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CLASSICS MONTHLY

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Workshop
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p55

**RUST REMEDIES
WHICH IS BEST?**
We put a variety of top
products to the test

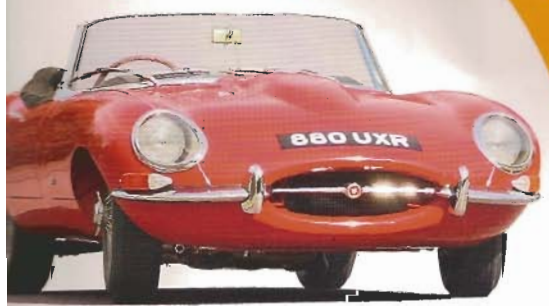


**ACID DIPPING
AND E-COATING**
Which is the best method
for total rust removal?

US Solve your fuel tank
corrosion, the safe way

GB and Lotus Elan
project cars progress

E-type resto
still superb 20 years on



early flat-floor Jaguar, chassis #27 **p90**

KILL RUST!

Stop the rot - 11 pages
of essential tips
and advice!

MAGIC MOGGIES

Cotswolds classic
drive: two cool
cats still hold their
own for modern
motoring
page 8



Spitfire Buying Guide page 104



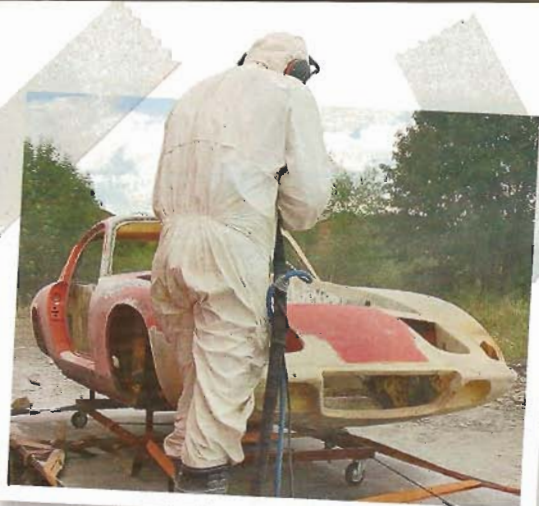
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Project Elan pt12

The damage revealed

With the frustration building, Jerry gets a new lease of life thanks to the wonders of soda blasting.



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The bottom line

You have two choices: equip yourself with a sharp chisel and start chipping; or get the experts to professionally remove the paint. Both techniques get paint off – one's free, the other's easy.

SRILL	Expert needed
TIME	More paint=more time
COST	£500 to £1000



SodaBlaster

The specialist

Soda Blast Systems (UK) LTD
Morgan Works
Riverlee Road
Off Roma Road
Tysley
Birmingham, B111 2JG
www.soda-blast.co.uk
enquiries@soda-blast.co.uk



Offside front wing

The harder you look, the more damage you see. I can barely bring myself to describe it, suffice to say the front centre and rear of the arch are damaged and the back part of the wing is more wavy than the North Sea.

"The harder you look, the more damage you see"



Nearside front wing

It's not too bad compared to the rest of the car – just parking knocks and scrapes to be rectified here.



Wing flank

Once all the filler had been removed, this is what we were left with. I can't even start to guess at how this happened. No matter, it's still got to be repaired.



SO FAR, SO GOOD...



Roof section

The cracking in the paint on the roof foretold of problems underneath. The oracle was right – the gel coat has had it, and one of the rear window edges has split.



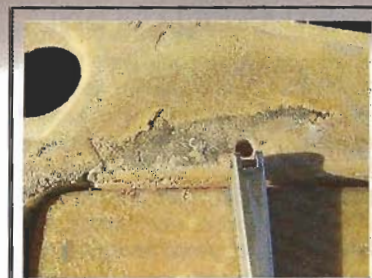
Rear quarter pillar

It looks like somebody had a half-hearted attempt at hacking the roof off to make a convertible then changed their mind and bodged it back together with body filler. No, I'm not joking...



Both rear wings

Both rear wings are cracked. The rear end had been subject to pretty major accident damage. It's been patched back together but now that the plastic filler has been removed, it's clear that it wasn't a good quality repair. I'm hoping that the shape of the car has been kept sufficiently well for a proper repair to be carried out.



Boot hinges

Repeated opening and closing of the boot has stress-cracked the shell in this area. This will be the second time it's been repaired – this time it'll be done properly.



Rotoflex couplings

Both Rotoflex couplings have let go at some point and tried to join the shopping in the boot. At least this will be an easy fix.



Rear corners

Both rear bumper corners have had it. Obviously somebody was pretty rubbish at reversing.



Part 1

Assessing and buying the right car



Part 2

Dummy chassis build-up, NEC 2006



Part 3

Full stripdown to component parts



Part 4

Zetec engine rebuild to 200bhp



Part 5

Upholstery – new leather seats



Part 6

Wooden-dash veneer restoration



Part 7

Fuel injection system set-up



Part 8

Bodywork assessment begins



Part 9

Chrome and brightwork restoration



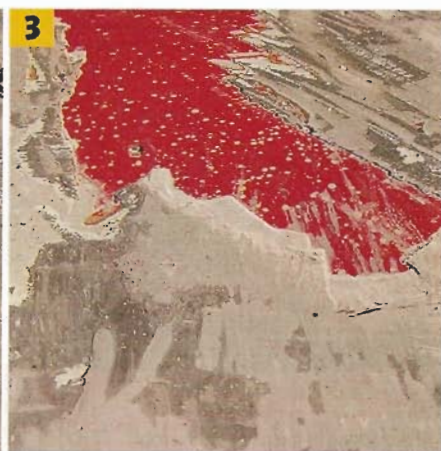
Part 10

It's Jerry's half-term report: D minus



Part 11

Powder-coating



Q&A

Is soda blasting toxic?

No. It's environmentally safe, using 100 per cent food-grade sodium bicarbonate. Safety protection is still advised, though. It's loud, dusty and requires a suitable area for the blasting.



Get all the paint off the shell but on no account use paint stripper. That was the instruction from Frank Sadowski of Option One, who'll be in charge of repairing and re-mattng the Elan's shell. It'll get into the gel coat and subsequent resin won't stick. Beggar, there goes Plan A.

Plan B was to remove all the paint using an orbital sander and 60 grit paper. Draper even lent me a big compressor and one of their

professional air sanders to try. I couldn't fault the kit – it was the paint on the Elan that kiboshed the scheme. The top couple of coats seemed to consist of some sort of coloured chewing gum that clogged the disc almost as soon as it touched the surface.

Think again

Hmm, Plan C then. Andy Widnall of Spyder Engineering removes paint from factory-built cars the hard way – with a sharp

chisel carefully getting under the layers and peeling it away bit by bit (pic 1). It removed the layers of old paint all right and on some areas you could chip away in fine old style (pic 2).

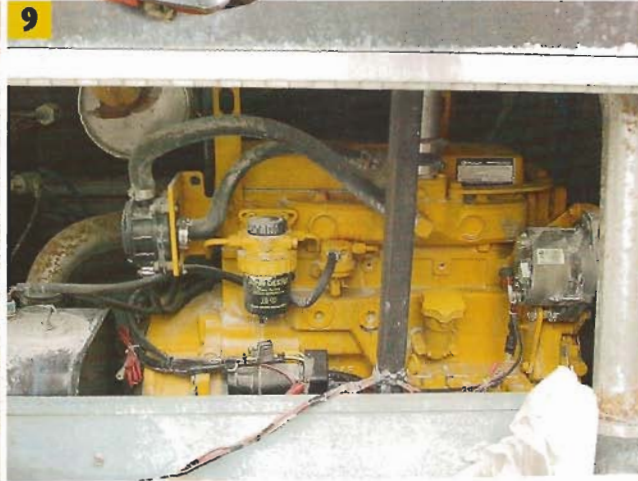
However, as soon as you reached a patch of body filler (pic 3), the chisel would stick and it took ages to remove just a few square

inches. The other problem was it being all too easy to slip with the sharp blade and gouge the gel coat (pic 4). Even after most of the layers of old paint had been removed and I was down to the factory-applied primer, the panel looked like the surface of the moon (pic 5).

Scratching and scraping for the best part of a day got

the paint off half of the roof of the Lotus. It was a heck of a lot of hard work and a quick calculation of surface area versus time taken so far gave me a rough idea of how long it would take to do the rest of the car. It was going to take at least a week of solid work to get the existing paint anywhere near removed.

“The top couple of coats seemed to consist of some sort of coloured chewing gum”



Q&A

How long does it take to strip a car?

Average-sized cars usually take 3-4 hours. Extra-thick paint layers such as on the Elan need longer. Less than a day, though. Now that's progress for your resto!



"As the process is so gentle, it was considered unnecessary to remove the Elan from its trailer"



In desperation, I called editor Gary to see if either he had any bright ideas or would like to come over to my house for a paint-stripping party. The thought of chiselling paint for an entire weekend concentrated his mind wonderfully and he recalled that he'd recently come across a company that offered what they termed as a non-destructive blasting system and put me in touch with Roy Grantham from Soda Blast Systems UK. I was

pleased to find that he was well used to working on classic vehicles, his last job being an Aston Martin Volante that had been stripped using this method without damaging the fragile alloy panels (pic 6).

Blast zone

The soda blast system (pic 7) works by blowing ordinary bicarbonate of soda (pic 8) at panels through the nozzle of a blast gun at between 80 and 150psi. It was claimed that

this would be able to remove the paint from the Elan shell without blowing holes in the delicate fibreglass structure underneath or even unnecessarily damaging the gel coat.

Roy had come across soda blasting and travelled to MMJL's head office in Houston, Texas, to see it for himself. Impressed, he invested in what's currently the UK's only soda blasting plant and negotiated for the European distributorship,

with which he's enjoying some success. In fact, they've just appointed a Spanish marina (Davilasport.es) as agents to join their Maltese contractor. Here's the advert bit – he's looking for agents in the UK, too.

Although the soda blast kit is big – its compressor is powered by a 4-litre John Deere diesel engine (pic 9) – being trailer-mounted, it's fully mobile. The company even offers an 'at your premises service' if you have a suitable space.

I decided to take the Elan to their works at Tyseley in Birmingham rather than upset my cranky neighbours with the inevitable noise and dust that blasting creates. As the process is so gentle, it was considered unnecessary to remove the Elan from its trailer before blasting (pic 10). The used bicarbonate of soda was simply washed off after we had finished or just got blown away.

Although the soda system is 'soft' in comparison to



“As more and more of the body shell was exposed, much of it was looking dodgy”



most blast mediums, some protective clothing was needed, so we dressed up like Crime Scene Officers (pic 11 & 12) and prepared to let rip on the Elan. Roy started on the nearside rear quarter (pic 13) and began working steadily and methodically about six square inches at a time, gradually exposing the gel coat of the vehicle (pic 14). The stream of soda particles carved psychedelic patterns into the vehicle as the paint sloughed away.

With the first patch exposed, my hopes were high. The exposed gel coat surface was looking good and even though it'd been blasted, it still felt quite smooth to the touch (pic 15). As more and more of the body shell was exposed (pic 16), though, much of it was coming out looking distinctly dodgy (pic 17). Most worrying was the amount of past repairs that were coming to light. The paint was coming off to expose patches of plastic

Q&A

What else will soda blasting clean safely?

It has numerous uses due to its 'gentility'. Boat hulls, kitchen equipment, graffiti, engine components, stubborn mould, masonry. Jerry even tried it on a piece of chrome trim and was very pleased with the results.



body filler that in turn disappeared to reveal smudges of home-repair-type matting covering holes (pic 18). It was becoming clear that this car had led a hard life, and the more paint that came off the more damage became visible.

Job done
It took Roy six hours to fully strip the shell and another 30 minutes to get the bonnet and boot lids cleaned off (pic 19). Afterwards, he freely

admitted that it was one of the hardest blasting jobs that he had undertaken, such was the thickness of the paints and primers on the shell. I was delighted with the results, though, and phenomenally grateful that I hadn't been compelled to spend the last seven days scratching away at the shell. However, having had a couple of days to assess the cleaned body I'm genuinely concerned that the shell may be too badly mauled for Frank at Option One to

repair. He's a glassfibre genius but has to draw the line somewhere. I'll know in a few days' time, so do me a favour – cross your fingers.

Big thank you
Want to have your car/boat/house soda blasted? You can contact Roy at roy@soda-blast.co.uk

If you're in Spain or Portugal www.davilasport.es
For Malta, email gme.abela@gmail.com