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EDITION

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# KITCAR

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READER'S BUILD

## MARLIN REBUILD

One owner, twice built Berlinetta

TECH

## THREADED FASTENERS

They look the same but it's vital to use the right ones

ADVICE

## KIT CAR SECURITY

How to keep your kit car safe at all times



# SMALL CAR BIG FUN

Billy Fletcher recently built and started competing with a CycleKart, and reckons you should too. Here's what it's all about

Words and pictures Billy Fletcher



With evenly matched cars and modest build costs, CycleKart racing is affordable and great fun

**K**it cars have evolved tremendously over recent years. Many of the component parts are now precision manufactured using sophisticated CAD/CAM processes such as laser cutting. With the aid of detailed build instructions, comprehensive kit contents, and instructional videos, they are a far cry from the basic kits of the 1970s and '80s, where parts either needed trimming to size or simply didn't fit! However, maybe having to use your ingenuity and develop your technical abilities was an integral and rewarding part of building these kits. The feeling of immense achievement in completing the kit eventually far outweighed the frustrations and challenges encountered during the build. Has something been lost? The recent interest in CycleKarts in the UK harks back to those early years, with enthusiasts scratch-building their machines (often in just a shed) from whatever is at hand using their ingenuity and imagination, fuelled by nostalgia and the urge to create something special.

CycleKarts are scaled, powered (not pedalled) vehicles with pre-WW2 race car styling. They are the modern offspring of the CycleCars of the early 20th Century. These early vehicles provided an economical alternative to the motorcycles and cars of that era, the latter then an expensive luxury item. They were minimalistic vehicles powered by engines from motorcycles.

## "CYCLEKARTS SLIDE AND DRIFT THROUGH THE CORNERS JUST LIKE THE CARS THAT INSPIRED THEM"

CycleKarts originated during the 1990s in the USA. Peter and Michael Stevenson made approximately three-quarter scale replicas of iconic racing cars using 17in Honda C90 motorcycle wire wheels and a pull-start Honda 200cc single cylinder engine (as used in portable generators and cement mixers). They had a basic twin-rail chassis, leaf-spring front suspension, and no rear suspension. The CycleKart community has grown worldwide since those days. Interest is currently growing in the UK so, in March 2022, the CycleKarts GB Club was formed.

There is a basic specification that the CycleKarts conform to, and the club provides guidance and advice (plus sympathy) to those currently building their creations. It also organises many events to display and explore the capabilities of the CycleKarts. They are not built to be serious race machines or show cars but are simply an expression of their creators' individual styling interests and a means of pursuing some vintage-style motoring enjoyment. This year has seen drag races on the beach at Saunton Sands in

Devon, dynamic and static displays at Brooklands including runs up the Test Hill, dynamic and static displays at various shows, plus events at various kart circuits.

The most recent event took place in late October at Whilton Mill kart circuit, and included various test sessions, the May-Bug Sprint, and a 40-minute endurance trial with a Le Mans-style start. Seven karts attended this event, some of which had multiple drivers.

CycleKarts provide a great smiles per pound ratio. A litre of fuel lasts for about 25 minutes of spirited driving, tyres last for a couple of seasons, engines just need regular oil changes (no filter) and the occasional spark plug. They are also great fun to drive as they slide and drift through the corners just like the cars that inspired them did back in the halcyon days of motor racing. So, if the thought of a full-size kit car seems daunting or too expensive, consider having a go at a CycleKart.

[www.cyclekartsgb.com](http://www.cyclekartsgb.com)



There are race meetings throughout the year

### CycleKart

**Body** A facsimile of the builders' chosen pre-WW2 inspiration car. A variety of materials including wood, aluminium and glassfibre

**Chassis** Traditionally a 3in by 1in box section twin-rail chassis, but there are variations on the theme

**Suspension** Front - Generally, a beam axle and leaf springs. Rear - Generally none

**Wheels** Wire spoked 17in wheels from a Honda C90 or pit-bike, with tyres to suit

**Engine** Rear mounted Honda GX200 pull-start, single-cylinder, four-stroke petrol. There are many Chinese copies of these for well under £200. 6.5bhp as standard but modifications allowed to achieve 9bhp to 10bhp

**Transmission** Centrifugal clutch and chain drive, sometimes with a 2:1 reduction gearbox and wet clutch, but often a Comet TAV variable-ratio belt drive

**Rear axle** Generally, a chain-driven 1in diameter kart axle, sometimes with a differential fitted

**Brakes** Either cable or hydraulically operated, often a single disc mounted on the axle

**Dimensions** Maximum width to outside of tyres is 1 metre and wheelbase is approximately 1.7 metres