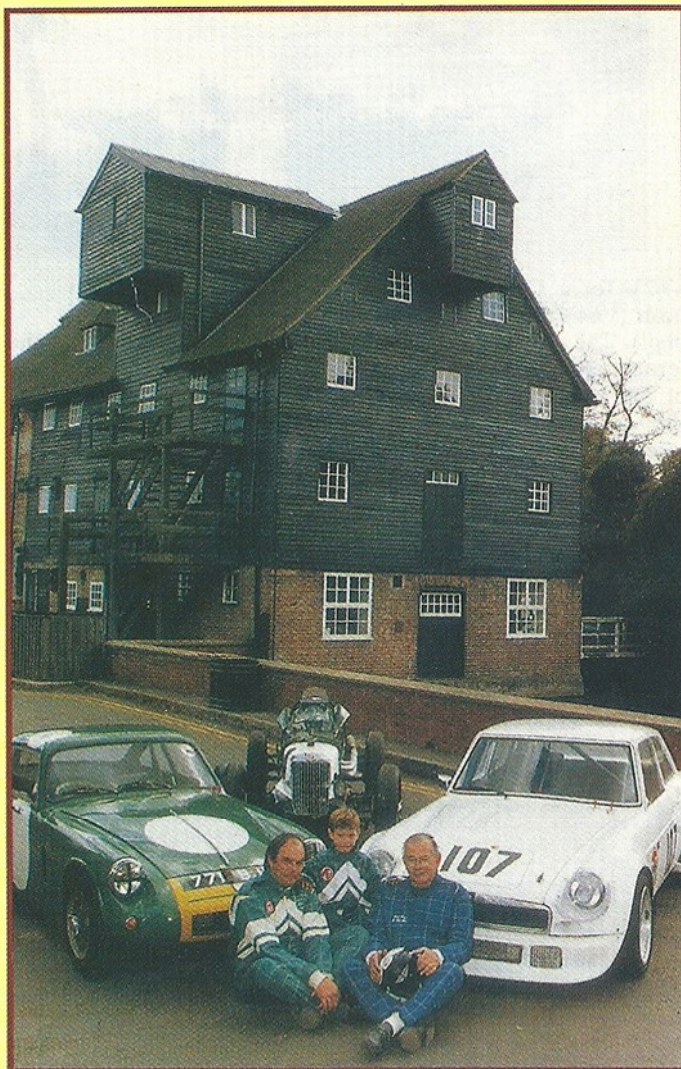


Impressions Of History

Your editor recently had the chance to drive one of the prettiest cars ever to come out of Abingdon, when he was let loose in one of the Jacobs Midgets, generously lent by Syd Beer.

I've never driven a Midget before, of whatever sort, in all my 30 years of M.G. Car Club life, so when Syd said it is the same as a road Midget to drive in terms of gear layout etc, he turned a whiter shade of pale when he heard this! However, nothing seems to phase Syd, or Malcolm for that matter and I suppose as we've known each other for that long, he quietly settled back in the passenger seat as I tried to put on the four point Luke harness. Eventually two dabs on the throttle to the 45 DCOE Weber and a flick of the key, and it started, settling down into a typical Weberised idle.

Nervously I edged out of the famous garage and took it up a few gears to the A1123 St Ives to Huntingdon road which that morning was in effect the main A604 dual carriageway, as an accident on that road had diverted everything, including large numbers of motorcycles on their way to a beanfeast at Peterborough. Eventually I plucked up enough courage to edge out into this maelstrom of lunacy. Fortunately we were out of it straight away as we turned off up to Wyton and beyond into the countryside of North Huntingdonshire. Apart from a tendency to stall the thing at T junctions I began to get used to this superb looking agile little machine. The exhaust and straight cut gears combined to produce an exhilarating wail as it was revved through the gears, though to be



The Beer dynasty – Syd, Malcolm and Adrian, at Houghton Mill. (Photo: Neville Marriner.)

honest I never took it beyond 6000, when 8000 is what it is good for.

As I've no idea how a standard Midget handles I cannot compare it, suffice to say as long as you kept the hammer down it would follow a neutral line. I reckon after about a week I would have been tweaking it around with the tail out, but on this sunny day, as I settled in, I enjoyed many a swoop through open double bends, along unevenly surfaced roads, with dust kicking up out of the verges, so for a moment I was at the Targa Florio!

As I relaxed I took in the simple 1960s style instruments, with Smiths tachometer and speedometer each side of the steering column, with ammeter between, and combined oil/water gauge. Indicators were manually controlled from the top middle of the dash. There was even a horn. Behind us was the spare wheel, and the fuel tank holding 19 gallons. We found a stretch of deserted up and down road, with some long straight stretches with some lovely sweeping double bends which I had a super time with, straight lining as we roared along, the bonnet stretched out ahead and that glorious noise ringing in our ears!

After this, a few photos, then I drove it back to Buckden, on A roads, through Huntingdon where it popped along on its big carb, needing to

Ready for the off, Syd fills the tank.





Your happy editor! (Photo: Syd Beer.)



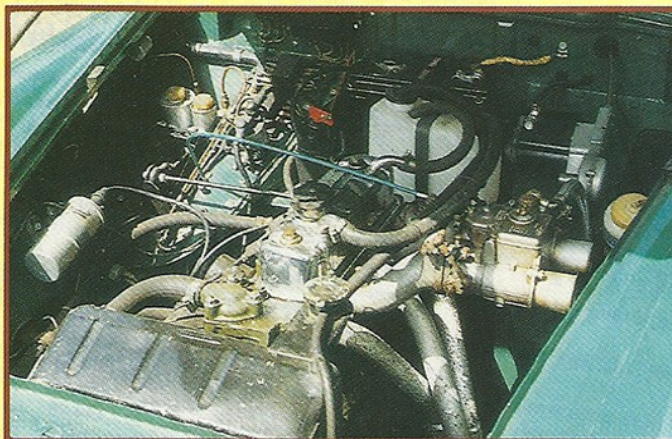
Rear elevation, showing the Monza quick filler fuel cap.

be in a lower gear, but defferential to noise levels. Got stuck behind one of those inevitably slow 440 series Volvos, before passing in one long last blast in 3rd gear, before onto the A1 and up to naughty speeds on the short stretch to my home! Fun on a Sunday morning!

Then an inspection of the innocuous looking engine, just like any A Series lump, except for the Weber, a cut out fuel switch and Torque Start battery.

Oh, by the way, I overcame the stalling problem quite early on – heeling and toeing was so easy, such was the pedal layout. A last chance to take pictures, discuss its history, before thanking and seeing Syd off as he took this example of only three in the world back home.

This car is 771 BJB, built specially at Abingdon for Dick Jacobs for International Sports Car racing, for 1962. It, and its stablemate 770 BJB, had a long and distinguished career and in 1965 came back into the works fold to race at the Sebring 12 hours, where 771 BJB won its class driven by Roger Mac and Andrew Hedges, and then, driven by Paddy Hopkirk and Andrew Hedges, took 2nd in class at the Targa Florio. This race was gloriously filmed by Castrol and is well worth seeing if you get the chance. This Sicilian classic was the last road race to survive the growing censorship of motor racing and to see Cobras, Ferraris, Porsches, Lancias, M.G.s and many others mixing it in the dusty mountains and villages of this island was something else.



The works – note single DCOE Weber and extractor manifold.



hands of Andrew Hedges and Keith Greene, being its last International appearance. They then passed into the custody of the Beer family, where they remain. 771 BJB was at Silverstone this year, running out of petrol despite there being 15 gallons left in its 19 gallon tank! 770 BJB is likely to be seen out later this year, not a moment too soon – they are beautiful little cars and a joy to behold. The third coupe is still in John Milne's hands and likely to feature in M.G. Enthusiast Magazine shortly. Certainly my short morning in 771 BJB will not be forgotten in a hurry, and I'm very grateful to Syd Beer for allowing me access to its joys and above all its wonderful noise!

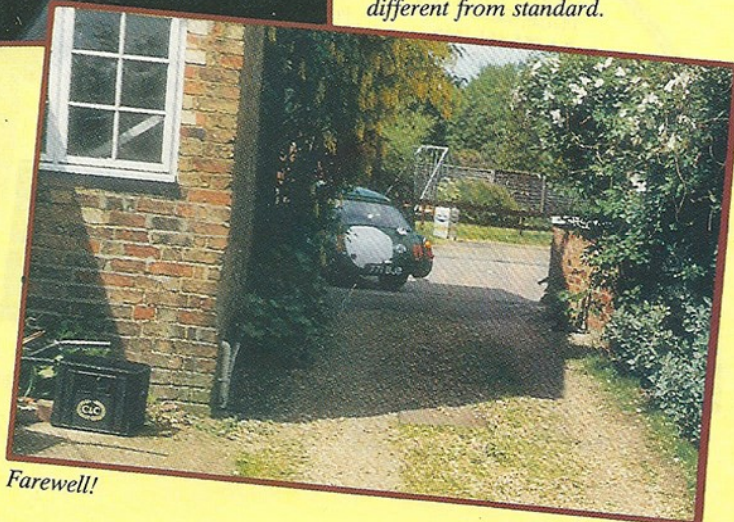
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The simple dashboard, not much different from standard.

Surprisingly, when these two coupes were built in 1961 and put into the hands of Dick Jacobs they were registered and remained in the name of the M.G. Car Company Ltd. A practice which has survived since Lord Nuffield's racing ban of 1935.

The coupes continued to be raced by the works in 1965, with 770 BJB being unclassified at the Nurburgring, in the



Farewell!