

# 1961 Brabham Sprite-Climax replica – Owner Paul Webb

Back in 1961 Jack Brabham re-engined the 948cc Austin Healey Sprite Mk2 and the MG Midget Mk1 with Coventry Climax FWE 1220cc single overhead cam engines, the same engine that powered the Lotus type 14 Elite. As you can imagine this transformed the performance of the car that formally claimed 46.5bhp, a 0–60 time of 19.8 seconds with a top speed of 86mph, to one that was now 40lbs lighter, had 83bhp at 6500 rpm and achieved a 0–60 time of 9.2 seconds with a top speed of 110mph. The front brakes were changed from the original drum brakes to an 8.75" Lockheed PL disc brake set up. The engine in this car started life as a 1020cc Godiva fire pump engine which was then converted to Coventry Climax FWE 1220cc automotive specification with mild tuning for road use and produces 102bhp at 6200rpm on the rolling road. A lot of time and effort was put into sourcing original parts and building the car as close as possible to the originals. The chassis front cross members had to be cut and shaped to allow clearance for the Climax sump and engine front pulley, plus the engine and gearbox was moved back to prevent the dynamo pulley fouling the radiator. The smoothcase gearbox bellhousing was modified to mate with the engine and later 1275 internals have been fitted for reliability. The engine mount has been purpose made as per original along with the exhaust system, and engine cooling is by the correct period Kenlowe fan. The Lockheed brake set ups that the Brabham Climaxes used are very rare and these had to be re-made from scratch, using an original unit as a pattern. The anti roll bar is the same as used on Sebring

The Coventry Climax engine



Sprites, that being from a Healey 100. Rear brakes are unchanged and the car is running a 3.9 to 1 LSD with uprated EN24 halfshafts, with the speedo being re-calibrated to match the diff. The rev counter is a modified MGA cable driven unit re-calibrated and with the dial screen printed as the original. The steering wheel used on the Brabham Climaxes was an aftermarket Healey 'Spyder' and as there was little chance of finding an original, a Nardi wheel which is very close to the original has been used and the boss had to be made from scratch. It is thought that only a handful of cars were converted by Jack Brabham as the price for basic conversion was a hefty £360

which was about half the price again that you had just paid for the new Sprite in 1961, but there is only hard evidence of four that existed and no original form is on the road at present. However, the original car converted by Jack Brabham, an MG Midget reg 751 VPF and used for road tests in the period magazines, is currently being restored.

Paul asks that if any members have any information on the Coventry Climax powered Midget he would be glad to hear from them at: [info@colmworthclassics.co.uk](mailto:info@colmworthclassics.co.uk).

A more detailed description of this car and its build are available on the Midget Register website.



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