

CORTINA DREAMING

Early Years – South Eastern England

My Cortina passion started when I was 18 years old. I purchased a 1969 MK2 super. My funds wouldn't run to my preferred choice a Lotus Cortina or a Cortina MK 2 1600 E. I removed the standard dash out and replaced it with a GT dash with all the ancillary extra clocks. I managed to purchase the 'E' seats and engine from a GT that a friend was scrapping. Three years later I bought a 1975 MK3 Cortina for 150 quid. This car, probably, was overpriced. I found a 1980 MK5 Ghia four years later. Many Cortina enthusiasts regarded the Ghia as a luxury car with a perky V6 engine. Unfortunately someone decided to take it for a drive one night, without my keys, and that was the end of this car.

Current Times – Canada- Saskatoon

Twenty years on and a life changing move to Saskatoon from the south east of England I stumbled across a 2 door 1970 MK 2 GT in Montgomery Place. I immediately headed to location after reading the advert on Kijiji. Furthermore, I couldn't come up with a good reason not to buy it.



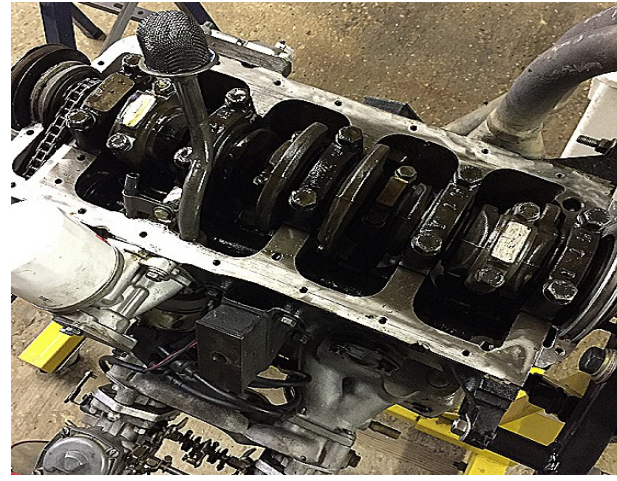
After buying the MK2 I replaced the standard 1600 GT engine with a Lotus twin cam engine that I found in Cranbrook BC. The motor sat in the owners basement for 11 years after he has bequested it in a will. I took a chance and bought it! First I rebuilt the twin Weber carbs. Then

checked the engine; and with Bob Forward's help we had the engine up and running. The engine switch was straight forward. Once completed, I had my first Lotus powered Cortina, and I was not disappointed. The power in this little 4 cylinder is quite startling



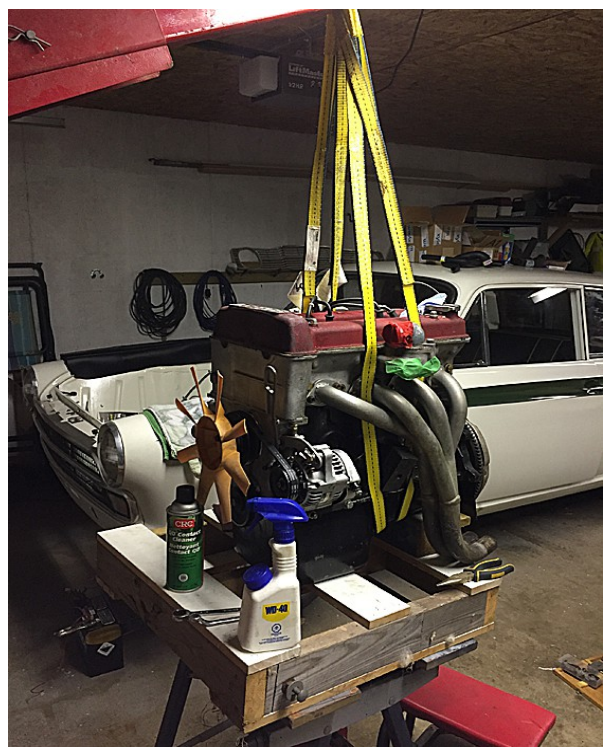
Fast forward to May 2017, I purchased another Cortina. This time it was a 66 MK1 GT. The car was owned by Gord Leach of Regina. He had bought the car as a primed shell, whilst he had it he had it painted in the standard Lotus Cortina livery. His plans were to complete this car, and along with another MK1 he had, have them back on the road. Tragically he was taken in a traffic accident. I purchased the painted shell and boxes of parts from Gord's wife, and I trailered them home to Pike Lake. My rebuild began! The hard part, the bodywork was already done, so it was down to mechanical work, the interior, and therefore fitting it all back together.





The engine bay was still painted black and I knew that if I left it and installed an engine, which I actually still didn't have, I would only regret. So I cleaned up and resprayed the engine bay in my garage, I had no record of exactly what colour paint the rest of the car had been sprayed, technically the Lotus colours should be Ermine white and Sherwood green for the stripe. Shortly after painting the engine bay I located a Lotus twin cam out of a 1969 Lotus Elan in Calgary. The engine only had around 25,000 kms and the owner wanted to get a different engine with the Weber head to take the twin 40's whereas this engine had the Stromberg head which had actually been converted to SU's. I had to change the bellhousing to match the block to the MK1 gearbox, flywheel and starter.

The engine came with a Denso alternator, I had to make some alterations to get this working by eliminating the voltage control box and changing some of the connections on the back of the ignition switch, it also came with a Petronix distributor and Denso starter motor. I decided to go back to the tried and tested points system and unfortunately the starter doesn't fit due to the cross members orientation. The starter will be a spare for my MK2 now.



Amongst the shell and mountain of parts was a Rubbermaid box filled with several wiring looms, clocks, gauges and brackets for various fittings and thanks to my two sons efforts we managed to get them all back in and working. The lights all came together and aside from the front sidelights, which had corroded, they all worked. I ended up drilling out the holes for the small corroded side light bulbs and installed a couple of dime sized LED lights, problem fixed. The interior went back in and there followed the glass. The windscreen rubber installation certainly tried my patience, not a straight forward job and the same can be said for the rear window. The chrome trim that fits inside the rubber also took many hours of concentration. I had to source all new rubber with the help of the Cortina MK1 owners club and various places in Australia of all places.

The fuel tank was badly corroded and so I cleaned that out, welded a few spots and bought a new sender unit. The MK1 uses a voltage stabilizer to regulate and control the gauges and I had some issues here with erratic readings, it took me a while to figure out that the clocks were grounded by the speedo illuminating bulb holder that pushes into the back of the speedo. This was slightly corroded and I was losing my ground. I added another ground to be certain and the gauges are now working as designed.

The front suspension and steering arm were installed but the steering arm was back to front, took me a while to figure out this problem. The rubbers were all pretty hard and I opted to replace them all, front and back, including the tie rod ends, pitman arm and steering box seal. Here I opted for the replacement poly bushes. Removing the old bushes from the leaf springs and track control arms required a lot of heat and swearing, but the 53 year old bushes finally gave way. To do this I found that various sized sockets and pieces of pipe worked pretty well.

The twin SU's were a little wide fitting in the engine bay so I had to adapt my air filter so that they actually fit. I am still toying with the idea of converting it back to Stromberg carbs, fortunately Bob came to the rescue and I am going to install a pair he had. I welded a small bracket to the pedal assembly and made up a cable linkage to the carbs, the original was a rod assembly. The Strombergs are now in place and balanced using a Synchrometer, the linkage turned out to be very similar with just a few modifications for the air filter. Now I have to wait for spring to road test and see whether I have the power I'm anticipating.

The car came with a set of reclining racing bucket seats for which I had to make up brackets, I had these in for a few months but they appeared too big, and I eventually found some Nissan seats. The Nissan seat are much more authentic and once I'd made up some more brackets and installed some seat covers I was happier with the result.



