

November 2018

Mutterings

THE NEWSLETTER of the EASTERN CENTRE
of the AUSTIN HEALEY CLUB



***Norfolk noggin venue: The Three Horseshoes at Roydon
with Angela Bonner's 100 to the fore***

<http://new.ahc-eastern.co.uk/>

ROB'S RAMBLINGS

The highlight of my month was hearing Dick Best's talk at the AGM that I report on later in the magazine. I am not generally a fan of AGM's (who is?) but they are important as they give members the chance to say their piece. It was especially nice to see so many new faces, compensating for the reduced number of old faces. It is a sad fact of life that as we get older sometimes cocoa and slippers win out - no names no pack drill!

Soup might have been in order for the attendees as a good half dozen Healeys graced the car park, sadly spread around unlike previous years where the golf club kindly reserved parking for us near the Clubhouse. It was actually a good Healey-driving day unlike one year when the car park was flooded (As was Andrew and Paula's house I seem to remember!)

Next up....the usual round of Christmas celebrations. Please let me have photos and a few words, particularly from the new faces as this will ensure that Mutterings, in whatever format, does not get stale.

Rob

NEW MEMBERS

- Stephen Wolfe of Dunmow has a OEW 1964 AH3000Mk3 which he has owned since 1973.
- Max Rose of Kings Lynn has a White 1962 AH 3000 Mk2A in concours condition.
- Tim Ryan of Potters Bar has a 1957 Red AH100/6 which needs some TLC
- Nathan Divey of Kings Lynn has not notified us of any cars.
- Alan Croucher of Danbury has green 1959 AHSpriteMk1 with a 1275 engine.

Welcome to the Club and we look forward to meeting you at one of our future events.

TOURING TROPHY - 2019

The Touring Trophy runs from AGM to AGM (October to October).

If you want to be in with a chance of winning the Trophy let the Editor mutterings@ahc-eastern.co.uk know your mileage in the following format.

Entrant	Date	Trip description	Trip	Total

Dave and Pam Haslam won the 2018 trophy with a grand total of 5645 miles that included a number of overseas trips. Well done Dave and Pam and keep those wheels rolling in 2019.

CLUB TROPHIES AND AGM

The Why me? Trophy always creates lots of interest at the AGM and you will see later that this year it was won by Terry Sprosson. Here he accepts the trophy from Andrew Hollick with a wry smile. We've all been there, haven't we?



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

The AGM has been and gone, I hope those that attended enjoyed it. The Guest Speaker, Richard Best, was brilliant, giving insights to working with the likes of Issigonis and the problems with muddled management along with the vested interests of the oil industry holding back development of steam and electric vehicles, if you ever get the chance to hear him talk at a car club event don't miss it. I am sure you won't be disappointed.

We were very pleased to welcome 9 new faces at the AGM and they can be seen below. I hope that I have all the names right! I hope you all felt included and we look forward to welcoming you at events in the coming year [with or without a Healey]. As always there is never enough time to chat to everybody in depth at these events but I hope you all got a taste of what makes Eastern Centre tick, and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.



From top, left: Brian and Gill Berry: Richard and Michael Moore: Brett and Clare Stead with Paul and Pauline Aukland.

Chairman's chat continued...

It was sad to lose Richard Mayes and Stuart Self from the committee, they have been beavering away over the years to enhance your Healey Club experience, they will be much missed at committee meetings. Tony Witherington is taking over Stuart's position in Membership and hopes to be able to make a connection with you all, I am going to take on the MSA liaison that Richard handled so please contact me if you wish to organise a road run. We are still looking for a Secretary so if you would like to join the committee and have some fun, please ask what is involved, enthusiasm is the most important qualification needed. We are very pleased to welcome new member Brett Stead onto the committee as a general member, we look forward to some fresh ideas on the table.

Eastern Centre events will no doubt be down to the Noggin n Natters over the winter months, please try to attend your local noggin, it is a great source of information and camaraderie. If you haven't got one near you why not start one? If you contact the Membership Secretary in the first instance he can try and put you in touch with nearby Healey owners [observing due diligence on the Data Protection front] every Noggin has to start somewhere!

My Sprite Suffering continues, if I find a panel that fits first time I will definitely let you know. It has progressed slightly but I doubt it will be anywhere near a paint shop by the time you are reading this! I am sorely tempted to buy an MGF just to experience a different set of problems for a change!

Happy Healeying.

Dave

*Seen R with
Paul Antcliffe*



CLUB TROPHIES 2018

The Chairman's Shield: Awarded to the club member that in the opinion of the Chairman and Vice Chairman has stood out with their work and efforts within the club. *Angie and Chris Davis for organising a fabulous EC weekend in Suffolk.*

The Mutterings Contributor of the Year Cup: Awarded by the editor of Mutterings to the club member who they feel has contributed quality and readable articles to Mutterings. *Pat (right) and Zara Kimber for a regular supply of interesting articles.*



The Tourist Trophy: This goes to the Healey (all types included) that has notched up the most miles in the year. *Dave and Pam Haslam who clocked up over 5000 miles in the 12 months to the AGM.*

The Sprinzel Trophy: To the Member who has done most for/in Sprites. *Pete and Paul Taylor for their 1965 Le Mans Sprite recreation.*

The Why Me?? Trophy: Well we all make mistakes or have problems that should or could have been avoidable, but some of us seem to excel at it, so in recognition of their skill comes this trophy. *Terry Sprosson: For over-tightening the temperature sender connection on the header tank of his 100 the night before the planned departure for the Le Mans Classic after weeks of working on the cooling system, resulting in it remaining in Barton Bendish rather than on the high roads of France.*

The Rudd Trophy is presented to the club member who it is felt deserves recognition for their behind the scenes work for the year. *Richard Mayes to thank him for many years of sitting on the committee as secretary and MSA liaison officer.*

2018 AGM

Dave has reported on the AGM elsewhere but one item that caused some discussion was the issue of poor attendance at EC events.

Membership currently stands at 222, with 21 added this year, so fairly healthy, why then the poor turnout? Is it something to do with communications and the move to electronic *Mutterings*? Is it just apathy or are we doing something wrong in the choice of events? There was a suggestion from the floor that new members should be asked to give three reasons why they joined the club and it is planned that when Tony Withrington takes over the Membership Secretary's role a questionnaire will be drawn up that covers issues such as this.

It was suggested that the need to download *Mutterings* from the website is a disincentive to some and Tony plans to work with National to arrange that every member with email receives *Mutterings* direct to their inbox as a pdf that can be read online, downloaded or printed. Watch this space.

One innovation to draw in more attendees to the AGM was arranging a guest speaker, Dick Best, and he did not disappoint, giving a lively and highly entertaining talk about his days at Longbridge working for amongst others, Alec Issigonis. He recounted a time when he received a telephone call from Sir Alec's mother (he, Alec, lived with her) asking that he call her as he had forgotten to put on the clean underwear that she had put out for him!! Dick explained the tricks used to make the woefully inaccurate panels fit on cars including the Healey - the use of a long piece of timber that was inserted into an appropriate crevice to enable the errant panel to be bent into position. His comments on painting, or indeed the lack of it, don't bear thinking about and certainly answer the question why cars of that era rusted out so quickly!

His talk was so well received that it is planned to arrange a social evening in the New Year at which he can talk for a longer period and to, we hope, a large audience! Nudge, nudge!

Rob



SOCIAL WHEELS, NOVEMBER, 2018

Hello everyone, many thanks to all who came to the AGM, a small but discerning group who enjoyed an excellent carvery and mouth-watering desserts after the important business of the AGM itself. I'm sure Dave and Rob will touch on the officialdom but I would like to give a special thanks to the new members who came along, you were most welcome and I hope to meet all of you again before too long.

The season is regrettably almost over, the clocks have changed and so has the temperature - time to dig out the gloves and furry hats for any winter Healey exercising, and I am now searching the 'net' for events to start the calendar off with in 2019.

A couple of reports on events this summer - the Helmingham Festival of Classic Cars, run by the Suffolk Vehicle Enthusiasts at Lord Tollemache's estate near Diss, in aid of EACH, was able to present a cheque for £6,000 to the charity, which currently cares for 364 youngsters with life threatening illnesses.

The Colmworth Breakfast Club had a record number of vehicles at their last meeting for the summer, and they will be presenting another handsome cheque to the local St. Denys Church towards the repair fund at a 'thank you' meeting on the first Sunday in December. No bacon rolls this time, but mince pies instead. Nice to know how kind the Classic vehicle movement is generally, many of our events are run to aid charity. I attach a few photographs from this latter morning, to show what a diverse group of enthusiasts and their vehicles come to this friendly meeting.



Social wheels continued...

Don't let your Healey gather too many cobwebs, get it out, they run beautifully on sunny, crisp days in winter, but watch out for any recently gritted/salted roads.



Happy Healeying,

Angela



SPRITE 60 IN SUFFOLK

Last month you may remember Dave Holman's article on the Suffolk weekend organised by Chris and Angie Davis and seen a small image of the specially made rosettes for the prize-winners. These were made by Angel Bonner and in the photo opposite taken at a recent committee meeting, Maggi Byford shows the impressive workmanship.



FROM PETE TAYLOR

Just a note to say that I attended the Sprite 60 event at Wroxhall Abbey in August.

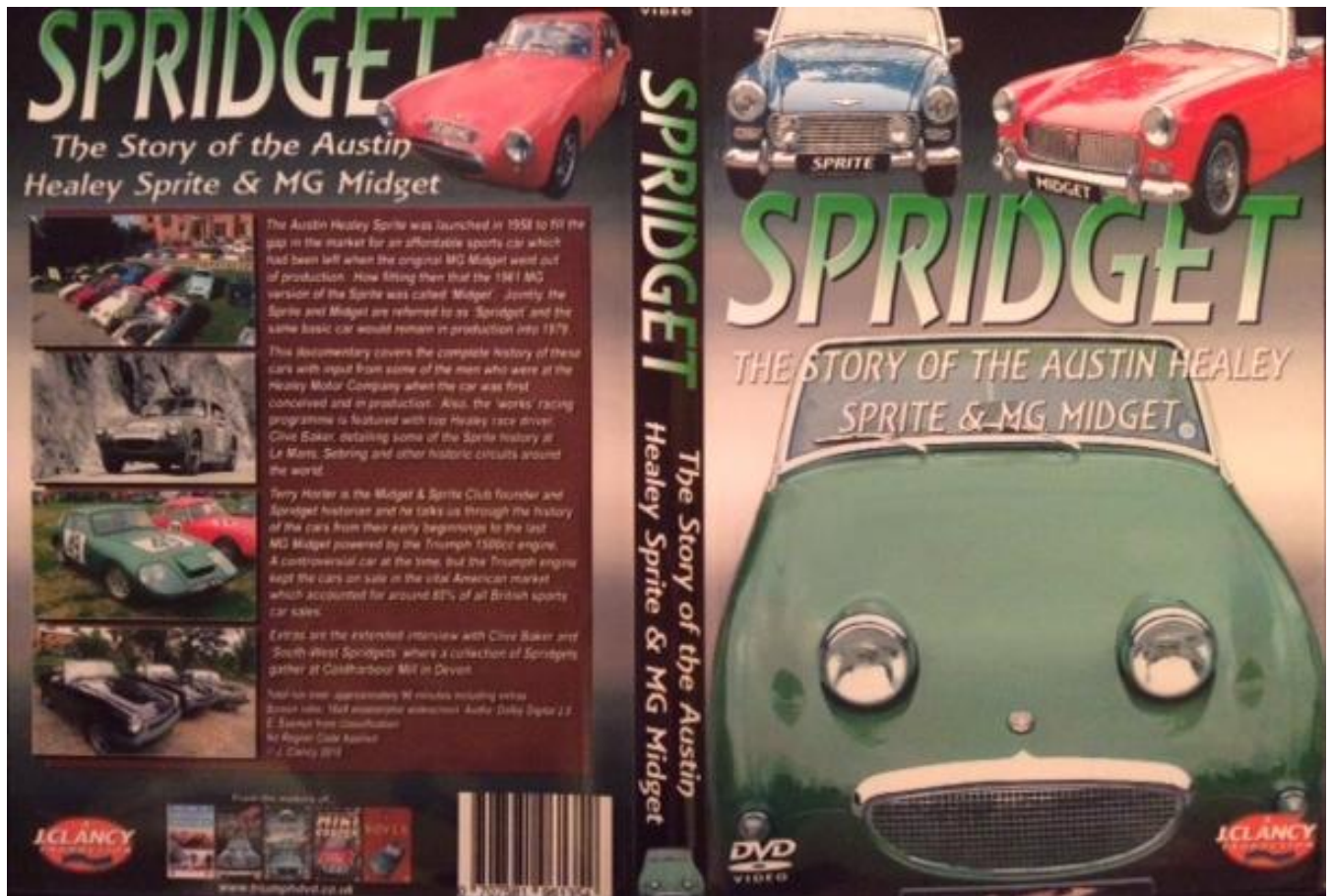
It was a horrible wet day, but there was a good turnout of about 200 Sprites and Midgets.

There was a guy named John Clancey taking video and recording chats about cars on the day. He has turned all this and more into a smashing DVD tracing the history of the marque and includes period footage.

He has put the film and interview he did with me in the chapter about race and rally in one part. It shows the colour film of the 1965 Le Mans with the originals of my replica and then cuts to my car!

The whole video is a great potted history of Sprites and Midgets and I recommend it.

<https://www.facebook.com/BulletDVD/videos/1912257232183379/>



EASTERN CENTRE CALENDAR NOVEMBER, 2018

Main events organised by AHC or where we have a club stand or where we know AHC members are attending will be shown in **bold**. Check on the website for more details and the latest information: www.ahc-eastern.co.uk

The following events for the remainder of this year are not especially Austin Healey events, but I think may be of interest to some of you:

- **3/4th Nov. 2018 HSCC SILVERSTONE** historic car racing.
- **9/11th Nov. 2018 NEC Classic Motor Show**, Birmingham.
- **18th Nov. 2018 Newark Auto Jumble** at Newark and Notts showground.
- **9th Dec. 2018 Newark Auto Jumble** at Newark and Notts showground.

2019

- **NEW YEARS DAY:** several events likely, including Barrington village green and probably Stony Stratford market square, details to follow.
- **28th April DRIVE IT DAY:** slightly later this year as Easter is on the usual date for this event around St Georges Day. It would be nice if Eastern Centre could organise their own drive for this important commemorative date, ideas welcome please.
- **3/6th May Northern Centre Weekend** - usually booked well in advance, contact Mike Stonier is probably the best to start with 07521 515746 as he looks after their calendar and events dates.

Plenty more to follow when the details are confirmed, keep an eye on Mutterings. If you set an automatic reminder to yourself - when Revcounter drops on your doormat go as soon as possible to the web pages to read the latest issue of Mutterings, or it may get forgotten and you might miss something.

See you soon, take care,

Angela.

THE 1968 LE MANS HEALEY SR

In the August edition of *Mutterings* I reported on the 2018 Classic Le Mans and mentioned that one of the competitors was a 1968 Healey SR and put this photo of it on the front cover. Afterwards I did some research and I reproduce below Geoffrey Healey's description of the car taken from his 1977 book '*Austin Healey - the story of the Big Healeys*' - Rob.



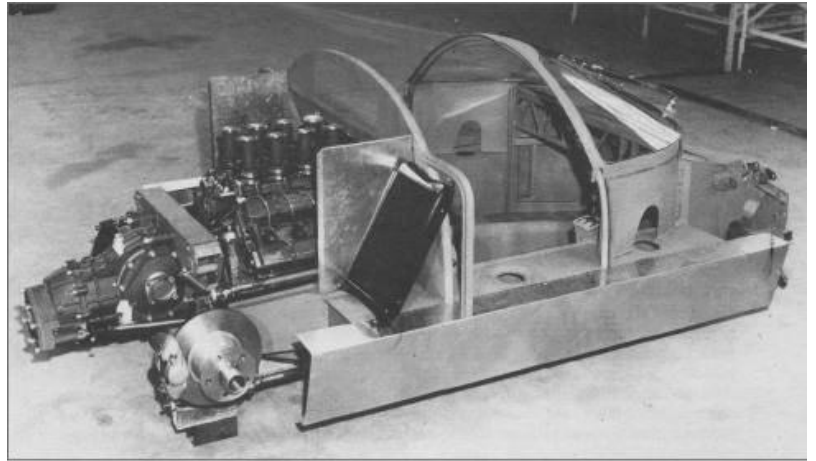
The SR was a very special car, built specifically for Le Mans. Over the years, we had been successful at Le Mans. In the mid-1960s we ran special editions of the Sprite for class wins and it was felt that we should make an attempt for a high overall position. The only engine within the BMC range that could possibly do this was the 2-litre twin cam V8 Coventry Climax racing engine. After a career of winning formula one Grand Prix races and the world championship, these engines were now obsolete due to the change to a 3-litre formula. So a plan was formulated to build a Le Mans car for the 1968 race, using one of these engines.

Brian Healey organised the supply of the engine with Lennard Lee and Wally Hassan. Lennard Lee and his firm Coventry Climax have never received full credit for their tremendous efforts with racing engines, which resulted in so many Grand Prix victories and the end of foreign dominance. The 2-litre V8 Coventry Climax engine was a beautiful unit with its light alloy cylinder block and finely engineered components.

Two engines remained-one with the later flat plane crankshaft which made the exhaust system simpler. Both engines had had a long and successful career, winning many races. A considerable amount of hard work was put in by Wally Hassan and Harry Spears to rebuild them. Ray Wood, Lucas's competition manager, rebuilt the fuel injection equipment. After a long period of idleness these engines once again gave their rated output of 240 bhp.

Healey SR continued...

The basis of the car was a steel monocoque (R) with a suspension system copied from the Ford GT40. The bodywork was of Birmabright aluminium alloy. Two Sprite MkIV cross flow radiators were positioned behind the doors.



SR under construction, showing the Hewland gearbox, Coventry Climax 2-litre V8 engine, Girling light alloy racing caliper, side-mounted Sprite radiator and the monocoque chassis frame.

15-inch light alloy centre lock wheels carried Dunlop racing tyres and Girling light alloy racing brakes were operated by twin cylinders via an adjustable balance bar.

The car was very solidly built-in fact it was too heavy and more suitable for a 3- or 5-litre engine. We have always tended to make our cars too heavy, a feature which brings benefits in normal use but is a handicap in racing. Considerable trouble was experienced due to failure of the joint between the engine and the gearbox. At first it was assumed that this was due to a faulty plate but stronger plates also failed. The problem was finally overcome by Wally Hassan who had additional bosses for bolts welded to the lower side of the oil sump. These constant interruptions to the track development programme did not allow sufficient time for the optimum handling to be achieved. John Harris, an old Healey driver and competitor in GT40s, was not satisfied, but fortunately, the race was postponed from June to September giving more time.

Our entry for Le Mans consisted of the SR driven by Andrew Hedges, Clive Baker and John Harris, and a 1293-cc special-bodied Sprite driven by Roger Enever and Alec Poole. Peter Browning, BMC competitions manager led our timekeepers with Les Needham. Walter Hassan and Harry Spears of Coventry Climax came to help with the engine and Digger Digby led a team of signallers. Practice was uneventful, only minor adjustments being necessary. The Sprite lapped in 4 min 53.6 sec, an average of 165.15 kph. The SR achieved 4 min 22.1 sec, an average of 185 kph. On the straight the Sprite was doing 151 mph and the SR 163 mph.

Healey SR continued...

The race started at 3 pm on a track wet with rain. The SR started promisingly but had to stop for a plug change. After 21 laps the clutch release mechanism jammed in the out position. The release sleeve had seized on the gearbox extension and poor Baker was stuck without any drive to the wheels.



Enever and Poole circulated the Sprite with train-like regularity to cover 271 laps at an approximate average speed of 95 mph and consumed 124 gallons of fuel, an average of over 18 mpg. The Sprite won the Motor Trophy for the best performance by a British car.

The SR was rebuilt for Le Mans 1969. Clive Baker and John Harris were the drivers. In practice the car was not pulling anything like its maximum 9,000 rpm on the straight. We checked everything, suspecting that the air flow to the intakes was restricted. Finally in desperation we opened up the gearbox to install a lower top gear ratio. To our surprise we found that Hewland had fitted the wrong ratio. Naturally we carried alternative ratios to those specified but we did not have a spare of the correct ratio. A telephone call got a pair of gears on the plane to Paris, and Brian and Wally collected them while we slept. With the correct ratio all was well. The car lapped in 4 min 13 sec with a maximum of 167 mph. The race started with some very fast laps by the large Porsches with 4.494-litre engines. The SR was lapping swiftly with Baker at the wheel when a tragic accident on one of the early laps blocked the road. In the ensuing traffic jam the engine overheated, causing a leakage at the head joint. Water was entering the bore, and the loss of water forced us to retire the car before further damage was done.

Healey SR continued...

The SR was not finished yet. The next year, 1970, it was rebuilt as XR 37. The body was rebuilt to open form, with advice from Bill Heynes to reduce the drag. A Repco Brabham 3-litre Grand Prix engine was bought from Jack Brabham. This was a very fine adaptation of a basic General Motors alloy V8 design. Its specific output was not high, and on Brabham's advice we used a maximum of 7,500 rpm at which speed it gave 310 bhp. John Harris continued the development work and in the end it handled extremely well.

With high hopes we started the race. The weather conditions were appalling. Rain alternated with dry periods, entailing frequent changes of tyres. The Dunlop wet tyres were superb in the wet but would not stand the heat on dry roads. Possibly because of these troublesome conditions, we had great difficulty removing the wheels. Andrew had an unpleasant moment during one of the wet periods. He was unable to come to a complete stop at an accident, and at the same time was struck by another car from behind. The mechanics carried out repairs to the body work but third gear was later to fail. This was replaced in very quick time-a difficult job with a very hot gearbox. At 4 pm we waited for Roger to cross the line on his last lap. Time passed and he finally arrived on foot. The engine had stopped and would not start. The trouble was the failure of a simple wire-wound resistor in the electronic ignition circuit. Undoubtedly vibration had finally been too much for it, and after 23 hours and 50 odd minutes it had expired.

After the 1970 race, the car, less engine, was sold to Robert Harrison in Australia. A keen member of the Austin Healey Club, Robert hoped to find a Repco Brabham engine in Australia, where they had been built. However, Repco engines suddenly became popular for use in hill-climb and sprint cars, and the supply dried up.

I am not sure of the provenance of the car seen at Le Mans but I believe it to have come from Australia so it could be the original. Brian Wheeler made a faithful replica of the SR with Rover V8 power that now resides overseas.

NOGGIN `N` NATTERS

Colchester area	Varies	Contact	Chris and Angie Davis	01206385982
St. Albans area	First Tuesday	Contact	John Keener	01494 728360
<i>Crown and Sceptre at Bridens Camp, Water End, HP2 6EY</i>				
Suffolk area	Varies	Contact	Garrow Shand	01394 389013
<i>Regular road runs and pub meets - contact Garrow for details</i>				
Cambridge Area	2nd Wednesday	Contact	Rob Ransom	01223 524821
<i>St Ives Golf Club, Joint meetings with Cambridge and District Car Club</i>				
Herts and Beds	Varies	Contact	Clive Cocks	01933 551885
<i>Contact Clive for venue and timing</i>				
W Norfolk area	2 nd Thursday	Contact	Dave Holman	01366 347412
<i>Varies: Contact Dave for the latest information</i>				
Bury St Edmunds	Varies	Contact	John Bolden	01359 240153
<i>Location varies</i>				

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