

Logbook

MiniWorld staff and writers reporting on their month in, under and around Minis...

Simon Benton



It's a start...

OBie goes under the angle grinder and professional decorators enable Simon to finish in peace and quiet.

OBie

Model: 1967 Mk1 Austin Mini
History: Bought by my dad as a present for my mum in 1977 and used as a daily drive until 1991
Mileage before restoration: 93,063 miles



It's amazing how such a small car, when pulled apart, takes up such a large amount of room. The bigger parts, like subframes, are over at Team C Racing where they have been stripped down, grit-blasted and are ready for re-coating and the build. A lot of the smaller items are here at home and, as I write, I'm surrounded by lots of boxes and bins. The new garage, where the bits should really be stored, is still at the planning stage so, for the time being, I'm having to share my work space with bits of OBie.

One thing I've learnt over the years is to get the balance right between family life versus a project. It makes life a whole lot



Rebuilding the Mk1's handbrake.

It's amazing how much a rub down and a coat of paint transforms some parts.



"...a lucky dip into one of the boxes finds the handbrake and the door locks."

easier. I'd been promising Mrs B for ages that I would get some jobs done around the house before we started on the car. The expectation now was that any spare time I had would go on the house and not on OBie. Although I'm not known for my tact or diplomacy, suggesting we get decorators in was thought to be a good idea. The ulterior motive of course was to free up my time... probably not such a good idea hinting that her extra work hours would be paying for it.

Anyway, at last I can get my hands dirty and a lucky dip into one of the boxes finds the handbrake and the door locks. I was going to have to get a move on now with all the bits, so started work on some of the quicker and easier tasks first. The original locks worked OK but had some stress cracks in the cases around the latch bolt.

I repaired these by grinding a 'V' groove along the cracks and then delicately filling them with weld. After a bit of finishing, and some time on a wire brush wheel, they are now ready for paint.

A quick look over the old handbrake and I could see it was worn and would



Quarter panel, wheel arch and boot floor removed.

have to be repaired and restored. As spare parts aren't readily available, I took my time carefully to press out the rivets for re-use. When apart, everything looked promising and would clean up well, apart from the crossbar that holds the cables, as this was badly worn – too many handbrake turns probably. The easiest solution was to make a new one from stainless steel bar. Once I had repainted the handle and wire brushed the ratchet bracket, all the parts could be riveted back together again. I used a little copper grease on the moving parts and took it gently when setting the rivets. Too much force and the handbrake would be too stiff to operate properly.

So for me, it's a start, as the first interior parts are now ticked off the list. Over at Bridge Classic Cars there has been some more serious surgery on the shell. With even more panels removed she was looking very fragile and virtually

unrecognisable. In this delicate state, the body is cut back now about as far as they can go without it falling apart. What remains of the shell needs very careful support to hold it in shape before the new panels can be tacked into place. Once the structure is stiffened up again, she can then go back on the jig for the rest of the work to continue.

Working at the back of the Mini we could see that the lower rear panel wasn't good under the tail lights and around the boot opening. To repair would mean a good amount of filler to get the surface back and with so many sections removed, rather than bodge it, now was the time to replace it even though it would take a while for the new panel to arrive.

In the meantime there was plenty still to do elsewhere. Some rust perforation around the rear quarterlight window and door frame meant Anthony would be kept busy. Where replacement panels aren't »



The repaired lock case masked up for painting.

“In this delicate state, the body is cut back now about as far as they can go without it falling apart.”



Above: Custom made repair panel. Below: The custom panel being tacked into place.



available, some custom sections had to be made to repair localised bad areas.

Moving to the front of the car and what a transformation! The floors and flitch panels are in and the new scuttle has been fitted. This was modified to have just the one set of wiper holes as was correct for Mk1s. The A-panels also are now in place which means the wings, bonnet and front panel can be offered up for a test fit.

The last time I saw OBie with a front end was back in 1991 when I ruthlessly cut the wings and front panel away before pulling the engine out. Now most of the main panels are in place and it's great to see the car taking shape again.

Once the rear panel arrived, no time was wasted getting it fitted and cleaned up. The bonnet and boot need some minor repairs and then it's just the doors to repair and re-skin and the car is very nearly ready for paint.

As she looks more like a car again, my girls are starting to take a bit more of an interest in the project. Dinner-time discussions revolve around the interior and what seats she will have, what colour and what are we going to do with the engine? For now, what we do all agree on is that she should have her interior trim in original Cumulus Grey, a new power plant (we all agree she needs more power for today's roads) and she will be painted blue again. 🇬🇧

Simon's contact list

Team C Racing, Mini restoration, modification and maintenance
+44 (0)1473 652926

Bridge Classic Cars, bodywork and restoration, +44 (0)1473 742038



This is the first time OBie has had a front end for 30 years! Below, left: New lower rear panel in place. Below, right: floor and rear valance fitted.



This is quite a common area for Minis to rust in. Right: a tidy repair.

