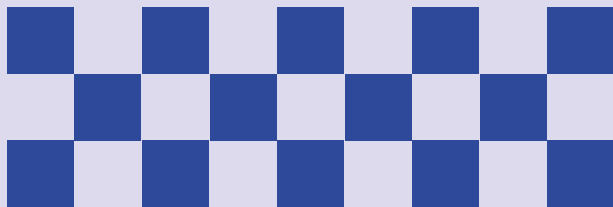


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THE WHO, THE WHAT & THE WHERE of THE MIDGET & SPRITE CLUB

COMMITTEE

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WILTSHIRE	Vacant
YORKSHIRE	Anita Lachowicz , Tel: 01423 862738 or mobile: 07720 725429 email: spridget.girl@ntlworld.com

Also see the Club Nights section on page 3 for new areas and contacts.

Compiled by David Hill. 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

© Midget & Sprite Club

Wheelnut July '07

HERE IT IS ... *the BIGGEST issue of MASCOT EVER!* I had a feeling this would happen with the amount of support YOUR magazine is getting these days. It really is gratifying to see the amount of material coming in from an ever-widening variety of sources.

I'm keeping up with my portfolio of contacts from other classic car publications – this month being no exception. Alan Anstead (stalwart *MASCOT* contributor and Area Organiser for both Kent and Surrey) alerted me to the 5-speed Conversion article published in the June issue of *Practical Classics*. Alan suggested that we try and run it in *MASCOT*, offering to do a comprehensive follow-up. So when I contacted PC's Editor, Matt Wright, he was very enthusiastic for it to be reprinted in our expanding magazine and you'll find it in this bumper issue. Our thanks go to Matt at Practical Classics for his support of MASC. The follow-up by Alan will appear next month.

Also in this issue you'll find the first of two interviews with John Sprinzel, originally published by Pirelli in 1962. This one deals with a road test of the then newly introduced Cintura tyre. In the next issue we will be running an exclusive piece written by John especially for MASC on the introduction of the Sprite into the world of Motorsport. This will then be followed in September by the second part of the Pirelli Sprinzel interviews, in which the techniques of Rally Driving are examined. So our thanks also go to John Sprinzel and Pirelli for their continued support of *MASCOT* and Midget & Sprite Club.

Other highlights in this month's mega issue include: Rutland Raid, the second part of Notes from London (and King's Lynn), Gear Lever Cover Colour by Dr John Davies (*finally the Editor has found the original piece from which this fascinating subject began!*). John has also supplied another in-depth article on Tachos, Paul Webb has written about his introduction to Innocenti 950 ownership, and again there is no shortage of Area Reports. Many articles have had to be saved over until further issues, including a report from Terry Horler on the Classic and Sportscar Day at Castle Combe.

It was great to meet up with Dave Dixon and the rest of the Cambridgeshire Area group at their June Mad Cat night. Unfortunately the weather could have been better (!) and so no-one brought their cars out that night. It also gave me the opportunity to meet with Richard Ladds, the Editor of the MGCC mag – *Enjoying MG*. Always very interesting to get together with someone in the same field to discuss different ways of achieving similar aims, ie. keeping you, our readers happy and the promotion of each of our Clubs. My thanks go to John Davies for taking Jill and I to Pidley and for his introductions.

Unfortunately the planned visit to BMH to see the next batch of Midget bodyshells being manufactured for 21 June was postponed by BMH due to re-scheduling. This visit will still take part in the near future – in fact, it was so over-subscribed that George now has enough participants for yet a further visit. So very popular and thanks for your support.

Please keep the articles and photos coming – they're the lifeblood of MASCOT. Thanks. Also please remember to continue to send in your photos for the Front Cover and for the Official 2008 Midget & Sprite Club Calendar.

Thanks once more to all contributors this month.

PLEASE NOTE: Deadline for AUGUST issue is Midday WEDNESDAY 11 JULY.

**Barry
Editor**

editor@midgetandspriteclub.co.uk

Membership No: 1150



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.

Front cover picture: This is what Robin Rowland (Membership No: 3848) says about his car. "This photo, of my recently purchased '71 Sprite, was taken at Sandbanks overlooking Poole Harbour. I had a Sprite some 30 years ago when I was a student. As you can see my current Sprite has been extensively renovated and was bought from a classic car dealer in Poole."

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Club Nights

1st Monday	London Area (Congestion Zone) – NEW VENUE , Meet at The Plumbers Arms , 14 Belgrave Street, Belgravia, SW1W 0LN at 7:30pm. Also generally meet at the Ace Café on 2nd Tuesday together with the Classic Cars Magazine night. Details: Gary Lazarus on 020 7700 5696 garylazarus@blueyonder.co.uk
1st Wednesday	Wiltshire – Meet at The Forresters , Leigh, near Cricklade.
1st Wednesday	South Staffs & Birmingham – Meet at the The Green Man , Middleton Village, 8.30-8.45pm
1st Thursday	Lincolnshire Area – Meet at The White Hart , Lissington, nr. Wragby. 8pm. Contact Brian Jeffrey, Tel: 01522 531425 or mobile, 07952 969514
1st Thursday	Notts/Derby border Area – (note change of day) at the Sitwell Arms near Horsley Woodhouse from approx. 8.30. Just a mile north-west of the A608/A609 crossroads. Ian Cooke 0115 938 3838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
1st Thursday	Yorkshire Area – For details of the July meeting please contact Anita. Meeting from 7:30 pm onwards. Contact Anita 01423 862738 or 07720 725429 email spridget.girl@ntlworld.com
2nd Wednesday	Warwickshire – Meet at The Green Dragon , The Green, Sambourne, Reddich, 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 & Crown , Pucklechurch at 8pm. All Bristol, Bath and surrounding areas members welcome. Contact Alan Lo on 01179 572617 email: alan@mobuzzing.net
2nd Thursday	Cambridgeshire – Meet at The Mad Cat pub in Pidley Village, midway between Huntingdon and Chatteris, 8pm
3rd Monday	Dorset – Meet at St. Peter's Finger , Lytchett Minster, Poole 7.30pm
3rd Tuesday	Central Scotland – Meet at The Garfield Hotel , Stepps, East Dunbartonshire. 7:30pm in the Lounge. Check first with Carson on 0141-245-6327 day or 013606-22334 evening.
3rd Tuesday	Surrey – Meet at The Blue Ball , Walton-on-the-Hill, 7.45pm onwards. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050. alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
3rd Thursday	Northern Ireland – Venue to be decided. Please contact Barry Stanage on 02890 401726 or mobile 07769 705497 or email berrystanage@aol.com
4th Thursday	Hampshire – Meet at The Poacher , South Warnborough. Note Change of Venue. Please ring Terry or Harriet Langridge on 01252 626063 for details.
4th Sunday	Kent Area – Meet at The Moat , Wrotham Heath at 12:00 for lunch. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050.
Last Thursday	Somerset – Meet at The Lord Nelson , Norton-sub-Hamdon. 8.00pm
Occasional Meetings	Home Counties North West for members in Herts, Bucks, Berks, N. London or anyone interested! Please contact Chris Jackson Tel: 01707 261567 or Mark Hall, Tel: 01296 660103

Club Website

Members Only pages for July, User name: Sprite Password: Torque



Events

From David Hill and Webmaster Toby Anscombe

Events organised so far for 2007

July

- Saturday 7th & Sunday 8th Surrey Area will be at the Ardingly Show (provisional) with the Club stand. Volunteers needed to man the stand. Details from Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050
- Sunday 8th North West Area Run to Powys Castle. Contact Les Robinson on 01772 432138
- Tuesday 10th Ace Café Night for Cambridgeshire Area. Why not join in for a pint, a chat, a bite to eat and a great atmosphere. Contact Dave Dixon Tel: 01733 222810 or email; e-dave@ntlworld.com
- Saturday 14th Great Western Rally and Road Run, Wiltshire. Details from Terry Horler, Tel: 01454 881770.
- Sunday 15th Kimbolton Charity Classic. Cambridgeshire Area will be hosting a stand at this stunning event. For advanced tickets and details contact Dave Dixon, Tel: 01733 222810
- Sunday 15th North West Area are attending the Hoghton Tower Classic Car Show. Contact Les Robinson on 01772 432138
- Sunday 15th Surrey Area BBQ chez Chris and Laura at Outwood. Details from Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050
- Friday 27th To Sunday 29th Silverstone Classic Meeting. Details from Chris Jackson on 01707 261567.

August

- Sunday 5th Cambridgeshire Area will be at the BMC Rally at Ferry Meadows, near Peterborough with the Club Stand. Details contact Dave Dixon, Tel: 01733 222810
- Sunday 5th Surrey Area's Wings and Things at Woodchurch. Details from Peter Gardiner. Email: pgardiner2@mail.dstl.gov.uk
- Saturday 11th Warwickshire's Mike and Benitas' Fun Day. Details from Michael Vann, Tel: 01455 292440
- Saturday 25th Or Sunday 26th Or Monday 27th North West Area will be at the Oulton Park Gold Cup Races. Not sure which day yet. Contact Les Robinson on 01772 432138
- Friday 31st To Sunday 2nd The Goodwood Revival.

September

- Sunday 2nd Coventry Motor Festival.
- Thursday 13th Surrey Area's trip to Circuit des Remparts, Angouleme, France. Book early! Details from Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050

October

- Sunday 14th Severn Valley Railway Classic Bike and Car Day. Warwickshire Area are going. Details from John Platt, Tel: 01789 488321
- Sunday 28th North West Area's Halloween Run. Contact Les Robinson on 01772 432138

November

- Friday 9th To Sunday 11th Classic Motor Show 2007 at the NEC, Birmingham. Club stand care of Warwicks Area. Details from John Platt, Tel: 01789 488321

December

Wednesday 12th Warwickshire Area Christmas Dinner at The Green Dragon. Details from Sheila Yates, Tel: 01608 665066

Wednesday 12th North West Area's Christmas Dinner. Contact Les Robinson on 01772 432138

Tuesday 18th Surrey Area Christmas Meal. Venue to be decided.

2008 May

Saturday 24th Spridget 50 – The Big Party. To register an expression of interest and receive priority booking, please contact Steve Clark on 07963 433832 or email: organiser@spridget50.com

Area Reps please let David Hill (email: david@hillnet.clara.net) have confirmed dates for new events asap. Remember there are Club Night Natters throughout the year and that area events are also open to members from other areas!

Please also note that the above lists only M&SC events or events where we have a presence or an interest. General classic events are listed in the classic press.

Ramble from the EGM!

Well, that was either the biggest vote of confidence in your present committee ever or we have been far too complacent. The EGM resulted in one member in attendance, and he was there to help serve coffees and teas! We hope this will mean the changeover is approved but will not count chickens before the votes get counted after July 3rd. Now, it is time for all good men to come to the aid of the party, so to speak.

We are looking for volunteers to join the committee in guiding the Club forwards. This often means taking the Club's needs before one's own and can be very satisfying and rewarding.

As we have the prospect of new rules to drive the Club, the committee has decided to make the current committee positions of

Membership Secretary and Magazine Editor, Club Officer posts, which will provide stability as we find our feet. John and Barry are happy to perform these duties in this way next year. These positions will not be on the ballot papers. You will all remember that I have decided to stand down as Chairperson, in two years we have achieved much and I think a new hand on the tiller will be an advantage to the Club next year.

Terry will no doubt be making the announcement to send in your names for the ballot about now. I have recently been asked if I would stand as a general committee member and have decided that I will offer my services. This will give you all a chance to tell me if I was OK or not...

Bill Mohan

Secretarial Scriblings

Firstly, congratulations to our Dorset branch. They have recently published the 100th edition of their local monthly newsletter. I am very pleased to receive a copy each month and very good it is too. Especially nice is the lovely handwritten envelope. Whilst the club moves on with professionally printed and packaged editions of *MASCOT*, here is still a vestige of how nice things used to be. It has warmth, character, that personal touch which so often gets lost

these days. Even though the plain brown envelope gives no other clue to its contents, that lovely hand written address tells me what to expect, and I like it. So well done Dorset, you have the right values and I look forward to the next 100 editions!

Now that wasn't there yesterday. When I vacated the driving seat of my multi-shades of red Frogeye yesterday, the driving seat was indeed – empty. It was locked away in the garage all night so no one could have got to it.

So what's this little metal item doing sat on my seat then? It was about an inch in diameter and about two inches long, have you guessed what it is yet? No matter, there is no prize so I will tell you, it was the dip switch pedal barrel. The peened over end that holds the pedal barrel on had become worn away to the extent that the spring beneath fired the barrel into the driver's seat. I have never heard of this one before in all my Spridgley years so beware, it could just happen to you. Happily, this occurred whilst the Frog was having a rest, had I been driving it at the time, the thought of a one inch by two inch missile being fired up my left trouser leg whilst driving would make amusing reading on the insurance claim form. I have fitted a spare dip switch and repaired the old one by carefully drilling down the centre of the spindle and securing the barrel with a self tapping screw. I now drive with cycle clips.

This has not been the only trick my Frog has played this month. A rattle from the nearside rear hub was a sure indication that the slave cylinder was having an affair with the hub flange. My Frog has the later type twin piston slave cylinders as a result of a change to disc front brakes. These cylinders are retained by a spring clip, for a while, whereupon the spring

clip fails to retain and the cylinder can move – usually into the revolving hub. Pulling off the brake drum revealed another problem, the unmistakable pong of hypoy oil. The hub seal had also failed. Both slave cylinders were also showing signs of leaking despite not being very old (less than 4 years). I soon gathered the necessary replacement parts but rather than chance fitting new spring clips, I drilled and tapped the cylinders to secure them with 2 off 10UNF screws each. I have done this mod before and made up a drill template to ensure that the backplates and cylinders are correctly aligned. However, my Frog has Midget 1500 backplates so the existing roll pin holes are in a different position. I now have two drill templates, just in case.

Still no progress on my 1967 Sprite other than to have finished painting the new fuel tank. I did purchase (from Moss) a new copper fuel pipe from tank to fuel pump flexible connection. This has the tank union olive soldered on rather than compression fitting as used originally. I should have asked the cost first, at around £15, this was somewhat more than I would have imagined!

Terry Horler

Mutual Assistance Directory

We are still getting a trickle of new members to the MAD scheme and I am really interested to know if any member of the scheme has rendered assistance to any other M&SC member recently. If so, please let me know so that I can give some anonymous publicity to the scheme. It will be nice to know that it is a useful service to members and not just something to keep me busy and fill a space in the mag!

The weather here in West Wales has been good of late but as I write this it is turning a bit sour. Sill, we need the rain to make the grass grow so that it makes for good Spridget photos.

Don't forget, if you don't carry your copy of the Mutual Assistance Directory and you would like a copy you can download it from the members only section of our website.

However, if you do not have access to the web or don't know someone who does, I will print off a copy and send it to you. Please remember that it is constantly updated so to be up to date, download it at least every month.

David Hill

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Your Club Needs You

It's that time of year again when we ask for nominations to form a committee to serve the club for the New Year. The Club year begins on 1 October, by which time the evenings draw in, the rain sets in, and it gets colder, so we all have plenty of spare time to devote to matters other than Spridgley driving. (Is life really that simple?) This year, we have some changes in mind.

Traditionally, the roles of Membership Secretary and Magazine Editor have been committee positions. Constitutionally, these positions are stated as "Should" rather than "Must" be committee positions, and this is where we propose a change. Both John Platt and Barry Lowe are fully prepared to continue in their present roles of Membership Secretary and Magazine Editor, but preferably as "Officers" of the club rather than as committee members. Both positions are very demanding in their own right and the extra burden of being on the committee have proved difficult for both. As both have done an excellent job for the club, and the difficulties we could face in replacing them only to satisfy a "technicality", we feel it appropriate to make these positions as "Officers" of the club. As such, Officers are appointed by the committee and should an Officer become "dis-appointed", then the club is spared the long election process to appoint any replacement. This also provides a continuity of services apart from the annual elections or

any other changes which may effect the general administration of the club. The pending proposed move to a Limited Company could have implications for the committee's duties but not affect any of the club Officer Duties. Hence, we feel that moving these two roles into an Officer position may be beneficial to the club at the present time. This does not however preclude the possibility that at a future date, these roles again be brought into the committee by election. Indeed, the position of Webmaster was originally a committee post, then an Officer post, and currently a committee post again!

That said, it is our intention that our nomination forms for the new club year will not include Membership Secretary or Magazine Editor. Other than this, we require a minimum of 6 and maximum of 11 committee members to serve the new club year in the roles of – Chairperson, General Secretary, Treasurer, Webmaster and General Committee members.

Nomination forms are available from the club General Secretary (Terry Horler) and should be returned to the same by the 20 August 2007. Any members tempted to offer their services are welcome to contact any of the existing committee members to find out more about being a committee member of the Midget and Sprite Club.

Terry Horler
(On behalf of the committee)

New Members

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

3562	Garry Webb	Worcestershire	Sprite Mk 4
3846	Mathew & Zena Maher	Hampshire	Midget Mk 3 RWA
3847	Steve Chapman	Nottinghamshire	Midget Mk 3
3848	Robin Rowland	Dorset	Austin Sprite
3849	Ray Dunkley	Co Durham	Midget Mk 3 RWA
3850	Robert Burgers	Holland	Midget 1500
3851	Terry & Kathleen Gravil	West Yorkshire	Frogeye
3852	Lawrence & John Mellor	West Yorkshire	Midget
3853	Michael Barratt	Conwy	Sprite Mk 2
3854	Darren Spragg	Leicestershire	Sprite Mk 3
3855	Colin Raeside	Bedfordshire	Frogeye
3856	Robert Holmes	Northern Ireland	Midget Mk 1



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Part No: XSID101 MK1 - MK2 Side Screen RH	£79.50
Part No: XSID102 MK1 - MK2 Side Screen LH	£79.50

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Part No: XHOD153 MK1 Hardtop Clamp Chrome	£28.50
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Part No: XGRL115 MK1 - MK3 Grille - Midget	£115.00
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Part No: XCLU155 948CC - 1098CC Clutch Pipe R.H.D.	£10.55
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Part No: XCLU158 948CC - 1098CC Clutch Pipe L.H.D.	£10.95
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Frogeye Rebuild

I'm pleased to say that my project of rebuilding a frogeye is almost complete. It has been, on the whole, pleasurable but inevitably there have been some highs and lows; there is simply no substitute for burning the midnight candle in an icy cold garage. If I added up the hours I've worked on it and multiplied that by minimum wage it would be enough to be a Paganì Zonda but I ask myself, be honest, what would I rather have? ... OK a Zonda.

I have put off writing and relating my woes during the rebuild mainly for fear of displaying blatant amateurism however now, at last, is the time to share some of what I've learnt so far. You never know, it may be of use to someone who is also about to, or in the process of a rebuild.

A short history about my Frog: Born in December 1958, it was active until old age set in, in 1973. From then it has not been used until now; consequently the DVLA removed it from their records. Fortunately, with the help of *MASCOT* it was reinstated with its original number plate WCD 482, two years ago. I paid £900 for basically a 'block of rust' (this became its name for a while) ... with no bonnet and most of the irreplaceable or valuable parts missing – Was I Ripped off? I have experience of owning a Frogeye back in the early seventies where the doors were the only means of preventing the car from collapsing in the middle. This car appeared to have no such problem so I bought it! The purchase of a reasonable metal bonnet followed shortly for £900. Of course that was by no means the end of my spending, I have yet to add up all the invoices for parts but I guess it will be at least £5000, please don't tell the wife!

Whilst we're on the subject let me say a word or two about parts: I quickly found that most replacement parts were of appalling quality and fit, however I had to accept the fact that this was all part of the fun. So many times did I think that my old part was way beyond being serviceable and simply buying a new bit would be the answer – until I saw the price – and then miraculously, I found that a bit of



wire brushing would often rejuvenate that part into being perfectly OK!

There are five main sources of parts for the 'Frog' that I know of and it's mostly swings and roundabouts with the prices although there is one who I found slightly cheaper than the rest – I wouldn't dare say, I'll let you work out who it is! I did find that most bits have the familiar white rectangular sticky label on them with the same part number, could this mean that they might possibly come from the same source?





Now to my learning curve and some topics that got my stress level up. Hopefully someone might find some of the following stuff useful! Advice is something every person who takes on a rebuild needs at sometime, no matter how experienced they are. There are many people out there who know practically nothing but rather than show their ignorance will give you an answer, whether right or wrong, sounds familiar? One classic example of uncertainty was the front chassis rails:

Whilst my rebuild was in a skeleton stage at the front end area, I noticed that the chassis rails were both very slightly bent upwards, i.e. were not perfectly straight as I cast my eye down them. Initially I suspected that this was sagging due to age. After gaining two 'experts' opinions who both said that the rails should obviously be straight, I almost began to 'cut and weld up' at the point of the bend. However I was niggled that the sketch of the chassis rails in my parts catalogue were not drawn perfectly straight. As a last resort I decided to ring another source of advice, good old 'Frogeye spares' who immediately told me: "Yes they should be slightly bent but only on the Sprite Mark 1."

Hopefully the technical advisor post for MASCOT will be filled soon and this will end the doubt and uncertainty.



Fitting the petrol tank is quite a long and fiddly job what with the rubber gasket around the filler pipe, the various bits of padding required between tank and boot floor and connection of the copper fuel pipe. The last thing I wanted to do was to do it all over again but unfortunately I had to! The fuel gauge sender unit relies on an electrical shorting principle, i.e. when the tank is empty the current coming down the wire from the gauge is totally shorted out to earth by the sender, giving zero deflection on the gauge (empty). With all the gasket goo around the place to make the sender and its eight screws, petrol tight, there wasn't much of an earth left at the sender unit. As we all know, you can't get at the sender unit with the tank in situ, so off it came. – My solution was to run an earth wire to one of the sender screws.

Brake fluid, well I had to use silicone brake fluid; I'd be a fool not to. I knew topping up the reservoir would be a delicate operation and overflow inevitable. Normal brake fluid would dissolve all my nice new footwell paintwork and soak through my new carpet below to dissolve the floor pan paintwork as well. Silicone fluid is harmless, nice to paintwork and doesn't absorb water but, and it's a big but, I found it extremely thin and consequently very seeping. On filling the system I found that virtually every connection was weeping. Only one solution, almost everything in the brake system had to be replaced for new. Incidentally, I did find that silicone gasket sealant used sparingly on the four way and three way unions did seal in the fluid very satisfactorily, I didn't replace these two items – far too expensive!

Now to float chambers and the curse of the needle valve! This caused me to rip most of my hair out. Some people like the smell of petrol – I don't, I have nightmares about it. No matter what I did, meticulously cleaning of the needle valves with meths and cotton buds, fitting of two inline filters, flushing out the tank and in desperation and fitting new needle valves; inevitably after a few minutes, petrol would ooze from the top of either of the chambers. As an electric fuel pump was fitted, I even fitted a cut off switch under the dash but that was a silly solution and would never have got me through an MOT! I eventually found the problem mainly by sheer luck more

than common sense; the twin carbs I used were not new but refurbished, beautiful in their entirety and completely rebuilt. All the dirt and gunge had presumably been jet washed off to leave a 'new' appearance and it was that, that fooled me. The innards of the metal pipes on the lids of the float chambers (two on the front, one on the back) had not been accessed by the cleaning process – in fact the cleaning process may have forced some gunge inside the tubes. A poke of a cotton wool bud inside the offending tubes revealed this build up of matter. I concluded that the petrol flow through the tubes was continuously dislodging particles which were clogging up the needle valves. A good cleaning of the tubes solved the problem.

To reward myself for all my hard work I decided to depart from originality and treat myself to Minilites; however it wasn't exactly straight forward as to what size tyre I should use. OK, here we go; Minilites normally come with a 5 j rim (13 cm) as mine did so theoretically the tyres I should have used were the 165 width variety. Unfortunately the standard profile 165-13 tyre (80 profile) was too big in diameter resulting in the rear tyre touching the bottom tip of the rear wing. The lower profile 165/70-13 tyre should be more or less the same diameter as the original fitted 145 tyre (according to the tables) but it didn't appear so, it simply looked too small. Ideally a 165/75 -13 would have been the answer but you try buying one!

This left two options; standard profile 155-13 or lower profile 175/70-13. Strictly speaking 175's are towards the limit for 5 inch rims although I have known a lot wider fitted to this rim size. 175's looked the business but unfortunately on full lock the tyres rubbed the inner wings. – So after four fitting sessions I eventually settled on standard profile 155-13's. Admittedly they're a bit weedy but at least they're slightly wider than the original 145's and do not catch or rub anywhere.

Lastly a quick tip regarding rebuilt dual gauges: Almost all of them will have a new temperature copper pipe and expansion bulb fitted. Before installing, dip the bulb in a cup of hot water. If the needle doesn't move, you've bought a duff one. I didn't check mine first and sod's law, it didn't work. Such a pity



as I'd routed the pipe beautifully around all the countless obstacles.

Don't think for one moment that these were the only problems (challenges) I had, there were many more but they were mostly down to my own stupidity!

Editor permitting, In a future edition of *MASCOT*, I would like to discuss the solution to the electronic rev counter mystery and a novel approach to the windscreen washer system. Speak to you soon.

Bill Cornwell
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Stephen was a technical illustrator in the '70s and '80s and now works for a government department in Bristol. He is building up his art portfolio and teaching drawing part-time.

Stephen's a club member with a '79 Midget that needs some love and attention!

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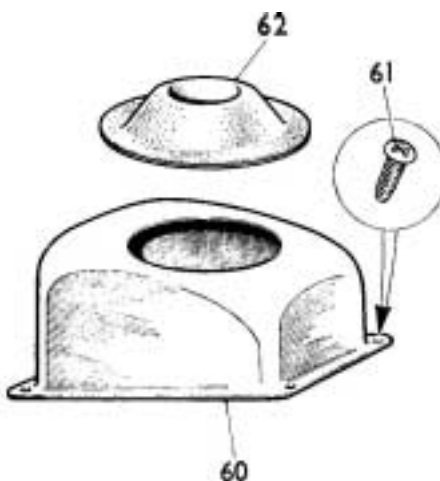
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Gear Lever Cover Colour

Beyond doubt, the domed steel cover around the base of the gear lever (part 60, Figure 1) was painted body colour on every AN5, HAN6 and GAN1 car which left the factory – there is ample evidence of this among the superb photographs within pages 1-73 of Terry Horler's book 'Original Sprite and Midget'.



Although some early HAN9/GAN4 models had red interiors, this same part was almost exclusively black on the later vehicles – this makes sense because any other colour looks decidedly out of place in a totally black interior (see Terry's book, photos page 98). However, what happened in between with HAN7/GAN2 through HAN8/GAN3 is not so well documented.

Almost everyone about to paint the gear lever cover of a HAN7 or GAN2 vehicle possessing a light body colour and a contrasting dark coloured interior is confronted with a dilemma. An extreme example is an Old English White GAN2 with all-black interior (including black trim panels

on the doors): should this cover be white or black? The former strategy places a white cover in an otherwise totally black cockpit and the latter contradicts the advice in Terry's book. Note that this was never a dilemma for the earlier AN5, HAN6 and GAN1 cars because these do not possess door trim panels: a body coloured gear lever cover looks good alongside predominantly body-coloured doors.

Maddeningly, my own car (an original GAN2) provides no answers because its body and interior are both red! Although the B.M.C. brochure describing the GAN2 cars does depict an Old English White (OEW) car with red interior *and a red gear lever cover*, these brochures were produced using reworked/retouched examples of GAN1/HAN6 models and cannot be trusted on matters of detail (this same brochure, for example, shows early brass carburettor dashpot covers rather than black plastic ones).

Careful forensic examination (paint scratching!) of the gear lever covers of three surviving GAN2 cars with different body and interior colours indicates that, in each case, the original cover colour was the *interior* colour, not the body colour. In the absence of any colour photographs of cars fresh from the factory, the best evidence supporting interior colour gear lever covers for HAN7 and GAN2 is provided by the December 1962 MOTOR test of a HAN7 car (Figure 2): although black



and white, the photographs in this report clearly show an early light-coloured HAN7 with a darker coloured cover. Photographs of an early GAN2 in the *AUTOSPORT* road test dated July 19, 1963 also indicate that its gear lever cover has interior (not body) colour.

In short, all available evidence indicates that the HAN7 and GAN2 cars were given interior coloured gear lever covers at the factory. This means that the cover of Andy Rickett's OEW GAN2 (Terry's book, page 56) probably *should* be hazelnut – although it is hard to believe that the factory would paint this one item in a unique colour (hazelnut was never a body colour option). On the other hand, it is also hard to believe that an all-hazelnut interior would ever have a black or green cover! If any reader knows what colour was given to the gear lever cover of a black HAN7 or British Racing Green GAN2 with hazelnut interior, please can they write in and complete the story? Thank you.

Red and blue interiors remained an option for the HAN8 and GAN3 cars and the colour of the gear lever covers of these vehicles probably always matched the interior colour –

although some OEW cars may have received OEW covers. A totally red or blue cockpit was never possible with these and later cars (because they were all given a black dashboard and black cockpit rails): this is a pity because some of the earlier interior colour schemes were very pleasing and enhanced the distinctive character of the vehicles.

Finally, note that the rubber grommet (part 62, Figure 1) is often installed upside down: this mistake causes the rubber to stretch and tear quite quickly in service. The position illustrated in Figure 1 is correct and will maximise points at concours.

I thank Niek Herwegh, Matt Gresalfi and Alan Lo for advice and forensic examination of GAN2 gearbox covers, Jonathan Whitehouse Bird for expert help (particularly regarding the HAN8/9 and GAN3/4 cars) and Terry Horler for encouraging me to read beyond page 73 of his book.

John E. Davies
jed2@cus.cam.ac.uk

The following two articles, which have previously appeared in *MASCOT* should be read in conjunction with John Davies' Gear lever cover piece (this should have been printed much earlier in the year). If all three pieces are read together, any confusion caused should be clarified. **Ed.**

Terry Horler's Response to John Davies

My thanks to John Davies for clearing up this rather grey area (or whatever colour that may seem appropriate). When compiling O.S&M way back in 1992/3, finding original spec HAN7/8 and GAN2/3 in the various colour options was nigh on impossible in the time available to me. This, and other items, prompted me to include a cop out disclaimer in the introduction, however, the responsibility for the "misfire in print" is ultimately – all mine. The positive thing is, someone took the trouble to find out, the only shame of it is that John got there before I did! Hence, my thanks and appreciation to John and other enthusiasts who have taken the trouble to try and colour

in some of the more obscure grey areas of our Spridgley things since O. S&M was first published in 1994.

Incidentally, the latest reprint contains a virtual rewrite of the Innocenti chapter. Since then however, someone now tells me that the Coupe version has a longer wheelbase than the Spider. No prizes for guessing who. Should I have the opportunity for another update to O.S&M, then gear lever cowls and Innocenti wheelbase variations will be on the list.

Terry Horler
(Older, wiser, alright, just older then)

The 1963 Sprites and Midgets

Growing up in Los Angeles during the '50s and '60s meant being exposed to all those wonderful "little British sports cars". One never seemed to have to worry about fumbling with those infernal roofs that took forever to erect when it started to rain because it never seemed to rain in Los Angeles.

My father bought a used MGA in 1959, and thus began my long affair with MGs. Over the past 40 years, I've restored many MGTCs, MGTDs, MGTfFs, MGAs, and MGBs, but had never owned an MG Midget or Austin Healey Sprite until 1998 when I came across a 1963 Sprite with its original, albeit weathered, iris blue exterior and cornflower blue interior. It was just begging to be restored to its former little British sports car glory, so I bought it. As always before starting a restoration, I read everything available on the history of the Sprites, including what is considered by the experts to be correct for the restoration of each particular model.

Being a collector usually means following the mantra that if owning one type of object makes you happy, then owning lots of those objects will make you extremely happy. Since I subscribe to this philosophy, I eventually collected over a dozen 1963 Spridgets, being careful to only buy those that still retained their original interiors and original paint so that I could be sure that anything I questioned, regarding authenticity, could be verified more easily by looking at actual, unaltered cars.

Along this vein, I had read in Terry Horler's book, "Original Sprite and Midget" that the gearshift surround on all the side curtain models of these cars was painted the same color as the exterior. I was surprised, to say the least, that not a single one of my 1963 Spridgets followed this rule. Every one of my cars had the gearshift surround painted the same color as the interior.

For historical purposes, the following list includes the identification numbers for eight of my 1963 Spridgets that I obtained Heritage Certificates for, along with the original interior

and exterior color, and my observation of the gearshift surround color:

HAN7L 30164 – black with red interior and red gearshift surround

HAN7L 35808 – iris blue with dark blue interior and dark blue surround

HAN7L 22487 – tartan red with red interior and red surround

HAN7L 25774 – signal red with black interior and black surround

GAN2L 24810 – black with red interior and red gearshift surround

GAN2L 23497 – old English white with black interior and black surround

HAN7L 33445 – signal red with black interior and black surround

GAN2L 17686 – tartan red with black interior and black surround

Other cars that I did not obtain Heritage Certificates for included a GAN2L white with red interior and red surround, as well as a dark green HAN7L with black interior and black surround.

Because I was perplexed that all of my original 1963 Spridgets had gearshift surrounds that were the color of the interior rather than the exterior, in contrast to what the historical data said, I took my question about this problem to the major domo Spridget List on the internet, which is a forum type of arrangement where people who own a specific type of car can ask other members questions about those cars.

The general consensus was that even in the 1963 cars, the gearshift surround should be painted body color instead of interior color. Finally, contact was made with Terry Horler, who agreed, after viewing several original '63 models with the surround painted interior color, that in the '63 models, but not any of the earlier models, the gearshift surround was, indeed, originally painted interior color.

Robert Wiedemeyer

A day at the Races...



Cooling off in the paddock

As someone still relatively new to the Spridget ownership scene, the thought of a day at Croft was rather exciting! Having never been to a track day before, I didn't really know what to expect, except perhaps a great deal of fun! And I wasn't wrong. The whole day from start to finish was to me what the idea of classic car ownership is all about. Driving to the track in our vehicles, taking them out and playing, and then driving them home again that evening. However, our little Rosie is far from being a suitable track car, and she happily plods along as our student daily driver, that is run on a bit of a shoestring budget. Regardless of this, we weren't about to let it spoil our fun, and we turned up as passengers with Mark and Anita, happy just to come along and take part in the day!

The day was shared with MGs On Track and also Lotus On Track and the groups took it in turns out on the track for 20-minute sessions, of which there were six over the course of the day.

However before the drivers were let loose on track, we had a safety briefing and a good introduction to the rules and regulations of a track day, all of which was important in order to make our day run as smoothly and safely as possible. Once this was finished, the cars all lined up and then they were ready to go. Several drivers took advantage of the experienced instructors available, and booked sessions during the day, which seemed to be pretty good value and everyone we spoke to seemed to have learnt something from this, or had improved their driving at least somewhere on the track.

Throughout the day, everyone was kind enough to offer any spare seats to those of us without vehicles there, or even just to others who fancied a ride in something different! This was really appreciated, and it once again showed how MASC really does have a great deal of club spirit! However, it seemed no matter what car I rode in, something seemed to falter, and I was beginning to acquire a bit of a reputation as a Jonah!



It was also great to see a few other cars participating, such as Andy's Mini, and Rob's Saab. Perhaps next year there may be a certain Marina in amongst the group...

To me, the day at Croft was great for several reasons. Since buying our Midget, I've always been quite apprehensive about driving her, and it's taking some time to build up the confidence levels to push that little bit harder. However, when at Croft it was wonderful to see what the cars are capable of when they

are in good working order, and being driven how they were meant to be. It was also good fun to learn about everything involved with track driving; from how to take the racing line on corners, to what the different coloured flags mean. We couldn't have asked for better weather, the strong wind seemed to keep the rain clouds moving, and it dried up nicely after a damp start! All in all, a superb day, and I for one can't wait for next year!

Rachel Foster



Mike Bennet's IOW Frogeye www.healey-frogeye.co.uk

HOW TO FIT A FIVE-SPEED GEARBOX

Tired of low-g geared classic cars with noisy transmissions and no synchromesh on first? Mike Smith suggests you fit one of the many kits that use the Ford Type 9 gearbox. And here's how you do it...

THE Type 9 is a strong, well-built, five-speed unit with a sharp gear change that complements many classics – and conversion kits are available for lots of popular models including the MG Midget, Austin Midget, MG T Series, MGA, MGB, MG Magnette, Triumph Spitfire and GT6. Prices are from about £500 if you supply your own gearbox. These can often be picked up at your local scrapyard for around £50. Complete kits, including a reconditioned gearbox, start from £7000. The kit pictured in this article was supplied from Frontline Springs which supplied all the parts needed, including the bellhousing, gearbox mounting, propshaft and speedo cable. The following steps are for an MG Midget. However, similar procedures apply for any rear-wheel drive A-series car including the Lotus Elise, Lotus Elise and A40.

AFRAID TO ASK?

■ **What if there isn't a conversion kit available for my classic?**

It may still be possible to fit a Type 9 gearbox if you can use the same engine on a model with a conversion kit. Most suppliers will offer you to buy the parts separately. For example, a Riley 1.5 or a Wolseley 1800 could be converted using an MGA bell housing and

clutch assembly. Similarly a Standard Ten, or Herald could be converted using parts from a Spitfire kit. Or a Triumph 2000 using GT6 parts. What you may have to do is track down the missing bits from the kit – and these might include the gearbox mounts and propshaft. Suppliers are usually happy to give advice about non-standard conversions.

SOURCING A GEARBOX

The Ford Type 9 gearbox was fitted to more than two million Ford Falcons, but there are variations which include different gear ratios and input shafts. Your kit supplier should be able to tell you exactly what type you need.

Generally five speeds fitted to the 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0 litre models between 1962 to 1987 are ideal.

Top of the food chain is the steel-plate gearbox fitted to the 2.8 litre car but five speed steel may require upgrading to the 1.5 component.

ESSENTIAL KIT

- Engine frame
- Reconditioned bell housing and gearbox
- Clutch replacement kit
- Bell housing
- Engine
- Propshaft
- Brackets, bolts, hood, cage (optional)

DIFFICULTY

There are some tricky parts to this job and we would advise that you fully digest this feature before getting stuck into the practical side.

NEXT ISSUE: FIX YOUR LEAKY ENGINE



A fifth gear makes all the difference.

Picture: www.frontlinesprings.co.uk
The Car Maintenance Editor



The bellhousing is the most crucial part of the kit. Unless you are good at precision sand casting this is one of the 'must-buy' parts. Earlier versions were produced using a cast dove Movers Minor gearbox bell housing that was welded to a steel mounting plate. Not all conversion kits use a cast bell housing. The Triumph Spitfire, GT6 and Vitesse, for example, use an engine back-plate instead.



Remove the engine and gearbox following the steps in the workshop manual. Clutch slave cylinders are difficult to bleed on Midgets and it's a good idea to leave the hydraulics connected. Just unbolt the slave cylinder from the bellhousing and secure it with wire so it doesn't get damaged. Separate the engine from the gearbox. Remove the clutch release bearing and yoke which is going to be reused.

WEEKEND WORKSHOP



3 Unbolt the clutch mechanism. You won't be needing it again because the five-speed kit requires a clutch plate to fit the Ford input shaft. Remove the clutch spigot bearing. This is a small bronze bush but it can be difficult to take out. Either carefully chisel it out or cut it out using a Dremel-type drill as in the picture. The new spigot bearing fits into the centre of the flywheel on a steel mounting disc. This can be a tight fit. You may need to sandwich the bearing disc between the flywheel and the crankshaft in order to press it into place. Don't forget to put a small dab of grease in the centre of the spigot bearing.



4 Fit the clutch assembly. The new friction plate matches the splines of the new Ford input shaft, which is a different pattern to the MG item. Unless you want to introduce yourself to a whole world of baffling when it comes to refitting the engine, use a proper clutch alignment tool to centre the clutch plate. Clutch alignment tools are cheap and they usually come with a wide range of adapters for different cars.



5 If the Ford gearbox came with its own bellhousing it needs to be removed. There are four securing bolts inside the bellhousing that have to be unworried. Back on the new bellhousing after fitting a card gasket. One of the selling points of the conversion is that on most A-Series cars only the bellhousing is visible when the bonnet is open – so the engine compartment will look completely unadorned and original.



6 The original clutch-release yoke is re-used after it has been fitted with a modern clutch-release bearing. The new clutch ball bearing is a vast improvement over the old graphite-based item. Some earlier clutch-release yokes from 948cc engines may not work because they won't suit the thickness of the new clutch assembly. Your supplier should be able to advise.



7 Bolt the new yoke bracket on to the back of the bell housing and fit the yoke. Don't over-tighten the bolt that the yoke serves on and check the clutch-release bearing moves smoothly up and down the input shaft. This front-line Spitfire conversion fits on to the input shaft thread and ensures the clutch-release bearing is perfectly aligned with the pressure plate.



8 Slide the gearbox on to the back of the engine and bolt them together. If the clutch has been aligned properly it should fit easily.



9 The old gearbox mount and bit of the floor need to be cut out because the Ford gearbox is larger than the original MG unit. Carefully scribe and remove the petrol pipe that runs inside the engine compartment and down the underside of the floor. Then measure and mark out the section to be removed.



10 Cutting out the floor and the gearbox mount isn't a high-tech operation, but is likely to involve a lot of grinding. Use a drill to make pilot holes in the corners of the cut and use a combination of jigsaw and hacksaw. The toughest part of this job is cutting through the gearbox mounting because it is a sturdy box section.



11 This is the chassis section that held the original gearbox mounting. Hang on to it if you think you'll ever want to change back to the original gearbox. It's a bit unlikely considering the advantages of the five-speed box. Incidentally, although the Midget needs the chassis to be modified, many of the kits for models such as the MGA, MGB, T-Series and Magnette require no cutting or modification and so can be easily returned to original if required.

FITTING A FIVE-SPEED GEARBOX

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The strength is put back into the chassis cross-member by a very solid gearbox mounting plate and two blanking boxes that slide into the remains of the box sections that were cut out. The bolts that hold on the gearbox mounting plate will pass through the blanking boxes.



On a Midget, the new shorter propshaft needs to be placed inside the transmission tunnel before refitting the engine and gearbox. The transmission tunnel is boxed-in on the MG and it's impossible to fit the propshaft with the engine and gearbox in place.



It's a two-person job to squeeze the engine and gearbox back in. Support the rear of the gearbox with a trolley jack and slide the spline of the propshaft into the gearbox as it moves into position. Then bolt on the clutch slave cylinder to the side of the bellhousing.



The gearstick on the Ford gearbox is further back than the original item, so a new hole has to be cut into our Midget. On other MG models such as the MGA, B, T-series and Magnette, the Ford gearstick comes out in exactly the same spot as the original. Consequently the conversion is very hard to spot unless you happen to be carrying out an inspection under the car.



At this stage there is nothing holding on the rear of the gearbox, apart from a trolley jack. Trial-fit the gearbox mounting plate. When everything is lined up, drill through the floor and fabricate the six bolts into place. Don't forget to fill the gearbox with oil or your new toy won't last long. You may need to use a funnel and flexible tube down the gearstick hole.



The speed drive on the Ford gearbox comes out on the opposite side to the original MG item. Unless you fit a right-angle drive, a hole needs to be cut in the transmission tunnel next to the driver's seat. The relocated speeds cable loops across the floor and underneath the carpets before passing up the side of the scuttle where it can be concealed by the trim.



Fit the gearbox transmission tunnel and reseat the interior and seats. Inside the passenger compartment the only give-away is the new position of the gear stick. The only problem remaining is that the speedo will not read correctly. Send it off for recalibration by a company such as Speedograph Richfield before you drive past the next speed camera.

ARTICLE COURTESY OF PRACTICAL CLASSICS

Practical Classics often features articles such as this gearbox 'how-to' and is printed 13 times a year. The new Practical Classics website is now up and running at

practicalclassics.co.uk. The PC writing team would like to wish all Midget & Sprite owners a fantastic summer of motoring and productive workshop activity!

USEFUL CONTACTS

Facilities Spridget (info for A-Series only) Tel: 01200 850777
H Gear Engineering (info for MGA, B, T-Series, Magnette) Tel: 01370 814003

Speedgraph (speedometer recalibration) Tel: 01982 411130
Speedograph Richfield (speedometer recalibration) Tel: 0118 70042195

SPRIDGET 50



THE BIG PARTY

All friends of the AH Sprite and MG Midget invite you to

The Heritage Motor Centre, Gaydon, Warwickshire
Saturday 24 May, 2008

Come along to the official party to celebrate 50 years since the launch of the Austin Healey "Frogeye" Sprite and all subsequent Sprites, MG Midgets and derivatives. Let's make this the largest collection of Spridgets ever seen!

To register an early no obligation expression of interest, and to receive priority booking information, please contact us with your name, Spridget age and details:

organiser@spridget50.com
tel 07963 433832



www.spridget50.com

On Early Tachometer Gear and Pulley Ratios

In designing the original Sprite, Geoffrey and Donald Healey were faced with the problem of how to install a mechanical tachometer (impulse or other electronic varieties being either too expensive or unavailable at the time). With the oil pump positioned at the back of the camshaft of the A-series engine, the then-usual solution was impossible. In his book “More Healeys” (Gentry Books Ltd, 1978), Geoffrey has related “how friends at Lucas and Smiths finally solved the problem by providing a dynamo with a drive at the rear and an appropriate gearbox to give the instrument its correct drive ratio”. He then adds “some trouble was later experienced in service when these little gearboxes seized up. This was quickly traced to ham-handed mechanics over-tightening the nut that held the box on”.

The trouble may well have been “quickly traced” but it was never eliminated. In an attempt to prevent over-tightening, later gearboxes were given a knurled ring rather than a large nut but gearboxes continued to fail, sometimes dramatically. For example, the dynamo gearbox of my first Midget (a Clipper Blue GAN1) disintegrated halfway between Melbourne and Adelaide in 1971. The tachometer needle jumped randomly about the dial for a few seconds and then fell dismally to zero; the box looked as if a stick of dynamite had exploded inside it and I never did find the gears. Later, a helpful pin-stripe suited salesman at a BMC dealership in the middle of Adelaide was pleased to sell me a new gearbox for the then frightening price of \$35(AUS) – this at a time when I was an impoverished student, four-star petrol was 30 cents a gallon and the whole car was worth only \$500. In a failed attempt to make conversation, this salesman told me “It’s a weak point in the design Sport, we sell lots of these”. Although the luminous sales probably paid for his suit, it would surely have been more helpful if he had advised me to tighten the nut with my fingers, not a pipe wrench. Ever since this financially crippling experience I have viewed these charming little gearboxes with a jaundiced eye and tried to

avoid them completely. When I upgraded to GAN2 with impulse tachometer in 1973, mechanical rev counters faded rapidly from my memory.

These memories remained faint until quite recently when my friend Bob Clarkson (Highway Yellow HAN6 Sprite, see *MASCOT* March 2007) asked me if I could shed any light on an apparent problem: Bob’s little reduction gearbox has a 4:1 ratio; his tachometer dial states 3:1; an authoritative source says the dial marking refers to the gearbox ratio. Does Bob have the right bits? Is Bob’s tachometer reading correctly? This query prompted me to examine two more original GAN1 tachometers: one from my own box of spares, the other on Alan “Fairweather” Lo’s “Mo” (the OMITV). Like Bob’s tachometer, both have 4:1 gearboxes and both have 3:1 markings on the dial. These are in fact the correct units and the reason is obvious once one examines the crankshaft and dynamo pulleys ...

On original 9C and 9CG engines, the ratio of the crankshaft to dynamo pulley diameters is 4:3 (12cm to 9cm, approximately). Thus for every *three* spins of the crankshaft, the dynamo pulley spins *four* times. With a 4:1 reduction gearbox on the back of the dynamo, the tachometer cable therefore spins once for every three spins of the crankshaft. If the 3:1 marking on the dial refers to the internal gearing *within the dial* and not to any little gearboxes downstream, then everything makes sense.

A quick call to John Ostick at JDO Instruments rapidly confirmed that the 3:1 marking on the dial does indeed refer to the mechanism within the unit. If the cable rotates at 1000rpm (the main crank spinning at 3000rpm), the dial will correctly read 3000rpm. So there it is, Bob can relax. Once again, thanks John!

Today, new original stock Smiths reduction gearboxes are extremely rare and command ever more frightening prices on ebay and at autojumbles. Although replica boxes are available these too are expensive, their quality

is suspect and they are probably even more prone to failure. Anyone with a working tachometer gearbox should make sure that it is lubricated properly and that the big 15/16" nut is not over-tight: it is far too easy to apply too much force! It is also a good idea to check the dynamo pulley diameter because very few surviving cars retain their original dynamos and bits have become somewhat mixed up over the years.

Finally, in these modern times when the Fairweathers (and me!) duck for cover at the first spot of rain, when lost Reggies are found days later with steaming engines and when many Spridgeteers seem to set out from A wondering whether they will ever reach B, it is worth remembering that in the good old days these were extremely tough little cars. I regularly drove that Australian GAN1 more than 400 miles from Melbourne to Cooma on

a Friday afternoon, over the Snowy Mountains in summer, on roads that were partly dirt tracks, and then made the return journey on the Sunday! I never checked anything (except perhaps the oil) before I set out, mobile phones were science fiction and my one precaution was a can of drinking water which my parents insisted I carry in case of any trouble 50 miles beyond the black stump. I am too ashamed to detail the mechanical neglect that car received during my ownership (my resources were scant, I could hardly afford either the necessary petrol or the modest insurance premium) – yet that little gearbox was the only thing that ever failed en-route during many thousands of miles. The possibility of a breakdown never occurred to me. I always arrived. Marvellous machines!

John E. Davies
jed2@cus.cam.ac.uk

U.S.A. Sprite Jubilee

Sprite and Midget enthusiasts in the United States will be able to mark the 50th anniversary of the introduction of the Austin-Healey Sprite near Hershey, Pennsylvania, May 17 to 20, 2008. Sprite Jubilee will be open to all models of the Sprite and the Midget as well as to any other British car. Awards and recognitions are planned for all British cars participating at the meet.

Guests at the event will be Gerry Coker, the Mk.I Sprite's designer; his wife, Marion; John Sprinzel, who built specialized Sprite bodies, and his wife, Caryl, and Daniel and Isabelle Stapleton. Daniel Stapleton has written a special tuning book for the Sprite and Midget.

While the exact location has not been selected, the event will be held in the Carlisle-Hershey area of Pennsylvania, the yearly venues for many large American car shows. The Sprite event will run at the same time as the Carlisle Import-Kit/Replicar Nationals, which will be held from May 17 through May 19, 2008, in nearby Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Sprite Jubilee is organized by Dr. Rick Moses and his wife, Cindy Moses. Rick Moses also organized Sprite events every five years since 1988: Sprite Fest, 1988; Sprite Bash, 1993; Sprite Rush, 1998, and Sprite Spree, 2003.

Those wishing more information may contact Dr. Moses in Pennsylvania at 717-534- 2222 (work) or 717-534-2525 (home), or mobile phone on weekends 717-379-5752 or Cindy's Moses's mobile phone 717-379-5572. For those living in the United States, there is a toll-free number, 877-748-3165. Keep in mind that Dr. Moses lives in the Eastern Time Zone of the United States and those calling from overseas or from other North American time zones should be aware of the time difference. In addition, an event website is available at <http://autos.groups.yahoo.com/group/SpriteJubilee/>. Please note there is no www in the site address.

The original Sprite, the Frogeye or Bugeye, was introduced to the press on May 20, 1958. From the first AN5 in 1958 to the last AN10 in 1971, there were 129,362 Sprites built in four models. The MG Midget, introduced a month after Mark II Sprite's debut in 1961, ended production in 1979. In all 355,888 Sprites and Midgets were built.

Glenn Surrette
Charleston, South Carolina MASC #3377

Pirelli Cintura test report: John Sprinzel tests the Cintura





PIRELLI

Road Test Report

JOHN SPRINZEL TALKS CINTURA

The fabulous tyre with the built-in 'safety belt'

The remarkable qualities of the Cintura in action all follow logically from the structure of the tyre itself. The Cintura is built up from textile cords laid at an angle of 90 degrees to the beads. Over the cords goes an inextensible textile belt running right round the circumference of the tyre under the tread. This 'safety belt' holds the tyre profile virtually unchanged, even at high speeds; consequently the Cintura maintains a much more uniform contact area with the road than conventional tyres can. To get some idea of the startling improvement in road-holding that results, read what John Sprinzel has to say.

Have you had any previous experience with Cinturas?

(JS) "Yes. I took an Elite down to Italy on Cinturas, and also I drove a Saab in Sweden on Cinturas".

Can you give us a few details of the recent test?

(JS) "Well, in the last 10 days I've done about 1,000 miles in a TR3: all sorts of conditions, from motorway to rough little lanes, in the dry and the wet".

Was any particular journey of special significance?

(JS) "I would say the most startling of all was after I had driven the car, on normal tyres, to have the Cinturas fitted. I drove back through fairly thick rush-hour traffic. And I felt I was in a different motor car. This may sound like a good advertising stunt, but in fact the car itself felt so much lighter all round, so much easier to drive. That was the most noticeable thing straight away".

What were your other immediate impressions of the Cintura?

(JS) "In no time at all I found myself throwing the car around with much gayer abandon than before, because it felt so precise. With Cinturas, the action you make on the steering wheel gives immediate response through the tread".

How did the tyres perform at speed?

(JS) "Whereas driving along the motorway, on other tyres, was quite a big deal at 80 m.p.h. - on Cinturas it was no trouble at all, even at 100 m.p.h. with one hand on the wheel. Afterwards, I checked the impression of the heating of the tyre. And they were no warmer than town driving would promote!"

How did Cinturas affect cornering?

(JS) "I was staggered, looking down at the speedometer; one didn't seem to be going very fast at all round corners - yet one definitely was. And in no time at all one was going much much faster. And even if you take Cinturas to the limit and force a breakaway of the tail, it is so gentle and gradual that it is easily controlled. The breakaway of the tail of the car happened perhaps a little earlier than one expected it, but it was so gentle and so controllable that after half a dozen corners one was doing it intentionally. It would not be a drift, it would be more a power slide than anything. Now normally rigid-breaker tyres are very rapid in their breakaway - one minute the adhesion is perfect, and the next minute everything is away. But with the Cintura the breakaway is very slow and safe. You just don't get sudden breakaway with Cinturas".

You consider this a big safety factor?

(JS) "Oh yes - because some rigid breaker tyres with good road-holding lure you on into going faster, until suddenly you're away. Bang - you're through the hedge backwards; whereas, with Cinturas, even a complete novice who is going faster and faster would feel the car begin to break away before it, in fact, did - which I would say is a big safety factor".

How about Cinturas and braking?

(JS) "The TR has very good brakes, discs on the front. So that you can stop the car up to the complete limit of the adhesion of the tyre. And brakes as good as this are a good test of a tyre. With Cinturas you could stop dead in any speed in the dry, well within the Highway Code limit. In the wet, I did manage to lock the front, but then it only behaved as you would expect and the minute you lifted your foot adhesion was regained. Compared with conventional tyres Cinturas are steadier, definitely steadier; one doesn't have to be so aware of where the steering wheel is and where the car is going. It went definitely in a straight line on braking and at all times".

Did Cinturas have any effect on the steering?

(JS) "Steering was much much more positive and surprisingly enough, much lighter. I didn't expect this at all. I've driven all sorts of cars on skid pans, and the amount of steering effort you need depends entirely, obviously, on the type of tyre and the mechanism and so forth of the steering itself. But with Cinturas, under similar slippery conditions, I found I needed half the usual effort to correct a slide. I was quite, quite surprised".

How did the tyres affect noise-level and comfort inside the car?

(JS) "Well, I would say certainly there was no cornering noise. There was none of the normal squeal caused presumably by tread distortion. It was very quiet cornering, in fact you could hardly induce squeal, unless you really put it in much too fast for conventional road uses. Also there was no drumming or howling from speed on the motorway. With ordinary tyres, you know, you get a terrible thump over cats' eyes - and you need real steering effort, especially at the 80 mark and above; with Cinturas,

however, you could run on cats' eyes at 100 m.p.h., and while you would certainly just feel them, they didn't make this tremendous noise and they didn't throw the car all over the place. I felt a lot less tired driving the car fast on Cinturas than I ever have before. In fact, Cinturas do make a car easier to drive. On three or four occasions we bowled into corners, main road fast corners, a lot quicker than I would have been happy with. (You know how it is, you're following somebody's rear lights at night and you are chatting to your passenger, and the radio's on). But there was none of the usual tightening of all the muscles as you suddenly realize you're rather fast. With Cinturas you just wind the wheel and get round without any sort of real effort or scorbable".

What are the big safety advantages of the Cintura?

(JS) "Well, the slow breakaway of the Cintura means that you can't be lulled into taking a corner too fast for the capability of the tyre. Then, the precise feel that the tyres give, the precise steering, means that you're never tempted to take an awful of wheel if you get into trouble - slight amounts of correction with Cinturas do what you want them to do. So the handling of any sort of difficulty is a lot easier with Cinturas".

As a rally driver, what do you think of Cinturas?

(JS) "I was impressed personally by the way they went on loose gravel, I mean the way they held the road on loose gravel. I was impressed by the way they went over bumps. I thrashed them over some unmade country lanes, for it is under those conditions that I do most of my professional driving. And I felt they handled exceptionally well. I like a tyre which lets me feel exactly what is happening (this is essential going fast round corners and on winding country lanes); and the Cintura gives you the confidence that the moment when the tyre starts to slide is not the ultimate danger point. And then there's the lack of effort needed to steer with Cinturas. I would say that for rally driving Cinturas were very good on all three counts. They make it possible to drive a car much more sensitively".

How did Cinturas handle in the wet?

(JS) "Take my first experience of Cinturas in the wet. We were going along a main road, fairly fastish. It looked as if it was wet because it was glistening (and, in fact, it was even a wee bit on the icy side in places). The surprising thing was that it hardly showed at all in the road-holding of the car. I would say that Cinturas in the wet are very, very good... very impressive. Very similar to a conventional tyre in the dry. With Cinturas, you hardly know it is wet".

How would you summarise your opinion of the Cintura?

(JS) "I think the great thing I would like to emphasise is the tyre's wonderful, light, precise feel. One didn't have to worry about the amount of correction. Let's put it this way: the TR3 hasn't got rack and pinion steering, in other words it hasn't got the precise steering of a Sprite, or an Elite; but with these tyres on it felt as if it had. That's the feeling I had, and my mechanic who drove the car to manoeuvre it around the garage after I had had the Cinturas fitted, said exactly the same thing. The fact is that it was much lighter and more precise - it transformed the car in fact.

Rutland Raid – May 19 & 20 2007



Well, we raided Rutland, as promised, and came away with nobbut a prize bootful of good memories. No gold bullion or priceless works of art, but then we were not a sufficiently strong force to fill even a Trojan horse. The full-time raiders numbered 10, in 5 specially prepared raiding Spridgets, from Yorkshire and from H.C.N.W. So it was a two pronged attack with, on Sunday, reinforcements from the part time raiders from Nottingham, Lincslot and the light blues, Cambridge. A total of 11 raiding cars, fully manned (beg yer pardon) crewed. The full timers met at Burghley House on Saturday at the specially appointed car rally signs. "Just in front of the house please????? So we can take pictures, please???? The house was visible from the parking spot but very distantly and we were second subjects of interest to a herd of inquisitive deer. A light luncheon was taken before sightseeing in which, apart from the house, we took in the surprise and sculpture gardens. The surprise consisted mainly of structures that aimed multi-jets of water at the unwary. Much like

driving a Spridget in a thunderstorm. One item, the exit gate, had to be taken on trust, where you have to step up to a curtain of water and believe that it would stop. It did, just. But not for long! And not long enough for some! The sculpture garden displayed familiar shapes in rusting iron. Again a subject dear to our hearts. The lake had a sign "Danger, deep water. No swimming!" (Even if you fall in? Just sink?) We made a tactical retreat on a cool, dank afternoon, to our H.Q. – The White Horse, at Empingham where, having stabled our trusty steeds we sorted our kit and had a few jars in the bar prior to spending a sociable evening around a well laden board.

The conversation ranged hither and thence but often settling on car related matters. One interesting change of direction led to some fairly intense instruction from Sally and Penny who disclosed many of the secrets of I-pods and mobile phones to the uninitiated. Sally and Penny are specialists in the subject being in their early teens. We retired for the night under clear skies that boded well for the morrow.

And on the morrow? Steve allowed me to drive his Midget on an early morning circumnavigation of Rutland Water. One particular stretch of this road appears as you round a bend and there, before you, is a two-mile stretch of straight road dipping and rising again. I responded to Steve's urge to floor it! Deep in the dip was an RAC van attending a parked car. On the return trip we noted the rear bumper of a car peeping out of the ditch, and tell tale marks on the road. Before we got back to base we saw two other cars parked peculiarly, off road. This seems to be a local pastime early on fine Sunday mornings. It is very, very tempting. Joined by the day trippers we set off on a well planned trip, sorted expertly by Anita and Mark on two previous visits. Following their detailed instruction we used the by-ways rather than the highways and saw some beautiful countryside in perfect weather. One spectacular landmark is the Seaton Viaduct. Spanning the Welland valley it rises 70 feet into the sky and strides over its $\frac{3}{4}$ mile length with 82 arches: 15 million bricks were used in its construction. In Kings Cliffe we drove up a certain Maltings

Lane, about 25 yards in length, it is so narrow that you can't open the doors if you need to dismount. Our mid-day destination was The Nene Valley Railway. A worthwhile visit for the mechanically minded and for the romantic. The past comes alive with these fire breathing monsters, and those of us who can remember it can stick our heads out of the carriage window and receive a face full of smuts. B.R. cups of tea and wads are available at reasonable prices. Back on the road, we wended our way back to the north of Rutland Water and to Barnsdale Gardens – the creation of the much loved Geoff. Hamilton. Much to the relief of some drivers there is little room in any of our cars for vast amounts of greenery and bags of manure. After refreshment goodbyes were said and we set sail for our various home garages. Thank you to Anita and Mark whose hard work made this a very enjoyable weekend. Perhaps we can do this again in a future year but at roughly this time in 2008 we will all be busy, won't we? What will we be doing? All together now. Happy birthday to...

Chris Jackson

Sprite Italiano

Our trip up to the Autosport show at the Birmingham NEC in mid January has now become a regular event on our calendar, but it's mere mention strikes fear into our bank manager. Why ??, well most people go there for a good look around and maybe come away with a few leaflets and give aways. Some maybe buy a few bits and bobs that will sit on a shelf in the garage for years to come, but for some reason we come away

with something a little bigger. A couple of years ago 4 of us bought a 1963 BMC Works Competitions Department support bus and this year it was an Innocenti 950 Spider. The plan was not to buy the Innocenti, so what went wrong. Well, Octane magazine had asked Paul Woolmer if they could display PMO 200 on their stand as it was featured in the then current issue. Paul trailered PMO up to the NEC on the Wednesday setup day and after setting her up on the Octane stand Paul wandered over to browse around the Coy's auction being setup opposite. In amongst the exotica was the Innocenti looking very much out of place with the rest of the offerings. Paul was manning one of the trade stands there until the Friday and then Paul with family and friends in tow and Yvette and I were going up on the Sunday for a good look around and to take PMO back at the close of the show that evening. This meant that





we would not be there and tempted to buy on Saturday the day of the auction.

When we arrived on the Sunday morning we headed over to the Octane stand as a meeting point. While waiting for others to arrive I went over to the Coy's stand to have a look around the Innocenti. One of the Coy's boys was putting a Do not touch the cars notice on her so I asked him how much did the Innocenti go for, came the reply didn't sell, do you want to buy it Oh dear, the not being at the auction plan back fired. I went back over to the gathering group and told Paul who said one of us was going home with it and if it was him he would be beaten to a pulp, so to save him from a severe beating Yvette and I did a deal and trailered it home the next day.

So what is an Innocenti 950 Spider?? Well back in 1960 BMC had an agreement with Innocenti in Milan for the assembly of the Austin A40 Farina from CKD (completely knocked down) kits sent over from the UK – a British car with an Italian designed body. When the Sprite came along, Innocenti was supplied with CKD kits consisting of pressings to construct the chassis, engine, transmission, wheels, axles, suspension, brakes, steering. Everything else was designed and sourced locally. Ghia of Turin designed a completely new bodyshell and the bodies were assembled by OSI using presses from Innocenti. The Innocenti concept was to move upmarket from the cheap and cheerful MK1 Sprite with a far more luxurious and stylish sports car which would be far more practical to live with. Such as wide doors, wind up windows, a lockable boot, interior light, cigarette lighter, ash tray, lockable glovebox and a heater as standard.

The familiar 948cc A-series engine was equipped with a new air filter box along with a

Marelli starter motor, dynamo and distributor. The radiator cap was positioned in the centre of the header tank, there being sufficient clearance beneath the almost flat bonnet to avoid the expense of producing the extension filler neck used on the Sprite.

The 950 Spider became available in 1961, just as the MK1 Sprite, was nearing its end in the UK. Indeed most of the early Innocentis were built up from what appeared to be leftovers from Abingdon. A total of 4,790 Innocenti 950 Spiders were built.

In 1963 the Innocenti Spider received the 1098cc engine and improved running gear and was renamed the Innocenti S. At this point Innocenti also redesigned the rear suspension to use semi-elliptic springs with telescopic dampers rather than lever arms. Just over 2,000 S cars were produced. The final update was introduced by late 1966 with the fixed head coupe roof version, the name becoming the Innocenti C Coupe. The radiator grill, side lamps and rear lamps were also revised for this model. Fewer than 800 examples of the Coupe were manufactured.



Production ceased around August 1968 (but cars were still being sold as late as 1970) with a total of around 7,650 Innocenti sports cars having been built. All cars were left hand drive and were sold chiefly in Italy, though there were some exports to North America. None are known to have been sold new in the UK. At present there are only 6 known cars in the UK, including Yvette's (yes it is hers, she holds the purse strings!!).

Paul Webb
Membership No: 3014

Cambridgeshire Report

No Mad cat night in the catchment period for this report but that is more than compensated for by the magnificent Rutland raiders run. This was mainly organised by the Home Counties and Yorkshire groups but well within Cambridgeshire area's clutches (in fact almost in my backyard), we had been planning a similar event ourselves, but are not too proud to muscle in on another area's event (especially if they are kind enough to organise it for us). The event was planned to start out on Saturday 19th of May at Burghley house, which must be one of the best great houses in England and despite being in my backyard, is a place I had never visited. I think the idea was to use Burghley as a kind of mustering point so that people from Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and the Home counties could arrive at any time throughout the day and have some pleasant surroundings to explore while waiting for their fellows to turn up.

I had a prior engagement on the Saturday but thought I would pop over to Burghley in the late afternoon on the off chance of meeting up with a few of the guys. As it happened my luck was in and a smattering of Spridgets were still resident in the designated Rally area, I did attempt to get some photographs but sadly my batteries gave out at the most embarrassing possible moment. As the majority of the MASCOTeers headed off to the Hotel I joined the convoy into Stamford (on my way to find a hardware shop to procure some batteries) so I could help them rattle a few Spridgetly sound waves off those old buildings. On my return to Burghley there was just one solitary Spridget left on the rally field to photograph, but hell it's about quality not quantity so I got a few great shots of the cars and the incredibly tame deer and even pulled GFR up in front of the house and got a few cheeky shots in the sunshine, before returning home with a mental note to self to come back in the Sprite another sunny day.

The following day, this was a two day event with the majority staying overnight in



Empingham, however us locals couldn't justify the use of an hotel (however pleasant it looked) and preferred to sleep in our own beds, anyway we got more Sprite miles in that way, so we all met up at the Hotel for 10am. We were all supplied with route packs and told we should proceed at will which would have been a bit like a treasure hunt without the treasure or the hunt, so we lead a bit of a conspiracy to bunch all the cars up and travel in convoy. Despite the weather forecast the entire weekend turned out to be very hot and sunny (as do all Cambridgeshire events) I even got singed. The run itself was brilliant through wonderful leafy lanes and past many local places of interest along long forgotten roads in a convoy of gleaming Sprites.

It was great to have four club areas participating in one fun event and great to meet up with some of the other seasoned multi area members again and to meet some new faces from Lincolnshire and mull over the possibility of a joint Wolds run later in the year (watch this space). I think Chris and Anita deserve a huge vote of thanks for organising such a brilliant weekend of Spridgeting for so many happy participants and allowing me to break the world record for the shortest distance travelled before taking a wrong turning while leading a convoy of classic cars, but the least said about that the better.

The other event that would normally have been reported this month was the Comberton Country Show this was unfortunately cancelled by the organisers at short notice. I believe I contacted everyone who had expressed an interest in this event in time to save them a wasted journey however if I missed you please except my apologies.

Dave Dixon



Yorkshire Report

Monthly Meetings

In May 20 of us met at The Stansfield Arms, Apperley Bridge, Bradford with 3 Frogeyes, 3 Midgets, and a Sprite, Stag, TVR and a Noble. New acquaintance Charles and son Martin joined us. Charles has a 1500 that is awaiting some welding to get it through its MOT. Martin has a Jowett and used to rally an Escort.

The June meeting was at The Blacksmiths Arms, North Cowton not far from Scotch Corner. It was good to meet new member Andrew R with his IOW Frogeye at last. Also joining us for the first time were Ray and Sue with their Midget, John and Carol all the way from Weardale in their newly acquired 1968 Sprite and Frank from Tadcaster. Plenty of local support too from Ken N, Ken G and Pat, Tony and Clare, Tim and Sarah, Geoff and Hilary and, from further afield, Nick M, Andrew McG, John and Rachel and Mark and myself. Lots of talk about the recent track day at Croft. Frank has some work to do on his

Midget before the Castle Combe track day. He discovered a broken steering rack mounting due to missing an essential spacer. Ray is planning to start stripping down his Midget for a respray. Nick M is almost ready to road test his newly built Caterham. Geoff revealed his plans for a run over the North Yorkshire Moors on August 18th. Tony's Toyota twin-cam Midget should be back with him soon. John and Rachel had some problems with the clutch slave cylinder on their Midget that they managed to finish in time to attend the meeting. Rachel is very keen on getting her Marina Coupe up and running. At the end of the evening John and Carol's Sprite needed some electrical jiggery-pokery to get the lights working sufficiently to get them home. Luckily Geoff had a meter and some spare wire with him.

Drive It Day 22nd April

At very short notice we arranged to meet at Masham Market Square (other clubs had the same idea). John and Rachel's Midget blew a tyre on route and the spare turned out to be a cross ply. Rob lent them his spare at Masham. Adrian from York joined us with his Lenham GTO and we were approached by a biker who turned out to be Don, a Frogeye owner we met at the Harewood Show a couple of years ago. Eight cars then drove a scenic route to Harrogate for a display on The Stray. Mark's parents joined us there and brought a couple of spare wheels shod with radials for John to change wheels for the third time that day.



Croft 12th May

This year's track day at Croft was well supported with much to do beforehand including an engine rebuild for my Atlantis replica. Having sold his Midget engine to Nick V from Durham, Jim had to build a replacement very quickly. Thanks to all who came along: drivers, passengers, helpers and spectators. A great day out with plenty of camaraderie in evidence. Lots of interest already for next time.

Rutland Raid 19th-20th May

Many thanks to Tim and Sarah for their support. Commiserations to John and Janet and Ann and Pete who had to cancel due to health and work reasons respectively. It was great to make new acquaintances and renew others with those attending from Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Notts/Derby and of course HCNW (see Chris Jackson's report). Thanks to all who made this inter-area event such a success. Any ideas for the next one?

Rally News

Nick and Josie have been very busy. They have taken part in the Ilkley Jubilee Rally (2nd in class), East Anglian, Fellsman and Hughes Rally (class win). Simon and Trevor came 6th overall in the Ilkley Jubilee Rally, won their class and were Best HRCR Tartan Series Crew. They came 9th overall and won the Regularity Award in the Viking Classic. Mark and I, Tim and Sarah and Carlo and Elisa ventured up to Scotland for La Carrera Caledonia. Sadly, no Carson this year but Bob Miller was there to welcome the Yorkshire contingent. More details next month. Tim and

Sarah did the Roof of England Challenge back in April. Frank did that one too.

Other Matters

Gary has sold his Midget having decided to continue with the reassembly of the Sprite. Someone who has a pink MKII Sprite has contacted me and Mark has heard of a MKI Midget also in pink. We look forward to seeing these Yorkshire Spridgets sometime soon.

Our friend Neg is well on with his Frogeye restoration. The shell looks like new and he's hoping to have it on the road in a few weeks time. Carlo's boss reversed his new Audi into Eglentine damaging the OSR light and wing. Neg has done a great repair job and Carlo spent hours making his Midget look beautiful again.

Nick C has discovered the problem with his Midget's handling was faulty shockers. Nick V has got his Midget running but still has a way to go before it is ready for an MOT.

I have recently heard of the death of Howard Turner (whom some of us knew) from serious injuries sustained in an RTA whilst taking part in the Ilkley Jubilee Run in his Frogeye. I understand that he was an innocent party and that some details will be available in the next issue of Old Stager (the HRCR magazine).

Dates

The next meeting is on Thursday July 5th. See the meetings listing for details.

BBQ – Sunday 12th August

North Yorkshire Moors Heather Road Run – Saturday 18th August

Anita

NW Area Report

On 19th May we went to Oulton Park for the MG racing. Six of us were there and we took part in a 3 lap cavalcade around the circuit, all good fun. The weather wasn't too good with regular showers but it didn't spoil the day.

For Spring Bank weekend we went to Capsthorpe classic car show. It rained non stop all day, absolutely dreadful. To make matters worse, the grass had not been cut and was so long that it was literally up to wheel centre height. Fortunately Janet took her

gazebo so at least we had some refuge from the rain. But did we have a good time, of course we did. Incidentally, it was Jane's birthday, bet she was really chuffed that Ian brought her along for a fun day out. I hope he bought her a very expensive present!

Did you go to the Kilton for June club night? Were you by yourself? Well that's because we were at The Plough at Euxton. Back to the Kilton for July club night. That's all for now.

Les

Balmy Nights in South Staffs

A fine night for a drive and when I reached the Green Man there were hordes of Spridgets lined up in the car park ready for Lara to slip in to get a great group photograph.

As well as the usual suspects John and his wife were visiting us, in a testing the water sort of way with a very nice Midget. We hope they will decide to return, a prospect helped by Dawn and Gavin turning up. John's wife was reluctant to be the only wife in the village and with us around who can blame her?

Err, guilty as charged as usual for forgetting names again. As they come along more often I expect to get the names right ASAP...

As I am off to Le Mans this week I have not been able to get along with Geoff and the



others to visit Warwickshire. See you all when I come back home.

Arrivederci! Au revoir! Ta ta!

Bill Mohan
1067

Surrey and Kent Meets

Surrey Meet May

A smoky bar greeted me at the Blue Ball Public House on Tuesday 15th May. Roll on 1st July. Numbers were fewer than usual but perhaps not everyone had recovered from the Surrey Area Shropshire Tour, which had taken place on the early Bank Holiday, as many of our regulars were missing.

Nay and Col were providing a demonstration out side in the car park. Phil their rubber bumper 1500, Triumph engined, M.G. Midget has just been converted to fully electronic ignition dispensing with the distributor and taking on board an ignition module, EDIS and Megajolt ECU. The ignition mapping being done by graphics, upon a lap top computer linked to the ECU, where the ignition map was shown for all to see. Col had set it up roughly but a rolling road set up awaited on the morrow to fine tune it ready for our June Tour to Arnhem.

Geoff and Elsa were without Frogeye as it had recently blown a head gasket leaving Geoff praying for fine weather as he is committed to fitting a new gasket out of doors. Now that brings back memories.

Good to see Nic Bowker again. Absent from meetings since Feb 06 I hadn't realised it was so long although he did make our Christmas meal. Nic had attended our recent visit to Shoreham WW2 museum or so he thought as we went to Shoreham in Kent whilst he went to Shoreham in Sussex. Do not laugh. He was not alone.

Peter Gardiner, for ever in his Midget, was quickly on the phone arranging a place on the impending club visit to B.M.H to see Midget body shells being made. I must reserve my place.

Martin Bird was also without his Frogeye which next week will have a Sierra 5 speed gearbox and 1098cc engine replace the original installations. A Surrey Vintage Vehicle Club (SVVC) member dropped in for some technical help with a Jaguar horn wiring problem for which Mike Ley quickly jumped in to 'do the honours' being familiar with that particular vehicle's set up.

David and Chris Wright, David and Linda Southcott and Colin Aldridge with Jude completed our group.

Kent Meet May

From the number of technical queries received, in the preceding week, it was obvious that there would be few Spridgets at Kent's May meet. There followed a flurry of messages from people unable to attend the meeting. The Kent Meet at the Moat,

Wrotham Heath, on Sunday 27th May 2007 was CANCELLED.

Alan Anstead

Area Representative for Kent & Surrey Sections

Mail to: alan.anstead@btopenworld.com

Telephone: (answer phone) 01322 384050

Warwickshire Report



The first event of the month was the Ludlow Classic Festival. The weather was poor with worse forecast. For the first time in memory, every car had its hood up, even the most hardened members saw sense, although they needed an extra push from their navigator. We arrived at Ludlow with the rain already falling, so having parked our cars in the display area inside the castle grounds and with a picnic out of the question, we set off into the town looking for a drier activity. The local craft fair was well supported, as were coffee shops and anything that provided some respite from the heavy rain. Roy persuaded Gray's to accommodate us all for lunch, with the chef's permission. Lunch was a jovial, if elongated affair and with our spirits lifted, we made our way back to our cars and the festival, only to find that everyone else had gone home and our cars were left looking very lonely and forlorn in the castle grounds. Our thanks go to Roy for organising the event, and even if he cannot control the weather, he ensured we had a most enjoyable day.

Seven cars with their intrepid drivers set off for Portsmouth in the pouring rain on a very, very wet Sunday, 28th May. The overnight ferry took us to Ouistreham, the port for Caen in Normandy and on a very, very wet Monday, we undertook an uneventful drive to Vannes in Southern Brittany. The hotel had good

parking, comfortable rooms and staff who were exceptionally helpful and friendly. Dinner was pre-planned with a restaurant in the town, and on our first and last night, we were taken there by the local tourist train. The meals, as one would expect in France, were excellent and the wine and cider flowed well, with Sybil holding the kitty. Next day the weather was warm and sunny and we set off for Quiberon, proudly wearing the Spridget T-shirts, which Margaret had just presented to us as her treat. We were asked by another holiday maker whether we were all members of the Spridget family, which, of course, we are!!

We drove through some beautiful scenery, but unfortunately, a misfire had developed in our car, a Daimler Dart, making it almost undriveable and a long break was taken in Port Haliguen while Chris unsuccessfully tried to repair it. The group were very patient and assured us that it was a good place to break down, particularly as the boatlift moving boats into the water from their winter dry standing was fascinating to watch. Finally, we sent the others on their way while we limped back to the hotel and started proceedings for the repatriation of the car. The process was reasonably straightforward, although to make matters worse, the beautiful, front, chrome bumper was dented while it sat in the port. For the rest of the stay Chris and I were

limited to the tour of Vannes as pedestrians, so missed the forays made by the group. Rosemary has kindly added the detail.

On Tuesday, the rest of the party continued to the magnificent Menhirs, Tumuli and Dolmens at Carnac. These are hundreds of standing stones just like the ones at Stonehenge.

Wednesday proved to be another very, very wet day on which we chose to explore the medieval town of Vannes. It cleared up sufficiently for us to visit Rochefort-en-Terre, a picturesque village with cobbled streets. The next day was very, very wet again so we visited a museum of the French Resistance at St. Marcel, a very interesting place, complete with a collection of wartime vehicles, including a half-track, which ran quieter than most Spridgets. A complete weather turn around on Friday allowed a top-down drive around the Golfe du Morbihan to Port Navalo, taking in the Chateau de Suscinio en route. Saturday we drove to the ferry in glorious sunshine, with Roger's car developing an electrical problem, later solved by an overnight battery charge. Three couples stayed on in Caen for 2 nights to visit the Normandy beaches while the rest of us returned home. Our thanks go to Rosemary and Alan for



organising the event and looking after us during it.

This weekend drivers Barrie and Dave, with Chris and Dave as passengers, plus Alan in his Lotus Elan, joined Terry & Barry at Castle Coombe for a quick spin around the track. It is always a great opportunity to meet the other members and experience driving the cars closer to their limits than is allowed on the highways. The sun shone as we walked around the track being highly amused by a group in a helicopter that landed in the car parking area, being pursued by the circuit safety car to obtain their entry fee!

Next month we have The Jolly Roger Run and The Bilkington Round Table Festival.

Chris and Sheila

Northern Ireland Report

It really is so long since I have sent in a report that I nearly have forgotten how to do it. Please don't think that I have forgotten about the Club or anything like that, it's just that firstly, we have been trying to sell our house, had it sold and then the purchaser disappeared. In the mean time, on the strength of having our house sold, we have signed and bought another one.

All things being equal (which they're not), in January I broke a bone in my foot in two places and, partly thanks to our wonderful National Health Service, only one of the breaks has healed. I have since had to pay to go privately into another Clinic and (hopefully) have the job fixed properly. As the injury is to my left foot and my Midget is not an automatic one, I just hope that it will start again and I will be able to yet again enjoy the wind through my receding hair.

I am just off the phone with a prospective member and I had to tell him about our intended house move and how it would change my activities in the Club. We are not just moving around the corner or even a few miles down the road but are making a complete job of it and are moving over to SCOTLAND of all places (to join Carson and his cronies). That has just reminded me of something. After having dug to a depth of 1000 metres last year, Scottish scientists found traces of copper wire dating back 1000 years and came to the conclusion that their ancestors already had a telephone network more than 1000 years ago. Not to be outdone by the Scots, in the weeks that followed, English scientists dug to a depth of 2000 metres and shortly afterwards headlines in the UK newspapers read English archaeologists have found traces of 2000 year

old fibre – optic cable and have concluded that their ancestors already had an advanced high – tech digital communications network a thousand years earlier than the Scots. About a week later, an Irish newspaper reported the following: After digging as deep as 5000 metres in a County Mayo bog, Irish scientists have found absolutely nothing. Therefore, they have concluded that 5000 years ago, Ireland's residents were already using wireless technology."

This will mean that I will no longer be able to try to fulfill my duties of Northern Ireland Area Representative (as if anyone would notice) and I hope that other members on the island

across the IRISH SEA will still be talking to me ! Which reminds me, if anyone wants to buy a 1962 Mk 1 Midget, a Club member over here has one for sale.

During my time as an Area Rep, I have tried (mostly in vain) to get more of the Midget and Sprite owners over here to join THE Club but have found it a rather thankless task. I think that there are only about three or four members over here and I have made it my job to travel about and see all of them. A not too onerous task. I have also tried to find someone to replace me as Area Rep but, so far, I have been unsuccessful. Any Offers ?

Barry Stange

A Rainy Day in Essex

Sunday May 13th was the day of the Battlesbridge Classic Car Show. Normally a very large event with a good selection of all types of classics from years gone, and normally a very hot dry day. However this year the day started with a light drizzle and no chance of getting better. This however did not dampen my spirits as I pulled the car out of the garage hoping that the Midget would start with no trouble as it was still early and the choke is not fully working yet and I'm sure next door like there lay ins on a Sunday morning.

The gates to the cars opened at 8am and I was first in the cue so I could get round the auto jumble before 10am when the public gates were open, this was a good move as my dad and I found some really good buy's.

It wasn't to long and I spotted a smart black 1500 next to my car and this turned out to be Pete from the Kent area who was followed by Jon and his rather quick early Midget, I knew this due to sharing a track day with him some months back. The third car was Alan from Kent and his Sebring replica, he did tell me he was going to bring his Frogeye, but due to the weather the solid roof of the Sebring one the toss for who was going which I confess to being glad about as I must admit it is one of my favourite Spridgets I have come across.

The fifth car for our display was Chris from Maldon and his mint Frogeye, although he lives not to far away he just got the car back

on the road for the show and only got back in the country the day before from his hols. Car number six was Bridget a very nice blue 1500 driven by John and Ann from Romford.

Gary L from London area and bridges run fame was due to come but was taken ill so I hope your feeling better reading this Gary, and for the second year Bob Ts Midget did not want to play so I think next time Bob we will keep the show a secret from the car untill your there. This was a shame as those that have seen it would agree the EFI engine in his car always attracts a crowd.

I would like to say a very big thankyou to these members that came even though the weather was not on our side and every one had a good time, Jon got himself a new 5-speed gearbox, Alan got to get his hands dirty taking the bell housing off to fit it in the boot of Jons car, Pete got to show how well his nice new mohair roof worked in the rain. I think Chris got to realize how much he liked his bed after just getting back from holiday and John and Ann just seemed to be glad to have a reason to be out in Bridget even in the rain as they were last to leave with me and were full of encouragement on getting a monthly Essex meet set up so with members like these I have got to get sorting a meet closer to the top of the list of things to do.

Lee Reed

Notes from London (and King's Lynn)

Part Two



On arrival at the base and further security checks, I was greeted by the sight of all kinds of four wheeled machinery. None of it older than ten years, and all of it way way faster than my frogeye. Ranging from Lamborghinis, Ferraris, Hot hatches, pure track racing Lotus Sevens, Elises and assorted other track day cars up to 1000bhp Japanese twin turbo charged testosterone filled Nissan GTR's and other assorted automotive exotica. Probably more than a hundred cars in total.

I was beginning to feel quite nervous about driving around a track at full belt with such an assortment of monsters doing the same, but during the briefing, the rules and etiquette were explained along with information that that the airfield is so wide and long that there would be more than enough room for everybody to drive without tripping over each other and loads of run-off space. In fact the main straight was over one mile long and 60 meters wide. Which was just as well as while I was blasting down it between 90-100mph; some of the very fastest cars were overtaking me 100mph faster!

They may have shot past me at full speed but under braking and around the tight twisty parts of the circuit, the little Sprite really came into its own. It was the first time that I had really pushed the car as hard as I could and even though people had always told me how good Spridgets were around corners, it wasn't until I had gone hell for leather with no fear of hitting anything, that I was able to experience the handling to its maximum. The car's

cornering was very impressive especially due to its up rated front telescopic suspension and Toby's nice sticky tyres. And it really didn't disgrace its self even compared to much more exotic and expensive machinery. I now understand my car's limits much more than I did before the track day and feel even more confident about its abilities.

The day was fantastic value for money and I was able to spend a full three hours (6 x 30 minute sessions) on track during which the car didn't miss a beat even though I was continuously thrashing it to within an inch of its life. I can almost guarantee than no one irrespective of how expensive or powerful their car was, had as good a time as me and drove the whole day with a bigger grin on their face

Furthermore the weekend raised £16,000 for the base's chosen charities and everybody had a fantastic time thanks to an excellent event organised with great care and enthusiasm by the people at RAF Marham.

My only one regret was that my car was the only classic there on the day and was probably thirty five to forty years older than the next oldest car. So next year it would be nice to have some other Spridgets along with me share the experience.

All you need is a full face crash helmet, a nicely secured fire extinguisher, a car with brakes, suspension and steering in good condition and a sense of adventure and it will be sure to be an experience that you will remember for a long time to come.

You might also like to apologise to your very generous friends in advance that racing 120 miles on a track at full speed and sliding around corners at the very edge of your (their) tyres adhesion does absolutely nothing to prolong the tyres life. Sorry Toby!

I estimate that in all I must have driven in excess of 320 miles that day, and most of it, on or above the national speed limit. Which goes to show just how robust and enjoyable these little cars are. I can't wait!

Gary Lazarus, London

Dutch Report

Last month we saw pictures of Alex's Midget project and he is still working hard to get it finished before our annual Dutch Spridgetrun on the 8/9th of september. But that's not all he has to work on. Last weekend we participated in the Annual two day Octagon Tour organised by the Dutch MGCC. Alex drove his MGB (sorry for swearing) and I drove my Midget... at least that was the plan.

On the Saturday Alex blew his headgasket and was towed home but did however return as quick as possible in aVauxhall Astra. Never mind Alex, your company was well appreciated at dinner.

I wasn't without troubles myself because after months of my car being on stands I was still working on it on Friday evening only hours before I was expected to start. As I was running out of time and my supplier couldn't find the proper clutch parts to go hydraulic I build the cable back in only this time improved so it will last a bit longer (hopefully).

A friend of mine joined me on the Friday evening test drive, without the bonnet/hood and reg.numbers on the car so needless to say we drew some attention from other road users (luckily no police!). Because of the time pressure, my head was full of things of still to do on the car to be able to make it to the run on time and when I was fuelling up the Midget I wasn't really paying attention and filled her up with...DIESEL!! Even worse is that I totally didn't notice my mistake and went of to do some extra testing and with in 1.5 miles when I looked in my rearview mirror I was suprised to see massive white smoke/clouds coming from my exhaust. That could only mean 2 things I thought: either we have a new Pope or my headgasket (K-series weakness) is blown, I guessed it would be the

second option... The car was however still driving (unbelievable!) so we returned to my



workshop and called up Bas to tell him I wasn't going to make it to the start.

That's it, I thought, until the next morning I noticed my fuel ticket and saw the word diesel on it... what the @#*#!!! What a idiot I've been!! Stupid me (I tried but couldn't find anybody else to put the blame on). I immediately called Bas again that I would be a little later but still was planning to come over. Completely flushed out the fuel system and run it with the proper fuel again until the white clouds disappeared and the car was running smoothly again. I hopped in the car and joined the others and finished the 300miles run without any hiccup from the Midget. Apparently I don't mind a little diesel and my guess is everything inside the engine is now well lubricated by the diesel because it have never run so smoothly!

By the time you read this we (the Midget and I) will have visited MG-Silverstone. At the end of July I'm coming over again to join our fellow *MASCOTeers* at Classic Silverstone and travel from there to the monthly Yorkshire MASC natter and on to Scotland as I did in 2005 and hope to see more from the Isle Of Skye.

Don't forget the Spridgetrun on the 8/9th of September and there will be English roadbooks available so everybody is invited to come over and join us in Holland!

For any info on Spridgets activities or whatever Spridget things in Holland contact me at ariedebest@planet.nl or phone me on 0031 622467633.

Arie

Linc'slot

On Sunday 20 May, four of our merry band, ventured south and joined the Yorkshire and the Home Counties North West groups, for the second day of their Rutland Raiders foray. Pete and Mary, Sue and myself, cruised down Ermine Street and found a great array of Spridgets in the pub car park at Empingham.

Our thanks to Anita for the welcome and introductions. We met loads of great people from other groups, with great cars. (They know who they are.) Someone had gone to a lot of trouble to create a smashing route on narrow country roads, through beautiful thatched villages, built of mellow brown sandstone. Everybody and his horse (or bike) seemed to be out taking advantage of the good weather. It was nice to see good road manners prevailing.

The first stop was at the Nene Valley Steam Railway. The final destination being the late Geoff Hamiltons garden, Barnsdale.

It was good to meet some of the authors of this great little magazine. And we look forward to meeting some of them again soon on our Wolds Run to Cadwell Park on Sunday the 8 July. Ring me for details on 01522 531425 or 07952 969514.

Well now – Thursday 7 June saw us at the White Hart at Lissington LN3 5AE. Almost a full complement of members apart from Lizzie,

who couldn't make it. Also welcome to Gary, who turned up out of the blue, in his white Frogeye Sprite. Tim and Jill came in yet another newly acquired car – an MGB of rather good quality. Pete had a drive round in it and pronounced it 'very nice'.

We had the usual chat about holidays – Mary and Pete had been sailing in the Lakes; the state of our Midget – not bad but no brakes. Photos shown, all relevant to our group; and a discussion about how wet Minis can get when you're least expecting it. All in all a very cheery evening.

Gary left followed shortly by Tim and Jill in their lovely growly MGB. Pete chose now to announce those immortal words I can't find the car keys!!! It soon dawned that the keys had gone off with Tim and Jill in the MGB. Frantic phone calls to switched off mobiles eventually resulted in Pete and Mary leaving their 1500 Midget at the pub for the night, whilst they were transported home by a daughter.

After all the excitement, we were ready for cocoa and sleep.

As well as Cadwell we are also hoping to visit East Kirkby to see the Lancaster taxiing, and possibly a Spitfire in flight. Contact Brian for details. Happy Spridgeting.

Brian and Sue Jeffery

German Spridget Register

Hi Barry,

It would be great, if you could publish some reports from the German Spridget Register in your magazine.

German report:

The German Midget and Sprite register was established in the year 2005. Until today we have 200 members in our register which is free of charge. Every year we arrange a meeting in different places of Germany. The first meeting we had in 2006, which took place in Girod/Westerwald. 50 teams from Germany, England and the Netherlands participated. This year the meeting will be in Rellingen near

Hamburg from the 15th – 17th of June. All our Spridgetfriends from foreign countries are very welcome.

Since the beginning of this year, we have a new homepage. You can find it under www.spridgets.net If anybody wants to be registered, just fill out the registration form and click on ab geht's. It's free of charge, of course. Please send a photo of your car to marcus.pieper@spridgets.net Best regards

Marcus Pieper

Please apologise the mistakes in my translation. Hope there were not too many!

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Bristol Area Report

After missing the April and May Bristol Area meetings, it was good to get along to a couple of local events all within 5 days. First was the Classic and Sportscar Action Day at Castle Combe (full report next month). From the Bristol Group, Alan Lo, Ken Payne, Colin Gale, Phil Sellen, Andy Cross and TH were joined by 5 cars from the Home Counties Group, 3 from Warwickshire plus several others, in all, some 17 Spridgley things filled the MASC area in the Paddock. A figure that no doubt the Editor will confirm as being somewhere near the truth as Barry and Jill, with their Innocenti Spider, were there too. Also good to see again, Denis and Heather Matthews who happened to get their Midget in with a spare pass from another Club, quite rightly, they felt it only fair to leave their Midget on that club's stand. Geoff and Marie Wilkinson also appeared but not with their white Frogeye.

Alan was proud to display his latest tasteful and attractive Midget adornments, and by this I am not referring to the Ace Mercury wheels trims! No, Alan stood in front of the OMITV with a grin wider than the radiator grille – with a feminine type perched on each front wing. Could this be where the term Rubber Bumpers was first coined? The evidence was well photographed ... and may even appear in a plain brown envelope on its way to Mrs Lo. Anyway, the postman had obviously not delivered by the following Wednesday as Alan was still being allowed to go out and play with his Spridgley Thing friends at club night.



Meeting at the Rose and Crown at Pucklechurch, the previous few days of Roof off weather gave way to rain. Feeling that I should fully support Alan 'Fairweather' Lo by not taking a Spridgley thing out if there should be the slightest chance of it getting wet, I got it totally wrong. The shame of it, I was the only one there without a Spridgley thing for the run to the Vine Tree at Norton. As punishment, I was made to lead the 4 car convoy with Alan, Phil and Colin keeping a close eye. I felt a little better when we met John at our destination; he had arrived from Stroud in something other than a Spridgley thing too. John's Frogeye is subject to restoration as I found out but otherwise, no doubt that would have been there to add to my shame. My only defence, my Frogeye's MOT ran out following the Action Day, so I couldn't have used it anyway, as for my 1967 Sprite, I'm not sure where I left that.

Rose and Crown again for the July meeting on the 2nd Wednesday, please get in touch with Alan as we shall most likely have another evening run.

Terry Horler

Market Place

Adverts to Alan Lo

23 Charnell Road, Staple Hill, Bristol, BS16 5NE
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