

# LIVING WITH CLASSICS

Our tales from the driveway, garage and out on the open road



Dave Spaul from JSD transport offers movement in lieu of the engine.

## OUR CLASSICS

# A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

A trial engine fit is successful, but there are further challenges ahead



Wayne Carter builds John's adjustable starter motor. The swivel mount was originally designed for race cars but also provides maximum adaptability when swapping engines.



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CONTRIBUTOR

## 1966 AUSTIN A60 CAMBRIDGE

**T**rial fitting the rebuilt five-bearing MGB engine in the A60 showed up a number of issues, chief of which was the lack of room for a starter motor. The standard MGB unit needed a small but significant section to be cut out of the main chassis rail, but even then would be perilously close to the steering column. It seems almost counter-intuitive that an A60's engine bay could be smaller than an MGB's, but it is – at least around the gearbox tunnel and flywheel area.

The bulkhead has already been slightly modified around the heater unit to accommodate the larger casting there. The gearbox tunnel has also been cut out, raised for the taller and longer MGB overdrive gearbox, and put it back in, so I was keen to avoid any more cutting. The larger

capacity alternator I was going to need to power the fuel injection and other electrical systems was also a packaging issue, with both the steering column and inner wing being too close for comfort. Research showed that the answer could actually be a firm just down the road from me – Powerlite in Brierley Hill.

Effectively the custom division of Eurolec Components, Powerlite specialises in custom starter motors, alternators and other small engine bay components and is family firm that has been in the business for well over 50 years. Powerlite invented the Dynalite – a modern alternator that looks like a dynamo (beware the cheap fakes) and does a lot of OEM work for manufacturers, including Radical and Aston Martin.

I went to see them armed with some measurements and was initially astounded by the huge racks full of alternators, dynamos and starter



The Powerlite 184 MS, showing holes around front that allow it to be mounted in unusual spaces.

motors. However, further back in the building it makes bespoke parts in short batches, or occasionally, as a one-off.

The starter motor that solved my problem was the elegant little 184 MS. An offset gear-reduced unit with huge cranking torque transmitted through a set of steel gears. The simple genius, though, is the adjustable mounting plate, which has 19 holes in for the allen bolts that secure the plate to the starter motor. This allows the unit to be swivelled when being fitted so it can sit in an available gap when a starter motor is being fitted to a car for which it wasn't designed or when space is tight.

Like all the best ideas, it's elegant and simple, but has offered me a solution to a problem that I had initially thought would mean more welding and cutting. I was even able to see the unit being made – it's nice to see an industry where people



High capacity MGB alternator.

are still making a high-quality bespoke product in the UK. Powerlite also solved the alternator problem, coming up with a high-amperage unit that fits in the MGB mounting brackets, but is just a tad narrower so as not to get in the way.

The next issue is working out how to fit the temperature sensor for the fuel injection into the thermostat housing because the beautiful billet-alloy unit that SC Components provides as part of its MGB kit faces the wrong way for the large capacity A60 radiator that I've already spent money on getting made.

The last problem the trial engine fit provided was that of the exhaust manifold. A couple of Cambridge-Oxford Owners' Club members who have travelled this road before advised me to use a left-hand-drive MGB manifold because it runs slightly closer to the block in order to clear the LHD

steering column and thus will fit between the engine and chassis in an A60. So in the absence of finding a European market one, I bought one from a supplier in the USA. It's beautifully made but turned out to be more expensive than I was expecting because of the import duty. It does fit in the hole between the engine and the chassis, but it's too tall and needs either bending into shape or (and this is not going to happen) a serious cut and shut weld in the front crossmember.

So while progress has definitely been made with the A60, there are yet more problems to solve in the big jigsaw puzzle!



Testing fitting MGB engine and gearbox.

**OWNED SINCE**  
May 1984  
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LAST REPORT 0  
**TOTAL MILEAGE** 500,000  
**LATEST COSTS**  
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