

# SUPER SPRITE

WITH THE design of the Sprite proving to be a highly-successful small sports car, the Healey family could have rested content. The 'frog-eye' Sprite MK1 was selling in very healthy numbers, but almost as soon as the car was launched the Healey family were working on a better model, a version that became known as the Super Sprite.

Under the bonnet was fitted the dramatically more powerful alloy 1100cc engine from Coventry Climax, already powering the Lotus Elite. Numerous changes were made, including disc brakes at the rear. And running right alongside the body of the car, a deeply pressed swage line, almost a signature of the Healey family.

With an all-alloy body the car was an exciting flyer. They took it to B.M.C. with the hope of receiving the kind of reception given to their design of the original Sprite, which had the advantage of using lots of components already in mass production. Instead, the new little Healey was given a frosty reception.

It is a car that would have been years ahead of its day, and clearly was built as the 'ultimate' Sprite, the car the Healey men would have loved to have made without making so many compromises. It was not to be, B.M.C.

thought little of rear disc-brakes, even though the MG A twin-cam was setting a precedent. Anything that could give more trouble in service was bound to be frowned upon, and lifting the bonnet must have caused more than raised eyebrows when the bosses of B.M.C. saw the engine. An outside engine supplier? A firm no to that idea, for a start. And with that the car was never given a chance...although the idea of a Super Sprite was a positive thought of the Healey men who went a lot further than just thinking out loud and producing sketches. In all, they made three.

There were quite a lot of prototypes and racing cars from the fertile minds of the Healeys. Precious few survive. This one that has lasted is one of the Super Sprites and was found in a garage covered in planks of wood and rubbish. The Lenham Motor Company received a call and they were told it

was a Lenham Special, with the Lenham Le Mans fastback. They went to investigate and recognised their rear body conversion, but the front called for a closer look and the car was pushed into sunlight. Right away they recognised that deep swage line running down the side as a hallmark that this was something rare. The attractive nose in alloy looked to be original and in good order, dust was rubbed off the bonnet badge, and there was the original blue Warwick badge that provided final proof that this was a genuine Healey special.

The Lenham Motor Company set about a restoration, taking the car to Williams and Pritchard to have the rear of the car re-made.

The result is a highly striking and attractive small sports car, a small piece of history that has survived the rigours of time and is now looking as its creators meant it to be.

*Also putting a nose into Graham Murrell's picture — the specially-built W.S.M. MG B.*

**Philip Young**

