



Commercial Quake

Simon Drew's Pick-up has been transformed from a £400 rusty runabout to a 1380 stonker
Words and photos: Rob Hawkins

The holes in the floor were covered over with tape, the doors were held on with nails through the hinge pins and it was painted orange with Stonechip on the roof," recalls Simon Drew on the day he collected a £400 wreck of a Mini Pick-up.

Back in 1990, this Pick-up became Simon's daily runabout and mountain bike transporter for a couple of years until, in Simon's own words, "It completely fell apart." A thorough restoration was the plan but the rebuild did not get under way for eight years. Luckily, the abandoned Pick-up had its uses.

"It had so many Mini bits in the back,

including engines and subframes – the petrol tank was on the floor," says Simon. "I did start to restore it, but got fed up after six months and it lay in the garage for about another six years."

Eventually the restoration began in earnest in 1999, 27 years after it first left Longbridge, and was finished in the summer of 2000. He's no stranger to reviving Minis and has a stunning collection to prove this.

Problems encountered with the restoration of a Pick-up are compounded by scarcity of some panels. Corrosion is usually the biggest task and his Pick-up was no exception. The entire front end, from front panel to wings, was renewed. Floors needed repairing, whereas the sills

OWNER SIMON DREW

Occupation:

Proprietor of The Mini Works: www.themineworks.com

First car: Morris Mk1 Cooper for £2,000.

Car skills: Engineering degree.

Most expensive part on your Pick-up: Building the engine and gearbox for around £2,000.

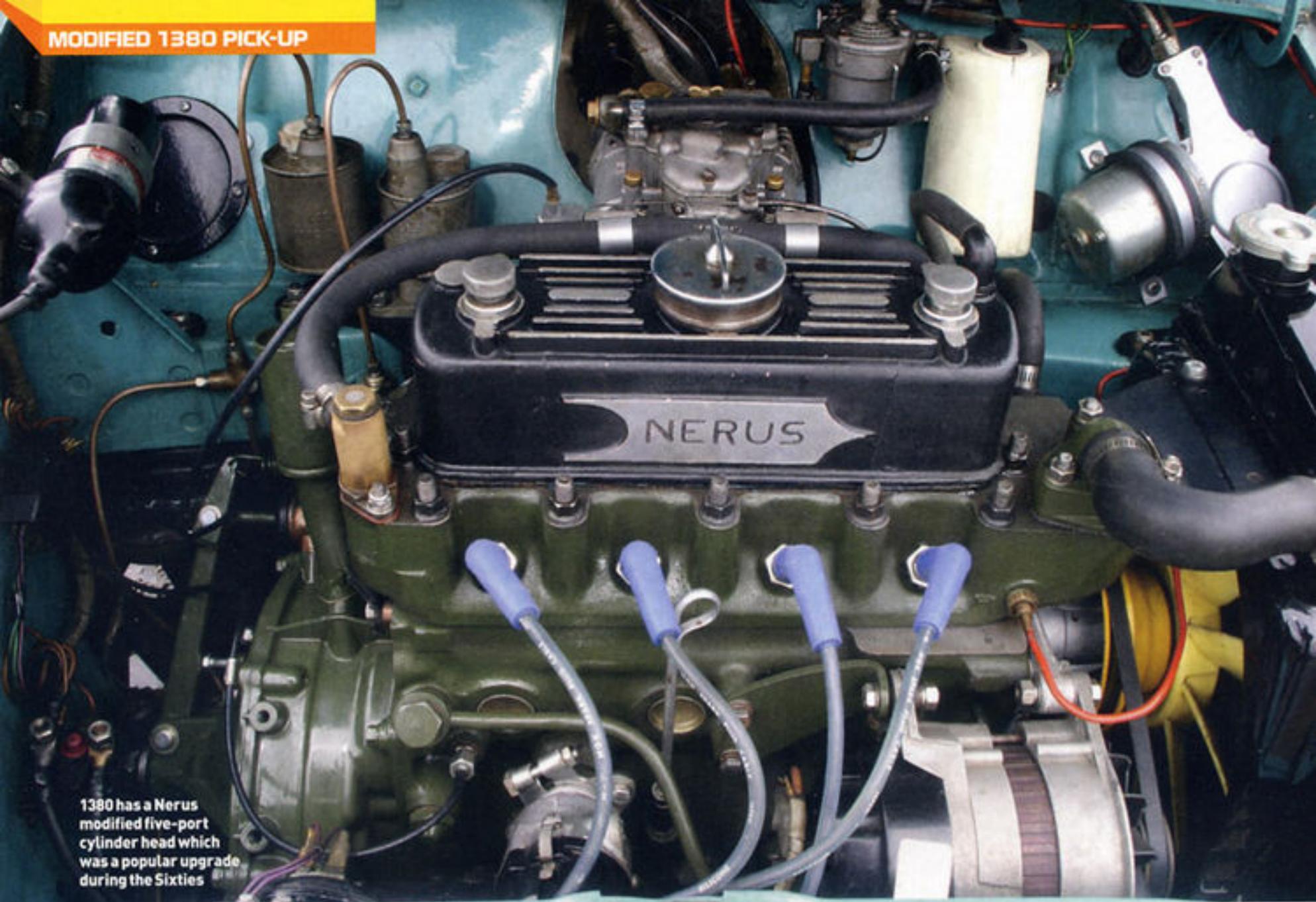
Best bargain: First, third and fourth gear synchro hubs for 50 pence each.

Top Gear or Fifth Gear? Top Gear.

Weber or SU? Depends on the car, but usually SU for simplicity.

Worst job on a Mini? Changing the steering rack.





1380 has a Nerus modified five-port cylinder head which was a popular upgrade during the Sixties

Nerus heads

Nerus Engineering emerged during the Sixties as part of the Rother Ironworks. The company was led by Frank Webb at the Rye works – who had worked for Lagonda, the HWM Formula Two racing team – along with cylinder head expert Harry Westlake.

Nerus became well known for its uprated cylinder heads, offering four levels called the MPG, Sports, Clubman and Competition. Prices ranged from £24 and 15 shillings for the MPG on a 848cc A-series, to £64 and 10 shillings for the competition head on an A-series.

Nerus continued to progress within the field of motorsport, producing race car components and eventually developing its own race car, the Silhouette, for the F100 series.

Today, Nerus Engineering is part of Elva Cars (www.elva.com) and based in Worthing, West Sussex. For further details of the modifications Nerus produced for the Mini, see <http://mk1-performance-conversions.co.uk/nerus.htm>.

Rare parts include a Mk1 Cooper 1275S 130mph-calibrated speedo and a Speedwell auxiliary gauges



✎ (inner and outer) had to be cut out. Similarly, the flatbed and rear valance both needed replacing. There was even rust in the cab, behind the seats.

Some panels survived but needed changing. A sunroof had been fitted by a previous owner but, as he wanted a more traditional look to the shell, he removed it. "I had to cut a roof off a Mini saloon, cut it in half and spot-weld it onto the existing Pick-up cab," he mentions, quite matter-of-factly.

Look closely at the photographs of this Pick-up and you'll notice the waistline and rear quarter panel seams are missing. He has subtly removed these to produce smoother lines by welding them over and finishing with a skim of filler.

He also spent many hours sweating over an angle grinder and wire brush in a bid to get the shell as clean as possible and back to bare

metal. Nowadays, he sends his shells away to Surface Processing Ltd in Dudley (www.surfaceprocessing.co.uk) to be alkali/acid/alkali dipped and then neutralised and etch-primed for thorough preservation. This costs over £1,000 but saves days of work, elbow grease and delays the onset of rust. If only he'd known that back then.

The bare shell was painted using high-build two-pack primer, followed by two-pack Aqua. "This colour was used on Mk3 Minis for a short period in the early Seventies," explains Simon. The exterior has been finished with a Mk1 Cooper front grille and moustache, chrome bumpers, group two arches and chrome sill and arch strips.

Inside the Pick-up, he has strengthened and stiffened the shell by augmenting the spot welds between panels with seam welds. It really makes a difference to rigidity. The upholstery, trim

and instruments follow a classic approach, with original Morris Mk1 Cooper gold brocade seats, Smiths Mk1 1275 Cooper S 130mph speedo, Speedwell oil pressure and coolant temperature capillary gauges mounted in a Mk1 three-clock binnacle and a flat Moto Lita 14-inch steering wheel.

Under the bonnet, he first built a normally aspirated 1275cc A-series using a Metro turbo block and head, Cooper S rockers and Kent 286 camshaft. "I got fed up with it as I did not feel it was producing very good power," he says. "Nothing went wrong with it. I just wanted to try producing some serious power from an A-series."

He opted for the bad boy 1380 in a quest for a powerful A-series and started with an MG Metro Turbo engine block and crankshaft with centre main strap. The crank was cross-drilled, wedged, bladed, ni-tempered and balanced. Other



Modestly beefy... Simon's Pick-up is a tasteful blend of Sixties and Seventies Mini chic. Typically, old commercial Minis need extensive restoration work

“I reckon it will do 70 in second gear”



Mk1 Cooper styled interior shows performance emphasis of this build

WRITER'S OPINION ROB HAWKINS

The Mini Pick-up has got to be my favourite model. I had one as a student, which struggled to reach a guesstimated 40mph (the speedo never worked). Also, the passenger door would open on sharp right corners, but despite the fact it was a wreck, I preferred the handling of the longer wheelbase over the saloon. Simon's Pick-up is a perfect combination of old school performance and looks. He's cleverly retained the classic looks of the Pick-up, added a Cooperised interior and equipped it with a meaty 1380.



performance parts include Cooper S conrods, Omega pistons, a Kent scatter pattern 296 camshaft and vernier-adjustable Duplex timing gear to allow the camshaft to be accurately set up.

One of the most noticeable additions to this 1380 has got to be the rare cylinder head. This is from Nerus, which was known throughout the Sixties for its range of uprated heads (see separate panel). His friend, Dave Greaves, sourced it for him and as Simon explains, "He always comes up with some gem when you least expect it and have no cash!"

The Nerus head features 1.5:1 roller rockers, 37mm inlet valves and 30.9mm exhaust valves. It's also been gas flowed, so he suspects this is Nerus's top of the range Competition head.

Feeding the Nerus head is a single 45 DCOE Weber carburettor that's bolted to a swan-neck BMC homologated alloy inlet manifold and ram pipes. On the exhaust side there's a Manifold LCB followed by a home modified Manifold big-bore, side-exit system. Thanks to the extra wheelbase of the Pick-up, a saloon's exhaust system must be lengthened to fit.

The gearbox has been similarly uprated with straight-cut, close-ratio gears, drop gears, a

cross-pin diff with fairly tall 3.1:1 final drive and a central oil Pick-up pipe.

The combination of a highly tuned 1380 and straight-cut gearbox is the ultimate in many people's opinion. Simon is similarly convinced.

"It's like driving a race Mini," he says. "The induction noise is so loud you can't hear the exhaust! It can certainly go and, with the diff, it has a great top end. It feels as though you've got a fifth gear in top and I reckon it will do 70 in second gear."

Simon's Pick-up is full of subtle and, in many cases, period modifications. For instance, he's fitted 7.5-inch Cooper S disc brakes up front to be able to fit 10-inch gold-painted Minilights. The suspension uses uprated bushes with Koni dampers and negative-camber bottom arms at the front. Adjustable camber brackets will soon be fitted at the rear.

The Pick-up is now reserved for the occasional blast along a country lane. Will he ever sell? He'll only want it back again if he does. What started as a £400 rust bucket that became a useful storage bin for several years, has now been transformed into a unique, largely period, modified Pick-up that's surely a show winner. ■

Pick-up sits tight on the corners thanks to its 10in Minilights, negative camber front arms and Koni dampers all round





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Basic recirculation heater was fitted to the first 850s and features a single flap and switch for operation. No fresh air intake



The standard Pick-up interior is very basic when compared to what Simon has fitted. Carpets would have been a luxury



Manifold big-bore side-exit system had to be lengthened to fit



Simon used to store engines and subframes in the back of his Pick-up



Modified 1972 Pick-up

Engine: Metro Turbo A+ block offset bored to 1380cc . Metro Turbo balanced, cross-drilled, wedged, bladed, ni-tempered crankshaft . centre main strap . Cooper 5 conrods . Omega pistons . Kent scatter pattern 296 camshaft . vernier-adjustable Duplex timing gear . Nerus cylinder head with 1.5:1 roller rockers . 37mm inlet . 30.9mm exhaust valves . Weber 45 DCOE . swan-neck BMC homologated alloy inlet manifold . ram pipes . no air filters . mechanical fuel pump . Filter King fuel pressure regulator . Manifold LCB . lengthened Manifold big-bore side-exit system . Mini Spares super-cool four-core radiator . high-flow water pump . Aldon race distributor . NGK HT leads . electronic ignition . NGK BP7ES spark plugs

Gearbox: Four-speed SCCR . straight-cut taper-roller conversion drop gears . cross-pin diff . 3.1:1 final drive ratio . centre pick-up oil pipe . MED Ultralight steel flywheel . AP Racing bonded clutch

Brakes: Non-servo . single-circuit system . silicone brake fluid . Goodridge braided steel hoses . front 7.5in Cooper 5 solid discs . EBC Green Stuff brake pads . Cooper 5 rear drums . standard brake shoes

Suspension: Dry rubber cone . uprated Mini Spares suspension bushes, subframe mounts . Koni dampers all round . standard front top arms . 1.5-degree negative camber bottom arms at front . tie-rods . standard rear radius arms

Wheels/Tyres: 4.5x10 Minilights painted in gold . Bridgestone 165/70x10 tyres

Interior: Morris Mk1 Cooper gold brocade seats . Mini Spares deluxe carpets . BMC adjustable magnetic seat belts . Mk1 Cooper 1275S 130mph Smiths speedo . Mk1 gauge binnacle . Speedwell oil pressure, coolant temperature capillary gauges . flat Moto Lita 14in steering wheel . gold brocade trim panels . sliding door glass . Paddy Hopkirk throttle pedal extension

Exterior: Pick-up shell painted in two-pack Aqua . Lucas headlights . Morris Mk1 Cooper front grille, moustache surround . chrome bumpers . Group 2 arches . chrome sill, arch strips