

## “To try to do or not to try to do”

So, you have bought a classic British car which needs some “work” done on it and now comes the decision whether to have a go by yourself or whether to take it to a shop which is familiar with those things that are unfamiliar to you. You don’t want to devalue your investment with a poor job but you do want to save expenses and you perhaps also want to “learn” what it’s all about. Here are a couple of brief examples which may be of help to you when trying to decide whether to do it yourself.

**Example 1 The Right Way.** I recently attended a meeting of the Foothills British Car Club of Greenville SC at the kind invitation of their President Eddie Saunders and we were given a very nice presentation by Gerald Medford describing the meticulous restoration of his MGB MG GT (that’s what it says on the back). He did the lot! The disassembly, the preparation for painting, the wiring, the actual painting, the mechanical stuff... all documented and photographed with a beautiful car as the result. I saw the car at the Chateau Elan meeting on May 8th and it’s a stunning example of what an individual owner with good “application” can



achieve.

**Example 2 The Wrong Way.** Before coming to the States I lived briefly near Stratford-on-Avon (Shakespeare’s part of England: see title of all this) and I thought I’d earn money after my office job by doing welding repairs to friends’ cars in the evenings using my sponny new oxy-acetylene set-up.

The first job on a VW Beetle seat went so easily that I felt I should graduate to our Sales Director’s son’s Series E Morris Minor which had just failed its “MOT” test (that’s the Ministry of Transport Annual Inspection) because of corroded spring hanger brackets. I told him that if he brought his son’s car over on Friday I’d have it ready for Sunday evening ready for the re-inspection.



I’d built a garage with an inspection pit at the end of our garden and enjoyed working out there although I was occasionally deafened by USAF F1-11 fighters from the nearby base at Upper Hayford doing VERY low maneuvers overhead.

The date was set, the car was delivered, I set it over my pit on four axle stands and started work from underneath. All seemed to be going very well (and the F1-11s were very active that evening) and I calculated I should have the job done in a couple of hours. I felt pretty smug about my new venture.

But then a strange thing happened. One of the jets zooming overhead seemed to be stuck vertically over our house and the noise didn't do its usual Doppler thing at all. I carried on welding for a while listening to the din and then suddenly had that cold realization that the roar was not from a jet but was from the Morris Minor going up in flames! I had ignited all the carpets, the leather seats, (yes they had leather) the wiring, the rubber trim and all the etc's you could imagine. The car was on axle stands, I had no water or fire extinguisher and I was down the pit: the car and garage seemed doomed.

When you really panic you can sometimes accomplish quite a lot in a short time and, suffice to say, I managed to beat the flames out with half burned carpets and a yard brush. Then I dragged the garden hose across and spent the rest of the evening cooling the car down and checking it was all out. I went to bed at 3am.

I told our Sales Director on Monday that I needed a "little more time" to weld the car and asked him to collect it the following Sunday: I didn't mention the disaster.

Then I spent all the evenings and lunch hours that week scouring scrap yards for Morris Minor parts including seats, dashboard trim, wiring, carpets and presented the car back all finished that Sunday night. No one except my long suffering wife knew what had happened. Later the Sales Director telephoned me. "Great job on the welding, Alvan. The car passed its test. Funny though, the gear knob seemed as though it was a bit melted as though someone put a cigarette close to it."

"Oh, I'm not sure what could have caused that." I said.

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