

# 1980 TRIUMPH SPITFIRE

1980 Triumph Spitfire 1500 Convertible

Owners: Bernie and Janice Taulborg Collection

Original cost: \$3,745.00

Previous owner(s): Original owner from Whitewood, South Dakota, 1980 - 1988; owner from Omaha, 2002.

Number made: Mark IV/1500, 1975 – 1980: 91,137; Spitfire sales in 1980: 4,037

Engine, etc.: 4 cyl.; 4-speed; 91.1 cu. in.; 57 bhp; 83 in. wheelbase; 1,875 lbs.

In mid-1961 Stanley Markland became Triumph's CEO. He was walking through the factory one day with technical director Harry Webster and they stopped at a tarp-covered form. Mr. Markland asked what was under the tarp and, when shown, said it was nice and how far had it gotten? Mr. Webster said the design had been shelved for lack of funds. Mr. Markland looked at it, walked around it, sat in it, and replied, "That's good. We'll make that".

The Spitfire was launched in October, 1962 to worldwide success, especially in North America. Production continued for 18 years and more than 300,000 units. The name Spitfire was derived from a fighter aircraft used in World War II.

According to an original brochure, the Spitfire was a true sports car whose classic lines expressed the "harmony of power and grace which is the car's hallmark". The brochure boasted that the engine was "strict on fuel but generous on power". With 71 bhp at 5,500 rpm, the "sharp confident accelerator can take you up to the 100 mph mark" while the optional overdrive allowed mileage of 50 miles per gallon. It was said to have "impeccable road manners... technical excellence and reliability, and styling and appointments to appeal to the individualist".

Increasingly stringent U. S. exhaust-emissions standards began sapping the Spitfire's performance. Triumph increased its horsepower but the larger government bumpers required after 1974 added unwanted weight. The Spitfire would see no major changes after 1974.

By 1980, British Leyland was struggling and its cash reserves were critically low. With the demise of the Triumph GT6, the Spitfire became a production orphan, sharing no parts with any other British Leyland model.

The Spitfire was retired in 1980. The final Spitfire 1500 produced was painted Inca Yellow and never sold. It is housed in the British Motor Heritage museum. It was not forgotten, however, and served as a major inspiration for Mazda's MX-5 Miata a decade later. Mazda used a Spitfire body for stealth development testing for the Miata chassis.

Sources:

<http://www.conceptcarz.com/vehicle/z9793/Triumph-Spitfire-1500.aspx>

[http://uniquecarsandparts.com/lost\\_marques\\_triumph.htm](http://uniquecarsandparts.com/lost_marques_triumph.htm) (History)