Trials and tribulations of the Classic Cars team and the cars we live with

1970 ROLLS-ROYCE MULLINER PARK WARD CONVERTIBLE
Engine 6750cc, V8
Time owned Two months
Mileage 107,000
Power Not disclosed (adequate)
Torque Not disclosed
Performance Top speed: 120mph; 0-60mph: not disclosed
Cost new £11,536
Value now £25,000

1970 ROLLS-ROYCE MULLINER PARK WARD CONVERTIBLE

RUN BY QUENTIN WILSON *classic.cars@emap.com*

Just me and my Shadow – and Dennis

DENNIS, MY Roller man, has spent more time driving my Shadow than I have. In the last month, he's stuffed in a new radiator, front discs and battery, done a big service, peeled off the nasty stick-on coach line and hand-painted a new one, blown in some bits and bobs of paint and generally preened and polished the old dowager.

Quentin's Rolls Royce MPW Shadow is home from the Thai embassy and enjoying a new life

Belt specialist Quickfit made up some lovely new period seatbelts, Flying Spares came up with some new door rubbers and hood catches and the classified ads yielded a second hand corner piece for the front bumper. Three years languishing in the Thai Embassy underground car park had done her no good at all, but two grand and a lot of fettling later, WKC 75H now looks and drives as it should.

Mind you, there's still plenty to do. The battery goes flat after a couple of days, there's a couple of mysterious rattles, the idle is lumpy and I need a good trimmer to detail the interior.

But I'm pleasantly surprised how inexpensive these old Shadows are to recondition. The radiator was only £200, the discs £150 a set and the full service came in at only £175. There's no shortage of used bits (I've found a perfect Corniche alloy bonnet and boot for £300 and a brand new old stock rear light for £50) and, for a low-volume coach-built car, virtually everything is still available. But I'm still getting used to the Mulliner's sheer beauty. Sometimes at night, I creep into the garage just to marvel at those chaste flowing lines and the classy tan hide and Brewster Green colour combo. Regrets? None at all. I only wish I had time to drive the thing.

1973 FORD CAPRI 3.0 GXL
Engine 2994cc, V6
Time owned 16 years
Mileage 136,000
Power 138bhp @ 5300rpm
Torque 174lb ft @ 3000rpm
Performance Top speed: 122mph; 0-60mph: 8.3sec
Cost new £1907
Value now £1000

1973 FORD CAPRI 3.0 GXL

RUN BY PHIL BELL *phil.bell@emap.com*

It's purple haze for Phil's Capri

FOR ME, the most important phase of any stint of work on a car is what I call 'looking at the job'. It's that priceless time you spend, mug of tea in hand, either pacing around the car or simply staring at it while frowning and wondering where on earth you're going to start and whether you really have the skills or conviction to see it through.

Somehow, my Capri restoration had become one massive job that only ever got looked at. The excuses – losing access to a spacious workshop, being stuck with a lockup garage without light or power, having both light and power but too little space – they all rolled in, one after another. Now I have the workspace I need, the excuses and the tea are gone and I've applied spanner to car.

I decided to start with a straightforward job as a symbolic gesture of restarting the restoration: a bonnet swap. The old one was so rusty it showered the engine bay with little iron oxide flakes like brown dandruff every time I opened it. It was probably repairable, but not nearly as viable as the spare one donated to me a few years ago. Although its groovy Purple Velvet Metallic paint has long since lost its original vibrancy, there's no serious rust. There is, however, a large dent in the bonnet bulge, but before I put any effort into that, I want to be sure the bonnet fits. Panel quality was variable in the Seventies.

I've just finished trial fitting it and after half an hour of opening, adjusting, closing and opening again, I'm not convinced it's quite right. Time for another cuppa.

Fitting a secondhand panel was the easy option

Purple panel is rust-free but mildly dented

ILLUSTRATIONS: MIKE GOODBUN