

March 2012

£2 No. 336

# Mascot

*The Magazine of the Midget & Sprite Club*



[www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk](http://www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk)





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# March Editorial

The end of January and the first two weeks of February turned out to be a great three weeks if you were a penguin or a crocus! However, it wasn't too good for Spridgeting about. With from the first half of February freezing and feeling even colder in the wind. Boris, the Mayor of London, his ears obviously still ringing from the backlash of last years snow debacle, had clearly decided that the merest sniff of snow would see him summon the salt spreaders from the four corners of the capital, specifically to dump their contents in my street. The weatherman got it right and it did snow in the London Borough of Islington. I awoke to find the garden covered in a beautiful layer of the stuff. The road outside though, looked more like a bridleway, such was the amount of grit and salt which had been deposited there every hour on the hour throughout the previous night. This had two effects. Firstly it denied me the fun of watching people in front wheel drive cars going nowhere fast (while those with traction control were going nowhere slowly). And secondly, it made me think twice about taking the Frogeye of the garage. I'm normally quite blasé about the road conditions but I feared that this was just too much salt, even for Gaps, whose thick layer of dirt usually makes it impervious to the stuff which comes up off the road.

Therefore, it was in the Renault Megane that I ventured up to Warwickshire to attend the first committee meeting of 2012. After hearing the Treasurer's report (and the committee's thanks go out to Natalia Flynn), I'm delighted to say that the club is in a very healthy financial position. So much so, that it was agreed MASC would set about to raising its public profile among the classic car world. And more specifically to drivers of Austin Healey Sprites and MG Midgets, who have yet to join. The first phase of this campaign is more visibility on the Spridget related websites and bulletin boards. Not only is our own website at [www.midgetandsprite.com](http://www.midgetandsprite.com) continually being upgraded and improved. But the largest and most frequented, the MG Cars Enthusiasts' website at [www2.mgcars.org.uk](http://www2.mgcars.org.uk) now carries two sets of adverts for MASC. One which is a direct link to our homepage and the other which links directly to the joining page of our website. The link banners are very impressive, and we owe a debt of gratitude to our webmaster Richard Mumford who has designed an active advert which alternates between a red Frogeye and a later Spridget, both with flashing headlights (which is clearly impossible to replicate here).

This is the Frogeye part of our active advert:



And here is the advert which links to our homepage:



In addition to what the committee is doing, the club has now grown to the status where we really need a designated publicity officer. Not a difficult job, but someone with some kind of marketing experience would be a bonus. Are you that person? Please let us know.

By the time that you read this, Gaps and I will have visited the MG Spares day and also Race Retro, both at Stoneleigh Park. I'm hoping for salt free roads.

Have a great month

**Gary & Gaps**

**The deadline for articles and reports for inclusion in next month's magazine is Tuesday 13th March**

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Cover image: Frogeye of L'Amicale Spridget taken at Le Mans Classic 2010 © Tim Saunders



## 1963 Innocenti Spyder S

It's a long time since we've featured one of these in MASCOT, so I thought that I'd refresh your memories with our Spridgets Italian cousin.

The Innocenti Spyder S was based on the Austin-Healey Sprite, as it used the same suspension, steering, drive train, and engine, but it had a unique body styled by Ghia. It also included some luxuries not seen in the Sprite, such as wind-up windows, larger doors, and external door handles. This car is a Spyder S, which was introduced in 1963 with a slightly larger engine versus the original cars. The engine came from the Mark II Sprite. The S was different cosmetically over the earlier Innocenti Spyderys, with a new grille, badging, hubcaps, and interior.

Innocenti was formed in 1931 by Ferdinando Innocenti with the purposes of manufacturing steel tubing. The company experienced success in the years that followed until their progress was slowed by World War II. Their facilities were destroyed which left Innocenti scrambling to secure government grants to rebuild their factories. The buildings were reconstructed in Milan where the company ventured into the scooter manufacturing business. This led to the production of automotive parts and car-body presses for many companies such as Alfa Romeo, Fiat, Lancia and more. Later, with a merger with

BMC, Innocenti began producing automobiles beginning with the A40 Farina.

The Turin based design studio, Ghia, was tasked with designing a bodyshell, based on the Austin-Healey Sprite. The result was a MK1 Sprite with a stylish body and luxurious amenities. A 948 cc A-series four-cylinder engine, borrowed from the Mini, was slightly modified and placed in the engine bay. The interior was plush with amenities such as roll-up windows, glove box, heater, and interior light. Practicality was reinforced with wider doors and a trunk that was lockable.

In 1961 the 950 Ghia Spyder was introduced, a time in history when the MK1 Sprite was nearing the end of its lifespan and the mechanical components were no longer being produced. This meant that only 624 of the 950 Spyderys were created using the MK1 chassis. With the introduction of the Sprite MKII, production continued for the Innocenti 950 Ghia Spyderys with around 4176 examples utilising this configuration.

By 1964 the 950 received mechanical and visual updates that included a larger 1098 cc engine and an improved chassis. The name was changed to reflect these changes becoming the 1100 Spider. Production of the Ghia Spyder continued until 1968.

**By Daniel Vaughan**

© [www.conceptcarz.com](http://www.conceptcarz.com)

# Club Nights

- 1st Tuesday **Essex Area** – Now meet at **The Bell**, Beckenham Road, Tolleshunt Major, CM9 8LL. For further details contact Jane Gates Tel: 01255830 509 or email: jgjanegates257@googlemail.com
- 1st Wednesday **Devon Area – The Dartmoor Lodge Hotel**, Ashburton, TQ13 7JW 1930 – 2200. Please contact Dave Price for details, 01805 603133, daveprice@daveprice.plus.com
- 1st Wednesday **South Staffs & Birmingham** – Meet at **Whitacre Ex-Service & Social Club**, 66 Station Road, Nether Whitacre, Coleshill, Birmingham, West Midlands. B46 2EH, 8.30-8.45pm Contact: John Collins, Tel: 07970 213084 email: green\_mx5@hotmail.com
- 1st Wednesday **Oxford Area** – Meet at the **Blackhorse Pub**, Gozzards Ford, Nr Abingdon. 7pm for those eating or 8pm for those not. Contact Grahame Gibbins at grahame\_gibbins@unipart.co.uk
- 2nd Tuesday **London Area** (Congestion Zone) – Meet at **The Ace Cafe** at 7:30pm. together with the Classic Cars Magazine night. Details: Gary Lazarus on 020 7700 5696 garylazarus@blueyonder.co.uk
- 2nd Wednesday **Heart of England**, covers Worcs, Warks, West Midlands and surrounding areas – Meet at **The Green Dragon**, The Green, Sambourne, Redditch, B96 6NU, at 8.30pm as usual.
- 2nd Wednesday **North West Area** meet at **The Kilton**, turn off M6 at Jct 20 onto A50 towards Macclesfield. Pub 4 miles on left. Please note new venue.
- 2nd Wednesday **Bristol Area** will meet at **The Rose and Crown**, Pucklechurch at 8pm. All Bristol, Bath and surrounding areas members welcome. Contact Terry Horler on 01454 881770
- 2nd Thursday **Notts/Derby border Area** at the **Sitwell Arms** at 30 Wood Lane, Horsley Woodhouse, Derby, DE7 6BN from approx. 8.30. Just a mile north-west of the A608/A609 crossroads. Ian Cooke 0115 938 3838 ilc@bgs.ac.uk
- 2nd Thursday **East Anglian Area**. Previously the Cambridgeshire Area meet at **The Ferry Boat**, at Holywell, 8pm
- 2nd Saturday **Yorkshire Area** – meet each month at **Ye Jolly Farmers Inn**, Dalton near Thirsk YO7 3HY – please note new fixed venue – more information at <http://yorkshiresc.blogspot.com/>
- 3rd Monday **Dorset** – Meet at **St. Peter's Finger**, Lytchett Minster, Poole, BH16 6JE 7.30pm
- 3rd Tuesday **Scotland** – Meet at Holiday Express, Keith Street, Hamilton 8:00pm. Contact John Pardo on 01698 814791
- 3rd Tuesday **Surrey** – Meet at **The Blue Ball**, Walton-on-the-Hill, 7.00pm onwards. Contact Mike Gorman, mike@birchwood44.freeserve.co.uk Tel: 01737-552256
- 4th Thursday **Sussex** – Meet at **Bolney Stage**, Bolney, RH17 5RL from 19:00. Contact David Southcott at dandsouthcott@btinternet.com
- 4th Thursday **Hampshire** –New Venue! Now meeting at **The Fox and Goose**, Greywell, RG291BY. Please ring Terry or Harriet Langridge on 01252 626063 for details.
- 4th Sunday **Kent Area** – Meet at **The Angel**, Addington Green, West Malling, Kent, ME19 5BB at 12.00 for lunch. Contact Alan Anstead, Tel: 01322 384050. alan.anstead@btopenworld.com
- Last Monday **Wiltshire** – Meet at **The Barge Inn**, Seend, Nr. Devizes, about 7pm except on Bank Holiday Mondays when it will be the Bell Inn at Yatton Keynell near Castle Combe, 6.30pm. Contact Andy Cross on 01225 743554 or e-mail andy@cross743.freeserve.co.uk
- Last Wednesday **Home Counties North West** for members in Herts, Beds, Bucks, Berks, N. London or anyone interested! Meet at the **Chequers Inn**, Redbourn, AL3 7AD from 6:30pm. Please contact Mike or Sue Gahan on email mike@mgahan.demon.co.uk or on 07850 488636.
- Last Thursday **Somerset** – Meet at **The Lord Nelson**, Norton sub Hamdon at 7pm for those wishing to eat or at 8pm for those not. Phone Ray Darch on 01460 72040 with any queries and to ensure we will be there!
- Northern Ireland robertholmes25@hotmail.com. If enough interest, will arrange a meeting.
- South West Wales Non regular and occasional meetings and runs arranged throughout the summer months. Please contact David Hill on 01239 811307 or email: david@hill.be

# Club Website

www.midgetandspriteclub.co.uk

**Members only pages Password: Ribcase (which is case sensitive)**

## Events

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

For the magazine Richard can be contacted at [Richard.flynn@live.co.uk](mailto:Richard.flynn@live.co.uk) or 0121 559 3103

For the website Richard Mumford can be contacted at [richardmumford@me.com](mailto:richardmumford@me.com)

### March

Saturday 31 Heart of England's two-day event with overnight stay at Frome.  
Contact: Dave Parker [sprite363@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sprite363@yahoo.co.uk)

### April

Sunday 8 Heart of England's visit to Midget and Sprite Challenge. Contact Tim Storrer [timslenham@hotmail.com](mailto:timslenham@hotmail.com)

Sunday 22 Heart of England's Drive it Day. Contact Geoff Hunter [hunters360@btinternet.com](mailto:hunters360@btinternet.com)

Sunday 22 Notts & Derby Drive it day. Group meet and drive to Calke Abbey. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838  
[ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

### May

Saturday 5 /  
Sunday 6 Heart of England's visit to Donington Historic Festival. Contact Alan East-Jones  
[alan.east-jones@ntlworld.com](mailto:alan.east-jones@ntlworld.com)

Sunday 13th Heart of England's visit to MG in the Trees. Contact Alan Pritchett. [alan.pritchett@bt.com](mailto:alan.pritchett@bt.com)

Sunday 20 Notts & Derby UK Slot Car Festival at Heritage Motor Museum, Gaydon. Large annual event with stalls and numerous layouts to try, and the museum! Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 [ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

### June

2-4 Notts & Derby Wollaton Park Autokarna + Diamond Jubilee NG8 2AE. Probably the largest Classic vehicle event in Nottinghamshire. I plan to pre-book a club area for a fixed number of cars if enough interest. Call me asap! Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 [ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

Wednesday 6  
From 3pm Notts & Derby Renishaw Hall Classic car + bike show near Chesterfield – S21 3WB  
Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 [ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

23/24 MG Live Silverstone (see ads in *MASCOT* for contacts)

### July

6-8 Notts & Derby Le Mans Classic, France. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 [ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

20-22 Silverstone Classic (see ads in *MASCOT* for contacts)

29 Ashover Rally S45 0JP <http://www.ashoverclassics.co.uk/>

### September

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

### October

21 Notts & Derby Stoneleigh Restoration Show. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838 [ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

tba Notts & Derby Donington MG + Triumph day in the Exhibition Hall. Contact Ian Cooke 0115 9383838  
[ilc@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:ilc@bgs.ac.uk)

### November

16-18 NEC Classic Car Show (MASC stand)

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# New Members Jan – Feb 2012



From last month, Bill Harding in his Frogeye



Nigel and Karen Whitehouse's Frogeye

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

|      |                                      |               |        |             |
|------|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------|-------------|
| 4562 | Nigel & Karen Whitehouse             | West Midlands | Sprite | Mk 1        |
| 4563 | Daniel, William & Iain Paul          | Devon         | Sprite | Mk 1        |
| 4564 | Roland & Gill Yates                  | Surrey        | Sprite | IOW Frogeye |
| 4565 | Richard Hassell & Harry Prior        | Kent          | Midget | Mk 3 RWA    |
| 4566 | Neil & Natalie Prince                | West Midlands | Sprite | Mk 1        |
| 4567 | Dave Downing & Debra Hannell-Downing | West Sussex   | Sprite | Mk 1        |
| 4568 | Paul & Christine Hutchings           | Derbyshire    | Sprite | Mk 3        |

Roland and Gill Yates'  
Isle of Wight Frogeye



Daniel, William & Iain Paul's Mk1  
Sprite undergoing restoration

**Ed's note: Obviously we welcome all Spridgets, not just Red Frogeyes!**

# Letters

## Take your choice



*Which one would you choose?*

Hi Gary,

Just read the Feb issue of *MASCOT*, and the old car with the black horse on it caught my eye. So I thought I'd send you a pic of another car with a black horse on it with a black Frog at the side of it.

Pic taken in December last year of a 435 Italia which costs over £200,000! But the little Frog had as much attention as the Ferrari. The owner of the Ferrari loved the Frog but would not do a swap!

**Geoff Seed**

*Westhoughton, Bolton*

*Hi Geoff, As much as I love my Frogeye, I'd consider swapping it for the Ferrari, that is until the first service bill came in!*

## Restorer Beware

I don't wish to take anything away from the wonderful white Sprite restoration by David Maskell shown on page 11 of the January *MASCOT*, but in the photo it looks like the wing on the drivers side is the correct early pattern, but the passenger side wing may be a later one. My impression from the partially hidden lights is that the position of the indicator/sidelight assembly is lower on the right of the photo. Is the owner aware of any mismatch?

The sidelight unit was lowered in order to balance out the space left when the thinner bumpers with black plastic inserts were fitted.

I have seen a number of Spridgets where the later wing has been fitted to one side only and the owner is totally unaware of the lop-sidedness.

There is a great example shown in Terry Horler's "bible" on Sprites + Midgets where it quotes that the car is "an original example" (hope I don't get nominated for the Pucklechurch stocks for this!)

**Ian Cooke**

*Notts/Derby area*

*Hi Ian, You've opened a can of worms there. How many owners are now going to go out to check their front wings?*

*I've looked at the book and you are right. However Terry's usual excuse is that he was young, impressionable and needed the money. Gary*

## Unloved in Kent



*Seemingly abandoned RWA Midget in Kent*

Hi

John Clark recently found this RWA seemingly abandoned in a car park in Cobham, Kent.

The car is without tax and seemingly in good condition. The front offside tyre is flattening.

Nearby a modern car has a council notice affixed pending disposal. Will this car suffer the same fate?

It has MGCC badges. Perhaps a MASC member who is also an MGCC may know its history?

**Alan Anstead**



## **Spridgeteer in Training**

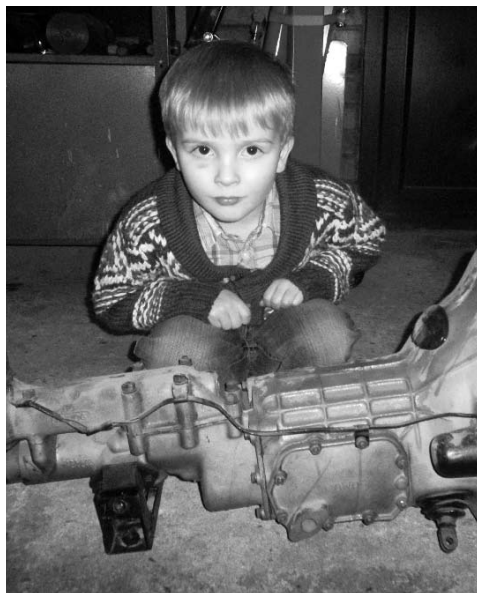
Hi Gary

After a great 2011 (Silverstone and Oulton Park) I have decided to repeat with Donington and Le Mans if possible, as I have been a classic racing fan for many years now but never been to Le Mans.

When I rebuilt little grumpy, I had a hardened steel bush fitted to one end of the gearbox layshaft, although this worked perfectly well for motoring in England, going abroad required a more permanent repair, hence the activity.

Youngest Grandson Luke who is aged 4 and already car mad, gave me some helpful advice (is the gearbox fixed yet Grandad?) and found the whole operation very interesting. Moss Europe and MG owners have been great with spares. Hope reassembly is as straight forward.

**Steve Greenhaff**  
No 4268



*Luke gives the gearbox the once over*

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**If you have any questions or opinions which you wish to have printed in MASCOT, please send them to me:  
editor@midgetandspriteclub.co.uk**

**Or by post to: Gary Lazarus, 40B Hungerford Road, London. N7 9LP UK.**

# Coils!!! Don't be fooled!

Following the recent ignition related articles in *MASCOT* I thought I would add my two penny's worth into the mix.

A part of my job is looking after ignition products for my company (a well known independent UK aftermarket name ... not the coil supplier shown I might add!!)

Carrying out research into old-style coils I found coils sold under a well-known suppliers brand were being sourced from overseas. When I dismantled these coils I was amazed to see the very poor quality of the construction and components used.

Following this I also dismantled another supplier's product and found the construction and components used to be far superior.

Here are photos of both parts, use your skill to decide which is which. I have removed the suppliers name from the poor quality unit to avoid any possible comeback!! The high quality unit has the manufacturer's name on it. (I have been using this coil on my car for several years with no problem,



as it has been stated before in *MASCOT*, a good quality ignition product, well maintained means happy motoring!!

**Grahame Gibbins**  
Oxfordshire area rep





# Frogeye XGJ 166

## Restoration and History



*Marilyn in the newly restored Frogeye*

I first saw my Frogeye XGJ 166 in a front garden in Catford, SE London in 1999 and although I already had a 1964 MK III Sprite, which I restored in 1996, I couldn't resist knocking on the door to see if the Frogeye might be for sale.

The car was under a tatty tarpaulin and looked in very poor condition with several colours of paint visible, mostly matt red with a silver Pride and Clark hard top. Unfortunately, the owner at the house did not

want to part with the Frog as his brother (who was deceased) had owned it before him and his own son had plans to restore it.

In January 2001, I was passing down the same road and the Frog was still there with no obvious signs of any work having been done to it, and this time the owner agreed to sell it to me. All I had to do now was go home and explain to my wife, Marilyn, that I had used our spending money for our forthcoming trip to Australia to see our daughter, to buy another old banger!

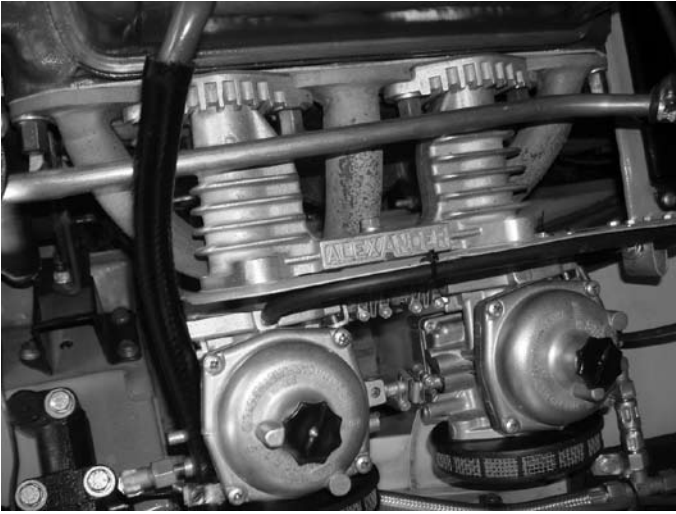
As is often the case with restoration projects, there is an initial flurry of work followed by long periods with very little progress. Both our daughters getting married certainly didn't help the bank balance.

By 2009, although I had completed quite a bit of panel replacement, very little work had been done on the mechanics. About this time I went on Alan Anstead's Miglia Tour and got talking to Dave Parker about the car and its unusual set-up with twin 1½ Strombergs and Alexander inlet manifold. Dave suggested that when I got home to have a look at the crank to see if there was a strengthening billet on the centre bearing. As it turned out there was the billet, plus the pistons and conrods, head and valves had all been modified. On closer inspection you could see the word "ALEX" stamped into the valve head, presumably short for Alexander.



*Mostly matt red*

*Twin 1½ Strombergs on an Alexander manifold*



spent in the garage. The most satisfying part of any restoration is putting all the new as restored parts back together.

Whilst refitting the original steering wheel, which had a laced wheel glove on it, I noticed yet another reference to Alexander stamped into the leather and there is also the possibility that an anti-roll bar that came with the car, but

was not fitted, may also have come from this same company. I recently took the Frog back to the house in Catford to show the previous owner the completed restoration and in the hope that he might know how and why all the Alexander parts had been fitted on to the car. Was it work that either he or his brother had done? He told me that there had been a previous owner of XGJ 166 before him and his brother. Unfortunately this does not show up on the DVLA trace, it only shows that the two brothers owned it from 1961 onwards. As well as this, the Heritage Certificate only shows the car leaving the factory on 13th May 1959 and being dispatched to Donald Healey, Warwick, in left hand drive form.

The bodywork was entrusted to Fisher Services at Sydenham, SE London and a great job, as always, was completed by Mark.

Once all the parts and body were back home the final push coincided with my retirement in April 2011 and most of the summer was

The previous owner at Catford also said when he and his brother bought it had Dunlop racing tyres on it, an oil cooler, and it had holes in the bonnet where Aero screens had been fitted at some point.

Unfortunately, I will probably never know the early history of the car, unless someone out there knows different!

P.S. The other day, having dropped my grandson off at his Playschool, I happened to see a familiar shape in another front garden under a tarpaulin. Well, I just had to knock! I think this is where I came in!! Watch this space!



*Alexander stamped valves*

**Ron Edwards**  
Kent Area member

# Sprite Brochures the same but different

I had been looking at the Moss parts catalogue, and liking the blue Sprite illustration (as I think it looks sort of Iris Blue – same colour as my present restoration). However, it occurred to me that I had seen a similar picture, but could not initially think where.

Well after a lot of searching – and perhaps I should say at this point that I have a collection of sales leaflets dating back to when I was eleven – I had a eureka moment! I was able to go straight to my BMC file, and there it was – a Sprite leaflet dated '12/63'. I actually remember collecting this item from Bert Raper's Garage in Cottingham, maybe three hundred yards from my parent's home, probably in early 1964. I remember that one of the owner's sons actually ran a Sprite at the time, which I liked the look of.

If you compare the two illustrations opposite, the Green car (from the back page of my leaflet) is depicted as a Mk III Sprite, whereas the earlier catalogue picture is a Mk II car.

They are however featured in the exact same background! Therefore one must assume that an illustrator must have amended not only the obvious colour, but also the hardtop, door handle, side screens, windscreen surround, rear bumper and wheels! Unless of course you can see more differences (could be a good game for the kids this!).

My only question though is – which came first? I know for certain that my leaflet is definitely 48 years old, but was the Mk II illustration created before then – or much more recently? Anyone know the answer? Strange to think that without the skill required at that time, many of us today can alter pictures using our laptops and a suitable program, simples...

Kind regards

**John Hutton**  
4464

*Ed's note:  
The blue Mk II one is (I believe) an earlier version dating from 1962/3.*

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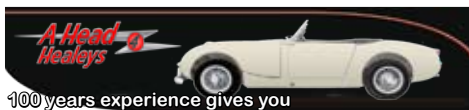
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**Are you the owner of this Sprite?**

Photo with permission and © John Short

## A Sprite of Many (additional) Parts

Part 1

**H**ow many of us from time to time have looked at our Spridgets and thought, what if I added this or enhanced it with that? You know, just something to make the journey more comfortable. I've always liked the idea of adding an electric windscreen washer pump (relatively easy to do, but I've just never got around to it).

In the 1980s many of us thought nothing of fitting an additional clock or dial to the dashboard. My old Datsun 1600 suffered the indignity of eight speakers and a graphic equalizer! Music blaring out far too loud must have made me look a lot less cool than I'd imagined at the time.

So what to make of this Mk1 Sprite? I've seen many photos of it over the years, in fact I believe that a former Editor, Mike North, placed a photo or two in *MASCOT* in the distant past. I will make no judgement especially as I suspect that the owner must have had it for a very long time, if not from new. As far as I'm aware it doesn't belong to a Midget & Sprite Club member but please let me know if it does, as I have many questions. I will simply point out some of the "optional extras" which I've noticed.

Exterior (starting from the front and working back)

Badge bar (with badges). 2 x spot/fog lamps, 2 x auxiliary lamps, all with stone guards.

Chrome strips either side of the grille, later winged badge, chrome inserts underneath the headlights. More stone guards, an air intake, Chrome front wheel arch extensions. Aftermarket bolt on wheels with spinners, leather bonnet latches and wing mounted air vents.

Wing mirrors and two aerials, 2 x screen mounted spot lamps, side indicators on the A post, chrome "Deluxe" badge. Speedwell door handles plus door locks. Rear chrome wheel arch extensions and additional customised rear fins!

Other things which you can't see are four exhaust pipes, two petrol caps (Mini Copper S style) a rear fog light, a boot rack and various additional badges.

Finally the car is painted yellow with a red "Alexander" style stripe.

All of this pales into insignificance compared to the interior, which I will feature in next month's magazine.

I'd really love to see it one day sitting on the MASC stand at the NEC.

**Gary**



## Drag Racing Midget

This is a long running work in progress. It began when I bought FHA 10K from a friend and neighbour in 1997, after a 10 year lay-up in a barn (the car, not me).

Over the next few years it evolved into a typical fast road car, 1380cc, stage 3 head, Weber etc. However about 4 years ago another friend fitted a turbocharged T16 engine into his MGB GT and took me for a ride. I was instantly hooked on the performance high that only a turbo can deliver.

The first iteration of converting the Midget to turbo power involved fitting manifolds, turbo and fuel system from a Metro Turbo. The engine was rebuilt with 1310cc (I wanted to keep the bores as stiff as possible), cast turbo pistons and larger combustion chambers in the existing cylinder head. The other major change was to fit Megajolt mappable electronic ignition. A modified Rover Tomcat charge-cooler completed the setup, with a Manifold 2" exhaust system.

I used the car on the road, the odd blast round Curborough sprint course, and memorably up Shelsley Walsh Hillclimb. Crucially I also took the car to Shakespeare County Raceway for a run up the quarter mile. With some advice and help from friends, I ran 14.5 seconds and felt pleased but wanted more.

Turbo power is addictive, and with a simple boost control device, you can feed your habit by dialling up more and more power from the cockpit. Unfortunately I had not mapped the ignition properly and detonation, the silent killer, was at work. Ultimately the engine expired at Curborough in a cloud of oil smoke and serious noise.

The detonation had cracked all 4 pistons, such that one piston finally had the crown part company with the skirt.

A complete engine rebuild followed, this time with forged pistons, an 8:1 compression ratio, and larger charge-cooler. I then had the car set up on a rolling road, with a fully mapped ignition, running up to 15psi boost, making 160bhp at the flywheel.





*Aero screens fitted, which allow a lunch of flies and bugs*



*Rear suspension showing the traction bars*

Various other changes had taken place around this time, with all the weather gear removed from the car (weight saving!). And ultimately aero screens replacing the conventional screen (Flying snacks on the move). I also fitted 'sticky' Toyo 888 rear tyres to get more grip off the start line, traction bars and a device called a linelock. This enables me to lock the front brakes on and leave the rears free so that I can spin the wheels up and warm the tyres before the start.

The results at the strip were encouraging and over the next few visits I reduced the quarter mile time to 13.5 seconds with a terminal speed of about 100mph. However this took its toll on the driveline and I broke ALL the teeth off first gear (straight cut close ratio box) as well as twisting a competition half shaft at the splines. The black museum of broken bits was growing.

Following some research on the net, I decided I had to be (even more) heretical and fit Ford parts to the car. Eventually I sourced a straight cut type 9 gearbox. This had the long input shaft, but by fitting 16mm spacers between the gearbox and bellhousing, and cutting the input shaft off flush with the bellhousing front face, it fitted ok, albeit with the gear lever a little further back than even the regular type 9 conversion. The back axle takes more of a beating than any other part of a drag racer, so ultimately I had a hybrid built. This utilises a Ford Escort (English axle) casing, but with Ford Capri (Atlas axle) competition half shafts and sidegears. These were fitted to a Tran X limited slip diff with a 4.1:1 CWP ratio. The axle tube and shafts were narrowed as much as possible and new saddles welded on to mate with the Midget

springs. I also fitted the Midget handbrake mechanism to the Ford drums. Finally I obtained some Compomotive ML wheels with a large offset to tuck the wheels into the body as much as possible and shod them with 205/60/13 tyres. They still stuck out, so aluminium bubble arches were fabricated and glued on to cover them. Finally a bespoke propshaft was made up to link the gearbox and axle.

One of the big problems with the car is to get it to hook up i.e. grip off the start line. The torque generated just spins the wheels, so I fitted a set of home made 'Cal-Trac' traction bars. When the car launches, the rear axle tries to rotate backwards, winding the front of the spring into an 'S' shape. These bars, working through a lever system transmit the wind up force into the top of the spring and force the wheel down onto the track. So far I have only mixed results from this, still a work in progress.

Somewhere along the way I fitted a Nitrous Oxide System (NOS) to the car, mainly to get



*The Nitrous Oxide System gives extra power on tap*

the turbo spooling earlier. The nitrous gas and the extra fuel are injected into the inlet before the carburettor and add about 25bhp. Together with a bit more boost from a new turbo and manifolds, the car now showed about 200bhp at the flywheel, plus 25 bhp from the NOS.

Back at the strip, the car seems to work quite well, with a best of 12.975 seconds for the quarter mile, and a terminal speed of 106mph. However the start is still full of wheelspin, so there is more to do.

I am currently shifting weight rearwards by fitting fibreglass front outer and aluminium inner wings, and adding water ballast in the boot! Ultimately I will try full racing slicks on the car.

I have also fitted softer than standard front springs (more heresy) and modified damper valves in an attempt to get the front of the car to rise on launch and increase weight transfer. My self set rules don't allow the use of active electronics i.e. launch control.



*The rear wing extensions, side exhaust and 'sticky' Toyo 888 rear tyres*



## Technical Specification

### Engine

1310cc. Forged Accralite pistons 13.5cc dish.  
Nitrided balanced crank and rods  
31/36 mm stainless valves (no inserts) 1.5:1 roller tip rockers  
25cc chambers, de-beaked, ported exhaust and inlet.  
Piper turbo cam.  
Megajolt V3 ignition, Ford edis coilpack NGK BCR8ES plugs  
Saab GT1752 turbo, electronic boost control  
Bespoke exhaust manifold, plenum chamber, charge-cooler, 2.5" exhaust, cherry bomb silencer.  
Metro Turbo carburettor, pressure regulator, high pressure fuel pump. Facet lift pump and swirl pot

### Transmission

Ford type 9 straight cut gearbox  
Escort Mexico clutch plate and cover  
English axle casing with Atlas side gears and shafts  
Tran X LSD with 4.1:1 gears

### Suspension

170lbf/in front springs, modified lever arm dampers  
1500 Midget rear springs, Spax shock absorbers,  
Cal-Trac style traction bars

### Wheels

Rear Compomotive ML, 205/60/13 Toyo 888 SG tyres  
Front Wolftrace, 155/60/13 budget tyres

On the road the car is well behaved (but a bit draughty) until provoked. It then feels like a 4 wheeled motorbike, effortlessly overtaking a line of traffic. When the boost comes on, you become tunnel-visioned, not daring to look at instruments or anything but the road ahead (think Starship Enterprise going to warp speed), it skips about unless the road is perfectly smooth, and I don't use it in the wet, the lack of grip is terrifying.

Why do it? Well the car is a Meccano substitute (forever being built, broken down and rebuilt) and the adrenaline rush when sitting on the start line is addictive. Boys and their toys.

I would like to thank a number of people for their help over the years, notably Nigel Cluley (who also sold me the car and has a degree in pxxx taking), Peter May, Peter Burgess and Dave Colledge at Retroford. Also Alex and Oliver Stephenson for the inspiration and finally my wife Sue for putting up with it all.

**Steve Cowling**

# Austin-Healey Sprite MkIV Rally Car O21BZE

I bought the car in February 2010; it is a standard spec 1969 Austin Healey Sprite imported from America, Chassis number: HAN9U8347G. Complete with three windscreen wipers and a rust free body.

In June of that year we commenced on a total rebuild, starting with sandblasting all parts including the chassis, which was then welded with stronger parts in addition to the fitting of a safety devices rollcage (R.A.C.No. 266). At the same time we fitted a Ford Type 9 5-speed gearbox.

In September 2010 I painted the chassis in black epoxy after which the body was sprayed in metallic silver. While the car was being resprayed, we totally rebuilt the engine with new pistons, a rebuilt cylinder head with lightweight rockers, a new oil pump and carburetors plus the addition of an oil cooler.



However, it is still pretty much a standard spec 1275cc A Series engine.

By December we'd built the car to R.A.C. B-rally car specs and by March of 2011 it was ready with all the homologation papers in order for us to go rallying, wonderful!

Back in April 2011 was our first rally, the TAC Rally in Belgium where we were winners in the BFO-BRC E09 class.





*The Sprite in action at the TAC Rally,  
photo © Kristof Vermeulen*

The second rally we competed in was the OVV Belgian Historic Championship, which took place in September 2011 and once again we won our class (BHC class B2). During this rally we met MASC member Graham Goodhall (whose blue Frogeye appeared on the MASC stand at last years NEC Classic Car Show, and is now owned by new club member and transport historian, Bill Piggott). Graham was driving his fantastic Austin Healey 3000 and is a very nice man.

Last year I was the driver of the car and my son Ari was my co-driver, he really is a fantastic co-driver and in 2012 I will let him drive the car as the pilot for the first time.

Ari and I also competed in other events last year with our other car which is an Austin Healey 3000. They were regularity-rallies. The I.N.G. Ardennes Rally, the BERCAR-DELEN Rally, and the ZOUTE Grand-Prix amongst others.

In 2012 we intend to do the TAC Rally again as well as the ORC Rally, the OVV Rally, and



*Ari (L) and Gino (R) with after their class win at the TAC Rally*

the YPRES Rally, all with the SPRITE (and all in Belgium).

I would like to thank my friend MATHIEU DAMIENS; he is one of the best CAR-photographers of the world! (See last month's cover shot.)

MASCOT would also like to thank Kristof Vermulen for the action shot. Photo © Kristof Vermeulen/raceshots.be whose web site can be viewed at [www.raceshots.be](http://www.raceshots.be)

Greetings from Belgium.

**THE CAR:** Austin Healey Sprite MkIV

**Chassis:** HAN9U83473G

**Year:** 1969

**Registration number:** 021BZE

**Engine number:** 12CDDAH17773

**Capacity:** 1275 cc

**Gino Dupont**

# Upholding the Tradition

## A Midget and the 2012 MCC Exeter Trial

*'Once upon a time there stood a policeman at the finish of a London-Exeter motor trial. Good natured, but with some amazement, he watched strings of competitors checking-in, covered with mud after an all-night and all-day run, finishing once again in darkness.*

*He said to a bystander, "How many more of these lunatics are there to arrive and why do they do it?"*

*(Extract from The Autocar January 4th 1935)'*



Colin and Dick attempt 'Sims' Exeter 2012

courses were getting 'a bit too rough' for the 'J' and I looked around for a Midget to modify.

Today, some eighteen thousand competition miles later 'HAP' the 1973 green Midget is still used in one-day Club events and most years we go out on the three major MCC Classics; The Exeter, The Lands' End and the Edinburgh; all endurance events and known affectionately in trials circles, as the 'Coldest,' the 'Longest' and the 'Hardest!'

For those not familiar with the term 'Classic Reliability Trial,' to give it the full title, it runs in classic format ... long distances, route checks and 'observed sections'. Certainly classic cars compete, but so to do Golfs, 205s, Suzukis, Escorts, Skodas, Beetles, BMWs, Dellsows, specials and many other types.

The aim is to navigate the course, keep to your Scheduled Time and 'climb' each hill without "stopping forward motion." Hills are usually steep byways or droving tracks and can be gradient 1:4 even 1:3 in places. So, all compete against the course and the organisers 'handicap' the various classes by introducing selected minimum tyre pressures and Restarts to even things out.

If you can manage all that with a 'clean sheet' you receive a Gold Medal from the MCC. If you do it better than anyone else in your class ... there is the 'Class' award. Earn three Gold medals in a calendar year and the MCC give you a 'Triple.' A much coveted silver sign post engraved Exeter, Lands End and Edinburgh.

A Triple is very difficult to achieve for you would have driven almost a thousand miles, climbed some forty or more Observed Sections without 'fault' and kept to Scheduled times throughout.



Colin and Dick in the 1933 MG J2 on the 'Step' Nailsworth Ladder Cotswold Clouds Trial 2002

**Time:** 23.18  
**Date:** Friday 6th January, 2012  
**Place:** Burford Rd Services, Cirencester  
**Weather:** Damp yet clear  
**Car:** No198 MG Midget  
**Biles/Munns**

### **"Well here we go again!"**

It was my navigator Dick recounting, as he had done so many times before ... we were off on yet another trial.

During the previous ten years, Dick had 'bounced' for me on forty or more events. Originally, we competed in my 1933 MG J2; an early Midget. However, in 2002 the



*Well waterproofed electrics and an aluminium undertray help to keep things going*

## **Trials**

The Exeter first took place in 1910 when a group of motor cyclists set off to drive from London to Exeter and back ... to see if they could do it! The roads were pretty poor in those days and I believe they stopped for a dinner in Salisbury.

Prior to that the Motor Cycling Club (MCC) had organised London to Edinburgh and return (1904) and London – Lands End – London ( 1908). In those days the Trial Officials travelled by train.

Cars were admitted to the Motor Cycling Club in 1914. It is still the organising Club today and over a hundred motor cycles set-off before we cars on this year's Exeter.

## **So what did this year's Exeter involve?**

Three groups ( 300+ competitors in all) starting at one minute intervals from Popham near Basingstoke, Cirencester and Plusha on the Devon / Cornwall border drove 90 -100 mile 'touring' legs in the night to converge on Haynes Motor Museum, Sparkford.

Whilst there had been a summary lighting check at the respective Starts, Scrutineering at Haynes ensured compliant MSA safety; fire extinguisher, spill kit etc. and the checking of tyres (no 'grip' or off-road allowed) and a random check for LSDs...not permitted.

After an hour's compulsory break we set off again in rain through Somerset, West Dorset and into East Devon for the first series of seven 'hills' and tests.

The New Year weather had been very wet and all Sections were muddy. Ours was a

late number (198) so it was just beginning to get light as we entered the Control at Exeter Services on Saturday morning.

Breakfast, fuel top-up and a further one hour's break renewed our energy for the trip up on to Dartmoor and another eight 'hills' and tests. Before Exeter we had incurred one 'fault' ... definite 'pilot error! So no Gold medal prospect ... no matter; you have to forget the 'cock-ups' and concentrate on the route and next test to come.



*The working area*

On Dartmoor we drove a number of traditional hills including Fingle (1932) and Sims (1933) where there must have been eight hundred or more spectators standing high on the banks urging us to do well.

Onwards for two more tests and down to the coast at Torquay, where we signed – off at 16.48 on time. We had covered a further 163 miles from Sparkford.



*2012 Sims Autojumble boot*



*The Midget prepped for the Exeter Trials earlier this year*

In the evening we enjoyed a supper for some four hundred competitors, officials and friends. A really great atmosphere prevailed and there was much chat of hills climbed and tests failed.

### Preparation

The essence of a trial is to drive the course successfully and finish.

Thorough and detailed preparation is essential and we carry a boot-full of spares to keep us on the road. The car is nicknamed 'Auto Jumble' after a fellow Spridgeteer saw the contents of the boot!

The engine and gearbox are protected by a strong aluminium undertray, the petrol tank is in the boot and the exhaust is well guarded. An extra spare wheel is carried for ballast and insurance against punctures!

These days there is a new Class 'O' which allows entry for an alternative non-damaging route. It still allows you to experience the trial without worry of damage.

I would thoroughly recommend it if you wish to look closer at the sport.

### So what's the tradition?

Dick and I like to do trials the way they used to ... hood down and going for it. It's brilliant open motoring taking us to some of the most spectacular parts of the country. Furthermore we are driving the 'hills' which trialists have done so for decades. It's being able to participate in motoring history.

There is also great friendship between competitors and if any one is stopped by the road side you check to ensure they are ok.

Entry fees are not expensive (£55 for the Exeter) thus cost per competitive mile / hour 'enjoyed' is very low indeed.

### And the Midget connection?

Well, in its early days the MG Car Company produced the M Type in 1929; a light two seater sports car based on the 850cc original Morris Minor and called the 'Midget.'

The M Type developed into the 'J' Type, the 'P' Type and then the various 'T' Types; all called Midgets. So our cars can trace their origins back eighty years or more.

There is no doubt if you enter one of the three classic trials or indeed a club one day event you will be part of a long standing motor sport tradition.

Perhaps that policeman in London all those years ago was right.

You do have to be certified to do trials.... but surely that's no different from any other branch of motor sport ... is it?

**Colin Biles**

### The 'Exeter' Programme shows 'Spridgets' were well represented

|     |                               |              |             |
|-----|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| 157 | Pete and Nigel Hodson         | Uffcombe     | Midget 1500 |
| 198 | Colin Biles and Dick Munns    | Malmesbury   | Midget 1275 |
| 244 | Peter and David Manning       | Berkhamstead | Midget 1275 |
| 245 | Michael and Colin Weeks       | Woking       | Midget 1275 |
| 252 | Duncan and Eleanor Welch      | Five Oak     | A.H. 1275   |
| 518 | Sue and Alan Scott            | Horsham      | Midget 1275 |
| 529 | Nigel Kendall and Glenn Pasco | Truro        | Midget 1275 |

Results were not available at the time of going to press.

If you would like to know more visit [www.themotorcyclingclub.org.uk](http://www.themotorcyclingclub.org.uk)  
Or The Association of Classic Trials Clubs [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)

# Heart of England Area



Despite the bitter February frost and snow there was a good turnout of 32 members at the Green Dragon, although it was noticed that there was understandably a distinct lack of Spridgets in the car park. We were pleased to greet a new member Steve Cowling from Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove who drives a MK 3 Midget.

Events on the calendar were discussed with the first being the Restoration show at Stoneleigh on February 19th. Organisation has been taken on by Dave Colclough and Dave Puzey who was able to report that all was in hand and that a good show of cars was expected.

The Spring Run this year is being organised by Dave and Chris Parker and is a drive to Frome in Somerset with an overnight stay at the Premier Inn on March 31st. Anyone wishing to join us should book direct with the hotel and then let Dave know.

For the last few years this group has had a good representation at Spriggetreffen in Germany, and it is hoped that this year this will continue, with a contingency already planning to go. There are few details available at present but it should be noted that the date is earlier than usual on 17/20th May to coincide with a Bank Holiday in Germany and is to be held in Bremen. Anyone interested in going should contact Jim Willis.

Future events were discussed and the decision made that the Heart of England group would attend both the Donington and the Silverstone events on the Sunday this year so members could ensure they got their entries in. We have received confirmation that there is to be the Father's Day event at Warwick Castle on June 17th which will enable members to get a 'bit of Culture and History' as well as viewing the classic cars.

*Hoping for a similar line-up at this year's Spriggetreffen, to be held in Bremen*



We have been told that the closing date for the Coventry run in August is May 7th so anyone wishing to go should apply as soon as possible, all details on the Club website.

At the January meeting we had decided to try out having an 'interim' meeting at the Green Dragon just for a drink and a natter in the bar. This totally confused Peter and Ann who thought we'd got the wrong night but we were happy to report that 11 people turned up. Interestingly the group soon split into 'us and them' – the men unsurprisingly talking about cars and bits while the women chatted about much more interesting stuff. It was good to have the opportunity to catch up with everyone and it will be repeated on the third Wednesday of every month. Maybe we will see you there and hopefully in the summer months we will fit in a drive.

Since the last meeting we have taken delivery of the new sail. It looks very good and has the MASC logo with Heart of England Area written on it in white on a green background. Now the world will know who we are at future events.

**Rosemary Couch**

*Ed's note: See new member, Steve Cowling's amazing Drag Midget on pages 18 & 19 of this month's MASCOT.*

# Home Counties North West

Hopefully by the time you are reading this the sun will be shining and the snow and sub-zero temperatures will be a distant memory! I need to get the Frogeye MOT'd and ready for the events we have planned for the year ahead in the North West Home Counties so I hope it warms up soon.

Our plan for this year is to have at least one event each month as well as our pub night on the last Wednesday of the month. We will either have a road run or a trip to somewhere of interest or visit to a car show. All events are highlighted on our website/blog ([hcnwmasc.blogspot.com](http://hcnwmasc.blogspot.com)) and all are welcome whether you live in our area or not! We will also have members attending some of the many car based events in our area, but that we are not 'officially' attending, so check out the website and see what is coming up that you might like to go along to.



Our first organised event of 2012 will be on March 25th. Chris and Pat are organising a road run. Breaking with tradition we will start at The Chequers Inn in Redbourn and will no doubt end up in a nice pub for lunch. More specific joining instruction will be e-mailed or will be on our website. If you fancy coming along please let me know in advance so we know who to expect.

If you live in our area or close by and haven't joined us before please do. We are a relaxed and friendly area and I am sure you will be made very welcome. And if you live further a field and want to join us at an event or on a road run please feel free to come along. In fact if you are going to any event further afield than your own area this year why not check out the events section of MASCOT and see if another area will be there so you can say hello and join with them! We are all one big club. Happy MASC motoring!

**Mark,** [hcnwmasc.blogspot.com](http://hcnwmasc.blogspot.com)



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# Scotland Report

Things have been very quiet on the Midget and Sprite scene in Scotland since the last report. There has been no meeting in the interim and, obviously at this time of year, no runs upon which to allow me to update you.

Brief contact with the members of the group revealed that work is proceeding on all the various cars, albeit at different rates of progress. However, it is evident that the advancement of the calendar and the slowly, but perceptible, lengthening of the days is starting to concentrate the attention wonderfully. Parts are finally being ordered and garages opened to allow in daylight rather than trying to work in confined spaces with inspection lights.

It is also now becoming viable to work with the doors open without the potential of freezing to death in the process. I do have to concede however, that according to the weather reports, that maybe the situation here in the west of Scotland it is clearly not the same in other areas of the country.



*Waiting for Springtime in Scotland*

It is my intention at the February meeting of the Group to finalise the programme of runs and events for this year and hence my next report should include the timetable for the year. In the meantime, I hope all you Spidgeteers get all the various modifications, additions and tuning completed that you promised yourselves and are looking to a good season enjoying these classic cars that we are all so obsessed about.

**John Pardo**

Contact: 01698 814791

E-mail: [jp1kg@talktalk.net](mailto:jp1kg@talktalk.net)



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# The Midget & Sprite Challenge



Thruxton in 2011 as Midgets and B's start

**T**he UK's only exclusively Midget and Sprite Race Championship. THE home of Midget & Sprite Racing. After 35 successful years the MGCC Midget Challenge has joined forces with the Sprites from the Austin Healey Club to create the The Midget & Sprite Challenge, sponsored by the Classic Car restoration company Robin Lackford Motor Engineering.

## **The 2012 Championship consists of the following rounds:**

- April 8th Donington Park (Double Header)
- May 5/6th Brands Hatch (Double Header)
- June 23/24th Silverstone MG Live Grand Prix Circuit
- August 11th Oulton Park
- September 9th Thruxton
- October 13/14th Snetterton (Double Header)

## **The cars are divided into five groups:**

Group A – Fully modified, based on classic Modsports rules. The cars are highly developed.

Group B – Race modified engines and slick tyres create cost effective race cars.

Group C – Road cars with limited improvements running on road legal tyres.

Group D – Limited modifications allowed to Healey club (Class D) rules.

Group E – Race modified engines and suspension, but treaded tyres (to Healey Club class E rules)

**Invitation Class** open to any Midget and Sprite at the discretion of the Championship Co-Ordinator.

The class structure ensures that the Challenge caters for all Midgets & Sprites and drivers from novice to expert who relish close racing and the challenge of a traditional rear wheel drive sports car. Above all we aim to provide serious racing on track, but a friendly and fun bunch off track. If you do attend any of our races do come and say hello and have a close look at the cars.

Having raced in the Challenge for 10 years, I can vouch for the truly amazing spirit within all the competitors, often supplying parts and



lan Langford's Class B Lenham Midget



*Ian Stagg leading Mike Harris' MGB and Dean Stanton's Lenham Midget*



*Steve Collinson in his Midget*



*Edward Reeve, one of the Midget Championship's greatest supporters*

labour to assist other challenge competitors to get their cars ready for the next race.

Some of the competitors to look out in class A for this year include Ed Reeve (now entering his 36th year of Midget Challenge racing), Paul Sibley in his indecently fast Class A car, expect also to see Grahame Adams and Martin Morris to be snapping at their heels during the course of the Year.

Of the Class B competitors, some name to watch out for are, Nigel Pratt, Ian Langford, Ian Stagg also the trio of Collinson brothers Steve, Pete and John and also Andrew Actman in his Sebring Sprite.

Class C competitors include David Pymm, Peter Hartle, and Richard Homer.

I must confess to being slightly in the dark as to Healey competitors, but expect the series sponsor Robon Lackford to be mixing it with some of the Class B cars in his Class E car.

It would be great to see Midget & Sprite Club members attending their local race meeting to support the Challenge and the are assured a warm welcome from both myself and all the competitors if they introduce themselves. They can also contact me for more information at [timslenham@hotmail.com](mailto:timslenham@hotmail.com) or [gilduffy@supanet.com](mailto:gilduffy@supanet.com)

**Tim Storrar**

*Championship Co-Ordinator  
Midget & Sprite Challenge  
Images thanks to Denis Wharf*

# Kent Area Report



## Kent Meet in January

It is with sadness that I inform you that, Kent Midget & Sprite Club member Ian Pickard suffered a heart attack and passed away on January 8th. Condolences to wife Noel, son John and family.

My first write up of the year. We start with a New Year's resolution not to be controversial nor upset anybody. Last year my ramblings brought forth responses just a step short of death threats so I will try to be moderate. I did only say try! Strange how none of those that complained ... Oops sorry. Didn't last long did it – that resolution? Another full e-mail 'in tray' later on?

Anyway several members, in Kent, are taking the opportunity, at this time of the year to work on their cars. Steven Ford, assisted by mate Tony, is busy sorting his Spridget and fitting a type 9. I could not get involved so made the chassis bracing kit for it. This car is definitely a family affair as mum and dad, John and Carol, are awaiting completion, of the project, so that they can borrow the car for a club tour, planned by Sussex Area rep David Southcott and others, in June.

Whilst on the subject of gearboxes, new Masc members, Ben and Dan Collins are about to start a Spridget restoration which they would like to fit with an automatic gearbox. Suggestions put forward, so far, for gearbox types that may fit, are MGB or Ford Sierra with a further suggestion of retaining a manual gearbox, but having a hand operated clutch by fitting a lever, for operating the clutch, to the gearshift lever attached to a servo operating on the clutch slave cylinder. Is there a club member out there who could assist with some input on the fitment of an auto trans to a Midget or Sprite?

Another family pulling together are teenager Andy Dawson's with mum and girlfriend both being pressed into helping with an engine rebuild? It's good to see a youngster rolling up his sleeves and gaining experience by laying hands on. I understand Paul and Jane Coveney are getting down and dirty and scraping the underside of their car ready for some rust protection. Crikey, the formerly unheard of, Mrs A has even been seen working on her unmentionable Japanese thing. Is it something in the New Year air? I am sure that there must be more out there attempting such jobs before the summer comes upon us.

I am still getting phone calls, and e-mails, regarding people breaking down, at the roadside, with rotor arm failures. The editor has run my article on upgrading the ignition system twice before so I cannot really ask him to re-run it again this year so please do yourself a favour and read the article. It is in the May 2009 edition of *MASCOT*, Page 37. It is available on the members section of the Club website. It might save you a long wait



Mrs A working on her car



Inside the Roadhouse Café, Rally Plaques and photos adorn the walls



Sprinzel cartoon mug

at the roadside. No names, as I try to avoid upset and controversy, but it does help if your spare rotor arm is actually in the car and not miles away in the garage. Doh!

Whilst out and about I recently dropped into the Roadhouse Café on the A20 near Lenham. Apparently this café has a continuous history of some sixty years. Having navigated the craters, big enough to swallow a Spridget, in the parking area I entered to double the clientele. Around the walls were pictures of rally cars and Rally Plaques. This café has been used in the past, and apparently in the present, as a stop for rallyists. Crews on the Monte Carlo Rally stopped here for a brew. It was the haunt of Mods and Rockers in the 1960s. I noticed pictures of John Sprinzel and Sebring Sprites. My tea was even served in a John Sprinzel mug! Ian Fleming is said to have come here and gained inspiration for the 007 tag, given to secret agent James Bond, from the East Kent Road Car Co bus that dropped him here (route 007). The East Kent Road Car Co buses and coaches, an amalgamation of several coach firms, from 1916, were liveried maroon and cream. Strangely some of their vehicles, from 1929, following an agreement with the Post Office, had letter boxes on board. Our own John Clark's father drove the buses on that route. Small world isn't it!

And so on to our monthly meet at the Angel, Addington Green, Kent where enthusiastic

landlord Lee moved several picnic tables from the front of the premise for us to have privileged parking at 'front of house'.

Blessed by good weather; the sun was out, and not being too cold, a goodly number arrived with hoods furled.

Janov and Jan Hutson had seen the club website and had decided to pay a visit, to check us out, in their white 1500 Midget. Hopefully they will join us on a more permanent basis. Geoff Algood paid a first time visit, after two years of membership, bringing pictures of his Frogeye that he has had many years. Off the road for some time he may be making a call to Terry Horler to reclaim the registration number. The pictures showed that it will be an interesting project.



Jan & Janov's 1500 Midget

Conversation showed that there will be a goodly number attending this year's Le Mans Classic in July. Do people want to meet up there? Those persons attending as part of the Loire Tour advertised in December 2011 MASCOT will be assembled, on the infield, with our 'twin' Amicale Spridget.

Also to look forward to in the coming months is a visit to a museum dedicated to 1955 Le Mans winner, and 1958 F1 World Champion, Mike Hawthorn. Then we have had an invitation to join Morgan Owners at an event in Kent so it is looking good for the coming year. If there is any interest I might organise a Battlefield Tour, in October, in France, but with a medieval theme. That still leaves a lot of dates to fill if anyone has ideas or wants to organise something.

**Alan Anstead**  
Kent Rep

# Midget & Sprite Club

## National Event at Silverstone

This is a reminder up that this year Silverstone Classic will be restricting Saturday only tickets so if you just want to attend on the Saturday I would advise you to book as soon as possible, if you book for more than one day but including Saturday there will be no restriction. I think the organisers are trying to get a better balance of numbers across the three days as Saturday is by far the most popular day normally. Opposite is the advert and discount code (bottom right) to try to give those who want Saturday only tickets a fighting chance of getting them.

Silverstone Classic will once again be our MASC national gathering and will be the biggest and best classic car show on the planet for 2012. We have secured special rates and infield parking in a designated MASC area again this year. Ticket prices are Friday £35, Saturday (limited availability) £50, Sunday £45, 2-day Fri/Sat £60, 2-day Sat/Sun £70 and 3 day weekend £80, this gets two people in one Spridget in to our infield area. Note these discounted tickets are only available until 31st March at which point the prices rise by £5 for each day booked (i.e. £15 on a 3 day ticket) and even these tickets will only be available up to 31st May.

Sadly prices have gone up slightly this year (not really a surprise) however every year this brilliant event gets bigger and better (take a look at the Silverstone Classic website for details), and is still good value for what is included.

[www.silverstoneclassic.com](http://www.silverstoneclassic.com) Quote booking code **C12134**

**Dave Dixon (ARD)** e-dave@ntlworld.com





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For some time past privately owned Alexander-converted Sprites have been making fastest time of day in local events so we thought it was time we entered one ourselves. First time out and before 100,000 spectators at the gruelling B.R.D.C. International Meeting at Silverstone on May 2nd, our Alexander-converted Austin Healey Sprite finished in front of the rest of the under 1,000 c.c. field in the Grand Touring class, and was in fact the fastest Sprite of the day.

Bob Gerard driving a Turner, also powered by a Series 'A' B.M.C. Alexander-converted engine came in a close second, both cars proving our claim that a genuine Alexander conversion not only gives you the speed but also the stamina to win.

As a result of intensive development the Stage 1 Alexander engine conversion for the B.M.C. series 'A' engine is second to none but we have decided that from now on our Racing Department, hitherto only available to trade entrants, will be at the disposal of private owners who may wish to take tuning a stage further either for road or track use.

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|------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
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| 0-50                               | 13.0 secs.        | 10.8 secs.       |
| 0-70                               | 33.8 secs.        | 22 secs.         |
| Standing $\frac{1}{4}$ mile ... .. | 21 secs.          | 19.6 secs.       |
| Maximum Speed ... ..               | 80 m.p.h.         | 89 m.p.h.        |
| Maximum speed (one way) ... ..     | 82 m.p.h.         | 92 m.p.h.        |
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Alexander Engineering advert from the early 1960s (see article pages 12-13)

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*Chris demonstrates what you can do with a rusty old Midget – and a Westfield body*

## Notts/Derby Area Report

Here's our much overdue monthly report, although Gary has done sterling work filling the pages of *MASCOT* without me.

We held a Christmas meal at The Sitwell Arms in early December, but despite taking a camera I forgot all about getting any shots, so you lucky people have escaped seeing the ravenous bunch of carnivores devouring the succulent turkey and Christmas pud. As Spike Milligan once said "gobble gobble glup glup munch munch munch!" which sums it up quite nicely.

The January meet brought out a good crowd, all desperate to find out what each other had been up to over the holidays, with a Healey Frogeye and a slightly noisy Midget in the car park – we must try to keep them from arguing! Inside Neil showed off his rocker box racer he has been preparing ready for the Silverstone MG Live event later in the year.

We discussed which events we are likely to get to this coming year, with the aim of trying to increase our presence at some of the larger local classic car events by pre-booking and displaying as a group rather than our usual scattering. "Drive it day" on 22nd April will hopefully involve a road run to Calke Abbey and we plan to be at Wollaton Park for their annual "Autokarna" on 3/4th June. Watch this space!

The meetings at The Sitwell Arms are now on the 2nd Thursday of each month and the next will be Thursday 8th March.

**Ian Cooke (Notts/Derby area rep)**  
*ilc@bgs.ac.uk*

*Ed note:*  
 I would so love to have one of these but in terms of practicality, they make a Frogeye feel like a people carrier!



## East Anglian Report



**N**ot too many group Spridget activities going on in the belly of Britain yet and as I look out of my window I can see the Sprite cave is covered in white, we even missed out on the pub meeting as a 70 mile round trip was out of the question in the snow and ice. We did have one non-car social event this month (just to keep the momentum up) and that was Pidley bowling organised, and reported on (below) by Diane.

### Bowling report

As usual Nigel made both of us late and that was after telling him half an hour earlier than we needed. After the fun of re-arranging who was in what lane as I had planned for two lanes but it turned out to be three so my plan failed! Graham got the best deal with three ladies all to himself on his lane. But he still failed to have the top score in his group beaten by Sally with the very impressive score of 211. Top girl!! In round one Mick won by just one point above Nigel sending a great challenge in the second round only for Chris to beat both of them they claim the pressure was too great! The overall winner was Mick.

We had a lovely meal but the wine went to Maggie and she accidentally spilt red wine over the table narrowly missing Mick then a little later she misjudged her chair and fell off it. As we got word that the snow was arriving we all said our goodbyes and travelled home

before we had to rent a room at the lakeside lodge. The event went well and everyone had a good time.

My comments are (as Pat and I failed to make it, hence the lane rearranging) that it sounds like everyone (especially Maggie!) had a fun time and a vote of thanks is owed to Diane for organising it for us (well done).

I attended the first MASC committee meeting of the new year in Aston Cantlow, and can report that your club is in good health, on a sound financial footing, the membership is rising, MASCOT is bursting at the seams with trade advertising and interesting and amusing articles and we are establishing a great web and facebook presence with net advertising and our brilliant and ever improving website (Richard Mumford deserves a well-earned round of applause).

On a personal front, although I mentioned that the Sprite cave was covered in snow, don't let that fool you in to thinking nothing is going on inside, I have been spurred on to get cracking with the Phoenix restoration project by the acquisition of my new secret weapon, no not ET but RE (as seen on page 48 of February's Practical Classics). Yes I have cooked up a deal with Mr East (Clint) to assist me in putting the Phoenix and her elder sister back on the road.

**Dave Dixon**



## Somerset Area Report

*Members and their cars on a previous Somerset outing, remembering sunny days in 2008*

Well there we were thinking that spring was just around the corner and Brrrrhhh!! Suddenly it's winter again. Still never mind it gives me a chance to write this report on what we have been up to since the last one published in November.

So thinking back, what have we done? Not a lot really, but we had a superb "Xmas" lunch in early December at The Flintlocks at March, a small village just off the A303, not far from the Somerset/Devon Border. If you are that way anytime we can recommend it. No the landlord has not bribed us to do so! By general agreement, we then did not meet later in the month due to everyone being busy with their own celebrations twixt Xmas and New Year.

January saw us back at the Lord Nelson on the last Thursday, when, as is customary, most were found to be "going through the Menu". The food is always good there too, so much so that the pub is almost too popular and is often very noisy making the holding of any sort of "business" meeting almost impossible. We did, as has been mentioned before, discuss a possible change of area name and venue which provoked some lively comment; also the question of holding a "planning meeting" say once a quarter, when we could decide on Future Events with a view to advising MASCOT in the hope we might then attract more interest and support from other club members living locally.

(Colin Jones and Jim Sherry- new or rejoined members – we'd be pleased to see you!)

This has now been put to the vote and the result is, we will not be changing the venue or our area name but there was universal support to hold other meetings at which we can discuss what we wish to do in the following months. This will be held at members' homes so that we do not have to compete with noisy skittles teams and others making merry. The first will be planned for late March early April.

As I write it is the weekend of the Great Western Autojumble at Shepton Mallet and several members plan to visit the show, others of a more romantic disposition may be going into Dorset to attend "A Valentines Cream Tea" at Mike Rolls in Fifehead Magdalen.

Though, still some way off, we have already organised our Area holiday in September or rather Dave Bearne has (thanks Dave!) We shall be spending a long weekend amongst the North Devon lanes with trips to the Devon Coast, Exmoor etc and who knows may be a struggle up Porlock Hill on the way depending on our route into Devon.

As they say after the best cartoons, "That's all folks" Here's to the next time.

**Ray Darch**  
Somerset Area Rep

# South Staffs & North Birmingham Area



*The camera cannot lie*



*Maybe it can – just the start*

After Steve's excellent report last month for the SS&NB area it is now my turn. I have been a member for two years and like Steve am, hopefully, nearing the end of a 3-year rebuild of my 1975 1500 Midget. The 'race' is on to see who finishes first!

Our monthly meeting was well attended by all the usual suspects, numbering ten in total. Our events planner, Andy, organised a meet up at the Bassetts Pole McDonalds for the Stoneleigh Show. Bill was taking deposits for the annual trip to Le Mans, unfortunately minus two, as both Steve and myself were feeling a lot less confident that our cars would be ready in time!

So, back to my project. Bought off eBay four years ago (without viewing – first mistake), 1975? Got to pay road tax? (second mistake). 1500? Triumph engine – not a real MG then (third mistake? We'll see).

Fortunately, I was able to drive the car through the summer of 2008 and after sorting out a couple of problems, thoroughly enjoyed it. Work started in February 2009 thinking the body wasn't too bad, yes, I know, stop giggling! I won't bore you with the details, but after digging out the filler, repairs on top of repairs, bodes, etc. I have ended up replacing most of it. Fortunately, the doors, wings and bonnet were all OK.

Now, finally painted, you can see I am going for the 'retro race' look which may not be to everyone's taste but I am really pleased with the results so far. The engine will be modified with twin 40 DCOE Webers and have been encouraged as to the 'reliability' issues by Mark Wright of Jigsaw Racing. Watch this space!

As always, Spridget enthusiasts, new and old, are welcome at our monthly meetings.

**Gary Hendon**



*Left spring hanger area – fine example of advanced corrosion!*



*And now*

# From the Bowels of Bristol

I knew it; one of our 'We don't believe you have got one' members is unquestionably a spy reporting to the village elders. At our January meeting, we spoke in hushed tones of our plans to celebrate 50 years of the ribbed case gearbox this coming October. This was a Class One security discussion, no one outside our circle of tables at the Rose and Crown could have possibly overheard. So it was, the following week I received a registered letter from the Pucklechurch Parish Council – Street lighting, Bus shelter cleaning, Dog poo bins and Intelligence gathering Department. It read "Dear Mr Horler, it has come to our attention that your Wednesday evening group, is planning to celebrate a 50 year old rib cage (sic). Will this be taking place on the Village Green?" Then followed an 8 page contract and application form with a suggested donation to the council's tea and biscuit fund. So, we have been rumbled and must now make an official booking for the village green. The contract was all pretty much standard stuff, details of Public Liability insurance, risk assessments, name of Safety officer, numbers likely to attend etc etc. However, a few odd ones – Condition No 148 "Do you intend to set fire to anything/anyone?" Condition 152 "Will your event involve any sacrificial activities?" Condition 153 "Will your event involve any Fair Maidens?" This last one was accompanied by the note "Please be aware that the Parish is unable to supply any fair Maidens at the present time – since we haven't had any since 1954". Evidently, the Parish can supply a few Damsels in distress (providing the date does not clash with any Jeremy Kyle show recordings). Damsels in distress – more like damsels in a state of undress from what I have seen around the village. So it was a no to those 3 conditions.

Now the secret is out, here is the plan. As we now have two of our members conscripted into the Pucklechurch Pounders Morris dancing squad, we have choreographed (?) a special Morris dance entitled 'The H gate 50' to celebrate 50 years of the ribbed case gearbox. The routine starts off in the Northwest corner of the village green in a slow and unsynchronised manner. It



*'Gertrud the Grappler' of the Pucklechurch W.I. wrestling team was determined to stop the 'H gate 50' getting to their corner of the field*

then moves to the Southwest corner, now synchronised and a bit quicker. Picking up speed, it transfers to the North east corner getting quicker all the time. Finally, to the Southeast corner at a frantic rate until they all fall down. We did plan a further move to the East by Southeast corner where upon they would have to do the whole thing backwards. However, this corner of the green is deliberately kept in a boggy and muddy condition by demand of the W.I. wrestling team – so we had to drop that.

Great stuff to look forward too then, unlike next year when I previously stated that there was nothing to look forward to in Spridgley thing folklore. Whoops, how could I have overlooked 30 years of the Midget and Sprite Club? Yes, it was 1983, when some of our Spridgley things had not even developed rust, that our club began. Strangely, our very first meeting was but a few miles away from where the Bristol group meet now, even more strangely, my Sprite Mk1V is still there (and that is the truth) Shall we descend upon the Lamb Inn at Iron Acton as a reminder of that great occasion? (Hopefully, they may have forgotten us by now!) In the meantime, all are welcome to join us at the Rose and Crown at Pucklechurch on the second Wednesday of each month for a good old Spridgley thing natter.

**Terry Horler**

# Get it in your Diary

## Donington Historic Festival 2012

The dates of the second Donington Historic Festival have been confirmed as Saturday May 5th and Sunday May 6th 2012 – a weekend that definitely deserves priority placement in your diary.

The inaugural event in 2011 was a tremendous success, attracting 12,000 people who basked in the Donington sunshine for two days of action-packed historic racing with 300+ cars out on track.

While the organisers can't guarantee the same idyllic weather, the 2012 Festival is guaranteed to deliver an equally thrilling array of huge grids of the cream of Europe's historic single-seaters, sportscars and touring cars, all battling it out around this hugely popular and exciting circuit in the hands of some of the top drivers in the sport.

The Midget & Sprite Club has already registered for the event and as with the Silverstone Classic, we intend to have a large

club gathering in our own specific club area, close to the action.

The advert opposite contains the discount code for tickets, which have been improved by the additional choice of allowing us to select one day tickets instead of the whole weekend.

Last year the drive around the track at speed was worth the entry fee alone!

Great racing, excellent views of the track, an informal pit area and perhaps as it's a young event it will be less commercially orientated than other Historic Festivals

A superb location and attractions on site such as the Donington Grand Prix Collection museum.

For further information please visit [www.doningtonhistoric.com](http://www.doningtonhistoric.com) or contact Alan East-Jones at [apfastsol@gmail.com](mailto:apfastsol@gmail.com) who has volunteered to be the contact for MASC members wishing to attend.

Quote ref. **MSCDHF12** when booking by phone or through the website.

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or

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## Market Place

Adverts to Alan Lo, 23 Charnell Road, Staple Hill, Bristol, BS16 5NE  
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**MG Midget White 1963** with MOT. 1380cc Road/Race Engine, multistud head, twin SU, B/Seats, new body panels and Minilites. Ideal hill climb/ sprint car project. Some work to finish. £2800, Richard (07957200739).

**Four-wheeled car transporter trailer** professionally built. Old but very strong and serviceable. 12' inside bed, complete with spare wheel, ramps, winch, lighting board. Paul 0754332498 (Essex), £575.

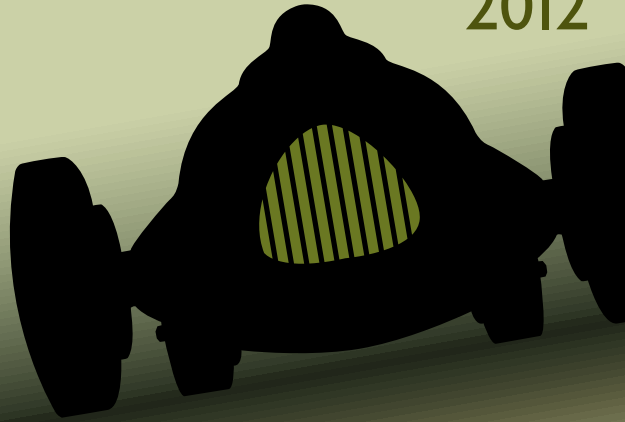
**Sebring Sprite project.** Complete Archers Sebring Sprite body kit aluminium skinned doors, 1967 MG Midget rolling shell on wire wheels complete set of instruments. Midget 1275 engine for reconditioning, gearbox, trims and many more period and special parts and a 1960 Healey Sprite V5C, VIN plate included. Please phone for further detail, Paul 0754332498 (Essex) £6250.

**1975 Midget 1500** in need of restoration. Unused since 1983. Offers. Contact John Mackie, tel 01736 810784 (Cornwall).

# DONINGTON HISTORIC FESTIVAL

SATURDAY 5<sup>th</sup> MAY &  
SUNDAY 6<sup>th</sup> MAY

2012



Principal Partner



## Donington Park's historic motor racing festival



Over 300 world-class historic racing cars



100s of cars on display from classic car clubs



Historic karting



Trade village featuring memorabilia, art, photos, books, clothing, classic car mart and autojumble



Kids' zone



Cafés, bars and food outlets



Access to all areas including spectator zones and paddocks



Free parking

### A packed programme of historic races from the 80s back to the 20s, including:

- Group C sportscars
- JD Classics Challenge for 66 to 85 Touring Cars
- HSCC Historic F2
- '1000km' for pre-72 sports-racing cars
- U2TC, Pre-66 under two-litre Touring Cars
- E-type Challenge
- Pre-63 GT
- Stirling Moss Trophy for pre-61 sportscars
- RAC Woodcote Trophy for pre-56 sportscars
- 'Mad Jack' for pre-War sportscars

### Special Midget & Sprite Club member offer:

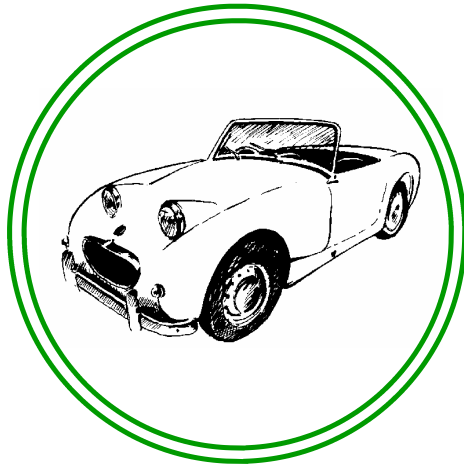
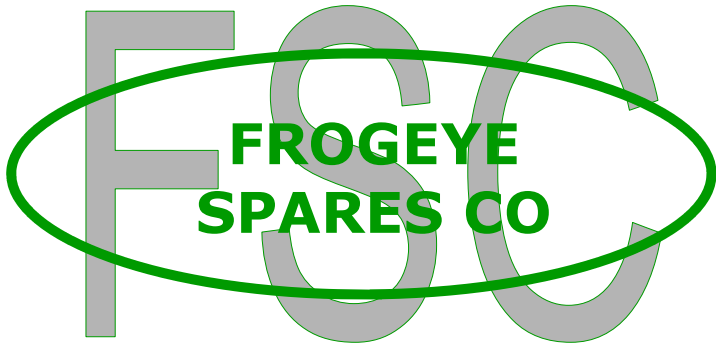
We have put together a special package for members of the Midget & Sprite Club, to give you discounted tickets plus dedicated members' parking and club display areas. Buy one advance one-day ticket for £18, or one advance two-day ticket for £30, and get another FREE! Children under 16 also go free. **QUOTE REF. MSCDHF12** when booking by phone or through our website.

**24hr ticket hotline: 0844 873 7355 or [www.doningtonhistoric.com](http://www.doningtonhistoric.com)**

For general enquiries please telephone: +44 (0) 1379 678 787 or email [enquiries@doningtonhistoric.com](mailto:enquiries@doningtonhistoric.com)

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