

# SPROUTING FORTH 2024

A photograph of a red car driving away on a paved road lined with tall, leafy trees. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The car is in the distance, and the road leads towards it.

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

A LOOK BACK AT 2024

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**1275+**

MILES IN A MIDGET  
AND SURVIVED

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**TECH TALK**

GEARBOXES, CLUTCHES,  
BRAKES AND MORE

THE OFFICAL MAGAZINE OF THE  
**SPRITE CLUB OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

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## FROM THE TOP

### A Note from Management

It's just gone 1400 on the 21st and this magazine was supposed to have been released yesterday. Its still got a long way to go so if the Christmas 24 magazine doesn't appear until after the 25th I apologise! There don't seem to be enough hours in the day right now!

Anyway .....

What a year the Sprite Club has had! Starting off on 1 Jan 24 with a Coffee run up into the hills, the Club has had something on every month, from club runs to All British Day, the National Challenge to Display Day, we've had a fairly active year by any measure.

This year the Club took what I believe was an important step early this year and moved to offer Clubman's that meet the Individually Constructed Vehicle requirements a pathway to gain Conditional Registration prior to their reaching 25 year of age. Along with several other 'single marque' clubs and few of the larger multi-marque and regional clubs, the decision resulted in a small bump in our membership numbers and the number cars on Log Books. Not a huge increase as some may have feared, but enough to offset the members and cars we lost this year as people sell their cars with an overall increase of around 5-10 members. Actually a good outcome and it helps maintain the health of the club.

On logbooks, at the end of the year we had over 100 cars on Conditional Registration, an outstanding result for a club that nominally has about 120 members plus another 30 or so family members. Somewhere in the following pages I hope that you'll be able to read a summary of the cars in the club. I say hope as I'm now writing this editorial without knowing what the finished magazine will actually look like! A bit like driving in reverse with your eyes closed!!

As you read the magazine you will find it adverts for the 2026 Nationals and an information piece (again, yet to be drafted!!) about what we are doing. I really hope that everyone in the club can get behind the program and come out and support the National Committee deliver what promises to be a fabulous event.

Anyway, that's probably enough from me as I need to finish putting this years magazine together! I hope there is something in here that piques your interest or brings back a fond memory from the past 12 months. I've sure as heck enjoyed the Club and the people who are in it. Our cars seem to bring a smile to the face of everyone who sees them!

Hope to see out out of the road in the New Year. Just make sure your log book is signed and your membership is paid!!

**Robin D**  
**Club President**

# YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

Running a club, large or small, is not easy feat. What I'm sure looks like a swan gliding gracefully across the surface of a mill-pond in reality is more like a duckling taking its first swim without Mumma Duck, and no, we don't always know what we are doing, despite what it might look like!

If you think you would like to assist with the running of the club please let a committee member know!

We urgently need someone independent to do an audit on the club's finances. You don't need to be a book keeper or an accountant, just someone willing to spot check the books and make sure we are honest! And, we will help, you just need to be not on the current committee!

We also need a 'webmaster' to keep the Club website in good health. Again, not a difficult role and one that comes with help from the most recent webmaster (aka, me!)

We always need help organising events and functions or just the mechanics behind operating an Incorporated Club. If you'd like to help but are unsure let us know privately!

So, if you feel like you'd like to help or you have a great idea for run or an event that is keeping you awake at night, let the Committee know!

## CLUB MEETINGS

Club Meetings are held from February through to December (inclusive) on the 1st Monday of the Month (with the exception of October when it is held on the 2nd Monday) at the clubrooms at the Fullarton Community Centre on Fullarton Road.

Please come along and say hello!





## 2025 COMMITTEE

**CLUB PRESIDENT** Robin Dunk  
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**SECRETARY** Peter Stanley  
[secretary@spriteclub.com.au](mailto:secretary@spriteclub.com.au)

**TREASURER** Kerry Fisher  
[treasurer@spriteclub.com.au](mailto:treasurer@spriteclub.com.au)

### CLUB REGISTRARS

Gordon Boyce and Don Cardone

**FEDERATION REP** Don Cardone

**MOTORSPORT SECRETARY** Pat Miller

### Social Secretaries

Grant Stephenson and Angela Wicks

**Regalia** Gary Dodd

**ClubbiesSA Rep** Sean Power

**Librarian** Miles Jackson

**Magazine Editor** Robin Dunk

**Web Person** Vacant

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**SOUTHERN GAS SERVICES**  
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# 2025 CALENDAR

AKA WHAT WE THINK MIGHT HAPPEN NEXT YEAR!

## January

- 1st - New Years Day Breakfast Run
- 26th - Australia Day Thong Throwing Competition

## February

- 16th - Clubbies Kick Off
- 22nd - Annual Ice Cream Run

## March

- 2nd - All British Day
- 19th - Midweek Run

## April

- 11th-13th - All Historic Mallala

## May

- 3rd-4th - Peter Hall Memorial 6 hr
- 14th - Midweek Run

## June

- 15th - Winter Warmers Pub Run

## July

- 16th - Midweek Run

## August

- TBA - Sprite Club of SA Rocker Cover Racing Championships

## September

- 20th - 53rd Annual Dinner

## October

- 5th - Barossa Vintage Collingrove Hillclimb
- 15th - Mid Week Run

## November

- 2nd - Annual Display Day (with the Austin Healey Owners Club of SA)
- 3rd - Annual General Meet
- 15th - Sports Car Cruise

## December

Please come along and say hello!

## To Be Planned:

An Overnight Adventure





# SOLID GPS TRACKERS

Keen readers may remember a member talking about GPS trackers and the peace of mind a new Australian product gave him. You may also recall a short article in last years Sprouting Forth about Solid GPS.

Since then a few of us have followed suit and purchased a Solid GPS unit to help protect our prides and joy. In return, Solid GPS have come on board to help the Sprite Club of SA deliver the 2026 Nationals and have kindly donated three GPS units that the club will be raffling off across 2025 to raise funds for the Challenge - stay tuned for details early in the new year as to how you can get involved and maybe win one of the units.

## How Solid GPS Works



### 1. Charge It.

Once you receive your tracker, charge it overnight and turn it on.

Then, download the Solid GPS app on the App Store or Google Play Store, or log in to our website.



### 2. Hide It.

After charging and turning your tracker on, hide it nearly anywhere inside your vehicle.



- Such as:
- Caravans: inside a cupboard or drawer
  - Cars: Inside the boot, glovebox, dashboard, etc.
  - Motorcycles: Anywhere inside your bike
  - Trailers: Securely hidden underneath
  - Boats: Inside or near the dashboard



### 3. Track It.

When your vehicle moves, your tracker will detect that movement and update your vehicle's location at its quickest, every 2 minutes (or up to every 10 minutes).

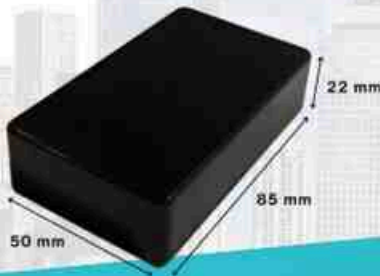
Then, track your vehicle 24/7 through your phone or computer.

3 Month Battery	6 Month Battery	12 Month Battery
<b>Standard Tracker</b>  <b>\$157<sup>MSRP</sup></b> Average 3-Month Battery Life	<b>Large Tracker</b>  <b>\$197<sup>MSRP</sup></b> Most Popular Average 6-Month Battery Life	<b>MEGA Tracker</b>  <b>\$247<sup>MSRP</sup></b> Best Value Average 12-Month Battery Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USB Rechargeable</li> <li>85mm*50mm*22mm</li> <li>31-Days Free Tracking</li> <li>4G SIM + Unlimited Data*</li> <li>Free Standard Shipping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USB Rechargeable</li> <li>85mm*50mm*22mm</li> <li>31-Days Free Tracking</li> <li>4G SIM + Unlimited Data*</li> <li>Free Standard Shipping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>USB Rechargeable</li> <li>85mm*55mm*25mm</li> <li>31-Days Free Tracking</li> <li>4G SIM + Unlimited Data*</li> <li>Free Standard Shipping</li> </ul>
<a href="#">Order Standard</a>	<a href="#">Order Large</a>	<a href="#">Order MEGA</a>

\*Requires a \$6.99 P/M or \$89.99 P/A subscription. 31-day Free Tracking Before Subscription Begins.

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★★★★★ 4.9 | 551 Reviews

## As Seen On



# CONDITIONAL REGISTRATION

## IMPORTANT NOTICE - PLEASE READ!

For the final time, a reminder that if you have not renewed your membership AND had your log book signed off for 2025, you cannot drive your Club registered vehicle on the road.

This means if you are considering the New Year's Day run and you haven't done the admin, you can't drive! As I don't want the club to get a bad reputation, I will be checking on the first run of the year!

The 2026 membership fee is \$60, an increase from last year of \$10 and the first increase in about 10 years! Don't start the year with a massive fine for being caught driving unregistered. Get your subs in and contact one of the Registrars to sort out your log book!

*Robin Dunk, President  
Gordon and Don, Registrars*



**SPRITE CLUB OF AUSTRALIA**

## SPRITE REGALIA SALE

- 50th ANNIVERSARY GRILL BADGE \$10
- 50th ANNIVERSARY LAPEL PINS \$5
- CLUB T-SHIRTS with LOGO \$30
- CLUB HOODIE \$55
- CLUB POLO with LOGO \$40
- NEW SPRITE GRILL BADGE \$35
- LIMITED Ed '1974' GRILL BADGE \$25
- SPRITE CAR STICKER \$3
- BASEBALL CAPS \$25
- BUCKET HAT \$25
- CLUB GOLF UMBRELLA \$35

FOR ORDERS PLEASE CONTACT  
Gary Dodd on 0411282045 or  
[regalia@spriteclub.com.au](mailto:regalia@spriteclub.com.au)

# 2024 NEW YEARS BREAKY RUN

An annual tradition three years in the making

What started out three years ago as three cars meeting for a New Year's coffee in Norwood has grown into some 13 cars taking a morning drive up to Uraidla for coffee and breakfast. 13 cars at 9am on New Years day ... and that doesn't include the late withdrawals, one from illness and at least one from a suspected NYE hang-over! At this rate we will have the whole club turning out within a year or two! Wouldn't that be an amazing sight heading up Greenhill Road!

Starting at the Sporting Car Club for the first photo of the year, the plan was simple enough. Get a group photo at the start, a straightforward run up Greenhill Road and coffee or tea at the Uraidla Republic Cafe. We had 12 cars at the start, picking up Don and Elaine on the way (Don gave the Midget a run for the first time in quite a while). If we do get any more cars we will have to park closer together at the Sporting Car Club or find a new start point as we just about filled the driveway! Quite a sight to behold really!



It was great to see club cars out that we don't see all that often, cars that have left the club and have now returned with new owners, and just new cars and new members! And of course friends of the Sprite Club, the Shipards with their Mk3 Sprite and the Oliphant's with their stunning 260z (although some of us were disappointed their 'new' 1960 Falcon XK didn't come out for the day!).

Aside from one motorcyclist doing his/her best impression of a temporary road user it was a great run up the hill. Easy and straight forward, a good way to start the year I think!







# WE ALL SCREAM FOR ICE CREAM!

A warm Summers night, an ice cream on offer at the end of the run and suddenly there were 22 cars arriving at the Fullarton Park Community Centre for the start!

With Bugeyes (6 in total), Sprites Mk II , Mk III and Midgets plus an Aston Martin, MGF's, MX-5, HQ Holden and Mercedes Benz the convoy was quite a sight.

After the usual briefing the cars headed along Fullarton Road to "Ring" the City arriving at Port Road – still in some sort of convoy - having been separated by various roundabouts and traffic lights. Once on Port Road there was a regroup and the Sprites, Midgets and Assorted vehicles headed to Port Adelaide, over the Birkenhead Bridge and off to Outer Harbour before turning southward via the coast, Largs Bay and Semaphore.

A quick deviation up Grange Road had the group arriving at the Fulham Gardens Shopping Centre and 48 Flavours Ice Cream Shop! Soon many were devouring their favourite flavours, including Helen Stephenson's dog Wynne, who was enjoying a tub of ice cream as



well.

Most had a chance to chat and compare the flavours, as well as inspect the vehicles. Once the cones were finished, most said goodbye and headed off into the twilight.

Thanks to Tiana Boyce (assisted by Mum and Dad) for setting and typing up the Run Sheet. Another great night!



# ESCAPE THE *Ordinary*

AND HEAD TO THE  
SPRITE & MIDGET  
NATIONAL  
CHALLENGE!

Murray Bridge,  
South Australia  
27 Apr - 1 May 2026

Proudly Supported By



**2026****A SPRITELY ODYSSEY RETURNS!**

Unless you haven't been reading the website, the Burble, not attending meetings or completely missed all of the references on various social media platforms, you will know that the Sprite Club of South Australia has taken a deep breath and had dived back into the deep end of National Meetings and will host the next Sprite and Midget National Meeting in April 2026, from the 27th through to the 1st of May

Using Murray Bridge as a base, the Nationals will take in the sights and tastes of the lower Murraylands and the Fleurieu Peninsula, and maybe a trip through the Adelaide Hills. For those with a hankering for a taste of motor sport, we are planning two action filled days at 'The Bend' with (first) Motorkhana and then Sprint events with some like minded marque enthusiasts.

The Expression of Interest is open and we've secured accommodation for the week at the wonderful Bridgeport Hotel, 100 meters from the banks of the Murray River.

We will be releasing more details very soon, including a 12 month payment plan for those who'd like to spread the cost.

For long time Challenge participants, there will be events and features that feel very familiar. With a mind to future events and attracting future 'Challengers', there aspects of the format that are a bit different as we look to make the event as accessible to everyone as possible.

Save the date, let us know you are coming and start getting excited.

See you in 2026!!

**2024 NATIONAL CHALLENGE**

After several years of false starts and a threat that this may have been the last time, the AHSDC staged the 2024 Sprite and Midget National Challenge in Wodonga, gateway to the Alpine Way. These are the shared experiences of a fun filled few days!



Originally published on our website, the following are the reflections of Robin and Grant on the National Challenge. Enjoy!

**Challenge Day 1 minus 1 week (and a bit)**

*Grant Stephenson: It's been a busy weekend in the shed getting the Sprite ready for the challenge. Both the Sprite and I needed a stop at Mt Compass. Can you believe it 34 degrees at 9.30??. All loaded and ready to go.*



Grant and his Mk1 Sprite have been to over 20 National Challenges/Meetings since his first trip in approximately 1980 and this was the first year the Sprite has been trailered across rather than driven, and on a brand new trailer to boot! Whilst one or two others from the Club may have been to more Challenges, we think Grant's Sprite holds the club attendance record for a car. And his nice new trailer ... you'd think that would be plain sailing all the way now wouldn't you?!

My pre-departure experience was somewhat different. My plan was to drive the Little Blue car there and back, via Lake Boga and the Flying Boat Museum. Two days over, one day back. Fate; however, decided to throw me a curve ball in the form of a failed clutch pressure plate three weeks out from the departure date. Perhaps that was fate intervening as I'd shortened our trip to Bali by a day so I could get to All British Day, which was the day it failed. Ho hum (note, we are heading to Japan in March next year and I'm not tempting fate with a delayed departure to get to ABD25...!). I suspect

day Grant was loading his trailer was the day several mates arrived, complete with engine hoist, to pull the engine out and replace the failed pressure plate. Eight hours in what ended up being a 38C day and the Little Blue Car was back under way. You have to love the simplicity of our cars, and the people who you meet driving them as without either it was going to be a long or costly repair job! As I had a new 45amp alternator sitting on the bench, we took the opportunity to slot that in too; however, unlike the spare distributor, 2 sets of spare points, spare fuel pump, radiator hoses, oil cooler lines etc etc, I didn't pack the old, still functioning alternator, something I would come to rue in little over a week!

Likewise, over in Whyalla, Adrian was also battling a failing clutch. A highly skilled mechanic and engineer in his own right, but even more highly short on time due to work, he entrusted his clutch replacement to a local shop. With a near 3500km round trip ahead of him he didn't want to rush it and make a mistake as a failed clutch that far from home was a prospect he didn't want to contemplate! The 5Speed conversion kit sitting in the back of the workshop wasn't planned to be installed before he left, so it waited for their return.

Not to be out-done, Peter also knew he had some looming issues and ordered both a clutch Master and Slave cylinder but they didn't arrive until the night he departed so he tossed them in, just in case. Mind you, his passenger for the entire trip, a 60l fridge, performed faultlessly and he had ice cold drinks for the entire drive! At least he had his priorities right! He wasn't going to be stranded and not have a cold water or glass of chilled wine!



Pete, along with the van Wageningen's and Faulks, set off about 5 days early for the Pre Tour event and, as luck would have it, he had no clutch hydraulics by the time he got to the motel and spent the first night doing a Master and Slave cylinder change in the motel carpark. Somewhere between Adelaide and Victoria he also chipped a tooth on first gear and the car (still) needs some dentistry work! Luckily the beers in his car fridge were icy cold!

Somewhere around about Mildura, 600km from home and still 550 to Wodonga, Adrian sensed the clutch was slipping and started to hear new and not-so-welcome noises, like something akin to a banshee screeching, every time the clutch was dipped. Nothing to see here, its a new clutch, professionally installed and all....!

## Get behind the companies helping us make 2026 a reality

Would you like help us deliver the 2026 Nationals and promote your business here? Contact the club and lets discuss!

Please support the clubs who are helping us deliver the Nationals at an affordable cost!!



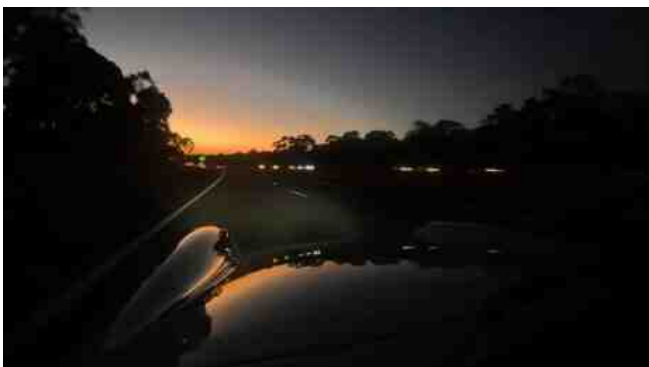
**Day 1 - Wodonga Bound!**

*GS: An interesting drive day one to the Challenge. David (Low) and I got breath checked by the local police at an Ouyen RBT, and yes we were all clean. An easy day driving, till I blew a tyre and destroyed a rim on the trailer.*



I headed out shortly before 6am, first stop petrol and then meet up with Grant and Angela and David and Di at Tailem Bend, after which I was going to strike out on my own to visit the Flying Boat museum enroute to Wodonga. At least, that was the plan in my head!

The local petrol stations did their best to delay me, first with X-Convenience being out of both 98 and 95 and then OTR having a dead pump. Eventually, with a coffee in one hand I was on my way, LED lights doing a fine job at turning the last vestiges of darkness slowly yielded to the ongoing daylight. A beautiful sunrise over the river valley awaited, as did an air temperature of 'brisk' 1C over the Adelaide Hills.



By sheer coincidence, I arrived at the same time as Dean with the yellow monster in tow. Discussions ensued and all present thought my plan to go it alone via Lake Boga was ever so slightly risky and so at about 8am Dean and I headed out, bound for Wodonga and adventures unknown.

I'm lucky - with a 3.9 diff and a trusty Toyota T50 gearbox connecting the engine to the rear axle, The Little Blue Car comfortably sits on 105-110kph at about 3000 revs and 36mpg (about 7.5L per 100 for the metric amongst us), so its ability to devour distance isn't really the issue, it's the driver's ability to be comfortable as the temperature climbed to nearly 35C by early afternoon that was the limiting factor, as was keeping bottles of water chilled!

The NSW roads were, frankly, terrible. If I were a NSW rate payer in the Riverina district I'd be justifiably concerned where my rates and taxes were being spent, again, something that a Spridget has a habit of reminding the driver!

Deniliquin was the nominated evening stop, although we considered rolling right the way through to Wodonga; however, fate, Murphy's Law, and a large slice of luck intervened when the brand spanking new Turkish made Lucas Electric alternator decided to stop alternating and so, with a cough, RDI-275 spluttered to a halt, approximately 10 miles shy of Denny. Dean and I looked at the engine and attempted to make sense of the symptoms when a local contractor, towing an LJ four door project car, pulled up behind and quickly diagnosed a dead battery. Mostly likely a collapsed cell we figured, given the bone jarring last 75km. With a jump I was on my way, Dean following along behind. And 500m down the road, it died again. And this is when the kindness of country people showed through. Mr LJ Torana, aka, Dennis Jukes of Jukes Contracting, connected up his jump start pack and said he'd pick it up from Reception of where we were staying in the morning. No names, no phone numbers, just old-fashioned values and trust that we'd do the right thing.

"I know the place, I cleaned out their septic tanks only last week" he quipped.

I couldn't believe it!



Anyway, after much checking and the local NRMA guy calling Steve from the Sprite Club to attempt to fault find it over the phone, the new alternator was determined to be the culprit and Dean and I retired to the local pub for a counter meal, with the battery left on charge overnight.

All in all, an exciting Day 1!

### Road Trip Day 2 - Onwards and upwards!

*GS: Toolebuc to Wodonga no trailer issues but I've ordered a couple of new spare tyres and rims. Another RBT but the trailers wouldn't fit so we got waved on. All settled in at the Blazing Stump Hotel. The Sprite is off the trailer for the Concourse tomorrow and it will be cleaned.*

My fun was only just starting in Denny. Overnight we'd charged the battery and in the morning we disconnected everything that drew a power load. USB charger, digital engine/oil temperature sensors, spot lights, everything, even the thermostatic fan. This is where it gets interesting. See, in an attempt to find every usable bit of power my little 1275 produces, I removed the fan from the engine. Its worth 1-2hp so off it came. Unfortunately, that meant I now had no fan drawing air through the radiator once the electric fan was disconnected. No issues when trundling along at 110, but its something of an issue on a 30C+ day driving in a small city such as Wodonga. Hmm. Not such a great idea after all really!

Anyway, we got there. Dean had no issues at all and by 4pm I had a new alternator in the car thanks to Colin from Sprite Parts ... and a reminder from Colin that only dumb people remove the fan. Yes, I think I deserved that!

Eventually both Peter (in the 'Fridget') and the Faulks arrived in their Midgets from the Pre Tour (Adrian still with his clutch sounding like fingers down a blackboard), the convoy of David & Di and Grant & Angela arrived as well as Sue and Helen, who'd taken a slight detour from Adelaide ... via Melbourne! Rob and Cheryl also arrived fresh from the Pre Tour and fresh from cruising in the air conditioned comfort of their 370Z. Air conditioned comfort on a Sprite Challenge. What will they think of next? Maybe driving a super reliable, dependable and luxuriously appointed sports car. After 10+ hours in a Midget I'm not at all jealous...

Thirteen Sprite Club of SA representatives. Let the fun begin!

Oh - at this point Peter discovered that the air-cleaner for this Weber DCOE was no longer attached to the car. Another thing to add to the list! Time for a cold beer.

### Road Trip Day 3 - The Challenge Begins!

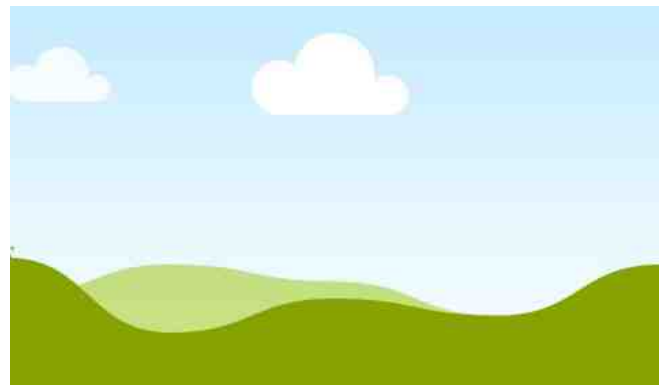
*GS: 7.00 am and out cleaning the Sprite, the sun was just up. Using the vacuum cleaner and the sponge, didn't wake the neighbours up next door.*

*Great display and so many Sprites!*

*Then off on a 185 km observation run with some cryptic questions. Angela with her head down trying to make some sense of it all.*



For many of us the 'challenge' began the moment we pointed our cars towards Wodonga and set off but today was the first official 'full day' of the 2024 Challenge, commencing with a magnificent display of Spridgets in the town centre and then an afternoon observation run. I have to admit, I might not have greeted the prospect of 185km though some of the best roads that Victoria has to offer with the same level of enthusiasm that others might have. Without a navigator to help decipher the clues, I had a cunning plan. I was going to use the IFR flight rules ... I Follow Red (Sprites) ... in other words, I followed the Low's for navigation and I attempted to solve the cryptic clues. It all worked well until the car tried to overheat going up a climb behind a truck full of firewood, at which point I ditched the questions and just enjoyed the view and the drive.



And what a view and what a drive it was. The roads in the Victorian High Country are great. Stunning scenery, beautiful flowing roads, almost as if they were built with a Sprite or Midget in mind, and fabulous people when inevitably I stopped to let the car cool down. Sprite people really are great!

At this point I really should talk about some of the evening events which included ...

### Rocker Cover Racing,

Always a crowd favourite, this, as with much of the entire event, was yet another 'first time'. With a little help from my friends and family when scavenging parts, I managed to build the 'Even Littler Blue Car', a mini homage to our Midget, aka, The Little Blue Car. What a baptism of fire it was to. From protests that it was badged 'Morris', questions about the weights I'd put inside the little beast and howls of consternation when Peter and I were spotted oiling the bearings immediately before the races, lets just say that some may have believed they couldn't win on the race track so they attempted to remove the competition via protest. Clearly the fastest car on the night, at the end of the competition it was Queensland first, SA second (my protests fell on deaf ears!) and then daylight third, followed by everyone else.

### ROCKER COVER RACING

#### THE GOOD OIL!

Many marque clubs like to claim ownership of the origins of Rocker Cover Racing. No matter where actually started, its a motor-based sport that everyone or all ages can participate in!

A gravity car, with its body built from a rocker cover, the cars need to meet some basic criteria and its first past the post is the winner!

Speed is the aim but style counts too!



The 'Even Littler Blue Car' has not been retired and will return much improved in 2026 for a rematch on an SA home track. I'm thinking a re-name is in order too. Bluebird for instance in honour of the great Donald Campbell and his exploits on land and water here in SA 60 years ago in 1964.

### Day 4 - Touring and Racing!

*GS: We took the bus tour and left the Sprite at the hotel. First stop Beechworth Asylum for a garden information walk, and a wonderful lunch, we were treated to the Kerrigan's house from the Castle (note, it needs a total rebuild), then couple of other stops before on to the Beechworth Berries for ice-cream.*

*The competition drivers headed to Wodonga TAFE campus for a day of sprinting*

#### The Car

- It must be constructed from any BMC or BL A-Series rocker cover.
- Maximum Weigh - 3kg
- Maximum wheel track - 210mm
- Minimum of four wheels, each not more than 150mm (6") in diameter
- The total length of not be more than 80mm longer than the cover

#### The Race

- Your racer must stay in its lane
- Heats and semi finals - first past the post wins
- Final - best of three, one race per lane. If needed, a coin will be tossed for the final lane.

I headed to the TAFE track to watch the Sprint sessions. With my favourite 70-200mm lens attached to my DSLR, no plan and pretty much no clue about motorsport photography, I attempted to capture the day. Everyone there was having a ball, all highly complimentary of the tight circuit and the day in general. The photos don't do it justice!



As for Adrian's screaming clutch – it hadn't gotten any better, in fact he felt it was now worse than the clutch he'd replaced. Only a trip to Melbourne (400km) and a drive to Whyalla (about 1000km) to go on their odyssey.

And the final dinner – just a wonderful way to close



Dean left with the quickest laps, as might be expected. Oddly he didn't fare as well in the regularity section!

**Day 5 - More touring and more competition!**

*GS: The last day of the challenge but two more drive days to go. We decided to have a look at the motorkhana. Well what a dust bowl! Brings back memories of Bordertown days .*

*The night theme was 1920s Gatsby, so we all got to dress up . Angela got best dressed lady. Another brilliant Challenge, huge big thankyou to the organisers. So much work, so much fun.*

Ah, yes, the Motokhana. I'm still cleaning my lenses! I've never witnessed a Motokhana first hand and it looked like a mix of madness, chaos and sheer fun. Hmm, maybe in 2026....

I took a sneaky detour out to the Hume Weir, site of a very early National Challenge. A very impressive piece of engineering! Clear water from the mountains. No wonder West End tastes better!

Peter's car; however, returned home ingloriously on the back of a tow truck. His alternator bracket had broken, causing the alternator to snap one of the lugs off. Fortunately Rod Wells of the Bugeye Barn not only had a spare alternator but also a replacement bracket. Another SA car saved by the support of the wider Sprite and Midget community.

what was a great event. I'd taken a leaf from Grants book early in the Challenge and made sure I sat at a different table with different people every night. Everyone had an interesting story or anecdote from the weekend but one thing that was constant, was the enjoyment. Just a great four days.

**Day 6 - The Journey Home**

*GS: We started the day with a farewell breakfast, I made an effort this year to talk to people that I've seen for many years but never spoken to it was so so good to make some new friends, two more drive days to go. No trailer troubles, but some seriously shitty roads. Good to see our mates have made it home safely.*

6.30 breakfast and goodbyes, 7am and three of us are all westward bound. Once again it was about 2C as the sun broke through and began to burn off the morning fog. Fingers crossed the car behaves itself for the next 10 hours. And, blow me down, it did. Well, it had a small niggle – coming through one hamlet somewhere I could suddenly hear a different noise. Off to the side of the road and Dean and I are looking for the source. It's the clamp around the exhaust, completely loose and running up and down the pipe. Its still there and its still loose. Maybe I'll fix it in a week or so. It's almost a lucky charm really (its still not fixed!)



As for the drive, it was largely uneventful. About 200 head of cattle 'grazing the long paddock' at one point and a roadtrain that decided it was turning right when Peter was about halfway down it's length. The worse part of the drive were the moronic SUV drivers on the road between Mount Barker and Adelaide who took great delight in blocking both lanes of the freeway. Why would you want your shiny new ute passed by a pair of 50+ year old MGs...!

Home for dinner. Just over 800 km in just 9.5 hours. Not bad for a 53 year old MG! Total trip distance? 1815km, averaging 35mpg. 163L of Premium unleaded were consumed at a cost of \$342.



Adrian, however was not so lucky. The clutch finally gave in in the picturesque town of Woodend and RACV took it back to their depot at Macedon. From there they were looking at options as to how to get the car back to SA to be rebuilt properly, complete with the 5-speed conversion, ready for its next big adventure. I possibly would not want to be the mechanic who installed the new clutch only a few weeks ago. They didn't get the car home for another week.

### Day 7 - Last day!

*GS: Final drive day home and just under 2000 km for the round trip .Just in case you were wondering , no I didn't need to use the new spare wheels for the trailer. That was because I bought new ones! We all know what would have happened if I didn't buy two new spares.*

*It was great to have David & Di Low as our driving companions , I've known them for just over 30years but never really sat and talked to them properly. Thanks guys, loved it.*

*Hope my last seven days have been interesting enough to give you an insight on the challenge if you weren't able to get there.*

I really couldn't have put it better myself!

Interestingly, both Bugeyes performed faultlessly. The three Midgets; however, (yes, Peter's 'Sprite' was technically born a Midget) caused everyone the most grief! Two clutches, two alternators, two tow trucks, one gear tooth, a master cylinder and an air filter. Not bad!

## ITS ALL ABOUT THE PREPERATION

Talking to members, it's surprising how many are reluctant to drive their cars past the Adelaide Hills or Southern Vales in fear of becoming stranded. At the thought of the 2026 Nationals being in Murray Bridge, one member started talking about buying a trailer to get the car there such was his concern.

Yet at one point in their lives, our



cars where considered 'every day drivers' to use the modern term.

Our cars are very simple, even basic. Some simple maintenance, most of which is achievable at home or at least doesn't need a 'Specialist MG' mechanic and our cars can reliably take you beyond a 50km RAA towing radius of home. A few simple spares and some basic training, and you will be able to defeat the most common issues that might leave you stranded.

Across 2025 the Sprite Club is planning to hold some basic maintenance workshops to get your cars ready and boost your confidence to venture into the wild blue yonder, or at least perhaps a weekend away to Clare or Robe!



# RUN THROUGH THE NIGHT TO THE 2026 SPRITE & MIDGET NATIONAL CHALLENGE!

**MURRAY BRIDGE**  
**27 APR - 1 MAY 2026**

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# ELEPHANTS DOOR RUN

Another fabulous run down to Sellicks and another great turn out of Sprites and Midgets enjoying the very last of the late summer sun.

I think the count was 8 about Spridgets, a Jaaag, a motorbike and a very new MX5, along with some other cars with about 28 of us enjoying Dean and Susie's hospitality at the Elephants Door for some wine tasting before lunch at one of my favourite pubs, the Victory Hotel.

Morning tea was at the Clarendon Bakery, along with some roadside mechanics to help the Halling's along the way with their Mk1 (his aunty Julie's old car, so quite a special car in Sprite Club of SA terms – stay tuned for a BBQ lunch run to Strath soon to service and sort the car for Dale and his family ... many hand will make quick work I think!).

Personally, we came back with half a dozen bottles of Sellicks Chills in the back of the Subaru and I can attest the wine is fabulous, so if you didn't get a chance, talk to Dean and buy some of their wine before its all gone. Its really quite a great drop and it helps a club member out!



As much as I hate to admit it, red cars probably won the day this time around! Once the Little Blue Car is back on the road I'm sure that blue cars will make a resurgence!

Winter will soon be upon us. Unless its raining, keep the roof off, grab a Club hoodie and a Club beanie and scarf combo, crack open the heater valve and enjoy the road!



## MIDWINTER BREAKFAST RUN

Sometimes no planning is the best planning!

Clear skies in the depths of winter. Seems like a recipe for a breakfast run, in only we'd had time to plan something.

A warm Summers night, an ice cream on offer at the end of the run and suddenly there were 22 cars arriving at the Fullarton Park Community Centre for the start!

Jez got frustrated with a lack of organised runs so he decided to get a few mates, their partners and their cars together the other Sunday. Word got out and he found himself the unwitting organiser of a run that brought together some 30 people, mainly members and a few who are 'Sprite Club Curious'.

Undaunted, he organised a table for breakfast and then a photo shoot for the 11 Spridgets in attendance. 11 cars and 30 people you ask – well, we also had one chap in an Alfa, two minis, a Datsun 1200 and an HQ Kingswood.



More importantly, we found a new Spridget owner who may become a member of the Club. He's upgraded to a stunning Mk3 Midget (UK import, via New Zealand, and bought from Queensland) from a Big Healey.

When cyclists stop their group ride to take photos of the assembled cars, you know you've put on a good display! A great morning had by all and we eagerly await the next Robinson Run!

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First impressions count, if your paint finish isn't up to scratch, it won't matter how good the bodywork is. Getting the paint right is as equally important as the body repair process itself. We take pride in our craft, and using only premium quality products, with end results worthy of a concours winner.



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Marque Restoration also provides general panel repair services, from fixing minor dents and scratches to custom fabrication to replace damaged bodywork, whether collision damage or corrosion. It doesn't matter if your vehicle is steel, aluminium, composite or a combination thereof, we can repair it.

## PERCY DOES THE PRIMA TOUR

Emerging from semi-retirement, internationally famous Puma Clubman 01 (AKA Percy) made a widely anticipated appearance alongside other celebrities at the Adelaide Rally.

I believe that only the influence of the Zagame tour group threatened that their glossy Italian machines would pale in comparison to Percy in the glamour stakes, relegated us to the very back of the distant Prima Tour queue.

Preparation for the four-stage, speed-limited Prima tour included three recce sessions, during which motorsport newbie navigator David decided that he did not want simply sit there ashen-faced and gripping the bodywork, instead to be 'all in' with a complete set of hand-drawn and illustrated pace notes of a unique design. These notes are now regarded as classics of the genre and can be purchased by discerning petrolheads.

He also heroically battled bouts of car sickness (scribbling pace notes while listening to gabbled corner descriptions and being tossed around tends to have that effect), but by the big day, he had it and the notes under control.

The nav's perch is not known as the 'silly seat' for nothing, and my first priority was to get David home alive, as his wife is known to be quite uncompromising in such matters. The second priority was to pray for dry weather, and apart from a light shower before the drivers' briefing, our prayers were answered. Our third priority was to avoid being trapped behind slow, aged classic cars, as there is no passing on stage, and tailgating is frowned upon. In this regard, we had a good



run on the first (Beaumont) stage behind a quickish 911, but we failed on the second stage, where we had a prolonged view of the elegant, tootling rump of an XJ6. Before stages 3 and 4, we were determined to jump the queue in front of an elderly BMW, which appeared to be shod with its original showroom tyres. A legal but snappy passing manoeuvre on the transit stage was not something that the BMW driver appreciated. Sorry old chap! It was necessary for our mental health.



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Stage 3 (Knott's Hill) was effectively aborted due to someone putting their GR Yaris on its roof, and also there was a non-competition-related medical emergency on Montacute Road, which further delayed proceedings. The stage was thus reduced to a clunking, snatching first gear crawl, a form of progress that Percy particularly dislikes. Thank goodness for the 25amp Kenlowe cooling fan, which is almost powerful enough to move the car forward with the engine turned off.

Stage 4 (Montacute, Corkscrew, Gorge Road) was the pick of the stages, and while we'd managed to place ourselves behind a fast Audi, I was still hoping for longer than the allotted four-second gap. We had a stroke of luck when a curious start line official stopped us for a quick chat, one that I was happy to prolong for as long as possible, while the second official waved increasingly frantically at David. The four seconds stretched to close to 30, and then we were off.

When people inquire about Percy's power-to-weight ratio they invariably say, 'I bet that's fun' ... and it is!

The speed limit (which the organisers threatened to reinforce with fines), and being responsible for the lives of two people kept us well within the limits, but the Montacute Road and Corkscrew sections were negotiated with relative freedom until at the Corkscrew/Gorge Rd intersection we caught up with the Audi, which in turn was dealing with slower traffic, so the last third of the stage the 'slowest link' phenomenon kicked in and the tour concertinaed into a slow convoy, one of the hazards of 'tours' which are after all, 'tours', not races.



With all the delays, the Prima Tour 'lunch' at Verdun was now closer to an afternoon version of a brunch, but the organisers laid on a wonderful spread of wines, gin, pizza and various other delicious goodies. Craig Lowndes and his wife Lara addressed us about the future of V8 supercars and prostate health. David and I then turned Percy's head for home.

All in all, it was a very fun day's motoring, and the event was organised with Tim and his team's customary finesse and attention to detail.

by Alistair Dow

## CLUBMANS? WHAT'S ALL THE FUSS?

A Clubman sports car, aka, a 'Clubbie' is a type of lightweight, high-performance vehicle designed for club-level motorsport and amateur racing.

Originating in the UK, these cars have a rich heritage dating back to the 1950s and 1960s, inspired by the legendary Lotus 7 designed by Colin Chapman. The car's ethos is all about minimalism and performance, combining a stripped-down, open-top body with a powerful engine to deliver exhilarating driving experiences.

Typically, Clubman sports cars are built on simple, yet rigid, chassis designs that prioritize weight savings and agility. Often partially or fully constructed 'at home', they are usually equipped with front-mounted engines and rear-wheel drive configurations, offering excellent balance and handling. The cars often feature tubular space frames and lightweight aluminium or fiberglass body panels to keep the weight as low as possible.

Clubbies cars are popular in various forms of motorsport, including hill climbs, sprint races, and autocross events. Their relatively affordable nature and the availability of kits or custom builds make them accessible to a wide range of enthusiasts and clubs, such as ClubbiesSA and our club!

Despite their humble origins, Clubbies have earned a reputation for punching above their weight, delivering competitive performance on the track and pure driving pleasure on the road.



# 2024 ANNUAL DINNER

52 Years Young, 52 Dinners and 52 Attendees!

Saturday 21st September was the annual dinner of the Sprite Club of SA. In 1972 our wonderful club was formed by a bunch of mates with an interest in Sprites and here we are now, 52 years on and still going strong!

This years' Annual Dinner was held at Cafe Papparazzi on Unley Rd with 52 members booked in for a big night, including four of the founder members! Angela and I had tried the food a few times and thought this would be a great place for the dinner. Friendly staff, an always generous portions, a great recipe for a good night we thought!

The food started coming out at 7.00pm. We knew what the menu was but we were not expecting this much food. No one is going hungry tonight! Starting with a sumptuous grazing plate, followed by chips, dips, arancini, breads. It just kept on coming! That certainly quietened us all down!

The raffle was next great idea for Mr President to walk the room to pick out the tickets plenty of prizes at the front table. Wine, Chocolates, Regalia, Car Tools , Candles , Umbrellas . A big thankyou to every one that donated the prizes!



I had been thinking of something different this year for the Place Mats. You would have noticed that they were all laminated pages from the Sprite Workshop Manual eight different types and an old advertising page from a 1961 news paper that I had stashed for such a special occasion. I had asked Gordon if he would put a quiz together for the night, and in typical GB style it was a perfect mixture of Gary/Des cryptic quiz , Sprite , and place mat questions.

Then the main course came out you better still be hungry cos there is more food, Steak , Chicken , Fish , this slowed us all down and gave the organizers some time for the trophy presentation to the hard working members of the club . Desert followed, with the evening nearly over it all started to slow down and gave us all time to move around the room and talk to each other.

Thanks to all the members that came along on the night I think it is so great that we can keep our club going this strong after 52 years . Yes it was a lot of work before and on the night to make the evening the success it was.

Grant Stephenson  
Social Secretary

# A SPORTING NIGHT OF SPRITES

## Sprites on stage at the Sporting Car Club!

Thanks to the work of David and Carole Tye, the Sprite Club of South Australia was invited to display some vehicles at the September Meeting of the Classic and Modern Section of the Sporting Car Club of South Australia.

With three vehicles chosen to be on stage, last minute changes, car problems and work commitments saw the Bugeye of Gordon Boyce and the Spridget of Peter Dineen grace the stage the SCCSA Clubrooms.

The Sporting Car Club has been busy with some background research and displayed a couple of videos showing the 75th Goodwood Revival Race that featured many Sprites and Midgets, and a great clip from Shannon's showing the history and features of the Sprite and Midgets.

After the meeting formalities President Robin Dunk was invited to the stage to talk about the Sprite Club. Robin outlined the Club's activities and the membership cohort, and put in a plug for the upcoming Display Day and 2026 Sprite Nationals.



Peter Dineen was next to join the stage, where he talked about the ownership of his Spridget, its previous history and the fun he has had during his ownership. He also related the story of his recent trip to the 2024 Sprite Nationals and the mechanical issues he had to endure during this road trip. He also described the fridge that he fits to the passenger space for these extended interstate travels.

Then it was an opportunity for Gordon Boyce to talk about his 1958 Bugeye. Gordon outlined the history of his 42 years of ownership, the restoration, its competition history and the events that the vehicle has attended, including 1998 Bathurst, National Meetings and other events.

There were a number of previous and current Sprite and Midget Owners in the audience, so at question time there were a number of questions about the cars, the joys of ownership and the specifics of each vehicle.

*Gordon Boyce  
Registrar*

## XXXXX

**11-13th:** State Hill Climb  
Champs @ Collingrove

**20th:** SuperSprint @ *The  
Bend East*

**27th:** Collingrove Finale



## VINTAGE HILLCLIMB PICNIC RUN

A perfect spring day greeted us for a run from the Stanley Bridge Hotel and along the top of the Adelaide Ranges as seven Spridgets, a Mini, and Merc made their way to Collingrove to enjoy the annual Barossa Vintage Hillclimb. Pat and Chris later joined the party, Pat in his fabulous Hot Rod.

With a little help from Gary Dodd, the Club managed to get a near pole parking position inside the paddock again, ourselves creating quite a bit of interest from the spectators! Aided by the fabulous weather a broad brush of green across the hills and valleys, and of course an amazing collection of vintage machinery, one could have been confused to think they'd stepped back to an earlier time.



Club Secretary Peter was on hand holding up the honour for the Sprite brigade with some very respectable times up the hill, getting quicker each run. I asked him what was the secret to a quick time and he grinned and offered *"don't slow down at the first left hander, get that right and you'll set a quick time. You cant see the exit over the crest of the hill, you just have to trust your instinct!"* Peter then recounted the day he got it wrong, and you start to understand why people approach that corner with some trepidation!

Highlight of the day for me had to be the Eldred Norman cars, his



Zepher special and a recreation of his fearsome Double 8 monster built from left over parts from WW2. Having grown up with stories of both cars, Dad's encounters with Eldred as a younger man and his watching his speedway hero, Harry Neale, driving for him at the Nuriootpa Grand Prix, it was a sight to behold!

Our thanks as always to the Sporting Car Club of South Australia for staging this fabulous event and for keeping the Collingrove Hillclimb alive. Its a must visit event for enthusiasts of historic racing and people just looking for a great day out on the long weekend!



Post Script - as a lasting memory of the run, two sprites picked up speeding fines from the local constabulary for 15 over the limit. Can't tell me Spridgets are slow! I'm just glad they didn't check me!



# MINISPORT



Proudly supporting the Sprite Club of South Australia, is one of Australia's Premier Classic Mini and Moke specialists. We keep the largest stock of A Series Engine and electrical parts for Sprite and Midgets (and of course classic Mini and Mokes!) in the southern hemisphere.

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## FISH AND CHIPS BY THE BAY

A perfect reason for a Sprite Club run!

What do you do with 11 Spidgets, a Datsun 240z, a couple of Clubbies, an MX5 and two Alfa Romeos?

You have a run through the city and the hills, grab piping hot fish and chips and then sit and enjoy the early evening telling tales and tall stories.

Thanks to Gary Dodd's efforts, the club assembled at the club rooms on Fullarton Road and headed off up Belair Road and across the top of the hills and back down before stopping at Seaview Fish and Chips in Seacombe Gardens for a F&C.

The procession (which lost one but gained another - me) then headed to Historic Kingston House to sit under the trees and enjoy the fabulous food, reminisce and watch the sun start to set over St Vincent's Gulf.

At terrible way to spend a Saturday evening really!

Thanks Gary!



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## XYZ XYZ

8th -10th: Legend of the Lakes Hill  
Climb @ Mount Gambier

8th -10th: Adelaide Rally

14th -17th: Adelaide 500

# 2024 LEGENDS OF THE LAKE

## Take two in Mount Gambier!

2023 saw Grant take on the highly respected Legend of the Lake in his own right, piloting his Mk1 Escort up the challenging twists and turns that make the event sell out in minutes!



He returned this year with one goal - to go up the course quicker than last year.

Thursday the day before we are all loaded up for a 5hr drive to Mt Gambier meeting up with my mates for a 7.30 start . An uneventful 5hr trip . We arrived just behind a massive rain storm, both sides of the main road into the mount are covered in about 200mm of water . Due to the rain we were unable to get into the pits for about 3 hrs.

Friday is 'Classic Day' I breezed through scrutineering we had about 6 to 8 runs , the little Ford ran faultlessly. I

*can't say the same for myself but the extra day of runs up the hill are certainly appreciated as I got the cobwebs out of the system!*

*Saturday / Sunday another 100 cars arrive , the pit area gets so busy . So now its time to get down to some quick times [well, for me anyway].*

*The Escort is now finished. Everything is over engineered so no excuses. It's all up me!*

*My Ford mates gave me a pep talk .... Pull your finger out mate. The rev limiter will look after the motor.*

*What an amazing weekend apart from a dead battery. An early run trying too hard and hit a cone in the bus stop 1.13-5 plus 5 for the cone. Oops!*

*My times were consistently around 1.10 to 1.16 but somehow I ended up with a 1-03.96. Don't know how I did it, didn't feel fast , didn't frighten myself . But my best time so far! Now for 2025.*



# SPRITE & MIDGET NATIONAL CHALLENGE '26

Murray Bridge  
27 Apr - 1 May 2026



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RECOMMENDED LUBRICANTS

Component	Engine, Transmission, Gearbox, and Chassis			Rear Axle and Steering Gear		Grease Points		Wiper Blades
	Engine	Transmission	Gearbox	Rear Axle	Steering Gear	Grease Point	Wiper Blade	
Engine	SAE 10W-30 SAE 15W-40 SAE 20W-50	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Transmission	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Gearbox	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Rear Axle	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Steering Gear	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Grease Points	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150
Wiper Blades	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150	SAE 75 SAE 90 SAE 150

TECH TALK

# GEARBOXES, RATIOS AND ROOVES!

With two of our members turning their hand to importing and selling gearboxes, a spate of broken clutches, hydraulics that refused to bleed and poorly stowed rooves everywhere I look these next few articles kind of wrote themselves.

For the record, I've personally established that a slave cylinder can be removed, installed and bled in under 30 minutes without any modifications to the slave itself required. Peter proved you can change the slave in a motel carpark and three of us managed to remove an engine, change a clutch and re-install in about 5 hours on a 38 degree Celsius day.

One club member can also categorically state that a 'designed to fit' gearbox conversion means it might have been *designed*, but that doesn't guarantee that what you get will *actually* does easily fit!

Oh, and in response to one Facebook question seen this year, there is no additive that will stop your brake master cylinder from leaking. You have to rebuild it, and quite soon - sorry!

And thank you to Colin Dodds from SpriteParts allowing me to reproduce one of his technical articles here!

Hopefully you find the following informative!

## OILS GUIDE

### Engine

20w50 or 20w60 Full Mineral Oil  
Oils to consider include:  
Castrol Classic XL, Penrite Classic or  
Penrite HPR 30

### Gearbox

USE ENGINE OIL for a standard Sprite  
or Midget Gearbox!

### Differential

SAE90 Mild Gear Oil

### Clutch and Brake Fluid

DOT3 or DOT 4



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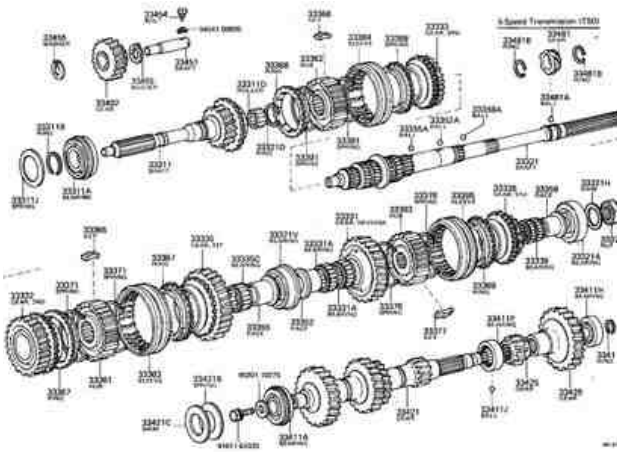
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## FIVE GOES INTO FOUR

Fitting a 5-Speed into a Spridget.  
A thoroughly modern conversion for a classic performance

The evolution of classic car restoration has witnessed numerous innovations, aimed at increased reliability, performance and usability in the modern world.

One of the more significant undertakings is the conversion to a 5-speed gearbox, providing for more relaxed highway motoring in a Sprite or Midget, along with a blend of reliability, performance, and efficiency.

### The Need?

Our Sprites and Midgets, with their swinging 60s style and aesthetics, are something of a joy to own and drive, particularly on the quiet winding roads and lanes through the hills; however, no one can say that the original gearboxes are charming, particularly for a younger owner who might not have grown up having to learn to double-declutch. Adequate in 1960 or 1970 (and they sound fabulous with straight cut gears!) they can call short on modern reliability and performance.

In the past many owners have sought out different differential ratios to get better highway performance but even these are becoming rarer and many simply worn out. Many who owners have sought out smoother shifts, better fuel efficiency, and improved cruising capabilities that retrofitting a 5-speed gearbox is an ideal solution.

## Popular Conversions

its fair to say that owners and mechanics have been seeking a little more performance from their cars since probably the day after the first Sprite was released, if not already in the works before! Owners and racing drivers have been swapping differential ratios for more acceleration or more top end speed depending on their needs and they continue to do so. A diff can be swapped out in literally minutes in the pits by a well-rehearsed team!

Healey Works team lead the way with gearbox swaps, putting overdrive gearboxes from MGBs into their LeMans cars for 150mph down the Mulsanne Straight but for us mere mortals, the advent of the compact Japanese alloy gearbox was manor from heaven! With the arrival of mass market cars such as the Celica, Corolla, 120Y and other like cars from Toyota and Datsun gave rise to a new industry, swapping these compact boxes into everything from the MGTC to Toranas, Cortinas, even local V8s, and of course, our Sprites and Midgets. Here in Australia the T50 gearbox with a Dellow conversion bellhousing was de rigour for over 20 years, eventually becoming the basis of the Frontline kit, initially with the T50 and then, as these became scarce, the Ford T9 gearbox. In the US the Datsun 210 was often the choice as part of the fabled 'Rivergate' kit.

The challenge with these conversions was always the availability of donor gearboxes. The Toyota T50, for instance, became a sought-after component in just about everything and, despite the millions of Corollas produced, in 2024 a good T50 is becoming hard to source.



## The Suzuki Jimny to the rescue!

The cute little Suzuki Jimny (known as a Sierra in some markets) at first glance hardly appears to be a thing of desire, and certainly not a car that would set a young man's heart aflutter, but look again! Buried beneath that utilitarian body is a gearbox perfect for use in your Sprite or Midget! Now, please don't get ideas about leaping out at the next red light and tearing the gearbox out of some unsuspecting person. They might get upset, but they are surprisingly readily available at a local wrecking yard if you know where to look!

Barrett Engineering (in the UK) has recently developed a new conversion kit that utilises this gearbox. It offers several advantages, including ample availability, ease of fitting, and compatibility with a wide range of classic vehicles. The Jimny, which has been on the market since 1970 (who realised?) so supply, whilst perhaps not plentiful, is still good.



Additionally, the Jimny gearbox does not require the removal of the second cross member, a modification necessary for the T50 and T9 conversions. This makes the installation process simpler and less invasive, preserving the structural integrity of your Spridget.



The Barrett conversion has been gaining popularity in the UK over the past few years and one of our club members was a relatively early adopter for his Bugeye build, bringing in the key components from the UK and matching them to a locally sourced box. Other members also showed interest with Peter (the Plumber) and Chris (the Car Dealer) negotiating a bulk order and then sought out interest from around Australia, finally importing six (correction, 9 + 2 Nissan Micra conversion kits!!) conversion kits to also be mated up to locally sourced gearboxes.

With the Barrett Engineering kit designed to fit any rear-wheel-drive A-Series car, including the Morris Minor, Marina, Sprite, Midget, A30/35, and A40 Farina. The club watches with great interest as the first of the conversions nearing completion!

## A QUESTION OF RATIOS

Ever wondered about the ratios in your gearbox? Wonder no more!

	Rib Case	Toyota T50	Cusco T50	Datsun 210	Ford T9	Suzuki Jimny
1 <sup>st</sup>	3.2	3.587:1	2.471:1	3.513:1	3.65:1	3.652:1
2 <sup>nd</sup>	1.916	2.022:1	1.696:1	2.17:1	1.97:1	1.947:1
3 <sup>rd</sup>	1.357	1.384:1	1.237:1	1.378:1	1.37:1	1.423:1
4 <sup>th</sup>	1.0	1.0:1	1.0:1	1.0:1	1.0:1	1.0:1
5 <sup>th</sup>		0.861:1	1.861:1	0.821:1	0.82:1	0.864:1

# BLEEDING THE CLUTCH

For something seemingly so simple, nothing frustrates more than bleeding the clutch!

*Borrowed from Sprite Parts. Thanks Colin!*

Bleeding brakes usually isn't a problem, as there is (should be) a valve in the bottom of the master cylinder that lets you build up brake pressure, and makes bleeding easier. That's not the valve's purpose, but it is a consequence of it being there.

The clutch however has no such valve. So if you have an air bubble in the line, you put your foot on the pedal and the bubble moves down the line, take your foot off and the bubble moves back again. Makes it really difficult to get the air bubble to the bleed nipple end.

After many years of frustration, I have developed the following method, and it usually takes me about 5 to 10 minutes. Note: this is written for right hand drive cars. Some obvious changes will be needed if you have a left hand drive car. Without really long arms you will not be able to reach both the clutch pedal and the slave cylinder at the same time!

Note, "Count to 5" in Step 8 is important. When you lift the pedal, you create a partial vacuum in the





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clutch line. This sucks some brake fluid out of the master cylinder and into the line. Brake fluid is a little viscous, and it takes a few seconds to suck it into the line.

1. Remove the bleed nipple entirely and clean the threads on a wire brush.
2. Fill the master cylinder. Ideally, have an assistant standing by to keep it filled during the process.
3. Remove the driver's side seat base and/or the steering wheel. Not always necessary, but if I don't do this I can't move to step 4.
4. Armed with the bleed nipple and a 7/16 AF spanner, crawl into the footwell.
5. With your right forefinger, block off the bleed hole in the slave cylinder - your finger is now the "bleed nipple".
6. With your left hand, push down the clutch pedal.
7. Take your finger off the slave cylinder, count to 1, put it back.
8. Lift your left hand from the pedal, count to 5, push the pedal down again.
9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 until fluid forces it's way past your finger.
10. Repeat 2 more times, then, with the clutch pedal still depressed, replace the bleed nipple and tighten it. While you are doing this, brake fluid will be running out the slave cylinder as it will be gravity bleeding all by itself.
11. Replace steering wheel, or the car is very difficult to steer. I guess we should replace the driver's seat base while we are at it!

Give it a go and let us know how you get on.

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## A MIDGET IS NOT AN MX5

Seems obvious, but so many people fold the roof away as if it is one! This is how it should be done!

Removing the roof on an early Sprite or Midget is easy. You undo the clips on the header rail (or just undo the studs on an early Bugeye roof), remove the roof and hood bow and neatly pack it away into the boot of the car. Simple.

To be honest, the roof on a later Mk3 Midget (including the black bumpered '1500' variant) and Mk4 Sprite are equally as simple (if not simpler) but all too often owners fold their roof down as if its an MX5 or other modern convertible and just get it wrong (see the image found on social media at the top of this article as I didn't want to embarrass any of our members!!).

Its not!

Not only does it not fold down neatly and create an unsightly mess, but in the longer term it damages the roof material and ends up costing you a replacement!

Instead of trying to describe it, I'll try and explain it in pictures!

## A GUIDE TO FOLDING THE ROOF

A few easy steps to go from here ....



...to here



### Undo everything inside!

Release the clamps on the head rail and all of the internal straps and studs securing the roof material to the frames!



### Fold the roof back

Fold the roof back, pulling the roof material away from the hood bows.



Lay the roof out across the boot, making sure the header bar is stowed, then bring the roof forwards and across the seats as shown.

### And stow it away!

Fold the sides inwards. The age and cut of your roof will largely determine whether you fold the sides under or over (as shown).



Tuck the roof under. If you've done it right it will be nicely nestle up against the boot.

I find it easiest to lay the cover out across the front seats and attach the straps before securing down.



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## A SPRITE CALLED 'SLUGGO'

In 1970 I came across what I thought was an absolute steal for \$1100; a secondhand 1963 Mk 11a Sprite

Sitting in Andrews Motors on the Main North Road at Prospect, just around the corner from the long established BMC dealer Taylors of Medindie (where club member Don Cardone would have been working at the time!!). With a thousand dollars cash in my pocket I was absolutely sure of doing the deal! Except it didn't happen. Plan "A" shot down in about two minutes flat, old Andrews would **not** negotiate.



Despite the knock back I instigated Plan "B"; ask dad if he would loan me \$100 for a couple of weeks, 30 seconds later Plan B was shot down with his response, "if you can't pay up front you can't afford it!" A hard but fair lesson learnt despite what I thought at the time. Those ten words of advice have stuck with me since that day.

Fast forward to August 2010 I phoned my father and the conversation went along these lines...

Me: *Guess what I bought*

FEJ (Dad): *No idea another motor bike, another yacht, house??*

Me: *No, a Mk11a Sprite*

FEJ: *You took forty bloody years to save the \$100?*

At 84 years of age, sharp as a tack, he remembered all the details!

Finally I was the proud owner of a Mk11a Sprite which had the basics a 1275cc motor, ribcase gearbox, Minilite alloy wheels, in British racing green with two broad yellow stripes over the bonnet and boot.

The trim, roof and tonneau cover were in good condition. Joseph Lucas had behaved badly for the previous owner who had rewired all the burnt sections of the wiring loom so I thought this should be okay.

After a week of ownership the modifications commenced with a trip to see Lance Walker who fabricated and installed a CAMS approved rollbar. The car started to look like a "Proper Sprite" but was diabolical to drive in the wet due to mismatch set of tyres that were so old if I'd had a puncture, welding a patch on the damaged area would have been feasible.

After the Sprite survived its first six months I headed out to Mallala Motorsport Park for a quick blast around the circuit. A combination of valve train and ignition problems resulted in a very slow trip home running on

three sometimes two cylinders. Maybe I was expecting too much from the Sprite. Any way repairs were completed and my next adventure was a Come and Try day at Collingrove Hillclimb which turned out to be more suitable for both the Sprite and myself.

**It was at Collingrove where the Sprite gained the nickname 'Sluggo' because it travelled at the speed of a slug up the hill.**







From memory my quickest run at my first event was in the low 48s. Development was a slow process starting with the driver. As I had to drive the car home after each event I was somewhat reluctant to treat the car too harshly. The remedy was simple buy a trailer and a tow car which equates to go harder on the track.

What became very apparent was the need for a better equipped car so over a couple of years numerous changes were made, the least expensive being the weight loss program, all trim, carpets, bumpers, engine bay metal work, windscreen wiper assembly, windscreen, radio were removed saving about 100kg. To this day the driver has not done anything about losing his excess weight.

Engine modifications included changes to the cylinder head, fitting of roller rockers and a Weber carburetor. A more suitable diff ratio from a Morris Minor panel van was fitted.

**Suddenly Sluggo was some six seconds quicker.**

My jubilation with the improvement was short lived as the appetite for gearboxes grew to two in four meetings but worse followed when the engine oil pickup blocked with silicon resulting in zero oil pressure and a seized engine. The blockage resulted from an over use of silicon during a rebuild by a previous owner. The block was reusable after a rebore however everything else had to be replaced but it did allow me the opportunity



to have everything balanced and matched prior to assembly. Additional work was carried out on the cylinder head including matching all ports to the modified inlet manifold and ceramic extractors. After what seemed an eternity the rebuilt engine was coupled up to the gearbox and installed ready to assault Collingrove again.

All went well and over the course of a season with times coming down to the low 40s and I was reasonably confident that all the issues had been solved. Never get ahead of yourself when you have a Sprite, another broken gearbox and a first for Sluggo a diff let go on the start line. Gear box number four was assembled using the unbroken components from the three broken ones. Surprisingly it is still working well five seasons later.



While this may read like the saga of broken car and bank account I have had a hell of a lot of fun making this Sprite do things it possibly shouldn't be doing. Every now and then I go to have shed clean out of all the broken and damaged parts accumulated over fifteen years of ownership. Then common sense kicks in and I think, might be able to use that one day so nothing is chucked out.

A list of issues dealt with over the time reads something like a BMC spare parts catalogue:

- 9 litres of British Racing Green paint
- 5 sets of tyres, three sets of wheels
- 3 water pumps,
- One differential
- Three Gearboxes,
- Two head gaskets,
- One engine rebuild and
- A half shaft, generator and a starter motor
- (oh, and a Partridge in a Pear tree)

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

They are the things which come to mind readily, but I'm sure my bank statements would tell another story, while my book listing expenditure would confirm a similar story had it not mysteriously vanished many years ago.

While it may seem to be a bottomless pit I have enjoyed competing locally and interstate with a degree of success including Two Australian Championship class wins, One outright Winter Cup win, two outright Collingrove Challenge series wins and numerous class wins spread over fourteen years. Interestingly my quickest time at Collingrove stands at 38.57 some 10 seconds quicker than my first event while my daughter Anthea, who shared the car with me for three seasons quickest time is 40.05 seconds.

No wonder Sluggo had such an appetite for so many components with twice the work load of most other cars. Along the way I have made many friends and developed a network of contacts around Australia who always seem to have access to replacement parts!

I am indebted to my longtime friend Rolly May who has assisted numerous times in getting Sluggo ready to compete; in addition to keeping his very quick Puma clubman ready for both Hillclimbs and Super sprints. Anthea is also very adept at gearbox

changeovers, panel work and problem solving when logic disappears from my thought processing

On reflection I doubt if this adventure with an Austin



Healey Sprite MK11a would have occurred had my father lent me \$100 in 1970. I believe the 39 year wait was beneficial despite having to pay more than \$1100 for a fifth hand Sprite!

*Peter Stanley  
Club Secretary*

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The advertisement features a close-up of the 3FOOTED MONSTER magnetic mount, which is a black, adjustable device designed to hold a GoPro camera. The mount is shown attached to a metal surface, likely a car's body. The GoPro camera is mounted on top of the device. The background is dark and out of focus, showing what appears to be a car's interior or engine compartment. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font, with the brand name in a larger, teal color. A small logo for the Good Design Award is visible in the bottom right corner.

# ADELAIDE TO DARWIN AND BACK IN SIX DAYS

## The Perfect Clubbie Trip??

*The Sprite Club of South Australia lost one of its members and former Club president, Paul Doube early in 2024 following a long battle with failing health. Paul had a lifelong passion with cars, including a Sprite but it's perhaps his Kestrel Clubman (aka Kestrel 7), now with his son in Western Australia, that is he is best remembered within the Sprite Club. This is the story of one of his adventures, a 2006 adventure up through the red centre and back.*

Wanting to escape the southern winter, even if only for a short period, Ruth and I had decided to head to Darwin to catch up with friends and enjoy the sunshine and warm weather for a few days.

Plans fell apart when it appeared that I had suffered a hostile takeover of operating systems by "Jack the Dancer", and that life would change while treatment was undertaken. Scans, tests of every possible description, biopsy's and pokes and prods in places I didn't think you could poke or prod, failed to exclude the presence of 'Jack' so it was decided to take the Clubbie and get away from the stress source for a few days of 'priority realignment'.

To me, this of course, meant driving the car to Darwin and back in 6 days, 6100 km in total and 3050km of unlimited speed roads. In other words, the perfect Clubbie Challenge!

Ruth chose to fly but to her credit, she understood the challenge and enjoyment to be had from six days of solitude in the car, and so the plan evolved to drive to Darwin and back, to enjoy the speed limit free NT roads and have the clubbie to use in the beautiful weather of Darwin in late July.

Car checked and prepped, iPod (*remember them? ... Ed*) loaded with 8 hours of favourite music and fuelled with as much enthusiasm as it was with premium unleaded, and in bed early(ish) and ready for a 4.00am departure on Saturday 22 July.

Problem One surfaced at 1.30am when the phone rang, to advise that No. 1 son (who had been out with mates to celebrate turning 18) was severely pissed and needed to be picked up.

Back home, and with Sadam bedded down where he could do no harm to self or home, very tired and a little peeved, at 3.00am, the car and I headed for Darwin. As I left a dark and sleeping 'Castle Doube' I made a note of the odometer reading, which showed 16,807km on the clock.



100km later at Port Wakefield, I was beginning to question my sanity as it was 3 degrees and not even my 'above snowline' rated parka, 'goretex' gloves and 'AusClubbies' beanie was sufficient to keep me warm.

A steady cruise at about 130kph saw me in Port Augusta for breakfast (God bless the Macca's bacon and egg McMuffin breakfast), slightly warmer, fuelled up and ready for the first real challenging part of the trip.

First issue was realising that while a 4.4:1 diff is fantastic for Mallala, it is not the best for cruising and about 4700rpm was the order of the day, but this first stage proved surprising as I averaged about 9 litres per 100km for this first leg.

Problem two appeared approaching Glendambo, which was to be my next fuel stop, when the sky caved in as I hit the clutch to drop a gear and pass a truck and the clutch pedal went to the floor. In Glendambo to investigate and found the line from clutch master to slave cylinder had ruptured, (not sure if it was a rock hitting it or simply fractured by vibration of a solidly mounted engine), but the loan of an oxy from the local garage and a rough brazing job with much swearing as I attempted to refit a line that now shouldn't have fitted, and the problem was solved.

Unfortunately this had cost me two hours, and meant that I would now be travelling into the night hours to reach Alice Springs on the first night.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



The rest of the trip to the Alice was event free, and I enjoyed the cruise nature of the trip, and as the weather was fine and clear, and the cold was not an issue as the day had warmed a little, and after my rough repair, the car was travelling well.

Shades of Barry Edson's trip to Perth, and Kym Ninnies' circumnavigation of Oz came to mind as every stop brought out more people than it seemed, actually lived in the given town, and much explaining of the car and of the trip meant each further fuel stop, Coober Pedy, Marla and Erldunda, saw me lose a little more time on each occasion.

Made Alice Springs by about 8.00pm, and at the motel, the owner recognised it as a clubman (though she thought it was a 'PR?' something from Sydney), and again a small crowd soon surrounded the car. A good steak and a couple of XXXX Gold's and it was off for a well deserved and much needed sleep.

Part one of leg one was over, 1540km had been completed and the car and I were sniffing at the nostrils for the speed limit free part two of leg one.

Macca's again for breakfast Sunday morning (thank heaven only as God eats better than this), and again more questions from the (surprisingly) crowded restaurant(?), before heading to a carwash to high pressure the collection of wildlife that had used Kestrel 7 for target practice on the night before.



As the NT border to Alice Springs section had been in the dark, this was to be the first opportunity to try the speed limit free roads, and at about 11.00am I headed out of the Alice, and started the fast run to all points further north.

Third problem of the trip soon surfaced, as cruising at 170kph (6,000rpm) saw fuel consumption drop to 13.5 litres per 100km, which meant stopping every 200-230km for fuel. This was actually a bit of a two edged sword though, in that it added time to the trip, but also meant I was able to get out of the car and stretch the legs. Again though, the attention it attracted, meant losing even more time.



The Territory is not all straight roads as many think, and the run up from the Alice was just superb, cruising on about 170kph and running up to 190-200kph to pass vehicles. The only thing is that the concentration levels are high and getting used to the closing distances because of speed differential is something of an acquired skill, but more than a few 4wd/caravan combinations saw Kestrel 7 pass them in very short order.

The next 1100km were covered in a little over 7¼ hours actual travelling time, however an additional 45 minutes (or thereabouts) in fuel/drink/food/ explain the trip-car stops, saw Kestrel 7 reaching Mataranka just as darkness fell.

Problem four became obvious during this part of the trip, as copious amounts of sun block did very little (note for return trip and hint to all taking long trips in sunny weather, is to use Zinc cream and use it liberally) and by Mataranka my existing nose had disappeared and I was starting on my second one – very sore indeed.

A dip in the springs cooled things down but as there was no accommodation at the springs (absolutely full of grey nomads and their 4wd/caravan combos), I had to move in to Mataranka for a bed for the night, and as this was only about 7km, I was happy to potter in at low speed. In reality this was essential as the windscreen was a mass of deceased wildlife and vision was a problem (read almost non-existent!).

Problem five then appeared, in the form of a small wallaby that appeared from stage right without warning. A big wrench on the wheel saw the unfortunate animal clip the right rear guard, thankfully without real damage to Kestrel 7, but with terminal damage to said Wallaby.

At the Mataranka Hotel for the night, a couple of icy cold Golds with three locals in the pub and the best "steak sandwich with the lot" in the world, and Kestrel 7 retired to sleep the sleep of the 'right and the just'.

The next morning was a slow start, and checking over the car and getting ready for an easy run into Darwin, saw me on the road by about 10.00am. Again the roads from Mataranka to Katherine, and then onward were just a joy, 170kph plus most of the way and not a care in the world if the entire NT police force was patrolling!

Problem six surfaced on the section from Katherine to Adelaide River when after passing a road train and just easing back from 200kph, a slow moving, recalcitrant crow zigged while I zagged, and the slight "ping" I heard signalled another crow meeting his/her/it's maker. Unfortunately the mongrel took my left hand mirror with him!!!

It may come as something of a surprise to those who have never been to the Territory, but this part of the world has a few of the very best clubbie roads imaginable, sweeping corners with elevation changes and no traffic, and no speed limits, but unfortunately still the ever present wildlife, so not all care is abandoned. Still great fun, out to Edith Falls (20 km each way) and 70km on the old road out from Pine Creek, just fantastic.

In to Adelaide River for fuel and 'Barra and chips', and as I turned the car off at the Mobil for my final fuel stop before Darwin, those immortal words ran loud and clear across the forecourt.

**"That's a f#@king Lotus Seven"!!!**

Kestrel 7 made the garage owners day, when after talking for a while and being told he had always wanted one (he certainly had a wealth of knowledge of all things clubman) I asked if he had ever driven one? He



said he hadn't but one day he would, to which I replied that that day had come! I then tossed him the keys and told him to take Kestrel 7 (unfairly referred to by certain Queenslanders at the Round-Up as the 'rent-a-clubbie' – there may be somebody who hasn't driven it but we can't work out who?) for a run.

About 10 minutes later (the longest 10 minutes in history) I saw the grin before anything else as he returned, and the excitement in his voice was a dead give-away that he had 'given it a bit'. He could not believe the acceleration and handling of the car, but his words to his wife at the counter rang clear.

**"That's it, we're f#@king getting one"!!!!**

The Barra and chips were on the house, and as I was about to leave, a chap turned up to take photos and get details for entry on the Adelaide River tourism blog on the net. This has apparently been linked to ClubbiesSA.com for those interested.

Arrived in Darwin about 3.30pm, 3040km after leaving Adelaide and feeling absolutely stuffed. But I was totally exhilarated, warm, and with Kestrel 7 looking surprisingly untouched by the trip, was looking forward to the remainder of the week in Darwin.



Had to pick up Ruth from the airport later that afternoon, and so headed first to friends with whom we were staying to unload, and then to carwash to again high pressure the accumulated deceased wildlife and road grime off the car. After this, I stopped at the supermarket at Nightcliffe to collect some supplies.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Got a park three spaces from the door and went to do the shopping, but when I returned, to my shock and horror, someone had moved Kestrel 7 to the first space from the door. Closer examination suggested this was not Kestrel 7 after all, and as I had not as yet consumed any further 'Golds', I thought I should investigate further, this strange phenomena of the self moving clubbie.

It turns out there is one clubbie in Darwin, it is red, and was parked two spaces from Kestrel 7. It is a Locost (called a 'PBR 7'), was built by a chap in Woollongong, and is now owned by Mike Wileman, who is the port manager for Adsteam in Darwin. Mike described it as the perfect vehicle for the dry in Darwin, and after cards were exchanged and arrangements made to catch up later in the week for a drive and bench race, we headed off for a quick run to town and back. A great end to part two of leg one!!

Darwin was wonderful, with 30 degrees during the day, dropping down to about 24 overnight, and it is a town just made for a clubbie.

Over the next week the car attracted more attention than Pamela Anderson at a stag night, and everywhere we went or left it parked, a small crowd gathered within minutes.

We took the car everywhere, out to Litchfield Park (much better than "Kaka-don't") and even took it on the dirt roads out to Rum Jungle Lake, to the amazement of all who noticed a clubbie parked in these bush locations, all without problem, and managed to get some good photos of the car in locations and on roads one doesn't normally associate with clubbies (I wonder how difficult a 4 wheel drive clubbie would be?).

One of the highlights of the week was the expression on the face of 76 year old Brother Ted, a Sacred Heart missionary, who also happens to be a mechanic, pilot and certified car nut, after taking the car for a run and being coaxed into sticking the boot in a bit. Just priceless!!

Also managed to get a new braided clutch made by Phil Kerr, the local brake and unusual requirements specialist in Darwin. Phil is a character, as he was a speedway outfit rider who was left a paraplegic after a racing accident.

Not one to let the grass grow under his feet, he started his own workshop, and got on with life, now employing about 6 guys and doing well. Phil gets about in a motorised wheelchair (with flames painted on the side??), but his daily driver is something else, an SS ute with a Harrop supercharger fitted, putting out 330kw at the rear wheels, doing sub-13 second ¼ miles and all on hand controls!

All too soon it was time to return to the southern winter, and so on Monday afternoon, once again loaded and fuelled, Kestrel 7 started south for the beginning of part one of leg two.

Only went as far as Katherine (a leisurely 320km in 2½ hours), where I stayed with Chris Dickson, a lecturer at Charles Darwin University, who is building a Locost and is also well advanced on the building (this should read total re-engineering) of a Dutton kit car from England.

Early start on Tuesday heading for the Alice, and again cruising easily at 170kph. Just out of Tennant Creek, I passed a road train and a few nomads, pulling back in at about 170 or so, and there in front was an NT police 'candy' car (XR 6

Turbo) doing somewhat less than me.

Thought about the brake for two heartbeats and then flicked the indicator on and booted it to pass him at about 200kph. Eased back a little, and to my horror, he accelerated to sit not far off my rear end. Followed me the next ten km or so to Tennant Creek, then followed me when I pulled in for fuel, stopped behind me.



He came up to the car and said the best line I have ever heard from plod, "awesome little car, solid as a rock". Turned out it was a chance to give the Ford a blast and have a good look at the little red rocket that had just passed him, and was not even a mention of the actual speed at which I had just passed him.

Into Alice exactly 7 hours and 40 minutes after leaving Katherine, including all stops and averaging 160kph for the trip. Just an amazing experience, and one Kestrel 7 handled without a whisper of objection or difficulty. Part one of leg two completed easily.



I found this part of the trip tiring though, with the concentration level required to maintain this level of speed for this length of time, and after checking Kestrel 7 over, and preparing it for the next day's run, I settled for a take-away and an early night.

Why the rush you ask? Unfortunately I was briefed for a trial at 9.30am on the Thursday and it is regarded as decidedly poor form to let your client get 'slotted' without even turning up to argue the matter!

Away early (Maccas again – does anyone really enjoy this rubbish), and the last part of the trip from the speed limit free sign to the border (314km) was dispatched in 1 hour 56 minutes, including a stop to put a 10 litre of fuel into the car, and an average speed of over 165kph.

Problem seven arose at this point, as having spent so long at high speeds, it is something of an anti-climax to come back to SA and have to potter along at 120 or so for the next 1200 km.

Made good time all the way though, until about 10 km past Pimba, having just pulled in from passing some nomads and a semi/B Double, and eased off the throttle, when the blinking lights of plod in the distance signalled another assault on my wallet and demerit

point stash.

**Discussion as to unlikelihood of Plod's parents having ever married proved fruitless in having him reconsider his position,**

and after about 15 minutes lost, Kestrel 7 headed south again for Port Augusta \$289 lighter and 3 points heavier.

Problem eight rose it's ugly head shortly after this,

when as I moved position in the car coming out of the Iron Stone Lagoon dip, and suddenly feeling my wallet was not in the pocket it should be. Stopped to find it but to no avail, and then realised I had put the wallet on the back of the car after having my licence returned to me, and had obviously driven off without it.

No cash, no cards and not enough fuel to get to Port Augusta if I went back to look for the wallet and couldn't locate it. Had enough to get back to Pimba, and thought if I couldn't locate it, I would try to work something out there.

God obviously smiles on clubbie drivers, or is it on devout 'Old Ignatians, as after about two hours of idling up and down the road, on high beam for twenty odd km back to spot where plod assaulted me, and then back to Iron Stone Lagoon and back again, my pious and deeply religious prayers (Jeeezus Fu#@king Chriiist) were answered and the wallet appeared on the side of the road, complete with all contents, and not even having been run over.

Unfortunately this lost much time and it was late, dark and dangerous (lots of kangaroos, sheep and black cattle on or near the road), as Kestrel 7 potted at 80kph the remaining 170km into Port Augusta. Silver lining to this cloud (aside from finding said wallet) was

that at 80kph, Kestrel 7 managed 6 litres per hundred km.

Arrived back to 'Castle Doube' at 2.20am Thursday morning as I had left it, dark and quiet with all asleep, Kestrel 7 utterly exhausted, totally exhilarated, and marvelling over the fact that I had just gone to Darwin and back in 6 days (4 ½ days of actual travel time), and had done so with the ruptured clutch hydraulic line as the only mechanical issue.

The odometer showed 24,216, and Kestrel 7 had just done 7409km in 6 days (travelling time), had done over 3,000km at or above 160kph, had been driven on everything from freeway smooth double lanes to heavily corrugated red dust roads, and just about everything imaginable in between, all without so much as a shudder of complaint from the car, while bringing a bit of fun to an old stager of a driver and lots of other people along the way.

Two questions then remain to be answered.

1. *Was it worth it?*

Absolutely!!!! The experience of a lifetime and one that could these days, only be done in a very few places in the world.



2. *Would I do it again?*

No! It is just too long and the run back from the border to Adelaide is just too slow to be enjoyable. The run up to the border is okay as there is some excitement at the prospect of the speed limit free roads, but not on the way back home. Then again, if I put the car on the train to and from Alice Springs ...!

*Paul Doube  
Feb 1953 - Jan 2024*





# SPRITELY BELLS

My deepest apologies to James Lord Pierpont ...



Dashing through the hills  
In a Mk1 Bugeye Sprite  
Lucas Tungsten bulbs  
Lighting up the Night  
Horns on Midgets sound  
Blinkers flashing bright  
What fun it is to ride and sing  
A Spritely song to night

Midgets Rule, Sprites are Cool  
Clubmans lead the way  
Oh, what fun it is to drive  
On a summer Christmas night, hey  
Jingle bells, Tappets yell  
The clearances are out  
If Father Christmas needs some help.  
We'll call the Sprite Club out.

A day or two ago  
I thought we'd take a ride  
And soon, with fading light  
The Sprite was rolled outside  
The car was lean and clean  
But misfortune struck us low  
The fuel pump did fail to tick  
So in an Uber we did go

Jingle Bells, Petrol Smells  
The SUs failed to fire  
We couldn't have any fun that night  
As something was quite dire,  
Alfas Rule, Midgets are cool,  
Fords they rust away  
We'd hope to take a ride that night,  
But we ended in an old FJ!

A day or two ago  
The story I must tell  
I went back to the car  
And on my back I fell  
As I looked across  
The problem I did see  
And once it had been rectified  
We could quickly drive away

Blue cars rule, red cars drool  
The engine's fired up,  
Oh, what fun it will be to ride  
In a pale blue car tonight, (right??)

Jingle bells, something smells  
The filter's sprung a leak  
Oh, what fun it is to fix  
A Spridget late in the week

Now all the hills are green  
The A Series burbles on  
The wind whips through our hair  
We sing this Sprite-ing song  
Drop it down a gear  
Around the bend we fly  
Listen to the intake roar  
And race off into the night

Jingle bells, jingle bells  
Jingle all the way  
Oh, what fun it is to ride  
In Mk1 Sprite all day, hey

Jingle bells, jingle bells  
Jingle all the way  
If Santa needs a lift tonight  
We can help him on his way!

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

