



J2 TECHNICAL ARTICLE

Number 31

May 23, 1981

From Octagon Heaven

Resource - MMM Register Yearbook
Article by John Kidder

RESTORATION OF THE VINTAGE CAR BODY

There are very little in the way of drawings or dimensions, except those which have been made by a few owners. There are no list of general fits or tolerances. Make sure you take a lot of photos and take a lot of measurements. Talking to someone else who has restored a similar car can be of help.

There are some ideas which you can use:

Before taking off the body, make a careful inspection and take notes. Examine in particular the fit of the doors, body mountings and bonnet. Take pictures.

If you have a slab-tank model, look at the rear body mountings. If these are broken you will find the rear of the body has dropped and thus broken the door pillars and their base and the door will not be fitting correctly.

Measure the bonnet sides and make sure that they are the same length. This may sound funny but there have been cars that have been in accidents and in repairing the owner cut off some material from one side of the bonnet.

Now you are ready to take off the body. Be more careful for you may need parts for patterns later. Remove seats, floor boards, wings, tank, and doors. Also remove the dashboard.

Now you are ready to remove the body. You have two choices here. 1) Try to remove the body mountings and remove the body in one piece. Do not be surprised if it breaks in half as you lift it off. 2) Take the body apart in pieces while still on the frame. Either way, measure the bottom rail of the body to the chassis at several points and make a note of your readings as you will be able to get the rebuilt body onto the chassis square.

Now de-skin the body by removing the thousands of nails and screws and gently lever up the bent-over edges needed to remove each panel.

Now measure the woodwork the scuttle top, particularly for width for if that is not correct, the windscreen will not fit properly and can affect the door fit.

Now dismantle the body frame carefully. Again same parts as they may be needed for patterns. If screws won't come out either drill them out or insert a hacksaw blade between the pieces and cut the screw. Glue on all split pieces and build up to original shape where pieces have rotted. Use new wood, fiberglass or woodfiller.

Where there are right and left parts, mark them well.

The best wood to use for replacing bad pieces is ash. There are two methods of making some of the curved pieces. 1) Laminate thin strips glueing and clamping them into shape. 2) Cut out of solid wood giving careful consideration to grain direction

Reassembly of the body pieces is the reverse of disassembly. This is where all of the measurements take come in to be very important. Steel screws are better than brass. Do not glue the joints as there is some movement of the car body pieces when on the road and glued joints may cause frame pieces to late break. Some have recommended putting fabric between wood joints to eliminate squeaks. When assembled, sand any high spots and prepare to apply the metal skin. The same applies to the doors.

When fitting the doors onto the body trial and error with small screws or nails works about the best. Once the correct position is found, remove one nail or screw at a time replacing it with the correct sized screw.

Panelwork should be made good before refitting. Steel parts can be patched in some areas. The panel should be stripped of paint using a stripper. Treat pannels with rust remover.

Now trim out and reassemble to the chassis that is after painted.