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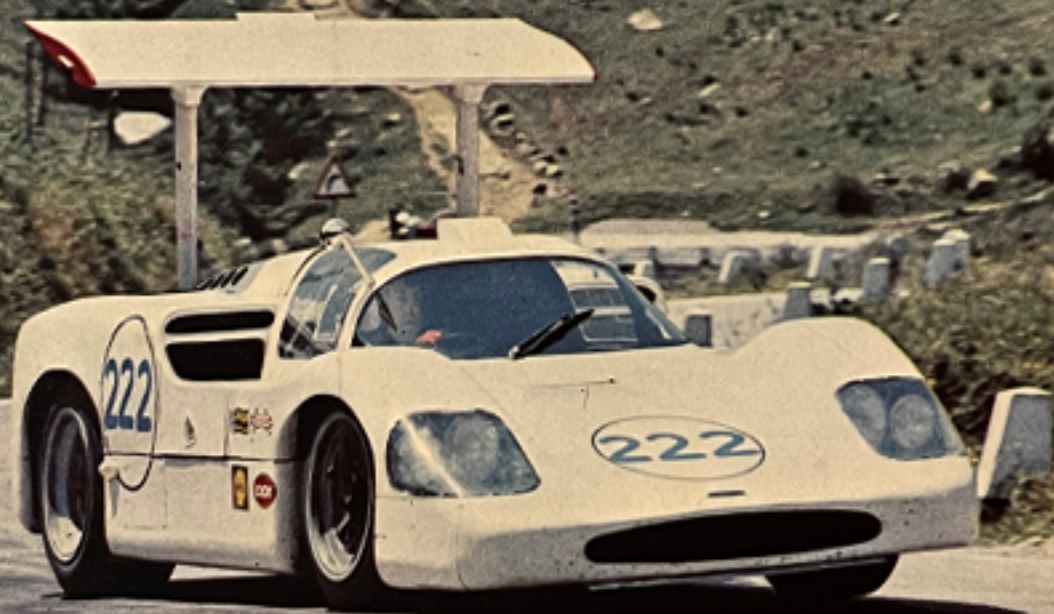
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# MOTOR RACING

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**Inside: JIM HALL TALKS CHAPARRAL  
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# More tales from the Targa

Behind the scenes with the M.G. and Austin-Healey entries at the incident-packed Sicilian classic

**I**F ever there was an event most likely to produce the best tales, then that would surely be the Targa Florio. For the BMC team this year's event proved no exception.

To say things went wrong would be putting it mildly, but, even so, Abingdon built sports cars challenged the massed might of the European works racing teams from Ferrari, Porsche, Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Renault Alpine and Ford France, and not only finished among the 30 survivors of the 71 entries, but also took ninth in general classification and 'unofficial' ninth, 10th and 13th fastest overall (more of which later), plus several class placings.

However impressive our results may appear, for the BMC Competitions Department everything went wrong—from start to finish. Timo Makinen and Rauno Aaltonen were 'arrested' after a minor *fracas* with an unhelpful airline official at Naples. In the race, Andrew Hedges crashed and 'wrote-off' the 'MGB' roadster on the second lap, while Clive Baker did likewise with the Sprite on the seventh and he, too, was duly 'arrested'. The race organizers then made their usual complete nonsense of the results and so deprived the M.G.s and Austin-Healeys of high overall placings in general classification. The final straw was a freak Sicilian storm which swept over Sicily and marooned



Highest-placed British car in the 'organizers' official classification was the Ted Worswick/Richard Bond ex-works Healey 3000. Note the magnesium wheels fitted the rear end only

the team on the island for nearly 48 hours. What a week!

But let's start at the very beginning—where all good tales should start. Peter Browning, BMC's timekeeper in 1966 and promoted to Competitions Manager for 1967, set the classic Targa scene in the July 1966 issue of *Safety Fast* after returning from his first visit there, giving us a true, behind the scenes impression of this, the only true road-race that still survives. To quickly recap, the gruelling 450-mile Targa Florio is run over the tortuous and twisty 10-lap, 45-mile Piccolo Madonie 'Circuit', which snakes and winds from sea level to over 2,000 feet, including only four miles of straight in its tour of this famous island of Sicily. Three ranges of hills, three villages, and countless corners are among the many hazards facing the drivers as well as the stray animals and spectators which all form part of this classic race. The 'track' is little wider than a British 'B'-class road, and the surface often torn up under the constant hammering from hard-driven sports cars under a scorching sun.

For this year's event—the 51st of the series and counting towards the World Championship for Sports Cars and Prototype Sports Cars—the BMC team comprised just three cars: a special-bodied Austin-Healey Sprite from Warwick and two 'MGB's from Abingdon—one of these an alloy-bodied 'one-off' GT version making its first public outing and making the debut of the 'MGB' GT in the Targa.

Austin-Healey Sprite LWD 959 E was

a brand-new car prepared by Geoff Healey at Warwick and based on that pretty little coupé seen at this year's Racing Car Show. Although basically very similar to the Le Mans Sprite, last seen at Sebring in April, the ultra-lightweight Targa car only sported single headlamps, doubtless considered sufficient on daylight events such as this. Power-house specification included as usual the 1293-c.c. unit with Weber carburation and 'MGB'-based five-speed gearbox.

From Abingdon came MBL 548 E, the 'revamped' 'MGB' GT, and one of the most purposeful-looking cars ever to appear from the Competitions Department. The all-aluminium body was beautifully flared-out at the sides to cover the wide-section 5.50—15 Dunlop Racing tyres (on 15 x 6½ Minilite magnesium alloy wheels), the sexy curves and fairings giving the car an altogether most attractive and eye-catching appearance. Those privileged to inspect the car more closely would have seen the four-cylinder 'MGB' engine which was bored out to 84.8 mm. giving a capacity of 2004 c.c. as used in the class-winning 'MGB' GT at Sebring. But whereas the Sebring car was fitted with a twin-choke Weber carburettor, the Targa entry had two 2-inch S.U.s, which gave a four b.h.p. increase in power output. On the test bed the car returned something like 150 b.h.p. at 6,000 r.p.m.

The other Abingdon entry, MBL 547 E, was a brand new 'MGB' roadster with hard top, tuned to the usual Group III specification with 1824 engine—the





The fastest of the British entries. Timo Makinen in the works 'MGB' GT prototype he shared with Paddy Hopkirk

same as anyone (with the money) can buy from Special Tuning Department at Abingdon—and to the exact specification of the Sebring car.

As usual, our team drivers presented a mixed batch of nationalities including, once again, three Monte Carlo Rally winners. Those 'Mini-Men' Paddy Hopkirk and Timo Makinen were paired in the special 'MGB' GT, while Andrew Hedges and 'new boy' Alec Poole were entered in the 'MGB' roadster. Making up the three car team were Rauno Aaltonen (1967 Monte winner) and Clive Baker in the Sprite.

BMC private entries, in fact, were the only other all-British cars entered, and these consisted of Ted Worswick/Richard Bond in the ex-works, ex-Targa Austin-Healey 3000, Jack Wheeler/Martin Davidson in the Team Coburn Sebring Sprite, Austrians Surst/Wippigotras in a Mini-Cooper, and a privately entered 'MGB' roadster which proved to be a non-starter. Of BMC interest too was the French-entered Mini-Marcos of Andresson/Lundbergen, with 'S'-type engine.

The two private Healeys were certainly no strangers to the Sicilian race. Ted Worswick's car, ARX 41 B, was built at Abingdon specially for the Targa and driven in the 1965 event by the eventual winner of this year's race, Paul Hawkins and Timo Makinen. They were leading their class when the distributor broke, Paul ran back to the pits for a replacement, only to discover they already had one in the car! They eventually took second in class. In the 1966 Targa, 'ARX' was an ex-works car in the hands of Ted Worswick, but was forced into an early retirement when the differential broke

on the first lap. In this year's event Ted's entry must surely have taken the first prize for enthusiasm. The car was driven to Sicily and back by Austin-Healey Club (Northern Centre) members John Smart and Kathy Manley, and entered with no mechanics or assistance whatsoever. Their high overall placing was a truly fantastic achievement, and a just reward for the team's enthusiasm.

Jack Wheeler's Sebring Sprite was a non-starter in the 1966 Targa after a spectacular crash in practice. They were back this year to be classed, at least, as finishers—and finish they did, as 10th fastest overall—a terrific achievement.

Entries for the 51st Targa were, as usual, split into the three categories—Grand Touring, Sports, and Sports Prototype—with BMC cars entered in each section. The 'MGB' roadster was in the 1600-2000 Grand Touring class, while its sister GT was to fight it out with the factory Porsches in the over two-litre sports prototype class. Thus the Roadster was running in the G.T. category and the GT in the Sports Prototype category—all very confusing and just like Sebring! The two Sprites were both entered in the hotly-contested under-two-litre Sports Prototype category along with the private Mini-Cooper. Ted Worswick's big Healey was looking for results in the over-two-litre sports car class, with the Ford G.T.s, among other things, to contend with.

The BMC entourage travelled to Sicily a week before the event by road and sea, by way of Ostend, Milan, and Naples, with the 'GT' on a trailer, and the other two cars and a practice 'MGB' were actually driven by 'comps' deputy foreman Tommy Wellman and mechan-

ics Mick Legg and Gerald Wiffen. The drivers flew in from all quarters on the rather indirect route to Palermo.

Trouble spot number one for BMC was Naples Airport where Timo and Rauno had stopped off *en route* for Sicily. An unsympathetic airline official refused to help when bottles of duty-free Vodka in the lads' cases were smashed in transit. Having refused to give his name, the Finns tried to photograph the official in an attempt to report him to his superiors, but this was too much and a punch-up quickly ensued, the result of which was a police cell for all three. Explanations in various languages took time and it was several hours before Peter Browning was assured of a complete team!

And so, eventually, everyone arrived in Sicily for practice. Targa terrain is familiar to the European rally circus, and Paddy, Timo and Rauno were probably more at home than many of the out-and-out racing boys entered. But the real advantage is with the local crews, who spend weeks and months lapping for hour after hour over the Sicilian mountain course and gaining invaluable knowledge that most of the foreign drivers have to learn in the few days that precede the race.

As a training car for all the drivers the team took along with them an Abingdon 'demonstration' 'MGB' fitted with Minilite wheels and a spare two-litre engine for the 'GT' if needed. The spare unit had, in fact, been used in the 'MGB' GT at Sebring, in the Targa 'GT' up to the time of departure and, of course, in the roadster driven to Sicily. It then proceeded to cover an equivalent of one and a half Targas in practice. Quite a performance.

Most drivers are unofficially practicing in the week prior to the race, but official practice over closed roads on the Friday is now compulsory, and in common with most of the other teams, BMC used the official day for no more than a steady one-lap run for each of the drivers in their actual race cars, plus a couple of faster laps in the trainer 'MGB'. Newcomer to the Targa team, Alec Poole really put the cat among the pigeons when he set fastest practice time of all the BMC drivers—naturally enough in



the two-litre trainer—with an incredible time inside the best 25 of the 71 starters. Perhaps an omen of things to come?

And so to race day itself. Obviously by now you will have read in the weeklies of the Porsche 910 Prototypes' resounding 1-2-3 victory defeating the favourites, Ferrari, and the powerful Alfa Romeo Tipo 33s, and averaging a record-breaking 67.62 m.p.h., so, instead, this report deals mainly with the fortunes and (mainly) otherwise of the BMC camp.

One of the unique features of the Targa is the start, the cars being despatched at 20 second intervals, with the slowest car leading off and the big boys bringing up the rear. This year's start was unexpectedly and unusually bang on time, but even at 8.00 a.m. on a Sunday morning in May the hot Sicilian sunshine is beating down relentlessly from a bright blue sky, and it feels more like lunchtime than breakfast!

It's perhaps easier to look at the performance of each of the BMC cars—works and otherwise—separately.

Naturally enough, everyone on the BMC pit was watching, with special interest, the performance of the alloy 'GT'. There were loud groans when Paddy brought the car in on the second lap with some obscure brake troubles, but a two-minute pit stop soon sent him on his way. At the driver change-over point the brakes were again playing up, but the rapid pit stops could only rectify the trouble for a short time and the car was back again three more times before the chequered flag, losing a total of 12 minutes. Otherwise the car went like a train to finish ninth fastest overall and third in class behind the eight-cylinder Porsches, although the organizers' crazy results system contrived to exclude the car from general classification; of which more anon.

It would be nice to say that all the team cars had the same 'relatively easy' passage of the 'GT' but that was not to be. Andrew Hedges took the wheel of the 'MGB' roadster for the first stint, and by the end of the first lap was leading all the 911S Porsches in the G.T. category. Then tragedy struck. Hedges clipped one of the many stone mileposts that are conveniently placed around the course, left the road and collided head-on with one of the biggest trees on the island. Some five minutes later a disappointed Hedges arrived back in the pits via helicopter to report a written-off 'MGB'. As an almost certain winner in the G.T. category this must have been one of Peter Browning's first big disappointments in his new career, and also a cruel blow for poor Alec Poole who never got the chance to prove himself after his promising practice runs.

Disappointment number two came in the form of the works Sprite which looked all set for a fine run, lying an incredible sixth fastest overall at the end of six laps. In Peter Browning's own words the car 'was going like a bomb', lapping consistently at 43 minutes compared with the 'GT's 44 and the roadster's 45 (one lap only!). (Incidentally, local hero Nino Vaccarella set a record fastest time in practice of 37 minutes in the works P4 Ferrari, with the works Porsches consistent around the 39 mark.) Clive Baker took the wheel of the Sprite for the first stint and then came in to hand over to Rauno, with the news that the car was 'going like clockwork'. Rauno was back on the sixth for the final change over and Clive took the car out for the final four laps. Then on the seventh it all happened. Clive rounded a sharp, blind corner high up in the mountains and was horrified to see a local hero 'playing chicken' standing in the middle of the road. In a completely unavoidable collision the Sicilian was scooped onto the Sprite's bonnet, and Clive, with his view through the windscreen completely obscured, crashed head-on into the guard rails which separate the road from a 200-foot drop into fresh air. Believe it or not, the next guard rail along was missing!

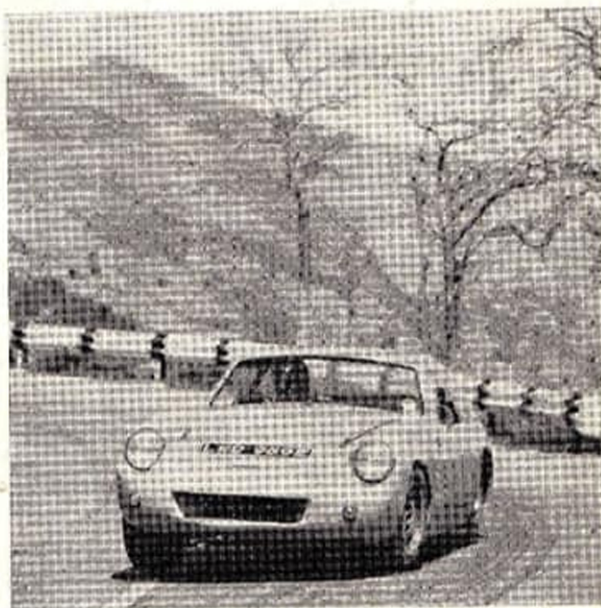
The 'jaywalker' was rescued by his pals and carried off with just a broken leg for his troubles. The unfortunate Baker on the other hand was grabbed by the ever-zealous police, who were finally persuaded to let him go some three hours later after hearing both sides of the story. So ended a superb drive in which Clive and Rauno were deprived of a possible sixth overall and a possible class win. Having covered more than minimum

distance the Sprite was classified and finished 'unofficially 26th fastest overall and sixth in class, yet unplaced in general classification.

The BMC privateers fared somewhat better than the works cars. Ted Worswick and Richard Bond shared the distinction of the 'officially' highest-placed British and BMC car in overall classification (9th), although they were only 13th fastest overall—nevertheless, a splendid achievement. Apart from a rear axle oil seal breakage just before the start, the crew never once had to put a spanner on the car during the entire race, their only incident marring a trouble-free run being a spin on the fifth lap in which the car clobbered a milepost and incurred rather a nasty dent in the passengers' door. This really was a tremendous performance on the part of these Austin-Healey Club members, and whether really ninth or 13th, their second in class to the Ford France Ford G.T. was really something to be proud of.

Jack Wheeler and Martin Davidson, although rather outclassed in the under-two-litre Sports Prototype class, were lapping the Sebring Sprite 'very nicely thank you' even if its handling was not quite right. The car had earlier spun and clobbered a bank, the back axle and rear shockers coming rather adrift in the process. To the spectators' great delight the car was oversteering like a mad thing and in an attempt to make it go round the corners properly the Sprite finished up with no less than a 20 lb. difference in tyre pressures! Although 10th fastest overall, the Coburn entry had been lapped (not surprisingly) by its class winner—the second overall Porsche—and did not figure in the official general classific-

*The ill-fated works  
Sprite of Rauno  
Aaltonen/Clive Baker  
high up in the  
mountains on the  
second lap*





ation, although they 'kindly' credited it fifth in class. What a fiasco!

Each year—or so it seems—the organizers of the Targa have a happy knack of making a proper 'cuds' of the results, this year proving no exception. In the 1966 event BMC team cars were deprived of certain awards because of some crazy rulings, and 1967 was to be the same.

This year's regulations stated that overall classifications would only be awarded to those drivers who had finished within 90 per cent. of the distance of their class winner—irrespective of actual overall fastest times. Similarly, class placings could only be awarded to those drivers who had finished within two-thirds of the distance of their class winner. All very confusing and a real tragedy for BMC with the alloy 'GT' in the same class as the winning Porsches. Although the M.G. finished third in class behind the two Stuttgart machines (and it wasn't all that far behind), it just failed to reach that 90 per cent. target and was thus robbed of ninth overall and officially unplaced.

Obviously the works 'MGB' could not be classified after its crash on lap two, but the works Sprite did complete more than minimum distance and should have been officially credited with 26th overall.

Ted Worswick's private Healey 3000 was given the amazing ninth overall placing after the class-winning Ford GT was forced to make several pit stops, thus allowing Ted to finish just inside the 90 per cent. rule. (Although the 'MGB' GT and the private Sebring Sprite were actually ahead of the 3000 on the road, they were both unplaced.) Wheeler and Davidson's Sprite had finished a fantastic 10th overall on the road, but as we've seen they, too, were excluded from general classification.

Surely it must be obvious that this system is ludicrous, where your overall placing depends solely on which class you are fortunate enough to be in. In fact, the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th cars fastest overall were excluded from general classification, and sure enough, it wasn't only BMC who were up in arms over the whole affair.

If the Targa is to continue as the sole surviving road race in the world, then the Automobile Club of Palermo must drastically alter their regulations—and quickly. Major motor manufacturers just will not travel all that distance and spend all that money to be deprived of well-earned publicity at the end of it all. It's just not worth it.

MURRAY LOAKE

## RESULTS

### *The Organizers' Official General Classification*

1. Paul Hawkins/Rolf Stommelen (2.2 Porsche 910-8)
2. Leo Cella/Giamberio Biscaldi (2.0 Porsche 910-6)
3. Jochem Neerpasch/Vic Eiford (2.0 Porsche 910-6)
4. Vittorio Venturi/Jonathan Williams (2.0 Ferrari Dino V6)
5. Henri Greder/Jean-Michele Giorgi (4.7 Ford GT 40 V8)
6. Hans Hermann/Jo Siffert (2.2 Porsche 910-8)
7. Bernard Cahier/Jean-Claude Killy (2.0 Porsche 911S)
8. Alberto Girardini/Zeffirino Filippi (1.3 Lancia H.F.)
9. Ted Worswick/Richard Bond (3.0 Austin-Healey 3000)
10. Raffaele Restivo/'Tortoise' (1.2 Fiat 124 Sport)

### *General Classification on Fastest Race Averages*

1. Hawkins/Stommelen, 108.811 km.p.h.
2. Cella/Biscaldi, 108.593 km.p.h.
3. Neerpasch/Eiford, 107.709 km.p.h.
4. Venturi/Williams, 102.165 km.p.h.
5. Greder/Giorgi, 98.981 km.p.h.
6. Hermann/Siffert, 97.929 km.p.h.
7. Munari/Andersson (1.3 Lancia H.F.), 96.966 km.p.h.
8. 'Nanni'/Ignazio Giunti (2.0 Alfa Romeo 33), 93.330 km.p.h.
9. Paddy Hopkirk/Timo Makinen (2.0 'MGB' GT), 92.256 km.p.h.
10. Jack Wheeler/Martin Davidson (1.3 Austin-Healey Sprite), 92.089 km.p.h.
11. Cahier/Killy, 90.702 km.p.h.
12. Girardini/Filippi, 89.827 km.p.h.
13. Worswick/Bond, 89.514 km.p.h.
14. Rauno Aaltonen/Clive Baker (1.3 Austin-Healey Sprite), 76.167 km.p.h.

**SUNDAY, 28 May 1967**, was quite a day for Britain: on the sea, Francis Chichester sailed into Plymouth at the completion of his epic voyage around the world; while on dry land Paddy Hopkirk and Ron Crellin drove the works Mini victoriously into Athens as the first-ever all-British winners of Europe's toughest rally—the Acropolis. This report—naturally—deals with the latter of the two achievements.

This Homeric victory was sweet revenge indeed for Paddy and Ron, who suffered a bitter disappointment in this event last year when robbed of their outright win after allegedly mending their car within what was said to be 200 metres of a control point.

Success, however, could have been even sweeter for Peter Browning and his BMC team but for the incredibly rough and tough conditions of this Greek classic—18 finishers from over 70 starters—and a very nasty accident, both factors putting paid to the chances of the flying Finns, Makinen and Aaltonen, who could have easily made it a 1-2-3 Mini victory.

Now rated as the toughest and most difficult event in the European Rally Championship calendar (and the eighth

# Paddy's Acropolis

**First-ever all-British win to BMC in Europe's toughest and roughest rally**

in fact, this year), the Acropolis is either won or lost on the high-speed, rock-or-dust-strewn special stages where reliability must be matched evenly with out-and-out performance. For each group of special stages a target time was set, and those who were lucky enough to attain the set time were unpenalized, while those who didn't incurred a penalty point for each second late. Nat rally all of this makes the com-

puting of the results needlessly complicated and is the outcome of setting varying times for each of the classes instead of running the Rally on a scratch basis—as, surely, most competitors would wish it to be.

Looking at the route, the 15th Acropolis Rally was virtually a tour of Greece with the 1,900-odd miles of rallying interspersed with 220 miles of special stages (split into 11 groups), three hill-climbs, and finally a 30-minute circuit race—provided, everyone thought, solely for the benefit of the enthusiastic spectators who lined the route, waving and cheering as the rally passed by.

As one of the five major rallies in the world, the Acropolis usually attracts just about every rally-minded manufacturer, but recent political upheavals in the country had frightened off entries from Saab and Volvo (both past winners), although the powerful Lancia team had entered three of their pretty new 1300 coupés in the Grand Touring Category to be driven by Pauli Toivonen, Leo Cella, and Ove Andersson. Ford of Britain had entered a lone works Lotus Cortina for Bengt Soderstrom/Gunnar Palm, although the Porsche 911S entry