

A SPRITELY TRIP AROUND AUSTRALIA

Russ Baldwin

I've owned Sprites since 1970 and have loved every minute of using them in all kinds of motorsport, but I've always wanted to do a lap around Australia in a Sprite. So after running the idea past a good mate (Bob Blayden, owner of a Sebring replica) and with 2018 being the 60th anniversary of the make, we decided the time was right.

I had just bought my Bugeye back from a friend so that became the vehicle of choice. After doing some servicing and preparations Bob and I set off in a clockwise direction from Newcastle on the 10th of April to follow Highway 1 with a car full (in Sprite terms) of luggage and spares.

The first day to Cann River was fine but then it rained on and off until we hit Perth (the Bugeye only has a soft-top and I'm usually reluctant to use it). Travelling up the west coast and across the top end, then down the east coast, we would leave just after sunrise to make the most of the cooler morning conditions and leave the roof up to get some shade.

Around Australia By Sprite

2018



While tripping around Australia we got a sense of the great legacy Donald Healey and the British Motor Corporation has left us, because just about every time we would pull up people would come along, take photos and ask about the car. Kids would usually think it was out of a comic book (or was a blue version of The Wiggles car!), the 20 to 40 year-olds couldn't believe it didn't have a boot or door handles – or know how to start it – and 40-plus brigade could remember someone having one or wanting one in their heyday. We met a lot of lovely and interesting people from all walks of life, all of them with some great stories. So, in short, the little Bugeye more than doubled the amount of enjoyment we had on the trip.

Running repairs were covered mostly by spares we had on board, like points, the rotor button and a head gasket that we needed to change just north of Perth. A kind mechanic let us swap the head gasket in his workshop and three and a half hours later we were off and running again. We also found the extra weight over the back wheels was causing the suspension to bottom out.

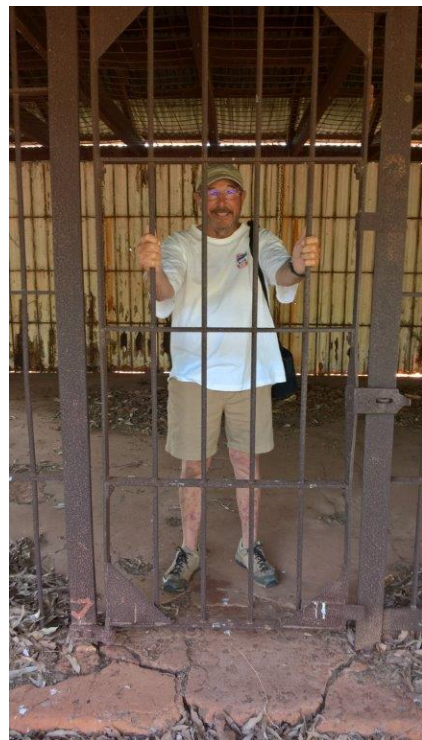
British Classic Spares on the Sunshine Coast sent us some new rear springs, but unfortunately Australia Post let us down, so we moved the heavier luggage forward and fitted some soft rubber grommets to soften the last bit of travel in the suspension. We also had a battery chuck it in, conveniently at British Classic Spares when I went to thank them for their efforts on trying to get us the springs.

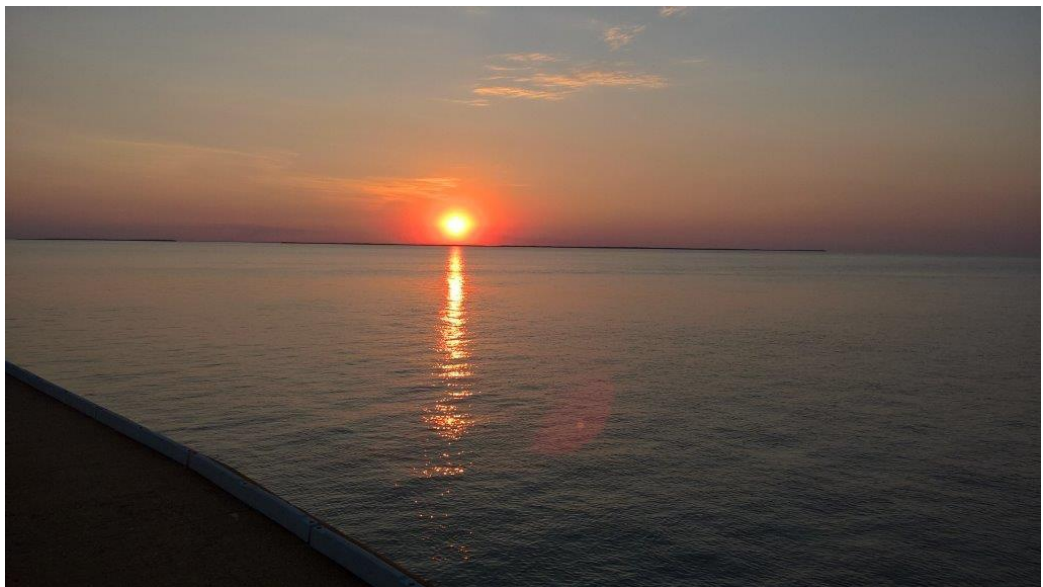
So if anyone's thinking of doing a long trip like it, if you take an old car it really makes the whole experience that much richer – whether it's the interested people you meet or the challenges along the way, it's something you'll never forget.

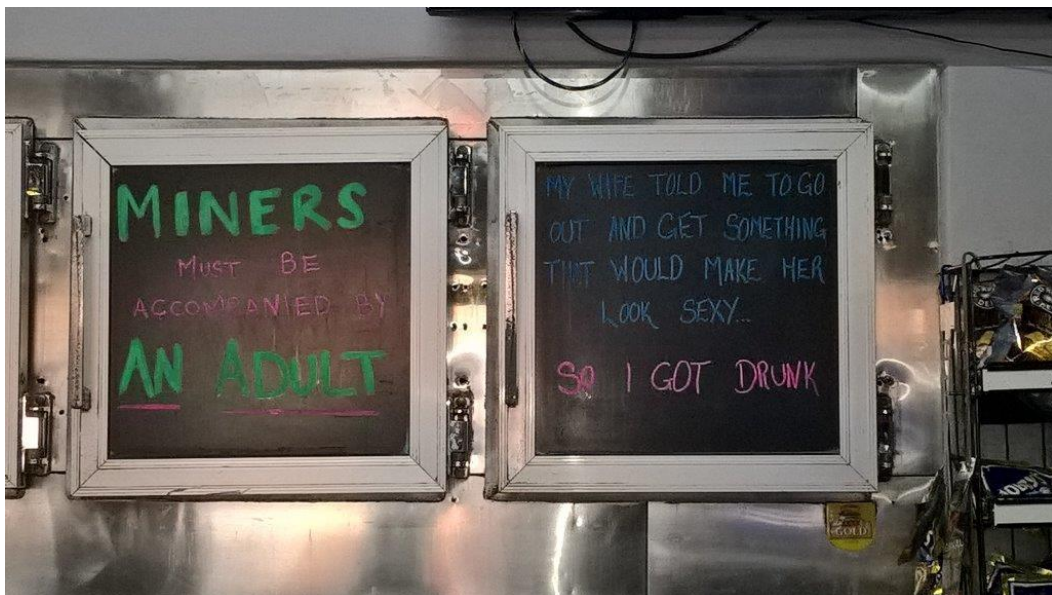
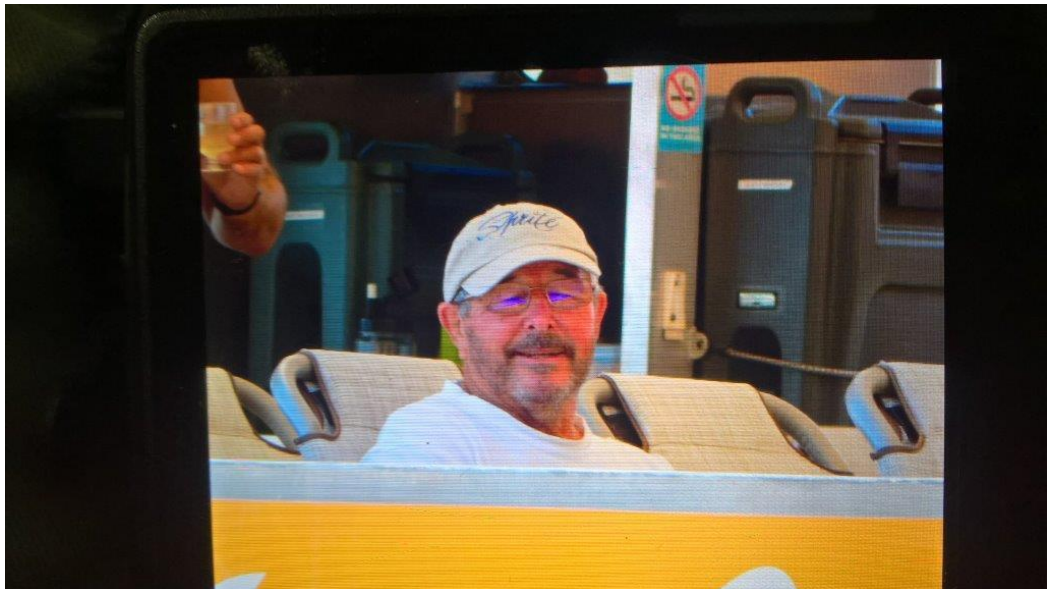
The trip took 6 weeks and 18,000 kms. A big trip for a little car.















The two hardy Spriters, Bob Blayden and Russ Baldwin. Very well done lads and 3 cheers for the little blue car.