

*Above, the engine bay of Jon Stopford-Collins' Volvo; smart but not over-restored*

*Below, with the mileometer reading 197,000 miles, the Volvo took an award at Stoneleigh in 1985*



I was only 17 years old and still driving with 'L' Plates when I bought my Volvo in 1979. She was a one owner car and had a full service history. With 120,000 miles on the clock she continued to be in constant use until the end of 1984 by which time the mileage had risen to more than 189,000. By this time the bodywork and interior were becoming tatty, but the car's structure seemed sound so I decided to restore her. A year's work saw a transformation from an everyday runabout to a 'concours contender'.

The first job was to have the underbody steam-cleaned. This enabled me to see the areas where the underseal had deteriorated fortunately only minor rust damage was discovered. After de-rusting, these areas were painted with three coats of Bonda primer then with two coats of Hammerite before applying fresh underseal.

While working on the underside, I decided to clean up the gearbox, rear suspension, rear axle, propshaft, etc., after removing some of the more obstinate dirt which the steam-cleaning had failed to remove. I prepared the rear axle, suspension and propshaft for painting, using a black enamel paint which gave a finish very similar to the original. The gearbox I left, as once cleaned the casing looked to be in very good condition. The front suspension was also cleaned and painted with black enamel paint, as original. A new exhaust system was fitted and this was sprayed with black Sperex High Temperature Paint.

### Bodywork repairs

I started by removing all the interior and exterior trim, carefully storing these parts to prevent them being damaged. All small items were tagged and labelled as I wasn't sure how long I could remember where everything had come from! I then turned my attention to the actual bodywork, looking at which areas needed repair or replacement. I decided that the bonnet would have to go as the edges were badly swollen, due to rust, and that to buy a very good second-hand bonnet would be cheaper than trying to repair the original. The same principle applied to the front near-side door which was also badly rusted. The front panel also had rust damage, this was a hole about four inches long and two inches wide, under the near-side headlight. This was repaired by cutting out the rust and welding a section in, using body filler to regain the correct contour in this area.

Next I removed the front wings enabling me to gain access to the inner wings properly, it also made visible a rather ominous hole on the off-side of the lower scuttle, with a similar hole on the near-side. I removed all the underseal

## Jon Stopford-Collins recalls the challenge of restoring his award-winning Volvo 164



Careful attention to the leather with a Connolly Bros renovation kit meant that the 'just-painted' look was avoided. Paint for the leatherette door panels came from Woolies

from this area using a power wire-brush to cut out surface rusting. The area of severe rust was cut out and a plate welded in to strengthen the area. Coating first with Bonda primer, then Hammerite and underseal to protect from further rust attack.

With the wings, bonnet and both front doors removed I was left with what had been my "pride and joy" looking more like a lump of scrap than a car.

Disheartened yes, defeated no!! My next job was to strip off all the old paint on the replacement panels that I had bought and also the two front wings. As this was done in January 1985 the weather was not ideal and my only working area had been under our car-port. I therefore, commandeered the dining-room, covering the furnishings with dust covers. This enabled me to thoroughly strip all the paint off each item in relative warmth and comfort. This job was not as easy as I had thought it might be, because the replacement panels had been repainted at some stage in their life and this caused me to have to use four applications of paint-stripper to each area, gradually scraping off layer after layer of old paint before reaching bare metal. This was a demoralising task, especially when I tackled the bonnet.

As each item was stripped I used a primer to give it a protective coat until I could continue working outside in better weather. Then I turned my attention to the main bodyshell, treating any rust that could not be cut out with Jenolite, this was then painted with Bonda primer. With all the damaged areas repaired the car was then ready for overall priming.

### Underbonnet

I then decided that whilst the bonnet and wings were removed I would take the opportunity to re-finish the engine compartment. The carburettors, inlet and exhaust manifold, the radiator, brake-servo, coolant expansion bottle and power steering reservoir were removed. This greatly improved access to the inner wings and front panel.

I did, however, want to re-spray the bulk-head, so to 'kill two birds with one stone' I removed the cylinder head as this would allow much more working space. It also enabled me to carry out a 'de-coke' and check the camshaft, as the engine had developed a slight rattle which was thought to be wear in this area. This assumption proved correct as there was a loss of profile and pitting in the case-hardening; so a new camshaft and twelve followers were fitted.

Next the old engine lacquer was stripped off, then the block and head were repainted with Hermetite red which is a good match for the original colour. I also stripped the starter-motor and power-steering pump, these were re-finished with black Hermetite and the alternator was repainted silver-grey. The servo was also stripped, but this I thought would look better sprayed rather than brush painted black. All the wiring was cleaned as were the relays and terminals. The grommets were removed from the bulkhead and everything was masked ready for spraying. With access to the bodywork surrounding the engine clear, I started to 'flat' the paintwork with 400 grade wet & dry, then de-greased. Three

# TRANSFORMATION

coats of grey primer were applied and then 'flatted' with 600 grade wet & dry ready for the 'colour coat'.

## Spraying

My next job was fitting the wings, bonnet and front doors, taking care to get the panel alignment correct. I then set about 'flating-off' the whole car with 400 grade wet & dry, which seemed to be a never-ending job which nevertheless had to be thorough to avoid any paint lifting once the car was finished.

After a thorough de-grease I then set about mixing my primer ready for the first coat. I had a practice with the spray gun — an Apollo 500, High Volume, Low Pressure type — then I started to apply the primer.

I had decided to spray three coats, which went on with surprisingly little trouble, any surface problems being 'flatted' out and touched in to produce the best possible base.

This was then 'flatted' with 600 grade wet & dry followed by de-greasing, again. The colour, California White, was then mixed. Two coats were then applied, the paint was allowed to harden thoroughly before — 'you guessed it', 'flating' yet again this time with 800 grade wet & dry.

With this done, and de-greased, the last four coats were then applied. The body was then left to harden-off. Most of the paintwork needed only 'T-Cut' to bring it to a mirror finish.

The odd small area which showed a slight 'orange-peel' surface required only a mild 'rubbing compound' and 'T-Cut' to give an excellent finish.

With the bodywork complete, all the exterior trim was cleaned and polished ready for refitting. Great care was taken with the trim not to catch the new paint. All the masking was carefully removed and before all the under-bonnet components were refitted, the carburettors and distributor were cleaned with cellulose thinner, which brought them up like new. All new hoses, breather-pipes and clips were fitted.

## Interior renovation

Next, attention was turned to the interior trim, the seats were in a sorry state, the pale-blue dye had worn completely through revealing the tan hide. To remedy this I bought a leather renovation kit (sending a snippet of leather from the underside of the rear seat for colour matching) from Connolly Bros Ltd.

This comprised of one litre of dye, a half-litre of concentrated cleaner, a jar of hide food and a small roll of stockinette. The leather seat facings were fairly dry and stiff, so first I had to clean them and then apply hide food, leaving them for 24 hours, after which time the leather

became soft and supple. They were then cleaned again to remove any excess hide food, the leather was then ready for the application of the dye. This was done by dipping a swab of stockinette into the dye, applying evenly and sparingly to the leather to avoid that 'just painted' look, which would have ruined the whole appearance. Once completed the transformation to the interior was incredible.

A similar treatment was given to the door panels and other leatherette trim, the paint for these I obtained from "Woolies", this too had to be carefully applied to prevent 'tell-tale' brush marks. With the interior trim refinished I set about carefully fitting it back into the car.

RTJ. was then almost completely transformed, only the wheels and final detailing was left to do. Each wheel was removed in turn, stripped, primed and re-sprayed with silver wheel-paint. Final details were to polish all the visible screws and bolt heads on the door-locks,

window frames, and under-bonnet fittings.

This was followed by polishing the toolkit, stripping and repainting the jack, then using shoe-polish to put the finishing touch to the tyres, bumper insets and the boot floor-mat.

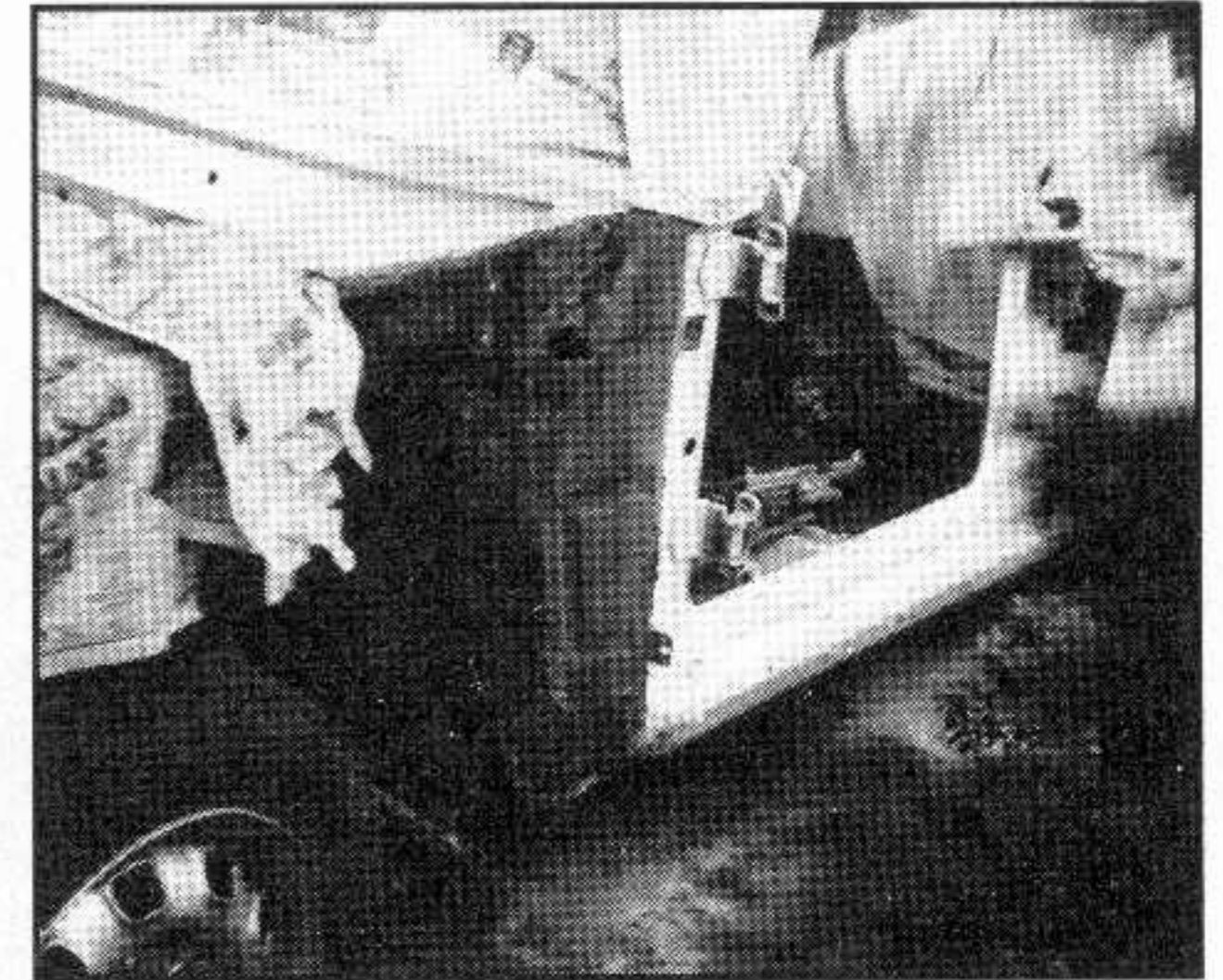
It had taken four months continuous work to get her to a high standard, (though work still continues, on improving her, as and when possible).

It is here I would like to thank members of the Volvo Owners Club for their help and support.

RTJ. was finished at the end of April 1985, just in time to be displayed on the Volvo Owners Club stand at the N.E.C. National Classic Car Show, she then went on to become the Overall Winner of the Standard Classes at the clubs National Rally.

A surprising amount of interest is shown in her wherever she is displayed.

I now have a car of which I am very proud. ▲



*Left, a view of the offside door post and inner wing with the front wing removed.*

*Above, this is how rotten the post was before it was repaired*

*Below, the happy owner after the prize-giving at the Volvo Owners Club's National Day*

