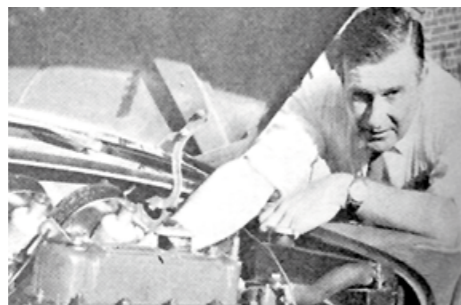




Urban myth or Aussie legend?

Few Mini models are as big a mystery as Australia's own Sports 850, but this baby track-burner played a unique part in the local Mini story.



Wal Warneford - SCW October 1961

It is not surprising that the Mini was going to attract the interest of tuning companies and racing drivers. The road-holding ability of BMC's baby four-seater is now legendary, but the potential was recognised instantly on the car's release, by many people.

By the time the Morris 850 was released in Australia, in March 1961, there were already a number of tuners in the UK pulling comparatively big horsepower figures from the 848cc engine. According to Laurence Pomeroy (*The Mini Story - 1964*) Alexander Engineering was possibly the first, offering a Mini with twin-carburettors, extractors and 8.9:1 compression, in December 1959.

Motor Sport magazine (September 1959) did a road test on the Mini, reporting; "What have these new small cars to do with enthusiasts? Ask the firms that are even now modifying and tuning them for high speed!"

In July 1961, Australia's *Sports Car World* had a road test from the UK, on a Downton

Engineering twin-carb Mini. Ads from the magazine show the Downton conversion was already available in Australia by that time.

In fact, many companies had already been doing such modifications for the A-series engines fitted to Austin A30/35/40 and Morris Minor. Some had even had limited success on the racetrack. The Mini was an open invitation to these businesses.

In Australia, the story was similar. *Wheels* magazine, March 1955, had an article on fitting multiple carburettors to your car. It is accompanied by a photo of a set of twin SU carbs being fitted to a Morris Minor engine. There is also a photo of a kit for the A30, clearly showing the cast alloy manifold, which bears the name: Monaro Motors. The importance of this will become apparent.

Sports Car World, September 1961, had a brief news item about a twin carb kit, followed up a month later with a road test on "the first Mini in Sydney fitted with one".



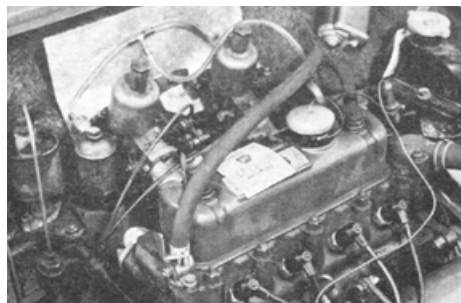
Peter Manton - SCW December 1961

The major difference, as seen in the available photos, between the English kits and the Aussie versions, is that those from the UK had the float chambers on opposite sides of the carburettor body (the outside of each), while the local product had the chambers on the left side of both carbs.

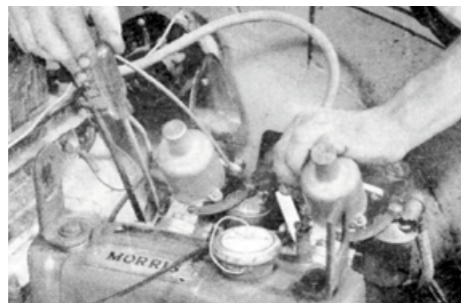
Credit for the design of the Aussie kit is given by SCW to Wal Warneford, head of Sydney firm, Automotive Carburettor Pty Ltd.

With so many people eager to hot-up the Mini, and so many kits that followed a similar theme, it is not surprising that BMC Australia saw an opening for an authorized sports package that would not void the factory warranty.

If you would like to read the rest of this story get your copy of *The Mini Experience* from your local newsagent, or subscribe today...



Downton kit on UK Mini Minor
Sports Car World - July 1961



Fitting twin-carbs to Morris Minor
Wheels - March 1955



Sports 850 twin-carb setup.
Note layout of float chambers



Story by Craig Watson
Photos by Craig Watson, Autopics & others