



First family outing in the GTE a success



Ingenious bracket fixes to body mounts...



...and secures inertia reel beneath floor



Et voilà! Three-point seatbelts in the rear



Reliant Scimitar GTE

Run by Martin Port
 Owned since September '11
 Total mileage 67,120
 Miles since May report 1356
 Latest costs £1195

BELTING UP FOR A FAMILY WEDDING

Sound familiar? Classic car + children = seatbelt dilemma. The quandary with the Scimitar, though, is just where to add the extra mountings needed for inertia-reel belts in the rear. Only lapbelts were fitted as standard, meaning that the third point needed to be fabricated from scratch – easier said than done on a glassfibre-bodied car.

For obvious reasons, I turned to the experts for advice. Quickfit Safety Belt Service has featured in

C&SC before, and for good reason – the firm knows its onions. More importantly, it had fitted belts in the back of a Scimitar before.

The chaps chose the points at which the body bolts to the chassis for securing the necessary bracketry. They devised two heavy-duty fittings that spanned the boot floor on both sides while also running up under the side windows to provide the highest mounting point.

Only when I returned to collect the car did I get a chance to fully appreciate the ingenuity of their design, which included concealing the inertia reels themselves beneath the floor within the two cubbyholes originally provided for storage. The belts then run up the outside of the rear trim to a neat little post before heading forwards into the seat area, where the original lapbelt mountings are used.

While the car was there, Quickfit also replaced the mismatched front belts, as well as swapping the fittings for static nuts on spreader plates where required so that any removal for retrimming wouldn't need two people and a four-post lift.

Obviously, this was never going

to be a cheap job. But the Scimitar has the benefit of being a full four-seater, family-friendly classic, so it would have been a shame not to have realised that potential.

Once the GTE was back, I was naturally quite pleased when Mrs P announced that we were going to take it to her brother's wedding. And it performed admirably: the boot proved big enough for a buggy, several large bags and the posh frocks, plus the rear belts did precisely what they were supposed to – securing both boys in fine fashion, even though one was in a child seat. The trip was such a success, in fact, that we spent the rest of the weekend using the Reliant four-up, which bodes well for its longevity.

Unfortunately, the Scimitar did blot its copybook one evening. An impromptu convoy with a rather nice Lotus Elite down the M3 was suddenly interrupted by an odd clatter coming from the back. It sounded as if the hatch had pinged open and, just as I was thinking of pulling over, there was a loud click and the noise stopped. I presumed it had then latched shut again, but when I took a peek, I realised that

one of the fuel tank straps had snapped, allowing the tank to drop onto the rear valance, cracking the glassfibre in the process.

I had no option other than to remove the tank and replace the aluminium straps, but soon realised that extracting a half-full tank was not a one-man job. Assistance came in the form of my local fourth emergency service (Phil and Oli from Classic Jaguar Replicas), who, on sensing the panic in my voice, immediately came to lend a hand.

With me still thinking that the aluminium straps were pukka, Oli knocked up a pair in something a bit thicker. The whole lot went back together more easily, with much less spilt fuel – and just one pair of hands – but, during a conversation with marque specialist Graham Walker, I subsequently found out that the straps should be steel. With a further set of replacements in the post, I avoided brimming the hefty tank until I had a chance to replace Oli's lovely bespoke straps with a pair of stainless items.

At the first opportunity, I roped in Elliott and we swapped the first strap, only to end up with a good inch or so of slack. Another call to GW revealed that there should be an inch-thick layer of insulation on top of the tank, but I knew that the only thing there was a manky bit of 4mm foam. So Oli's straps went back on, I swore about wasting the best part of two hours and thought about doing it all again – probably when the axle finally comes out for the impending diff rebuild, which is slowly getting a bit closer.

THANKS TO

- Quickfit Safety Belt Service: 020 8206 0101; www.quickfitsbs.com
- Phil and Oli Cottrell
- Graham Walker: 01244 381777; www.grahamwalker.co.uk



Broken strap hanging down and tank finally on the floor. And yes, that is fuel everywhere



Thicker straps aren't right but do the job