



# CLUNK CLICK...

Authenticity is essential for a top class restoration, but does that have to mean the seatbelts too? Jerry thinks it does



**SEATBELTS, LOVE** them or loathe them, the fact remains that if your Land Rover was registered after January 1, 1964 it's got to have 'em. No belts equals no MOT certificate.

That was my problem. Despite the Herculean efforts restoring my fire damaged Series IIA, it couldn't be MOT tested immediately after its mechanical rebuild as the fire had done for the original belts. Most of the webbing had melted leaving the tag ends of the old ones dangling mockingly from the bulkhead fittings and the buckles lurking as rusty lumps in the foot-wells.

So, what's all the fuss about, surely seat belts are seatbelts? Whack a set in and the MOT is in the bag.

Indeed, I could have bought black ones at any Land Rover event but I didn't. Tempting as they were at a mere £26 each, they just weren't right for my IIA.

The devil, as they say, is in the detail. Having bothered to buy proper Exmoor Trim elephant hide seats, I wasn't going to spoil the look of the interior for a few quid.

What I wanted was a set of grey

belts with proper period-style 'lift the flap' buckles. Second hand wasn't an option so far as I was concerned, if I'm going to have seatbelts they had better be as good as they can be.

New was the answer if they could be found. Luckily such period fittings can be bought, albeit at a price.

At the bottom of the Great North Road lurks Quickfit seat belt services who have been making belts since they were made mandatory in 1964. They offer a bespoke service to the owners of classic, and modern, vehicles.

My first job was to jump into the cab of the Series and get an approximate length for the new belts. Ordinarily it would just be a case of taking the old ones out and sending them off as patterns but mine were missing totally.

I had to resort to lengths of string to represent the straps, sitting in the driver seat and mocking everything into position before measuring the length needed for both the lap and diagonal portion and the buckle strap. There is no need to be too



A set of seat belts in the appropriate style and material will add to any restored vehicle's authenticity. Custom seat belts are easier to source from a professional company than you might think – don't be tempted to make your own.



exact though, within a couple of inches or so will be fine – Quickfit will leave plenty of extra webbing for final adjustments.

There are more good reasons to keep the old belts than just their use as patterns. If the fittings, buckles and tangs are in good order and can be re-used then you'll win in two areas. The new belts will be totally authentic plus you won't have to fork out for new fittings.

correct type of bulkhead fittings, I headed down the A1 for a demonstration on making seatbelts.

First off the webbing, which comes on a huge roll, is cut to length using a hot blade. This seals the material as it cuts, leaving a neat edge that won't fray.

Then it is passed through the various buckles and fittings, the webbing being threaded in a

marring your otherwise perfect \$1,000,000 restoration. And yes, Quickfit do often refurbish the 'belts for million dollar cars.

What is the difference? Look at the 'belts in your modern vehicle and you will find the stitching is done in a rectangle with a cross through it. On 1960s vehicles most British manufacturers used a complicated 'E' shaped pattern – no problem for Quickfit though, they have it all sewn up.

Clutching my new belts ready to fit complete with new U shaped shackles, it was time to pay the bill. Three belts, lap and diagonal for the driver and passenger plus a lap belt for the middle seat, each bearing the all-important tag which tells the MOT inspector that they are made to the appropriate standard, set me back just over £200 including the VAT.

I considered this to be good value and was surprised when it

was pointed out that my bill for the three was larger than most. This was because I had bought a set of new buckles at just under twenty quid each plus a complete set of new fittings to replace those that had possibly been damaged by the fire. Had I been able to re-use stuff, the bill would have been £50 to £60 less.

Those of you who don't run a Series Land Rover may be pleased to learn that it isn't just classics that Quickfit work on. They also get involved in making belts for custom applications like one-off vehicles, even making and fitting belts for vehicles that didn't have them from new.

Fancy a set of custom coloured seat belts for your Land Rover in a matching or contrasting shade? That's possible too. There are myriad colours available, even high visibility yellow if you really want it!

**LRM**

## Vehicles registered from 1964 on must have appropriate seat belts fitted

DIY seatbelts are not an option, all temptation to get hold of a length or two of webbing and borrow an industrial sewing machine must be put aside. Although it is not rocket science, the job does have to be done properly. Bear in mind that in an accident these are the only thing between you and potentially fatal contact with the windscreen and dashboard area.

Armed with my sheet of dimensions and a parts book diagram, which showed the

particular way so that the belts will adjust when needed but also lock tight in the fittings when the belts pull up in an accident.

Finally, the webbing is folded to suit the end fitting and stitched tight using a pattern appropriate to the vehicle's age. A pattern appropriate to the vehicles age? Come on, be serious. Why should such a trivial detail matter?

Well, try wining the Quail Lodge concurs in the USA (or indeed any of the top UK competitions) with the wrong seat belt stitching

## CONTACT

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