



A Vintage Year

Ben Webb and Patricia Käsehagen-Webb knew exactly what they wanted: a Mk1 Island Blue Cooper S, and it just so happened that a local expert 'restorationist' had one

Words: Monty Watkins. Photos: Jim Jupp

Making sure that you end up with a genuine Cooper is a problem for any Mini restorer, especially as so many of the Minis for sale, on eBay or elsewhere, are described, quite wrongly, as Coopers. Ben Webb and Patricia Käsehagen-Webb, of Fife in Scotland, both have time-consuming jobs and were never going to be able to build their own dream Cooper S that they wanted as a shared 10th anniversary present. The simple answer, in their case, was that they would have to buy one or commission a professional build.

Even the seemingly simple first step of choosing and buying a likely resto project proved to be difficult, taking around two years. "We never

found an example we truly liked, or liked the idea of. We wanted one to restore to its original condition and to be of a specification that we liked: Mk1, Cooper S, Island Blue. There are quite a few non-authentic examples out there." Where did they get advice? "Simon Drew of The Mini Works. We brought another Mini in to him one day, for some repairs, and we started chatting. It all went wrong from there!" In a good sense, of course.

They went into it with their eyes open and formed a close partnership with their 'restorationist', Simon. He has in-depth knowledge and experience in restoring Mk1s, which satisfied them that the project was in safe hands. They borrowed a huge number of books covering Mk1 Cooper Ss and started to read up on what these cars were all about. They also consulted several other Mini Cooper Register members who offered

advice as well. As Patricia explains: "Do a lot of research before purchasing an S, no matter what condition it is in. It is increasingly difficult to get a lot of genuine or original S parts nowadays so, if you want to go for a proper and original restoration, you need to ensure that the example either has the correct parts already on it or that you can obtain them. Budget for a fair chunk of change. Ss demand high prices and that's just the start of it. Upkeep and maintenance add up as well."

Of all the Minis, though, the original BMC Mk1/2/3 Cooper and Cooper S range is the easiest to research in detail. John Parnell's book, *Original Mini Cooper and Cooper S*, offers a good starting point in order to identify whether the Cooper or S you are looking at is real, fake, complete or modified. However, Ben and Patricia were also fortunate in that Simon happens to have several »



Benn Webb and Patricia Käsehagen-Webb

- ▶ **Your first car:** *Ben:* Mini Metro Vanden Plas
Patricia: Fiat-Bertone X1-9
- ▶ **Occupation:** *Ben:* Risk manager
Patricia: IT Programme manager
- ▶ **Pets?** African grey parrot
- ▶ **Lottery win:** Buy a vineyard in the south of France with large stable block filled with Minis; buy Simon a big garage so he could have a south of France division (and maintain our Minis of course, free of charge)
- ▶ **Does your Mini have a name?** Isla
- ▶ **Favourite TV programme:** *Ben:* Dexter
Patricia: Downton Abbey
- ▶ **Member of any clubs?** Mini Cooper Register
- ▶ **Fashionable or comfortable?**
Fashionably comfortable



Doorcards, carpet and rear shelf trim are new but the rest was carefully restored.

“There was a shell and everything else was boxed”



Original non-reclining S seats in Cumulus Grey with gold brocade. From April 1962, UK Cooper seats had five flutes in the base and five flutes in the squab.



The compact Mini front seats of the era left plenty of knee room in the back.



Front seatbelts became a legal requirement in Great Britain on 1 January 1965.

unrestored, untouched MK1s in his portfolio, which also allows for additional reference points. Seeking advice from some accredited experts in the ranks of Mini clubs, such as the Mini Cooper Register and the Mini Cooper Club, was also invaluable.

Ben's first car was a Metro and neither he nor Patricia had any experience owning or buying a Mk1 S before they set out on this journey. What they did have was an abiding love of character cars. She had owned a 1974 Ford Mustang called, ominously, Christine, a Chevrolet Camaro Berlinetta and a Jaguar XK8. Her favourite of all time was a mid-engined Fiat Bertone Torino X1-9. Ben also had cars like the BMW 840ci and Maserati 4200, but his fondest memories are of an MG Metro. “It was one of my first cars so I had a lot of fun throwing it around the country lanes.” With this wealth of experience behind them, they were never going to phone up the first vehicle restorer they could find and order a Cooper S delivered to their door. It also became apparent that they

weren't going to find a suitable 'drive-away' Mk1 S.

“There was a shell and everything else was boxed up. We chose to buy it in this condition because it allowed us to see its originality. Interestingly, the previous owner, who owned the car from the mid-1970s, used to use it to get to and from his work. He was an apprentice mechanic and his toolbox fit perfectly between the two tanks!” Getting a Heritage certificate straight away showed them that the identification numbers all confirmed what they had been told about this 1967 Austin Mk1 1275 S. They bought it in March 2011 and the whole restoration was to be done by Simon and his team at The Mini Works.

Probably because of motorsport supremacy in that decade, the 1963-1967 Mk1 S is still the most sought-after Cooper, despite the refinements to be found in later Mk2 and Mk3 evolutions. If you're going to buy a 1275cc Mk1 S (it was also available with 1071cc and 970cc engine options for a short time) then the later the year, the »

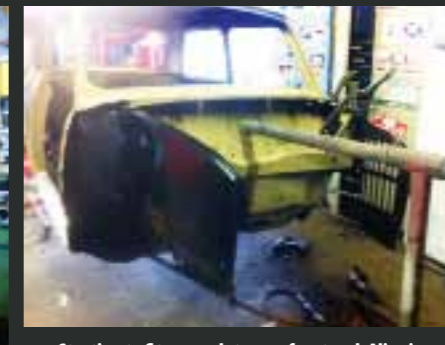


In 1967, the year of Mini's fourth consecutive outright Monte Carlo victory (including 'l'affaire '66') it must have been achingly cool to own this S. And it still is.

THE BUILD



Bodged sill sections and outer floors had to be replaced. You can see marks where the floor crossmember has been removed and the front end is also absent here.



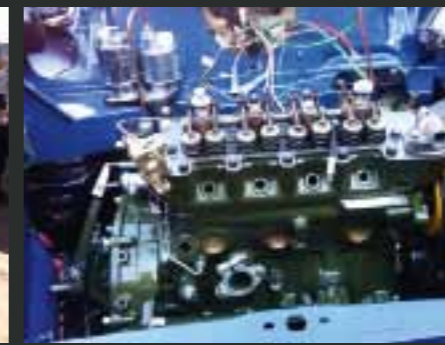
Starting to fit a complete new front end. Aligning inner wings and front panel is critical to achieve a good bonnet fit. Support spit with single uprights offers excellent access to the front end panels.



Engine, head, rocker cover, dynamo, starter, clutch slave and thermostat housing were originally BMC green. Some of these components have been left unpainted for serviceability. Standard fan would have been a 16-blade steel item.



A very Scottish colour scheme and spot-on for the Mk1 Cooper range. The diagonal panel stiffener in the front panel would usually be painted black to hide it from view. Reassembly took only two weeks.



It's all in the detail. Despite conversion to dry suspension, Lucas RB106/2 dynamo control box, top left of pic, is in correct position for an Hydrolastic Cooper Mk1. S engine has double valve springs and forged rockers.



3-bolt mounting for DR3A wiper motor on left, correct rectangular headlamp dip switch above tunnel. Coopers never had floor starter switch. Mk1 Cooper floorpan had lesser models' wandshift aperture blanked and covered with mastic at the factory.

“He pulled out all the stops and, somehow, managed to assemble the whole car in only two weeks”



This is how to win a trophy at Beaulieu.

better the original specification will be. Broadly speaking, the ‘vintage’ year for the Mk1 1275 S was September 1966 to September 1967. Ben and Patricia’s S was built originally in March 1967 and most of the important evolutionary changes to the Mk1 S had been achieved by around September 1966. Despite a waiting list for Coopers, cars were often registered in Great Britain a considerable time after they were built so most of these vintage year Mk1 Ss would probably have received D, E or F-suffix number plates.

Ben and Patricia weren’t wielding the spanners

but they were keen to have some hands-on involvement. “Simon let us take away the trim and the seats for cleaning. The trim, in particular, was quite warped and stained. Our kitchen ended up having loads of pieces of trim under books for flattening. There was barely any room to cook for about three to four weeks. It was certainly worth the effort, though, as we managed to bring up the brocade and keep as much original to the car as possible.” The schedule gave every indication that the completed car would be ready for the Mini Cooper Register’s Beaulieu Mini Cooper Day on 10

June 2012. “We really wanted to drive the car more than concours it. With it planned to be completed so close to Beaulieu we thought, if we were ever going to do concours, then it would be at that time as the car would be so fresh from the restoration.”

“The car went on to the painters and came back only two weeks before Beaulieu. We really didn’t think it would be ready and gave Simon many ‘outs’ so he didn’t feel he still had to make the deadline. He pulled out all the stops and, somehow, managed to assemble the entire car in only two weeks. It was ‘broken in’ driving down»

GB registration suffix letters covering the ‘vintage’ Mk1 1275 S year, September 1966 - September 1967

D 1 Jan 1966 to 31 Dec 1966
 E 1 Jan 1967 to 31 July 1967
 F 1 Aug 1967 to 31 July 1968

Source: Wiki

UK Mk1 S different models and build dates

1071 S 16 Jan 1963 to 27 Aug 1964
 1275 S 14 Feb 1964 to 11 Sep 1967
 970 S 1 Jun 1964 to 5 Apr 1965

Source: Parnell



That flat, round disc ahead of the air filter housing is the breather control valve of the Positive Crankcase Ventilation (PCV) system which was fitted to UK Coopers from June 1964.

Advice from Simon Drew: ‘the Restorationist’

Take your time looking, do your homework, know the weak points. Know where to look on the car. Common fail areas are outer sills, floorpans, boot valance area and, of course, front end from A-panels forward. If it looks clean and has had work done, ask where it was done and was it by a professional specialist. Nine times out of 10 the work will be sub-standard and short-lived.

If you do decide to buy a full resto project again take your time looking. Try the specialists for cars, as they always seem to have something. Car clubs are a good source, as are classic car shows, Mini magazines, eBay but always try and view or pay cash on uplift! The more complete the better, especially if it’s not been tampered with. If it is missing critical parts, cost that into the selling price as finding certain parts is difficult, costly and sometimes impossible. If you are unsure, seek advice or walk away.

Cars that have had poor welding done are harder to restore than cars with original rust. Generally, the shell is the most difficult bit to

restore and it is the most important so, if you’re not confident welding, get a professional to do the job. It can be costly, as it takes lots of man hours, but do it right or not at all.

Don’t strip the car until you are absolutely ready to start work on it. So many people get it in the garage, pull all the bits off it, stick them in lots of random bags or boxes, find out the shell is a bit rustier than they thought and rapidly lose interest. Don’t cherry-pick all the nice jobs. Always get the shell sorted first. No shell, no car.

- Strip the car carefully.
- Sandblast or dip to remove all rust.
- Assess rust and buy all correct panels (not cheap stuff, use M-Machine or Heritage).
- Start on one part of the car, usually floor, one side at a time.
- Close one section down at a time and move on to next part.
- Once the shell is welded, seal up properly and paint the underside with good quality primers, then send to paint shop.

- While the shell is away, get the subframes built up.
- It’s a good time to sort the engine too (get a professional Mini specialist to do engine machining).




- On return, cover the car underneath in cavity wax for protection if it’s going to be on the road.
- Best next step is to drop the shell onto the subframes with the engine fitted.
- Suddenly, the car is on its wheels, with engine in, and looks a lot more complete.
- Next, wiring loom in
- Gradually work your way through the car.
- Tools that you will definitely need: quality MIG-welder, air compressor, angle grinders, personal protective equipment, lots of vice grips, good quality socket set, spanners, etc. Other tools that are bit more professional are a spot welder, a spit to put your Mini shell on to rotate it and a plasma cutter.



This grille, with 10 full slats and a pair of ‘half slats’, is unique to the UK Mk1 Austin Cooper and S models. 13-row oil cooler was standard on S from January 1966, necessitating the ‘angled’ version of the front panel stiffener alongside it.

from Edinburgh to the New Forest. Also the car still needed a heater plate, which Simon had procured from a friend of his, and that had to be put on as it was parked in the concours marquee. So you could say that the car was actually completed at Beaulieu." The result was a coveted

Best in Class trophy and the *MiniWorld* Car of the Show award. Not a bad start in concours, knowing the expertise of the MCR judges; a testament to The Mini Works' build quality and a tribute to Ben and Patricia's careful research before they went ahead with the project. 

Ben Webb and Patricia Käsehagen-Webb would like to thank: Simon Drew and The Mini Works team for all their hard work and dedication (www.facebook.com/themineworks); Graeme Allen, David Dyson and Kevin Murray for words of advice.



Cooper bootlid was double-skinned from December 1966 up to early Mk3 S production in 1970.



Another bonus of having a vintage year Mk1 S is that the twin 5.5-gallon tanks became standard in UK from January 1966.

Technical Specification

1967 Austin Cooper S

- ▶▶ **Engine:** Mini Works Cooper S A-series . 1310cc . Mini Works 12G940 stage 3 flowed 11-stud head . Mahle +0.040-inch pistons . Swiftime SW5 cam . standard valve gear . cross-drilled crank . lightened flywheel . twin SU HS2 1¼-inch carbs . standard air filter box, paper elements . PCV breather system . non-vented rocker cover . SU electric fuel pump . 6-blade steel fan . two-core radiator . 3-branch exhaust manifold . stainless RC40 exhaust system . Lucas 23D4 40819 distributor . points ignition . HA12 coil . Champion plug caps . Lucas C40 dynamo, RB106/2 control box . 13-row oil cooler
- ▶▶ **Gearbox:** Close-ratio helical cut all-synchro Mk2 type remote shift four-speed manual gearbox . optional 3.44:1 final drive ratio . cross-pin differential . diaphragm clutch
- ▶▶ **Brakes:** single-circuit system . Lockheed master cylinder . reconditioned Lockheed Type 5½ vacuum servo . copper brake pipes . Lockheed twin-pot front brake calipers . Cooper S 7½-inch front discs . standard rear S spacer drums, 7-inch x 1¼-inch, single leading shoe type
- ▶▶ **Suspension:** Originally Hydroelastic, converted to dry type suspension . Hi-Los . Spax adjustable dampers
- ▶▶ **Wheels/Tyres:** Optional Cooper S ventilated steel 4.5x10-inch wheels . Dunlop SP Sport Aquajet 145SR10 radials . S/Van/basic Mini saloon wheel trims
- ▶▶ **Interior:** Standard S-type non-recliner front seats . standard rear seat . Cumulus Grey, gold brocade seat trim . Newton Commercial grey carpets . Britax static front lap belts . three-clock oval centre pod, 130mph S speedo calibration . fresh air heater system . Newton Commercial rear parcel shelf trim . Original doorcards and front parcel shelf . heated front screen . restored steering wheel, horn push . twin 5½-gallon fuel tanks . grey carpeted boot board . double-skin bootlid
- ▶▶ **Exterior:** Restored 1967 Cooper S bodysell . M-Machine new outer floors, sills, complete front end, various other panels . sealed beam headlamps . bumper overrides, corner bars . Austin Cooper/S grille, badges . chrome filler caps . vented front valance . Old English White (WT3) roof, Island Blue (BU8) bodysell . two-pack paint . The Mini Works boot badge (designed by Patricia for The Mini Works)



Patricia designed the Downton-inspired boot badge for The Mini Works.



Patricia and Ben heading off to the south of France in search of a good vineyard. You've got to know what you're looking for...