

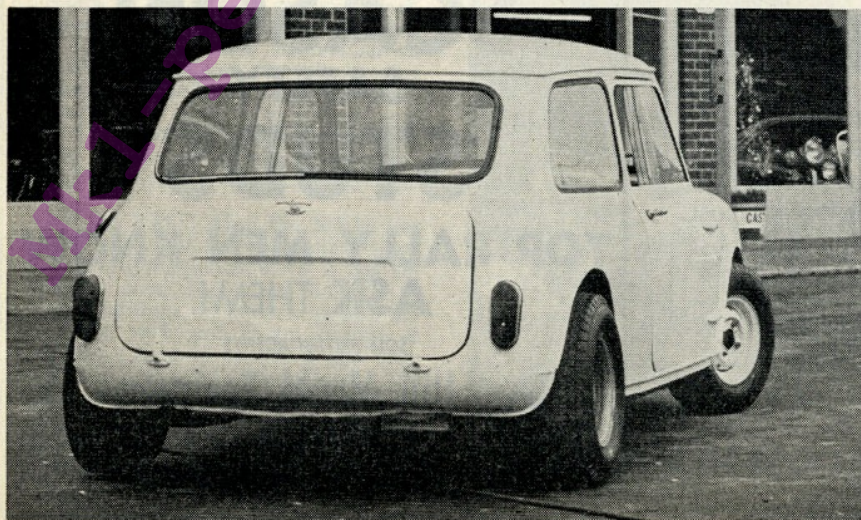
THE Mini was originally designed as a four-seater utility car, but many people would like a lower, sleeker version of less aggressively utilitarian outline. The G.T. Equipment Co., run by those fervent Mini enthusiasts Geoffrey Thomas and Neville Trickett, have tackled the problem. They decided that it was most desirable to retain a strong steel body, and so they modified the standard shell rather than making a new design altogether. In any case, the high transverse engine of the Mini will not fit into an Italian-style coupé, so something like the basic Mini shape must be retained.

The roof is lowered by cutting and re-joining the screen and door pillars and by pre-fabricating the rear quarter pillars. Naturally, the screen and rear window are smaller and have considerably more slope. The windscreen is laminated and the side and rear windows are plastic to save weight, though glass could be used.

The body is cut away from the floor pan, right round the wheel arches and along the bottom. It is reflanged and joined again, during which the unsightly external seams are deleted and the body is welded internally, increasing strength

# MiniSprint and Walker GTS

Road impressions by  
**JOHN BOLSTER**



and reducing wind resistance. The doors are completely reconstructed to fit and a new boot lid and bonnet top are made of glass fibre. As the standard fuel tank is now too tall to fit, a new glassfibre one of 7½ gallons' capacity is substituted.

The body is so arranged that the standard sub-frames bolt back into place and no modifications to the mechanical components are necessary. The height reduction is 4 ins., or 5½ ins. if the usual suspension lowering procedure is carried out at the same time. In addition to the cleaner exterior and more sloping screen, a 14 per cent reduction in frontal area is achieved and there is a weight saving of about 1½ cwt.

A seat modification to give a lower and longer driving position is standard, though most owners prefer to jettison the ordinary seats altogether and fit one of the excellent brands of special bucket seats. The complete reconstruction of the body shells is carried out at the works of the G.T. Equipment Co., Parkstone, Dorset. In addition, the R. R. C. Walker Garages are distributors and will assemble cars to customers' requirements, under the name Walker GTS.

The basic lowered body, on an exchange basis for a standard shell, is supplied in primer complete with windows for £195. Obviously, there is no P.T. as this has already been paid. Complete 850 c.c. cars are sold for £495. These have B.M.C. reconditioned engine and gearbox units or Janspeed rebuilt units. With a single carburettor engine, the MiniSprint will give a Mini-Cooper a run for its money. There are considerable insurance advantages in retaining a standard motor, and though the reduction in weight and wind resistance assist the performance, the lower centre of gravity is a potent safety factor. At £495, the car is absolutely complete with all expendable parts renewed. It is supplied in white paint with minimum trim, most owners preferring to do their own interior decoration.

The man who wants the ultimate takes his Mini—1275 S or what have you—along to Rob Walker's garage. In 2½ working days they will strip it down and rebuild it into a lowered MiniSprint shell. The car can be finished in any colour scheme and the interior is trimmed like an expensive G.T. model. The complete rebuild costs £337 and the car is then called the Walker GTS.

I was able to try a 1275 S, which I collected from Rob Walker's garage at Dorking. The appearance of the car is enormously improved, the long, low look being most attractive. Sitting well back, I had a good all-round view and my head was as far from the roof as with a standard Mini. This lowered machine handled particularly well on corners and the reduced air drag gave brilliant top gear acceleration. Obviously, the maximum speed would benefit but I was unable to measure this in my short test. The inclination of the rear window keeps it remarkably clean.

I formed the opinion that the MiniSprint is well made and practical, as well as being a good-looking car. Naturally, if the driver sits well back he is reducing the rear seat space, but most people will not regard this as a full four-seater, though it can be so used. For racing purposes, a car with a modified shell is regarded as a G.T. model rather than a touring car, irrespective of its engine specification. As a road car, it makes a standard Mini look like a 1908 taxi.