

## 1979 MGB GT SEAT REFURBISHMENT (Richard Searle - DHM 15V)



Inspired by tired 'deckchairs' and the demonstration provided by Yvonne and Sandra (PJM Motors - 01630 652873) at last November's MGB Focus Day I bit the bullet and purchased a set of leather seat covers, backboards, diaphragms and seat foams (£440 - inc vat and p&p).

After removing and striping each seat (tackle one at a time so you've always got a point of reference) clean the frames, removing the old contact adhesive etc., before priming and re-painting (PJM Motors advice not to shotblast to avoid damaging the working mechanism). The 'C' clips can easily be re-painted by fixing to a broom handle or similar prior to spraying.

### **Refurbishing the seat back**

Fitting the backboard. Line the lower edge of the backboard with the lower edge of the metal frame (the 'L' shaped section) before making the fixing holes and inserting the securing screws. Apply duck tape to secure the remainder of the backboard to the frame.

Fitting the back foam - After a 'dry' run (to check alignment) apply contact adhesive to the seat frame and the area of the foam where the two will touch. When the glue has cured secure the foam to the frame. It's worth taking time to ensure that where the foam extends past the frame it is firmly attached to the backboard - and any hard edges present on the foam are shaved off (you can see where any trimming / shaving is required by temporary fitting the new covers (see below).

Yvonne and Sandra demonstrated how to apply additional foam to the sides and back of the seat to produce a 'deluxe' version - however the additional foam isn't part of the kit - which I didn't realise when ordering - and having put a date in the diary to do the work decided to crack on with a 'standard' version .... which was good enough for MG back in '79. Being a BGT, and having

two children I also felt that harder seat backs were less likely to get 'punctured'. Decision made.

Before fitting the new cover place clingfilm on the sides / top of the seat foam and spray the clingfilm with furniture polish.

Fitting the cover - Insert the oval fibreboard inserts into the cover's pockets and then slide the cover over the frame/foam assembly and pull down (the clingfilm makes this process much easier). Ensure the foam doesn't leave any ugly lumps and bumps - if necessary remove cover, re-trim the foam and repeat the exercise. Next insert the headrest (if applicable) - this will ensure the new covers remain centrally located. Do not be tempted to remove the headrest until the new cover is fully secured. Leave the covers at least an hour, longer if possible to 'settle' (overnight is ideal).

Next apply contact adhesive to the area of the foam where the seat cover flutes will be and then apply contact adhesive to the flute area of the cover (spray adhesive makes this bit easier - although you will need to make sure the glues are compatible - I used solvent based Evo Stick). Once the glue has cured you need to pull the cover taught and secure to the lowest part of the frame (the tubular section) with the two large 'C' clips. If doing this on your own you can apply contact adhesive to the tubular section of the frame and the corresponding part of the cover (which is how Turner's - the seat manufacturer - seem to have done it originally). When you're happy the cover is correctly aligned you can adhere the flute area of the cover to the foam by firmly pressing the two items together - working from top to bottom. Once complete apply books etc. to weigh the cover down to ensure the two don't pull apart.

Pull the rear of the cover down and secure with the 'flat' clips (a bent screwdriver may assist). Finally, cut a small 'x' where the rake adjuster protrudes (if applicable) and 'ease' the cover over the adjuster before securing the handle and fixing the screws that hold the oval fibreboard inserts in place.

### **Refurbishing the seat base**

Fit the new diaphragm. Contrary to popular belief it's the diaphragm that is most likely to be to blame for a sagged seat - not the base foam (although these will often be well past their best). If you can remove the old diaphragm without the use of a tool it needs replacing.

If you haven't recent built the kids / grandchildren a trampoline (or have and can't find the spring fixing tool - I couldn't) you can easily make one using a 100mm nail (file the point down) and a piece of 20mm+ dowel / section of tree branch etc.

Re-attach the base to the seat back. You may find one of the drivers side seat bolt has striped its thread - a new bolt and a re-taped thread easily resolves the problem. Tighten each bolt fully and then slacken off  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  a turn to allow the tipping / reclining mechanism to operate. Secure with the locking nut.

Place the seat foam on the base and mark the seat foam with a marker pen either side of the seat back flute section to aid later alignment. Adjustment of the seat rake and forward tipping mechanisms will aid installation.

Turn the seat cover inside out and place on the seat foam. Align the cover with a) the front edge of the foam and b) the alignments marks you've just made. Once happy with the alignment fold half of the seat cover back and apply contact adhesive to the flute area and corresponding area on the foam. In theory once the glue has cured you can secure the two before doing the same for the other half. However I found that however much I tried, the cover moved slightly throwing the two out of alignment. To overcome this (when the glue had cured) I placed a piece of plastic sheeting between the foam and cover so the bond couldn't take place, double checked the alignment, before finally removing the plastic and securing the cover to the foam.

Once happy with the alignment pull down the front and sides and secure with the newly painted 'C' clips. A tidier finish can be made by sniping the skirt either side of each of the front legs. Finally, pull the cover tight and secure the rear with the remaining 'C' clips. Excess material can be secure to the base foam / diaphragm with a small amount of contact adhesive.

### **Headrest**

After removing the fixing screws, staples and the metal blade (spade like item), remove the cover and plastic bag. Place clingfilm around the exiting foam and spray with furniture polish. Fit the new covers and once happy with the alignment re-fit the metal blade before stapling the cover and re-fixing the plastic shield.

**Attach the runners.** It's a good idea to temporarily secure the runner without the adjustment mechanism with a cable tie to aid installation in the vehicle.

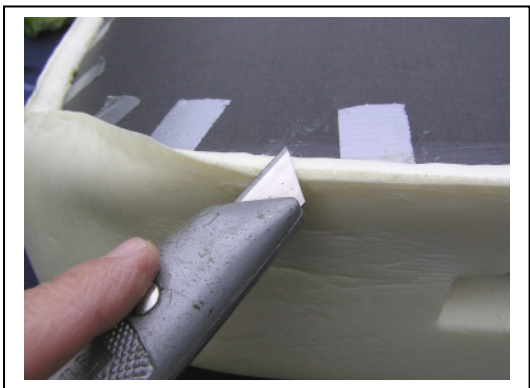
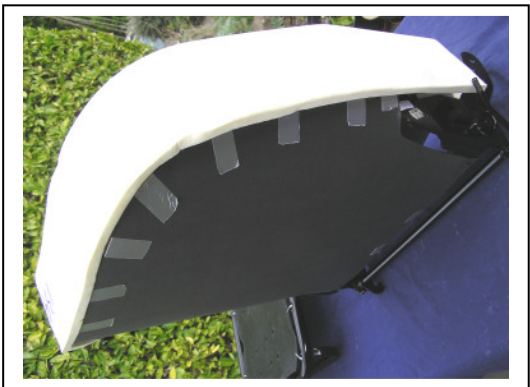
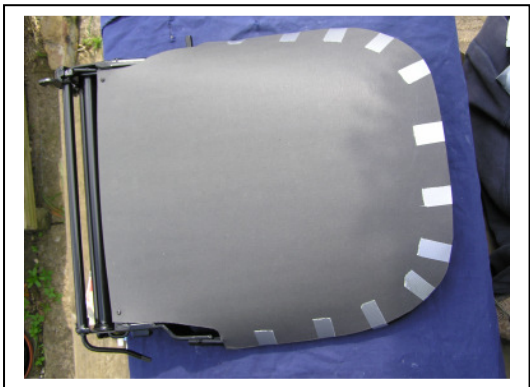
### **Was it worth it?**

A recent call to PJM Motors confirmed that a set of refurbished front leather faced seats, on an exchange basis, would have cost £630 (inc vat and p&p) - so a saving around £170 when you factor in the cost of the additional sundries required - paint and glue etc. I've now put into practise a new skill and can take satisfaction in 'a job well done'.

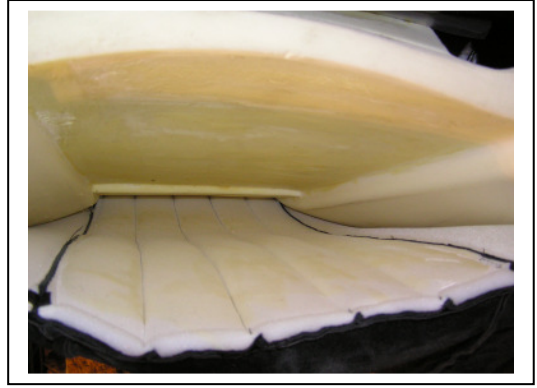
If you are thinking about having a go yourself PJM Motors provide a full set of instructions with each set of covers - although they don't advice to apply contact adhesive to the mating surface - but you'd soon work that out when bonding doesn't take place. Yvonne also advised that most owner / enthusiast home refurbishment errors are "recoverable".

So was it worth it? Yes .... I just wish I'd tackled it when I brought the car so we could have enjoyed the last twenty years with improved comfort. I just need to decide what to do with the rear seat.

Photos







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