



Lilly, our granddaughter aged nearly 11, tries one of the new belts for size.

# The quest for originality

by Tony De Frates

It's nearly two years now since I bought my W115. It's the 220, or 220/8 model to be precise, and one of the things I liked most when I first spotted the car was its originality. This even extended to the extras the first owner fitted to the car when he ordered it in 1969. Accessories such as the *Delco* swept back style wing mirrors. At one point I thought I would keep them because they showed what a typical English buyer at the time might have chosen as an optional extra but, although popular with Ford Corsair owners, they didn't really suit the more upright shape of the W115. What's more, you couldn't see that much in them, so I had them removed in favour of the door mirrors that were available at the time from Daimler-Benz. I also had the *Selmar* personal key switch removed. It was in the form of a lock face that graced the front offside wing of the car. Although the *Selmar* car alarm and immobiliser were extras which were no doubt state of the art 41 years ago, I'm not sure they would be much use today and could have caused problems if they had decided to play up, as they tend to when they get older.

Although it's been relatively easy to



The original Britax buckles were used with new webbing in the front.



New grey/beige webbing is a close match to the car's stone colour interior.

remove these unwanted extras, the seat belts presented more of a challenge. The car came with *Britax* inertia-reel front belts. However, on the occasions we have been four up the rear seatbelts, or the lack of them, has been a concern. The trouble is, I love the interior and didn't really want to spoil it by bolting in a pair of proprietary belts, which in original grey would clash with the interior colour scheme and would tend to flap around annoyingly when not in use.

A recommendation from several Members persuaded me to get in touch with Stuart Quick and his team at Quickfit Safety Belt Services. Quickfit's seatbelt expert is Pawel and he took me through the various options available over the phone. Subsequently I decided to run the car down to Stanmore to discuss the issue in more detail and look at materials.

We settled for grey/beige webbing, a close match to the car's MB-*Tex* stone colour, with classic chromed buckles and concealed inertia reels.

The front belts were original (I know that because I still have the *Britax* literature supplied with the car in 1969) but the reels, especially on the passenger side, were becoming tired and reluctant to retract. What's more, the webbing was rather grubby and starting to show the first signs of fraying. So the decision was taken to go the whole hog and ask Quickfit to change the fronts to match the new rear belts. The thought process was made easier when Pawel offered to use the original *Britax* buckles with new webbing.



Classic chromed 'airliner' style catches in the rear to match fronts.



Webbing from the inertia reels emerging through subtle chromed slots.



Inertia reels are concealed under the rear parcel shelf.

What a beautiful job. The rear belt set up has been cleverly engineered so the inertia reels are bolted to the underside of the parcel shelf in the boot with the webbing emerging through a subtle chromed slot in the parcel shelf. The front arrangement is much neater than the original ever was, with the smaller reels being bolted to a concealed bracket on the floor, which also takes the fitting for the other end of the belt. The whole lot cost just over £650, a bit less than estimated because many of the original fittings at the front were re-used.

Pawel thinks these cars would typically have had static belts and the rear parcel shelf certainly incorporates the smaller, drilled holes ready for such use. Inertia reels fitted in the rear would have been put on top of the parcel shelf and not below it.

In fitting rear belts I had to decide whether to go for originality or practicality and the latter won the day hands down. More importantly, the occupants are more safely accommodated with belts that are easy to use. In any event, once the webbing has aged and the chromed buckles and fittings have tarnished, they are going to look more in period. Quickfit Seat Belt Services can be contact via 0208 206 0101 or [www.quickfitsbs.com](http://www.quickfitsbs.com)



The front set up is much neater than the original ever was, with the smaller reels being bolted to a concealed bracket on the floor. The impression of the original and much larger *Britax* reels can be seen from the indentation on the carpet.