

# THE HUNT FOR



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# HEALEY HISTORY

## THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING A 1964 SEBRING SPRITE PROTOTYPE



In the 1960s, the Donald Healey Motor Company designed, built, and developed a limited number of Sprite models aimed at competition in three major racing venues: Le Mans, the Targa Florio, and Sebring, Florida. These highly developed works Sprite prototypes looked very little like the standard production Sprites; however, some of them were envisioned as possible production cars. One such car is the subject of my story – a 1964 Sebring Sprite Prototype coupe that has rarely been seen since it was shipped to the USA in June 1964.

In the 1960s, the Donald Healey Motor Company designed, built, and developed a limited number of Sprite models aimed at competition in three major racing venues: Le Mans, the Targa Florio, and Sebring, Florida. These highly developed works Sprite prototypes looked very little like the standard production Sprites; however, some of them were envisioned as possible production cars. One such car is the subject of my story – a 1964 Sebring Sprite Prototype coupe that has rarely been seen since it was shipped to the USA in June 1964.

In the early 1990s, while on a tour of a Delaware Valley historic site with a group from the Antique Automobile Club of America, a member mentioned to me that nearby was a Donald Healey Motor Company Works Sebring Sprite. He noted that this Sprite was seldom seen but was, in his words, “as it left the Warwick works in 1964.”

## THE CAR APPEARS

Fast forward to the Austin-Healey Sports & Touring Club’s annual event, Encounter, in August 2010, at Normandy Farm in Whitpain Township, Pennsylvania. During the Popular Car Show, AHSTC member **Ben Kenion** came up to me and excitedly said, “Come and see the Sebring Sprite that just rolled in!” I’d examined and written about a 1966 works Sprite several years previously, so I was very interested to see this important piece of Healey racing history.

Ben introduced me to **Kurt Ritthaler** and his red coupe Sebring Sprite that he’d brought to Encounter at the invitation of AHSTC member and motorsports enthusiast **Jason Urban**. Kurt showed me his scrupulously maintained records of the car, which he said had competed in the 12-hour race at Sebring in late March 1964. After taking some photos, I got permission to follow up with a story about this car, which turned out to be the very car about which I’d heard more than 15 years previously.

## THE SEARCH FOR HEALEY HISTORY BEGINS

Time passed until the spring of 2011 when I called Kurt to

arrange a visit. He responded, “I’ve been waiting for your call.” Ben and I drove out to Kurt’s home in Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania, where we reviewed all his records of the car he’d purchased from Stephen Pitcairn in July 1985. It appeared that this car indeed competed in the 12-hour race in Sebring in 1964. Apparently, the red coupe lasted nine laps, only to retire with rear axle problems.

As I saw the written records and the car, I thought that this story would be rather straightforward – the records spoke for themselves. The DHMC bill of sale noted engine number XSP 2173-2 and chassis number HAN8-64-R-2. A simple tale could be written about a works Austin-Healey that raced at Sebring.

Or did it? Despite the DHMC documentation that read “built for Sebring 1964,” there was no physical proof that this red Sprite raced at the Sebring 12-hour race in 1964. My hunt for Healey history began.



Photo courtesy of Al Pease.

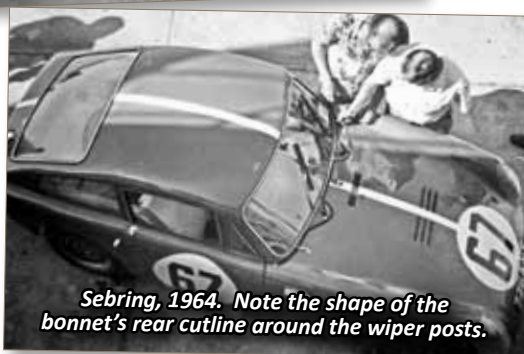


Photo courtesy of Al Pease.



Photo courtesy of Al Pease.

## BLUE VS. RED

Kurt, an avid motorsports and sports car enthusiast, has attended many racing events, including the 1964 Sebring race. He now asked the big question: “How could this red car have raced there when all the other Sebring Healey works cars were blue?” The purportedly easy story suddenly posed a new challenge.

I began the hunt for more information on this red coupe. I contacted knowledgeable Healey enthusiast/owner/racer **Charles Matthews** in England, who steered me to other Sprite enthusiasts in Europe.

## CORRESPONDENCE IN 1964

In the meantime, Kurt’s documentation and correspondence provided this rough timeline for his Sprite:

**21 March 1964** – 12-hour race held at Sebring, Florida.

**24 March 1964** – Stephen Pitcairn, a Delaware Valley resident, BMC dealer, and sports car aficionado, wrote to the Donald Healey Motor Company asking if any of the “Sprite Coupes” he had seen compete at Sebring a few days earlier were for sale.

**2 April 1964** – A letter from the DHMC, signed by **Bic Healey** for his father, Donald M. Healey, to Pitcairn states that “... normally we do not sell any of these prototypes. But in your case I think we may be able to make an exception...” A full description and “idea of the price” were to follow.

**22 April 1964** – DHMC (Bic Healey) writes to Pitcairn and includes the specification sheet “for the Sebring Coupe Sprite.” This letter states that it is difficult to arrive at a price for such a special car (only two having been made), but suggests a price which will “include a complete overhaul when the car arrives back here from Sebring...”



**27 April 1964** – Pitcairn writes to the DHMC and forwards a deposit check.

**30 April 1964** – Bic Healey writes to Pitcairn acknowledging the "...cheque by way of a deposit on the 1100 cc. Sebring Sprite." This letter also notes that the "Sebring cars have as yet not returned from the States." According to Bic, the cars were due on May 6, and he notes that "We shall require... in the region of two to three weeks to go through the car and put it into first class order..."

**11 June 1964** – DHMC tells Pitcairn that the Sprite "will be sent freight forward" to Philadelphia and asks for payment of the balance due. Bic Healey adds, "The car, incidentally, looks most attractive after the attention given to it..."

**16 June 1964** – Pitcairn remits balance to DHMC and requests the name of the vessel in which the Sprite will be shipped and the date of sailing.

**19 June 1964** – J. Cooper, a Director of the DHMC, writes Pitcairn and tells him "...The Sprite is being shipped on the S.S. *Wolverine State* from Southampton on the 24th instant



Photo courtesy of Al Pease.

## THE TIMING PUZZLE

Based on the information above, I noted that in none of the correspondence was the color of the Sprite ever mentioned; the factory specification for the "Prototype Sprite" clearly stated that this car was "Built in 1964 specially for Sebring" and "This car did little of the race before being damaged (Bent rear axle). This will all be replaced and the car will be as new." (22 April 1964)

The Bill of Sale specified this Sprite's chassis number as HAN8-64-R-2 and the engine number as XSP.2173-2. With this info in hand, I provided my photos of the car along with the chassis and engine number to my Sprite resources in Europe.

My questions about this Sprite were about its participation in the 1964 Sebring race (those who attended did not recall a red car) and its possible running at Le Mans on June 20-21, as most works Healeys at Le Mans were thought to be red.



Photo courtesy of Al Pease.



Photo courtesy of Ivo Visser.

The records for the 1964 12-hour race results at Sebring show the Austin-Healey entrants by the DHMC included the following:

**Car #61**, Austin-Healey Sprite driven by Clive Baker and John Colgate. This car had a British registration number of 770 KNX and raced in Class P.3.0 (Prototype, under three liters). It finished 24th overall, one of the last cars classified. This car was silver blue.

**Car #33**, Austin-Healey 3000 driven by Paddy Hopkirk and Grant Clark. The registration number was 56 FAC and was a DNF (did not finish). The color was silver blue.

**Car #67**, Austin-Healey Sprite driven by Al Pease (Canada) and Donna Mae Mims (USA). It was entered in Class GT 1.3 (Grand Touring up to 1.3 liters). Records say that this car was a DNF after 9 laps because of rear axle failure. Neither

[June], which is scheduled to arrive in Philadelphia on the 11th of July." Pitcairn is advised that he should contact Royston Distributors, Philadelphia, which is the agent.

**6 July 1964** – DHMC confirms the shipping date of 24 June regarding the S.S. *Wolverine State*.

**13 July 1964** – Pitcairn writes to the DHMC to confirm receipt of the Sprite on 10 July and notes "...as can be expected, there was the usual minor damage caused by the shipper but this is covered by insurance." Pitcairn goes on to say, "Your treatment of the interior is excellent. In fact, between competition events the car could be used as a show piece."



Photo courtesy of John Wright.

Trackside at Sebring, 1964; BMC mechanics from Hambro, BMC importers in New York.

Photo courtesy of Al Pease.



*The Sprite at Sebring, 1964. Note the sparse interior trim and only one seat.*

registration number nor color was included in the records.

I noted that the cars with race numbers 61 and 67 were both Sprites, but were entered in different classes: P (Prototype) and GT (Grand Touring). As far as is known, both engine displacements were the same at 1100 cc (1.1 liters). Photos of car #61 at Sebring indicate that this coupe in 1964 looked nearly identical to Kurt's red coupe in question. The differences were subtle: the bonnet configuration and the duct for the oil cooler under the grill. Of course, car #61 was silver blue; the Sprite in question, definitely red! Neither color nor registration number was noted for car #67. I wondered, Could #67 be Kurt's car?

I sent the info to my contacts in Europe, hoping to receive some clues to help construct the pieces of this red car puzzle. Their responses proved interesting, especially as some included memories nearly 50 years old.

With only the engine and chassis numbers of the red Sprite to refer to, **Derek Tew**, of the **British Motor Industry Heritage Trust**, emailed to say, "I have had a look through the build ledger, but there is no obvious candidate as to the identity of this car." (The BMIHT provides information for production vehicles only; no specials or works cars are included in their build records.) He suggested finding any body numbers; if found, these might enable a search for the stock Sprite body which was used as a basis for this specially built works Sprite. However, no body numbers were evident on Kurt's red car.

**Clive Baker**, a talented BMC driver and the co-driver of the other Sprite prototype at Sebring in 1964, recalls: "All Sebring Sprites in 1964 were silver blue in color. The car John Colgate and I drove did not have a bent axle. The 1964 Le Mans car [770 KNX, driven by Baker and Bill Bradley to 24th place overall] looks like the red one in your picture – but had an external cooler box fitted under the front. This car was also silver blue and had no interior panels, etc. fitted. But I recall Geoff Healey using one of the cars to drive from Cornwall to the Cape [Warwick] in road trim, at about the same time."

At this point in the search, it seemed no one who attended or



Photo courtesy of Ivo Visser.

drove at Sebring 1964 could recollect a red Sprite Prototype. I puzzled over the fact that the 1964 Le Mans race was run on 20-21 June, and this red car shipped out of Southampton on 24 June. Therefore, how could this blue car, 770 KNX, change colors, be fitted with an interior, and ship to America in a span of just three days? Not likely.

Clive added that "we never raced any red Prototypes except the Day-Glo orange one at Sebring... I can only think that Geoff may have used it at some time; he used to change chassis no. and engine plates between the Works cars quite often."

Perhaps Clive meant that he, himself and his co-drivers never raced any red prototypes. I thought that his mention of the changed chassis and engine number plates was interesting and might end up applying to Kurt's red Sprite Prototype.

## COULD IT POSSIBLY BE 770 KNX?

Meanwhile, I sent photos of the red Sprite and information about the car to **Ian Grainger** in England. Ian, a Sprite enthusiast, races Healeys in the UK. He responded that "the car you quote with that engine number and chassis number is indeed the very car pictured in Chevalier's book [*Les Healey au Mans 1949-1970*] and had registration number 770 KNX... This car was the last 1/4 elliptic springs competition car and was registered to the Donald Healey Motor Company on 11th March 1964 and was specifically constructed for the 1964 Le Mans 24-hour race. The car was blue in the race and had a 1098 cc engine." Grainger continues, "Its license expired

*Interior of the car as it now appears. Note interior trim, carpet, and dash.*



Photo by author.



Photo by author.

*Engine bay as it now appears, that same way as it left the works in 1964.*





Photo by author.

One of the magnesium "Healey" wheels.

on 30th September, 1964 after which it was restored by the Healeys and sold to the United States."

This information did not make sense to me. These cars, the red Sprite and the blue 770 KNX, are very close in appearance, but not identical. The differences are in the front oil cooler on 770 KNX and the cut line of the bonnet (hood) below the windscreen and where the bonnet met the front cutline of the doors. The information from Ian was sent to the **Warwickshire County Record Office** asking for details on registration 770 KNX.

Photos of the red Sprite's engine compartment prompted Ian to comment: "...good to see the original engine and ancillary equipment still in place." Remember that this red Sprite is now in the identical condition in which it left the DHMC Works in June 1964, so Ian's observations were well-founded.

Responding to my inquiry to the Warwickshire County (England) Record Office about registration number 770 KNX, the office provided information including a ledger page showing 770 KNX registered to "Donald Healey, Ltd. Warwick"; Type and Colour: "Austin-Healey Sprite"; Weight: "1098 cc"; Date of Registration: "11-3-64" (11 March 1964). No color was indicated.

## ENTER REGISTRATION NUMBER 776 KNX

On the same ledger page were registration numbers 769 KNX through 776 KNX, inclusive, which were all registered to Donald Healey, Ltd. – some Sprites and some 3000 Mark IIIs. Of major importance, as we'll soon see, was the one number at the bottom of the old ledger page: 776 KNX; Austin-Healey Sprite; 1098 cc; on 11-3-64 (11 March 1964).

The Record Office also sent a copy of a "Surrender Card" for 770 KNX. It said: "Class: Private; Make: Austin-Healey; Type of Body: Sports Sprite; Colour: Blue; cc: 1098 cc; **Engine No. XSP 2173-2**; Date of Original Registration: 11 March 1964; Date of Expiry of Last License: 30 Sept 1964; Name and Address of last Owner: Donald Healey Motor Co Ltd, Warwick."

Note that the engine number of the red Sprite is the same as the one noted for the blue "Sports Sprite," registration number 770 KNX. My search became more complex!

Meanwhile, **David Matthews**, a former employee of the DHMC, had viewed photos of the red Sprite along with what information was then available about the car.

Concerning the possibility of the subject red Sprite's

having been raced in 1964 at Le Mans as 770 KNX, David notes: "It is amazing that two days after Le Mans in 1964, [car] No. 53 770 KNX in light metallic blue? Was already on its way to USA?"

David cites the Le Mans results dated 22 June 1964: Car No. 53; Austin-Healey Sebring Sprite; driver Baker/Bradley; entered by Donald Healey Motor Company; results 24th overall. He

continues, "Normally they would be in red (for Le Mans)... The car in my opinion is dead right down to the alloy Healey wheels but the colour change from blue to red is difficult to nail down." My sentiments exactly!

Matthews also recalls that, "This car was attending the Encounter Conclave at Harrisburg USA in 1987, my first visit to the US..." David Matthews has a very good memory, as the red Sprite did put in a brief appearance at the AHSTC/AHCA event in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1987.

## IDENTITY STILL A MYSTERY

At this point, it seemed that the red Sprite may have raced at Sebring in 1964, but no one could recall a red Sprite being there. Also, the red car may have been Sprite 770 KNX at the 1964 Le Mans race; however, how could any car compete at Le Mans on the 21st, return to the works, be refitted, and ship out on the 24th of June?



The car at Encounter, 2010.



Photos by author.



## THE "EUREKA!" MOMENT

Existing information and photos of the red car were also emailed to **Hans van de Kerkhof**, a driving force of the forthcoming Healey Museum in The Netherlands ([www.healeymuseum.nl](http://www.healeymuseum.nl)). Hans responded by telling me that his museum archivist, **Ivo Visser**, would be researching the information and forward to me any news.

Ivo's email arrived on 22 August 2011 and stated: "In my private collection I always kept separate the attached photo of 776 KNX at Sebring [1964] of which I hoped to find out more history on as well to locate the Sprite in the near future."



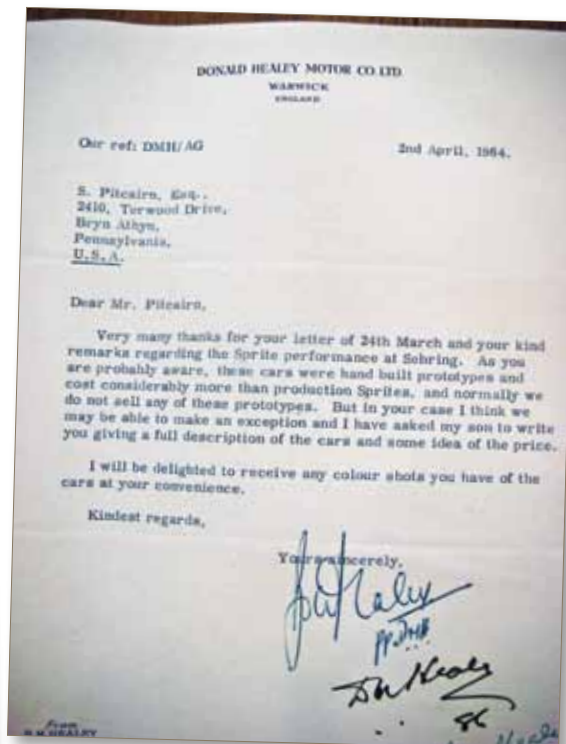
*The engine bay showing the Weber carb and dry sump oil reservoir at lower right.*

There, on the computer screen in brilliant color, was a photo of a RED Sebring Sprite, race number 67, registration number 776 KNX! To add to my glee, the photo showed both rear wheels off the car, which would indicate a problem, perhaps, with the rear axle. Finally, here was positive proof that the red Sprite did, in fact, compete at the 12-hour race at Sebring in 1964 with registration number 776 KNX.

Ivo, who has been collecting Healey memorabilia, magazines, photos, etc. from all the works and special Healeys since he was 15 years of age, lives in The Netherlands. His vast store of information has been accumulating for over 20 years. Ivo also drew the same conclusions that I had reached: that 776 KNX (red) and 770 KNX (blue) were both returned to Warwick after Sebring 1964 – 776 KNX for repair and research on the rear axle failure after only nine laps at Sebring, and 770 KNX for preparation for the forthcoming Le Mans race in June 1964.



*The bonnet cut line showing unusual configuration about windscreen wiper posts.*



*Letter to Stephen Pitcairn dated April 2, 1964, noting that DHMC may sell the Sprite to him.*

Ivo also suggests that as 776 KNX was entered in the GT 1.3 class (Grand Touring, under 1.3 liters) at Sebring that it was probably entered with "standard trim." Recall that the other blue Sprite, 770 KNX, competed in the P 3.0 class (Prototype, under 3 liters) and one of the drivers, Clive



*(L to R) Gerry Coker, Donald Healey, and Kurt Ritthaler at Encounter, 1986. Kurt is the current owner of the car.*

Baker, said there was no interior trim on this blue car.

Seeking confirmation that the photo was taken at the 1964 Sebring race, Ivo stated, "For 100 percent I can confirm that the photo of the red 776 KNX is at the 12hr of Sebring in 1964." He generously cited a video of the race in which the red Sprite could be seen briefly as it sat parked off the track. Also, the two race cars seen on track were identified as participants in this 1964 race.

## "EUREKA!" MOMENT #2

A few days after seeing Ivo's mystery-solving photo, I received two more color photos from **John Wright**, from nearby Upper Black Eddy, Pennsylvania. John, a collector of vintage cars and very reliable when it comes to any race car's history, was familiar with the red Sprite and searched through his photo





Photo courtesy of Kurt Ritthaler.

**The car on display at the New Hope (Pennsylvania) Auto Show, 1965, just after the car arrived in America.**



Photo courtesy of Kurt Ritthaler.

**Sprite and "Goldie" at Encounter, 1986. ("Goldie" was the show car for the introduction of the 100-Six model at the London Motor Show at Earls Court in 1958.)**

collection. The photos he provided confirmed that this red Sprite was at Sebring in 1964. One photo showed the three DHMC entries lined up, probably prior to the race. The other was a close-up of two mechanics standing by the red Sprite with its bonnet (hood) raised.

A careful study of all three photos, along with a comparison to the red Sprite, revealed the following details:

- The photo at the track reveals a narrow white stripe down the center of the car. Careful inspection of Kurt's Sprite showed evidence of the stripe's edges which had been removed and/or painted over before the car was shipped to the US.
- The photo with the mechanics reveals the curve of the bonnet (hood) at the back edge. The red car has a curve around the windscreen wiper posts while photos of all other racing Sebring or Le Mans Sprites had a straight line at the windscreen's base.
- The tire in the photo shows a green dot; this was noted in the DHMC spec sheets which accompanied the red Sprite.
- The engine bay seen in the photo matches the actual car, as does the red paint line up the front of the silver sheet metal behind the front wheel.
- Also, the three cars lined up were the DHMC entrants (as per the race numbers) of the 1964 Sebring 12-hour race.

There is now conclusive evidence that Kurt Ritthaler's red Sebring Sprite coupe did participate in the 12-hour race at Sebring, 1964 – if only for nine laps!

## 776 KNX INFO FROM WARWICKSHIRE

A new inquiry to the Warwickshire Record Office was subsequently made seeking information about 776 KNX. The Record Office returned information in the form of a "Surrender Card." It noted that 776 KNX had "Colour: Red"; "Engine No. XSP-2173-2"; and "Chassis or Frame no. HAN7/11563-H-2." Also noted were the original registration date of "11th Mar. 1964" and "Expiry of Last License 31st Mar. 1964 (Refund)." Those original register and expiry dates would allow for the red Sprite to be registered 776 KNX for the 1964 Sebring race. Upon return to the UK, and knowing of the impending sale,

November/December 1961, and the chassis Prefix [should have been] HAN-6, not HAN-7, according to the Vehicle Register. The following notes were taken from both the Build Ledger and Register (there is no Build Card): Right Hand Drive North American, Sebring Development..."

Based on this BMIHT information, it appears that this red Sprite began life in late 1961 as a stock production chassis and later modified by the DHMC to become a works Sebring Sprite prototype coupe. The earlier Sprites (HAN-5, HAN-6, HAN-7) had the quarter-elliptic rear springs. The red Sprite has semi-elliptic springs, one of the many modifications by the works to transform the stock chassis into a proper prototype race car for Sebring and other race venues. The works probably designated a new chassis number, HAN8-64-R-2, following the modifications.

## SEBRING 1964 DRIVER'S RECOLLECTIONS

Searching for additional information about Al Pease, one of the co-drivers at Sebring in 1964, I came upon a website [www.britishracecar.com](http://www.britishracecar.com) and contacted Curtis Jacobson from Colorado who directed me to Mike Adams of Saskatchewan, Canada; both know Al Pease who now resides in Tennessee.

(See sidebar, "The Drivers".) I mailed recent photos of the red Sprite along with photos of the car at Sebring in 1964 to Al and arranged a follow-up phone interview.

With remarkable recall, Al said that the red Sprite's interior did not have

DHMC got a refund of their registration fee.

Using this chassis number, I again asked the BMIHT for any information on this chassis as it appeared to be a production number for a "stock" Sprite. BMIHT's Derek Tew responded by noting, "I have located the car in the production records, it is one of five, however the date is



**DHMC invoice for the Sebring Sprite, 2 June 1964. Note chassis and engine numbers.**



the interior of the car as it now exists. One of his photos shows the sparse, if any, interior panels in 1964 at Sebring. Al also remembered that there was only the one seat, and it was a very plain, "typical racing seat." He did not recall an odometer, only a tachometer. (The odometer now in the car reads 796 miles.) As for carpet, "There was none."

Photo by author.



Instrument cluster with 796 miles on odometer; note position of tachometer at right.

Al noted that as he was to do most of the driving during the 12-hour race, he had a lot of practice in the car. "It was a beautiful little car; I was quite impressed with it," he remembered. He continued by commenting that the Sprite "was beautifully styled; it was great to drive... the finish and details were terrific."

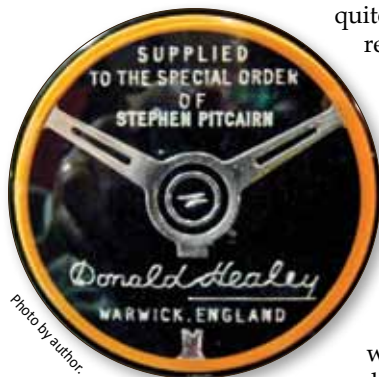


Photo by author.

Special and unusual DHMC badge affixed to dash of Sprite.

As for the demise of the Sprite on the ninth lap at Sebring as he was driving, he vividly recalls, "There was a terrible noise at the back and the car ground to a halt very quickly." As the rules allowed only the driver to work on the car, one of the Hambro mechanics

came out to direct Al with repairs, but the rear axle was irreparably damaged.

Pease and Mims had been selected to drive the Sprite, as he was a BMC driver at the time, and the late Donna Mae Mims was an SCCA Class Champion in a Sprite. Al said that Donna often amused the crew with her little dyed-pink dog that she carried everywhere. (See sidebar, "The Drivers".)

Pease sent several of his black and white photos of the Sprite at Sebring which further established its identity. After seeing the recent pictures of the red Sprite, he said that "an unchanged car such as this never happens; most race cars were brutalized..."

## THE SEARCH ENDS

After many months of research and assistance from a number of generous enthusiasts, my search for the identity of the red Sprite was over. Although this car had but a brief racing life at Sebring in 1964, it was, in fact, one of the very few prototype Sprites prepared by the Donald Healey Motor Company to compete at Sebring.



Photo by author.

Current interior, showing door panel, carpet, seat, and the vinyl covering of interior tubing.

Following the 1964 Sebring race, the works repaired the car and fitted it as a touring coupe and shipped it to America for its new owner, Stephen Pitcairn. Pitcairn

added seat belts, which were then required for racing, and competed in perhaps two hill climb competitions.

The identity of these events and the results are not known.

Then in 1985, Pitcairn's friend Kurt Ritthaler became the second owner, or "caretaker," of this historic vehicle, and he has shown

the car to the public only four times: at the New Hope (Pennsylvania) Auto Show in 1985, at Encounter 1986, briefly in 1987, and finally in 2010. Kurt believes that because the car has not been exposed to the public that it has simply been forgotten, and, as some have claimed, "lost."



Detail of DHMC spec sheet; rear suspension noted with half elliptic springs.

## OWNER RECALLS ENCOUNTER 1986

Kurt, second owner of the red Sprite, recalls taking his race car to the AHSTC Encounter in 1986. The event was held in Trevoze, Pennsylvania, and featured two very important guests: Donald M. Healey, CBE, and Gerry Coker, the stylist/

Courtesy of the Warwickshire County Record Office.

Index No. and Number	Name and Address	Car or Cycle	Type and Colour	Weight	1st Person (if female, 2nd Person)	Date of Registration
769 KNX	Donald Healey Ltd. Warwick.		Austin 1000	1075cc	A	5-7-64
770 KNX	Do.		Austin Healey Sprite	1075cc	A	11-9-64
778 KNX	Do.		Austin Healey Sprite	1075cc	A	11-3-64

The ledger page from the Warwickshire County Record Office lists both 770 KNX and 776 KNX.

The three DHMC entries at Sebring, 1964. The 770 KNX Sprite is at left; the red Sprite, 776 KNX, at the right.

Photo courtesy of John Wright

Gerry met with Kurt and spoke about this car and the works cars in general. Kurt vividly remembers that Donald Healey said, "These cars were throwaway cars" intended for only a few race entries. Healey also said that no two of these cars were alike.

This beautiful, unmolested 1964 Sebring Sprite prototype is not lost and it still resides in the hands of a very responsible "caretaker." Kurt notes that while the car is not for sale (as he says, "I only buy, I don't sell"), he is pleased that its story is now known and its chapter in Healey history is recognized.

Courtesy of the Warwickshire County Record Office.

Vehicle No.:	776 KNX
Class	PRIVATE
Make	AUSTIN HEALEY
Type of Body	SPORTS
Colour	RED
Horse Power	
Unladen Weight	
Seating Capacity	
C.C.	1098 cc
Engine No.	XSP-2143-2
Chassis or Frame No.	HAN711563-H2
Date of:	
Original Registration	11th Mar 1964
Expiry of Last Licence	31st Mar 1964 (Refund)
Name and Address of last Owner:	DONALD HEALEY MOTOR CO. LTD WARWICK
	1,000 x1 48

1964 and the notation of "refund."

designer of the original Healey Hundred. With Kurt's Sebring Sprite on display, DMH and

## THE DRIVERS

Two drivers were assigned to drive the red Sebring Sprite at the Sebring 12-hour race in 1964: Donna Mae Mims and Al Pease. Their car, number 67, lasted only nine laps, when the Sprite retired with rear axle failure.

### DONNA MAE MIMS

Born in 1927, Mims was the first woman driver to register a national championship in Sports Car Club of America (SCCA) competition in 1963. There she drove a pink Austin-Healey Bugeye Sprite, once owned by Dr. Jonas Salk, of polio vaccine fame. Mims competed for over a dozen years, including several appearances at the Sebring races.



Donna Mae Mims.

Mims was known as the "Pink Lady," and most of her race cars were painted pink, including the Bugeye Sprite, a Chevrolet Corvette and Corvair, a Triumph TR3 and an MGB. She dressed in matching pink coveralls and helmet.

In 1979, she ran in the last, infamous "Cannonball Run," a cross-country, semi-legal sprint, as part of an all-female team. Their entry was a 1968 Cadillac limousine sponsored by "The Right Bra." The drivers wore tight-fitting clothes and went braless.

Janet Guthrie, herself a pioneer in the field of women racing drivers, participated as co-driver in an all-female team with a Sprite Prototype at Sebring in 1970; they finished first in class. Of Mims, Guthrie recalls: "Donna Mae always wore pink. Her race cars were pink. I think I remember a pink wig and she dyed her little dog pink – a poodle? I shared a room with her once at Sebring, and she had to have the lights on all night! She and I were polar opposites, but she was serious about her racing."

Donna Mae Mims died from stroke complications on October 6, 2009.

### AL PEASE

Al Pease, born in 1921, moved from England to Canada following World War II, in the 1950s. There he began driving club races in a Riley sports car. He joined the British Motor Corporation (BMC) in the late 1950s and competed for BMC in local sports car competitions through the mid-1960s. His race cars were mostly MGBs. He probably gathered more trophies than any other Canadian driver, as he won many regional and national championships in a variety of race cars for nearly 30 years.



Al Pease at the 1967 Canadian Grand Prix at Mosport.

Pease also drove a BMC-entered Big Healey to victory twice in the Canadian racing event called the "Sundown Grand Prix"; a race run from sundown to midnight.

In his mid-40s, Pease entered Canadian Grand Prix Formula 1 races in 1967, '68, and '69. His first race was at Mosport, a race track he helped to design. Pease holds the dubious distinction of being the only F1 driver to be black-flagged for going too slowly!

Despite the black flag, Al Pease was voted "Driver of the Year" in 1964 by the Canadian Racing Drivers Association, and in 1998 he was inducted as an honorary member of the Canadian Motorsports Hall of Fame. He now resides in Tennessee, USA.



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