

# PROFILE

## Barry Sidery-Smith

Barry Sidery-Smith's life has been cars both as a well known MG trader with an uncanny knack of finding cars for fellow enthusiasts and as a very skilled motor racing competitor for over 50 years. Although known as "Sideways" to many, his racing style is in fact neat and quick, particularly in the wet. He has been a Club stalwart too running a natter and an active member of the SE Centre committee for many years, a joint founder of the BCV8 Championship in late 1973 for a first season in 1974 and organiser of Club test days at Goodwood. But what lies behind the familiar bespectacled smile seen in the paddock at so many race meetings and other Club events? Well I was keen to learn more of a fellow Club member and his enthusiasm for MGs.

Barry's interest in racing began as a boy when he helped out an amateur racing driver as his pit crew at race meetings. Barry had got chatting with him as he passed by on his paper round in Long Ditton and as soon as he was old enough to drive, talked the owner into letting him enter a race with the car, a Parker JAP Special. That uncanny knack has served Barry well over the years! In 1959 Barry bought a Healey 100/4 and his first race was at Goodwood with another at Brands Hatch all over the same weekend. He went on to race Healeys and TRs for many years until his first association with MGs when he bought and raced a former works MGB – 94 HJJ – in 1970.

On returning from National Service with the East Surrey Regiment in 1955, Barry joined his father running a successful small car hire and trading business in Surbiton near Kingston in Surrey. Barry had wanted to go into the REME so he would be involved in vehicles but as was frequently the case he was disappointed - instead he was packed off to an infantry regiment and posted to Germany. Nevertheless he ended up running the motor transport section. But it was not all cars - Barry was a keen and able football player for many years. He was trialed with Fulham and Queens Park Rangers and often played three times a week for various teams - the Surrey county team, the Old Kingstonians or a local team in Molsey.

Barry can reflect on many high points over a long motor racing career – racing in the early 1970s in the popular BRSCC Prodsports series in his semi works MGB JYH 770 D with the TVRs, competing in the BCV8 Club events with the ex Colin Cork and John Carter MGB prepared by Gerry Brown and supported by Brown & Gammons and participating in the annual classic car race meetings on European circuits like Zolder, Zandvoort and Spa-Francorchamps with the generous support of DAF. Barry is particularly proud of a Francorchamps trophy he received in 1980 for finishing third overall against some very powerful machinery in a race which suffered torrential rain throughout. Yet again the combination of the MGB handling and Barry's skill of racing in the wet brought success and a presentation from Fangio who had come over at the invitation of the Belgian Automobile Racing Club to open the shorter 4.5 mile circuit for its first event. Barry has played a major part in taking a party of historic cars there each year since.

Another magical moment for Barry was taking his ex le Mans MGB to the 24 Heures du Mans in 2002 for a supporting eight lap Motor Racing Legends race before the main event starting later that Saturday afternoon. "It was a phenomenal experience thundering around that 8 mile circuit racing against a pre 1966 field of E-Types, Astons, Ferraris, Maseratis, Jaguar C and D Types and of course Cobras. It was a race, not a parade as in earlier years, where the MGB touched almost 135mph at points round the Sarthe. Andrew Hedges, the driver who had raced the



car with Paddy Hopkirk to a second in class and 11<sup>th</sup> overall in 1965, came into the pits to say hello and talk of the car." Back in 1965 the car had a special nose for the Le Mans race which had to be removed for other races each season and was stored with Syd Enever. Barry says it has vanished after it was sold to the late Bill Nicholson and went to one of his customers.

Later Barry entered his le Mans MGB for the 24 hour Classic Le Mans events and in 2002 met with an uncharacteristic accident when during a night session he was pounding down to Indianapolis from Arnage with a gaggle of cars ahead. A car clipped the edge of the track where there is a slight kink on the circuit and wobbled causing an E-Type on its tail to brake heavily and end up stationary across the circuit. Barry hit it broadside on and instinctively in a half daze turned off the ignition to avoid a fuel fire. Sitting there in pain his mind thought "without lights the next gaggle that came through Arnage in the pitch dark would see nothing of the accident until they are on top of us!" So he heaved himself out of the car and ran leaping over the armco barrier into the trees – and passed out. He came round thinking he was in heaven with a buxom French lady marshal over him assessing his injuries – a broken sternum and more. The strong MGB structure had been his saviour. He was taken off in an ambulance for treatment and then taken home by Dr Rod Longton and others on a double bed in a motor home. Julius Thoroughgood organised a campaign and raised £20,000 generously donated by supporters so the car could be rebuilt by Surrey Sports Cars at Ripley with support from the BMH Body Plant at Witney. Then with new aluminium wings found in Germany it was back at the Classic Le Mans event in 2004.

The Goodwood Revival has been a favourite meeting for Barry – in recent years he raced Steve Dixon's Le Mans MGA and then his Le Mans MGB in the Fordwater Trophy in a race with Stirling Moss who was driving the ex Pat Moss Sebring Sprite.

Barry is well known for his generosity of spirit especially when it comes to his fellow racing companions not only on the track but also those who do more menial jobs to make up a successful event. His contribution to the Club's successful BCV8 Championship has been valuable over the years, originally as co-founder with Victor Smith but memorably as chairman presiding over wild end of season dinners at the Bookham Grange hotel! A remarkably genial character enlivening any Club gathering.

Meeting Barry was an enjoyable opportunity to learn more of a welcoming and most amusing Club personality with a passion for the marque and racing MGBs.