



Wolseley awakes

A cosmetic tidy-up of Mick Clarke's Wolseley didn't quite go the way he planned. The result is a concours car, as Nick Larkin discovers

Photos by **Mark Dixon**

I NEVER intended it to look like *that!*, said Mick Clarke, gesticulating towards his immaculate gleaming black Wolseley 16/60. 'I thought a quick tidy-up and a few weeks' work would see me with a car I could use and take to shows.'

But, like many before him, Mick found a car needing more work than originally envisaged and, more importantly, once seized by the bug, he decided to carry out a complete restoration to the highest possible standards.

'I thought "I only want to do this once, and I want to make sure it's right",' recalled Mick, a 51-year-old garage foreman from Grantham, Lincs.

That decision meant a year of working every evening from Monday to Thursday, Sunday mornings and often some of Saturday too! Mick bought the car from a local Farina 'nut' who owned several examples. He'd been looking for a classic, originally setting his heart on a Wolseley 1500 because of its reasonable performance and

rack-and-pinion steering.

But as soon as Mick saw the 1969 16/60 automatic he knew he was going to buy it. 'I particularly wanted a straight car. There was no filler and, to my amazement, the floor didn't need welding.' Wife Barbara, who shares Mick's love of classics, says (about the car!): 'It was love at first sight.'

Work began by stripping out the interior. Mick managed to locate another Wolseley which was being prepared for banger

racing, the sport which resulted in the demise of literally thousands of Farinas in the seventies and which still, unfortunately, finishes off the odd one. This car yielded several door trims and a driver's seat cushion. All these items were carefully stashed away, ready for attention later.

Next came the bodywork. Despite being basically sound, the Wolseley was no stranger to rot, particularly in all four wings. Incredibly, the sills hadn't really suffered at all.

By a miracle, Mick heard at a club meet about a man in Manchester with four new Wolseley wings for sale. Such tales abound in Farina circles, and are often tall stories in the way that anglers claim to have captured 50ft long trout. But this particular tale was nearly true – the rear wings had never been on a car, but the front ones, although virtually rot-free, had been painted in a foul, thick brown paint.

'I spent a month with the wings on the lawn scraping that lot off' he recalled.

The old wings were removed with an air chisel, and the new ones fitted – after quite a lot of trial and error – using a MIG welder. 'I'd done some gas welding in the past but had never tried a MIG. Practice was definitely needed.'

While the front wings were off, Mick repaired a couple of small rust holes in the inners. 'I went around them with a hammer, which certainly detected any rot.' Once this was



The Wolseley's interior was stripped out before rusty bodywork was removed with a chisel



'Banger racing led to the demise of thousands of Farinas in the seventies'



Above, leather seats were restored with a kit from Woolies
Right, illuminated Wolseley badge adorns traditional grille





dealt with, Mick gave the inner wings a liberal coating of anti-rust paint, paying particular attention to the area around the wing seams, which were coated with a zinc paint, welded up and rezinced.

'Looking back, I went mad, but it seems to have worked. There's no sign of rust bubbles,' Mick reckons that fitting the rear wings was by far the worst part of the restoration. 'They have to be lined up with the boot floor, the wheelarch and the D-post, which takes ages.'

Farina specialist Earlpark of Heanor, Derbyshire, provided rear wheelarch repair sections and a front lower valance, which Mick welded in.

A couple of small holes in the

doors were sorted out with the trusty MIG, after which the car was ready for spraying.

Mick had arranged for this task to be carried out at the garage where he works. The bodysell was stripped down to bare metal with a circular sander and etch primer applied, followed by half a dozen undercoats and three top coats of two-pack.

'I decided on two-pack as it's easier to look after and more durable,' said Mick. After the old underseal was removed, Mick treated the entire underneath to a couple of coats of black Hammerite.

Meanwhile, Mick was busy restoring the car's seats, with the aid of a leather renovation

Above, the car was finished in two-pack paint for durability, with black Hammerite on the underside

Right, engine is the 1622cc B-series fitted to Farinas from 1961. This car has the optional automatic 'box



'The servo was perfect for the job and cost £10 – then I had to pay £40 for an overhaul kit'

kit from specialist Woolies, which he highly recommends. This firm also supplied new Furflex-style edging for the door surrounds.

New seat webbing was bought from a Morris Minor specialist and adapted to fit the 16/60. Replacement screen and door rubbers were also fitted.

Putting the interior woodwork back into condition wasn't easy, however. Removing the old varnish was accomplished by using Nitromors and a hot air gun. Six coats of yacht varnish were then applied, and rubbing down carried out with 1200-grade sandpaper.

'I then decided to give it some welly, using a combination of Brasso and anything else I could think of to get that shine. It was a lot of work,' Mick recalled.

He bought a set of new carpets from Earpart to complete the renovated interior. Brakes were the next in line for attention, and Mick decided to fit a servo – 'It's a lot of car to stop!'

He had originally intended to install a Rover 2000 brake servo unit but, on the recommendation of a man in his

local scrapyards, opted for Lockheed servo from a Hillman Avenger. 'It was perfect for the job, and only cost me £10. Then I had to pay £40 for an overhaul kit,' said Mick.

He bolted the servo to the front bonnet slam panel, and routed the brake pipe from the master cylinder around the bulkhead to it, then took the pipe the same way back and connected it to the T-joint. The vacuum was connected to the inlet manifold.

Mick then completely stripped the system, fitting new cylinders, shoes and seals where necessary, and installed new copper brake pipes and flexible hoses.

The engine ran well, though with 60,000-odd miles on the clock was ready for a decoke.

A couple of valve seats and a rocker shaft were also needed. A thorough inspection of the 16/60's wiring revealed everything to be in generally excellent condition, with only a couple of new connectors required.

This lot completed, Mick could turn his attention to details. Chrome side strips for the doors came from a variety of sources. The original front bumper was good enough to be retained but one new overrider was required.

A new starter motor and dynamo were bought from specialists. 'It turned out these would be cheaper than overhauling the old ones,' Mick rebuilt the existing distributor.

Finally, to complete the picture, Mick was lucky enough to pick up a front number plate surround – common only to the Wolseley of the Farina range – from another enthusiast. Then the car was given an enormous dose of Waxoyl.



New wings were fitted front and rear – a lucky find

The result was a finished 16/60, or at least that's what Mick thought. 'I don't know whether I dropped a clanger, but when I repaired the nearside front door I must have distorted it without knowing. Once it was painted and on the car, it stuck out like a sore thumb.'

The only solution was a new door, and luckily Earpart had an unused factory original in stock. This, sprayed and fitted, meant the car was finished, and today it must rank among the finest Farinas in the country. Anyone used to a manual version of these cars would be amazed at how smooth and

refined an effect the Borg Warner automatic 'box has on Farina motoring.

Mick intends to keep the car to a very high standard, but not to be over-fanatical. 'I don't know why, but I love driving the car. I'll certainly keep it up to scratch, but I can't be bothered with polishing the underneath or spending hours getting the car ready to show judges. They'd end up covered in Waxoyl if they went over this car too closely!'

Our thanks to Vacu-Lug Traction Tyres of Grantham for letting us use their premises for photography.

