

WELCOME TO OUR SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER



Making A Dash For It

Over the last few Newsletters we have shown the retrimming of a 1953 XK120 DHC. So far we have talked about the seats, trim and carpets, which have now been restored and all look beautiful. However the distinguishing wood trim of the XK coupé models (there are some differences between the XK120 and 140 coupés but the basics are the same) and the instruments, which all looked fine before we started, now let the side down. One of the great frustrations of any restoration work is that each time one part is restored another – which looked fine before - immediately looks dowdy - ‘The lowest common denominator rule’.



Fait accompli

This is particularly so with coupé models, which have rather luxurious veneered dashboards, door caps and other wood parts. So when the interior is the subject of a retrim, the wood must be considered at the same time, along with the instruments, gauges and even switches.

As you can see from the photo below, the wood is lacking any lustre, the trinket tray is a different colour and the switches and knobs look tired as do the instruments with yellowing paint on the needles and odometer numbers. Time for the magic wand!



As most of the woodwork has to be removed to carry out a retrim anyway, the extra work in removing and refitting the parts involved is fairly minimal. This is exactly what we did with the car here. Woodwork restoration and trimming are not quick jobs. Unless you are a skilled cabinet maker or furniture restorer, don't try this at home – as they say. This really is specialist work and don't forget that every time you sit in your car you are face to face with the dashboard - any blemish will stand out like a sore thumb. There are very few craftsmen who can do a top job; so there is inevitably a delay while parts are restored or new parts made. Therefore, you need to plan in advance as your car is likely to be out of action for a while.

Likewise with instruments; there is virtually nothing that even the most skilled amateur restorer can do to them. You should also bear in mind that most of the instruments will have been in service for decades. It's not just a case of having the faces and needles looking like new if you want a long and accurate working lives from them - the 'works' need attention too. At this stage you have to decide if you want your instruments restored and returned to you or to just exchange them which may be quicker. In the case of the speedometer, if the mileage is genuine you may want the restored instrument returned showing that mileage. The car shown here had only done just over 49,000 miles from new, so the odometer was faithfully set to show that on the restored instrument. The clock inside the rev counter is notorious for problems due to its mechanism which has points that fuse together. The clock is fixed to the rev counter by two screws and is easily removed once you have access to the back of the instrument. It can be repaired or replaced with a quartz one, which runs on a small battery and keeps perfect time.



The wood parts ready to be restored to their former glory (some hood parts were already done)

So back to the job in hand; the 1953 XK120 DHC featured in the photos was bought back in 2000 at the Coys auction at the Silverstone Classic. It had been laid up for some 20 or so years before coming 'out of the barn'. Luckily it had been stored dry, which meant virtually no body corrosion but the storage conditions allowed woodworm to nibble away unchallenged. By the time restoration work started, apart from the veneer covering it, about one third of the plywood backing the dashboard had disappeared. There were other wood parts affected but the dash was the main problem. However, the veneer itself was not too bad. At the time, the owner was on a tight budget and rather than replace the whole panel, he carefully bonded a new section of plywood in place of the digested parts and reattached the veneer. The small holes in the veneer were filled with 'body filler' and sanded flat with fine sandpaper and a sanding block. Some paints were mixed together to match the original walnut colours and with deft work using a tiny paint brush the repairs were matched in. A coating of lacquer was sprayed on to finish it making a half reasonable job. I must add that before starting any restoration work, any wood that shows signs of infestation should be removed and treated with woodworm killer to ensure that none of the bugs can do further damage.

Before getting started, the very first job – and a vital one – is to disconnect the batteries. Any work involving the dashboard, risks electrical shorts and is a serious fire risk.

There is no particular order in which to start removing the wood. All the cappings on the doors and pieces around the windscreen and hood frame are held in place with clearly visible wood screws. Once removed, these screws can be thrown away, because you should always renew them. Once the

door cappings are off, you can remove the weatherstrips which reduce the amount of water that runs down the door glasses. This gives access to the screws holding the other door trim woodwork panels in place. The metal finger-pulls on the door cappings are each held in place with two set screws. These tend to corrode making the screws tough to undo. As the pulls are made of chromed aluminium, they should be handled carefully as they are easily damaged when for example holding them in a vice. Also be careful if using a spray such as WD40 to help undo the screws as you could end up staining the wood if it is to be reused.

With the woodwork removed from the doors, hood frame and screen pillars, the dashboard now remains. The first job is to remove the top panel between the dash and the windscreen, which has the screen demister vents in it. The mirror is first taken off and then the screws underneath the panel with the ashtray in it are undone. Once these are out you can carefully prise up the panel but it is sometimes quite tight.

Under the dash is a large piece of leathercloth-covered board or sometimes ply. This must be removed but first the bonnet pull handle must unbolted from its bracket. The board is held in place by screws which screw into the bottom of the dash panels. The central trinket tray – or radio if there is one – needs removing and the runners or brackets supporting them taken out as well as . There are also some small wood screws that go into the back of the bottom of the central dash, just above the trinket tray.



With these out, you are now ready to start removing the dashboard but this must be done carefully. I repeat that the battery must first be disconnected - if you haven't done it now, you may need a fire extinguisher! Behind and on either side of the central part of the dash you will find four hexagon headed screws, two on each side. You need to slide your hands up from underneath to find them and use a small spanner to undo them. These hold the centre part of the dash to the two side panels and attach the whole assembly to two fixed metal brackets. These screws are a bit of a fiddle to undo but once they are removed the centre part of the dash with all the instruments will come free.

The next job to do is to undo the connections to the instruments that will prevent you being able to move the dashboard and instruments very far. These comprise the speedo and rev counter cables and the oil pressure gauge pipe. The first two are simple enough to undo and more often than not you can do them with your fingers. The oil pressure pipe needs more care as it is quite rigid and you can end up with oil dripping out on to the carpet – it is best to take the carpets out before you start. The pipe to the temperature gauge still remains but this is fixed to the instrument. However it is long and flexible enough not to matter too much. If you want to take the temperature/oil pressure gauge out, then this pipe must be undone from the radiator elbow and the wire-covered pipe carefully fed through the engine bay and bulkhead without kinking it .

Now there is a bit of room behind, the long piece of wood that goes along the top edge of the dash and holds the ashtray it can be removed. Wood screws hold it to the glove box assembly on one side and the steering column panel on the other. The glove box itself and related 'furniture' can be removed later.

You should now have the most fearful looking mess of wiring with the instrument panel hanging from it. My best advice to those of a weak disposition is, before you undo any wire, to tag each to identify where it goes. While the original wiring is colour coded, this fades, and trying to work out what is what is not an easy task. I suggest that you tag each wire, or groups of wires, with something like white or light coloured plastic insulating tape, on which you can write where it goes. A photo or two as well may help later. Eventually you will end up with the dash free of the wires and with all of its instruments and switches ready to come off. The instruments are held with 'L' brackets secured by set screws, and the wooden fascia is fixed to the metal back panel with stubby wood screws.

All the knobs can now be taken off. If the removal of any is not obvious you need to press small buttons in the sides of the knobs with something like a thin punch or even a nail, to release them from their shafts. Finally you need to remove the cigar lighter, light switch escutcheon and warning lights from the fascia. The latter should push out relatively easily. In most cases these items are best replaced with new ones as this is usually more economical than to try and get them refurbished. Likewise with the wiper and heater knobs - if they are getting shabby new ones are the best bet. That's all the stripping-out done so once you have your shiny new or restored instruments and woodwork in hand, you are ready to start re-assembly.



The refurbished dash with the switch escutcheons and warning lights fitted

We can supply what you need for this work. But as I said earlier you should plan ahead and check with us what is available and how long it may take to get any work done. In most cases with instruments, we can either supply exchange items from stock or get yours restored. With the wood work, we can get yours restored or do have items in stock from time to time. But as I mentioned earlier, there are very few craftsmen who can do the job at all let alone those who do it well, so patience is essential.

Another tip is with regard to the wiring. It makes perfect sense, if it has not been done in recent years, to consider rewiring. Fitting a new wiring loom is as much for reliability as it is for safety. The old insulation is the main problem. I am sure you are aware that the original insulation on any car of the age of an XK becomes brittle, and that means a very real risk of a short or broken wire – at best a breakdown – at worst a fire. While this is a major job involving the whole car, now is the most opportune time to do it and we stock all the necessary looms and fittings. Apropos the electrics, a 'must' at this time is to replace every single bulb in the dashboard and in the instruments. It is the easiest thing to do now but a pig after the job is done.

Once you have got all your gauges and woodwork back, the refitting is the reverse of the removal. I suggest you use masking tape or film to protect the shiny surfaces until everything is back in place. Use new chrome or stainless screws when refitting the wood. On the subject of screws, if the woodwork has been restored, the holes where the screws fitted may have been left untouched. It is not unusual for these to have become enlarged over the years and bigger screws fitted to compensate. In such cases where the screws are visible don't put bigger screws in – longer perhaps but never thicker. To make good, the best bet is to take a match stick or piece of wood, put a dab of PVA adhesive on it and gently tap it into the hole. You can then use a standard screw and it looks perfect.

All that's now left is few more hours making sure that every electrical, cable and other connections are correct and tight and voilà – you now have the perfect interior for your XK Coupé.

So what is the next job?

Greg Broad

MORE FENDER-BROAD NEWS...



We have a number of Broadport XK120's in build and for completion this year. Restrained by space and staff before, our Bristol 15000sq ft site has given us the chance to build more cars we like for people we like.

Finding cars to restore of the right quality is becoming very very tough. If you have an XK you are considering selling please give us a call. Rusty but proud old 'wrecks' especially wanted!

For more **Fender-Broad** news and to see a selection of cars for sale visit the **Fender-Broad website**.

PRODUCT SELECTION

At Guy Broad Parts we are making all sorts of product kits available to enable you to add simple and tested improvements to your car.

Major Touring Kit includes: hose kit oil filter, head gasket set, lower gasket set, spark plugs x6; points, condenser, rotor arm, fan belt, thermostat; brake lines x 2, coil, fuel pump, 2 x front brake seal kit, 2 x rear brake seal kit. There is also a brake master cylinder repair kit, clutch master cylinder repair kit, wiper blades, x 2 bulb set, dynamo brushes.

Minor Touring Kits: hose kit, oil filter, head gasket set, spark plugs x6, Points, condenser, rotor arm, fan belt, thermostat, brake lines, x2 bulb set, dynamo brushes.

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