

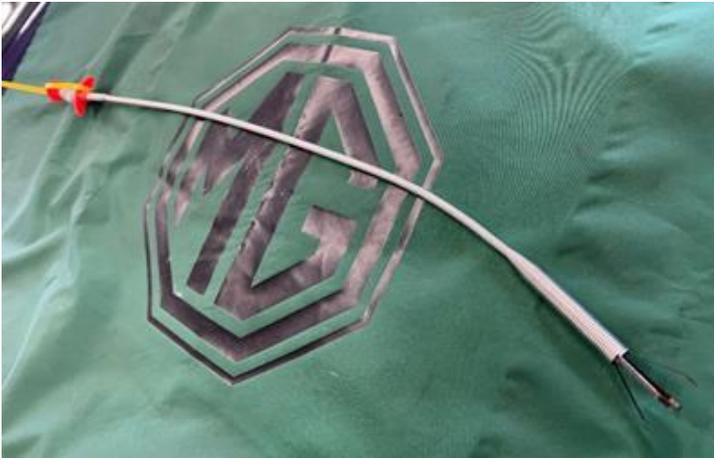


Air intake grille with mesh in place to keep leaves out

Fitting an air intake grille mesh

Peter Spurr found his fresh air intake chamber was full of debris and was starting to rust. He needed to find a way of gaining access to the grille surround to fit a mesh grille as a useful upgrade. Here is describes how he tackled the job.

The air intake grille is a chrome plated fitment with eight large apertures to allow the air to pass through. Whilst it fits with the car's style, it is less than practical and not effective at keeping leaves and other debris out.



Spring-loaded grabber tool

Maintenance access through the air intake grille is difficult

The eight holes in the air intake grille are sufficiently large to allow all manner of debris to pass and then accumulate at the bottom of the chamber. At the same time, they are too small for the hand to gain access and the chamber is deep making maintenance impossible other than cleaning out the drain tube at the bottom to remove accumulated sludge. A spring-loaded grabbing tool can be useful for reaching down and removing the bigger items, but it is laborious and only partly effective.

How is the grille attached to the car?

The grille is not designed to be removed. Fitment is by six pins on the underside of the grille which mate with six holes in the bodyshell. I am aware of two methods of fastening the pins to the body:

Blind fixings – the Parts Catalogue (AKM 0039) shows the part as “Blind Fixing” (item 25 in the diagram). The blind fixings form an interference fit between the grille pins and the body.

Spire pins – on my late '1973 car, there were six spire clips fitted to the grille pins when the grille was in place.

Removal of the grille

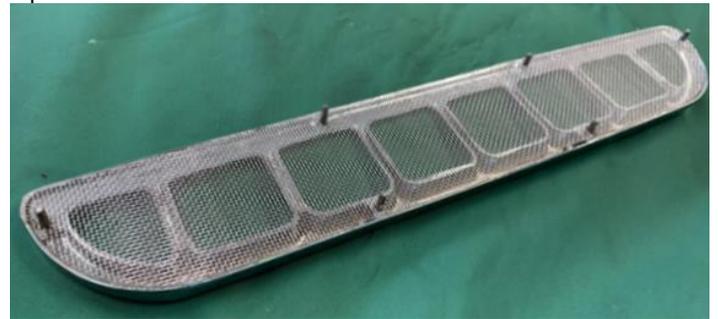
To avoid damage to the paintwork and the grille, care is required in removing the grille. Assuming you have the standard type with **blind fixings**, it could be possible to pull it off. I've not tried, but the security of the fit and ergonomics of leaning over the wing will make it difficult. A small puller is useful to lift the wiper arm from the wiper wheel box. They are available from the [wish.com website](http://wish.com). The option is to use a broad tipped lever (screwdriver) with a soft cloth to prevent damage to the paintwork. Inserting the blade between the grille and body, then twisting is relatively crude but effective. Accepting the inevitable, the paintwork may well need to be touched up afterwards.



With the **spire clips**, a straight pull is even less likely to be effective given its locking properties. I resorted to levering it off and repairing the damage. Any thoughts on a more elegant method would be gratefully received.

Preparing and fitting the grille mesh

After cleaning out the debris from the chamber, I prepared the damaged surfaces (both existing and caused by my handiwork), primed them with rust encapsulating primer and followed up with a top coat.



Grille with mesh in place and showing fixing pins

To prevent further accumulation of debris, I have installed a mesh between the grille and the body. The mesh panels are available from suppliers such as Brown & Gammons (P/N AH6202X) currently at £6.24. I looked at making my own, but the cost of the materials was more than the finished commercial item.

Refitting the grille with the mesh is straightforward. Again, assuming blind fittings, they are put over the grille pins, then offered up to the body. It is an interference fit which was quite tight on my car. I initially applied hand pressure to place the fixings, then covered the grille with a cloth and tapped gently with a hide hammer.

The alternative method is to place the fixings in the body and apply the grille to the fixing. It doesn't work, the fixing is merely pushed through the hole and its plastic lip destroyed. Blind fixings are widely available at about 14p each. I bought eight, expecting to damage some on the way.

The result is a subtle upgrade which is an effective modification to keep most of the debris out of the fresh air chamber but there will still be road dust gathering at the bottom so periodic cleaning the sludge from the drain plug will be necessary to ensure any water is able to drain away and leave the bottom of the chamber dry. Just a reminder, do not remove the drain plug as it's a devil to refit!