

Luck at first sight

Scotsman Simon Drew agreed to buy this '64 Mk1 1275 Cooper S sight unseen – so had he bought an original or a replica?
Words and photos: Rob Hawkins



Finding a genuine Cooper S can lead to financial ruin and disappointment as the process is a minefield of identifying correctly-fitted parts and checking everything from Heritage certificates to VIN plates. Even then, such attention to detail doesn't provide the

reassurance that a restored example is genuine, only that a collection of relevant parts has a Cooper S origin. There aren't many original unrestored Cooper Ss left so clean-looking 40-year-old examples are very hard to find and expensive.

In 2003, when Simon Drew

heard that this 1964 Mk1 1275 Austin Cooper S was for sale, he knew he had to add it to his collection. This particular model was produced between 1964 and 1967, using the largest A-series in the Mini range.

Numerous changes were made throughout the production



OWNER Simon Drew

Worst car you've driven: Ford Escort.
Dream job: Got it – running my Mini business The Mini Works (www.theminiworks.com)
Worst job on a Mini? Rubber doughnuts.
How many Minis do you own? Seven-ish
Current collection includes: Aug '59 Mini, 1960 Downton-tuned 850, two '62 997 Coopers, '63 1071, two '64 Cooper Ss and '72 Mini Pick-up.
Lottery-winning plans: Bigger house plus a couple abroad and set up a bigger and better garage.



Interior includes worn carpets, but who in their right mind would renew an original wool carpet?



Radiomobile push-button radio only plays Radio 2 and the Jimmy Young Programme



Flashing indicator stalk is a true 1960s Mini hallmark



You have to look beyond a bonnet badge to find a genuine Mk1 Cooper S. Left: full width front valence may have been fitted as late as August 1964 and is consistent with dry rubber suspension equipped Mk1s



Simon suspects the 1275 S engine has never been removed or rebuilt



Speedo appears to be type fitted originally to 970cc and 1071cc Mk1 Cooper S

run for the Mk1 1275 S. For example, the first models were fitted with dry suspension before Hydrolastic was introduced in September 1964. The 1275S speedo read 120mph but there were new calibrations, reading up to 130mph, not present on the 120mph 970 and 1071 S speedos.

Twin fuel tanks weren't introduced to the S until 1966, so Simon's has only the single 5.5 gallon tank mounted in the nearside corner of the boot.

For obvious reasons, models of Cooper S this rare aren't on sale for long.

"I received a call from my trusty old friend Dave Greaves," recalls Simon. "He told me about the car and its condition and gave me until the end of the day to decide on buying it without seeing it!"

With Simon living near Edinburgh and the car some 450 miles away in Beaulieu, there wasn't time to travel down and inspect it.

"I went on my gut feeling and said I

would have it based on Dave's description alone."

Parting with £8,000, Simon endured the 900-mile return journey to collect his Cooper S. Luckily, he chose to trailer it home, where he had the opportunity to properly check over the S and see just what he'd bought.

"I was lucky – it had hardly been tampered with," he explains. "The interior trim and wool carpets were still intact, including a Radiomobile radio, though I think it had had a little work to the brakes and some cylinder head work just before I bought it."

With a mere 47,000 miles on the clock, Simon looked around the engine bay and is confident the motor has never been removed.

Checking over the bodywork, he noticed a couple of sills and the rear valance had been replaced, but other than that all the

panels and paintwork seemed to be original.

"The black roof has polished through in parts to the undercoat, which gives it a nice patina," he remarks.

The identifying marks of a genuine Cooper S are relatively easy to spot on this example. There's a body number on the original front panel, which matches up to the Heritage certificate. The Mk1 1275 Cooper S used servo-assisted brakes. Crammed into the engine bay on Simon's S is a servo and consequently the voltage regulator is correctly mounted on the crossmember. This also results in a special Cooper S wiring loom being fitted in the engine bay.

"The loom takes a different route to the voltage regulator as it is mounted on the crossmember rather than the inner wing," Simon explains. "The fuse box is also mounted differently to the bulkhead."

The history of this Cooper S is sadly not

WRITER'S OPINION Rob Hawkins



One of the items on my list of things to do before I die is to own a Sixties Mini. Simon's Cooper S is close to what I'd like to own. It has the correct mixture of originality and weathered looks that should be found in a classic car. The 1275 S engine, remote linkage-controlled gearbox and Cooper S brakes mean it can still be a match for most modern traffic and provide entertainment when required. Simon's gamble of buying this S without seeing it certainly paid off.

As detailed as he'd like. The car had spent 20 years in Holland before being returned to the UK and bought by its previous owner who had planned to use it for historic rallying.

"He campaigned a seriously high-spec MGB with some success," says Simon. "Luckily, before he set about spoiling this wonderfully original car, many people advised him not to as it was too good."

The originality and patina of this Mk1 Cooper S are the key points that appeal. Under the bonnet, for instance, a little rust is showing through on the engine block and there's little evidence of silicone cleaner or fresh paint. The bodywork is practically spotless, as is the chromework, and inside

the worn sections of the wool carpet merely add to the original feel of this car.

On the road it is a fantastic example of a classic Mini, with just an occasional judder from the clutch when setting off, which Simon believes is probably caused by a 44-year-old seal.

Armed with a 3.76:1 final-drive ratio and the torquey 1275cc A-series, acceleration is lively through the gears. Peak torque arrives at a mere 3000rpm, so you don't need many revs to feel the force of the A-series. However, top speed isn't quite as exhilarating, and with the gear ratios calculating 14.7mph per 1000rpm you're unlikely to get a speeding fine on a motorway.

With skippy Dunlop SPs and potentially original suspension bushes, you need to lean on tight corners and hang on to the bus-sized two-spoke steering wheel.

Simon appears to have found himself a Cooper S that not only looks authentic but drives and handles like a Sixties

classic. For once, a thorough restoration is not the answer in this case, just straightforward preservation. ■

Mk1 S motors

Three different A-series engines were fitted to the Mk1 Cooper S. The smallest of these was the 970, followed by the 1071 and finally the 1275. They all shared the same bore size of 70.6mm but used a different stroke to achieve larger displacements. The compression ratio was higher for the 970 at 10:1, compared with the 1071 at 9:1 and the 1275 at 9.75:1.

Performance of the largest S motor was all about torque. The 1275 produced the most at 79ft/lb (109Nm) with the lowest revs of 3000rpm. The 1071 produced a smaller 62ft/lb (85Nm) at a higher 4500rpm, whereas the 970 needed 5000rpm to produce its peak 57ft/lb (78Nm).



Twin fuel tanks weren't introduced until January 1966, so Simon's S has only one 5.5-gallon tank. Early standard boot board had same colour carpet as interior. Later ones were grey.

"I went on my gut feeling and said I would have it"

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1964 Mk1 1275 Cooper S

Engine: 1275 S block . EN40B crankshaft . 1275 S pistons . AEG 163 cylinder head . AEG 510 camshaft . 9.75:1 compression ratio . twin 1 1/4-in SU HS2 carburettors . alloy inlet manifold . standard paper element air box . SU electric fuel pump . cast iron three-into-one exhaust manifold . Cooper S exhaust system . twin 'crimped' silencers . two-core radiator . steel 16-blade cooling fan . standard water pump . Lucas HA 12 coil . Lucas 23D4 40819 distributor . Champion HT leads, plugs

Gearbox: 22G333 Cooper S four-speed helical gear set . remote gear linkage . 3.76:1 final-drive ratio . 14.7mph per 1000rpm . standard-wound yarn/riveted clutch plate . cast iron flywheel

Brakes: Servo-assisted single-circuit . Lockheed 7.5-inch Cooper S solid front discs . two-pot callipers . Ferodo brake pads . Cooper S rear drums . standard brake shoes

Suspension: Rubber cone suspension . oil-filled dampers . standard Cooper S front top and bottom arms and tie-rods . standard rear radius arms . solid-mounted front subframe . rubber-mounted rear subframe

Wheels/Tyres: Dunlop 3.5-in steel wheels . chrome hubcaps . 145x10 Dunlop SP tyres

Interior: Optional extra reclining front seats upholstered in standard red and grey with gold brocade trim, matching rear seats . wool carpets . Smiths 120mph speedo in centre binnacle with backlight . Smiths oil pressure and coolant temperature gauges . Radiomobile push-button radio . two-spoke steering wheel

Exterior: Cooper S 'shell' (up to August '64 type) . Tartan Red . black roof . full-length Webasto sunroof . Mk1 Cooper S front grille . Mk1 front and rear bumpers with overriders . Cooper S bonnet, boot badges . chrome sill, arch trim . Lucas headlights



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