

Part 2 Restoration

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In the last issue we met Reg, the 1971 Clubman GT. Since then things have been moving at a steady pace, including Reg getting naked.

After storing Reg temporarily, the day finally arrived to peel back the tarps and get my hands dirty.

Since my own garage was full of cars and parts, I had intended moving Reg to my in-laws' for all the work to be carried out.

Unfortunately, their home renovations were in full swing, and access to their garage was blocked by scaffolding. This meant I had to disassemble Reg and store all the parts in my parents' garage. They were quite happy with this arrangement, because it meant I would spend more time at their house.

I find stripping cars rather exciting, as there is no real skill required and it takes minimal effort. With a vast array of tools accumulated from over ten years working in the aircraft industry, I began removing everything from Reg. The front and rear screens were first, followed by the entire interior, including the dash pads and gauges.



Burnt out wiring and grape vine remains.

Then came the wiring loom, carefully extracted like long strands of spaghetti. To my disappointment, the majority of the rear loom was completely melted and will require total replacement.

The headlining appeared dirty but decent. However, during the removal process it literally fell apart in my hands. Also, the grape vine which had engulfed the engine bay during Reg's hibernation period, had found its way up and under the roof lining. Hopefully it hasn't worked its way into the motor!

In next to no time I had covered my parents' driveway with bolt on panels, interior bits and pieces, fuel tanks, glass, etc. It's amazing how much room is consumed by so little, when you spread it out in an orderly fashion. Storing it all is going to prove a challenge.

At this stage Lance arrived with his engine hoist in a box trailer. We unloaded it and



Lance helps get the engine out.

rolled it into position. The original GT motor was a breeze to remove. The 'Hardy Spicer' joints make engine removal very easy. The front hubs can remain in position, and you don't need to separate the top ball joint from the top suspension arm, as you would with the later style 'pot joints'. With Lance's help the motor was lifted from the body for what might be the first time since the car was originally built.

It may look dirty, but I have a really good feeling about it. Looking under the rocker cover reassured me that it was a low mileage motor, as it was very clean. It was promptly loaded into the trailer along with the hoist, and taken away for its rebuild.

Meanwhile, Lance has also been busy rubbing back his Morris 850 (Redmond) by hand. He chose the labour-intensive way of removing paint by sanding, using wet and dry sandpaper.

My eldest son Curtis loves to help, and Lance was fortunate (or unfortunate, depending on how you look at it) to have him help with the sanding. It was fun to watch, until Curtis got bored and decided that pretending to drive the car was more fun.





Starting to get the paint off. The soda comes out at 120psi, but doesn't do any damage.

Now that Reg was an empty shell, albeit ugly red and turquoise, I could examine every aspect of it with a fine-tooth comb. There was not one spot of hidden rust under the rubbers, which I have seen on countless other Minis. Despite carrying 35-years' worth of crud, the floor pans were relatively straight and totally rust free. In fact I did not find ANY more rust in Reg, other than what I had already seen.

This was a huge relief, as most people who had seen Reg had commented about how much work I had to do. I wasn't blind. I knew all that, but I could see beyond what lay in front of me, and the complete picture was nothing short of beautiful. At this stage my only fear was having the body blasted back to bare metal, only to reveal a multitude of hidden sins.

Reg was now ready for paint stripping. Rather than do this by hand, I chose Sodablast, in Tarrant Point, Sydney, who use bicarbonate of soda medium (via compressed air). It may sound a little different, but it is a quick, non-destructive and environmentally friendly method of paint removal.

Aaron Ruig loaned us his Mini trailer again (thanks mate!), and Lance once again gave up a whole day of his time to help with the project (a HUGE thank you Lance!).

During our trip to Sodablast, we stopped once when a loud noise sent us into a panic. It turned out to be a truck that we had passed, and not Reg falling off the back of the trailer. We also noted many people

When we arrived at Sodablast we were greeted by John, Richard and Slim. They were very enthusiastic about the job, and Reg was promptly rolled into the blasting bay.

Sodablast have some impressive machinery for paint removal, and I was informed that it is the same technology that recently stripped the Statue of Liberty in America.

John gave us a quick demonstration of the soda-blasting process, by stripping a small section of Reg's rear quarter panel. The Sodablast technique propels baking soda at around 120psi onto painted surfaces and removes all contaminants completely.

Soda-blasting does not affect the original surface, providing the surface is harder than the soda. This means that all metals, glass, some PVC's, fibreglass, etc can be soda-blasted without damage.

Better still; any stray soda will not have any effect on bearings, seals, gaskets, hydraulics, or any other critical engine components, as it doesn't have the 'gritty' nature of sand or plastic as used in bead blasting. It dissolves in water, so is simply washed away with a rinse. For more information on Sodablast, call them on 1800-SODABLAST.



The end result, back home again.

Lance and I went for a coffee while the Sodablast guys did their work. The anticipation and suspense was almost as bad as when my wife gave birth to Curtis!

When the dust had settled, Reg was totally naked. I was very impressed with the way the paint had been removed without any harm to the body.

The only nasty surprises were a few pin holes of rust, which had been lurking under the paint, and the front left guard, which contained a little body filler. The drivers door was beyond help, as the metal surface was pitted all over from rust. This was disappointing, as all the bolt-on panels are the original items.

On the trip home we took a wrong turn, finding ourselves in peak hour traffic in inner Sydney. This time I'm sure people were admiring Reg's naked appearance, as nothing looks finer than a car with the paint totally removed - except one freshly painted.

I'm told that because soda-blasting is a non-abrasive form of paint removal, a car can remain in an unprotected bare metal state for some time before it needs to be painted (weather permitting). Still, no point waiting around, so I'd better go and buy the paint.

I want to thank all the businesses and individuals who have helped with this restoration so far. Your support is greatly appreciated, and it will ensure this rare Australian performance car returns to its former glory. 🙏

