

Austin-Healey

MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2015

THE WSM SPRITE



*in action
at Goodwood 2015*



WSM Sprites

Affectionately known as "Wuzzums," the WSM Sprites and one Midget were the brainchild of Douglas Wilson-Spratt. He and business partner Jim McManus subsequently called their cars WSM when American customers asked what they were called. Hence, Wilson-Spratt McManus – WSM. Much admired wherever it appeared, the WSM resembled a scaled-down version of a Ferrari 250 GTO – and was just as handsome. Between 1962 and 1965, the firm built nine of these cars, which inculcated Douglas's many years' experience competing in a Sprite since 1958 and his creative tenacity to improve form and function.

By: Martin Ingall





Douglas Wilson-Spratt above the pits at Goodwood where his beloved WSMs were racing. This was the last time he attended the Goodwood Revival.

Design and performance were in his blood. In 1961, Douglas Wilson-Spratt designed an aerodynamic sports coupe based on the Austin-Healey Sprite that served both as an effective road and racing car.

Photo by Lorraine Noble-Thompson



Geoff Hill recently enjoyed his new WSM Sanction 2 at the Harewood Hillclimb.

Photo by Graham Bish



A lineup of WSMs at the Goodwood Revival.

The history

At age 89, Douglas passed away in 2011, leaving a living legacy of his talent and innovation. Throughout his long life, he constantly planned, designed and created everything from cars to caravans; from houses to motorhomes; from growing gardens to airborne aircraft. His aim always to give these creations his "treatment in the pursuit of betterment in function and form." His engineering background with the Bristol Aircraft Company and experience as a test driver for the car division gave him a passion for motorsport. Later in 1954, Douglas and his wife Laurette sold their Marlborough Caravan business and bought a garage in Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, renaming the business Delta Garage, which housed Austin, Vauxhall and Bedford dealerships: They added Volvo to the mix.

In 1961, Peter Jackson joined the firm to run the forecourt and workshop; the following year, Jim McManus came from the Donald Healey Motor Co where he had been sales manager. And with both having had success with Healeys, Douglas and Jim decided the marque needed a

London presence: They established the Healey Centre in Swiss Cottage. The business expanded and soon outgrew its space, so it was relocated to Delta Garage in 1963.

Douglas started his motorsport career in 1946 with a 3-liter Bentley, then a 4.5-liter, before trialing an Austin 7 Chummy and racing with a Triumph TR2. On May 16, 1958, Douglas took delivery of one of the first Austin-Healey Sprites, registered VBM 7 – in advance of its public release – and ran the car in at night before taking it to its first competition success a week later on a Sporting Owner Drivers Club rally with John Bayliss as navigator. He also took a Frogeye Sprite on the Monte Carlo in both 1959 and '60, and joined the team of Sprites that won the 6 Hour Relay at Silverstone in 1961, of which he was especially proud.

The streamlined WSM cars built between 1962 and 1965 achieved notable success in races and rallies of the day. They now enjoy stature on the historic motorsport scene that far outweighs the modest numbers produced.

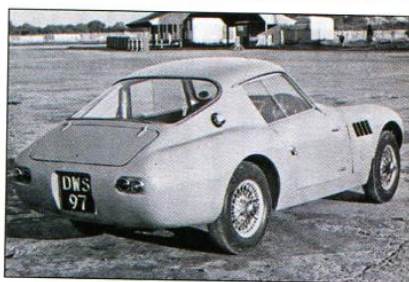


BXN was effectively the forerunner of

VBM 7 became DWS 97 for 1961-1962, modified by the fitting of an aluminum coupe body similar to those built for his good friend John Sprinzel, but fabricated by Peel Coachworks, incorporating Rolls Royce rear lights and a boot lid.

When Jackson's standard-body Sebring Sprite 46 BXN burnt in a rally fire, Douglas assisted in the design of a new aluminum body, again crafted by Peel Coachworks and fitted with a Speedwell Monza bonnet. When viewed from the rear, the distinct similarities between BXN and the WSM cars that arrived later are quite apparent. So BXN was effectively the forerunner of Douglas's series of WSM Sprites, the first of which – WSM 201 – debuted at Silverstone in October 1962.

Douglas designed the WSM for competition, but also for road use as a grand touring car. Tailored to his 15 stone (210 pounds), 6-foot frame, the car used a standard Sprite floor pan to which was added a tubular space frame and roll cage. This was then



A 1962 photo of the WSM prototype: Douglas Wilson-Spratt went on to build a number of special bodies on Sprites and 3000s. This Sprite photographed in the paddock at Silverstone was a very practical road car.



The WSM Sprite ... In His Own Words

Tony-Wilson Spratt

Just like racing around in the Isle of Man Tourist Trophy, things can come full circle. Operating the Delta Garage business in Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, my late father Douglas Wilson-Spratt designed the WSM Sprite in 1961, primarily for his own use on road and track. Inspired by the interest in the aerodynamic sports car at its debut on a Silverstone track day, he built another nine cars to order. The ex-Bentley racer and aviator went on to pen the WSM MG1100, WSM Austin-Healey 3000, WSM MGB and Jaguar XK150S Shooting Brake, exquisite designs that reached fruition and are now collector items. Forty-eight years later and with my father's permission, WSMs were on the menu in Bedfordshire once again with the Sanction 2.

As in 1962 when my father and ex-Healey sales manager Jim McManus became friends after meeting at a competition event driving Sprites, I likewise met Austin-Healey exponent Paul Woolmer in 1995 at Silverstone. Based on a mutual appreciation of the same car and its outstanding abilities, we realized demand for the appealing design still existed. Using an original body that Dad had retained from WSM 203, and based at Woolmer's Bedfordshire address, WSM Cars was reformed in 2010. Since then, one competition car and three road cars have been constructed for customers, and the build manifest is now half way through intended production.

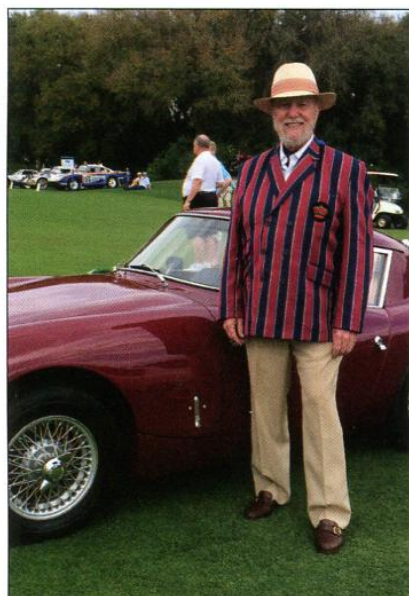
The process followed the advice of the WSM creator in that the body shell was to be provided and fitted – and only signed off by WSM with a chassis plate upon completion to discourage anything less than a first-class result by well-meaning

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Douglas Wilson-Spratt's series of WSM Sprites, the first of which – WSM 201 – debuted at Silverstone in October 1962.



WSM 202 originally owned by Douglas's son-in-law, Mike Lewis, who campaigned it in races and hill-climbs during 1963. (This car now owned and raced by Graham Robson.)



The WSM car company now offers Sanction 2 cars: Bill Emerson, AHCUSA member and author of "The Healey Book," is this model's proud owner. Here, Emerson displays his WSM at the 20th annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance in March 2015.



clad in aluminum and included a forward-hinging alloy bonnet. Components throughout were kept as light as possible and the engine tuned. This first car was painted in Douglas's favorite color Chiron Blue, named after French racing driver Louis Chiron.

The car attracted immediate interest and led to the production of eight additional models for owners in the U.K., Europe and the United States, initially built with aluminum bodies from Peel Coachworks, though others were built with fiberglass. WSM 201 and 203 also had aluminum bonnets; all others had fiberglass. Ray Halsall built two ultra-lightweight bodies with fiberglass for Douglas (WSM 206) and for club racer Mike White (WSM 205), and three cars were built to GT specification, intended to be comfortable grand touring cars that could be raced on weekends and driven to work on Monday. They were heavier than the Sprint model because they retained more of the original Sprite floor pan-chassis. During 1963, four cars were exported: WSM 203 to Dr. Clinton Chichester in San Francisco, WSM 204 to Dr. George Snively, WSM 207 to Joel Nelson and WSM 210 to Dr. Michael Saverino in Florida. WSM 202 went to Douglas's son-in-law, Mike Lewis, who campaigned it in races

and hill climbs during 1963; Graham Robson now owns and races this car.

In the hands of Douglas, Jackson, Mike Lewis, Mike White and Simon Arkless, among others, the WSMs became prominent at race circuits throughout the U.K. and Europe. Lewis took WSM 202 to many wins in race and hill-climb events in 1963, and also raced the ultra-lightweight 206 when Douglas could no longer compete because of back problems. The 1963 and 1965 Silverstone 6 Hour Relay races saw WSMs 201 and 206 on the Sprite teams achieve eighth and fifth places; the same cars were transported in a converted AEC coach for Jackson and Douglas and entered in the 1964 German Grand Prix at Nürburgring on August 1. Jackson took third in class and, a year later, WSM 206 won third in class at Rennen 500-km at the same venue.

A 10th car, the fiberglass body that Douglas kept as a spare – WSM 208 – was not completed until 2009, 44 years after the original nine. It is now registered with Douglas's old registration, DWS 97, painted Chiron Blue and regularly raced by his son Tony.

With the revival of interest in special versions of the Sprite through the



The striking cockpit of a "Sanction 2" WSM Sprite.



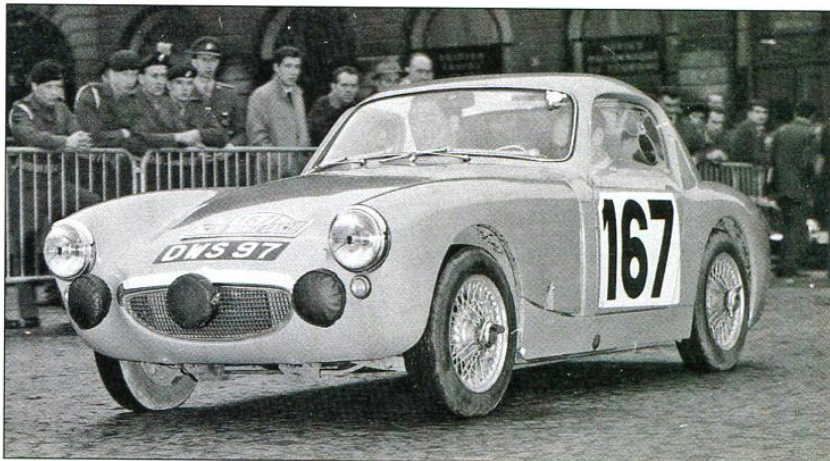
Hazel Chapman and children have just presented awards for the Silverstone 6 Hour Relay. Douglas Wilson-Spratt is at the right; Colin Chapman can be seen behind D 20.

1990s and into the 2000s, Tony and Woolmer, now of Woolmer Classic Engineering Ltd., asked Douglas if they could produce another batch of WSM cars built to individual customers' requirements. Douglas gave his approval with the understanding that each car would only be sold in completed form, like the originals, to avoid poor-quality kit-car versions built by amateurs. The proposal led to the formation of a new WSM car company and construction to date of five cars under the WSM Sanction 2: One was delivered to American Healey enthusiast and author of "The Healey Book," Bill Emerson.

Also designed and built by the original WSM company were the single MGB-based car, now owned and raced by Tony Wilson-Spratt, and again, just the one car based on the Healey 3000. The latter surfaced recently in a poor state, sold at auction, and is now being restored by the second incarnation of the WSM business.



Pictured from left: Douglas Wilson-Spratt, David Seigle-Morris, John Sprinzel (hidden) Ian Walker, Paul Hawkins, Chris Williams and Peter Jackson.



PMO was joined at the Paris start by Douglas Wilson-Spratt's light grey Sebring Sprite, now appearing as an alloy coupe.

John Sprinzel, a lifelong friend of Douglas Wilson-Spratt, famous Sprite driver and current AHCUSA member, furnished the photos on this page. Back in the day, both used to drive TRs and Sprites in rallies and races, the 1962 Monte Carlo Rally among them. Sprinzel went on to build a number of Costin-designed Sebring Sprite coupes, his own bearing the famous PMO 200 registration.

WSM Sprites





If ever there were a more beautiful car ... well, the WSM Sprite is it.
Photos courtesy of Martin Ingall, Graham Bish and Tony Wilson-Spratt

FROM AN ORDINARY SPRITE TO A WSM SPRITE

The Making of WSM 403

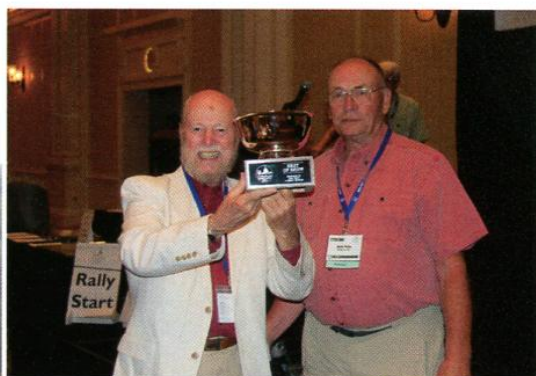
By Bill Emerson

Donor car selection

Douglas Wilson-Spratt required the customer to provide a donor car as the beginning point for each WSM. Bearing this in mind, I started looking for a 1962 to 1964 Austin-Healey Sprite; it's surprising how many of these cars were available, but in absolutely terrible shape. After much searching, I found a former racecar from Hawaii located in a canvas garage in southern Florida. The price was right, the body and chassis were fine, but the 1275cc racing engine didn't run.

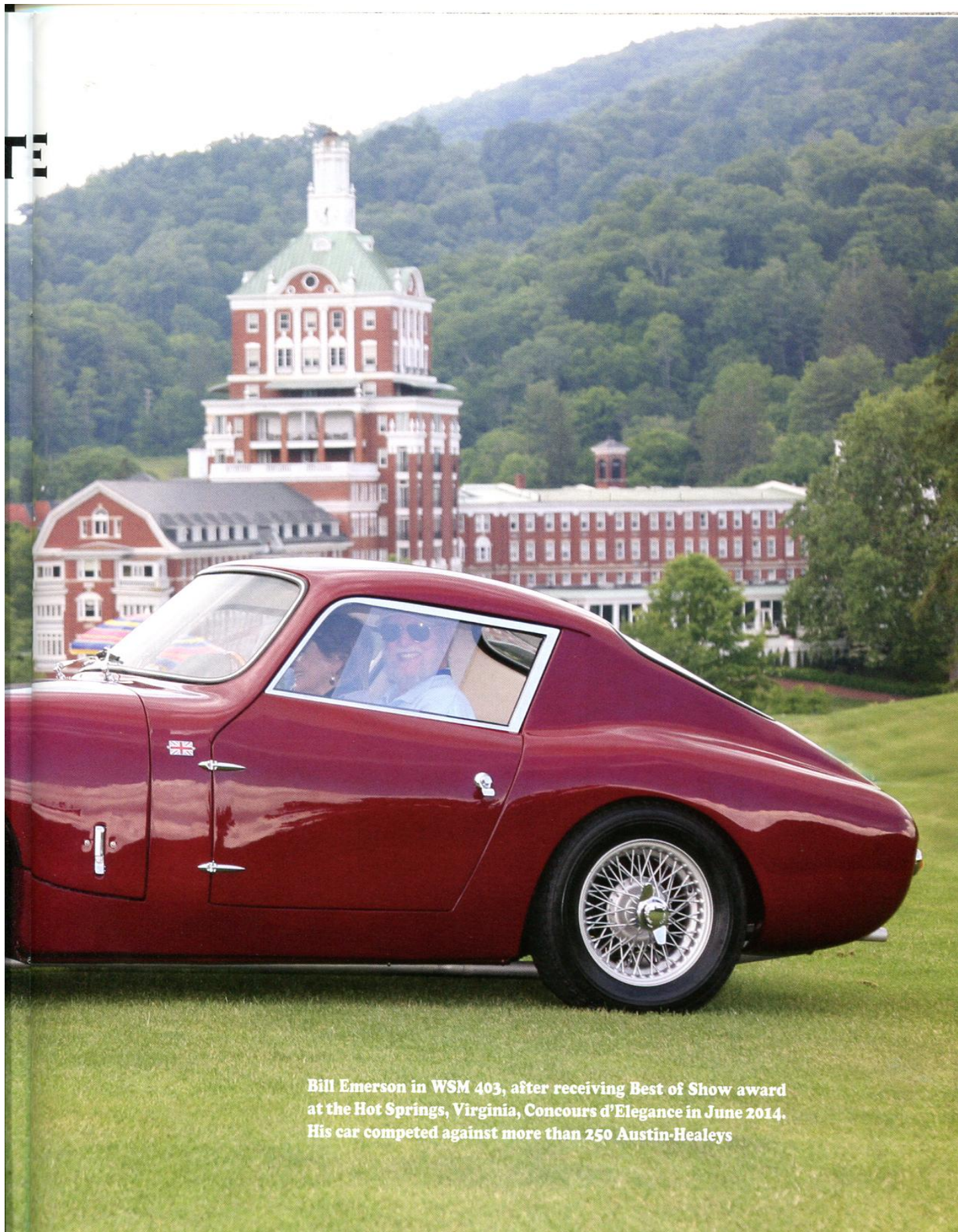


Advice: Do not take Ron Fitch with you when buying a car. Having brought cash with me when I visited the car and its owner, I went inside to finalize the deal. Before the cash exchange occurred, we both heard the engine running. The price immediately jumped \$1,000. Fitch had performed his magic, but at a cost to me of an additional \$1,000. Oh well. We now had a running car for me to drive to the Port of Miami for shipment to England.



The Best of Show Award





Bill Emerson in WSM 403, after receiving Best of Show award at the Hot Springs, Virginia, Concours d'Elegance in June 2014. His car competed against more than 250 Austin-Healeys

Transportation to England

This is an unsolicited advertisement. Upon purchasing the car, I called Hagerty Insurance, explained my plans and sent them two pictures from my cell phone: Hagerty insured the car and also arranged for full insurance during the boat voyage to England, insurance during the car's restoration in England and advised me to call again when I wanted to declare an increased during the car's restoration or when I wanted to bring it back to the United States. That's what I call customer service. When transporting a car to Europe, it's necessary to provide the car's title to U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which placed some holes in the title and then returned it to me. Evidently, these holes are something special because there was absolutely no problem with Customs when I returned the car to the United States.

A Car in the raw

A major part of the WSM build process is the removal of all of body panels and running gear from the donor chassis. Once this was completed, the WSM body – in very raw form – can be mated to the chassis. But assembly of the car was a very long and arduous process, with many emails and telephone calls across the Atlantic. Mechanically, WSM 403 was a running car. However, as delivered, the interior had only seats, headliner, and door panels. The build took much longer (and required more money) than I anticipated.

My car was finished the same day – but merely hours before – a lovely commemoration.



Assembly of the car in England



Celebrating an anniversary

On September 29, 2012, a celebration for the WSM automobile's 50th anniversary was held in central England: In attendance were seven of the 10 original WSMs built by the Douglas Wilson-Spratt/Jim McManus team, as well as the three Sanction 2 WSMs recently completed. The event's guests of honor were Tony Wilson-Spratt (Douglas Wilson Spratt's son) and McManus himself, the "M" of WSM.



Transportation Back From England

The next day, I drove WSM 403 to the port of Southampton, utilizing a drive-on, drive-off ship instead of placing the car in a container. I kept my fingers crossed until I saw the car arrive at the dock in the United States. I've used this service for three different cars traveling to and from Europe without encountering a problem.

Arrival in the United States is best handled by a Customs clearinghouse, which checked my title and asked for some money before handing me my keys to the car. It was ready to go and I drove 215 miles from the port to my home before beginning to celebrate my WSM 403's arrival. During this trip, I shared the drive expenses with three people – about 50 miles for each. Two were content to be the passenger, including me: My son insisted that he drive. Now that is love.

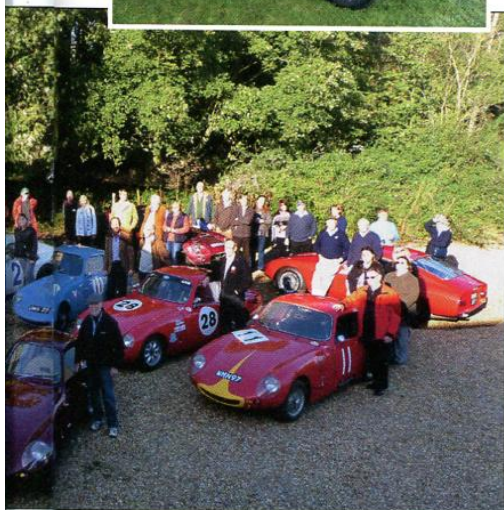


Planning the interior

From the very beginning, I planned that the WSM 403 would be a grand touring car and as such, would be comfortable. Part of that plan would be implemented during the build; I would do the rest after delivery. After receiving some excellent instruction from Paul Tsikuris of Tsikuris Classics in Lakeland, Florida, I first installed Coolmat heat-isolation material in the entire cockpit area, followed with Eastwood sound-deadening material. The result: Even on a hot day, the cockpit remains quite comfortable. Once the heat- and sound-deadening material were installed, professionals covered the area with 1960s'-period carpet, including boot area.

There was one small problem: The car had no windows. Repeated emails and telephone conversations across the Atlantic were to no avail. It took

more than a year for window frames and sliding plexiglass to arrive, accompanied instructions that I read very carefully ... had a beer ... then read them again. I called my friend Fitch; these instructions were indecipherable – and besides, he owed me. Fitch arrived and read the instructions ... had a beer ... then read them again while carefully looking at the window frame pieces and car. His expert opinion: "Take it to Paul." I delivered the WSM 403, the window frames, plexiglass and instructions to Paul, and left these in his able hands. I'm not sure whether he had a beer before he called to say the instructions were totally useless, but he said he'd find a way to put the window frames in so they'd look ... well, correct. He did his magic and I began the task of fitting the plexiglass sliding windows, which were too large for the openings as delivered. After many months, I can drive in the rain ... with stuff – I designed and commissioned the build for fitted luggage that matched the car's exterior color of the car.



Creating the fitted luggage

The WSM is a small car with limited storage space so I designed and had built, fitted luggage that matched the exterior color of the car. I did the initial design in cardboard, using these patterns the cases were built by a cabinet maker, then trimmed in leather by the same professional who had done the interior detail work.



Refining the engine

Although the engine bay was somewhat clean when purchased, it was in no shape or condition for a show field. The carburetors were removed and carefully cleaned to return them to as-new condition, without polishing the dash pots. The myriad hose clamps were all discarded and replaced with correct-period English hose clamps; all rubber hoses were cleaned with Dawn to remove any grease and; the incorrectly fitting air filter was replaced with a K&N dual air filter, its cover painted to match the WSM's exterior. Of course, there were hours and hours of cleaning and polishing before the first show.

Winning

It's 870 miles from Floral City, Florida, to Hot Springs, Virginia, where I planned to travel for my WSM's first official showing. During the trip to Hot Springs, it rained in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia. Fortunately, I had arranged to use the lift of a local Hot Springs-area garage upon arrival. First, I thoroughly washed the car with Dawn dish soap, washed it again with Meguiar's car shampoo, polished with Meguiar's paste wax, then buffed. Once this was done, I used Dawn to clean the engine compartment. Then I lifted the car to clean the underside – again, using Dawn – cleaning the chassis and wire wheels. The car was now ready for the show field of a concours d'elegance. Many people were surprised when I told them the car was driven from Florida. Competing against more than 250 Austin-Healeys, WSM 403 was awarded Best-of-Show trophy.

On the field at Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance

Based on the WSM's Best-of Show award, the car (and I) were invited to participate in the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, 158 miles from Floral City. Plus, show organizers had arranged an 80-mile drive for Friday to display cars scheduled to exhibit Sunday on the field. Once again, it rained during my drive to the concours.

The WSM was very dirty at the end of the day and certainly required a thorough cleaning before show. The problem: There was no available cleaning area at the hotel. I had to improvise. Imagine, if you will, washing an entire car with bottled water. I think it took about a dozen bottles of water before I was satisfied with the exterior cleanliness and began the polishing process. Sunday morning, WSM 403 entered the show field where it received many compliments during the day. It didn't win an award, but it did pass a major milestone, graduating from Show Car to Go Car.

**Look for my WSM 403 traveling down the road:
you'll recognize it easily by the smile on its face
... and mine!**



In His Own Words

>> Continued from pg. 9

enthusiasts. Most of the cars produced in the 1960s were aluminum bodied, but two lightweight fiberglass cars were built specifically for competition. WSM has stock of Mk2 chassis and offers a turn-key build, but the customer can provide the chassis; WSM then addresses the body with doors, bonnet, boot lid and screens.

Since that light-bulb moment in 1995 at Silverstone to track down WSMs, and the Internet's advancement in bringing the whole world to our fingertips, we discovered that 10 of the 15 cars constructed between 1962 and 1967 have survived. Two of the four exported to the United States have since returned to join the six in the United Kingdom, while one remains in Japan and the Jaguar in Switzerland.

Highlighting the renaissance of the brand began in 2001 with a celebratory and surprise appearance at Rockingham Speedway in England of four WSMs for Dad's 80th birthday. Subsequent gatherings for Classic & Sportscar, Collectors Car and Octane magazine articles maintained the profile, as have displays at the Classic Motor Show and Race Retro exhibitions. But the lure of the checkered flag continued and there are currently seven cars active on racetracks throughout the U.K. in historic motorsport. Woolmer owns the prototype car known by its registration initials "BXN," now driven by his son Richard in selected events, and WSM 202 with Graham Robson at the helm was on the Les Leston grid at the Goodwood Road & Racing Club members meeting in March 2015.

WSM 207 returned from the United States in 2003 to be purchased and raced by Rae Davis, and WSM 210 followed a more roundabout route the same year after being owned by Dutchman Leo Kusters since 1987 – Englishman Clive Cocks had long admired the brand and made his race debut in WSM 210 in 2004. WSM 301 came back to Wilson-Spratt family ownership in 1980 and returned to racing in 1995, fulfilling race entries throughout the U.K. and mainland Europe. The WSM models in the 1960s were regular travelers abroad: WSM 301 followed suit 30-plus years later with treks to Dijon, Le Mans, Montlhéry, Monza and Zandvoort inked into this summer's busy schedule. During the 20 years of motorsport spent mostly driving my father's designs, WSMs have thrilled and thwarted in equal measure: Yet our love affair remains.

WSM invitations to the Goodwood Revival in 2003, 2006 and 2010 on the Fordwater Trophy grid were warmly greeted, and the rapid WSM Sanction 2 racer campaigned by Ian Hulett continues to stoke public interest. Geoff Hill's K-series engine-powered WSM GT S2 is currently storming the hill climbs in the U.K., while Lorraine Noble-Thompson recently found that her S2 (named Douglas) is the perfect GT and cruises comfortably at 80-plus mph. Perhaps most eagerly awaited of all is the return of the WSM Austin-Healey 3000. Having searched for the car since information provided in 1998 sparked the quest, we found the derelict car deep in the English countryside in 2003. That the car is back under the auspices of WSM for restoration confirms the opening thoughts on that full circle.

Tony Wilson-Spratt



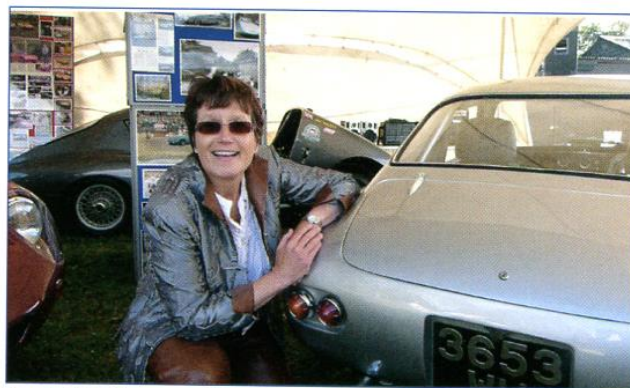
LORRAINE'S 'DOUGLAS' TRIBUTE CAR

By Lorraine Noble-Thompson

Before deciding to order the first GT from the new run of Sanction Two WSMs, Lorraine Noble-Thompson had a very nice round wheelarch Midget.

But then I attended the Healey Weekend and had a close look at all the Sprite variants; I took plenty of pictures. There were Ashleys, Lenhams ... but I kept returning to one that I thought was just a very nice and unusual-looking car. It was a WSM, though at the time, I had never even heard of the models. And it just happened to be Clive Cocks' WSM No. 210: I'd had a picture of it pinned up next to my computer for ages. The car had a smiley face that appealed to me.

I didn't think I could ever afford one of the originals – there are only six of them left – and it's a rare occasion when one becomes available. Besides, they're all used for racing, and I didn't want a racecar: I wanted a road-going car that I could perhaps use for a bit of sprinting now and then. But when I heard rumors that Tony Wilson-Spratt and Paul Woolmer were going to build 10 more of these cars, I got to know



Lorraine Noble-Thompson with her Sanction 2 WSM Sprite.

these men better, later deciding I really wanted one of the new GTs. They're built with a new body shell on a modified Sprite or Midget platform. Obviously, I could have used my Midget, but it was such a great car, I didn't want to cut it. That put the project on the back burner until we could find a suitable car.



▲ Lorraine Noble-Thompson's WSM Sprite.

Douglas Wilson-Spratt's signature proudly graces the back of Lorraine Noble-Thompson's car. Another is on the dash. ►

WSM SPRITE

I knew I wanted the GT for road use – saying goodbye to my convertible was not an issue for me as I've got a motorbike for when I want to get my hair blowing in the wind! While Woolmer started work on the build, I had to choose the color. This proved surprisingly tricky, until a chance comment from Douglas Wilson-Spratt helped me decide. He'd visited Goodwood in 2008, I think, and we were chatting away about WSMs when he said, "I've never seen a silver one." I liked the idea, and on that random comment the decision was made. Then I had to choose what kind of silver. Don't tell anyone, but the shade I chose is actually a Hyundai color. In my defense, it is warm and creamy rather than harsh and tinny, and it virtually matches a Jaguar shade from the 1960s, so I get away with saying that is where it comes from.

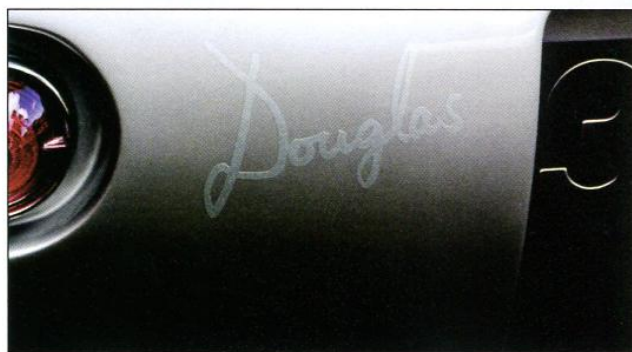
When the guys building the car heard of my choice, they were less than impressed and said they wouldn't like it. But as the paint went on, they had to admit that it worked and looked good. And I must say that the comments I've received since the car's debut are that the silver and grey interior are just spot on. Certainly, I'm very pleased with the results because, although it is a girl's car, it's not a girly car.

I didn't realize the build would take

quite as long – about three years from start to finish – but that was largely because everything was bespoke and this was the first complete car from the new Sanction that the guys had built. Ian Hulett's WSM 401 had been finished, but he'd built it from the body shell they supplied.

I had pictures of the cars from the 1960s, and I wanted mine to be just like them. So initially I didn't want door locks or handles, but moving forward, we thought it really ought to have a bit more security than this or anyone would be able to slide the window open, reach in and open the door. So we got a couple of MGB GT tailgate locks and used those on the doors. I've subsequently noticed in the pictures that some of the original WSMs had exactly the same thing, too.

I also went for external door hinges – the Triumph Herald boot hinges – which had been on the first of the original WSMs, but not the last. I wanted it to look like a 1962 car, not a totally new and updated concours version of the original. That's why I opted for sliding windows.



It's a tribute to him that the car is known as the Douglas WSM. That's his signature on the back: He knew it would be placed there in his honor when I obtained his signature for it just a few months before he died.

Douglas Wilson-Spratt chose the wheels, as well as suggesting the color. I had the choice of wire or Minilites, and he said, "If you can get somebody to wash your wire wheels all the time, go for them. If you can't, go for Minilites." Hence the Minilites. Douglas passed away in 2011, but I do know that while he was around, he took a strong interest in my car. It's sad that he didn't live to see it finished, but I'm sure he would have been pleased with how it has turned out. And it's a tribute to him that the car is known as the Douglas

WSM. That's his signature on the back: He knew it would be placed there in his honor when I obtained his signature for it just a few months before he died. I've got his signature on the dash too, and the whole interior is beautifully matched to the car. The seats are from a Mazda MX-5 Mk1, and they match the curve of the bodywork very well. I had the interior trimmed by PJM and chatted with its technicians about which grey to choose, ideal piping and other details. I could envision what I wanted in my mind's eye, but it was hard to put that into words. In the end,

WSM Sprites

I left a lot of the final decisions to Yvonne at PJM because she'd been doing it for years. If she said, "Oh gosh, you don't want that," I believed her. You have to trust people with more experience in things like that.

Other details I wanted inside the car included the knurled finish to the dash, which I think other people have picked up on for their WSMs. The front screen is electric, though that doesn't really show up when you look at it. This is obviously not an authentic 1960s touch, but I didn't want to incorporate all the ducts needed to bring hot air to the screen for demisting. So while there is the basic Midget on-off heater, there aren't any screen vents. The rear screen is not heated, but it seems to demist pretty quickly on its own. And the car is small enough that it's no problem to reach around and wipe it clear if I need to.

I was driving through the village a few days back and this chap on his bike stopped me to ask what it was. He said his wife just loved it, but it does seem to appeal to both men and women. On the back is a very discreet WSM badge, which is easy to miss, but I'm fine with that because I like the mystery. Outside the cricket match at Goodwood this year, I was parked beside two Ferraris and I've got pictures of the crowd huddled around my little car. I thought: "It's only a Midget!" But Douglas got the shape just right. My car has been compared with a Ferrari 250, a baby E-type, a Lotus Elan – and I certainly don't mind.

While the fiberglass construction is thick, the car is relatively lightweight. But if you have a fiberglass car, the best color you can choose is silver because it puts the thought of metal in your mind: Somebody who makes fiberglass bodies and saw my car at Race Retro told me that, and it's very true.

I have a 1380cc Oselli engine with a Toyota 5-speed gearbox; the engine had a race cam, but we have since changed that for a fast road cam, which is less extreme and more suited to road use. A couple of weeks ago, we installed a taller 3.7:1 differential. Now it sits easily at 70 mph in fifth, but still pulls strongly up hills; previously, over revving wasted the torque. I wanted the exhaust to sound racy, but in the end we've fitted a standard Midget pipe with a chrome tail-piece. It now sounds purposeful without being too intrusive. There's a little lumpiness in idle from the tuned engine that hints at its race potential – and it is a bit noisy on a run – but nowhere near as noisy as people told me it would be. You get used to it: I can still hear my radio.

It's not like a modern car, but if I'd wanted that, I would have purchased a modern car and saved myself three years' waiting. And that carries through to the whole design as it has all the quirks of the original as standard. Some people expect that if they are having a car built from scratch, then it's going to be just like a modern car. That was never my intention.

The seating position is typical Midget and very low to the ground, but the cabin is probably more spacious than the

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100-4, 100-6, AND 3000

JAGUAR WANTED

INCLUDING: E-Type, XK 120, 140, & 150

TRIUMPH WANTED

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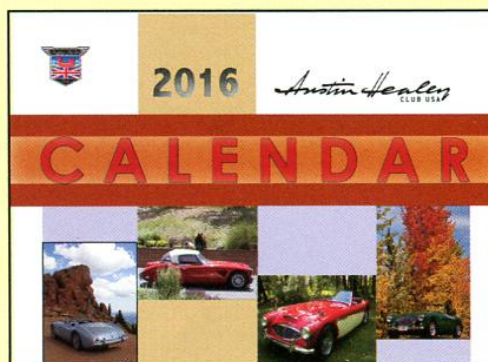
standard Midget now that it has hollow door shells rather than winding windows. It feels lighter than a Midget, and the faster I'd go, the lighter the front got as the nose lifted a fraction. It now has a chin spoiler, which corrected the front-end lift. It picks up side winds too, but again, I'm used to it. The back suspension is on semi-elliptics, so it's a little more comfortable than the racing versions with their quarter-elliptic springs.

The registration number comes from an Austin A40 that I used to own: I kept the plate because it was a 1962 number and had the letters WU for "Wuzzum," so it all seemed to match. It just adds a period touch to the car, without meaning that I had to use a 1962 car as the base – that would have been more of a shame, and far more expensive.

In hindsight, I could have bought a Porsche! I'm not telling how much my WSM cost in total, but though the costs did spiral, I'm over that now. People have offered me a considerable sum to buy it, but it's not for sale. The thing about this

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car is that it is always pleased to see me: Its that smiley face that caught my attention long ago. I tell people it's a Midget with attitude. And I've had to get to this new Midget, but that's the same for any Midget – or any old car. It has taken about five years altogether from first thoughts to finished WSM, so it's something of a relief to find that I like it so much.



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