

# Martin's 'Green Thing'

Martin Parkes, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands

I've now owned my 'Green Thing' since February 2012 and have mostly loved every minute of it. My original intention was to enter sprints and hillclimbs in it after stripping/rebuilding and modifying but up to the start of this year I had only done one sprint, some grass autotests and a couple of tarmac slaloms. The rest of the time had been taken up with appearances at classic car shows and driving on classic tours which have been very enjoyable, but I felt that I needed to do more.

So, around April, while I was planning the year's classic car show timetable for the Owen Motor Club, I made the decision to get back into motorsport. A trip to Demon Tweeks was arranged where new overalls, helmet and gloves were purchased by my good wife Elaine as a birthday present for me which also just happened to be in April!

As you probably know I campaigned a Westfield SE with a 1700 cc Ford crossflow for 20-plus years which in its day was very competitive but times change and for me to remain competitive I needed to spend a lot more money on it, so I decided to sell it at the beginning of 2012 and go for value for money motorsport with a classic car. My beloved Westfield has since changed hands again after I sold it and is now owned by Imp Club member Mark Ibbotson!

In May I took my Imp to Aldon Automotive for them to finally sort out the 'dead spot' between 3,000 and 3,800 rpm which they did, and the car instantly became a complete joy to drive through the whole rev range. I did a couple of test days at my local circuit – Curborough – before my first event there on 10th June which was the figure of eight circuit layout.

My last season with the Westfield was seven years ago so it was like starting over again; the week before saw lots of things going through my mind like noise levels, scrutineering and remembering to pack all the spares, fuel, etc the night before. In the end I needn't have worried as the scrutineer was keener to tell me about his early Imp rather than checking mine, which I know was up to the latest *Blue Book* regs, but one never knows with these scruits!

As with all my sprinting I just concentrate on improving my Personal Best and if I win anything then that is a bonus; the main thing is to enjoy the day. There were four cars in my class, a double-driven lovely Sebring Sprite and a Lotus Seven. Two practice runs were treated as practice



Shelsley Walsh, June 2018. Martin improved his times throughout the day, being rewarded with 5th in class

Photo: Derek Hibbert



and then my two-timed runs after lunch were consistent with 0.01 seconds separating them giving me 3rd in class with 77.28 seconds compared to 70.24 for the class winning Lotus.



Shelsley Walsh,  
17th June  
Photo: Elaine Parkes

The following Sunday I managed to get an entry at Shelsley Walsh near Worcester, which is an historic hillclimb that I love but is totally unsuitable for my little Imp. Five cars made up my class with the largest being a 2341 cc Porsche 904! Two practice runs followed by two timed runs in the afternoon saw

my time improve from 49.38 seconds (first practice) to 43.93 (second timed), so again an improvement as the day progressed which gave me 5th in class and a huge smile after every run.

I did another morning test day at Curborough at the end of July before my next event at Loton Park Hillclimb



Loton Park: Imp and  
Austin-Healey Sprite Mk4  
Photo: Elaine Parkes



Yet another  
chatty scrutineer:  
"Takes me back to  
when I had an Imp..."  
Photo: Derek Hibbert

Loton Park  
Photo: Elaine Parkes





on the 4th August. I wasn't sure whether this venue would suit my car but that didn't matter as it is another lovely hill to drive. Situated just outside Shrewsbury on the Welshpool road this hill is set in the beautiful surroundings of a deer park. Of all the events I have done up and down the country over the years this is one place I'd never won an award. There was just one other car in my class which was a father and son driven Austin-Healey Sprite Mk4 which was the same colour as Elaine's. After two practice runs my time had gone from 80.58 seconds to 74.95 which had put me only 0.27 behind the father, who I assumed was a regular here. Despite my trepidations, the hill really suited my car and my driving style so after lunch I pedalled it a lot harder on the two timed runs and, to my amazement, finished first in class with 73.63 seconds on my final run. So, my 'duck' was broken, and I came away with my first trophy from here and my first competitive award with my Imp which gave me an even bigger smile.

I'd been told of a 55th Anniversary Classic Sprint at Curborough early in the year but typically had done nothing about it. Then someone mentioned it to me again when marshalling on a trial. Back home I looked it up and found it was only a week away but I managed to get an entry for the following Saturday. This was supposed to be classed as a mini Goodwood, but the entry was poor due to it clashing with the actual Goodwood revival and a couple of other large sprint events. The weather didn't help either as it rained on and off all day. Nevertheless, it gave me practice at driving my car in the wet on this single lap event. We had three timed runs and I was up against a fully sorted 'Frogeye' Sprite which shouldn't have really been in my class as it was not road legal! Still, I improved during the day from 46.91 seconds to 43.47 and finished only 1.2 seconds behind the Sprite!

**Loton Park, 4th August:**  
1st in class  
Photo: Elaine Parkes



The following Saturday was another favourite of mine which was Harewood Hillclimb. Because of the distance Elaine and I decided to travel up on the Friday, drop the car and trailer off at the circuit, and then stay at a Premier Inn so at least we could have a sensible timed start in the morning. Seven cars made up the class: three Minis, a dual-drive well sorted Peugeot 205 and the Sprite Mk4 again. My car received lots of attention with another very chatty scrutineer once again telling me all about his old rally Imp from years ago! This is a brilliant hill which I love to drive, and their meetings are always very well run with delays kept to a minimum.

My times improved throughout the day from 82.31 seconds (first practice) to 76.65 (third timed run) which gave me 6th in class beating the Sprite by 5.17 seconds and only a mere 9.11 behind the class winning Peugeot!

I've also managed to fit in some classic shows throughout 2018 as well, so as you can see, I've had another busy but enjoyable year with my Imp. Not many mods planned over the winter apart from some re-wiring, stiffening the rear suspension slightly and maybe, if possible, changing the gear ratios due to the big gap between 2nd and 3rd. Any suggestions on the latter please drop me an e-mail ([martinparkes518@btinternet.com](mailto:martinparkes518@btinternet.com)), although I do still want to keep it drivable on the road and not go down the noisy straight-cut gearbox route.

I'm looking forward to 2019 already.



**Harewood: 6th in class**  
Photo supplied by Martin Parkes