

Refurbishing RV8 wheels

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Hugh Boddington set a V8BB thread running with the question "has anybody had any experience of stripping the lacquer from an RV8 wheel using Nitro Mors water based paint and varnish remover?" It soon became an active thread and finally David Sutcliffe from Australia posted details of how he had refurbished his RV8 wheels. (Dec 09)

Steve Birmingham replied saying I stripped my wheels down last year. I used Nitro Mors and did two wheels at the same time, the first application of 'Nitro' takes the thick of it off, I used a small paint brush to apply the 'Nitro', then took the lacquer off with wire wool. I needed a second dose of 'Nitro' to remove a few stubborn bits of lacquer, then after a quick rub round with wet and dry sandpaper (very fine) I gave it a good rub with Autosol polish, then finished each wheel off with a small mop on a drill. I only did the rims, and I'm very pleased with the result.

Brian Moyse responded saying "Spit and Polish" did my wheels earlier this year and I would be happy to recommend them. The finish is very close to the original, colour match also, as I sent them one of the wheel centres as a reference. My tyre fitter refitted the mock studs and the only "work" I found I had to do was rub down the inner face of the centre holes where excess paint thickness was stopping the wheels seating properly on the hubs. No doubt in time the corrosion will strike again, but in the meantime they only require regular washes to keep them looking good. (The contacts for Spit & Polish are in the V8LIFELINE listing of MGV8 specialists available on the V8 website)

Angus Munro added this is quite interesting to me as I am thinking of tackling my wheels as well. Under the original finish I seem to have pitting corrosion. Pitting corrosion is one of the most destructive and intense forms of corrosion. It can occur in any metal but is most common on metals that form protective oxide films, such as aluminium and magnesium alloys. It is first noticeable as a white or grey powdery deposit, similar to dust, which blotches the surface. When the deposit is cleaned away, tiny holes or pits can be seen in the surface. These small surface openings may penetrate deeply into the wheel rim and cause damage completely out of proportion to its surface appearance. I would think that if the surface of the rim is left as bare polished metal, it would be impossible to clean around the countless dummy nuts and corrosion would begin again. Is there a clear finish available that would give a similar appearance to the original but be of a better quality?

Steve Birmingham noted the dummy nuts are held in by friction, I knocked them out from the back, using a small punch, then cleaned them up in a bowl of soapy water and a tooth brush they have splined sides, I tapped them back in, using a rubber hammer, since polishing them I've covered three thousand miles, a quick wipe over when

washing the car is all they get, they look as good now as when I first did them.

A quick check using the detailed Index to the RV8NOTES series shows the other useful notes are:

RV8NOTE15 - MG RV8 wheel corrosion

Bryan Ditchman's useful tip will help MG RV8 enthusiasts keep their wheels in good shape. (Sep 99)

RV8NOTE261 - RV8 alloy wheel refurb

A tip from Jeff Swann provides a useful tip which could avoid damage to the dummy wheel studs on an RV8. (May 07)

RV8NOTE265 - Refurbishing RV8 wheels

Jeff Swan's V8BB posting on how he refurbished his wheels. (Jun 07)

RV8NOTE276 - Removing the Wee Nuisance

Robbie Stewart explaining how he replaced the MG badges on his RV8. (Oct 07)

Hugh Boddington thanked fellow members for their responses to his query as to which paint stripper to use. He had read all the observations with interest and said: the centres of my wheels are as new, but the milky appearance is only around the ugly studs. My plan is to strip the rims having removed the studs. I am not re-lacquering as it is easy enough to clean with 0000 grade wire wool and use a suitable wax. The problem is around the studs. I am seriously thinking of either leaving them out, or fitting stainless steel slotted pan head bolts, to make life easy for cleaning, and in my opinion they look better. I am not certain whether these and alloy will react adversely being different metals? You all probably think I am mad, as I do like to keep classic cars original, but I will obviously retain the studs, and at least my sponges, leathers and fingers will not be torn to ribbons! I found Jeff Swann's workshop notes 261 and 265 most helpful.

David Sutcliffe then provided his detailed note on how he had refurbished his wheels saying I have restored 4 of my 5 wheels as follows. They are a fair bit of work particularly as I have done the whole wheel and used 5 different coatings. The original coating is a greenish colour if that is of any interest to anyone. The original coating becomes milky in time and peels around the false studs.

I first knocked out the false studs, had the tyre removed by tyre company and stripped the wheel with ordinary paint stripper - I used thinners on the first one and took hours. Stripper is fine. Only needs to be on for a short time. I used a pressure washer to remove the loose paint and used wet and dry, very fine grit to clean and polish the shiny aluminium and polish out imperfections. The coloured part of the centre of the wheel is the bit that takes most of the time, because of the holes. A finger is about the right size.

For a clear sealer I have used an American paint product POR15 "Glisten PC" clearcote. They make a special kit for polished wheels including providing metal polish, a detergent cleaner, (thinner for spraying) and the clear sealer in the kit. POR15 makes fantastic products. You should be able to get

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it mail order from the US if not available locally. The kit does about 3.5 wheels. As a matter of interest, I used POR15 black for repainting my cross member. The black paint is very tough, looks like a shiny baked enamel. It goes on with a brush but the brush marks disappear and it is an air cured epoxy using moisture in the air to cure so pretty safe to use. Should not leave paint lid off too long. The product would cure well in UK. That's an Ozzy joke.

Anyway back to wheels. The sequence for me was: wet and dry all imperfections etc out. That includes the tube side the inner side of the wheel and the coloured front centre. Etch coat any exposed aluminium to be repainted. Two pack undercoat rim back side and tube side. Again rub out imperfections. Then apply a two pack final coat with colour matched two pack paint. Then colour coat front centre of rim with automotive matched paint. Paint designed to go under clear coat which is the common auto paint these days. The centre needs to be masked off from the rear of the rim and the exposed aluminium protected. Use a fine pin striping tape for the fine line around the polished recess next to the coloured centre. This gives a very fine masking and allows the curve to be closely followed. Then use ordinary masking tape and newspaper for the rest of the wheel. When dry clear cote the wheel centre and polished aluminium with your choice of clear coating. I finished the tube side with a standard wheel silver paint as that was what appeared to be on it originally.

With regard to the removable hubcap, it's pretty much the same deal. The trick is to remove the badge first by drilling a hole in rear to tap out the centre emblem. The emblem is held on with double sided tape. If you don't remove the badge, good chance the stripper will strip it as it did mine. Preparing the hub caps is very tedious trying to wet and dry the hollows and clear out old paint, but the one that I have done has come up very well. I think next time I try I will have that part glass bead blasted first.

With regard the colour of the wheel centre, I went to an auto paint shop and they colour matched the centre colour by eye. I have noticed colour variation in all of my wheel caps. When we were matching that made it a problem so I just chose the shading I liked best. The photos show the finished results.

Peter Jevons added POR 15 paint is available in this country from "Frost Auto Restorations" I have used it extensively on my restoration projects with great success.

Angus Munro added - following your excellent tip I took contact with Frost Auto and received the following advice from them. For the wheel rims, after removing all traces of the original finish and polishing the rims with fine wet and dry followed by Solvol Autosol, I should use the product Eastwoods 10200 Gloss Finish for Bare Metal. Eastwoods is another American product and I understand that POR-15 is UV sensitive which is then not suitable for wheels exposed to our, err, sunny days. I will

however use black POR-15 on my front cross member and back axle.

The RV8 wheels topic was then revived a week later.

Ray Ellis comments on his experience with getting RV8 wheels professionally restored. I would like to make a point to fellow MG enthusiasts regarding the refurbishment of alloy wheels including diamond cutting on MGR ones. In my experience with Lepsons they are the best, with branches in Gillingham in Kent, Wiltshire and West Midlands They have a far better dust free finish with no dry areas where generally not enough paint has been applied, then covered in lacquer. The cost without splitting hairs is about £5 per wheel more than another well known wheel refurbishment specialist which Ray no longer uses. He added that he has been in the motor trade for almost 36 years and has tried various companies but if you want possibly the best oven baked finish, then Lepsons is the best.

In a subsequent posting Ray added he had just had another four Jaguar 19" wheels refurbished at Lepsons at Gillingham in Kent and as usual they are mint. Another bad point with another wheel refurbisher is that on the reverse side of the wheel there are usually large clamping marks on the paint finish where they are held to be put in the spray booth. On the Lepsons' refurbished wheels there are none which suggests they use better refurbishment equipment. The exact cost of the four Jaguar wheels was £258.75 for a service which included collection and delivery back to Ray's house, removing and refitting the tyres and then rebalancing using stick-on weights with brand new valves. All I have to do is bolt them on. I believe is the nearest you will get to an "as new" finish. Interestingly enough the local Rolls-Royce and Bentley specialist near Ray also use them . . . enough said.



Tool made with a piece of water hose to drive the false studs back in. Cut leather wad in the end to cushion stud head. Green garden hose to stop stud slipping off driving pin. (Photos: David Sutcliffe)

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Interior painted with 2 pack slightly blue colour to match original.

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Close up of wheel showing tool to hold false studs.



Standard silver wheel paint for inner rim.

Restored wheel cap alas with a new centre badge.



Almost completed wheel.

