and came too late to prevent this damage. Apart from this, all the wheel arch rims are perfect and the A-posts and all the other potential Midget rust spots. The engine maintains its factory specification. Oil pressure of 60 psi, the coolant keeps cool and the gearbox changes smoothly. The only fly in the ointment is a tendency to leak a bit





Near Ffestiniog

of oil, both engine and gearbox, indicating the 35 year old oil seals are now past their best.

Since owning the car and being in the Club, I have attended some rallies and classic car shows with the Club, one at Bridgemere Garden Centre near Nantwich last year, and the Manchester Indoor Classic Car Show in March this year. We also had a wonderful weekend in Wales last July with the hood down the whole weekend and brilliant sunshine, quite something for North Wales, (a once-in-a-lifetime event, I think!!).

So, what are my thoughts after eighteen months of ownership? The main thought is my nervousness when I first bought it as to whether it would be too cold and draughty for my wife, Leslie; would she like it? Well, to my great surprise, we both found the heater to be really very good, and it soon generates plenty of heat, in fact too much for me! Part of the mod to install the brake servo was the need to move the heater valve out of the way. The only one available now is completely different, and, joy of joys, has a Bowden cable on it to allow the control to be fitted inside the car. Another thought is of the excellent ride quality. I had fears it would be very very uncomfortable and hard riding, but not at all, quite long journeys can be completed easily, and I don't get tired out or get a bad back from the bumps. Noise inside the car is quite high, but this is alleviated by Leslie wearing ear plugs, and also not generally going over about 55mph, maybe 60 on motorways. Finally, my third thought is how much I appreciated the joys of an open-top car, last experienced in the '60s and '70s with a school friend's 1954 MG TF 1250 and then in his E-type Roadster. Of course we were young lads then, and could put up with some discomfort, but now, even

as a pensioner, the joy is still there, although we wrap up much more than we would have done then.

My future plans for the car revolve around regular use, and keeping it as original as possible, because I think it is worth preserving. There cannot be many Midgets around with such a low mileage and with a complete history from new. However, now the car is finally getting some use after its long slumber, some parts seem to be deciding the effort is too much and it is time to pack up. On the day of the Donington Park Classic Car meeting and races in early May, the clutch slave cylinder decided to pack up, so we had to return home and take my other classic, a Jaguar XJ6. However I soon found a new cylinder on eBay at a reasonable price. The gearbox does seem a bit noisy in first gear, I hope this lasts the course for 2012 at least. In the end, one has to be philosophical about things; after all 35 years of clutch actuation on the car is a good service life!

Fraser Mitchell
North West Area



Dignity and Impudence (Jag and Midget)

The K Series Engined Spridgets Tour of **Pembrokeshire**



Friday the 13th makes some people feel a bit nervous, but this was the date that had been set for a weekend based in Pembrokeshire for some friends with K Series Midgets to get together. Joining us for the weekend were Anthony Cutler and his wife Lesley, Paul Evans and his wife Vanessa, Tim Dalton and last but not least, myself and my wife Sharon. The base for the weekend was the Broadmead Hotel in Tenby, providing great accommodation, safe parking and easy access to the town. By early afternoon, the four 'K' Midgets were parked up in front of the hotel. Lovely sunny weather added to the occasion. A short walk into delightful seaside resort of Tenby found the group soon wetting their whistle in the Hope and Anchor Pub down by the harbour, enjoying the selection of real ales on offer. The Kite brewery from Cross Hands was a particular favourite! Following this was a walk around the town,

the picturesque harbour and a walk on Castle Beach, feeling the sand between our toes. It was just like being on holiday! It was soon time to return to the hotel to get refreshed for our evening out in the town.



A meal had been booked at the Qube Restaurant in Tudor Square and so this time a seven-seater taxi got us back into town. After a great meal we felt it our duty to visit a couple more hostelryes. At this point we lost Anthony. He had bumped into a friend from Sheffield who was on holiday in Tenby and he had popped back to his flat to say hello to other family members. What a small world! He soon caught back up with us and we headed for the Lifeboat pub. This was an eye opener as it was also the destination for some other visitors to the town who



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Laptops to tune Spridgets (whatever next Ed)

announced to all that they were from 'The Valleys'. Who says people watching isn't interesting!

The following morning dawned wet. The forecast was poor but we were determined to make the most of our day. After breakfast we headed off on our 120 mile tour of the county, which is also the only coastal National Park in the UK. Led by Neil and Sharon, the tour took in the coastal route to Manorbier and its surfing beach and on to Pembroke and its beautiful Castle, the birth place of King Henry VII. From here we headed over the Cleddau Bridge which crosses the magnificent Milford Haven waterway, the WWII home of the Sunderland Flying Boat. From here it was on to the seaside village of Little Haven. The coast road from here, going north, is superb with the road clinging to the cliffs and providing dramatic views over St Brides Bay passing little coastal villages such as Broadhaven and Nolton Haven. By now the rain had stopped. A coffee stop was taken at Newgale where the two mile long beach is a surfer's paradise. It was whilst in the cafe here that Anthony began talking about QR Codes. Neil was able to show off with his iPhone app 'i-nigma' to decode Anthony's codes. The title of this writ-up has been coded with QR and the techy ones amongst you will know how to decipher it. It's not Egyptian Hieroglyphics I promise. It is the future however. K owners are very modern you know!

Suitably refreshed we travelled further up the coast to Solva and on to St Justinian's, the site of the St David's lifeboat which protects the north coast around Ramsay Island. Lunch was taken in St David's before heading up to Abereiddy Beach where Anthony popped a bottle of sparkling wine to celebrate a momentous occasion, this being 10 years ago since he sorted out the inlet manifold problem on his K. I know, scary isn't it!!!

Lower Town, Fishguard was our next destination, the site of filming for Moby Dick



Cleaning the cars at Neil's

and then on to the mountain road over the Preseli's, the highest point in Pembrokeshire. Without stopping again we headed for the Cresselly Arms and Cresswell Quay, an old pub steeped in tradition. A pint of 'Firewater' was the order of the day. Thirteenth century Carew Castle came next before arriving back at the hotel by 6pm. Time then for the laptops to be brought out and a bit of tinkering with Paul and Tim's Ks. A bit of fine tuning took place, much to Paul's consternation, having recently spent a small fortune on a Rolling Road session! Dinner in the hotel had been planned for the evening. This went down very well. So did the wine.

Sunday morning was dry, bright and sunny which really showed up all the dirt the cars had accumulated the day before. First stop then was Neil's place to wash the cars off and to allow Anthony an opportunity to take a drive in Neil's 1958 Frogeye Sprite. He enjoyed this and certainly appreciated the vast difference between Mk1 Sprites and K series Midgets! Lots of people wave and smile at you, when driving a Frogeye Sprite. I wonder why? With hoods down, the route from Tenby took us along the coast road taking in Saundersfoot, Wisemans Bridge, Amroth, Pendine and Dylan Thomas's town of Laugharne. Hitting the dual carriageway the Ks then headed for the Heads of the Valleys road. Fun was had with some unsuspecting modern Euro boxes! Upon reaching Hirwaun we split up with Anthony and Lesley who headed off home. Tim followed Neil and Paul to Brecon before peeling off. Neil and Paul were then heading southbound back to south west Wales.

This had been a fantastic weekend with some great driving roads clear of traffic and great company. The cars, as usual, went like clockwork with fantastic performance accompanied by great fuel economy. There is no doubt we will be arranging another weekend away later in the year.

Neil Thomas, Tenby



Yorkshire Area Report

The morning of our monthly meeting brought with it sunshine after two days of very heavy rain. The sunshine brought out the Spridgets and we had an excellent turnout.

Despite being eight months' pregnant I managed to squeeze into the passenger seat of Daphne, my Sprite, which Tim drove to the meet. We arrived at Ye Jolly Farmers to find Rob and Jenni had already arrived in Jenni's daily driver. Rob's had some alternator problems with the K Midget and it wasn't quite ready to make the journey this month. Next to pull into the car park was in Ken in his Mk I Midget "Little Red". Ken and his partner Julie had just returned from around the world trip so Ken was keen to show off his tan! It was lovely to see Geoff and Hilary who had made the journey down from Guisborough in their daily driver. Hilary has made amazing

progress since her serious neck injury six months ago and wants to get back in their Frog when she is ready.

Steve and his son-in-law drove Steve's immaculate pale blue RWA midget up from Peterlee. Steve finished his restoration on the car last year and is taking her to the Le Mans Classic and Silverstone Classic in July. John from Richmond brought along his daughter's Mk IV Sprite EEV, which has gained some interior trim over the spring. David Wigley was next to show up in his pretty Mk II Sprite "Dinky". Steve Webb who we first met in November came along in his daily driver and some new faces Tim and Elaine, in their Z4. Both Steve and Tim are both restoring Frogeyes and from East Yorkshire so plan to compare notes. Last to arrive was Andrew Harrington in his pre-war Midget, a J2, which he recently raced at Silverstone and knocked 15 seconds off his lap time.

As usual those who were eating enjoyed a piece of Lynne's homemade pie, and it was good to catch up on all sorts of Spridget and other gossip.

This will be my last area report as I am standing down as co-area rep, as I am going to have my hands full with MASC's youngest Spridgeteer not long after you read this. Tim is carrying on as co-area rep with Rob Armstrong, who will be taking the lead on things over the next few months as I'm hoping Tim will have his hands full along with me! We are keeping both Spridgets and our daughter will be introduced to the Spridget way of life as soon as she's old enough. We'll see you soon...



Andrew's pre-war Midget joins the line-up (shame that the caravan at the back isn't a Sprite)

Sarah (& Tim) Saunders

NW Area Report

This report is all bit of a rush, I forgot about it yet again, so apologies if I've forgotten anything.

Bernie and Lynne's Anniversary run 15th April

To celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary Bernie organised a run. It was a brilliant turn out with 10 cars in total. We met up at McDonalds at Hattersley, just at the end of the M67. Here we had breakfast before setting off. The sun was shining so it was tops down, apart from David. He still had his hardtop on, pretending he was driving an MGB!! What is it with these cars and people turning 60? Lee's engine rebuild was not finished so he and Maddie came along in his Nissan Figaro. We set off following Bernie along some lovely roads; this is an area I'm not too familiar with. The halfway stop was at Derwent reservoir. This is where the Dambusters 617 Squadron practiced their low level flying with Barnes Wallis bouncing bomb. At the gatehouse is a memorial and museum which was very interesting. This was a lovely location and although the sun was shining it was rather nippy! From here we set off on the second part of the run, finishing at The Fletcher's Arms in Denton for lunch.

This was a lovely day enjoyed by all. Thanks to Bernie and Lynne for organising it and we wish them well for the next 25 years. I have put a date in the calendar for 15th April 2037 in readiness for their golden wedding anniversary run.



Bernie and Lynne

York Weekend 27th-29th April

This was our annual weekend away. Organised by Neil and Shelly, we stayed at the Kilima hotel just a few minutes walk from York city centre. We all arrived Friday night and had our evening meal in the hotel.

Next day we went on a run to Bridlington, on the East coast in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It seemed to take forever to actually get out



Bernie and Lynne run



Derwent reservoir line up



Bernie and Lynne's run – all together

of York but once on the open roads we had a good run. Altogether we had seven cars, including Fraser and Lesley, who although not staying with us were in York that weekend.

We travelled in convoy but got split up entering Bridlington but with the wonder of the mobile phone soon met up for a bite to eat. This town must be the coldest place on the planet – it was absolutely freezing, probably due to the arctic winds blowing in from the North Sea. So cold in fact that the tops stayed up, yes I know it sounds soft but trust me it was cold! Next stop was Hornsea but here it was too cold to even get out of the car so we set off back to York. That evening we went on a ghost walk, organised by Shelly before staying in the city for evening meal.

Sunday was time for home. Neil had planned a route taking us back so off we set. The weather was not good. Cold and heavy rain so unfortunately it was tops up again – bet David was feeling rather smug in his pseudo MGB! We stopped for a brew near Skipton, from where David and Heather decided to head straight home as did I. The rest carried on to Ferrari's restaurant near Longridge for tea.

This was a wonderful weekend so thanks to Neil and Shelley. We just need a volunteer to organise next year's weekend away!

Donington Historic festival: Sunday 6th May (report by Bernie)

Fraser and Lesley, Pete and myself went to the Donington Historic festival. Fraser wasn't in his Midget as he has clutch problems, so he and Lesley travelled in the sumptuous luxury of their Jaguar. We met up with others from MASC at our designated parking spot.

First race of the day was a round of the E type Challenge, which unfortunately had to be red flagged due to a multi car accident caused by oil on the track on the pits straight.

There was some great racing in every category of the six races all afternoon, with the group C cars with their ground effect bodywork looking and sounding fantastic swooping through the Craner curves. Another great dice was in the pre '61 Sports car race between Martin Stretton in his Lister Jaguar "knobbly" and Bobby Verdon Roe in the actual 1959 Le Mans winning Aston Martin DBR1.

The final race was for pre '66 touring cars in which the leading Alfa Romeo Giulia was coming through the Foggy esses as if on rails, followed by the great Jacky Oliver in what looked like an evil handling BMW 1800 TiSa, until his tyres went off and he dropped back. It was a cool but dry day thoroughly enjoyed by our little group and definitely a date for next year's diary. The ticket price included a free paddock where you could get up close to the cars and drivers, and the legend that is Sir Stirling Moss was there signing autographs in the *MotorSport* tent.

Finally, IMPORTANT NOTICE

The June meeting will be on Wednesday 20th and not the 13th (which would be the usual meeting date). Venue will not be at the Kilton but once again will be at The Plough at Euxton (near Leyland / Chorley, just off M6 junction 28).

Hope to see you at The Plough on 20th June.

Les

Notts/Derby Area Drive it Day

or Lovely Weather for Ducks



The line up on Ilkeston Market

Stephen's sketch...

Four of us met up with three members of the MGOC and a lone Triumph Herald at Ilkeston Market Square as we had the previous year. After discussing a number of options to take account of the variable weather conditions it was agreed to chance a drive to Carsington Water for lunch. Some of the brave risked going topless and we enjoyed a pleasant drive, mainly in sunshine, arriving at Carsington at 12.30 having had a coffee break en route at a farm shop just outside Duffield. Unfortunately the weather changed just as we arrived, and so after a visit to the bird spotters "hide" and having some lunch we made the drive back home in light drizzle.

Ian's idiom...

John took the lead in the Big Healey, unfortunately (or was it deliberately?) missing the turn for Carsington Water on the way. However the meandering ride through the picturesque villages of Kirk Ireton and Alton with their tempting public houses was noted for future visits – "John's Mystery Tour?" To summarise, it was a good turn out in good company, considering the weather!

Jo's jottings....

Failing my original aim to have my Sprite on the road, we had to slum-it in the MX5. At least I could get the top down – or so we thought A dry start from Ilkeston Market took us to a wonderful location for evenings at a well established farm shop, plant nursery and tea rooms overlooking the Ecclesbourne Valley. Home of the preserved ex-mineral railway line our group visited last year. Funny how classic car driving gives you a thirst for tea and the passengers need for cake! The drive-iteers requirements were more than adequately met. Ian demonstrated how the hood on the Midget/Sprite could be put up and down once in *parc ferme* mode, whilst

drying his sunglasses off (worn especially for the occasion to hide his red eyes from the day before – too much time spent at the 19th hole apparently – you need more practice Ian!) The showers at Carsington drove us inside to the shops and the permanent exhibition showing "The role of Water in our Daily Lives". We now know where our water goes as well as where it comes from (as if we hadn't guessed), although there was no mention of that age old mystery "wet Spridget footwells"....

Monthly Report

Yet more showers were dodged this month for what proved to be the best turnout so far this year. Mark had travelled all the way from Leicester with the top down in his Frogeye which he uses on a daily basis (I didn't know anyone did that sort of thing any more!). Also new member Lee, in search of gearbox tips and advice – no shortage of leads there after my recent research and subsequent rebuild. Paul, noticeable by his absence last month, was rumoured to be cruising the high seas in search of enlightenment. Perhaps the question "had he seen the DUKW on the Erewash canal?" (the border between Notts and Derbyshire) gave him the idea for his next Isle of Wight Frogeye project – I hear he's now fitting a propeller so that he can avoid the ferry costs on his annual pilgrimage across The Solent. The chassis tub should be watertight. Don't forget your passport!

The next big event will be the Wollaton Park Autokarna over the Jubilee weekend, where we have our first official paddock area for MASC; closely followed by the stately setting of Renishaw Hall for their classic car gathering on June 6th.

Next meeting at The Sitwell will be Thursday the 14th June.

Ian Cooke

Notts/Derby area rep. ilc@bgs.ac.uk

East Anglian Report



Jo and Mark at Donington, taking the Porsche and Jaguar under braking

Pat and I were away for the April pub meeting and our first real car event of the season, so I have included an account (kindly provided by Diane) below.

We had strict instructions from Graham that we must leave on the dot of 8.00am from Peterborough services for our visit to Donington Classic Car Racing, however. Nigel and I, who are noted for being late, surprised Hubie & Sally by turning up at 7.40. We were soon followed by Mick & Tricia, and while waiting for Chris, Mary, Mark, Jo and our leader of the day Graham & Maggie we proceeded to Costa Coffee. When 8.00am arrived and no Graham & Maggie we thought we could tease them as on the dot had arrived and passed. When Graham & Maggie arrived they then had to get fuel, not too organised!

Off we set only to stop along the way as Graham had an electrical problem, Chris then discovered he had been driving with his hand brake on, and he blamed Mary for her blanket covering it!

When we arrived it was very, very cold and the theme continued throughout the day. We had three names earlier drawn out of a hat so three luckily people could take part in two parade laps of the circuit. Mick, Tricia, Mark, Jo and another couple had the wonderful pleasure of being racing drivers for the two laps, an experience which will be remembered.

Due to the cold weather eight of us decided to call it a day and head to the Blue Cow for a meal. So we left the hardened Jo, Mark, Chris and Mary to watch the last races. After a short stop again for Graham's electrical



The Red Midget of HTJ2 (Hard Top John 2)

problem we made it to the Blue Cow Pub where we were met with a warm (note warm) welcome. To Sally's annoyance Hubie was excited to see the football on the big screen. We all had lovely homemade food and five out of eight of us had good old rhubarb crumble, after having lovely conversations about school dinners and the meals we used to have we said our goodbyes and made our way home. So a thank you to Graham & Maggie for a fun day and organising the food.

We did manage to get to the May pub gathering on what turned out to be a grey cold old night, and I did have a remarkable success with Nigel's fiendish fumble bag by identifying (with a little help) 10 out of the 11 items (with HTJ suggesting that item 11 probably wasn't admissible). The evening progressed with talk of events, spare parts and modifications with a healthy variety of opinions. Derek announced that we have our biggest ever crowd already pre-booked for our Christmas meal which he is organising (you have to book early to secure the best venues). See you all at the oldest Inn in England and beyond.

Dave Dixon



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Kent Area Report

For the April "Old Boys" midweek run Kent member Ralph Whitmarsh arranged for us to visit The Foulkes Halbard Collection at Filching Manor Motor Museum. Four Spridgets turned out on a changeable day varying from heavy rainfall to bright sunshine. Ron had a troublesome day with his Frogeye. The rotor arm, in the distributor, disintegrated and caused the car to halt in a most precarious part of the A21 where a hard shoulder was almost non-existent. However almost as Ron's Frogeye expired I passed and pulled over driving my Sebring rep. With assistance from the Police and a low loader the car was moved to the safety of a lay by and a spare rotor, from my collection, fitted. I was using the run to test some stub stacks in my K&N Filters. After a 100 mile run on this day I don't think I noticed any benefit / advantage although really a rolling road session would be the scientific gauge of their worth.

We met the rest of the "Old Boys" at the museum instead of the planned RVP. On our return journey the Gremlins returned, to Ron's car, first pulling a fuel line from the pump and then entering the gearbox causing it to sound as if it were to expire soon. (The latest from Ron is that the gearbox is coming out for inspection).

Ralph as "Red Leader" invoked a little known privilege to be chauffeured (in a Porsche) leaving his Frogeye at home. Chris Rickard aboard his Frogeye and Mel Collins in a 1500 Midget had a trouble free journey. Chris' passenger used to be a Frogeye owner. He brought a picture of it when in his possession so perhaps someone may know of its history when he forwards a picture to MASCOT Editor Gary.



Bluebird K3

Karl Foulkes Halbard (far right)
explains the history of Bluebird K3



The Foulkes Halbard collection is based around the record breaking Campbell family's many achievements. As part of the collection the museum has Sir Malcolm Campbell's Bluebird K3 world record breaking boat which after a lengthy rebuild it is hoped to test on Bewl Water later this year, along

with other famous Campbell cars, boats and memorabilia. There are also many other rare and wonderful things in the collection, which was originally put together by the late Paul Foulkes Halbard and is now being continued by his son Karl Foulkes Halbard. Karl kindly guided us around explaining various exhibits and answering many questions. The collection contains a 1907 Corbin Racer, several Bugatti cars, Fangio's very own racing car, the Alesso, and a Vale sports car amongst many others.

For "Drive it Day" Kent Area, on 22nd April, instead of meeting at our usual meeting place at The Angel, Addington our group went to Rowfant House to join up with other MASC sections. Some members first met at the Grasshopper, Westerham, Kent, before proceeding, as a group, to Rowfant House. The Woodpecker was also the meeting place for a Jaguar Club who were starting their Brighton Run. Well organised as befits a major club they had most welcome catering.

Rowfant House is a beautiful, 16th century, Grade II* listed manor house situated in the quiet of the Sussex countryside, surrounded by farmland and woodland, conveniently located between Crawley and East Grinstead, around nine miles from Gatwick Airport. Set in 22 acres of beautiful, photogenic Capability Brown-style gardens and parkland with its own lake, Rowfant House is used as a venue by professional groups, charitable organizations and private individuals for a variety of business and social events. A goodly selection of vehicles attended and Sussex, Surrey, and Kent Sections of MASC had their flags flying. I expect those that chose a trip home with hood lowered may have received a good soaking.

Elsewhere our two young members are working toward completion of these projects. Andy Dawson to rebuild his 1275 engine and Rylan Williams to get his car on the road. Rylan has upgraded his and his father's, handbrake mechanism (which will hopefully feature in a future edition of MASCOT).

Andrew Gibson has his Arkley back on the road and was displaying it at the Kent Kit Car Show. Also at the Kit Car show was a red IOW Frogeye displaying a MASC badge but who does it belong to? John Clark's bonnet



resto' progresses and we hope to display it, on the car, at Le Mans Classic.

Le Mans Classic is getting near. We are full on our advertised Loire Valley / Le Mans Classic Tour (30/6 – 14/7) but will any other MASCovites be at Le Mans, for the Classic, or 7th Historic Grand Prix de Bressuire, on the previous weekend?

Following on from the article last month on making an under bonnet toolbox John Clark followed suit with a shortened version to fit behind the brake servo on his Frogeye. Another seasoned European traveller JC also has a spare coil affixed nearby.

Alan Anstead, Kent Rep.

Mail to: alan.anstead@bopenworld.com
Kent MASC website: www.masckent.org



MASC at Rowfant House



Heart of England

Drive it Day – 22nd April 2012

displaying engineering details of tram construction, a history of the origins of mass transport and poignant details of early and mid 19th century squalid living conditions, one unsavoury consequence of the Industrial Revolution are graphically illustrated.

Others opted to “spend their penny” a genuine old penny provided at the entrance and the historical fare for a tram ride with panoramic views from the top deck across Derwent Valley, The end of the line is The Glory Mine, a discontinued former lead mine, now unfortunately inaccessible to the public. You may guess why!

Bright sunshine greeted us on Sunday morning although the weather forecast promised wintry showers, sometimes heavy so the fair-weather sailors stayed in port. Not so the intrepid more hardy souls who met up at the prescribed McDonalds car park, hoods down and ready for a 40mile run through part of the Derbyshire Dales via the county town to Crich, home of the National Tram Museum at Crich Tramway Village. The prior visit to Calke Abbey was abandoned as it would have tangled with a charity run and a sponsored walk through the grounds.

At the Reception Centre we were greeted by a cheerful young lady who after much confusion as to who had free entry (pre-68 drivers), who had concessions (those amongst us made too soon), and those who paid full price (those not on this earth before the Queen's Accession) then invited us to park in a prime spot within the Village in front of the Derby Assembly Rooms opposite Town End Terminus.

The ride along a cobbled paved street negotiating tram lines was interesting if not tortuous, and clearly bad news for wheel weights, the loss of which became obvious on the way home. There were no potholes though.

First stop was the comfort room followed by the Café/Restaurant and then a choice of The Red Lion, a licensed pub reconstructed on the site and formerly located in its heyday opposite the Sheffield Corporation Tram Terminus. Alternatively the well stocked Great Exhibition Hall

The tram garage contained a large display of restored examples of trams including examples from Western European cities, New York and the San Francisco funicular. The great Exhibition Hall which Rosemary told me she found quite thrilling, contains various examples of trams common to all major towns during the century until the early nineteen sixties when one by one they were phased out.

In the end umbrellas were not needed and the showers avoided us until we found our own ways home, hoods erected just in case and which proved fortuitous.

Geoff
2656





Scotland Area

Sunday 29th April dawned dry, bright and sunny, albeit pretty cold. Still it was the first Scottish Group Midget and Sprite Club run of the year and a couple of us obviously decided independently that the opportunity for some roof down motoring should not be missed. So with thick jackets, woolly hats and gloves firmly in place we set off. The number of cars was a disappointment, but due to various issues with car availability, clashes with family commitments – holidays and children's birthdays, the nett result was a small, but select group.

We met at The Windmill Tavern and then travelled via the M73, M80 and M9 to turn off the A9 and through Kinbuck, just north of Dunblane. From here the route was via Muthill to Crieff where we stopped for brunch. By now it was getting significantly warmer and the adoption of hats and gloves following the stop was optional. The way now lay through Glen Almond and Strath Braan to Aberfeldy and thence to Kenmore to visit The Crannog Centre on the Southern shore of Loch Tay.

Crannogs are types of ancient loch-dwelling that have been found throughout Scotland and Ireland. They comprise dwellings constructed from timber, reeds and straw that are constructed on props above the water. At The Crannog Centre they have reconstructed one such crannog and it, together with the small visitor centre and hands on examples of early crafts, make a fascinating visit.

From the centre we followed the northern shore of Loch Tay, passing the snow capped peak of Ben Lawers to Killin, where we stopped at The Falls of Dochart, a local beauty spot. After a photo opportunity to capture the snow capped mountains and the water passing over the falls, it was back on the road through Glen Dochart to Crianlarich and then to Inverarnan and the infamous Drivers Inn. A visit to this establishment is an experience as it is full of all types of artefacts of every description that, at the very least, stimulate conversation. The food is very good and being hungry classic car drivers and passengers we made the most of the opportunity. From here it was home via the west shore of Loch Lomond, over the Erskine Bridge and then via the M8 and M74 back to the starting point. By this time it was around 7:00pm and the sun had dropped behind the hills. The associated fall in temperature meant that gloves and hats were donned again for the last few miles. The total distance covered was about 170 miles, the weather was glorious and it was a great way to start the year.

Unfortunately, today's run (May 13th) had to be postponed due to personal circumstances, but Ricky has offered to run it later in the year. Actually, as I sit here and type this watching the rain run down the windows, perhaps it wasn't such a loss that it didn't happen!

John Pardo

Contact: 01698 814791

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2012 Drive It Day on the Essex and Suffolk borders

Essex group leader Jane, ably assisted by John, again organised a group run on National Drive It Day.

Six cars arrived at the Snooty Fox, Frating near Colchester under threatening skies. Lunch was interrupted by rain which necessitated the raising of a couple of hoods but failed to dampen the social atmosphere including the presentation of a birthday cake complete with candles to Diane.

After lunch, the small convoy headed north through the first of several heavy showers

to cross the River Stour at Manningtree to enter Suffolk. We then turned west onto some lovely minor roads to pass through East Bergholt before a friendly cyclist "suggested" there may be a problem [aka a speed trap] in one village.

We lawfully continued our way through the historic town of Hadleigh with its beautiful timber buildings.

Leaving the A1141, we headed for Kersey and its small ford. Just as the Frogeye of Tim & Linda Wyman was about to start crossing the ford, a thoughtless 4x4 driver coming in the opposite direction sped through the water to soak the car and occupants.

The route continued through some more lovely lanes where the first swallows were seen, to pass through Groton and Boxted. A group of locals outside The Fleece waved appreciatively at the convoy of Spridgets.

Heavy rain was encountered again on the following A road sections before minor roads led to Stoke by Nayland. From here, the road which runs parallel to the River Stour, passed through Thorington Street, Higham to Stratford St Mary.

The final section passed under the busy A12 to head to Dedham. After parking the cars, a short stroll led to The Rose Tea Room where we enjoyed a cream tea.

Thanks again to Jane & John for organising the day and hopefully the sun will shine on our next get together on the South Suffolk Run.

Doug Plumb
Member 4071



Diane and the cake

Thanks to Linda Wyman for the image of Diane and the Cake.

Hampshire Happenings

Picket Piece

On Bank Holiday Monday, 9th April my wife, Hannah, and I headed to Picket Piece for their Spring Classic Vehicle Meet and Autojumble. It was drizzling when we left Alton but by the time we reached the venue the rain was hammering down. We made a quick recce of the sight and it was obvious that the rest of the Club hadn't yet arrived or weren't (as it turned out) coming!! My wife wisely returned to the dry car, her coffee and book whilst I tried to find any Sprites or Midgets. Many Clubs were in attendance including Mini, BMW, Triumph, Landrover, VW Campers and various American muscle cars. Gazebos and flags were a waste of time in the torrential rain, which made it harder to find our little gems. Eventually, I managed to find a tidy White 1275 '71 Sprite, and two Midgets (an Orange 1275 '74 and a Yellow 1500 '76)

Just time to browse the autojumble and call it a (soggy) day !!

Hope the weather is kinder to us for other events this summer!!

Andy & Hannah Bufton

So to the news

On a lovely spring afternoon Marian and I took Ethyl for a run to Emsworth but didn't quite make it, as just outside of Havant the clutch decided not to let us change gear any more. I managed to crash it into first gear which allowed us to pull off the main road and contact Britannia Rescue.

The rescue man looked underneath and stated the slave cylinder was leaking and going nowhere so we had a tow back to my lockup.

Next day a new slave cylinder was bought and fitted, bled, but no clutch, the pedal went to the floor so I thought the seals in the master cylinder weren't sealing, just letting the oil blow past, so up to the MG Barn again this time for a new master cylinder.

On the way out, waiting for a gap in the traffic, the van in front of me decided to reverse up to give an incoming van more room, unfortunately he backed straight into the front of me. To say I was not happy

didn't really do me justice – anyway the car was mobile and would be repaired on his insurance.

That weekend was the MGOC's Arundel Castle picnic, we were going to take Ethyl along but we took Penelope instead. It was a beautiful warm sunny day and when we arrived at the Castle there must have over a hundred MG's of all types – from J types to 2011 TF's. Marian came with me around the cars, then she went round the gardens, I joined her on her way back and the blossom and flowers were great.

I picked up Penelope yesterday (16th) complete with her new bumper and right-hand headlamp, and today picked up Ethyl with her new clutch. What a difference!! I didn't realise how bad the old one was, I knew it dragged (a bit!!!) but it's like driving a different car now.

This Saturday is Stubbington Spring Fair so Ethyl might be tempted to do a visit (only if it's dry).

All the Best

Ken and Marian

“Ready for the BIG start up”

Last year I had a call from Terry, he gave me the name and telephone number of a chap with a 1275 Midget/Sprite engine for sale.



As the address was only about 20 miles away I went and had a look and subsequently purchased the engine along with a few other spare parts. The engine had not been run for about 15 years, but had been stored in a dry garage.

I decided to treat myself and have the unit rebuilt professionally, and gave Skiptune the job. The engine was delivered to Bagshot and about five weeks later was ready for collection.

While the old engine was out I decided to respray the engine bay/front wheel arch area, so stripped everything from the front of the car.

This was earlier this year, so I had to wait for a dry and warm enough day to do the spraying. Once this was done reassembly began and after some time all was ready for the big start-up.

A friend from work came to give me a hand as two heads are better than one when setting timing/starting/watching for leaks etc.

Everything went to plan and the new engine started and ran well.

The first test run was Good Friday, I did a 50 mile round trip with both oil pressure and water temperature fine, the Sprite was parked back in the garage.

After everything had cooled down I checked the fluid levels, all ok, looked under the car and saw an oil patch below the bellhousing, oil was dripping from the drain hole in the bellhousing.



As the engine bay used to be

An email to Alan Anstead confirmed what I suspected. The front oil seal on my type 9 gearbox was leaking and to replace this seal is an engine/gearbox out job. How I laughed!

Easter Monday saw the unit removed gearbox separated, bellhousing off ready for the new seal. I decided to renew the rear seal at the same time. As I write it is all back together and starts and runs, just waiting now for the rain to stop.

John Foard

Forthcoming Events (John's Bit)

events@midgetandsprite-hampshire.info

June

5th – Classics at the Emporium, Fleet. Food available

10th – Visit the Mike Hawthorn Collection Meet at Newlands Corner at 0900, £3 min donation. Collection based between Dorking and Reigate.

17th – Deers Hut

21st – Monthly Meeting – Fox and Goose

22nd/29th – Telford Trip

If you have any contributions for the website/newsletter or photo's from the events please forward them to Barry – info@midgetandsprite-hampshire.info



Getting ready for lifting in

Home Counties North West

Road run and pub lunch



They stand in line, The cars are nine,
And, just for once, The weather's fine.
There's his and theirs and theirs and mine,
All colours, like a washing line. (They were pretty).

So, for our second run and pub lunch of the season, we met at Tesco's car park in Tring and assembled four Frogeyes and six assorted later models. This, at the behest of Jen and Mark, our Squadron Leaders. The party included three new cars and four new members: Bill, in his Mk1 Sprite and a newly repaired toe; Mike likewise mounted but in coupe style; and young Matt who was good enough to allow Simon, his pater, to chauffeur him in the RB Midget. Other vehicles were piloted by members of the old brigade.

We took off in formation, as close as possible but in line astern rather than the Veer pattern which looks more impressive. Our route, almost immediately, took us into narrow, hilly and MUDDY lanes far from the madding crowd, giving us beautiful countryside and incredible views. After only eight and a half miles we arrived at 'World's End', somewhat surprising because Armageddon was not marked on the map. It turned out to be a high class garden centre featuring a good café where we refuelled ourselves. While there we were greeted by the crew of a smart white MGB GT and also accosted a pair leaving mysterious notes on the boss's driving seat. They turned out to be the new owners of a white Frogeye who were looking for a club. Mark quickly noted names, ranks and numbers.

Lunch, which was to be at The Bridgewater Arms at Little Gaddesden, was fifty miles away, so we reformed and took off again in formation, as close as possible. It is amazing how many tin top motorists dive into a line of cars obviously travelling together, despite the fact that we keep up a very reasonable speed. This separation makes the detailed route notes, carefully prepared by Jen and Mark, an essential piece of equipment. So, next stop lunch- well, not quite. As the penultimate car I managed to miss a turn and lead Ian and Louise, who were tail end charleying behind us, on a slight diversion. When we caught up with the pack they were waiting at a Police diversion directing us into more narrow lanes one, in a small village, was only single track. Here we met with a volume of traffic, mostly 4x4s, negotiating the road closure. I am sure that our patience and humour helped to calm the road rage demonstrated by the opposition. Joining the A4146 (not on the route notes) our navigators set off for Little Gaddesden from the other side only to meet the road closure again. Quick calculation and a 180 degree turn put us on the route to lunch and other creature comforts.

At The Bridgewater Arms we were greeted by Mike and Sue who had arrived in the Beemer due to a lack of cooperation of their classic transport. The weather had been kind or the route planning cunning as we managed to turn away from any threatening cloud and remained dry. Thank you Jen and Mark for a great day out.

Chris Jackson, 3056
www.hcnwmsc.blogspot.co.uk

South Staffs and North Birmingham

I'll have to be more careful in future – I wasn't paying attention when Dave casually sat down next to me at the meeting and sneaked the report book under my jacket, thus ensuring that I would be obliged to write this month's report. All that after my evening had started so well, as I managed to drive to the meeting with the hood down – overseas members reading this may say SO?, but as we UK'ers all know we have been awash – literally – for many weeks. The constant rain should have been a welcome respite following the prior declared drought, but no, it seems it is "the wrong sort of rain", so our drought continues.

There were eight of us this time, and conversations were split roughly 50/50 between those whose 4 wheels actually moved us from A-B, and those whose wheels were still neatly stacked in a pile in the garage, awaiting attachment to their respective bodies. I am led to believe that hopefully we shall see two "new" Spridgets on the car park mid summer (ish!). The other

four of us turned our attention to forthcoming events – five cars were supposed to be attending Catton on 6th May, but the event has been cancelled due to a waterlogged field. We discussed at some length our intended John O'Groats to Land's End run, which will take place in August. We decided to restrict numbers for this to avoid the pitfalls of larger convoys, and have got our six cars mentally fired up and ready for the long journey. I have also made a note that haemorrhoid cream may have to be added to the standard spares carried in the boot of my car!

The drive home was also done with hood down, and shortly after arriving home the heavens opened again, hopefully with rain that is acceptable to our Government.

Geoff Mears

PS – I'm afraid I cannot provide a relevant photo relating to current events, so here is an old picture from 1993 when I mastered the art of filling my garage to capacity.



Market Place

Adverts to Alan Lo, 23 Charnell Road, Staple Hill, Bristol, BS16 5NE
email: alan@mobuzzing.net Tel: 0117 9572617

For sale: Oxy Acetylene welding kit torches, regulators, gauges, pipes etc. £40. Contact Reg, 01889 271037 Staffs.

For sale: Pair of Mk3 Midget front wings, rusted under sidelights, but no dents. £65 for both. Ken 01453 845013 (Glos).

For sale: Two months old 13" Moto-Lita wood rim steering wheel complete with Sprite boss and horn push, £125. Two months old head lamp with Halogen bulb £8. Contact Ian, 02476 695882.

Wanted for a Frogeye rear cockpit capping rail, please contact phillward@talktalk.net

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