

# GIFT HORSE

When a badly decayed Wolseley Hornet Mk3 came up for grabs, for free, Adam Smith was one of the few who didn't run for cover...

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Photos: Jim Jupp

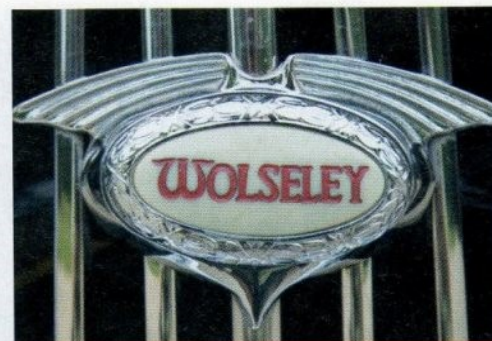




Mk3 vent grilles reverted to horizontal bars only, like Elf, although Mk1 and Mk2 Hornet had 'criss-cross' vent grilles. Wolseley grille badge is illuminated.



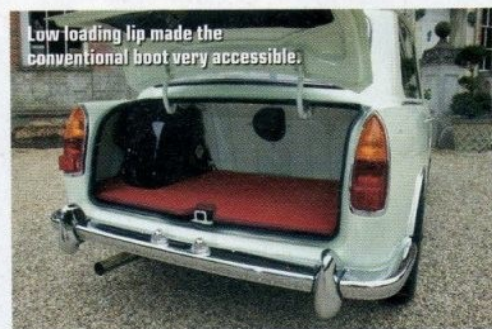
Wheelbase is same as Mini saloon at 204cm but Hornet is 21.6cm longer overall.



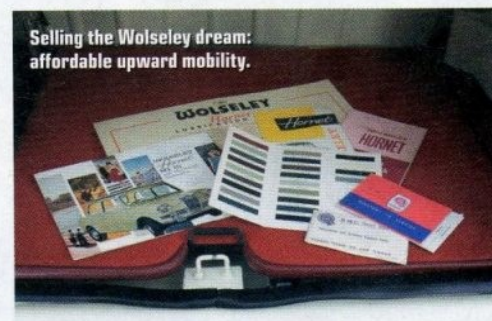
## The Wolseley Connection

Frederick York Wolseley (1837-1899) died some 60 years before the Mini was launched but you'd be wrong to think that there wasn't an important Wolseley/Mini connection. Irish-born Wolseley made his fortune in Australia as a farmer and as the founder of the Wolseley Sheep Shearing Machine Company. The Wolseley Company was also established in England in 1889, but he resigned from the English concern in 1894 and returned to Australia. What was left of the English company was 'saved' by the resourcefulness of the foreman, a Mr Herbert Austin. In 1895, working in secrecy, Austin designed and built the first prototype Wolseley motor car. The Wolseley Motor Co was acquired by Morris in 1927. Learn more at [www.wolseleycarclub.com](http://www.wolseleycarclub.com).

Low loading lip made the conventional boot very accessible.



Selling the Wolseley dream: affordable upward mobility.



**S**hout out "anyone want a Hornet for free?" and even Mini fans will shuffle uncomfortably away from you, averting their gaze. Mr Smith was still listening. "In 1968, the car was bought new from Eustace Watkins, a main distributor for Wolseley in London. Lieutenant Colonel Graham Hoare was 55 when he bought the car... Graham's daughter recently contacted me to say that, from 1968 to 1979, it had a comfortable, quiet life with the Hoare family, staying around North-West London. In 1979 the car was bought by a GP's wife, who used it as her day-to-day... After years of 'make-do' repairs, it failed its MOT and, in 1991, it went to live in a North London lock-up garage. In 2001, the garage roof collapsed onto the car. In 2008, the owner had to give up the garage and the car. He made contact with me at the L&SMOC and, being the fool I am, I agreed to take it. It was free but I hadn't seen any pictures. How bad could an MOT-failed Hornet be after 20 years off the road?"

His aim was simply to do the "minimum needed to put it back on the road." It doesn't always work

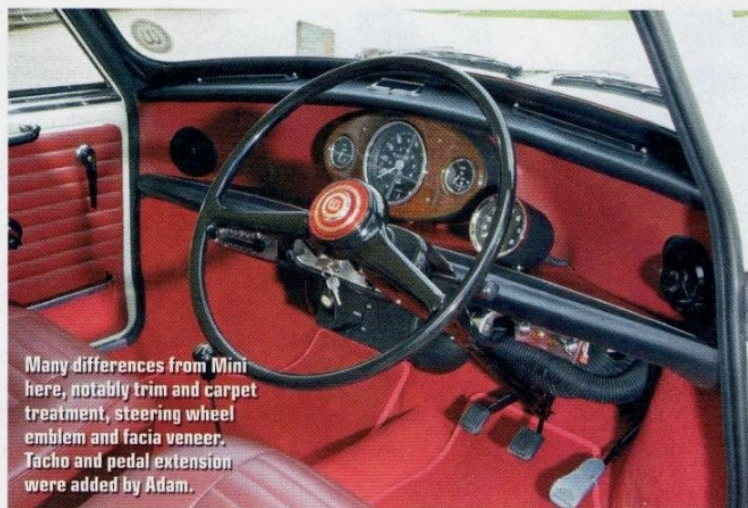
that way though, particularly when the minimum turns out to be substantial. "When you start doing the welding and getting the bodywork perfect, the last thing you want to do is bolt rusty, old parts back on to it." If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing right. Happily, Adam's dad, Mick Smith, runs Canal Lane Garage in Wakefield and was able to help with the huge amount of bodywork and other jobs that needed doing. First task was to get the engine sorted. The Hornet was built in March 1968 and was fitted with the 998cc engine and manual three-synchro gearbox with Cooper-style remote shift. Interestingly, it had also been treated to a Downton/ST conversion early in its life, including a Cooper 12G295 cylinder head, twin SU HS2 carbs and a special exhaust system.

"This engine appeared to be running quite smoothly and, as it wasn't smoking, I decided to work with my dad to do just the minimum needed. This involved a partial strip, to allow us to replace the easy-to-reach 'sensible' parts: main bearings, clutch etc. While replacing the clutch I also replaced the flywheel for a slightly lighter

Mini Spares item and fitted a NOS 731 cam (later replaced with the Swiftune SW5 due to concerns over the 731's usability). The engine was one of the first parts completed, way in advance of the bodyshell. It sat under a blanket for months." When the car had been collected, it ran OK and trundled along in first gear satisfactorily. At least that was a bonus, and helpful when pulling in and out of the garage during the welding.

With the bodyshell removed to Canal Lane Garage in 2008, Adam and Mick set about assessing what would be needed: new wings, A-panels, front panel, inner and outer sills, »





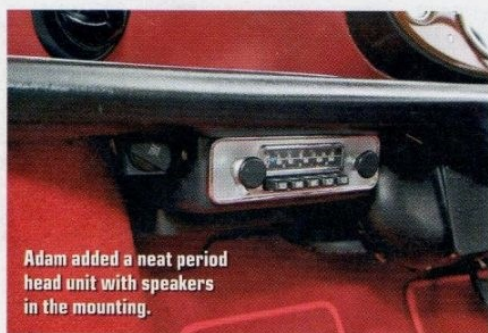
Many differences from Mini here, notably trim and carpet treatment, steering wheel emblem and fascia veneer. Tacho and pedal extension were added by Adam.



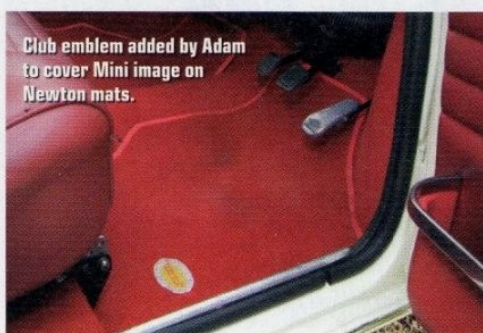
Unlike the posher Elf's wood dash, Hornet had an oval instrument pod and open shelf with colour-matched trim cards.



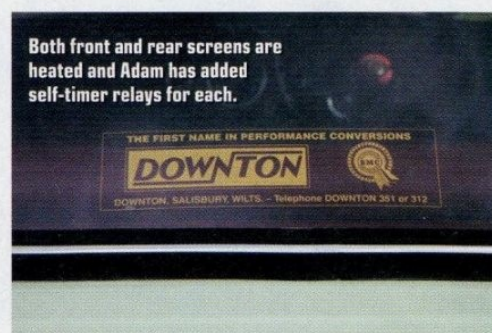
Unique rear seat and side panel trim design. Seats included leather.



Adam added a neat period head unit with speakers in the mounting.



Club emblem added by Adam to cover Mini image on Newton mats.



Both front and rear screens are heated and Adam has added self-timer relays for each.

doorsteps, bonnet, front floorpans, doors, rear inner arches, rear valance and a lot of holes to be welded over. In the case of the Hornet, many of the unique panels are no longer made. "Where you come unstuck is with the rear valance, front panels, doors, bonnet, bootlid, etc. Front panels are just not available. Those places that suggest they have them simply don't and you will find that it is a Mini front panel that has been modified with a plate welded over the front and new holes in the right places."

Adam rates [www.elf-hornet-register.co.uk](http://www.elf-hornet-register.co.uk) as the best source of information for prospective Hornet and Elf restorers. Gordon Furness at [www.catmint.biz](http://www.catmint.biz) is a good source of unique parts and there is another supplier in Bradford, where Adam got an excellent rear valance. He managed to get a good set of rebuilt doors on exchange from [www.minidoor.co.uk](http://www.minidoor.co.uk).

The work commenced: "We did all the welding

and replacements in stages to reduce the chance of twisting and distortion. I kept the shell rolling, with its subframes, so little bracing was needed."

Both Elf and Hornet had endless chrome: unique overrider, bumpers, grilles, chrome trim and other chrome accessories. If it needs replacing you'll have to search high and low. He gathered as many parts as he could, with eBay listed as a prime resource. He even found a new original grille and went to collect it. The seller said it had been a spare

for the Hornet he used to own but had been on his son's bedroom wall since the 1980s. Having spent hours scanning eBay, Adam also collected many Wolseley hubcaps and steering wheels, in order to get good condition originals.

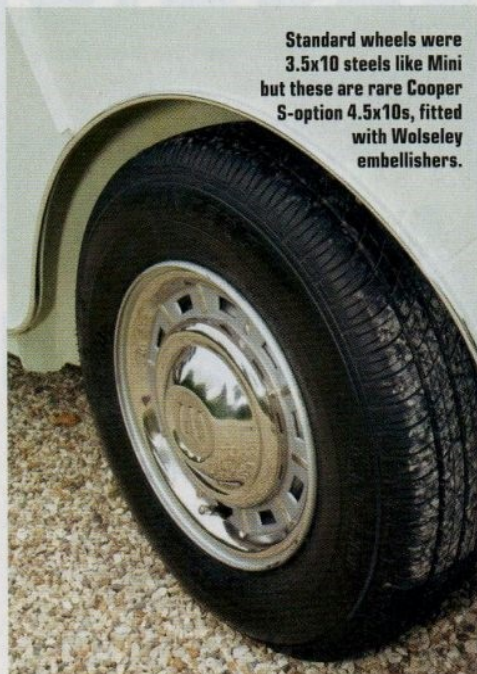
If acceptable NOS parts could not be found, his last resort was to get some items re-chromed. This is not something that many Mini restorers try, as the cost is prohibitive, but there are

also some other downsides. Parts made from cast zinc or cheap alloys with minor pitting, like the door handles and the bonnet catch 'spear,' can become extremely pitted, due to the pre-chroming acid-dip process, and may need to be replaced. No rust pitting can be filled before chroming. "The average cost for a bumper re-chrome seems to be about £150-£250. Rusty metal is never going to re-chrome to perfection so my advice would be to find the best part you can before spending lots of money on re-chroming it." He used [www.premier-plating.co.uk](http://www.premier-plating.co.uk).

From quite early on, it was clear that this Hornet was not going to be built as a standard resto. He wanted some concessions to road safety and it meant doing away with the twin-leading-shoe front drum brakes and the standard dynamo. The engine was tuned to a much higher output than the standard 38bhp for the 998 Hornet. At around 632kg it also weighs more than the early Mini saloon (although the Rover Mini MPI is a portly 715kg). So he invested in a remote servo kit, Cooper S 7.5-inch front brake disc conversion and a Lucas alternator. How can an alternator be a safety

**"How bad could an MOT-failed Wolseley Hornet be after 20 years off the road?"**





Standard wheels were 3.5x10 steels like Mini but these are rare Cooper S-option 4.5x10s, fitted with Wolseley embelishers.



Re-chroming is no small matter for this car but the end result, as well as excellent original spec two-tone paint, make this a show winner.

## THE BUILD



The original owners of the Hornet didn't drive it for long before going to Richard Miles of London for a Downton-derived BMC ST tuning package to bring the 998 motor up to Mini Cooper power.



Just turn the key and... Actually, we better get the power saw out and do some creative chopping. Adam's Hornet wasn't the worst shell we've seen but not many would have taken this on.



Aligning the new doors, A-panels, inner and outer wings is a critical job if you want the bonnet and front panel to fit correctly. Even at Longbridge or Fisher and Ludlow, Mini panels did not fit properly.



Having good front and rear subframes in place helps with panel alignment and reduces the possibility of shell distortion during welding. You can just see the Cooper S 7.5-inch disc brake assembly.



Beautiful veneer dash pod facing differed from Elf's full-width dash but retained the design functionality of the Mini dash shelf, plus the new eyeball fresh air vents for driver and passenger.



Fitting up. Note the Cooper/S-spec 'remote' style gearshift mechanism, the Speedwell pod for the Smiths additional tachometer and Dynatone acoustic sound deadening.

part? Because he wanted Cibie H4 headlamps and heated front and rear screen, which would have defeated the standard dynamo.

Although he hadn't road-driven the car in its standard Hydrolastic form, he knew that he didn't want the Hydro nautical roll and pitch. He went to Mini Spares for the C-AJJ3362 front suspension kit. This is a Works-derived conversion which adds a pair of telescopic dampers to firm up the front end. At the rear, he was advised by *MiniWorld's* very own Jim Jupp that an anti-roll bar kit, also from Mini Spares, really paid dividends. So he fitted one of those,

as well as a rare new-old-stock Hydrolastic suspension system from an eBay seller.

Even if the specification was going to change, he had decided that he should keep the original paint scheme. Most Hornets were supplied with contrasting roof paint and his had been painted originally in Yukon Grey and Dove Grey, a bit, er, low key. So he opted instead for Snowberry White overall with Damask Red roof. These were original Hornet colours and would still match the red interior.

Thankfully, it had been a fairly complete car when it was handed over, including the interior.

Newton Commercial were sent the leather and vinyl seats for re-covering. This they could do but the original Cardinal Red colour was not available so they had to find a match. Likewise, the trim and carpets were ordered in Grenadine Red, which was the closest equivalent. Surprisingly, Newton had no patterns for the Hornet dash trim cards, so he sent along the old ones as patterns. He recommends that restorers should hang on to old original trim as new replacements may need altering or trimming to fit.


They were en route to the MOT when they »





Dick Burzi design has all the BMC cues. Looks long but is actually a little shorter than contemporary Mini Van and Estate models.

found out that the three-synchro gearbox, which had seemed very reasonable pottering in first gear, was completely shot. Out it came for rebuild and plans to show the Hornet off at L2B 2010 were scuppered. Later that year Adam's Hornet did, eventually, go to the ball. At the White Horse Classic it earned Car of the Show; at the Blenheim Palace Classic it was second in 1960s class and at the 2011 L2B it was first in the 1960s class. Fewer than three years before, it had been propping up a garage roof. Now, albeit not restored to standard spec, this is certainly one of the most beautiful Hornets we have seen. Adam says that there are only 117 Mk3 Hornets

registered in the UK (and far fewer of the Mk1 and Mk2 models). So let's hope that car collectors suddenly realise that this is one of the rarest Minis around and the survivors are rescued by fearless restorers like Adam Smith. 

**Adam would like to thank:** Lisa and Ruby; Mick Smith of Canal Lane Garage, Wakefield (+44 (0)1924 826072); Steve Stovell; Jono Eales; Mini Spares Centre; L&SMOC; Newton Commercial; All of the helpful Elf & Hornet Register forum users ([www.elf-hornet-register.co.uk](http://www.elf-hornet-register.co.uk)).

**MiniWorld** would like to thank: [www.ardingtonhouse.com](http://www.ardingtonhouse.com) for the photoshoot location.



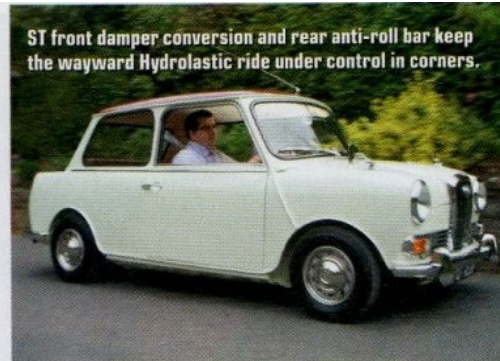
Non-OE servo, alternator and twin carbs help to fill an engine bay that looks half empty in a standard Hornet.



A pair of Cooper-spec HS2s were at the heart of the Downton conversion for 998cc A-series.



The tuning package was officially recognised by BMC.



ST front damper conversion and rear anti-roll bar keep the wayward Hydrolastic ride under control in corners.

## Technical Specification

### 1968 Mk3 Wolseley Hornet

- ▶ **Engine:** Original 998cc block, Downton/ST top-end . original pistons/bore . new main bearings . Mini Spares lightened flywheel . 12G295 Cooper cylinder head, leaded type, polished . Swiftune SW5 camshaft . lightened cam followers . duplex timing gear/chain conversion . twin SU HS2 carburettors . Cooper twin-carb inlet manifold . K&N air filter elements . Filter King fuel filter/adjustable pressure regulator . Lucas 45D4 distributor . NGK Platinum sparkplugs . Manifold stainless LCB exhaust manifold . Manifold full stainless system, special lengthened tailpipe . ARP, stainless and titanium fasteners
- ▶ **Performance:** 62bhp at the crank at Slark Race Engineering . average 36mpg
- ▶ **Gearbox:** Manual three-synchro, rebuilt . remote-shift type . new bearings, layshaft . centre oil pick-up pipe . 3.765:1 final drive
- ▶ **Brakes:** Single-circuit . Mini Spares remote servo/master cylinder . rear drums . front Cooper S disc conversion, 7.5-inch discs . Cooper master cylinder, brake pedal . twin-pot callipers . Dot4 fluid
- ▶ **Suspension:** Standard Hydrolastic system, new-old-stock components . Mini Spares C-AJJ3362 additional front damper conversion . rear anti-roll bar conversion . subframes and most components powder-coated
- ▶ **Wheels/Tyres:** Cooper S 4.5x10 steel wheels modified to accept original Wolseley hubcaps . Falken Sincera 145x10 radial tyres
- ▶ **Interior:** Original seats retrimmed Grenadine Red by Newton Commercial, leather/vinyl . front seat mount extension brackets . Newton Commercial carpet, boot board in Grenadine Red . one-off floor mats with Wolseley OC logos . Newton Commercial cream-crackle headlining . handbrake system rebuilt, powder-coated . Kangol static front seatbelts . standard oval central pod . Smiths additional rev counter in Speedwell pod . 1960s Blaupunkt 8-track head unit modified as MP3 player . speakers integral with head unit mount . new-old-stock standard Wolseley steering wheel . standard switches . heated front and rear screens . Paddy Hopkirk alloy throttle pedal extension
- ▶ **Exterior:** Bodysell restored . new A-panels, wings, front panel, inner sills, outer sills, doorsteps, bonnet, front floorpans, doors, inner rear arches, rear valance . many holes welded . two-pack Snowberry White (WT4), roof Damask Red (RD5) . Waxoyl and POR15 anti-rust treatment . Cibie non-sidelight headlamps . all brightwork rechromed . new-old-stock mirrors, grille, lights, boot lock