

# Mascot



The Magazine  
of the  
Midget & Sprite  
Club





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

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<b>CHAIRPERSON</b>	<b>Nigel Williams</b> , 7 Kings Avenue, Hanham, Bristol BS15 3JN. Tel: 0117 961 2175 email: nigelwilliams7@tiscali.co.uk
<b>GENERAL SECRETARY</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>TREASURER</b>	<b>Anita Lachowicz</b> , 5 Park Grove, Knaresborough, Yorks. HG5 9ET. Tel: 01423 862738 Mobile: 07720 725429 email: spridget.girl@ntlworld.com
<b>EDITOR AND TRADE ADVERTISING AREA REP'S REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Gary Lazarus</b> , 40B Hungerford Road, London, N7 9LP. Tel: 0207700 5696 email: garylazarus@blueyonder.co.uk
<b>TECHNICAL ADVISOR</b>	<b>Alan Anstead</b> , Tel: 01322 384050 Email: alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>Mark Boldry</b> , 5 Park Grove, Knaresborough, Yorks. HG5 9ET. Mob: 07887 799033 Email: mark.boldry@ntlworld.com
<b>GENERAL MEMBER</b>	<b>John Platt</b> , 2 Pear Tree Gardens, Bearley Road, Aston Cantlow, Henley-in-Arden, Warks. B95 6HT Tel: 01789 488321 email: membership@midgetandspriteclub.co.uk <b>Philip Sellen</b> , 40 Amberley Way, Wickwar, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos, GL12 8LP. Tel: 01454 299222 email: P.N.Sellen@bristol.ac.uk

## OFFICERS

<b>CLUB ARCHIVIST</b>	<b>Terry Horler</b> , 63 Littledean, Yate, Bristol, BS37 8UQ. Tel: 01454 881770
<b>EVENTS CO-ORDINATOR</b>	<b>Gary Lazarus</b> , 40B Hungerford Road, London, N7 9LP. Tel: 0207700 5696 email: garylazarus@blueyonder.co.uk
<b>MEMBERS ADVERTISING</b>	<b>Alan Lo</b> , Tel: 0117 9572617 Mob: 0775 3867806 email: alan@mobuzzing.net
<b>MUTUAL ASSISTANCE</b>	<b>David Hill</b> , Llyserfan, Beulah, Newcastle Emlyn, Ceredigion. SA38 9QB. Tel: 01239 811307 email: david@hillnet.clara.net
<b>CO-ORDINATOR</b>	<b>Bob Clarkson</b> , Tel: 01902 842643 email: raclarkson@tiscali.co.uk
<b>CAR REGISTER</b>	<b>Mike Grout</b> , 55 Park Road, Spixworth, Norwich, NR10 3PJ. Tel: 01603 890211 email: mike@motorparts.freemove.co.uk
<b>REGALIA OFFICER</b>	<b>Toby Ancombe</b> , 7 Lysander Court, High Road, North Weald, Epping, CM16 1HF. email: tobyancombe@taratec.co.uk
<b>WEBMASTER</b>	

## AREA REPRESENTATIVES

<b>BRISTOL</b>	<b>Terry Horler</b> , Tel: 01454 881770
<b>CAMBRIDGESHIRE</b>	<b>David Dixon</b> , Tel: 01733 222810 email: e-dave@ntlworld.com
<b>DEVON</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>DORSET</b>	<b>Ian Beaver</b> , Tel: 01722 326840 email: ian.beaver@btinternet.com
	<b>Bryan Fox</b> , Tel: 01202 683842 home, 01202 674017 work email: sueandbry@x877.wanadoo.co.uk
	<b>Vacant</b>
<b>ESSEX</b>	<b>Terry Langridge</b> , Tel: 01252 626063 email: Hampshire.spridget@ntlworld.com
<b>HAMPSHIRE</b>	<b>Chris Jackson</b> , Tel: 01707 261567 chrispat@holwell8.freemove.co.uk
<b>HOME COUNTIES</b>	or <b>Mark Hall</b> , Tel: 01296 660103 markdhal@aol.com
<b>NORTH WEST</b>	<b>Alan Anstead</b> , Tel: 01322 384050 email: alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
<b>KENT</b>	<b>Brian Jeffery</b> , Tel: 01522 531425 or mobile: 07952 969514 email: brianlincoln@yahoo.co.uk
<b>LINCOLNSHIRE</b>	<b>Gary Lazarus</b> , Tel: 020 7700 5696 email: garylazarus@blueyonder.co.uk
<b>LONDON</b>	<b>Bill Mohan</b> , Tel: 0121 353 7211 or mobile: 0798 461 6371 email: bill.mohan@btinternet.com
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<b>NORTH WEST</b>	<b>Ian Cooke</b> , Tel: 0115 938 3838 email: ilc@bgs.ac.uk
<b>NORTHERN IRELAND</b>	<b>Dave Bearne</b> , Tel: 01823 412004 email: david.bearne@lloydstsb.co.uk
<b>NOTTS/DERBY</b>	<b>Alan Anstead</b> , Tel: 01322 384050 email: alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
<b>SOMERSET</b>	<b>Alan Couch</b> , Tel: 01564 773302
<b>SURREY</b>	<b>Chris Yates</b> , Tel: 01608 665066 email: chrishe@tiscali.co.uk
<b>WARWICKSHIRE</b>	<b>Vacant</b>
	<b>Anita Lachowicz</b> , Tel: 01423 862738 or mobile: 07720 725429 email: spridget.girl@ntlworld.com

Also see the Club Nights section on page 4 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

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# Editorial

December, Christmas and cold (at least it is while I'm writing this at the end of November). It's here, the end of the year. And a very mixed year it's been too. The world teeters on the edge of economic oblivion. The giant motor manufacturers of Detroit sink slowly into the sunset (well that's my take on it anyway), while our native bumblebee population is suffering disease that could jeopardise its very existence.

On the plus side, interest rates are very low and looking to drop further (which is a God-send for those of us with mortgages), MG, albeit under Chinese ownership, goes back into limited production at Longbridge. The English football team (apologies to Carson's chums) seem to have lost their losing way and I'm reliably informed that our Cricket and Rugby teams will soon follow suit. There is a new President (elect) of the USA and we have young Lewis Hamilton as the F1 World Champion.

In a smaller way, our Spridget world has had a tremendously successful year. The high point obviously, being the Spridget50 "Birthday Party" at Gaydon in May: 1100 rally plaque tickets sold, thousands of pounds raised for Charity and most certainly the largest collection of Spridgets ever assembled in one place at one time.

The whole event, while bringing together the five main Spridget related car clubs, was conceived by MASC club member Steve Clark and with no less than twelve of the seventeen organising committee being MASC members, the club played an enormous part in the event's undoubted success.

The club also celebrated its 25th Birthday and continues to go from strength to strength. You only had to look at our stand at last month's NEC show to see how popular our cars continue to be. As well as the ten magnificent Spridgets assembled, there was barely a moment when the whole stand (and it was large) wasn't thronging with visitors and club members alike. Many thanks to all involved.

The club has a new committee and the result of the ballot is:

Nigel Williams (Chairperson) 111 Votes  
Anita Lachowicz (Treasurer) 122 votes  
Gary Lazarus (Editor and Trade Advertising) 127 votes  
John Platt (Membership) 123 votes  
Alan Anstead (Area Reps. Representative) 121 votes  
Mark Boldry (Technical Advisor) 113 votes  
Phil Sellen (General Member) 117 votes  
There were a total of 33 abstentions and no spoil papers.

We say goodbye and many thanks to Bill Mohan and Toby Anscombe (who remains as webmaster) and I'm sure that after their well deserved year off in 2009, will be back putting themselves up for election to the Committee in the future.

We would also like to say thank you to all the unsung heroes, the Club Officers and Area Reps. They are the ones who actually make the Club the success that it is.

Have a safe, happy and healthy festive season and I'll see you all again in the New Year.

Deadline for area reports and articles for January's Mascot is Friday the 12 of December.

*Gary & Gaps*

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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.

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*Front cover picture:*

*Martin Ingall's Jade Green Sebring Coupé on the Monte Carlo Challenge 1995*

# Club Nights

- 2nd Tuesday **London Area** (Congestion Zone) – **Note Changed day & Venue!** Meet at The Ace Cafe at 7:30pm together with the Classic Cars Magazine night. Will revert to The Plumbers Arms, Belgravia next spring. 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 Plough**, Potterhanworth Booths, LN4 2AU, south east of Lincoln on B1190 at B1202 junction. 8pm. Contact Brian Jeffery, 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 Saturday **Yorkshire Area** – Contact me, Anita 01423 862738 or 07720 725429 email spridget.girl@ntlworld.com for details of the December meeting.
- 2nd Wednesday **Warwickshire** – Meet at **The Green Dragon**, The Green, Sambourne, Redditch, B96 6NU, at 8.30pm as usual.
- 2nd Wednesday **North West Area** meet at **The Kilton**, turn off M6 at Jct 20 onto A50 towards Macclesfield. Pub 4 miles on left. Please note new venue.
- 2nd Wednesday **Bristol Area** will meet at **The Rose & Crown**, Pucklechurch at 8pm. All Bristol, Bath and surrounding areas members welcome. Contact Terry Horler on 01454 881770
- 2nd Thursday **Cambridgeshire** – Meet at **The Mad Cat** pub in Pidley Village, midway between Huntingdon & 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, 7.00pm onwards. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050. alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
- 4th Thursday **Sussex** – Meet at the **Friar Oak**, Hassocks, from 19:00. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050. alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
- 4th Thursday **Hampshire** – Meet at **The Poacher**, South Warnborough. 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. alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
- Last Wednesday **Home Counties North West** for members in Herts, Beds, Bucks, Berks, N. London or anyone interested! Meet at the Chequers Inn, Redbourn, AL3 7AD from 6:30pm. Please contact Chris Jackson Tel: 01707 261567 or Mark Hall, Tel: 01296 660103
- Last Thursday **Somerset** – Meet at **The Lord Nelson**, Norton-sub-Hamdon. 8.00pm
- Most Sunday Lunchtimes **Wiltshire** – Meet at **The Spotted Cow**, Marston Meysey
- NEW NEW NEW !!! We are hoping to start a South West Wales Area and are planning a first meeting in January. Details in January's **MASCOT**.

# Club Website

Members Only pages for December,

User name: Micro Password: Blister

## Events

From David Hill & Webmaster Toby Anscombe

### Events organised for 2008

#### December

- Sunday 7th Cambridgeshire Area are having their Christmas Dinner at the Mad Cat, Pidley. Contact Dave Dixon on 01733 222810
- Wednesday 10th Warwickshire Area's Christmas Dinner at The Green Dragon. Details from Sheila Yates, 01608 665066 or email: [chrishe@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:chrishe@tiscali.co.uk)
- Sunday 14th Dorset Area's Christmas Meal at Bulbury Woods Golf Club. 12:30 for 1pm. Please ring Ian Beaver on 01722 326840 or Bryan Fox on 01202 683842
- Tuesday 16th Kent/Surrey/Sussex Area's Christmas Meal at Woodman Public House, Sevenoaks, TN14 6BU. No other area meetings this month.

#### 2009

##### May

- Saturday 23rd To Tuesday 26th South East Area's Westward Ho! Tour. Visiting Somerset, Exmoor and North Devon. Book now or you may be too late. Details Julie: [john\\_julie@mac.com](mailto:john_julie@mac.com) or Helen: [h.ward@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:h.ward@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk)

##### June

- Sunday 7th Dorset Area will be attending the New Forest Run organised by MGOC 1009. Further details from Ian Beaver on 01722 326840.
- Thursday 11th To Sunday 14th South East Area's annual June Battlefield Tour visiting museums, monuments and castles around Amiens. Contact Alan Anstead, [alan.anstead@btopenworld.com](mailto:alan.anstead@btopenworld.com).
- Sunday 14th Dorset Area are organising their annual "MGs at Kingston Lacy" with all proceeds to Dorset Air Ambulance. Further details from Ian Beaver on 01722 326840.

##### August

- Sunday 16th South East Area's Bar-B-Q chez Ashley & Denise. Details from [AdsanHinton@aol.com](mailto:AdsanHinton@aol.com)

##### September

- Saturday 12th To Tuesday 22nd MASC's Miglia Tour through France, Switzerland & Italy including Circuit des Remparts at Angouleme. Details from Alan Anstead, [alan.anstead@btopenworld.com](mailto:alan.anstead@btopenworld.com).
- Friday 18th To Tuesday 22nd Angouleme Tour for Circuit des Ramparts and joining with returning MASC Miglia Tour. Details from Alan Anstead, [alan.anstead@btopenworld.com](mailto:alan.anstead@btopenworld.com)

## December

Tuesday 15th

South East Area's Christmas Party. Details from Alan Anstead,  
alan.anstead@btopenworld.com

## 2010

### July

South East Area are going to the Le Mans Classic 2010. Yes really! These events take advanced planning to secure accommodation. There is a provisional list and I will be seeking non refundable deposits around May 2009.

Area Reps please let David Hill (email: david@hillnet.clara.net)  
have confirmed dates for new events asap.

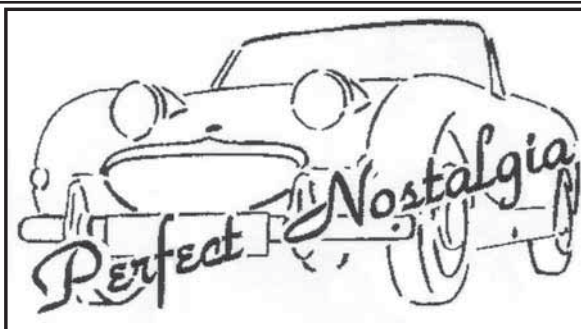
Remember there are Club Night Natters throughout the year  
and that area events are also open to members from other areas!

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.

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# The Lucas RB106 Control Box

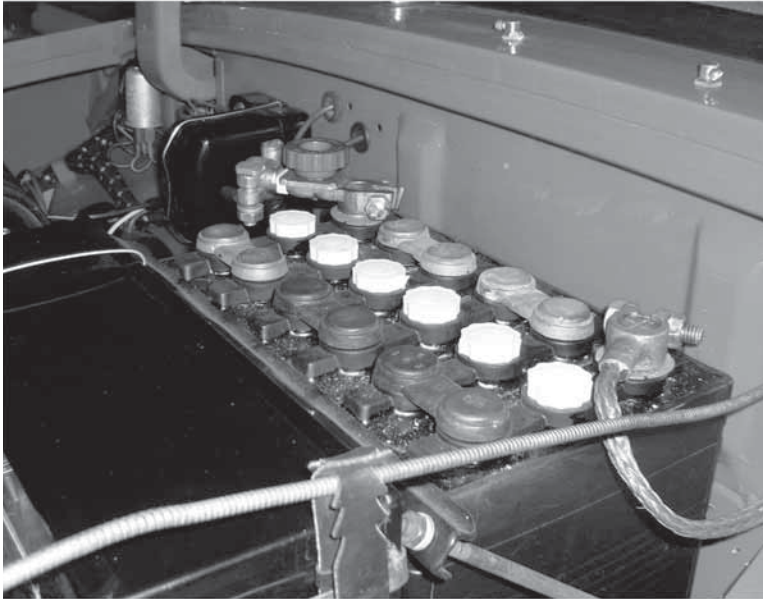
## Part 6: The Battery

In Part one we noted that it is very difficult indeed to understand how the RB106 control box works unless we first understand what it is designed to control (and why, indeed, any sort of control is required at all). For this reason, Part two was devoted entirely to a discussion of the dynamo and Parts three through five concentrated almost exclusively upon how the RB106 control box is connected to (and controls the output of) the dynamo. The battery itself has so far received scant attention. But the RB106 box must also control the battery and this is the moment in our story when this vital component moves to centre stage and commands our full attention. Although the battery is often regarded as a 'fit and forget' component, we cannot afford to forget it here: we need to understand (or at least to glimpse) why the battery places stringent demands upon the design of the RB106 control box. We have seen already that the box controls the battery and dynamo as we motor along. Quid pro quo, the battery controls the design of the box.

First of all, we must appreciate that the battery is far and away the most powerful part of the RB106 charging circuit. While the standard Spridget dynamo can produce little more than a piffling 22 amps at 12 volts, the car's lead/acid battery can sit quietly for weeks, minding its own business and doing nothing at all, and then instantly produce more than 200 amps to drive the starter motor and fire the engine! The chemical reaction inside the battery that is able to produce suddenly this explosive power is one of two really violent chemical reactions that occur under a Spridget's bonnet. The battery therefore deserves the utmost respect and it should always be disconnected if there is the slightest chance of an accidental short circuit. For the unwary, the battery is a big accident waiting to happen. If a fully charged battery is short circuited via a gold ring on a finger for example, the result can be molten gold and a piercing scream, followed by a

short trip to the local hospital. Rubber gloves and safety glasses should always be used when handling the battery's liquid (which is not-so-dilute sulphuric acid) because a splash in the eye can cause permanent damage to one's sight and a longer trip to a major hospital. If a spanner is dropped carelessly on top of a 1960's period style battery with exposed lead bridges connecting the cells (Figure 1), the result can be giant sparks, molten lead and a hot spanner. Although a modern battery with enclosed connectors will often look curiously out of place in the engine compartment of an early Spridget, and will probably lose concours points, it is a much safer unit (much more immune to the dropped-spanner accident).

While the battery is definitely the most powerful component of the RB106 charging system, it is also the most fragile: it is a part that one expects to replace at irregular intervals during a car's lifetime. 'Tyre, battery and Exhaust' businesses abound and have always thrived whereas voltage control boxes and dynamos have often outlived the rest of the vehicle. The reasons for the battery's limited service life are not difficult to understand because the plates inside any lead acid battery designed for starting automotive engines must be relatively thin to provide the large surface area necessary to provide large instantaneous bursts of current for the starter motor. If the plates are too thin they will be too fragile and the battery will have too-short a life. Conversely, if the plates are too thick the battery may live longer but be an impossibly heavy and expensive object. A modern car battery is a high tech balance between several conflicting factors and it is capable of delivering excellent performance and long service life – but only if it is maintained correctly. While we are able to perform some of the essential maintenance ourselves by fussing with hydrometers, regularly checking for clogged vent holes, topping up if necessary and regular float charging if the vehicle is laid up during the



*Figure 1. A 1960's period battery with exposed lead bridges connecting its cells. The RB106 control box is visible here in the background (the most sophisticated component in the whole vehicle?)*

winter months, it is the RB106 control box which provides continuous maintenance of an early Spridget's battery while the engine is running and the cut-out switch is closed. A properly adjusted control box is *essential* if the battery is to perform correctly and enjoy a long life. But what does 'properly adjusted' really mean in this context? We must now stop waffling and making vague qualitative statements such as "the regulated dynamo voltage must not be too high or it will damage the battery". We need to be quantitative. We need to know precisely how high is "too high"? One volt or ten? And must this be accurate to the nearest volt or to the nearest one hundredth of a volt? In short, we need to take a cold, hard, flinty-eyed look at some real numbers, fast.

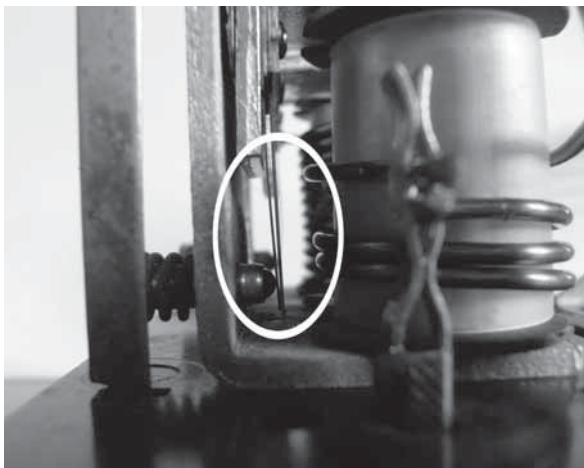
When fully charged at 20 degrees centigrade, a 12 volt lead acid battery is not 12 volts at all, but somewhere between 12.6 and 12.8 volts (2.10-2.13 volts per cell). If this battery is to receive a continuous-preservation (float) charge, the correct charging voltage is 13.8 volts PLUS OR MINUS ONLY 0.05 VOLTS. If this charging voltage is too low then damaging deposits of lead sulphate will slowly build up inside the battery. If the voltage is too high then corrosion of plates and loss of electrolyte will occur, with

potentially explosive quantities of hydrogen gas being evolved in the process. Thus the voltage setting of the RB106's regulator needs to be set very precisely indeed, using an extremely accurate voltmeter. Five hundredths of a volt is not a lot and if this intelligence causes a sharp intake of breath then be prepared for an even greater shock because these numbers are all temperature dependent. The voltage of a lead acid battery *changes with temperature* and, for proper charging, the regulator's voltage setting must change by -0.1V for every 10 degree centigrade rise in temperature (and by +0.1V for every 10 degree fall in temperature). In a very real sense, the battery has the character and temperament of a menopausal prima donna: it requires pampering, everything must be just right, within very tight limits, if it is to deliver proper power and enjoy a long, useful and successful career. Although the need to make very delicate temperature dependent adjustments to the regulator's voltage setting seems at first sight impossible, the RB106 control box yet again performs an apparently difficult task in a remarkably economical and ingenious fashion ...

Within the RB106 control box a non-adjustable bi-metal strip is fitted behind the contact

tensioning spring of the regulator (see Figure 2).

The two metals of this strip have different coefficients of expansion and, because the metals are welded together, the combination bends as the temperature changes. As the strip bends it changes the tension of its attached spring and this, in turn, alters the voltage setting of the spring's contacts. In this ingenious way, the delicate and precise adjustments necessary for proper temperature compensation are performed reliably by the RB106, without any fuss or great expense. Many thermostats and other temperature control devices operate in exactly the same way and it is interesting to note that these bi-metal strips were invented by John Harrison and used by him for the first time in the construction of his famous marine timekeeper H-3. If you are fed up with reading about RB106 control boxes, try reading Dava Sobel's book 'Longitude' (ISBN 1-85702-502-4) for some light relief – the true and fascinating account of a lone genius who designed a vital part of an early Spridget in the 18th century.



*Figure 2. The bi-metal strip is just visible (outlined) in this photograph of a late model RB106 regulator. In this view, the series and load turns on the bobbin (see Part 5) are also visible to the right of the strip*

This completes our description of the RB106 control box. Next month, Part 7 will be entitled 'Testing and Fixing'. But be warned: the emphasis will be on 'testing' because very few amateur workshops possess the equipment necessary for properly adjusting the regulator.

*John E. Davies (Member 3443)  
jed2@cam.ac.uk*

## Mutual Assistance Directory

When this month's **MASCOT** lands on your doormat, or in our case, into the teeth of our pet collie, Christmas will be in about three weeks! Doesn't time fly? However, Christmas is a good time to ask for all those Spridgetly accessories eh? I don't know what to ask FC for but I would like to ask GB (the boss of GB (really UK)) for free road tax for cars over 25yrs old. Our Midget was made in March 1973 and misses the free tax by a few weeks!

Well, I expect that you are all looking forward to your Area Christmas Dinners and hopefully, here in South West Wales, we may have an Area early next year! Please see the Club Nights section of this month's **MASCOT**. If you live near the area please get in touch, we need support. In the meantime, have a great Festive Season!

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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# New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members

4068	Jason Trevorrow	Wiltshire	Midget Mk 3 RWA
4069	Ian West	Surrey	Midget Mk 1
4070	Bastiaan Burger	Netherlands	Frogeye
4071	Doug Plumb	Essex	Midget Mk 3 RWA
4072	James Ker	London	Midget Mk 3
4073	Daniel Hodder	Lincolnshire	Sprite Mk 4
4074	Dave Matthews	West Midlands	Frogeye

A correction to last month's New member's car photos: Paul Woolmer's yellow Sprite "46 BXN" is of course the Ex-Peter Jackson, Peel alloy bodied Coupe and not a WSM as was stated. My thanks go to Jack Wheeler for the correction. **Gary**



*Jason Trevorrow's Midget Mk 3 RWA*



*Bastiaan Burger's Frogeye*



*Doug and Jenny Plumb's Midget Mk 3 RWA*



*Daniel Hodder's Sprite Mk 4*

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**268 Kingston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7QA**

# My Motoring Recollections



Strange how some things arise from small beginnings. In my case a chance conversation with Alan Anstead at a recent Leeds Castle classic car show in Kent started me thinking about the cars that I have owned. Like most owners all my previous cars have been discarded when I had either worn them out or changing needs dictated them moving on. Having recently sold a classic Lotus I now regret my fickle youth when I recall some of the desirable cars that have passed through my hands. Some cars are just hazy recollections but others are still vivid and trigger fond memories. One fond memory related to my 1958 Austin Healey Sprite Mk1 (Frogeye), registration number VYN 337 which replaced a less memorable modified black Austin A35 saloon. Both were used for "plot and bash" road rallying in addition to everyday use. The A35 had Sprite twin SU's and side exhaust but no brakes and that is where the similarity ends.

Again a chance suggestion led me to the DVLA website and surprise surprise my old Sprite is still alive and on the road after some fifty years. Other cars I have owned eg. MG Midget Mk 3, Opel Manta were no longer listed as being registered. After searching in my loft, I came across a number of sprite related memorabilia including my Sprite purchase receipt dated 20th June 1964, complete with 6d stamp (old pre decimal money). Suddenly I thought it would be nice to be able to share some of the memories with the current owner whoever they are.

My Sprite was first owned by George Cooper the brother of Henry of Cassius Clay boxing fame and it was then purchased by a good friend of mine from a garage in Catford, South London. After a few years of ownership my friend decided to "up-grade" to a MGA and hence VYN 337 became mine for the sum of £305. As previously mentioned, I intended to rally the Sprite and joined the Sevenoaks Motor club but it soon became apparent that I needed more performance to compensate for a lack of driving ability.

Although being single at the time, my hard earned money was soon being spent. Whatever the Sprite needed that is what it

got. Following failure of the dished pistons the rebuild included a fully balanced engine with flat top pistons, modified Mini Cooper cylinder head, up-rated BMC camshaft, lightened cast valve rockers, sports exhaust system, oil cooler, plus front anti-roll bar, eight inch front drum brakes (taken from a later Austin A40) and radial tyres etc.

Without a rolling road getting the induction right was very trial and error with the original 1 $\frac{1}{8}$  SU's being replaced with firstly 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  then 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  versions and I even tried a DCEO 40 Webber but that was just too big.

Rallying success was limited with many "scary moments" whilst chasing the Mini Coopers but my navigator Rodney Eastaugh and I did get a mention in the "Motoring News" when we hit a tree which suddenly appeared when I was not looking one dark and wet night.

Eventually I decided to buy an early tuned 998cc Mini Cooper and so the Sprite was Kemp. I am amazed that VYN 337 is still alive and would like to talk to the owner and pass on some of the early history. He/she may or may not know anything about the Sprite or possibly has been unable to trace me but so far my efforts have not been successful. It was suggested that I write to the DVLA but they returned my letter and declined to pass it on to the current registered owner. The cost of returning my letter was the same as passing it on – miserable lot!

Alan Anstead suggested e-mailing Ray English in Australia with chassis numbers etc which I did and I now wait and hope.

Although I am no longer in the first flush of youth, I like to think I am still enjoying my motoring and although recently having sold my 1972 Lotus Europa Twin Cam, I now have a Lotus Elise series 2 with 160 bhp to play with. I just wonder if I will have good memories of the Elise in another forty five years – if I am still around.

**Vaughn Rackham**  
vrackham@tiscali.co.uk

# Representing the Regions

Following the recent election for the Masc National Committee I now find myself in post as the Area Representatives Representative. Thank you all those people that voted for me.

I bought my green Frogeye in 1969 when a poor apprentice toolmaker. Over the years the car and I have had many exciting and enjoyable experiences both at home and abroad. You may have seen pictures of me, with the car, in various motoring magazines. In 1993 I joined Masc. I became a member of Surrey Section which was run by David Wright. David put in sterling work as an area rep until Christmas 2006 when I took over the role. Prior to that date I had retired from work and built a Sebring Coupe rep to share the garage with my Frogeye. In 2006 I also set up a Kent section taking on the admin side of Sussex in 2007 and bringing all three sections under the South East Area Banner.

I have been running tours and events under the Masc banner for several years but was

becoming increasingly concerned as to roles / responsibilities / and liabilities involved when organising club meetings and tours. What, even, is the definition of a club meet? Speaking with other reps it became apparent that some shared my concerns whilst others had not given the matters consideration.

Following yesterday's (9/11/08) National Committee Meeting Masc is to join the Federation of British Historic Vehicle Clubs and through them I hope to be able to find direction and guidance that can be passed on to the regions.



*Alan Anstead*

**PETER FLYNN**  
CLASSIC CARS

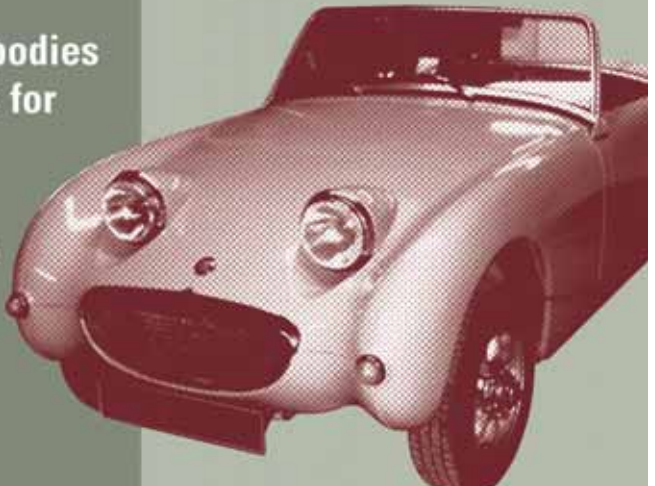
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GATWICK



# The French, Swiss and Italian Job

## Part 3 (or, The Charge of the Penarth and Worcester Motor Club)



*In this third and final part of their odyssey, we follow Adrian, Dawn, David and Kate's trans-European journey from Bolzano, home to Worcester. The adventure concludes.*

### Monday July 28th. Bolzano

The morning was spent walking the old town and getting our bearings among the narrow streets and galleries with their shops and restaurants. Our hotel overlooks the Waltherplatz, a lively place during the day and a noisy, bustling place in the evening with people looking for watering-holes and restaurants. At midday we set off, heading east up the Val d'Ega and over the Passo di Costalunga at 6600ft., the Passo Pordoi at 8100ft., the Passo di Falzarego at 6800ft., and on to the town of Cortina d'Ampezzo. We arrived during the rush-hour, so we turned north and returned to Bolzano via Dobbiaco and Bressanone, encountering a violent rain-storm on the way. In the mountains, the rain comes very quickly and very heavily, and both us and the inside of the car got a good soaking before I could get the hood up. Driving in these valleys and over these great passes can best be described as 135 miles of Prescott Hillclimb-type roads, challenging, exhilarating, and very satisfying. Well worth the long drive to get here. What will tomorrow have in store for us?

### Tuesday July 29th. Bolzano

We decided that Cortina had to be visited properly, so we returned there via the Val Gardena and the Passo di Sella at 7400ft., and another climb of the Passo Pordoi.

Cortina, famous as a half-way halt and overnight stay on several international rallies of the '60s, is a town of fine hotels and traffic-free streets. It was easy to imagine the wide main street in the 60s full of Minis, big Healeys, and Fords, all parked up and being fettled by hordes of 'works' mechanics. Now it is more peaceful, with tourists and visitors wandering its streets and browsing its fine shops. The return to Bolzano was wet again, but, this time, we were ready and the hood went up in good time.

### Wednesday July 30th. Bolzano

We spent the morning in the town trying to locate some Werthers sweets and check on a few more of the sights of this lovely place. Sweets purchased, we set off to explore the area south of a line between Bolzano and Cortina. The Val Travnola led to the Passo do Rolle at 6200ft. and a nice stop for lunch in a restaurant for 'walkers' with big appetites!

The car was noticeably slower afterwards but we made it to San Martino and through the Val Sugana to Trento for a walkabout. The weather, which in the mountains had been fine and sunny with a nice cool breeze, turned hot and sticky, so a return to the car was called for to provide some cooling air. This area of the Dolomites is very different in character to the northern areas visited during the previous two days – the mountains are a bit lower and less craggy with a covering of trees. The valleys are wider and the whole area is a bit less dramatic with a gentle rolling feel about it, but still great driving country.



*Tea at Ponte di Legno*

### **Thursday July 31st. Bolzano to Chur**

Today was all about the 2 great passes of the Dolomites, the Stelvio and the Gavia. Leaving Bolzano in fine weather we headed north and then west to the Stelvio. The approach is quite ordinary, through a couple of villages and along a climbing and winding road through a valley, just like any other road in the Dolomites. Just when it looks as though the valley is a dead-end, you look up and see the road and pass proper. 43 hairpin bends, or 'Touranti' as the road sign calls them, going up a near-vertical rock face to a summit in the clouds at 8500ft. The bends are tight requiring a wide entry and sometimes an even wider exit. The summit is reached with a mixture of relief and achievement, both car and driver somewhat out of breath. The descent towards Bormio is very different with more sweeping bends rather than hairpins



*The Stelvio pass towards Bormio*

and includes 3 tunnels, with bends in the middle and no lights. The Passo di Garvia is very different: a badly broken and pot-holed road with very few barriers on the outside of the corners, which do little to inspire confidence. Something of a let-down after the Stelvio and a road that I would not want to do again, at least, not until the roadworks have been completed and the surface is more 'car-friendly'. Further passes, the Passo del Aprika and the Passo de Bernino took us to St. Moritz, looking rather ordinary without snow, and on to our overnight stay at Chur. It was a great day, but a pass too far: next time we will miss out the Garvia.

### **Friday Aug. 1st. Chur to la Bresse**

The hotel was not quite as good as the others had been, so we left early. David and Kate decided that they had had enough of the 'up-and-down', the driving kind, so they took the main road route to la Bresse, with a little help from Holly. We headed for the town of Linthal and the Klausenpass, a hill-climb created in 1921 as a direct competitor to Mont Ventoux in France. It climbs to 6400ft. over its 13.4 miles, but is no longer used competitively as Switzerland banned all motorsport after the 1955 Le Mans disaster. Now, it is just a mountain pass linking Linthal to Altdorf, but still a 'must' for the serious driver. The climb is a bit rough and steep and a good challenge, and, not being so well-known as the Stelvio, is relatively traffic-free. But the descent is the really superb piece of civil engineering, the road being 'glued' to the side of a near-vertical valley, and offering wonderful views of waterfalls and white-water rivers. It being the Swiss national holiday, Altdorf was playing host to a street market which required our attention. The market was great, very noisy, colourful, and busy and a very pleasant hour was spent there. Onward north to Luzern, Basel, and back into France at Mulhouse, followed a very pleasant drive over the Vosges mountains to our hotel in la Bresse.

### **Saturday Aug. 2nd. La Bresse to Reims**

A gentle day. La Bresse is a small town in a sloping valley on the side of the Vosges mountains, with a very 'safe' feel about it. We walked the town before setting off north through rolling countryside towards our next



overnight stop at Reims. Lunch was taken in the small village of Coussay in the Orange region at a local watering-hole and was the highlight of the day. The scenery as we travelled north became increasingly flat and arable and the winding roads of the Vosges mountains gave way to long straights with distant horizons. We drove into Reims for a visit to the magnificent cathedral, the place of coronation of the French kings. An interesting drive to our hotel followed; one of those situations where we could see it but not get to it, but well worth it when we arrived.

### **Sunday Aug. 3rd. Reims to Calais**

The day was warm and sunny as we left a very good hotel and drove a short distance to a small piece of motoring history – the old Grand Prix circuit. Racing took place on this public road circuit for 45 years up to 1970: in 1961 Giancarlo Baghetti in a Ferrari won here on his Grand Prix debut, a feat unmatched to this day. The grandstand and pits on the side of the D27 are still there and in the process of being restored. We lined up the cars in Le Mans-style starting positions for a photo-call before driving the circuit, now with much-changed junctions. We continued our journey north to the town of Laon.

Much like Carcassonne, this is a walled town on a hill with ramparts giving fine views of the surrounding countryside. A cathedral and narrow streets full of cafes and browsing shops was a good reason to spend time here and have lunch in one of the many interesting squares. We left Laon to follow the long straight roads north through the Pas de Calais region to the ferry port. By late afternoon a rest halt was called for and we found a delightful Bar/Restaurant with a wedding party in full flow and a charming host who both spoke English and was a classic car enthusiast. A very pleasant hour was spent here with a photo-call for our host sitting in the Healey and wearing a grin as wide as the

Channel, with various friends and relatives admiring the polished engine bay of David's MG. A well-watered and uplifted pair of cars and their crews drove on to our now-familiar hotel in Calais.

### **Monday Aug. 4th. Calais to Worcester**

The Last Charge of the Penarth and Worcester Motor Club was the short distance from our hotel to the ferry, completed in style with hoods down and in bright sunshine. The crossing was smooth, the Duty-free was raided, and a cup of English tea was much enjoyed. We said our farewells to David and Kate at Dover and parted company, they to head home to Penarth, we to visit some friends in Ashford. After lunch we took the motorway back to Worcester, a boring but convenient route, enlivened somewhat by a German camper shedding the contents of roof box just in front of us! We arrived in Worcester as we had left – hood down and in sunshine.

### **Postscript**

We covered 2955 miles in 16 days of driving, both cars never missed a beat and a good time was had by all. There is no doubt that northern Italy and Switzerland provide some of the greatest driving roads in Europe, the Stelvio is challenging and the Klausen is spectacular, but there is far more to the region than just the roads. The scenery is stunning and there is a surprise round every corner. Would we go back there again – yes, but with more horsepower! If anyone wants to bore their friends or relatives, then we can oblige with 9 hours of DVD footage and a whole album full of photographs. To sum it up, it was a wonderful holiday and a great driving experience, made even better by sharing it with someone else. Many thanks David and Kate, it was great to have you both along for the ride.

*Adrian Turley*

# Battery Testing

**M**onday morning, leap into the car just a'bursting with the energy to get started on another working week. Seat belt on and keys in the ignition, turn the key and "Duh!" Try again, "duh!" Nothing happening! It has happened to most of us I expect and we always tend to blame something we did in the car over the weekend, doors open while the vacuum is in use and the stereo chuntering away. Flat battery! You hope!

So it's out with the neighbour's jump leads after plucking up enough courage to disturb him whilst he gets ready for work. How to connect them up? Red to black is it? Hmm cannot remember... So here we are, read this and put the mag where you can always find it. (Or print this off and leave it in the garage)

Safety is important, vitally so. Batteries breathe out hydrogen specially when under stress so it is vital to prevent sparks occurring or you could be going to casualty rather than commuting.

Connect the RED Lead to the positive terminal on the donor battery (Next door neighbour's car?) Connect the other red clamp to the positive (+) terminal on your flat battery.

Connect the BLACK Lead to your donor car's negative terminal first, THEN finally connect the last Black clamp to your ENGINE at least 18 inches away from your battery. This is so that any sparks happen well away from the hydrogen; we don't want your car to imitate the Hindenberg, a very well recorded effect of sparks and hydrogen getting together. Use an unpainted piece of metal and on a Spridget I'd advise using the alternator/dynamo-mounting bracket for this.

Start the car and leave the leads on the battery for five minutes, DON'T just disconnect and drive off. Disconnecting too soon can allow a power surge to damage the electronics in the car, even in relatively unsophisticated cars like ours the stereo could get an overdose of volts if the alternator went into a high output peak. (Show the alternator an empty battery to fill and it will want to, if its regulator is slow or

faulty very high voltages can occur!) Then away you go merrily off to work.

Sometimes though life isn't that fair. If the battery doesn't take the charge you may need to test it. Did you get to work after a twenty, thirty or even more minute drive? Park up and find that the same happens again at work and you cannot drive home? You need to find out whether the battery is any good and for this you need membership of a Motoring Organisation, who will test it for you... Or you need a digital multimeter and the jump leads again.

The car may have a drain in its electrical circuits, maybe a faulty relay or the alarm, stereo etc.

To test for a drain / leak you disconnect one terminal. Always the earth, then complete the circuit between the battery and the lead with the ammeter. (Must be at least 10 amps capable) With ignition off there should be zero amps flow. Any flow and you have a leak, pull out fuses 'til you find the guilty circuit then isolate all the items on it until the leak stops (Yes you have to put the fuse back in to do the checking & isolating!)

If there is no amperage leakage there may be a problem inside the battery. A safe way of testing for the state of health of the battery is to use the car's own systems. Using the starter to put a load on the battery is a very safe method and only uses what is built into the car instead of those big heavy duty "across the battery terminal testers" that the garage trade rely on.

You can't safely use the ammeter to check the starter current because you cannot put the starter motor current through the instrument without damaging it, lots of power there.



Test the battery by disconnecting the coil low tension lead, so the engine wont start, then with the voltmeter across the + and - battery terminals do these readings.

At the beginning the voltage should be around 12.5 and no less than 12.2v. If not charge the battery first to get to 12.2v min. Then with the engine disabled crank the engine for 15 seconds watching the gauge, no not 5 secs or 10 or 12, 15 real seconds is the requirement.



The significant bits are:

1. Always check battery at the standing voltage 12.2 – 12.5v, if car has been running put headlamps on for a minute or so to disperse highly charged state from running. Test must be done at 12.5v to prevent false impressions of good when actually bad. When ignition is turned off the battery can display 13v plus until natural drain has occurred, thus lights on etc.



2. The voltage drop is essential, and the most significant part of the test. Some batteries can crank for ages at 9v instead of 10v, this doesn't matter as long as the drop is only 0.3v, if the drop reaches 0.4v the battery has failed.



From 12.2 volts the voltage should not drop below about 9.9v and the overall volt drop should not be more than 0.3volts when the cranking is underway.

If the battery does drop away it IS faulty. Sometimes this test shows what looked like a good battery for 10 seconds suddenly drop away to 5 or 6 volts. If it does it is out, finito!



Non-destructive testing like this is far safer than slamming a load inducing great resistor tester across the terminals, firstly because inducing sparks across the terminals of a battery which naturally exhales hydrogen gas is asking for death and wholesale destruction when the battery explodes and secondly internal damage to the battery doesn't happen as the loads you put on it are only those you incur with the starter motor. Please play safe around batteries, I have seen the awesome power stored inside the simple 12v battery...

Never run the alternator "unloaded" you will beggar up the electronics, so you can't disconnect the battery while running the engine to see how many amps are being fed to the battery! You need a device called an amp-clamp for that job and that is getting a bit specialised I reckon.

That battery test (with additional use of an Amp Clamp) is now part of the standard AA battery test procedure, followed properly it will always answer battery condition queries. It was introduced a few years ago and (after a dinosaur-like resistance period, old dogs/new tricks etc. session) is used by the patrol force, unlike some of the dodgy and downright dangerous methods used by people in a certain rival company when caught on TV, some time back.



*Bill Mohan*

# Midget Challenge Declares New Champion



*Will Smallridge, Group A Champion  
on his way to another race win*



*Pête Collinson Group B Champion*



*Dave Pymm, Group C Champion*

Following the final round of the Lenham Cars Midget Challenge with Surveying Devon & Cornwall, readers might like to know the outcome of this long running racing championship for our favourite cars. The Spridgets race in three Groups:

- A- with wide-ranging modifications, on slick tyres,
- B- limited modifications on narrower slick tyres, and
- C- fairly standard road tyres.

Will Smallridge, who won the Mallory park race (attended by a group of MASC members), secured the overall championship in his Fully Modified car and also took the Group A crown. The championship for Groups B and C "went to the wire" and were decided at the final race. Peter Collinson took Group B and David Pymm, who has raced in the series for 25 years, secured Group C in his Road Going car.

It is hoped we may be able to secure free spectators tickets for the coming season to enable more MASC members to watch Spridgets being pushed to their limits on the circuit. Further information on the 2009 Midget Challenge, which starts at Donington Park in April are on the Website [www.mgmidgetchallenge.co.uk](http://www.mgmidgetchallenge.co.uk)

**John Baggott**

**Thanks and credit to Martin Price  
for the use of his photos**

*Editors note. I would be interested in gauging people's interest in reading a series of light-hearted race reports from next year's Midget Challenge race series. Please let me know. And as a taste of what to expect, the following pages feature a report by "Team Sibling Rivalry" covering the last race of the season at Mallory Park. Gary*



With the points after Snetterton issued, it's all doom and gloom. Steve is almost guaranteed 4th place in C class, John needs one of his best finishes of the season to take the C class title and Pete needs a miracle to win the B class; him to win and Dom to come last or not finish. There was no way that was going to happen.....

We rock up Saturday early evening to a calm Mallory park in the evening sunshine. Shorts and tee shirts on an October evening – that can't be right. Brilliant to see Marty back with a new Skiptune engine in his car after all his previous troubles (the car that is, we promised not to mention that incident in the supermarket...) Steve turns up with the new B class for its first outing and assures us that he has not polished it (yeah, right). The rest of us have to put on sunglasses to look at it because of the shine – puts an advert for Mr Sheen to shame.

We had bought the big BBQ and after lobbing in a couple of bags of charcoal and breaking out the beers a very sociable evening follows. Jamie Oliver (sorry, I mean Nigel) arrives with some flashy onions for the BBQ and puts our Tesco value sausages to shame. Martin Morris arrives with his in car DVD's and we all pass judgement on his lines, braking points and so on. It's a brave man who is prepared for that abuse. (It's also a brave man who eats one of our BBQ's in the dark). John "accidentally" spills a bottle of cider on Steve's car. Shame. Off to bed for an early night.

Up at 7.30am and those last minute jobs are tackled. In Steve's case slightly more than that when he finds that the panhard rod has become detached from the car. Someone asks Pete if he has put a new valve guide in to sort out the oiling problem. What do you think the answer was??

# 10 Mallory Park

## October The final round



**Not a polishing cloth in sight** All through scrutineering without a problem and out for qualifying. It's a good field of 25 cars, but at Mallory that means traffic...a lot of traffic. With the differing lap times of the 3 classes on a short circuit, there are precious few clear laps to be had. Throw in a few spins, crashes and oil leaks and we all feel we could have done better. In Pete's case, a lot better. He really needed a pole (extra point) but yet again had a problem, putting him 7th in class. Dom secured pole, although came in early. Nigel Pratt showed the value of testing as his landed 2nd, his best showing of the season. John could only manage third, and the extra point for Dave Pymm who got second behind the great debut drive from Will Sharpe effectively meant a race win was needed and Dave had to finish third or worse. Steve's start in qualifying could have been much better ... exiting the assembly area onto the track and the car won't drive above 2000 revs ... rev limiter kicking in, so probably the slowest car ever goes around Gerrards and he's forced to pit and rip the wiring off. Back out and it's better, but we'd set one of the shocks up to max firm and left the other, with predictable results ... The black flag came out, and everyone but Steve (who was concentrating on lining up for Gerrards) saw it. Problem was the black flag was for Steve's car 73. Les, amongst others came in after thinking it was for him. Nope – error over the entry forms (not my fault shouts John at this point) meant that the organisers thought there was a stray orange and white B class car on the circuit and they were trying to bring it in. Steve is called up to race control for a ticking off. Protests his innocence but the clerk gives him b@ll@cking anyway for speeding in the pits (clearly the clerk hadn't

A combination of a bit of advertising on the midget and sprite BBS (<http://www.mgcars.org.uk/> and follow the BBS link for those who don't use this brilliant site), the 750mc providing 50 free tickets through the Midget register and the fantastic weather means that the crowds are out. Good to see a lot of people coming over to say hello.



driven a car with a cable operated F3 clutch for a while.)

John was blaming Steve for holding him up, but unfortunately for him the lap times showed Steve. Steve's car wouldn't rev over 7000 rpm, some blaming possibly wrong jets in the carb, others suggesting that what was the point in a 130bhp engine built to rev to over 8000 and running it on points still?? (since writing this Steve has subsequently made note to self to fit the electronic ignition as soon as possible.)

A nasty prang for Adrian Moore saw his very pretty frog needing some new panels. Good job Adrian is in the trade.

Sandie Robbie had a problem at Gerrards which saw her stranded, facing the wrong way and needing half a roll of gaffa tape to repair the bonnet. She still had a big grin on her face in the paddock though and the damage was not bad enough to stop her getting on the grid.

It was an early bath also in C class for Ian Langford. He swapped his head after the last round for what turned out to be a dodgy one, resulting in another head gasket failure. Luckily John had a spare standard head, so at least he got to race, even if not very quickly. In class A William took his 11th pole of the season, over a second ahead of Paul Sibley. That's a lot here. Disaster for Gil, seizing his engine after doing his impression of oily Pete and depositing too much on the black stuff. Dave Weston in a rare appearance finished early as well.

A bit more fettling and in Steve's case softening off the rear after some wise words from Peter May. A new spark plug for Pete and John finds his choke linkage has fallen off, resulting in the rear carb running rich. A quick fix with a cable tie and it's off to the assembly area. We all smirk as Phil Attwood has to get a bump start.

Dom is obviously feeling the nerves, as the most obvious false start in the history of motor racing is made

When the lights properly go out, the A cars stream off behind Bill and following in the lead in B is ... Nigel Pratt! The concertina affect of Dom's start makes itself felt and John has to slow down to avoid rear-ending a car in front, thus allowing a few cars past.



Pete threads his way through the field and Nigel relinquishes the class B lead to Dom before the second lap is finished. The normal Dom/Pete battle continues until lap 6 when Dom starts to falter. His car develops a problem, dropping down to 3 cylinders and eventually limping home on a single cylinder. Pete finishes first and a quick assessment shows the impossible – he has won the B class!

No such luck for John – he can't make up the time to catch Dave, despite setting fastest lap and settles for third in the race (behind Dave and Will Sharpe who takes the win in his debut). Steve finishes 8th in class, satisfied that he hasn't bought a complete lemon (well, an orange perhaps). The problem over the entry form continued and Steve was shown on the time sheet (for the first time in his racing career) as having fastest lap.

Ice creams are eaten and the trailers are loaded, but in John's case not with the car. It's found a good new home with Tim Cairns in Suffolk and we hope to see it out again soon (painted lavatory blue, so Tim tells us).

That's it, season over. Another blinding year done and only the end of year dinner left to report on. Watch this space.

[www.teamsiblingrivalry.com](http://www.teamsiblingrivalry.com)

*MASCOT would like to thank "Team Sibling Rivalry" for their excellent race report and photos.*

*Pete also won the Krissy Duffy trophy and a great piece of motorsport history – the damaged door from William's old car when Pete punted off Smallridge senior a few seasons previously*





## From across the Pond

Here are a few pictures from across the pond. Both of these cars are No. 2-plus cars, (about as good as you will see over here).

The Blue car is a 1972 Model, extensive mods. And cosmetic upgrades, SCCA Vintage Racer Approved. Look close, too much to list all the changes.

The Orange car is a 1974 model, several upgrades, but, more of a stock nature in outward appearances.



*Douglas Warren*  
Cullman, Alabama, USA  
Member No. 4030



Both cars have won numerous first place slots at BRIT Shows as well as open Shows. They draw a crowd wherever they are shown. Both run and drive like new.



# Jack Wheeler's Racing Sprite (Part 2)



The Sprite's (period) racing career came to an end at the Nurburgring in 1969 when Jack rolled the car going through the Carousel. Early in the race a throttle spring inside one of the Webers had broken up and jammed the throttle. This had no bearing on the subsequent accident but Jack lost considerable time trying to affect a remedy in the pits putting the car out of contention. Apparently before World War II one was considered quite a hero if you could achieve a lap of the Nurburgring in under 10 minutes, so Jack, being now well behind, decided he could at least try for that. It was in this attempt that he 'over-did it' and was lucky to escape without injury, though the car was mangled – especially the streamlined bonnet of which little remained. After the event the car was dismantled and, due to lack of space, parts were distributed among numerous friends and relatives. Some 25 years later, it all took some finding again when Jack decided to restore it.

On one occasion, Peter Jackson, who had campaigned a Sebring Sprite in the past but, was now racing Lotus Elans, partnered Jack at the Nurburgring, and he complained bitterly

about the handling, especially at the rear of the car. Peter pointed out that the wheelbase of an Elan was little different from that of a Sprite and why didn't Jack equip it with Elan rear suspension? Jack went to Temple Fortune in North London where Ian Walker (another Sebring Sprite man), Paul Hawkins and John Pledger were working and they found him all the parts he needed. Peel coachworks welded in part of an Elan backbone chassis to the rear of the Sprite and built a slippery bonnet with inset headlamps for the 1968 season. The following year it also had Elan front suspension. By now the hardtop had been discarded and a Perspex wrap-around fly screen fitted, together with a panel which partially covered the passenger area (full covering was not permitted under the regulations).

I am not really sure how the revival of interest in the Sebring Sprite came about. Brian Archer was beginning to plan a replica of the Williams & Pritchard Coupé in the late 1980's, and by the early 90's Tom Coulthard and John Sprinzel were well into preparations to publish their book: "Spritle Years". Jonathan Whitehouse Bird had recently found the remains of EAO and started its restoration. Jack Wheeler was approached by Tom for information and he and Jonathan paid Jack a visit and asked him what he was going to do with 'the bits'. It was this that sowed the seeds for 7080AC to be "re-assembled". The car only really survives, in Jack's hands, and in its original form, because it was damaged in 1969, and therefore it could not be sold on, when it may well have been further modified and perhaps eventually lost.



Then the question was whether to rebuild it as the Coupé car raced in the early '60s or the open, Elan-equipped car of the later period. Jack eventually decided to do both! He had enough parts but only one bodyshell and that needed a lot of work. Brian Wheeler built a new shell for the hardtop car which then had a new



aluminium rear plus the original hardtop and a replacement fibreglass bonnet. This car is fitted with a wet-sump motor with single 45 Weber and the MGB overdrive gearbox, while the open car has the 8 port head, dry sump motor and the 5-speed box. At the time of writing this latter car is with Brian Wheeler for a replacement aluminium bonnet to be fabricated.

The Coupé has bolt-on wheels while the open one has centre-lock Minilite wheels. Many were curious at last year's Goodwood Revival, as to the purpose of the aluminium trumpet just ahead of the windscreen. This was introduced as a means of ventilating the driver's footwell during the intense summer heat at Mugello. A scoop on the bonnet feeds fresh air straight down on to the driver's feet, and this is now a feature on both cars. Naturally both have the registration 7080 AC and the Healey Motor Co chassis plate, though the open car has the extra digits 26R to denote its Elan connections.

I realise I have said little here about Martin Davidson who remains a close friend of Jack's



and continues to race the car on his behalf, as he did in the 2006 Fordwater Trophy at the Goodwood Revival bringing the car home in 8th place overall and 4th Spridget.

### Testing 7080AC (No.2) at Bruntingthorpe (19 August 2008)

I had a visit from Jack Wheeler one Saturday recently when he was scouring the Kent countryside, with two 5 gallon cans, looking for leaded petrol for his open version of 7080AC. The car was finally ready for testing, having been provided with a complete new bonnet in aluminium, courtesy of Brian Wheeler's skilled hands. The following Tuesday Jack and his long-term co-driver Martin Davidson put some 200 miles on the car around the airfield perimeter track at Bruntingthorpe in Warwickshire. I really admire the way in which they felt able to take the car "straight out of the box" after very many years of disuse and do a full day's testing – no rolling road or dyno for them, just set it up in the workshop and away. Apparently, apart from having to re-set the carburettor float levels it went very well, using up all of their 10 gallons of petrol. I suppose anyone who can race at Nurburgring, and then trail the car all the way down to Sicily and take part in the Targa Florio the following weekend (admittedly nearly 40 years ago) has to be "special". The last time the car was running was when Jack inverted it going through the Caroussel at Nurburgring in 1969.

**Words by Martin Ingall ([sebringsprite.com](http://sebringsprite.com)), pictures reproduced courtesy of John Phillips, Jonathan Whitehouse-Bird, as well as John Sprinzel and Tom Coulthard, authors of "Spriteley Years"**

*Editors note. I have been lucky enough to have had a couple of visits from Jack Wheeler (who coincidentally lives about five minutes walk from my office). He has kindly mentioned a point which needed correcting in last month's MASCOT. In the November issue on page 20 the original Sprite at the bottom of the page didn't become supercharges until a later incarnation.*

*Also Jack is keen to track down an alloy A Series sump, so if you have one sitting under your bed or languishing unused, in your garage, he would be very interested in hearing about it.*

# Model Reviews

## No. 1



The latest model to be received for review is this 'personalised' Frogeye Sprite. In this instance, that of Terry Horler's 'multi shades of red' example. We understand that a limited run of 5 of these is planned with other 'personalised' models subject to being commissioned. No price has been announced as yet.

We asked Terry for his comments on this model who reported back that it was just like the real thing, but with a better paint job. Terry had no idea that a model of his Frogeye was about to be launched. However, he did remember someone taking a lot of photographs of it a few weeks ago.

If you would like to place an order for a personalised model of either your car or one of the limited edition 'Terry Horler' Frogeyes, please contact –

Polly's Personalised Models  
01173 079475 or 07866036257

## No. 2



One of my (not so rare) Ebay purchases is this unusual plastic "Healey Racing" Transporter. I think that it's HO 1:87 scale and made by a German company "Brekina Automodelle".

It has excellent detail including a propshaft, fuel tanks and an exhaust system detailed on the underside, but it is only 4 inches (10 cm.) long.

Has anyone else ever seen a "Healey Racing" Transporter, either as a model or as a full size example? Please let me know.



Gary

# The BBS



With now 87% of our members online, many may not be aware of the tremendous resource of the BBS.

Log on to [www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk](http://www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk), click the "links" button and scroll down to the 3rd item "The live BBS for Technical / Sprite & Midget"

This opens to a site hosted by the MG Enthusiasts Club with headings for all the MG models. Register on the link in the top right hand corner, with your own User Name and Password (not those printed in *MASCOT*) which will then allow you access to the archive section.

Scroll down to the three Midget & Sprite sites – General / Technical / Events. Here you will find an amazing range of topics relating to our cars, a friendly and lively worldwide community and in the archive section possibly all the questions and answers that have ever been raised about Spridgets.

Once registered, you will be able to post your own contributions.

*John Platt*

## Editors note:

Other informative and interesting Spridget related websites to while away the winter nights are:



## [www.SpriteSpot.com](http://www.SpriteSpot.com)

Which also has a chat forum and a very good Photographic section including dozens (possibly hundreds) of photos of the rebuild and history of Jonathan Whitehouse-Birds Ex Sprinzel Sebring Sprite "410 EAO"



## [www.sebringssprite.com](http://www.sebringssprite.com)

Club member Martin Ingall's magnificent website dedicated to all things Sebring Sprite



## [www.spriteparts.com.au](http://www.spriteparts.com.au)

Colin Dodd's Australian website which includes details of his E Type engined Mk1 Sprite "The Flight". Also includes technical articles



## [www.williamsandpritchardregister.co.uk](http://www.williamsandpritchardregister.co.uk)

Club member Tim Saunders fantastic website dedicated to all things Williams & Pritchard. In addition, this site is also becoming a valuable reference for those interested in the different and numerous period aftermarket Hard tops and one piece fronts produced over the years.



sorting a problem with his carbs; fortunately he made it just in time. Everyone met at our house for a brew and bacon butty before setting off.

The route took us over to Blackburn way, past Rivington and Anglesark resevoirs, onto Darwen then back through Tockholes. We eventually stopped for lunch at the Bobbin Mill in Buckshaw village. Weather wise we had a few showers on the way but not too bad I suppose considering it was October.

That's all for now.

See you at the Kilton on 10th December.

*Les*

## NW Area Report

Unfortunately this report had to be submitted before our November club night. This evening is one of the highlights of our year, a talk by racing driver Derek Walker. There will be a full report next month.

Since last club night we have had one event, our Halloween run on 26th October. There were 5 cars taking part, those of myself and Diane, Bernie and Lynne, David and Heather, Neil and Shelly plus Andy and son. Neil was lucky to take part as he spent most of the previous day and some of the morning



*A seasonal photo of Nic Bowker's IOW Frogeye*



*Meeting at Hatfield*

## Home Counties North West

October always feels like the last of the big Spridgeting months to me; clocks changing and the nights drawing in. This year, as it has been for the last few years, it is also the time for the last HCNW road run. October's second Sunday brought pretty good weather and a good turnout.

As usual it was a 10am meet in Hatfield and, as often, happens I was last to arrive. This time with my co-pilot Ian, whose car was SORNed and put away for the winter. The car park was overflowing with cars for an October run, in total we managed to drag 8 cars out of their garages including a welcome return of Gaps and his keeper, our editor Gary.

Chris and Pat "reprocessed" a combination of old routes and led us on an enjoyable run around the Herts and Beds countryside, along some good roads and through some nice villages. We finished off with lunch

and plenty of chat in the Lilley Arms, Lilley, a reused venue. Some of the co-pilots complained it was a little cold but they soon managed to warm up. Let's look forward to salt free roads in the spring and some more runs out – anyone any ideas?

Wednesday 29th was club pub night. Despite my usual optimistic e-mail trying to encourage people out in the smallest cars in their garages the unusually early snow kept all of us in modern transport this month. Probably sensible. A good turnout saw us taking over a corner of the restaurant and moving tables together, but unfortunately the power failed in the kitchen and food was a long time coming. A table full of hungry MASC members is not what you want to see if it's your first night waiting on! Poor Jenny and Dave were first there, first to order and last to be served.

Another good evening of chat about our cars and life in general was enjoyed by everyone. And we managed to make a decision about the Christmas meal date! This year we will be celebrating later than some and are planning for Sunday, 1st February 2009. If anyone fancies joining us at a venue to be confirmed (Thanks for "volunteering" Maurice!), please get in contact with either Chris or me.

I finished off the evening with a well wrapped up, top down drive home, over the Dunstable Downs via Whipsnade Zoo. Jens MX5 provided a good warm trip home. Do you think I could fit heated seats in the Frog over the winter...?



*R & R at the Lilley Arms*

**Mark**

# As I(s)Lay Down To Sleep



In a fantastic B&B in Port Ellen I thought there can't be many better birthdays than this for a Scotsman....A 160 mile top down drive in my RWA Midget to Campbeltown with my oldest mate to watch Scotland win their World Cup qualifier in a pub with the boys of the Campbeltown Tartan Army, then up early to catch the Calmac ferry at Kennacraig for the 2hr sail past Gigha and on to the lumpy island of Islay with the Mrs.

Islay is one of those perfect sized islands for a long weekend visit; small enough to cover easily but big and diverse enough to warrant decent roads that lead to stunning range of topography and places of historic interest. It is even more gratifying as it is home to beautiful and romantically named distilleries that give birth to the most musky and rich malt whisky on the planet. This when you have to speak nicely to your passenger to chauffeur you to a few for a tour and a tasting not that you ever see any Police!

We stayed 3 nights on what had been organised as club run, but in the event only our car made it and our excuse for going (the ferry ain't cheap at over £100) was to see the Islay Jazz Festival. Incredibly good blues n jazz in far flung venues that ranged from huge whisky bonds to tiny village halls reached by sea loch roads with glittering water (sun or moon!) on one side, moody glens on the other and puzzled sheep in the middle. And when you want to get home fast, Islay has some of the straightest superhighways in Scotland...if

your tracking is aligned properly you can take your hands off the wheel for up to 10 minutes at a time to look at the sea eagles through your Binos!

Top sights are the Paps of Jura looking across the Sound on the road to Bunnahabhain, the siren song of the seal colony at Portnahaven, the entombed Puffer wreck on the golden beach of Machir Bay and the old home of the Lords of the Isles at Finlaggan. All best viewed from the cockpit of a wee car in between Jazz gigs and hearty full Scottish breakfasts.

Ps. The Jazz Festival is an annual event, that you must do at least once in your life.

(Welcome back, Bob!) Linda, the dug and I went to Islay in October. Islay's beautiful. It's a Club bashie-waashie must.

Decades ago, I worked with a lovely guy, Curly Collins [bald of course], who flew out of Bowmore with the RCAF in Sunderlands. We stopped at Loch Indaal, Bowmore. I could almost see the flying boats take off – shades of Dean Jagger's B17's in '12 O'clock High'.

Curly had a quiet war over the Atlantic; contributing little to the advert 'Victory will be sweeter with a Mars'. But he did get a spaniel drunk on beer in the mess every night. And then the dug flew the next day, Atlantic patrolling.

'Always in my dreams I'll see, the lights of Loch Indaal'. Curly.

*Carson and chums*

# Cambridgeshire Report

Well it's that time of year again and amazingly by the time you read this it will be December (deadlines and printing lead times being what they are, I am writing this in early November) but even now it is wet, miserable, dark and very windy outside, hence not much chance of a Spridget ride in Cambridgeshire this month, not for me at any rate. My poor Sprite is sitting in the workshop with the engine out, you may recall I was having problems with a slipping clutch back in the summer but managed to persevere with it until all the scheduled Cambridgeshire events were concluded, although unfortunately I was unable to use it individually quite as often as I would have liked (I need to get one of my projects up and running so that I have a spare).

The problem is that one thing leads to another, well it would be a shame to go to all the effort of removing the engine and not clean and paint the engine bay at the same time, and then if I am going to do that I may as well pop the front wings and nose cone off and do a proper job. Just think of the improved assess and it's only a few bolts, and then well one of the inner wings is in a bit of a state, may as well do a proper job and pop a new one on for the sake of twenty quid or so and a few spot welds and while I am at it the driver's side one is a bit ropery and I do have a spare one kicking around surplus to requirements. All this and I haven't touched the clutch yet, so off with the clutch and low

and behold it's not worn very much at all just very oily, come to think of it we did seem to use a bit more oil than normal on that last trip to France.

Mad Cat night arrived and I put the issue of my oily clutch to the collective wisdom of the group, since I have had no previous experience of the rear end oil sealing arrangements on the 'A' series and Mr Haynes is none too clear on the subject. It seems there is not much to prevent oil escaping, hence the drain hole with the split pin in it in the bottom of the bell housing and the Spridgetly tendency to mark its territory. One suggestion was to fit an aftermarket rear end oil seal that seals on the crank palm in much the same way as on a modern car, and while this may work and may even stop the territory marking (although it means having to have the rear end bearing cap machined) it still does not explain what happened to cause such a bad oil leak capable of contaminating the clutch to this extent. One theory was some kind of blocked breather issue causing a build up of pressure that could force the oil into the clutch area. One thing is certain, I will not be bored this winter.

Getting back to more general area issues, as I said not much going on on the event front this time of year being the low point of Spridgetly activity, more about planning than doing (apart from workshop activities that is). One or two of our local members will be out and about in proper cars though, there is Fred in his Sprite which is what the Americans call a "Daily Driver" (well done Fred) and there is Graham who has just had his frog transformed on the rolling road from pond life to 100hp perfection (you just know he will be out in it). On the planning front we are on the verge of finalising the events for next year, sadly the **MASCOT** deadline falls before November Mad Cat night, otherwise we would have more event news to publish but watch this space.

All that remains for me to do is to wish you all a fantastic Christmas and a Brilliant 2009. See you all at the Mad Cat.

*Dave Dixon*



*Graham's  
now 100hp  
beast*

## Linc'Slot

**A**t lunch time on Saturday 1st November, in our quest for a new venue for our regular monthly meetings, the gang headed for The Vine at South Thoresby for a lovely lunch. This is a very popular and ancient pub but at the time of our visit we were the only customers. Is it us? Unfortunately its location is not suitable for our gatherings as it is too far north and east. The hunt goes on. Our desperation is starting to show. We are making enquiries of a tea room.

Topics for discussion included the Classic Car Show at the NEC; Mary's suggestion of a narrow boating trip; arrangements for Christmas Lunch which will be a private affair at our house; and the now traditional New Year's Day visit to Pete & Mary's for lunch followed by a walk on the beach at the nearby East Coast whatever the weather.

We also learned that Tim had investigated Pete's Midget's petrol consumption issues and has, hopefully, sorted it by freeing off the automatic advance bob weights in the distributor. Apparently they were seized solid. It would seem from our camping trip last



month that this was causing the car to use about twice the petrol the others were using.

I have a personal quest on my mind which is to construct a contraption that will lift my Midget vertically, high enough to do some restoration work on the underside. I have investigated devices known as Rotisseries with which the car could be rotated on to its side but that does not appeal to me. However, I think I may be able to use some of the technology that is used by them in the construction of my home made car lift. If anyone reading this is a bona fide structural engineer, willing to cast an eye over a sketch or two, on a free gratis basis of course, I would love to hear from you on my usual Linc'slot email address. Likewise to anyone else with any useful advice.

The date and location of our December meeting has not yet been decided, so please contact me before you come to see us.

*Brian Jeffery*

## The Re-Registration Scheme

**M**y thanks to those members who responded to my plea to act as Vehicle Inspectors in regard to the DVLA re-registration scheme. Since this request in the August edition, DVLA have informed me that the club will continue to be approved to process applications to have Sprites and Midgets re-registered under their original registration numbers. So, we are still in business and must be ready to now physically 'inspect' vehicles as and when required. I could still do with some more volunteers so please give me a call on 01454-881770 if you would like to find out more.

You may recall that I was awaiting a DVLA inspector to give my Frogeye a quick look over following an error on the MOT certificate. This happened when the MOT inspector entered the number in the left hand door pillar into his 'system' causing an alarm to go off in Swansea. Despite my detailed explanation of the numbering system applied to Frogeyes, they wanted to check it out for

themselves. So, an inspector arrived, wrote down the 3 numbers that are most easily found on the body, happily accepted the lack of an engine number, and hot footed it back to Swansea, presumably. Anyway, a new MOT certificate and V5C soon followed along with the request to return the 'faulty' documents in the 2 envelopes provided. All is now well, after 48 years of having the incorrect chassis (car) number appearing on the documents, DVLA have finally caught up and put matters to rights. This does highlight the importance of having your Spridgley things documentation correct these days. From our own Car Register, we know that errors in recording numbers, prefixes and suffixes were commonplace when the cars were new or new documents issued. I would certainly recommend that you check yours before the man from the DVLA is summoned to pay you a visit!

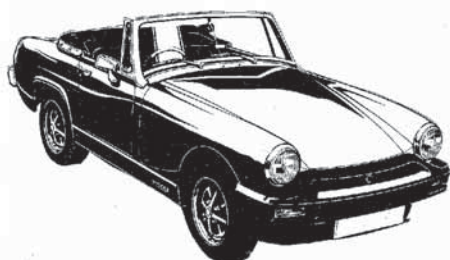
*Terry Horler*

# Dorset Area

Midget & Sprite Club



## MGs at Kingston Lacy



Sunday  
14th June  
2009



Live music

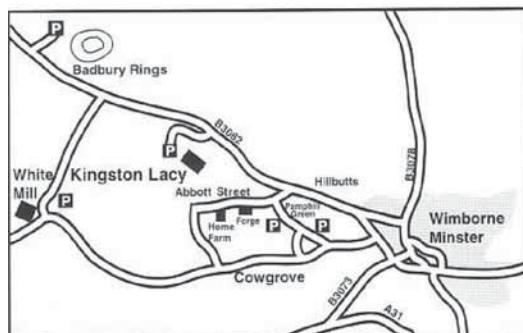
Cream teas



Kingston Lacy House  
Nr Wimborne, Dorset  
(10.am - 4.00pm)

Price of admission will be  
£7.50 per car (2 occupants)  
+ £1.00 per person thereafter

Non-MG Classic Cars & Classic Motorcycles Welcome!



All proceeds from this event will go to the  
Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance

# October in the South East of England

A crisp dry night brought out seven Spridgets and all but one (my Sebring coupe rep) with tops down. I think I am correct in saying that there were five Frogeyes and one Austin Sprite

Twenty one people filled the area in the bar, at the Blue Ball, Walton on the Hill, Surrey, which had been set aside, by the landlord, for our exclusive use.

Good to see new members Roger Pearce and Peter Neale-Smith at the meet especially as they had each brought their cars along. New member John Marklew & Kathy brought pictures of their car which is currently supported on a home built rotisserie, whilst under restoration. Yet another restoration project is that of Jeff and Elsa. Elsa has prompted Jeff to restore a frogeye for racing. They are spending lots of cash on panels from Ashley Hinton who has agreed to have a Club visit to his factory in the new year. Unfortunately I didn't have my diary handy to fix a date. I was busy collecting deposits for our Christmas meal on Tuesday 16th December 2008. Forty seven people and the number rising!

A couple of breakdowns in the S.E. Area recently, rendering the vehicles dead at the roadside, have been found to be due to Rotor Arms. Apparently some rotor arms have been found to have insufficient insulating properties in their construction where the brass contact is fixed to the plastic body. The product brand of the faulty items is unknown. Carry a spare?

Thursday 23rd October 2008 was the night set aside for the Sussex Meet at Friars Oak P.H., Hassocks, I was there, David and Chris Wright were there, David & Linda Southcott were there.

**BUT WHERE WERE THE REST OF YOU?**

Sunday 26th October 2008 was wet. Apologies were received from Gary Lazarus after he had said that he was attending the Kent Section meet. It was a grim day for a long trip in a Spridget. Jane Pearce had higher matters to attend to, being "well stitched up" this weekend, as she was sewing curtains at Buckingham Palace. Will

we soon see Paul's Austin Sprite bedecked with royal signage on his doors and "by Royal Appointment". Her Business has really taken off since I mentioned it in **MASCOT** a few months ago. Paul's son Simon attended our meet, with a lady friend, as a new member although the "paperwork" has yet to be completed. Pity he chose to have an MGB instead of a Spridget but the car has been in his family a while.

I was using the weather as an excuse not to take my Sebring rep and the fact that I was conveying a gearbox for Martin Ingall. My excuse was, somewhat "shot down in flames" when Martin arrived to collect the gearbox in his Sebring rep.

Ron Edwards brought his Mk3 from south London to sign up to our September 2009 European tour (Masc Miglia) which has been much advertised in **MASCOT**. Ron also brought details of his Frogeye. The Heritage certificate shows it as being sold to Healey as LHD but soon after it appears to have been sold in London as RHD. Perhaps after some detective work an interesting story may evolve.

My ears suddenly pricked up. John Clark was suddenly heard talking about wearing a woman's pink bra. Was he "coming out". Was cross dressing the cause of his distant divorce. Call me old fashioned but I was much relieved to hear that it was a condition of participation in a "Moon" walk, next year, through London in aid of a Breast Cancer charity.

Peter Gardner was, as ever, in his 1500 Midget. Mel & Barb Collins "popped in", with Spridget, on the way to visiting relatives – very Sunday!

John Larrington and Ralph Whitmarsh left their Frogeyes at home. After much discussion about club and cars our meeting which began as the Pub opened at midday finally ended at a quarter to four.

**Alan Anstead**

*S.E. Area Rep*

Mail to: alan.anstead@bopenworld.com

Tel: 01322-384050 (answer phone)



## Warks Talk

*The NEC  
show line-up*

**A**lthough there were no specific runs, with just our regular meeting on the calendar for this month, it does not mean that the Warwickshire Section have been idle. The Restoration Show at Stoneleigh is an annual event and much visited by those with winter projects in mind. Sheila describes it as the "Scrap Heap Show", when she is being polite, but Chris and Alan, amongst others, enjoy a day browsing in the muddle and Dave Parker used the opportunity to sell more of his collection. Chris returned this year, very pleased with a set of new plugs and a clock for his "other" car.

As you can imagine, the occasion which has taken up most of our time is the planning for the Classic Car Show at the NEC, which John Platt organises with meticulous care each year. However, as this year is rather special and we all wanted the Club Stand to reflect its Silver Anniversary and the Austin Healey Sprites' Gold Anniversary, it has taken even more planning than usual. John wanted to show every model of the cars and has acquired space for 10 cars. There is additional activity required in getting the cars to the show, with Roy Cole and Geoff

Hunter, collecting the sectioned Midget from the Patrick Collection, plus the other drivers often taking time from work to deliver their cars to the stand on Thursday. To plan the details of this celebratory stand, we decided to have two extra meetings. Rosemary Couch is in charge of balloons, banners and other glittery effects, Barrie Smithson is organising posters that highlight the reasons for the celebration and Stuart Gunn has redesigned the top of the flag poles he had made previously and added two new posters that look extremely smart and will attract attention from across the exhibition hall, leaving no excuse for not finding us. It is in keeping with the NEC Theme of "Celebrating Anniversaries" and we hope the effect will show our cars to perfection and that it will sell the club as the one to join. Various Warwickshire members will be manning the Stand during the 3 day event and we hope to see visiting members from all over the country.

The AGM was held at the Patrick Collection on Sunday and, as always, there was a good representation from the Warwickshire contingent. Details of the Meeting will be reported elsewhere, however this time there was representation from as far away as Scotland and at last, we appear to have a club, which is driving towards Limited Company status, with a far more professional approach. It would appear that we will need to keep the committee informed of our planned club outings for 2009, which will be the main point for discussion at our next meeting.



*The planning meeting*

*Chris and Sheila*

# Bristol Area Report

## (Emergency Services Evening)

If the title leads you to think that we had organised an evening with a theme, it wasn't like that at all. Indeed, the events of our November evening turned out to be an experience that nothing short of a Hollywood film production could have produced.

Firstly, Philip Sellen experienced a complete brake failure in his Midget Mk11 as he pulled into the car park of the Rose and Crown at Pucklechurch. Unable to stop, he smacked into the back of Alan Lo's Midget Mk1 as he was about to reverse into a parking space. If there was any good news, at least the drivers knew each other and eased the exchange of names and addresses without bloodshed. Both Midgets were too badly damaged to find their own ways home; Alan called the AA to retrieve his Midget whilst Philip summoned the RAC. In case you are wondering, the RAC got there first.

As all this was unfolding, Colin Gayle arrived in his I.O.W. Frogeye complaining of a hot smell from somewhere. With all the distractions of trying to separate the mating Midgets, Colin's hot smell was soon forgotten, but not for long. We had not retired to the bar for more than 10 minutes when someone ran in saying that a car was on fire in the car park and the Fire Brigade had been called. The entire pub emptied to see Colin's Frogeye erupt into flames. The Fire Brigade arrived but too late to save the Frogeye. Clearly, the AA or RAC were not going to be able to recover the resultant hot sticky mess without a bulldozer.

Not believing this incredible chain of events, we again retired to the bar. However, in the rush to get into the warm, Andy Cross slipped over and banged his head on the concrete step. Being a First Aider, I know that any form of head injury needs to be taken seriously, so the Ambulance service was called. By now, our numbers were few, so by a law of diminishing risk, surely nothing else could happen?

Wrong, just as a waitress was coming out of the kitchen, I got up from my seat and

knocked the tray of hot food over someone at the opposite table. Clearly, this fella was in no mood for an apology and took a swipe at me. Before I hit the floor, the pub manager was phoning the police.

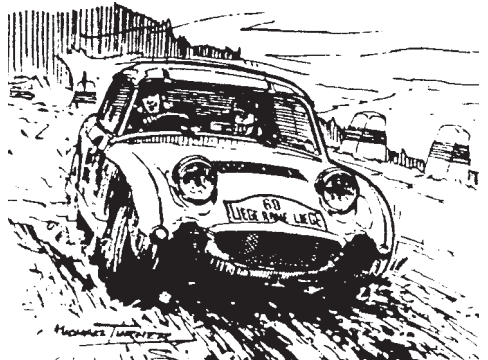
So there we are, the AA, the RAC, Fire Brigade, Ambulance and finally, the police. Who could have organised such an evening of events?

As we left, the manager asked who we were to bring such a trail of destruction and injury to his normally quiet pub. We said the MGOC and if he would like to take it further, to write to a Mr R. Bentley of Swavesey in Cambridgeshire.

I doubt if we shall ever have another Bristol Meeting like this one, or indeed where we will ever be allowed to have a meeting once this gets known around the pubs in Bristol.

Of course, none of the above is true but must surely be lot more interesting to read than my usual dull area report. In the meantime, we shall continue to meet at the Rose and Crown at Pucklechurch on the second Wednesday evening of each month. It's the pub with the remains of a molten Frogeye and broken lamp lenses in the car park and blood on the step. The stain in the carpet marks where not to sit if you want to avoid a roast beef shampoo. Now, what to write for next month??

*Terry Horler*



## Musings from the Chair

I would like to begin by thanking all of you who braved the elements to attend the AGM on the 9th November. I know not many attend but it is a vital part of the club's year and is an opportunity for members to meet the committee and take part in forming the club's future. I feel this is even more important as the club grows and becomes more diverse.

We had an excellent stand at the recent Classic Car Show at the NEC. Congratulations to John Platt for organising a very interesting line up of cars for the stand and a Big Thank You once again to the Warwickshire branch

for manning the stand over the three days. Well done all.

Finally it's that time of year when we have to dust off the trimmings and think what to buy the Spridget nut in your life for Christmas. Once again MASC comes to the rescue. The club has a very good range of regalia items from stocking fillers like key fobs and badges to fleeces and polo shirts, or even a year's membership subscription. Go on, you know it makes sense.

Merry Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

**Nigel Williams**  
Chairperson



*Ken Samen's 1977 Midget, in snowy Warrington, Pennsylvania, USA*

# Want to Build a Lenham Sprite?

## The *Le-Mans Coupé* Conversion Special coachwork for the Austin-Healey Sprite — MG Midget



*Original brochure cover*

Classic cars of Kent & Sussex have just acquired the intellectual rights to the drawings and moulds together with the trading name of Lenham Motor Company Ltd. from Dave Cplowe.

The Sussex based company can now supply all the Lenham hardtops and body panels ever produced, including the Lenham Bodied Healey.

Lenham hardtops are available for the Austin Healey Sprites and MG Midgets. There is also a kit to convert the Spridgets into an aerodynamic Grand Touring car plus an open version, the Lenham GTO.

Dave Cplowe originally bought the moulds and company name from the founders Peter Rix and Julian Booty in 1998 and for a while ran his team under the Lenham Racing banner.

Shaun Rainford, MD at CCK said "Ever since we raced our Lenham GT, SS1800, at Goodwood, there has been a tremendous interest in this unusual GT car. As an introductory offer we can now offer bonnet and combined rear end/ coupe top for either the Lenham GT or Le Mans GT for £600 plus VAT. We are also getting the Lenham badges and headlamp covers re-manufactured".

CCK can be contacted on 01825 733060.



The Le Mans Coupé body conversion for the Sprite and Midget is a completely new rear end which replaces the existing bodywork. This fixed head Grand Touring bodywork gives greater streamlining, an increase in top speed of around 9 mph, and much more room inside.

The conversion comes as a kit comprising a one piece rear end/roof moulding, windows and rubbers. For those who feel that the fitting is beyond them we would be pleased to quote for cutting the old bodywork off and bonding on the new, and for painting and trimming.

A special bonnet is also available for these cars and this forward hinged one piece moulding comes ready for painting. The lights change over.



## Lenham Hardtops for the MG Midget — Austin Healey Sprite



The Midget Exsisting hardtop shown left is craftsman made from strong but light glass fibre.

The outside has a black colour-moulded leathercloth finish bonded into the top, while the inside is finished in grey cloth. There are rubber seals to all surfaces. The top utilises the hood clips on the front rail and there are hook bolts at either side. This top fits all Midget and Sprite later models.

We still have the moulds for a hardtop for the Sprite Mk I & II and Midget Mk I, and these have our black leathercloth outside, grey cloth inside. A Mk I Sprite Frogeye bonnet is also available.



*CCK Lenham GT racing at Goodwood*

# 25 Years of the Midget and Sprite Club

## Part 9 The Real Beginning?

If you have been following this series thus far, then you will know that Masc can trace its roots back to the early part of 1983. Although this marked the initial idea of a club just for Spridgley things by our founders, it was by no means the first idea. Although Nigel Williams and Terry Horler were aware of the recently formed Sprite and Midget Owners Group in the UK, the Sprite Car Club of Australia can lay claim to being the earliest and longest running of clubs for our cars. But none of these, or indeed the Southern Counties Sprite Club and Sprite Drivers Club of Scotland would have formed had it not been for the Austin-Healey Sprite in the first place. The Donald Healey Motor Co is of course accredited with the design of the Sprite but not with the original idea. This came from Leonard Lord, the head of BMC. At a meeting between Lord and Healey in 1956, Lord suggested to Healey that there was a gap in the small sportscar market that needed to be filled. So Donald returned to Warwick and did just that. But was this really Leonard Lord's idea, or did something else give him the idea? I strongly suggest that it was.

As we all know, or should do, it was the humble Austin A35 that made the Sprite possible. A ready supply of suitable parts that proved both reliable and economic to base the Sprite upon. Prior to the A35, Austin had announced the Austin A30 at the 1951 Motor Show, this being the first application of the new 'A' Series engine with a modest 803cc capacity. Despite its diminutive size and 28bhp output, someone saw its potential as the basis for a small sportscar. This was Jack Turner. Jack had set up his company in 1948, making low volume sports and racing cars. With the launch of the Austin A30, Jack saw an opportunity for a low cost, simple sportscar that would appeal to a much wider market. And so in 1955, the Turner A30 went into production, using A30 running gear in a

fibreglass bodied sportscar on a steel frame. The 'A' Series engine was fitted with twin SU carbs whilst the Austin's steering box and linkage was replaced with a rack and pinion unit, is this starting to sound familiar?

So then, could this have been the true inspiration that first made Leonard Lord think of a small sportscar within the BMC family? Indeed, when the A35 was announced in 1956 with the 948cc 'A' Series engine, the Turner 950 could not have given a clearer message to Leonard Lord. However, BMC did not make fibreglass bodied cars on steel frames, so would a mass produced, steel bodied version be of interest to an even wider market? The low volume production Turner was not particularly cheap unless purchased in component form, BMC would have little difficulty in undercutting it on cost with their mass production and marketing resources.

Rather than approach Jack Turner with a deal, Lord turned to Donald Healey instead. Had things been just a little different, then we may have been celebrating 50 years of the Austin-Turner Sprite in 2005 instead! Interestingly, just as the Healey Motor Co were to later fit a Coventry Climax engine to a development Sprite, Jack Turner offered a Coventry Climax engine in his version also. Unlike Healey's however, he was not instructed by BMC "Not to do it again".

So, who should we really applaud? Is it Leonard Lord, Donald Healey or perhaps Jack Turner for giving us what we celebrate and support today? Whatever, we certainly know who to blame for killing it off!

Today, there are few Turner 803 and 950 examples left, owners of these find solace within the Fairthorpe Sports Car Club. Do these owners wish, as we did 25 years ago, that they could enjoy a club dedicated solely to their own vehicles? Whatever, we not only wished it then, but now celebrate 25 years of achieving just that. It was

probably a good thing that we started when we did, would there be such a solid interest in Spridgley things today had we delayed? Would there indeed be so many survivors of our cars had it not been for the support and encouragement that Masc has provided over those years? I would like to think that the club has made a difference, not just to the

Midgets and Sprites that might not otherwise be around today, but to over some 4000 members (not including joint members) that the club has had in its first 25 years. What will the next 25 years have in store for us? To find out – stay with us!

*Terry Horler*

## Mince Pies and Classic Cars!

Get away from the Christmas shopping on Saturday 6th December by popping down to the Midland Classic Restorations and Peter May Workshop Open Day. These well known classic restoration and race preparation specialists are opening their doors to visitors for a day of festive fun – Mince pies, mulled wine and classic cars will all make for a welcome break from the seasonal preparations.

Visitors will be treated to a mouthwatering selection of MCR's completed restorations, as well as looking at a number of 'projects in progress'. Peter May will be busy fettling racing cars, as well as working on one of his well known race engines.

Midland Classic Restorations' owner, Dominic Mooney, said "Now that Peter has had time to settle into his new workshop, we wanted to open our doors and invite people see the range and quality of services we offer and, in addition, provide a welcome break from their Christmas shopping" Both Peter and Dominic will be on hand to answer questions and offer advice to all visitors at their workshop, situated on the A449 at Ombersley.

For further information please contact:

**Dominic Mooney**

Tel: 01905 622166

Email: [dominic@midlandclassicrestorations.co.uk](mailto:dominic@midlandclassicrestorations.co.uk)



## Market Place

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

### FOR SALE

**1969 MG Midget 1275** For Sale: Total Restoration in 2005. Red in colour, done just over 1,000 miles since. MOT till October 2009. £3,800 ono.

**Southam, Warwickshire**

Tel. 01926 611980

**Looking for a good condition**, structually sound, earlier Spridget, preferably a Sprite Mk II onwards. Car with exotic bonnet/hardtop would be of interest. Car must be fully functional and not need any urgent work. Doesn't need to be a show car, its going to be used!

**Ring Tim Saunders, Yorkshire**

**07968 261990**



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