

My Story So Far - Pt IV

By SMM 34643

While Les had made good progress on my engine, engine bay, electricals, suspension and brakes, and I was finally back on wheels again, I had been wondering what the plan was for my interior trim and my final paintwork. I couldn't help but feel that Les was holding back on some important bits of info from me, and I was starting to get a bit impatient.

Well, just before Christmas in 2021, you could have knocked me over with a wet chamois! Les comes into my shed with my two side headlining pieces, and the large centre headlining section, all beautifully covered in nice new felt. Then, to top that, he came back in with both my completed front bucket seats (one at a time, mind you) in beige trim with maroon piping that looked just like when I was new! I was so excited that if my engine and gearbox had already been installed, I would have leaked oil all over the floor!

"How come these were appearing now?" I wondered. Well, it turned out that Les had been secretly working on the headlining and fitting up my front and rear seats inside the house, where I couldn't see what was going on. After completion, he kept them stored in the house; but with his daughter and grandkids about to descend



Above: Rear Window. Hmmm, a good name for a movie?
Below: felt cut-outs



on the place from the country for the Christmas holidays, he had been instructed to "get them out of the house!" Just as well, else I might have had to wait longer for my pleasant surprise.

Les then filled me in: he had purchased a complete trim kit for me from Newton Commercial in the UK, which included seat covers, padding kits, door and rear quarter panels, parcel shelf, carpet and underfelt; the whole lot, even down to clips, screws and cup washers! He had worked on the seats progressively over a year or so, and he said he was pretty pleased with the job. He had bought the headlining felt locally to match my original velour-type of covering, the only thing Newtons didn't supply. I couldn't have felt happier!



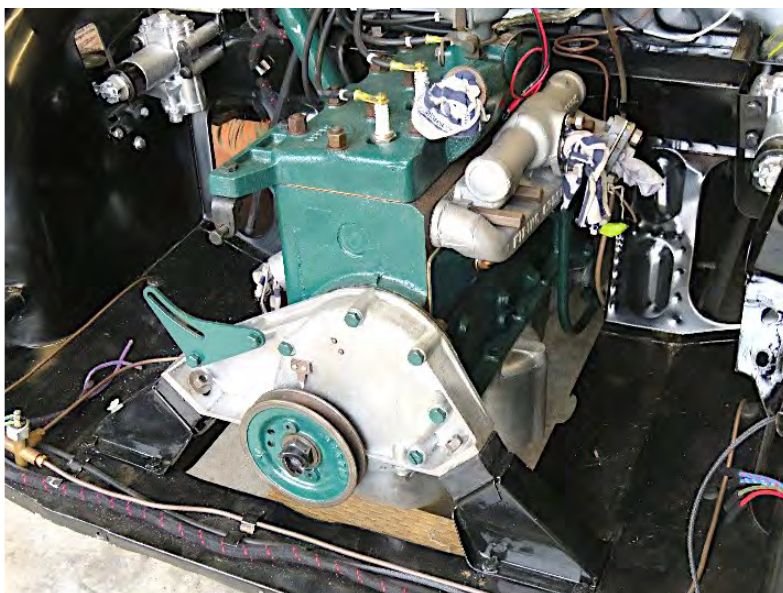
The seats - a quality job
after a steep learning
curve!

Below: my original seats
were a little worn...





Johnny B with my new heart and, below, nestled on my engine mounts



Before
And
After



Les had planned to get the front seat covers installed by a professional motor trimmer, since my type of seats are fairly complicated with the padded roll top around the curved squab; but after Newtons kindly provided a copy of their own in-house instructions, I think that bit of Scottish ancestry in him persuaded him to have a crack at doing them himself, and thus save a wee bit (think a lot) of money. Apparently, it was a huge learning curve, with a bit of trial and error involved – the roll tops were particularly tricky to get right with the correct amount of wadding, and installing the panels on the back of the squabs was even trickier. In the end, I believe it was a pretty fair decision on his part to try it himself.

Les told me that the front bases were more straight forward than the squabs, except for the 'sewing' of the covers to the underneath padding section, which had left him with rather sore hands.

The Newtons instructions for the rear base and squab were less detailed, but were easy to follow. What I found quite amusing was that the Newtons instructions said to use the original horse hair if it was in good condition, (which it was, but Les topped it with some additional felt and some special foam rubber which Newtons supplied). I don't know how many horses contributed their manes and tails to my original seat padding but I'm happy to have retained some of their originality. Giddy-up!

Hearing Les recount all this and seeing the front seats gave me such a good feeling, and even though I had yet to see the completed rear seats, I was able to tick off another box! Mind you, the front seats and the centre headlining section went back into the house after the family left.

Okay, that's the interior spoken for I thought, but what about my exterior? And there, still sitting up on the bench, was my completed engine waiting to be installed.

The next few months saw rain, rain, and even more rain! I could hear it constantly on my shed's Colorbond roof. Les had said he now planned to get into my final paintwork, but the rain was not helping



one bit! He did manage to crane my engine off the bench and mate up the gear box during this time, but all he could do for my panels was a bit more prep with some blocking and filling when possible.

Then, surprisingly, Les had a bit of a window straight after Easter in April 2022. He made the most of it, getting final coats of black acrylic on all my panels and body. Not being a professional, he made a few mandatory runs in the paintwork (which I insisted he sort out straight away) but I think overall he “played hard, done good” (even living in Melbourne, I’d heard that one-liner, and I liked it so it’s mine now).

This paved the way for the next steps – to put me all back together again. Then more good news - by now my good mate, Johnny B agreed to visit in May to assist with my engine install, and after that to help with bolting up my mudguards and doors – not essentially, but ideally, all 2-person jobs.

Johnny B arrived one day around late morning sporting new overalls and, as usual, was straight into it, helping to get my engine and gearbox onto the crane and into the engine bay before bolting them up snugly on my new engine and gearbox mounts. Being a lot skinnier and nimbler than Les, he insisted on getting underneath me to bolt up my tailshaft. It was great teamwork from the two of them that afternoon.

The next day was mudguards and doors day. Together, Johnny B and Les decided it would be a good idea to cut back/compound all the paintwork before fitting up the panels. Now Les had been hesitant

about using a large rotary polisher to compound my paint job, which he said could cut through the paint in the blink of an eye in the hands of an amateur (meaning his hands!). So, after doing some research which suggested “any mug” can achieve a good compounding job with a DA (dual action) polisher, he bought himself one. Following further advice, he even bought matching-brand pads and compound for the DA job, deciding on Meguiars. His plan was to then do the final polish with the appropriate pads and polish when everything was installed, to finish off. Les and I were both amazed and impressed with the results from the DA compounding. Did it even need a final polish? It made me a very happy chappy.

Johnny B waited patiently for Les to compound each panel in turn before helping to fit and bolt them up. He even found some little jobs to do between panels, like installing the carby and polishing my engine number plate!

“Thank you again, Johnny B”, were my thoughts as he went home. I now felt it was getting near the end of my resto – it may even be in my next episode. But you never can tell, can you? Maybe not...

