

The Sad Tale of the Forgotten Car Atlantis

Richard John Morris - Reprinted from the April 1997 edition of MASCOT.

Ever heard of the Atlantis 1600? No - well I'm not surprised as it is not considered to be a true MG or Sprite and has now consequently been shunned, which is unfortunate because it was really rather good and deserved to succeed.

In 1970, David Martell, a former Brabham BT18 and Chevron B15 driver of some repute, and the owner of Car Preparation (a specialist garage/workshop in Oakley, Nr Bedford) thought the Spridget, which was already acknowledged as having very many good points, could be improved on. With this in mind a prototype was soon developed using a Ford crossflow engine and gearbox and several subtle modifications. The prototype was registered OVV 433J and was tested by many of the motoring publications of the day - Cars and Cars Conversions, Hot Car and Safety Fast. All the testers, without exception, had high praise indeed for the Atlantis although it was, if pushed hard, prone to prodigious amounts of axle tramp - something that even the standard Spridget was renowned for.

Thus having established that there was a market and demand for the Atlantis, Car Preparations commenced production in 1971 using only brand new cars. The Atlantis retailed at £1166 which was neatly between the standard Spridget at £970 and the MGB at £1308, and was available with all the options available at the time from BL. Depending on colour and specification, delivery was between 3 to 6 weeks.

The performance advantage over the standard Spridget was considerable - how about 0-60mph in 10.3 secs and a top speed of 106mph. The 0-60mph time is 2.8 secs better than the standard car and 1.8secs better than the 1.8 litre MGB! Cold starting was instantaneous and the engine would pull well from cold right up to the redline, unlike the venerable A-series engine!

Externally the Atlantis was distinguished from its more common brethren by "Atlantis" insignia on the sills and bootlid and by a split front bumper. The bodyshell itself required some modification - approximately 2" (50mm) of the heater box platform was removed and the gear lever aperture was set back 3" (75mm) to accommodate the breadth and length of the Ford gearbox; which exceeds the dimensions of the standard item. The specification chart appended to this article details the other alterations required to complete the conversion.

Unfortunately very little seems written about the Atlantis and, as such, production figures or the numbers that remain do not seem to be readily available. Similarly the date that production ceased is not known.

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Specifications **Atlantis 1600 / 1972**

MANUFACTURER:	Car Preparations, 8 Union Street, Bedford
PRICE:	£1166
OPTIONS:	As per standard BL options list, 6" GT wheels with Dunlop 165x13 SP sports £80, 3.721:1 final drive, £30, modified MGB 9 gal. fuel tank with sender, £26.50

ENGINE:	Ford Xflow 1600GT; 4 cylinder in line, 1599cc, 9:1 compression ratio, 92 BHP (DIN) 62 5500rpm; single Weber twin choke carb; reduced diameter cooling fan; revised oil filter mounting bracket; tubular exhaust manifold(made by Mike the Pipe.); special engine mounts; pancake air cleaner. NB: engine mounted slightly further back in the bay than standard.
TRANSMISSION:	Ford four speed all synchro close ratio single rail gearbox; 7.5"dia. hydraulic clutch; modified propshaft; special rear gear box mount, albeit in identical position to standard.
SUSPENSION:	Front as standard except 5/8- anti-roll bar fitted. Rear as standard except panhard rod and anti-tramp bars to differential housing.
BRAKES:	As standard but servo (Lockheed) assistance with DS11 (Ferodo) brake pads at the front and slightly harder rear shoes.
STEERING:	As standard.
WHEELS:	As standard.
WEIGHT:	14.4cwt (13.4cwt standard) 54% (F) 46% (R) distribution, (52.4%(F) 47.6%(R) standard).

PERFORMANCE:	MG	ATLANTIS	DIFFERENCE
0-30	3.9secs	2.8secs	-1.1 secs
0-60	13.2secs	10.4secs	-2.8secs
0-80	33.5secs	22.5secs	-11.0secs

MAX SPEED:	106mph
FUEL CONSUMPTION:	AVERAGE: 29mpg
HARD DRIVING:	23mpg