

Capri Style

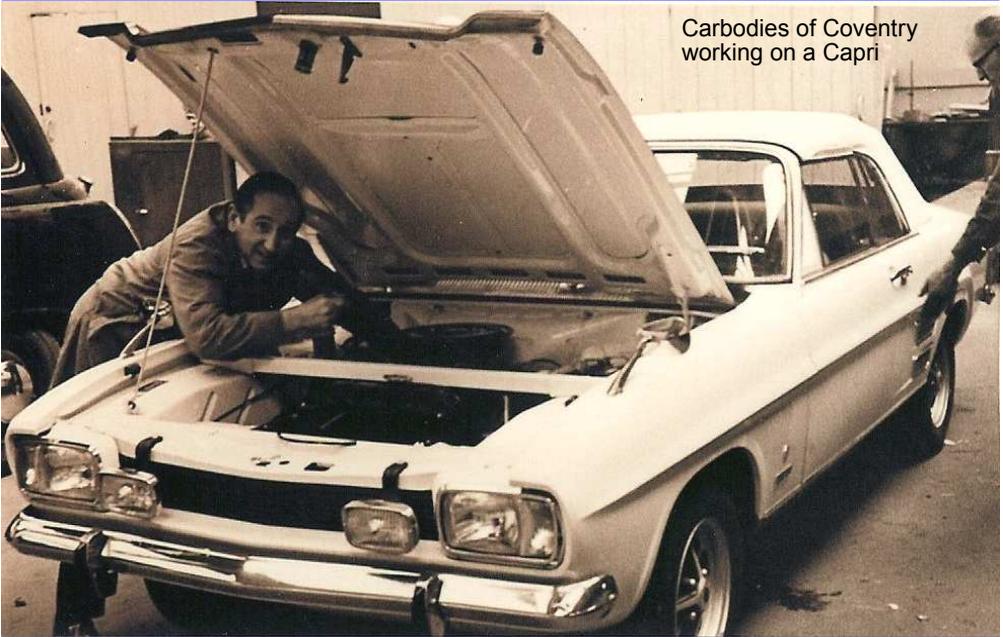


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Carbodies of Coventry
working on a Capri



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Carbodies Convertible Capri - is the puzzle solved?

When an email came through telling me about an unusual convertible Capri I got very excited, the more I read the more I felt sure that this was an original Carbodies prototype. Remember two cars had been built, one had been crashed, but was it crushed or was it sold?

I have written about the car on several occasions not just for our magazine but as an article for CCI magazine as far back as the mid 90's, so yes its been a bit of an interest of mine for a long time.

Another Capri enthusiast called Peter Newbrook had seen my article for CCI and he wrote to CCI saying that four years earlier he had written about a Carbodies convertible which he believed he had been instrumental in planting the seeds for the project.

Back in 1969 the Chairman of Ford Motor Company was Sir Patrick Hennessey.

Peter had several meetings and exchanged correspondence with Sir Patrick about the feasibility of marketing for a convertible Capri. He believed the format could be the same as that used on the Ford Consul and Ford Zephyr. Peter firmly believed that it was a direct result of these conversations that resulted in the order being placed with Carbodies of Coventry for a prototype to be built.

So it went ahead and the prototype was built, it was said to be very well constructed, the folding top was identical to the Zephyr conversion in that the first fold went half way to the De Ville position and the second half was power operated and disappeared behind the rear seat. The base car used was a 3000 GTCLR with regular Rostyle wheels and with automatic transmission'. The body was painted white.

It was road tested and reviewed by journalist David Benson for the Sunday Express early in 1971.

The prototype cost a little over £3000 to manufacture and the intention was to sell each car at between £1800 and £2000 tax inclusive. The price could only be achieved if sales of 50—60 cars per week were sold, a big ask back then as competition in the convertible market also came from Crayford and Abbott, and really until recently convertibles in this wet, wet country of ours didn't really sell that well. Crayford only managed in the region of 30+ conversions and remember that these were sold through Bristol Street Motors - yes a Ford dealership.

So perhaps the future wasn't that bright for a another convertible. The Carbodies conversion never went into production Carbodies were disappointed by this, it was also to be the last project of this type undertaken by them for the Ford Motor Company.



Carbodies convertible on test drive 1971

Now the it gets really interesting

The story we have is that

This prototype Capri was out on a test drive when it was crashed and was written off, as with all Ford cars it was sent to the crusher.....or was it?

The story goes on that a second convertible was hastily built by Carbodies this time with a 1600GT engine, so questions could arise as to the reason for the crash, was it hushed up to save face if indeed it did happen? Carbodies only ever admit to one conversion, but really give the impression they would rather not talk about it.

From here on a cloud descends over the Carbodies Capri and is forgotten - well for a few years anyway.

Bill Monroe, a writer, was researching Carbodies of Coventry and the Ford cars they worked on, and he raised the issue of the Capri and Carbodies. We pooled our information but it still wasn't a lot to go on and a dead end loomed large. What became of the car or cars?

Then a new twist enters the tale.

Our club used to go to Stoneleigh Park Warwickshire every August Bank Holiday to a huge show 'The Town and Country Festival' (mid 90's), it was here that a young woman came onto the stand to chat about her fathers Capri, a car that he had owned for over 23 years (then, and still owns now).

She went on to tell us that it was a convertible, such a beautiful car that she had chosen it for her wedding car (dad owned a few classics) Crayford or Abbot 'said the gang', but the more she described the car the more intrigued I became as she wasn't describing either of the other convertibles. Is this the missing Carbodies???



We exchanged telephone numbers and

yes I was soon on the phone to dad Cavan.

The history that Cavan had about the car was that at one time it had been used by the wife of the then Chairman of Ford UK, she had used it as her everyday car to get around London, chauffeur driven of course. When she wanted a newer model the chauffeur took up the opportunity to buy the Capri, he later sold it and it went to a new owner in Wales.

I know this is true because this next owner I have met several times and discussed the Capri with him, yes he wishes he had never sold it. But it passed to the hands of its present owner who had it in storage until his daughter chose it, as afore mentioned. Now this car was white with a 3000 GT engine, everything about it shouts Carbodies but the original car had the number plate MNO 10J this one was MNO101J.

Your car is insured, but what about the parts?

Like most people, I renew my car insurance every year and do the same with my house insurance (buildings and contents), but does this adequately cover the parts that many of us collect to maintain our cars?

In a vast majority of cases the answer is a resounding NO! I found this out when a friend's garage got broken in to and a pair of Mk1 Escort wings was stolen, but the car was left alone. Because my friend was unable to produce a receipt for the wings, the insurance refused to pay out for them. His problem was that the wings came from separate auto jumbles and how many of us would get a receipt if we asked for one? This made me think that perhaps I should make sure that the parts I have collected are properly insured which I found was easier said than done. After 12 months searching, I finally found a place that could help.

Home insurance will cover some parts kept within the house and possibly the garage or outbuilding, but only up to a certain value. Then there is no guarantee that the insurance will pay out should you need to make a claim. In today's society many insurers want proof you had something before they will pay out. If you have something they consider 'outside the norm' they start to ask questions. This was highlighted a few years ago when homes in Gloucestershire were flooded and home owners made claims for two freezers. The reason was that as far as insurers are concerned, most homes only have the one freezer; this was despite people still having two freezers in place after the flood. The insurers comment was that the home owner could have easily got an old one from a second hand shop in attempt to get a second new one which they would sell on. It was only those that could prove through receipts that they had two freezers in operation at the same time. So where does that leave us with car parts? If you have two right hand indicators, the insurer may pay out for one if you can prove you had such a part but not the second unless there is proof of ownership. Basically home contents insurers specialise in home insurance only.

What about classic car insurance? I followed this line of enquiry after sharing my concerns on several forums. Here you would think there is some progress; well there is some! Car insurance (classic or otherwise) will insure the car and to some extent contents such as stereo, but does nothing for those spare parts you have collected. So we move to restoration insurance which covers your car while you restore it and parts are removed from the car. Well parts are now covered but only the parts removed from your car. They will cover new parts you have collected if the old part has been binned, but how many of us do that? Then the car has to be in the process of being restored.

Your car is insured, but what about the parts? Continued

The insurers I have spoken to say the car had to be partly dismantled, so as far as they are concerned, if you have a rolling restoration (i.e. a car that is in pretty much continuous use and restored bit by bit) is essentially a running, complete car. Plus those of us with cars where the parts are hard to get (most RS models greater than 15 years) have more than one of a particular part. One for the restoration and a second should our pride and joy be involved in an accident so require repair. Again to get a pay-out for duplicate parts you need evidence such as a receipt.

It wasn't until I attended the Classic Car Show at the Birmingham NEC in 2011 that I finally started to make progress. Most of the specialist classic car insurers were completely unable to help but a couple said that if I contacted them after the show they might be able to help which included my current classic car insurer, but these ultimately came to nothing. One however was pretty sure they could help and took my details and said they would contact me after the show. Chris Frost from Hagerty Classic Car Insurance was true to his word and on the Monday said their underwriters were sure they would be able to cover my parts. They would need a list of all the parts that I had an estimated value for each part. Listing the parts was easy, because I had already done this after getting fed up of being unable to find the part I needed, so while looking for an insurer, I had numbered the boxes of parts I had and then catalogued them in a spread sheet. The hard part was applying a value, but with the help of different club registrars and forum members sharing the price of parts they had purchased over the years an estimate was made of the value of each part. Some parts were harder than others, for example a fuel pump I needed a few years ago sold on eBay for over £60, but the one I eventually purchased and is now on the car only cost me £16 and was also from eBay. Cases like these we agreed that a value somewhere between the two plus 10%. The total value of the spares I have was a bit of a shock, but when you buy a part here and there you never tally how much the whole collection is worth. Now it was down to the underwriters to say how much the policy was going to set me back. This didn't take too long and the cost was very reasonable being no more than it costs to insure my car which is of a similar value to the parts I have collected.

Hopefully this will help those collecting parts to help maintain their car or in preparation for a restoration, so that should a theft occur, you won't be completely out of pocket like my friend was.

Gareth Beynon
(241/1006)

A Day With Octane!

Soon after spending a few days with Roy and Isabel at the NEC for the Classic Car Show catching up as it was about a year or so since we last spoke, I received an email that had been forwarded by a journalist in need of a Capri, but not any Capri. Specifically he was after an RS2600, of which I only know of about 5 in the UK that of which I think only 2 are on the road. Just like many owners of a classic car, they would probably be unlikely to take their car out for a magazine to do an article in early December. So now we were on to his second choice, an RS3100 of which there is probably getting on for 60 in the UK that could be on the road, but again who would take their car out in early December as most would be in the garage for winter with no TAX.

Fortunately Isabel was in luck because I find it extremely hard to refuse any request that she makes of me, so I contacted the journalist to find out more. The article was to be on the sportier cars that few had a chance to own because these cars were primarily built for one purpose and that was so that Ford could go racing, so these cars were the homologation specials. Therefore I agreed to take part provided that I could find someone that would hire a trailer to me for a reasonable price so that I wouldn't be too out of pocket and that the photo shoot wouldn't finish too late as I rarely tow a trailer, let alone reverse one in to my driveway at night. Under the pretence of work, a trailer hire company was found in Coventry that would help (fortunately he was a fan of Capris) so a list of available dates was sent off after a little negotiation with my boss in Brussels. Fortunately he has someone in the UK work for him before that is a little fanatical about cars, so he understood and allowed me to indulge myself this once. It also helps that one of the company's I am working with is a major supplier of car polish in the UK and the manager of a Germany company I am working with is also a big Capri fan! The service of my parents was also called upon to help with manoeuvring everything back in to the drive in the dark afterwards.

The day started relatively early so that I could avoid the rush hour and take my time to get the RS to the studio in Banbury. Only one error was made and that was 100 yards from the studio when I turned left instead of going in to what looked like a distribution centre. Fortunately I wasn't the only one to make this mistake as the owner of a Mk2 Escort RS200 had done the same, so the passenger kindly guided me back so I could turn car and trailer around. On arrival we received a warm welcome and the offer of a cup of coffee, the supply of which was continuous throughout the day with biscuits included. Mark Somer the Art Editor gave us an outline of how the day was scheduled and introduced us to James Lipman the photographer. Unfortunately Paul Hardiman the writer was otherwise engaged having to look after one of his children that were off school sick. Mark and James explained the order pictures would be taken and the effects that they were after. This all sounded very simple but once the shoot started it soon became clear what was involved in producing the pictures required for an article trying to answer "Why we love blue collard racers."

The cars that had been rounded up were a 1966 Cortina – Lotus (to give it its correct title according to Ford) along with a 1987 Sierra RS Cosworth (the original 3 door type) supplied by Ford Heritage; 1974 Escort RS1600 (currently for sale at £49,950! An horrendous price for a car where nearly 100 were built compared to 250 RS3100s) supplied by Legends Automotive after the Escort Twin cam fell through at the last minute. A 1979 Escort RS200 supplied by Luke Taroni which is currently for sale in Tamworth and my 1973 Capri RS3100 soon after

Getting the cars into position was easy using skates under each wheel which meant no need to keep stopping and starting the engine. I only started the RS3100 once to put into the studio where I was given plenty of notice so that I could run the old girl up to temperature before pulling her inside. Once in position we all broke for lunch where we were treated to a proper home cooked meal including desert. Much of the time was spent in darkness but your eyes soon get acclimatised but the lights were put on long enough for me to change over the radiator cap and the battery, this was done to give the engine bay a more authentic look. I don't run the car with the shiny radiator cap because it is an original Ford factory second, so although it looks the part, brand new and shiny, it always results in the radiator boiling over! The battery is the original one that came with the car and ceased to hold a charge over a decade ago! The engine bay is the only restored part of the car which the long standing members of the club will remember from 2007 after a battery incident. The interior is completely unrestored and the outside has been treated but more along the lines of preservation rather than restoration (another very interesting article in the March issue of Octane).

I am very impressed with the overall feature which I think quite rightly focuses more on the picture of the cars with a single column down one page of the double spread given to each car. My car is genuinely as shiny as it appears in the pictures as I spent an intense week polishing the old girl as she had been put away with nothing more than a light going over with a duster! None of the pictures have been subjected to any enhancement because you can see where the light reflections change on the front wing and the rear valance where I know there are defects in the paint finish. The opening shot to the article makes the thinness of the paint on the bonnet is clearly visible over the inner section of the headlights. It was a pleasure to work with people that are not only enthusiastic about the cars they feature, but show the cars in their true light.

Since the article was published I have had several people contact me wanting to purchase my car and I have turned them all down despite being offered at least £4000 more than the car has been valued for by a specialist in RS Capri's, so perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the value of all Mk1 Capri's as they become ever rarer.

Gareth Beynon
(241/100)

