

**May 2024****Official Bulletin of the Sprite Club of SA**

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**President's Mumbblings:**

I look at the date and realise it's the 28<sup>th</sup> of April. Good grief. I fear the years are accelerating as I get older or maybe I'm too busy to notice the days flying by. The days are growing shorter and the air is getting crisper and colder. Great for our little cars, not so great for us as a driver. The heater can cope but only to a point! I may have to put in a colder weather thermostat soon to help the engine get up to temperature.

Its been a pretty busy past month and a half. The National meeting was a definite highlight, but so has been seeing new members join and the work the club has done to bring the new ICV rules into being within our Club. From talking to members of other clubs, the Sprite Club should be very proud of the way it's taken the ICV challenge on. I'm not saying this because I'm the Club president, but we have one of the most comprehensive approaches to the ICV registration requirements. Members I think know that we probably go above and beyond with the process of cars moving to 'Historic Registration' under the Act; yes, we probably are a little more onerous in our registration process than some other clubs but I think the extra effort Gordon and Don regularly go to ensures that we, as the car owners, know we have done everything right in terms of roadworthiness and registration if something untoward happens and things goes wrong. The new ICV category is no different and it's an absolute credit to Sean and Lee from the Clubbies group and Gordon and Don. The club has developed a check list that should help any prospective newer ICV owner understand if their car is going to qualify for the Conditional Registration scheme or if they have a little more homework to do. If you are reading this from another Club and are interested in what we've developed, feel free to contact the club to talk about the approach the Club took.

And the fun doesn't stop just because its getting colder. The Committee has put together what I think is a great calendar of events over the next couple of months. Hopefully something for everyone, from midweek runs to (with a bit of luck) Rocker Cover Racing and everything in between. And if you have a burning desire to do something club wise, let the Committee know! I'm trying to get us into somewhere different for a Club meeting or two so stay tuned! And, you are looking at the calendar and not a club member, why not come along and join us on a run or an event? You'd be most welcome!

Oh, and don't forget to talk to our club sponsors before you click buy on-line! As we look towards the possibility of hosting the next Nationals here in South Australia the club will be talking to our current sponsors and new ones alike for all kinds of financial and non-financial support to help stage the event. Sponsors are only going to support us if we support them, so talk to them before you buy and let them know you are from the Sprite Club of SA!

That's enough for me (and I've still got the rest of this newsletter to write...) so see you out on the road!

Robin D

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**Help Wanted!**

You might have noticed in the calendar that we'd like to bring back Rocker Cover Racing. Well, we need to retrieve the racetrack from Gary Beaton's farm shed up in Lenswood and deliver it down to Kerry, who has graciously offered to bring it back to life. If you can give me a hand on weekend soon let me know and I'll run the trailer to collect it.

**Grill Badges and other regalia**

They are on their way! FINALLY. If you are like me and signed up for a new grill badge and are still to pay, please get your \$\$ in or bring it as cash at the next meeting! Hopefully Australia Post will have delivered them before then!

And keep your eye on the website and Facebook site as we have an expanded range of regalia for purchase about to be launched.

**MINISPORT****SPRITE CLUB OF S.A.**

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## 2026 Nationals

Most of you know we are doing a scoping study to determine if hosting a Nationals here in SA in 2026 is a viable proposition. We have a small team already coming together, but we are always keen to hear from people who might be able to help in different areas, from administration through to marketing. I'll provide an update to the club at the next meeting and what I think we need to do next. We are very interested to hear others thoughts and experiences as we work towards a decision point.

Current thinking is:

*Timing* – Preferred - the weekend before Easter 2026 (ie, last weekend in March). The Event will run Friday (pm) to Monday (am) or Tuesday (am).

*Location* – at or near Nuriootpa. This provides a number of options for accommodation (although not one single venue) and Mallala Raceway is less than an hour away

*Motorsport* – seek to incorporate into a round of the MSCA SuperSprint for a full event of racing, including, potentially, the Motorkhana event.

*Display/Concours* – The club is in early discussions with the Barossa Council for an appropriate public venue for maximum exposure.

*Other events* – TBA but will include a road regularity or observation style run through the hills and at least one extended/drive bus tour to local points of interest.

*Pre or Post Tour* – based at a different motel in the Barossa or Adelaide Hills, likely limited to 50 persons, with no more than 3 hours total driving each day.

*Delegates* – Open to all members of the four Sprite Clubs with all member's Associate Vehicles welcomed. To increase event appeal and participation it is proposed that the event is also opened to *all* owners of AH Sprite and MG Midgets *irrespective* of their club affiliation.

## Upcoming Events

For the full calendar update please scroll on down through this month's Burble.

### *Peter Hall – 5 May 24*

Once again the Sprite Club, with a significant amount of help and support from Sean and the Clubbies team, are putting a team into the Peter Hall 6 Hour. It's not just getting 4 or more drivers to the start line and that's it – this is a full team effort and Sean would dearly love some assistance out there on the day. If you can help, please let myself of him know. He need everything from runners to lunch-boys, two-way radios to experienced cat-herders. You don't have to commit to the whole day but if you can spare a couple of hours the team would be very grateful.

### *Midweek Meander #1 – 15 May 24*

Yes, its back. Russell and Judy's famous mid-week mystery runs. This one will be about 110km of driving in a southerly direction to get there which will include a spectacular view and a fabulous location for lunch! Total run distance will be about 160km so fill up the tank before you go! And that's about all I know!

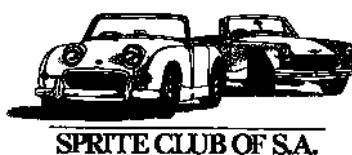
- Starting point: Hazelwood Park
- When: 0930 for a 1000 start

### *Lunch and Wine Run – 26 May 24 (date and venue/s TBC)*

This year it's going to happen. It's been called a 'Lunch and Winery Run' as I'm not sure if we are heading to a winery and then to a lunch or if it's lunch at a winery. I'm waiting to confirm the details! It plans come to fruition it will be lunch at the Victory Hotel and a visit to local Cellar Door that some may already know.

Stay tuned for more details as they develop and I will post them onto the website and the Facebook page.

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## Caught in the Headlights

Welcome to an all new section in the Burble where we hope to feature members and their cars. This months Q&A is with Don Cameron. Don joined the Sprite Club last year after purchasing a modified Sprite MkIII from the Sydney area.

*SCSA: So Don, you have a bit of a history on two wheels, what attracted you to a Spridget?*

Don: I'd started looking for a Sprite back in about 2018, when I was living in Coffs Harbour but there was little on offer anywhere around me. Then COVID came along, and the world turned upside down. I decided to move to SA for work, finally arriving in late 2020 and the idea started bubbling away again.

*Sprites and Midgets are like that. Once they get under your skin its an itch that's hard to shake!*

Ha ha, yes, not helped by the Sprite Club 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Display! Sadly there were no cars for sale! After freeing up some garage space by moving some motorbikes on, I finally found a Sprite, ironically, back in NSW!

*Don, tell us about your car!*

It's a Mk3, from what I can tell, an Australian built car. It's had a big block dropped into it – an 1275 A+ from a Marina – you know, the one with the annoying positioned oil filter that you can't remove without spilling oil everywhere, unless you rotate the whole car on its side that is! It's had a roll hoop fitted, more like the roll bars you'd see in a Shelby Cobra rather than a normal roll bar. I don't know what's been done to the engine, if anything but it runs well. I haven't done much to the car since it arrived save the basics – I've done full brake overhaul and I had someone do a baseline tune on the engine which really improved how it ran. I've fitted retractable belts and I've put in a GPS speedo from Speedhut in the US and a new steering wheel. The GPS speedo is a clever bit of kit and well worth a look.

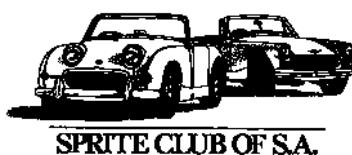


*Do you know the cars history? I watched with interest on Facebook as you led up to buying the car, trying to track down its past without much luck.*

Yes, that was a bit challenging and really odd as, despite it having a SCCA sticker on it, no one knew much about the car, or if someone did it had been lost with time. Sadly the real records where not kept. I'm not sure that the gentleman I bought it from actually wanted to sell it but it was a case of the new wife telling him to get rid of the old wife's car after it had been 'gifted' to him! Sadly, any and all records were long gone (as was the ex wife). I managed to establish it was restored about 15 or 16 years ago but I don't know by whom.

*I like to describe driving a Spridget through the hills as something akin to strapping on a pair of roller skates. It seems to come alive when the road gets challenging, whereas a more pedestrian car, something like a MGB for instance, well, it's like driving your favourite arm chair, comfortable, predictable, dependable but not really exciting .... One will get to you your destination unfazed with your suit hardly crinkled and with your pulse hardly changed, whereas the other, well, you know you've been driving; your partners hair is messed up and your hearing gone from being told to slow down (please direct all comments to [uknowlmright@myspace.com](mailto:uknowlmright@myspace.com)). You've got a long history with motorbikes, how do you find driving the Sprite?*

Yes. Its most certainly a lively little car! It goes where you point it and it rewards being driven properly. I work in the transport industry and when you park at work and your head is inline with the wheel centres of a Prime Mover, yeah, the guys laugh at me but they also want to take it for a spin! I love motoring around with the top down (are you listening Gary Dodd .... 😊) and drive the car every chance I get. Whilst it's impractical



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for me to use as a daily driver, it still comes to work with me a couple of times a week, weather permitting. Having only had the car about 6 months or so I haven't had the chance to get away in it yet, but I'm looking forward to a weekend or two away in the Barossa or McLaren Vale! The boot is small but you can fit bottles of wine into all sorts of places in the car!

*You've been a member of other motoring clubs, especially motorbike clubs in NSW. How as the Sprite Club of South Australia experience been for you?*

I connected with your good self just after I purchased the car after posting a question on Facebook somewhere, and you mentioned the Club. I remember saying at that time that I'm not really a 'clubbie' kind of person, but I'm so glad I joined ! It's great to be able to drive with, or even just chat to, people who share a similar interest or passion. I've been on a couple of breakfast drives, and last year's Display Day at Glenelg was amazing! I really hope that you can get the National Meeting idea up and going as I'd love to meet up with the greater Sprite and Midget world. Who knows, I might find who rebuilt my car!

*We see the prices of our cars going up and down quite regularly and its hard to know "did I get a bargain" or "did I pay to much", not that we ever seem to count the countless hours (or money) that we put into keeping our little cars on the road. And we all saw the article in the news the other week about how much as a nation we spend each year on our cars. Why do you think its important to preserve classic cars and do you have any advice for people contemplating their first classic car?*

I read a newspaper article just before sitting down for this chat that lamented the dearth of 'old school' mechanics, motor trimmers and the like, and whether that would ultimately lead to the death of classic car motoring. I think it's really important to somehow engage younger people to do what we do, because ultimately all of the knowledge that keeps our cars alive will die with us.

As for someone buying their first classic, as someone who's just done it, just do it! But do your homework first. My car arrived in Adelaide sight unseen by me, but I was fortunate to have a knowledgeable mate in Sydney who grew up in the UK in the 60's and 70's driving them who gave it a good look over.

*Future plans or purchases? Maybe follow the lead of another recent member to the club and build a his and hers fleet of Sprites and Midgets?*

There's nothing on my list at the moment, but ask me again tomorrow.....

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#### **Tech Tip #14**

Cooling systems.

I know, I've done this before but consider this. Its getting cooler and our engines will take longer to warm up. You might want to consider putting in a hotter thermostat to get more warmth into the water jacket before it opens up to the radiator. If you are unsure as to which one to use, you might want to talk to Colin at Sprite Parts or the team at Minisport down in St Marys.

It's a 10-minute job to switch it out for the colder months and your engine will reward you!

#### **Blast From The Past**

This months magazine retrospective is from Wheels in 1962 following the launch of the all new Sprite MkII. Don't stop at the events calendar, keep scrolling through the newsletter until you find the Wheels article.



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## Sponsor's Spotlight



An individual Mintie and parts arriving within two days of ordering, wrapped up and packed in an empty Scotch Bottle box. I can only be talking about Sprite Parts and Colin "AvagoDDay" Dodds.

I first met Colin in person in the NSW Southern Highlands in the early 1990s when I'd bought a Sprite with a questionable re-build history and renewed our acquaintance via my current Midget (and an attempt to by an ex race Bugeye just prior to that). He told me off for not talking to him before I bought my first Sprite because he knew the car I'd bought and the troubles that came with it, and we have had many colourful conversations about the work that the DPO (dumb previous owner) and DCO (dumb current owner) have carried out to my current car.

Colin has never tried to say he's the cheapest supplier of parts (although he often is!) but you are not going to find 50+ years of experience and knowledge anywhere else, especially at 9.30pm when your alternator or similar part has failed.

Personally, I recommend everyone to talk to Colin first. Getting the parts is only part of the solution. You also need the knowledge and the expertise and you won't find a part number for that in a Moss or Rimmer Brother catalogue, or a Facebook forum.

He supports all of the Sprite Clubs in Australia and without Australian based businesses like SpriteParts or indeed the Bugeye Barn and Minisport, restoring and maintaining our cars would be a far harder and less enjoyable task.

If you need parts, think of talking to an Australian supplier over saving \$10. Talk to Colin ... just be prepared to be told that you might be the DCO. It might just save you from being stranded by an 'improvement' that was a good idea at the time.

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# 2024 Sprite Club Calendar of Events

## January

1st	New Year's Breakfast Run
26th	Australia Day BBQ at the <a href="#">Chabral's</a>
28th	Glen Ewin Estate Hillclimb Revival

## February

4th	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
5th	Monthly General Meeting
18 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
24th	Ice Cream Run (TBC)
25 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Trophy Day

## March

2 <sup>nd</sup>	<i>All British Day – Echunga Oval</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Super Sprint Rd1 (Mallala)
4 <sup>th</sup>	Monthly General Meeting + <a href="#">ICV</a> Vote
15-17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Adelaide Motor Sport Festival</i>
16 <sup>th</sup>	Sports Car Cruise/ <a href="#">F&amp;C</a> Beach Run
17 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
22-26 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Sprite</a> and <a href="#">Midjet</a> Nationals (Wodonga)

## April

1s	Easter Monday Breakfast Run
6 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Hillclimb Come and Try
7 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Challenge Trophy (1)
7th	<i>Aldinga Airshow</i>
7 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
8 <sup>th</sup>	Stars and Their Cars @ <a href="#">Sporting Car Club</a> (1830)
14th	<i>McLaren Vale Vintage and Classic Run</i>
21 <sup>st</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA</a> Ray Pank Hillclimb R1 ( <a href="#">Collingrove</a> )
21 <sup>st</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
26-28	All Historic Race Meeting – Mallala

## May

5 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Peter Hall 6-Hour Regularity Relay
5th	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
6th	<b>Monthly General Meeting</b>
15 <sup>th</sup>	Midweek Run
19th	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
26th	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Challenge Trophy (2)
26 <sup>th</sup>	Winery + Lunch Run (TBC - Sellicks Beach)

## June

2nd	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Monthly General Meeting</b>
16th	<a href="#">SCCSA</a> Ray Pank Hillclimb R2 ( <a href="#">Collingrove</a> )
	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
19th	Winter Solstice Midweek Run
23 <sup>rd</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Super Sprint Rd 2 ( <a href="#">Malalla</a> )

### Colour Coding Legend

<span style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;"> </span>	Sprite Club Event
<span style="background-color: #ffe0e0; padding: 2px;"> </span>	<a href="#">ClubbiesSA</a> Event
<span style="background-color: #e0ffe0; padding: 2px;"> </span>	<a href="#">MSCA/SCC-SA</a> Competition Event
<span style="background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;"> </span>	Other events of note

## July

1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Monthly General Meeting (Wine &amp; Cheese)</b>
7 <sup>th</sup>	Winter Warmers Breakfast Run
7 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
7 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Challenge Trophy (3)
14th	Pub Run!
21st	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
21 <sup>st</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA</a> Ray Pank Hillclimb R3 ( <a href="#">Collingrove</a> )

## Aug

4 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
5th	<b>Monthly General Meeting</b>
11 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Super Sprint Rd 3 (Mallala)
14 <sup>th</sup>	Midweek Run
18 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
24th	Pie and Peas + Rocker Cover Racing @ Fullarton
24 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Hillclimb Come and Try
25 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA</a> Ray Pank Hillclimb (R4, <a href="#">Collingrove</a> )

## September

1st	Spring has Sprung Breakfast Run
1 <sup>st</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
2nd	<b>Monthly General Meeting</b>
8 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Super Sprint Rd 4 (Mallala)
8 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA Collingrove</a> Challenge Trophy (4)
6-8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>The Bend Classic</i>
21st	Annual Dinner
22 <sup>nd</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>

## October

6 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">SCCSA</a> Historic Hill Climb
6 <sup>th</sup>	Picnic run to <a href="#">Collingrove</a> Historic Hillclimb
6 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
13th	Gary's Fish and Chip Run
14 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Monthly General Meeting</b>
11-13 Oct	SA Hill Climb Championships ( <a href="#">Collingrove</a> )
20 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
20th	<i>Bay to Birdwood</i>
20 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">MSCA</a> Super Sprint Rd 5 (The Bend - East)
27 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">Collingrove</a> Season Finale

## November

1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>John Blanden's Climb to the Eagle</i>
3rd	<b>Sprite Club Annual Display Day (Wigley Res)</b>
3rd	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
4th	<b>Annual General Meeting</b>
9 <sup>th</sup>	Classic Sports Car Cruise
14-17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Adelaide 500</i>
17 <sup>th</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
28 - 1 Dec	<a href="#">Shannons</a> Rally Adelaide

## December

1st	One Last Breakfast Run
1 <sup>st</sup>	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 1st Sunday @ Magic Bean Brew
2 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Christmas BBQ General Meeting</b>
17th	<a href="#">(ClubbiesSA)</a> 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday Xmas @ The <a href="#">Rezz</a>
21 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Fish and Chips Beach Run



**SPRITE CLUB OF S.A.**

# wheels

AUSTRALIA'S TOP MOTORING MAGAZINE

OCTOBER, 1962

Registered at the G.P.O. Sydney, for  
transmission by post as a periodical.

2/6

FULL TESTS

- Holden EJ
- New Zephyr
- Renault R4
- Sprite Mk II



FORD ZEPHYR

**SPECIAL: AIDS TO SAFER DRIVING**  
**HILLMAN HOT-UP: COMPLETE GUIDE**



SPRITE CLUB OF S.A.

*Although the nose and tail have been drastically changed, there is some similarity to the old Sprite in centre sections.*



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# SPRITE: PRACTICAL FUN FOR LESS THAN £1000

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By IAN FRASER *It didn't cost much, but we had plenty of fun . . .*

**B**Y the standards of today it is tempting to regard the Austin Healey Sprite as something less than a sports car if you wish to embrace it in the strictest meaning of the term.

The important thing to remember is that there is an ever-expanding gap between the low cost, moderate performance sports car and the high performance costly model. The difference between the extremes often amounts to a margin of 70 to 100mph in top speed alone.

And to cap it all off there are a number of sedans around the road these days that can comfortably match sports cars, cubic centimetre for cubic centimetre, in performance. This makes sports cars even harder to define because sedans are getting more sporty in their nature.

However, this is very much inclined to be paper-bound theory. As any enthusiast will tell you, there is absolutely no substitute for driving a sports car, regardless of its performance.

The Sprite Mk II is at the more humble end of the

scale. It is the only sports car selling for less than £1000 available in Australia, and because of this it is also the most popular.

Success came to the baby Healey in spite of the Mk I's toad-eyed appearance. Its many virtues comfortably outweighed aesthetic appeal and BMC's decision to assemble the cars locally, to keep retail price at a minimum, has paid off handsomely.

Changes were made to Sprite styling in England last year and the ckd packages of this model have only recently arrived for assembly in Sydney. As far as most people are concerned, the Mk II can be regarded as a completely new car. Certainly the psychological attitude of owners is going to change both because of the appearance and the car's more usable concept.

In appearance the Sprite is conventional. The radiator grille is squat and oblong and the headlamps have a normal position on the mudguard extremities with the winker/parkers mounted directly below. The almost flat windscreen is fitted into a frame which can easily be detached from the scuttle, presumably for the benefit of competition drivers who wish to reduce the frontal area of their Sprites. Tail lamp assemblies are fitted in the ends of rear guards. There are sturdy bumpers with over-riders at both ends of the car. Easily recognisable points which assist in establishing identification are the wheel arches and doors, which are virtually the same as the Mk I.

As I see it, that ends the similarities.

The mechanical design of the car is about as straightforward as it could be. The engine and transmission are based on BMC B-series designs, similar to those of the Morris Minor 1000 and the Mini. Front suspension is independent by coil springs. At the rear end the suspension is via a very satisfactory arrangement of quarter elliptic springs and location arms. Construction is unitary — again, one of the very few sports cars in which this method is used, in spite of its rigidity advantages.

In the cockpit there is room for two people, although an extra one can clamor into the space behind which would normally serve as additional luggage space.

The seats themselves are little buckets which, for my 5ft 11½ in were a little too small and the squabs too vertical for real comfort, but no doubt shorter people would not mind as much and bigger ones may get used to it. Would-be Sprite owners must be pre-





pared to make sacrifices when it comes to driving position. No matter how short the person it would be impossible to get back far enough to achieve the currently favored long arm driving position.

I must admit that this annoyed me at first, but it is something that is not too hard to live with. At the conclusion of our test I felt quite at home. Driving position is not the only thing of which I disapprove. The gear change lever is mounted rather high on its tunnel and in the first and third slots it is all too easy for the driver to slam his knuckles into the dashboard, specially if the ratio is engaged with a rush. The solution lies either in a shorter lever or a smaller knob. The hit or miss distance is only a matter of half an inch or so.

There is no glovebox in the dashboard which is basically only a sheet of pressed metal on which to hang the instruments and switches. In this regard the driver is quite well catered for. There is a tachometer and matching speedo with total and trip distance metres. The fuel gauge is well calibrated and the oil pressure and water temperature dials share the one housing. Winking direction indicators are fitted but do not self cancel. Since they lack audible warning, it is easy enough to miss seeing the flashing green light on the dashboard.

A plunger arrangement on the dash operates the standard equipment windscreen washer — essential because the Sprite's low build allows the screen to catch vast quantities of muddy water splashed up from other cars on wet days. The wipers themselves give as good a sweep as could be expected on the rather shallow screen. There are a couple of blind spots, but that seems to be unavoidable unless three blades are fitted, a la Jaguar E-type.

Other cockpit details include attachment points for safety harness and quite big pockets in the doors for storing all kinds of odds and ends. Come hell or high water the passenger is entitled to a diagonal safety belt to keep his head away from the deadly-looking panic handle on his side, cunningly placed to meet a fast moving head. Panic handles of this type in sports cars should be outlawed along with the wickedly-positioned assist bars taxi owners insist on putting above the front seat squab.

The low sweep of the Sprite's shapely bonnet, combined with the slightly higher mudguards, makes for truly pleasing driving and accurate placement of the car on corners and in traffic.

During most of the test I drove the Sprite with the hood down. Because the seating position is low and body sides high, the car's occupants get good protection from the weather and still have the advantages and pleasures of open motoring. If storm and tempest threaten to overwhelm the spartan motorist, there are two neat sidescreens with sliding Perspex panels and a hood with a big rear window which can be erected. Unfortunately this is not a particularly swift process since the hood bows are separate and require individual attention. When not in use, everything gets packed up and stowed in the boot, thus consuming a fair amount of the available space. The spare wheel fits flat on the boot floor so by the time everything finds its place there is not much space for big suitcases, but if a traveller is prepared to pack his clothes in soft bags and also utilise the space behind the front seats, there is a considerable amount of luggage space — much more, for instance, than the MGA. As I see it, there is enough room for two people to take along most of their requirements for a fortnight's holiday.

Interior trim is not elaborate, nor does one expect it to be. Finish on the car I tested was quite good, but nothing startling, although as production advances it will probably improve.

The luggage boot lid has to be supported by a clip-out stay, which is rather fiddly when you have an armful of parcels — a very cheap price to pay to be



*Bold front of the Sprite bears strong resemblance to Italian Innocenti Sprite. Winkers and parkers are combined.*



*Access to the engine compartment is not as good as it was on Mk 1, but is satisfactory nevertheless. Bonnet needs bracing, note distortion.*

## WHEELS FULL ROAD TEST

WHEELS, October, 1962 47



**SPRITE CLUB OF S.A.**

**SPRITE . . . PRACTICAL FOR FUN FOR LESS THAN £1000 . . . continued**

able to securely lock valuables away. The fuel filler cap is also lockable, by the way.

Access to the cockpit is okay once you develop a technique and stick to it. Everything falls fairly well to hand once you are inside the car. At first the gear lever seems rather high, but this is again purely a matter of drive adaption. The steering wheel is inclined to hamper access to the starter button which is separate from the ignition switch.

At no stage during the test did I have the slightest difficulty starting the engine, although it was slow to warm up. When it did, however, the temperature remained constant, plus or minus a few degrees, regardless of the circumstances, which often included extended periods of idling in heavy traffic.

Smooth throughout its working rev range, the engine was inclined towards a lumpy idle at 600 rpm, which may be accounted for by the new camshaft in this model. Various other modifications have been made to the Mk II engine in search of more power.

Naturally the gearbox is there to be used and if anything like reasonable results are to be obtained, the only thing that will bring them about is regular changes of ratio. The old model Sprite battled along for several years with a box of difficult ratios. Second, particularly, was frustratingly low, third too far away from it. Learning from past errors (and no doubt taking advantage of the lower range torque) BMC engineers re-hashed the gearbox to make the ratios more sporting. Top remains the same at 4.22 to 1, but third has been raised to 5.72, second jumped up to 8.08 and first to 13.5. The effect of the changes means that second can no longer be used for starting from rest so why BMC did not introduce synchromesh on to first I just would not know. It needs it.

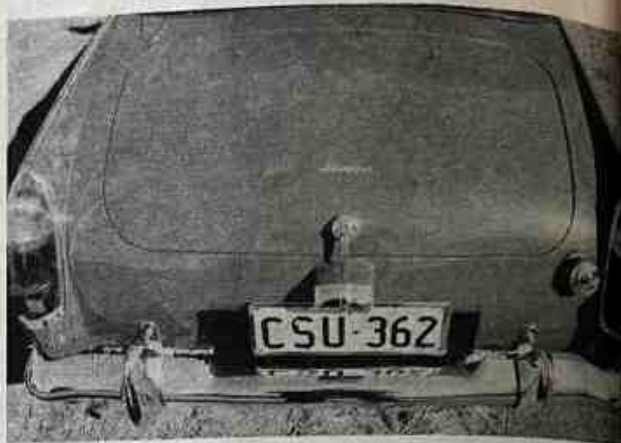
The gearbox ratios are now so well chosen that they are a delight to use through an accurate and positive change mechanism.

Top speed and acceleration are by no means startling by sports car standards but, as the figures show, are comparable with the majority of popular six cylinder sedans. Cruising is nice at around 65 mph at which there is enough acceleration available for easy overtaking. Around about the 4000 rpm mark is comfortable for cruising and well within the suggested rev limit of 5500.

While on the subject of engine performance the staggering economy is worth noting. The figure of 46 mpg, recorded over 186 miles of suburb and near country roads is nothing short of amazing. The combination of low frontal area and light weight permit the use of very light throttle openings.

On top of this the roadholding is so good that one rarely has to slow for a main road bend, thus it is possible to maintain steady throttle positions.

Of the roadholding little can be said other than



*Sprite Mk II has totally different tail to the older model. The boot is lockable, so is the fuel filler. Spare wheel stows on boot floor.*

the fact it is outstanding. There is a trace of understeer and when really pushed the rear wheels break first — and very gently.

Steering, by rack and pinion, is light and accurate at all times. At first it is disconcertingly sensitive; a movement of the wheel brings an immediate and positive response, yet out on the open road one is hardly aware of taking corners. You come close to "thinking" the Sprite through bends.

Obviously there is tremendous potential in the handling department — probably much more than the average owner would ever exploit.

Brakes are light and very effective. Discs have not been used and, in the car's standard form, are definitely not necessary. The handbrake, mounted on the passenger's side of the tunnel is unusually powerful, even if it has a rather long action.

Although not everyone will agree, I think this new Sprite is going to give a lot of people, who would not have tolerated the Mk I's compromises, the chance to return to the fun of motoring. That is the important thing about the Sprite. It is damned good fun to drive and immensely usable. It is also the right car for the young enthusiastic motorist in whose hands a more powerful machine would be dangerous. As a second car in a household the Mk II would have few peers since it is economical, light to drive and small enough to park almost anywhere, tremendously safe, and, of course, great fun. What a marvellous chance the Sprite offers to motorists who want to hurl mundane transport right out the window. #

*Instrument panel is neatly arranged, but gear lever is a shade too long, endangers driver's knuckles. Picture was taken from new space behind front seats.*



# wheels ROAD TEST

## TECHNICAL DETAILS OF THE AUSTIN HEALEY SPRITE



### SPECIFICATIONS

#### ENGINE:

Cylinders	four in line
Bore and stroke	62.94 by 76.2 mm
Cubic capacity	948 cc
Compression ratio	9 to 1
Valves	pushrod overhead
Carburettor	two SU
Power at rpm	49.8 (gross) at 5500 rpm
Maximum torque	53 ft/lbs at 2750 rpm

#### TRANSMISSION:

Type	manual
First	13.50
Second	8.08
Third	5.73
Top	4.22
Rear axle	4.22

#### SUSPENSION:

Front	independent coils
Rear	quarter elliptic springs and radius arms
Shockers	lever type

#### STEERING:

Type	rack and pinion
Turns, 1 to 1	2.25
Circle	30 ft

#### BRAKES:

Type	drum
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#### DIMENSIONS:

Wheelbase	6 ft 8 in
Track, front	3 ft 9 1/2 in
Track, rear	3 ft 8 1/2 in
Length	11 ft 4 in
Width	4 ft 5 in
Height	4 ft 1 1/2 in

#### TYRES:

Size	5.20 by 13
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#### WEIGHT:

Dry	11 1/2 cwt
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### PERFORMANCE

#### TOP SPEED:

Fastest run	85.9 mph
Average of all runs	84.3 mph

#### MAXIMUM SPEED IN GEARS:

First	28 mph
Second	47 mph
Third	68 mph
Top	85.9 mph

#### ACCELERATION:

##### Standing Quarter Mile:

Fastest run	21.7 secs
Average of all runs	21.8 secs
0 to 30 mph	5.5 secs
0 to 40 mph	8.8 secs
0 to 50 mph	13.4 secs
0 to 60 mph	18.6 secs
0 to 70 mph	28.2 secs
0 to 80 mph	NA secs
20 to 40 mph	13.3 secs
30 to 50 mph	13.1 secs
40 to 60 mph	15.2 secs

#### GO-TO-WHOA:

0-60-0 mph	21.4 secs
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#### SPEEDO ERROR:

Indicated	Actual
30 mph	29 mph
40 mph	39 mph
50 mph	48 mph
60 mph	57 mph
70 mph	67 mph
80 mph	NA mph
90 mph	NA mph

#### FUEL CONSUMPTION:

Cruising speeds	46 mpg
Overall for test	34.5 mpg





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