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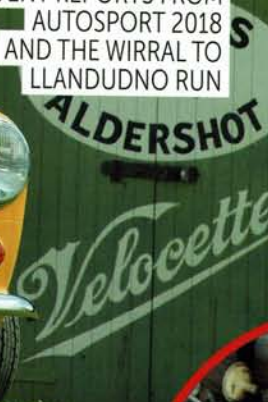


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TECH / EXPERT Q&A FOR THE ANSWERS **TECH /** CARBURATION GUIDE

1970 MKIII COOPER S

Q C A



1970 MKIII COOPER S

CAR COOPER

The only Mini Cooper to survive the change to the MkIII range of late 1969, this Cooper S is one of the rarest fast Classic Minis, and caught the eye of owner Jonathan Bown.

Words Martyn Collins Photography Matt Woods

Jonathan's Classic Mini history stretches back to when he was 17 and got his first as a birthday present from his father, who also loves them. "I have had loads of Classic Minis over the past 25 years — approximately 20 cars." On top of this beautiful MkIII, Jonathan's enviable Mini fleet also includes a



1970 MKIII COOPER S

This MkIII's interior features immaculate original navy trim.



Original period steering wheel.



It was a race against time to get seats back in.

"I have had loads of Classic Minis over the past 25 years – approx. 20 cars"

MkI 1071 Cooper S and one of the first 100 Cooper 997s produced. "The 1071 is a fully restored car, with an original body and only a handful of panels replaced. The 997 is an original car, not restored — but still looks amazing, however I believe the engine now requires some mechanical work this year."

LAST CLASSIC COOPER

But back to the MkIII S, the last of the Classic Mini Coopers until the Rover comeback in the '90s. Almost the Q car of

the original Coopers in my opinion, why? Well, the MkIII was only available in single colours without the white or black roofs and apart from the badging and vented wheels, looked like a standard Mini 1000 from the same era. The launch of the flat-fronted Clubman 1275GT in 1969 was the beginning of the end for the MkIII Cooper S as the two were fighting for sales and the MkIII 'S' sadly lost!

Paul Preston of Paul Preston Classic Mini Restoration owned this Mini and had already started work on the



Dash instruments from the '70s.



New carpet set was installed.

Bronze Yellow paint gives this car it's unique appeal.



Refurbished vented Cooper S steel wheels, with chrome hub caps.



"It was finished in Bronze Yellow from the factory, so it was a done deal!"

restoration when Jonathan made an offer on it. This was on the proviso that Paul carried out a full nut-and-bolt restoration on the car. "He offered me the car as it was and I always wanted a MkIII Cooper S. Paul carries out all the work on my

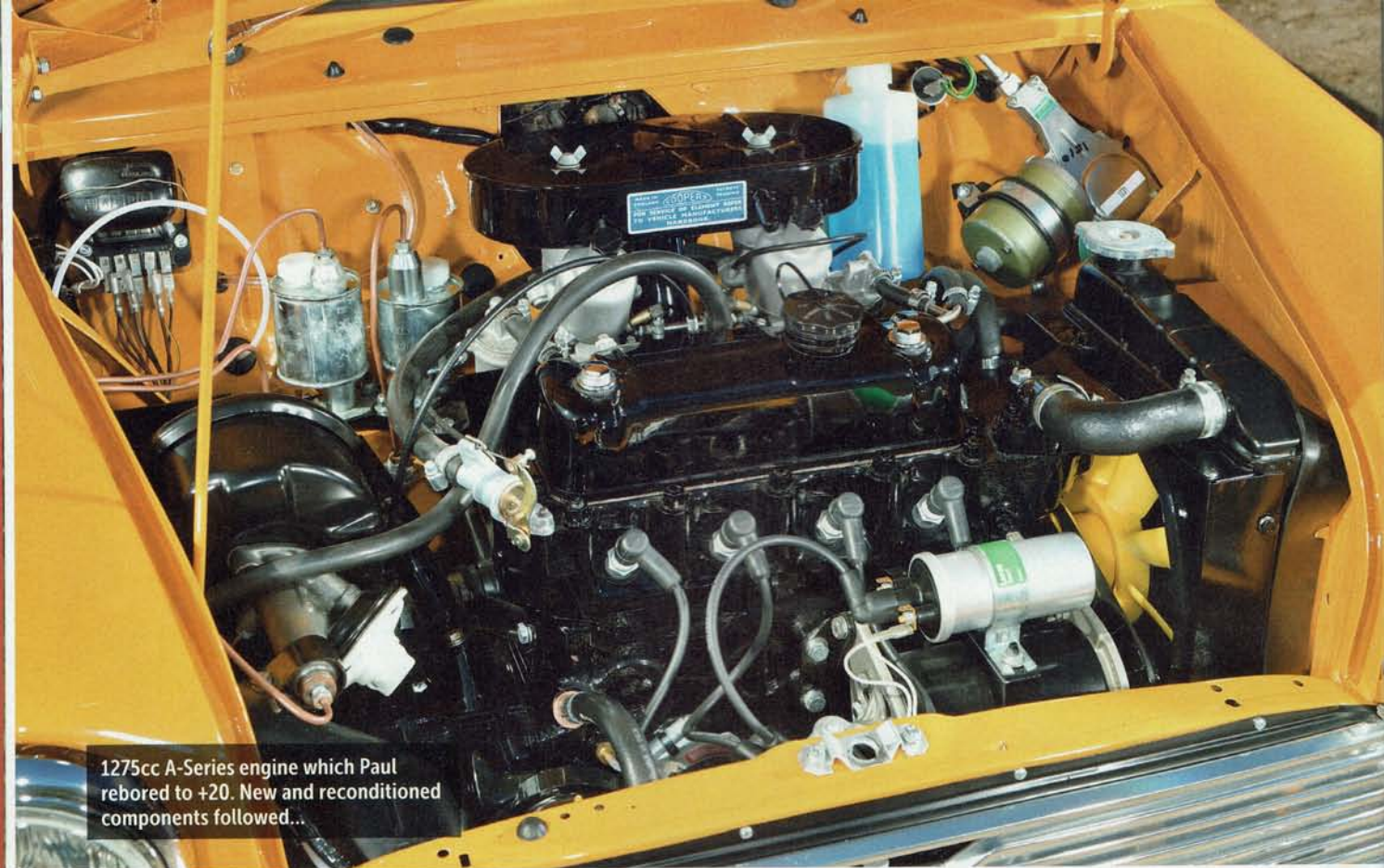
Minis, as his finished product is the best."

A DISTINCTIVE HUE

That distinctive, original Bronze Yellow colour sealed the deal for Jonathan. "My wife loves Minis too and saw a restoration

book with a MkIII Cooper S in the back which happened to be in Bronze Yellow and asked when I was getting her one, the following month I saw Paul's MkIII Mini Cooper S as a project car, he then advised it was finished in Bronze Yellow from the factory, so as far as I was concerned it was a done deal!"

So what's the history on this Mini? Well, let's go back to Paul as he found and owned this Mini for a number of



1275cc A-Series engine which Paul rebored to +20. New and reconditioned components followed...



RC40 single-box exhaust system.



Original plate, registered in 1970.



Period chrome mirrors.

years until he sold it to Jonathan. "I was speaking to a guy at a show and he said he had a MkIII Bronze Yellow Cooper S, which I'd been after," Paul explains. "I was after a MkI or MkII too, but went and had a look at this car in Henley-On-Thames - it was literally parked in a ditch! So I picked it up with my wife and we brought it back home. The guy who owned it was quite eccentric."

When Paul bought the Cooper, it was 90% complete with just a few little pieces missing and the original engine. "It had

"It was literally parked in a ditch! So I picked it up and brought it home"

been partly stripped. This guy had stuff all over the place, so I think it was one he'd started and then lost interest in and stopped," Paul goes on.

CHANGING HANDS

After being parked in that ditch, this MkIII was in a really bad way when Paul

eventually got it in his workshop. But, he still managed to start paneling its shell up — even though he hadn't quite got around to finishing it.

Paul then owned the car for a number of years until Jonathan got in touch, while Paul was on holiday of all places, and offered to buy the MkIII from him. "We had a quick chat while I was on holiday, then when I came back he came to see me and we did a deal on the car and I restored the car for him."

About 30% of the work was done when Jonathan came along, so then he obviously needed to finish it as Jonathan was now the customer. "I'd started to put floors in it, the shell was on a jig, but then because of work, I'd not got around to →



Standard Cooper airbox



Original twin brake fluid reservoirs

1970 MKIII COOPER S

From panels to wings, to the bonnet, boot and roof - almost every exterior part was rebuilt.



finishing it. We did the deal two and a half years ago."

During Paul's ownership, he managed to find out some of this MkIII's history. Apparently when it was brand-new in 1970, it was dispatched straight to Wood and Pickett to have some conversion work done by them. "It had a Webasto fabric roof put in it and a re-trim, but fortunately it had the original interior with it, and when we panelled it up I put a steel roof panel back in, as Jonathan didn't want the sunroof in it. He wanted it put back to as it had left the factory."

This was on top of a great history file that came with the car and included 75% of all old MoTs and loads of tax discs.

"Jonathan wanted [the car] put back to as it had left the factory"

Jonathan's since managed to find the first owner of the car from new and spoken to him a few times.

THE RESTORATION

The full nut-and-bolt restoration undertaken by Paul took about a year from start to finish. It started with the shell being blasted, then the re-paneling followed, and this Mini's had a lot of panels! On top of the new floors, it's had new rear quarters, boot floor repair

panels, a rear valance, heel board end, new roof skin to replace the original one that been cut to fit the Webasto sunroof, door steps, outer sills, inner wings, A-panels, front panel, outer wings, scuttle, the doors have been rebuilt, along with a new bonnet and boot lid. Paul tells me it was then Epoxy Primed and bare metal resprayed in original Bronze Yellow and finally completed for Stanford Hall.

I went on to ask if Paul had experienced any issues with this rebuild. "We had a

Paul repaired the boot floor and rebuilt boot lid.



Badge of honour - one of the rarest Classic Minis.



1970 MKIII COOPER S



All the chrome was lovingly refurbished or replaced by Paul.

TECH SPEC

BODY 1970 MkIII Mini Cooper S body fully restored by Paul Preston Classic Mini Restoration, with new floors, rear quarters, boot floor repair panels, rear valance, heel board end, new roof skin, door steps, outer sills, inner wings, A-panels, front panel, outer wings, scuttle, bonnet and boot door skins, refurbished or replaced chrome trim. Paint: Two-Pack Bronze Yellow.

ENGINE Standard 1275cc A-Series engine also rebuilt by Paul Preston Classic Mini Restoration, rebored to standard +20, reground crank, new bearings and thrusts, new oil pump, head fully reconditioned, new pistons, twin 1.4-inch HS4 SU carburetors with standard airbox, standard LCB, RC40 single box exhaust system.

TRANSMISSION Rebuilt standard four-speed remote Cooper S close ratio gearbox, standard final drive.

SUSPENSION Converted to dry suspension with standard dampers.

BRAKES 7.5-inch Cooper S disc assemblies, servo.

WHEELS AND TYRES Refurbished vented Cooper S steel wheels, with chrome hub caps, 165/70/10 period tyres.

INTERIOR Original navy interior trim, new headlining and new carpet set.

few issues with the head gaskets that were supplied, with them blowing oil out of the side — we resolved that, but that was the only mechanical issue,” he said.

The only other issue was a lack of time, as the Saturday before Paul took it to Stanford Hall, he was still putting the seats in it! He explains: “I will never forget that weekend - it was a nightmare, as it was completely chucking it down with rain. Still, we made it in time, and did okay actually.”

“It was nice to have the opportunity to restore it and make a nice car out of it”


TOP OF CLASS

Completed for the British Mini Club’s annual show at Stanford Hall in 2016, perhaps unsurprisingly after all Paul’s hard work it came top in the Cooper S class, scoring an incredible 99 points out of a possible 100.



Restored to perfection, this Cooper is a work of art.

So now the rebuild has finished does Paul regret selling it? “Yes, I regret it now, as MkIII Cooper Ss are still gaining in value. It was just I needed the physical space, I love that car and I’d have liked to have kept it myself and always wanted to restore it. My pleasure is restoring them really though, that’s what I get out of it. It was nice to have the opportunity to restore it for Jonathan and make a nice car out of it.”

Jonathan named the car ‘Preston’ after the man who restored it for him of course. And since its completion, Preston has lived under a fitted cover and is used alongside Jonathan’s other Classic Mini Coopers during the summer months. And according to him, it will never be up for sale. What a collection and what a MkIII Cooper - Jonathan’s surely has to be one of the best! 

THANKS TO:

Paul Preston Classic Mini Restoration.