

Mike Maloney's Arkley

By Mike Maloney

I'm not sure when the addiction began, the Arkley addiction that is. I think it may have been in the late 1980's while attending a British car show in Kentucky. As I was entering the car show in the early morning, one of the workers responsible for getting the proper British car in the proper marque isle, looked at my car and said to me, "Morgans to the right in isle 13!!!" Say what? I was astonished because I was driving a very mundane non-exotic MG midget! But I must admit it was a very unusual hybrid MG Midget. But wait, I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me back up and explain.



During the late 1960's, John Britten was the owner of a Morgan/Lotus dealership in, of all places, Arkley, (hence the name) Herfordshire, England, which is a kind of suburb of London. John was also one of the most successful MG midget motor sports racing drivers in England. In the ever so competitive world of auto sports, removing weight was always a priority. It was hardly surprising that John began using fiberglass front and rear bodywork to further lighten the car for a competitive edge.

Shortly thereafter, John Britten began selling turn key cars and fiberglass kits for the do it your self aficionados. In the mid 1970's the kits were licensed to be produced in the United States.

The kit, consisting of one complete front and one complete rear body section, transforms a post 1966 Spridget into a lighter and arguably more stylish British Sports car. In order to install the front and rear sections, the front fenders and hood are removed, and the fiberglass front is bolted directly to the original bumper brackets and the wiper motor has to be slightly repositioned. Portions of the rear of the car and trunk are then cut out using a sawsall. (A good deal of blind ignorance and courage is required to make the first cut) Once this is done the rear section is fiber glassed and pop riveted into place. Since all of the original car except the front and rear body sections are retained much of the typical "kit" car assembly and fit problems are avoided and the basic mechanical integrity of the Spridget is unaffected.

Depending on your point of view, the cars look similar to a Lotus/Morgan, or bug eye Sprite from the front and very much like a Morgan or MG TF from the rear. I have owned three of these cars (sadly one now resides in San Francisco and the other in Michigan) Now, here is where the addiction becomes clear. I currently have one running Arkley and TWO more under construction!! The car pictured has a standard 1275cc engine along with a Datsun 210 5 speed transmission. (This certainly transforms the car) These cars are certainly not for everyone, and certainly not the purists. I guess it all depends on your definition of "Improving the Breed". Basically, I think people either love or hate these pug ugly little hybrid British cars. For some reason I just can't stop building them!