



Gateway Relay

Vol VII, No. 11

St Louis Sports Car Council

November 2018

Council News & Notes

- These are the times that try sports/special-interest car owners' souls, ie, the calendar's winding down and for that matter, the temperatures are trending down. As we wrapped up this issue of the *Relay*, the question of first snowfall was apparently answered in Missouri (the editor was at StLSCC's remote ops center in northwest Washington and got to observe the proceedings from a distance).
- The Boeing and SCCA autocross series have concluded for another year, with the Gateway Autocross Association posed to run their last event. There's one major drive still scheduled (as the saying goes, come one, come all) and then the member club activities will shift to indoor venues.
- Ah, but above and beyond the pending holidays, be of good cheer. The eight member clubs certainly had a great year; with a large number of events and activities (with the assistance of club contacts, we managed to cover 63 of them between January and October, with a few left to go) and we expect a similar robust sked in 2019.
- To all clubs, enjoy the coming winter and drive 'em when you get the chance.



Up & Coming

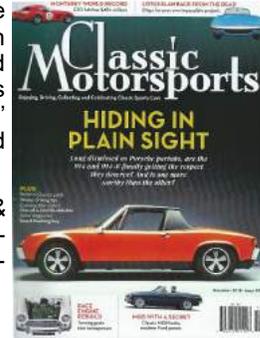
- 18 Nov 18—6th Annual SLTOA Veterans Run.** Open to all cars/drivers; meet at 9:30 AM at the State Farm parking lot in Columbia Center, immediately south of the McDonalds on IL 3 in Columbia. Cars roll at 10 AM for a flats and hills run to Chester, IL, for the traditional group photo at the Popeye statue overlooking the Mississippi and lunch at Reid's Harvest House. From there, the Illinois contingent can return home by their preferred route while Missouri drivers can cross the river to Perryville and head back to St Louis via US 61 or I-55. All proceeds from donations will go to the Semper Fi Fund, a non-profit which provides a variety of programs to assist veterans, wounded veterans and their families from all branches of the US armed forces. For info contact Mark Morgan at rangermk@sbcglobal.net.
- 29 Nov 18—MG Club of St Louis RUBCO.** At Uncle Bill's, 3427 S Kingshighway; arrive by 9:30. Please RSVP to uca57mga@aol.com or rubco@stlouismgclub.com.
- 7 Dec 18—Annual SLTOA Christmas Party,** at the Missouri Athletic Club-West, 1777 Des Peres Rd, Town & Country; 6:30 PM cocktails, dinner at 7:30 PM. Open sign-ups after 5 November, \$25 per person, club subsidized; after the first 70 sign-ups, the rate increases to \$40 per person. Reservation information available at www.sltoa.org, deadline is 3 December. Please bring one car-related gift per couple (or individual, if attending solo), \$15-20 cost range. A second, unwrapped gift for Toys for Tots would be most welcome.
- 15 Dec 18—First Coffee, Coffee & Cars** of the winter, at Just Jags, 8 AM to 10 AM.
- 12 Jan 19—MG Club of St Louis Annual Holiday Party,** at Maggie O'Brien's, 2000 Market St, St Louis. Great food and trivia, details on registration to follow. Monitor www.stlouismgclub.com/events-calendar/.
- 12 Jan 19—Jaguar Association of Greater St Louis Annual Dinner,** at the Deer Creek Club, 9861 Deer Creek Hill, St Louis. Monitor www.jagstl.com and the online *Growl* for more details.
- 27 Jan 19—Coffee, Coffee & Cars,** at Just Jags, 8 AM to 10 AM.

Note: Some club events restrict participation to club members only, primarily for national/chapter insurance reasons. If interested in joining in on a drive or other event, we recommend you contact the club's event coordinator in advance for details.

In Print

The third quarter issue of *Moss Motoring* is out and contains the usual good mix of LBC-related articles (go figure!), starting with a history of MG's legendary Abingdon works. The editors follow up with an article by an individual who tracked down and bought an MGA just like the one his ailing father formerly owned. Owners' stories on an Austin-Healey 3000 and Triumph TR6 round out the issue.

The cover of October's *Classic & Sports Car* announces "BMW's Greatest," the 3.0 CSL. Inside, a compar-



Continued on pg 3

Roadwork: the MG Ashley GT

It's pretty much a given that a good idea which receives a popular response in turn leads to other good ideas. Case in point, the 1958 debut of the Austin-Healey Sprite: small, affordable, not exactly fast (the cars went into production powered by British Motor Company's A-Series 948cc straight 4, which punched out 43 bhp), somewhat cramped...and a *whole* lot of fun to drive. In fact, the "Bugeye" (or "Frogeye," if you're of the British persuasion) proved so popular, BMC decided to give MG its own version, the Midget.



Series I MG Midget. Photo: BMC, via Honest John Classics

Above and beyond the automotive industry's strong embrace of the concept of badge engineering, the addition of the Midget as an off-shoot of the Sprite made perfect sporting (and financial) sense. The Sprite production line was at

MG's old Abingdon plant and the 1961 introduction of the Mk II model – aka the "Square Sprite" – provided an excellent foundation for the MG counterpart. The second generation Sprites/first gen Midgets cars were still small, still cramped and still fairly underpowered, although in 1962 BMC booted the A-Series engine to 1098cc, boosting power to 56 bhp. In any event, sales of the new MG immediately took off and remained strong through the end of production in 1979.

The Sprite readily lent itself to modification, including specialized body work; examples included the streamlined Sebring Sprites developed by the Donald Healey Motor Company in Warwick (see "Going the Distance: the GT Sprites," *Gateway Relay*, August 2016). Above and beyond Healey's effort, a number of other companies also produced body kits. One of these was Ashley Engineering, which produced streamlined, bolt-on kits for the Sprite, MG Midget and subsequently the MGB, Triumph Spitfire and E-Type Jaguar.

The company dated to the 1955 establishment of Ashley Laminates by Peter Pellandine and Keith Waddington in a small garage in Loughton, Essex. One of the first products to come out of their shop was the Ashley 750, based on the Austin 7 with 747cc engine and available in two wheelbases. The car looked like a Ferrari or possibly an Osca and was offered in both fixed head/coupe or roadster configuration. However, in 1956 the partners parted company – apparently amicably – with Pellandine founding a new company, Falcon Shells, and Waddington continuing with Ashley.

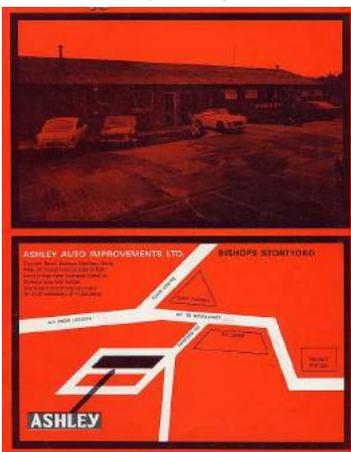


Photo via *Sebring Sprite*.

More designs followed from a new facility in Upshure, including the Ford-powered 1172 hardtop and convertible and the Ashley Regent chassis, suitable for Ashley or other manufacturer bodies.

Design and production of body modifications for the Sprites started in 1959; *Sebring Sprite.com* described the initial front

end redesign of the Sprite as "bulbous" (*that was an understatement*).

see the **ASHLEY** line

... and take the Ashley line to "extra special" glass-fibre bodies and the best special building service in England. Now you can build a full four-seater G.T. saloon using only your normal home workshop equipment. The new Ashley tubular steel chassis frame is supplied complete with front and rear suspension, flooring, underpan, rear seats, propshaft (tunnel) and the full four-seater G.T. body with safety glass front, side and rear windows and all electrical equipment. It's fully assembled and ready to accept standard Ford components—you can be on the road in just 30 hours! Outstanding value at £587, ex works. Send for full details (enclosing 1/- P.O.) or call at our Harlow showrooms for a demonstration run.

ASHLEY LAMINATES LIMITED.
 Bush Fair, Southern Way, Harlow, Essex. Tel. Harlow 21211.
 Open 9.50 weekdays 10.5.30 Sat. 10.15.12.30 Sun.
 99, Northgate, Halifax. Tel. Halifax 2475.
 Open 9.50-6.00 Wed Thurs and Sat.

Above: The Ashley 1275. Right: Ashley's first stab—a hardtop for the Bugeye.



The designs developed for the Midget Mk I/Sprite Mk II, on the other hand, constituted a major step up. The modifications included a one piece hood/bonnet with power bulge for engine clearance and a larger air intake. At the back end, a new fastback hardtop with lid for access to the trunk and spare tire; conveniently, the hardtop bolted directly to the fittings for the Midget's optional hardtop.



1974 MG Midget modified with Ashley GT components. Photos: Bring A Trailer

Total sales of the Ashley bodies to MG Midget owners, either as kits or produced by the small Ashley works? Hard to say. Due to changes in English tax laws, the company suspended production of finished cars in 1962, but continued offering the body parts for owners to install. In 1963, Waddington moved the company to Hertfordshire as Ashley Auto Improvements; while he died unexpectedly during the mid-1960s, the company continued in operation until 1972.

Peter Pellandine spent the rest of his life producing additional body kits and vehicle mods in New Zealand, England and Australia primarily under the Falcon title, while concurrently engaged in steam-powered vehicle research. He passed in Tasmania in December 2012.

As for racing, undoubtedly the modified, streamlined Midgets saw competition in England, most likely in club racing events; an search for records of participation in major continental races and rallies and the like failed to turn up anything.

However, the Midget-based Ashley GTs do show up periodically in vintage races. At the 75th Goodwood Members' Meeting, held over 18-19 March 2017, a number of MG (and Austin-Healey) –based Ashley GTs took part in the Weslake Cup for 1960-1966 A-Series engine-powered GT cars built between 1960 and 1966. The race received the name of Harry Weslake, designer of the A-Series among other projects (does the name "Eagle-Weslake" ring a bell?). The MG drivers included Brian Smith, George McDonald and Larry Tucker.



Larry Tucker in his MG Ashley GT. Photo via Ultimate Car Page.



The large and the small: MG Ashley GT dueling with a 1954 Lincoln.

If you're an MG Midget owner looking for something different, a new company in England – appropriately named Ashley – offers conversion bodies for Spridgets, plus performance and tuning parts. Ashley advertises it can also provide bodywork for similar Midget/Sprite-based GTs such as the Sebring, Lenham, Williams and Pritchard. In addition, the company

offers complete cars, using a donor MG or Austin-Healey, for £24,000 (about \$31,300).

Occasionally the cars come up for sale or auction. In 2011 – appropriately, at Goodwood – Bonhams offered a 1965 MG Ashley GT, (as an aside, the top sale at the Festival of Speed Auction was the ex-Innes Ireland Aston Martin DB2/4 Cabriolet, £606,500/\$795,273. The ex-Paul McCartney 1967 Lamborghini 400GT 2+2 went for "only" £122,500/\$160,628).



The Bonhams Ashley GT.

A 1964 model with the 1098cc engine went on sale via Bring A Trailer in January 2011, available in Carsholton, England. In August 2017, a 1974 Ashley GT, modified by the Deep River, Connecticut, owner through purchase and installation of the body panels, sold for \$6600. The seller modified the car, adding a 1275cc engine and Datsun 5-speed transmission.

One things for sure: if you latch onto one of these small GT cars with MG mechanicals and structure, you'll have a local rarity. As Bring A Trailer stated in reference to the '64 Midget, the winner of the online auction would have "...an interesting model whose rarity and GT styling would gain it entry at places where normal Midgets and Sprites would find resistance."

.....
Sources: Ashley, www.ashleygt.co.uk/; Dave LaChance, "The Ashley GT is back," *Hemmings Daily*, 21 October 2010; *The MG Experience*, www.mgexp.com/; "The MG Midget Coupes," *MG Midget Register*, 10 July 2012; "Ashley Hardtops & Bonnets," Sebring Sprite, www.sebringssprite.com/ashley.html," n.d.; "Aero MG Midget: 1964 Ashley GT," *Bring A Trailer*, 27 January 2011; *Sports Car Digest*, <https://www.sportscardigest.com/>; "Goodwood Members' Meeting 2017 – Picture Gallery and Report," *Motor Articles*, 19 March 2017; Jonathan Sharp, "Goodwood Members' Meeting Part 2," *Veloce Today*, 4 April 2017; "1965 Ashley MG GT," Bonhams, 16 September 2011.



In Print (Continued from page 1)

son test between a CSL and an Alfa Romeo Montreal, plus a buyer's guide for the Jaguar E-Type V12 and a feature on the MGA Twin Cam ("Abingdon's Most Exotic"). A BMW figures prominently in the November edition of *Road & Track*, starting with a comparison between the BMW M2 Competition and Chevrolet Camaro SS 1LE. Same issue, a first look at the new Jaguar F-Type with turbocharger 2-liter four. November's *Car & Driver* offers up more BMWs, including a look at the latest 3-Series ("BMW promises that the 3-Series is done resting on its laurels"), a wrap-up of the magazine's long-term experience with a 2017 BMW M2 and a quick look at the new X5.

November's *Classic Motorsports* offers of something different. One feature covers performance mods for the BMC A-Series engine, as found in the Mini, Austin-Healey Sprite and MG Midget; another announces the "MGZ," a modified MGB produced by Ceres Motorsports of Orlando, Florida. Biggest mods? A two-liter Ford Zetec twin cam up front, backed by a Tremec T-5 5sp transmission. The Zetec's good for 180 bhp, somewhat north of the stock MGB's four-banger.

Featured Events continued

VSCDA Grand Prix AuGrattan XXXII, MI
JAGSL/Taxman Group Racing Team 17-19 Aug 18



Photos courtesy of Phil Taxman

KTVI Fox-2 Pre-ABCCS Interviews
MGCStL & SLTOA, 21 Sept 18



Gateway Healey Assn RUMP
27 Sept 18



Photos by Jim Reiter



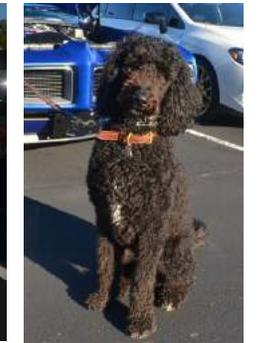
Montelle Winery Drive/Tour

MG Club of St Louis, 13 Oct 18



Left: You never know what you're going to see while waiting for the MGs to pass by...









Photos by Glenn Owens

Gateway Healy Association RUMP

25 Oct 18



Photos by Jim Reiter

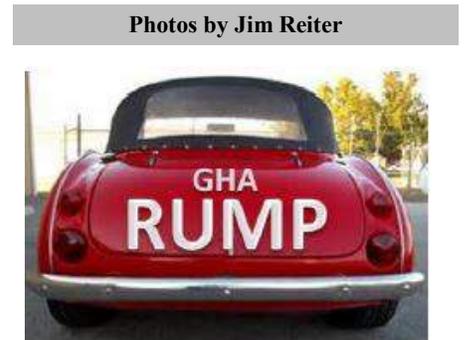




Photo by Stephen L Paur



SLP



Featured Events

SCCA Autocross No. 9

28 Oct 18



No, the '40 Ford didn't run (rats!)



Noted local hot shoe D. Maul



BMW Car Club of America St. Louis Chapter



Gateway Relay is published monthly for the member clubs of the St. Louis Sports Car Council (www.stlsc.org), copyright 2018, all rights reserved. Photos used in this newsletter and the StLSCC web site are the property of their respective clubs. Send electronic articles, photographs, queries and information of interest for the affiliated clubs to the StLSCC Coordinator/Chief Flack/Editor, Mark Morgan, at stlscd@gmail.com.

