

June, 2023

Oil Spots

A Newsletter of the Plateau British Car Club



THE PREZ SEZ

One of my co-conspirators neglected to send his bio, so we will chat about a recent trip my wife and I took to the BARBER MOTORSPORTS MUSEUM in Birmingham, AL. The museum is housed in a modern five story glass and concrete building that is exceptionally clean. The grounds also have a large race track with paddock area for motorcycle and Indy cars. There happened to be a cycle race in progress while we were there. Although I am not a cycle guy, I was quite impressed. The building houses more than a thousand motorcycles of every kind and manufacturer from the earliest wood frame steam powered to V8 drag bikes and everything in between. Besides, it also houses one of the largest collections of Lotus cars anywhere. In addition it houses a complete technical library for the restoration facilities and two large parts rooms. Restorations are done on a one on one basis as some bikes are more valuable in their unrestored state. They employ five full time restorers as well as many other building staff including two girls charged with a full time job of dusting the displays. There are many real Indy cars there as well as about 200 antique boat motors. There is literally stuff hanging off the walls in this building. It is only about 4 hours away, so this can be done as a weekend trip. It did not disappoint and was quite reasonably priced. JUST REMEMBER WHEN EVERYTHING IS COMING YOUR WAY.....YOU ARE IN THE WRONG LANE!

Chris



Oil Spots is the official monthly publication of the **Plateau British Car Club of Tennessee**. Material is actively solicited for the newsletter and every effort will be made to use appropriate material from the membership. Unsolicited material from non-members is also encouraged. The editor reserves the right to edit for length and appropriateness. No placement of material is guaranteed. Your contributions should be submitted to: dprainey@att.net

Deadline for submissions is the 20th of the month prior to publication.

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All British Cars/Owners Welcome

The Plateau British Car Club was created to band together owners of the Little British Cars (LBC) to provide a way of exchanging ideas, technical data, amusing stories, and just plain fun. All LBC owners are invited to enjoy the "LBC experience" to the fullest with friends. Ownership of an British car is not required for membership, but non-British car owners are classified as Associate members and have no voting rights.

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The Membership Chair report.

The membership chairperson reports that there have been no new members added to the PBCC during the month of May. If you know someone who would like to join, please don't hesitate to encourage them to do so.

TREASURER'S REPORT

EDNA HORONY

		PBCC	Financials		
May 1, 2023 Beginning Balance	Income	Income	Expenses	Expenses	Total
\$1,049.20					\$1,049.20
Membership Dues	\$25.00				\$25.00
Ad Income					
Office Supplies					
Flowers/Cards					
Annual Web Page					
Rugby Expenses					
Total for Month					\$1,074.20

Classified ads on the website are free to members in good standing of the Plateau British Car Club.

All others must pay \$10.00 (with submission of the ad) for 3 months minimum. Maximum 40 words per classified ad. Ads may run three consecutive months, and again after a two month hiatus, upon re-submission to the Editor at dprainey@att.net. Commercial advertising rates are based on camera-ready copy (electronic or hard copy). The rates are: Full Page- \$130/year, \$70/6 months, \$45/3 months; Half Page-\$75/year, \$45/6 months, \$24/3 months; or Quarter Page-\$45/year, \$30/6 months, \$15/3 months. Ad copy (commercial or classified) and payment must be submitted to the Editor by the 20th of the month prior to publication. All copy and advertising material is accepted and published in good faith. The Plateau British Car Club, its officers and the Editor of the Oil Spots expressly disclaim responsibility for any and all consequences that may arise from the publication and/or use of any material. Opinions expressed by contributors are their own, and not necessarily those of the Plateau British Car Club of Tennessee, its officers and/or the Editor.

O-----o

Just in case you are interested!!

You can say that you heard it here first!!

One acre of vineyard = 5 tons of grapes, which = 3,985 bottles of wine, which = 797 gallons of wine, which = 15,940 glasses of wine, which = 13.5 barrels of wine,
one barrel of wine = 59 gallons of wine, which = 1,180 glasses of wine, which =
24.6 cases of wine.

One case of wine = 30 pounds of grapes, which = 48 glasses of wine, which = 12
bottles of wine

one bottle of wine = 2.4 pounds of grapes, which = 4 glasses of wine
which = 4 happy people.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rostyle wheels were so named because the maker of the wheels was Rubery Owen, hence R.O. style.

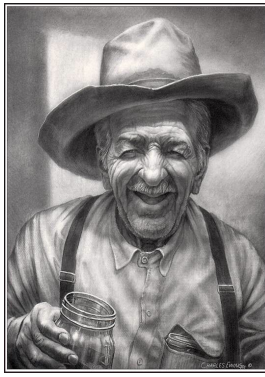
“A gentleman does not motor about after dark”, Joseph Lucas, 1923

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HERE ARE SOME NOTEWORTHY FUTURE EVENTS

- **CRUSIN’ INTO SUMMER-HOSTED BY THE PLATEAU CORVETTE CLUB**
- **RETURN OF THE BRITISH - RUGBY, TN - AUG. 19 - 21, 2023**
- **CHATTANOOGA BRITISH CAR SHOW IN Ooltewah, TN - Oct., 2023**
- **Details can be found on the club’s website at PBCCTN.org**
- **Some details are to be determined**

We need club members to be drive leaders and sponsor a drive out.



“There once was an old geezer, so bold,
His LBC Roadster was worth its weight in gold.
Its curves and lines, so sleek and fine,
Made it a car that was simply divine.

He'd polished it up to a dazzling shine,
With every detail, he made it look just fine.
And when he drove it down the street,
People would stop and gaze in complete defeat.

The engine would roar as he hit the gas,
The wind in his hair, he'd feel like a young lad.
He'd cruise down the highway with a grin on his face,
Proud of his Roadster and its classic grace.

For years, he'd driven this car with pride,
Through twists and turns, it never left his side.
And though he knew it wasn't perfect,
He loved it all the same, with every defect.

Now, as the years passed and he grew old,
His LBC Roadster became a story told.
But still, he'd sit behind the wheel,
And remember the days of his youth with zeal.

For though his body may have aged,
The memories of his Roadster had stayed.
And as long as he had those memories,
His LBC Roadster would always be young and free.”

Written by AI

Your Parts Supplier Guys

Now, if you've ever spend a couple of hours pouring over an LBC parts catalogs, meticulously putting together a list of the things that you want from your favorite supplier, you might want to keep in mind when you are finally ready to pick up the phone and use their toll free number, the following little scenario:

Joe Foneguy works for one of the large LBC parts suppliers. He arrives at work at 8 o'clock AM on a Monday morning to find that he is the first one there and that the coffee hasn't been made yet. He puts the pot on and goes to fire up his computer while he waits. Gets it all fired up, he is just about to get up and get his first cup of the day when the phone rings. Being the generally nice guy that he is, he answers it.

Now remember, it is Monday morning, Joe isn't fully awake yet and hasn't had any coffee. The guy on the other end of the phone is in a different time zone and has been awake and over coffeed for a couple of hours now.

The customer then starts to ask Joe a bunch of questions about front suspension parts, as he is just about to rebuild his. Joe manages to wind his brain up enough to answer all the questions about coil-over kits and tube shocks and polyurethane bushes and drilled brake discs and competition pads and lowered springs and new kingpins and all that stuff. Joe has his ordering software thingy open and ready to go. He has even entered some part numbers while talking to the guy so that he can be ready to quickly confirm or cancel the order as soon as he knows what the customer wants.

The customer then orders a set of standard upper crossmember pads.

Joe clicks the cancel button next to all the stuff he had entered trying to be efficient and enters the part number for the pads - only to find out that the last 35 sets in stock had been sold over the weekend to people doing exactly the same thing as the current customer. New stock would not be in for a few days and upon being told this, the customer gets all irate and slams down the phone.

Joe sits there for a moment to calm down then starts to get up to get his first coffee of the day. Sure enough, the phone rings again. Once again, Joe answers it and goes through the same question and answer process before taking a tiny order.

Eventually Joe actually gets the chance to get his coffee, only to find that everyone else coming in has emptied the pot and nobody has refilled it!

As you might imagine, the next time he answers the phone he probably isn't going to be that nice cheerful, sweet guy that he usually is. Unfortunately, the person on the other end of the phone doesn't know Joe still hasn't had his coffee and just assumes the supplier he is dealing with is no good.

So, if you want good service from a supplier, remember a couple of basic rules, Don't call them first thing in the morning, give them a little time to get their coffee and wake up. Better yet, wait until they have been at work for a couple of hours before you make that call. If everyone did that, by the time the phone rang for the first time, they will be so bored that they'll be happy to answer all your dumb questions, whether or not you place an order, just to have someone to talk to!

Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent - Dennis Rainey



Membership to the Plateau British Car Club is open to anyone interested in British vehicles.

- You do not need to own an immaculately restored British vehicle to join the club.
- You do not need to drive a British vehicle to come to club events.
- You do not even need to own a British vehicle to join the club.
- You do not have to refer to hoods as "bonnets" and wrenches as "spanners".
- You do not need to drink Earl Grey tea or warm beer.
- You do need to have fun.

Arkley MG Midget **by Jack Spradling**



"Winnie" my personal Arkley SS based on a 1971 MG Midget

READ ON.....

This is Winston, (or Winnie to friends), a 1971 Arkley MG Midget with a John Britten designed front and rear.

Besides the custom body work other upgrades include: The 1275cc MG engine was rebuilt and a street cam added; Electronic ignition; Weber 32/36 carb with a new header and exhaust system; a 5-speed Datsun transmission rebuilt by Rivergate; wheels are 13x7 with 185/70R13 tires. The interior was completely redone with modern racing seats that are becoming worn and I will be replacing soon. A modern radio/speaker system and cigarette lighter plug installed. A center console/storage area/arm rest was also added. Indicator, running, and stop lights use LED bulbs.





I use Valvoline VR1 20/50 motor oil due to its high zinc content. For the 5-speed transmission I use Redline MT90.

I found this car for sale on the MG Experience Forum. I talked to the owner/builder several times and then, with my brother Stephen, made the trip to Wesley Chapel, Florida on November 7, 2021. We picked it up the next day and returned home traveling about 1500 miles over the two days.

Though I had driven it in Florida, it was two days after returning home before I had an opportunity to do a real shake down drive. It wouldn't start. The battery was about 3 years old, so I replaced it. I still had trouble starting it until my brother suggested that I had flooded it in all of my previous attempts. I held the accelerator to the floor, turned the key and after a couple of seconds it fired off. I took it on a test drive of about 20 miles. The car rode and drove brilliantly, a completely different experience than with my previous 1969 Austin Healey Sprite. Acceleration was much improved, road speed was much better at lower RPM's, and it climbed hills without straining.

And then...I pulled into a market to turn around and head home when the car died. I was able to pull into a space and I tried to restart it without success. I knew I had fuel, the fuel pump was running, there was fuel visible in the fuel filter so I knew it wasn't a fuel problem. The battery had been replaced only an hour before. I checked wiring connections and found nothing out of the ordinary. I called AAA (an excellent resource if you are driving a classic British car) and was told there would be an hour and a half wait for a tow truck to take it back to my house. After an hour and forty minutes AAA called back and said that they had turned it over to another service and it would be an additional 2 hours. The sun had long set before they arrived.

Two days later I began trouble shooting. I finally found a loose connection to the regulator. I tightened it and the car started.

Because of the weather it was another 3 days before I could put some miles on her to see if the problem was resolved. Initially the issue did seem to be corrected. It was then that I noticed when running the amp gauge never showed over 12 volts. It turned out that my alternator was going out. I pulled it and had it repaired at a local shop for about \$50. That completely cured that issue.

The next problem was that the front tires were leaking down. Though they didn't look old and the tread was still good they wouldn't hold air for more than a couple of days. Decided to replace the tires with a set of Kumho Solus TA11 tires.



The new tires, without the wide white sidewalls, lose the cute gangster look and, I believe, make it look a bit leaner and meaner.

Next issue I discovered was the odometer did not work. That issue did resolve on its own though the trip meter will not reset.

The starter was beginning to consistently drag. It would eventually turn over but it would often take several attempts for it to finally spin. I replaced it with a starter from a previous parts car that I had on the shelf. Again, problem solved.

Unlike the previous owner who chose to transport the car by trailer to car shows, I choose to use the car as a regular driver. I have gone on several trips of 150-miles or more, including one trip to a car show in Crossville, Tennessee, in June of 2022 and another car show in Rugby, Tennessee in August of 2022. In both cases the car performed flawlessly.

It also won first place in the modified class at Rugby. Recently I made a 340-mile round trip to Townsend, Tennessee for the 2023 Springtime in the Smokies event. I averaged 35 mpg driving up and about 40 mpg coming home.



The red 1969 Austin Healey Sprite with the flag on the hood (bonnet) is my former car. I sold it to purchase my Arkley and my brother, Stephen, contacted the buyer a few months later and bought it back.

I have put together a small “road kit” that I keep in the boot, accessed behind the seats. It contains some spare parts and limited tools for doing minor roadside repairs. The parts include a fan belt, bulbs and fuses, thermostat, plugs and wires, fuel pump. Obviously not for serious issues, but for many of the minor things that can go wrong with a 50-year-old car, it gives me the ability to get it back on the road quickly.

Arkley History

The Arkley was designed by accomplished sports car racer John Britten in 1969 as a fiberglass front and rear body conversion for MG Midgets and Austin Healey Sprites. The parts would fit every model from the first 1958 Bugeye Sprite to the last 1980 Spitfire powered MG Midget. There were two versions, the “S” with standard wheels and tires and the

“SS” with wider wheels and tires. The “SS” was the most popular and the “S” was dropped. Only about 900 to 1000 were produced originally and very few made it to the States.

The fiberglass sections were manufactured by Lenham Motor Company at Harrietsham in Kent. They also built the fiberglass bodies Britten used on the Midgets and Sprites while dominating his class in racing. Conversions were done in Britten’s shop, Arkley Engineering, at Arkley in Hertfordshire, and other bodies were sold as DIY kits. Originally the kits were built to recycle rusting or wrecked MG’s and Sprites.

The first car was produced in 1970. The influence for the design was the Lotus 7 at the front and the Morgan at the rear. Both were companies that Britten had previously worked for. While some have suggested that the Bugeye (or Frogeye) was the influence for the front clip due to the raised headlights, a look at the front of the Lotus 7 shows where the inspiration came from.



Lotus 7 front clip



Morgan rear end

The front fenders and the hood (bonnet) were unbolted and removed from the donor car. The rear section had to be cut away and the new section bonded on to the rear of the car. No structural members were cut and with the loss of over 300 pounds the car was stronger and quicker than the original. Many of the kits went on racers and hill climbers. It is unknown how many actually survive.

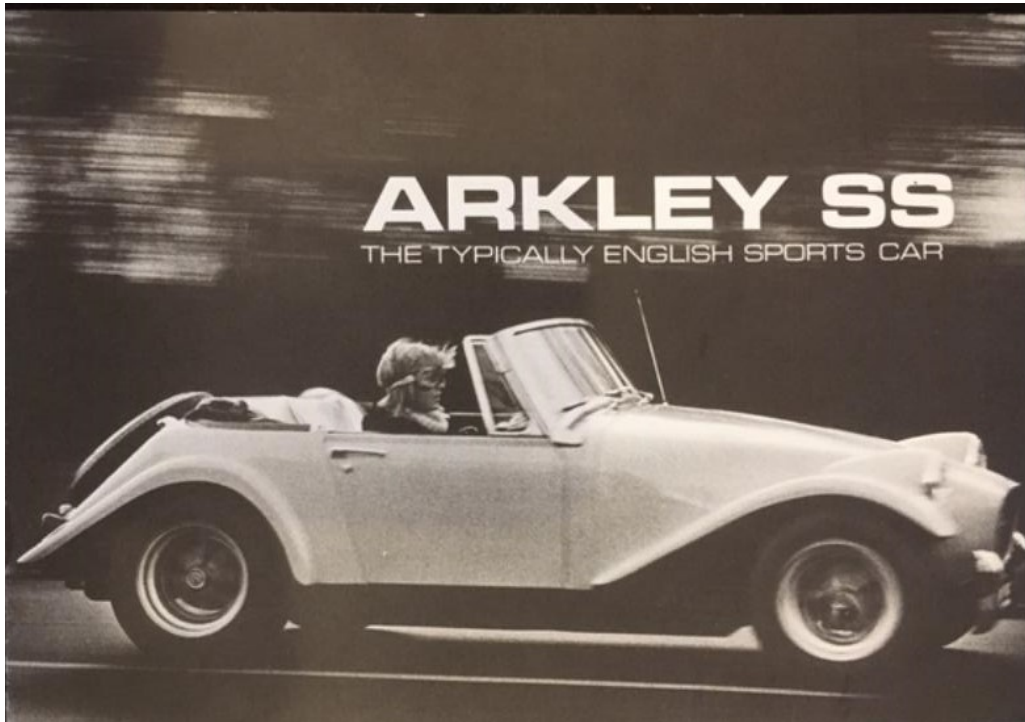
Peter May, who had worked in the John Britten Garage, founded Peter May Engineering in 1979, and bought the Arkley manufacturing rights from Britten in 1987.

Below are other examples of Arkleys





Arkley SS Brochure



the Arkley SS



It's impossible to look at the Arkley SS without realising at once that it's packed full of wheels, tyres and machinery. There is no wasted space, no useless overhang, but the chunky styling conceals a deceptively generous amount of leg-room. The outside spare wheel makes an admirable rear bumper, and leaves room for luggage in the tail. Main body panels are laminated glassfibre of great strength and rigidity, so your body-rot problems are gone for ever.

The truth of the matter is that somewhere along the line we traded the old-fashioned sports car pedigree our fathers worshipped for heavily chromed bumpers, slab sides, projecting luggage boot, and suchlike effete modern trappings. The Arkley SS marks a return to sports-car sanity and open-air freedom; to each wheel snugly sheathed in its own wing; to an exhaust pipe of not insignificant diameter designed to be heard as well as seen; to a power/weight ratio fit for a car of twice its capacity; to a bonnet that opens up on the whole power unit instead of a measly hatch; to a view from the driving seat that takes in tapered bonnet, cowled headlamps and flowing wings.

Wheels are the widest ever on a production car this size, and the fat, soft Torinos will claw their way round dicey corners where any other car would end up in the ditch.



building your own Arkley - step by step

WHAT YOU NEED TO START WITH

The Arkley SS is based on the BMC Sprite/Midget range. One can go out and buy the engine, chassis, trim etc etc separately to go with the kit, but it's much easier if you start off with a complete Spridget. And unless you are an expert, don't be tempted to rebuild a crashed write-off into an Arkley; the wise thing is to spend a little more on an undamaged car, or one with superficial damage only. Any undamaged parts you don't use, such as wings, bonnet etc, are easy to sell and fetch good prices.

Any year of Spridget can be made into an Arkley, and kits are available covering 1958 to 1973 models. Make sure the car is free from structural damage, and that the floor is not badly rusted. The important area to check is around the rear spring mountings. The sills should preferably not be rusted either, but if they are it is not too difficult to fit new ones. The sills contribute to the rigidity of the monocoque floor pan, and while replacement fibreglass sills are on the market, we advise keeping to steel ones, and having the replacements welded into place.

SELECTING THE RIGHT KIT

The only differences from year to year that affect the fitting of the kit are to do with the weather equipment. Since 1958 there have been four different front and rear hood-fixing arrangements, as well as the change from sidescreens to wind-up windows. The rear cockpit edge of the Arkley body has the same shape and position as post-1967 Spridgets, i.e. 1275cc models.

For the earlier models, the original hood cannot be used, but the front rail and the hood frame are retained.

GETTING DOWN TO BARE FACTS

Let's assume you are not a two-car plutocrat, and that you want to have your car laid up for as short a time as possible. We suggest you proceed as follows:

1. Unbolt front wings, bonnet lid, bumper and front valance.
2. Trim off inner front wings. Move horn and (late models only) wiper motor.
3. Bolt Arkley front end into position, using existing holes. Fit straps.
4. Change over headlamps and front number plate. Fit side and flasher lamps. (Car can now be driven again).
5. Cut away unwanted rear bodywork (detailed instructions included with kit).
6. Fit Arkley rear end. Bond firmly into position using strips of fibreglass applied from the inside.
7. Change over rear lamps and rear number plate lamp. Modify rear exhaust mounting. (Car can now be driven again).
8. Fit the wide wheels and tyres. Bolt the new spare wheel into its recess.





9. Lower the suspension as described in the fitting instructions. (Parts not included in kit, but total cost under £6).
10. Fit the hood frame and hood. Where this kit includes a hood, the price includes a set of new hood fasteners and free fitting at Car Hood Co.
11. Have your new Arkley sprayed in your choice of colour.

This should give you a very good idea of what is involved, but a fully detailed set of instructions come with the kit, and these are packed with practical information and advice.

The cutting off of the original bodywork, and the fitting of the new rear section, can both be done by us or by our approved fitting agents if you think it is beyond you, and fixed prices will be quoted in advance. The average handyman should be able to manage perfectly well, however. Please don't be afraid to consult us if you hit any snags.

The one job we do recommend you to have done professionally is the painting of the finished car. As the bodywork is new and unblemished, and the area of paintwork is small, the cost will not be very much compared with a normal respray. We do not supply the Arkley bodywork already pigmented with colour as this has practical disadvantages – the outside surface has a smooth, opaque grey finish.

your questions answered

Q. Can I get HP on the Arkley?

A. On a ready-built car, yes, no problem. You could have HP on the kit as well, but probably better to buy the kit in stages as you proceed. That way you avoid interest charges.

Q. Will I have problems insuring the Arkley?

A. You ought not to, although we can't speak for all of the hundreds of insurance companies. If anyone tries to quote you a high premium, please contact us. Consider third party, fire and theft insurance to keep the cost down – the Arkley is just about the easiest car made to repair after an accident.

Q. How much boot space does the Arkley have?

A. There is plenty of room behind the seats. More luggage can be put right in the tail of the car; this compartment is normally closed off by a bulkhead (which you could temporarily remove when preparing for your summer holidays). Overall, there is probably as much space as a Spridget with a fat spare wheel in the boot.

Q. I have an MG Midget which I am thinking of converting to an Arkley SS. How much of the original car is used?

A. Complete floor pan, front and rear suspension, power unit, drive train, scuttle, steering box and column, hydraulics, wiring harness. These items are left assembled as a single unit, cutting down assembly time drastically compared with other kits.

Q. Can I build a Ford 1600 or MGB-powered Arkley?

A. These engines can be fitted to the Arkley, and there is enough room under the bonnet. However, it's a tough and expensive do-it-yourself job, and we don't know of anyone that supplies an installation kit. Suggest you wait to see how much more performance the immense weight-saving gives you before doing an engine-swap.

Q. Will the Arkley kit suit any year of Sprite or Midget?

A. Yes, right from 1958 to the present day. Price list gives full details.

Q. Will the Arkley bodywork fit my Morris 1000/A35/Spitfire/Singer Gazelle?

A. If you're a mechanical genius, yes. Otherwise, no!

Q. When I remove the outside bodywork of my Sprite, won't it take away some of the strength of the car?

A. The rather heavy metal bodywork has nothing to support but itself, and in fact the Arkley, with its lightweight glass fibre bodywork bonded to the strong and well-braced steel platform chassis, makes an exceptionally strong and rigid combination. In the critical centre-section the torsional stiffness/weight ratio is actually improved.

Q. Do you make a hardtop for the Arkley?

A. No, because several makes of hardtops for 1967 and on Spridgets fit the Arkley very well. We stock the Lenham hardtop, and it blends nicely with the styling of the Arkley.

Q. I'd like to build my own Arkley SS, but have not got a Midget to use as a basis.

Can you supply the whole car in kit form?

A. No, because if you add up the cost of all the new British Leyland parts needed,

works out dearer this way than stripping down a brand new car for conversion.

Q. How will VAT affect the Arkley?

A. Practically every time you spend money on something, a little bit goes to VAT, and the Arkley is no exception. However, the kit is exempt from the 10% car surcharge.

Q. My Midget has wire wheels. Will these be OK to keep?

A. The ordinary sort of wire wheels will look lost in the capacious Arkley wheel arches. Either get your existing wires widened (Weller Wheels of Edenbridge, Kent, can do this) or arrange a hub and wheel swap with someone who has disc wheels.

Q. What is the delivery wait for an Arkley kit?

A. Normally we have them ex-stock; occasionally there is a few days delay. If coming from afar, please phone up first.

Q. Do you make other types of bodywork?

A. No, just the Arkley.

Q. Can I buy the Arkley bodywork as separate items?

A. Yes, we sell a full range of spare parts.

Q. Will my old tonneau cover fit?

A. On 1275 cars your tonneau and hood envelope both transfer straight over. If you have an earlier car you might possibly adapt the tonneau to fit.



Q. I've just put a new hood on my Midget. Will it fit the Aekley?

A. On 1275 cars, yes. If your car is an earlier model with the detachable hood, no. Used hoods are easy to sell (try the 'Mart'), but you must keep the front rail and the hood frame.

Q. What should I look for when buying a Spridget for conversion?

A. Try and find a sound, straight car but with horrible paintwork (this will put other buyers off it and help you to get the price down). If you think you've found a suitable car, we will inspect it for you free.

Q. Do I need much skill and experience to build the Aekley?

A. Not too much, just care and patience. If you meet with any snags, we're always there to help.

Q. Is there any reason why I shouldn't race my new Aekley?

A. No, none at all. In fact the Aekley has been accepted as a modified sports car for British club racing from 1973, so you should be in good company on the circuits.

Q. Does the old bodywork off my Midget have any value?

A. Yes, it's easy to get good prices (*Exchange and Mart* again), and by the time you've sold front and rear bumpers, front wings, centre valance, bonnet lid, boot lid, narrow tyres, etc., you should get £40/£50 back.

Q. Is it true that the Aekley is really a Japanese Morgan?

A. No.