

Restoring WOLSELEY 16/60

Wolseley Woman!



What does the owner of a Ford Anglia buy when she needs bigger transport? A BMC Farina of course. Paul Guinness catches up with a Farina convert who has just completed a major restoration project

Photos by John Colley



I don't think I'll be able to drive it - the steering is just so heavy and I can't find reverse gear!' was the reaction from Sally Harris when she bought her 1965 Wolseley 16/60 four years ago.

You see, Sally had been used to rather smaller machinery up until that point. In fact, almost all her previous cars had been Ford Anglia 105Es.

By 1991, though, Sally felt the time had come to move up a little. She wouldn't part with her Anglias (she still owns two), but she fancied something bigger, more powerful and, it has to be said, a lot stronger for everyday use. It had to be from the '50s or '60s, it had to be around 1600cc and be relatively simple to work on.

Friends and family offered advice. The list of potential purchases grew ever longer. Until Sally suddenly realised the BMC 'Farina' range of family saloons offered exactly what she was looking for. An Austin Cambridge or Morris Oxford would be ideal.

Within minutes of deciding what to go for, Sally had hold of a copy of that week's *Auto Trader*, to see how Cambridge and Oxford prices compared with what she had to spend. And there, in the 'Collectors' section, was a '65 Wolseley 16/60 for just £375, albeit one lacking an MoT.

The Wolseley was only a couple of miles from her home in Stourbridge, West Midlands. 'It had to be worth seeing, if only to show me the kind of things I should be looking for on a Farina,' said Sally. But as you all know, intentions of 'just looking' are easily forgotten when viewing a car...



Mind you, this was certainly not love at first sight. In fact, when Sally drove up to the Wolseley, she was tempted to keep on driving. Quite simply, the car looked awful. It had been described as maroon and grey. And yes, there was maroon paint on the car, although it had erupted into a mass of craters and cracks and had then been brush-painted over with what looked like a can of Dulux Tomato Red. And the grey? Oh, that was applied by brush too. Very thickly to hide the horribly crazed maroon that lay beneath.

The walnut and leather wasn't quite what she had hoped for, either. Okay, it was complete - but the passenger seat had collapsed, and in a desperate effort to retain some comfort, appeared to contain more cushions than a suite factory. Much of the leather-look trimming had been covered in grey corded carpet - lovely! And where there was real leather on



Layers of paintwork were gradually stripped, not a job for the squeamish



Rust had taken large had attacked exterior panels, especially the rear quarters



New metal was welded into bodywork around wheel arches and quarters

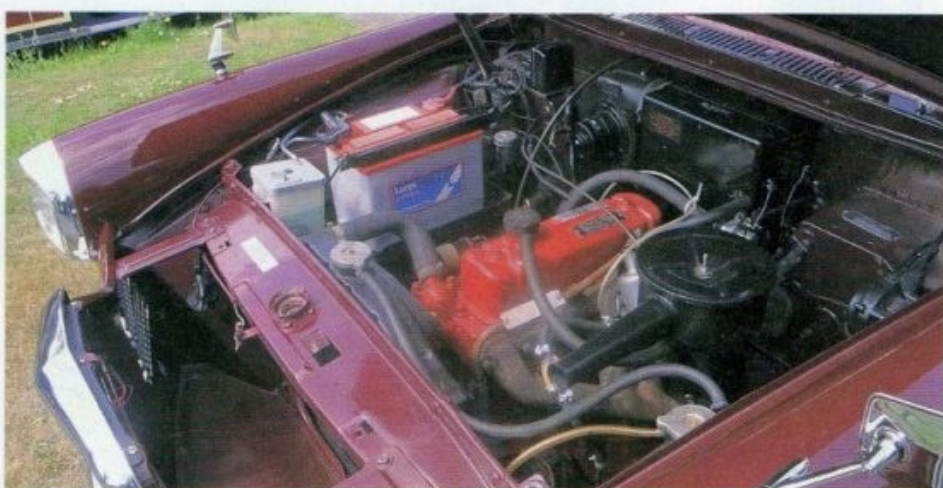


Repair sections were made by hand before being let in by Vernon Goodridge

Right, Duke's wooden dashboard is no hazard of design with Art Deco-style instruments



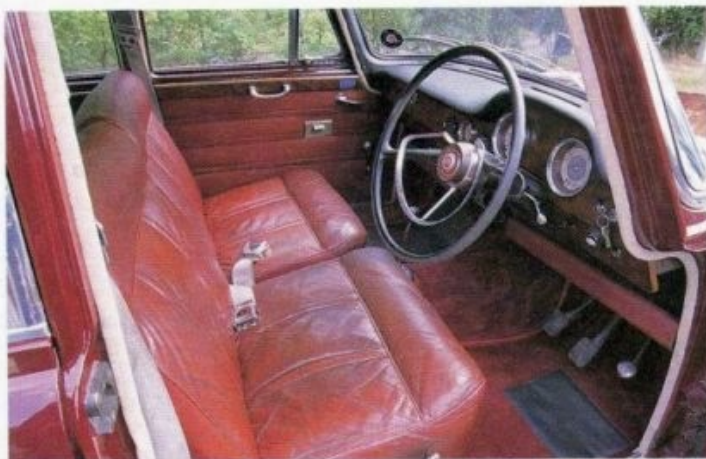
Below, MG rocker cover hints at one part of Duke's varied history





Left, when Sally met Wolseley, the relationship was intended to be a six month affair. But now they'll never be parted!

Right, replacement interior from earlier car has wonderful patina of age and provides a welcoming introduction to Farinas



the seats, dirt had sunk in with a vengeance.

Sally's heart sank - until she dropped to her hands and knees to give the underside the once-over. Quite simply, the underneath of BMJ 563C was astounding. Welding repairs had been carried out to one small area of box section. The rest was completely original and totally perfect - rare for any Farina, let alone one so cosmetically challenged.

The price of £375 was eventually reduced by forty pounds after a bit of haggling. But how to get the car home without an MoT? Sally took the brave step of booking it in for an immediate test with the garage that she regularly used, Stourbridge MoT & Car Repair Centre, confident in the knowledge that the car would fail but at least ensuring she could drive it to the garage and then back home again with some legality. Her biggest problem was getting used to the incredibly heavy steering compared with her Anglias, plus a gearchange that she found needed two hands to locate reverse!

Although she feared the worst, Sally was overjoyed when her newly acquired 16/60 failed its test on only relatively minor points: the rear indicator lenses had faded, the hand-brake reading was below par and the kingpins needed replacing. That was it! No welding, no major expense. Within three days and for a total cost of £60, Sally had her Wolseley MoT'd and ready to roll.

The car may not have looked much in those days, but Sally was immensely proud of it. It was a grand car compared with her Fords, offering a touch of luxury and that unmistakable feel of an upmarket, old British motor.

This grand old chap was soon christened 'Duke' and Sally proceeded to use the car every day (with total reliability) from September 1991 to January 1993, by which time a little sprucing up was well overdue.

It wasn't that the car suddenly needed major work for an MoT. In fact, it still had eight months' ticket left to run when Sally took the decision to start stripping the Wolseley in her garage at home. Cosmetic

titivation and a much-needed respray were all that Sally planned. Six months off the road, a few hundred quid here and there, and the Wolseley would be a bit tidier and more in keeping with its amazing structural condition. What wonderful intentions!

Two-and-a-half years and more than £3,000 later, Duke is finally complete. And the tremendous thing about this restoration is that Sally has been the mainstay of it all. She's the one who spent month after month up to her elbows in oil, grease, paint-stripper and Waxoyl. And she's the one who stripped the entire car back to a rolling shell, only to reassemble it all again virtually single-handed once the bodywork restoration was over and done with.

With the car stripped of its chrome trip and interior, Sally set about the loathsome task of removing all the paint, using nothing more than paint stripper and scrapers. Not an easy task when you remember how thick the paint had been.

While all that was going on, Sally employed the services of a specialist mobile welder (although she's determined to learn to weld for herself the next time she decides to tackle a restoration). Vernon Goodridge spent many weeks lovingly creating new sections by hand, welding them in flush with the existing bodywork with a great deal of skill and perfectionism.

New rear arches, bottom rear quarters, new front wing sections around the headlamps, a complete new front valance and a replacement section for the back of the near-side front wing. All these hand-made sections fitted beautifully, requiring only a minimum of finishing work. The great thing was that, even after very thorough investigation, Duke required absolutely no welding underneath whatsoever - only cosmetic panelwork was needed. Even the sills are still original - not bad for a tatty old car with nearly 100,000 miles under its wheels...

The offside front wing had a new rear half fitted, acquired when Sally bought an accident-damaged Cambridge and a boot-full of spares for the grand sum of £25. Included

New bolt-on wing was found in a car bought for just £25



With the original wing off, the build-up of muck was revealed for the first time in years



Although Sally did not weld, she did most of the preparation work herself

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was a brand new wing section, plus a perfect bootlid and excellent gearbox, all of which are now fitted to Duke.

'The great thing about having a mobile specialist like Vernon to do the welding was that he didn't mind me helping,' says Sally. 'In fact, I did all the preparation work myself before Vernon started work on each section, and he even taught me how to lead-load - it was all fascinating stuff.'

With the welding complete, Sally entrusted Duke's respray to Lowes Garage, at

Kinver in South Staffordshire, whose ace body man, Brian Hall, spent much time doing final finishing to the bodyshell prior to spraying it in Embassy Maroon, albeit using two-pack this time for durability.

The resprayed shell arrived back home in May 1994 and it took Sally a year almost to the day to reassemble the whole car and get it MoT'd and back on the road. Sally has every right to feel proud of her achievement, and particularly the standards to which she has worked.

'I made sure that everything that went back on the car had, at the very least, been thoroughly checked and repainted or sprayed where appropriate. It's amazing how time-consuming all that can be. Even the heater, for example, is far more complex in design than you expect. I ended up having to strip that down completely, repair and replace various components, spray it all up and then reassemble. When you're doing similar tasks throughout the entire car, you can see where the time goes.'

The Wolseley's interior was replaced with an excellent maroon leather example from an earlier 15/60, which Sally bought from a fellow member of the Cambridge-Oxford Owners Club.

One of the few parts of Sally's Wolseley not to have been rebuilt or replaced this time

around has been the engine, simply because a replacement unit was already in when Sally bought the Wolseley. But why an MG plate on the rocker cover?

'Duke had an MG Magnette engine fitted some years ago, though with the twin carbs removed to bring it nearer to Wolseley spec. It seemed a shame to dump that engine as it runs so smoothly and has excellent oil pressure readings,' she revealed.

'I could swap the MG plates for Wolseley ones - but why should I? That engine is a part of Duke's history and there's no reason to hide the fact that it came from an MG.'

Sally's 16/60 was finally MoT'd and ready to return to the road once more just a few days before she and Duke took part in a Birmingham to Weston-Super-Mare classic car run, covering nearly 300 miles in a matter of hours. Since then, Sally has continued to use her Wolseley regularly and has every intention of enjoying the car as much as she can. She's earned it after all this time!

What Sally has ended up with is surely one of the most impressive four-cylinder Farinas in the UK. It may not be as original as some - it's been thoroughly restored after all. But no car could be more loved than this one and it is a pleasure to see an owner so devoted to her classic car and now knows it so intimately inside and out.



Once bodywork was finished, Wolseley was masked up for spraying



Attention to detail meant final results were excellent



Two-pack was used to give extra durability over original cellulose



Above, Farina's design for BMC looks at its most restrained on the Wolseley

Right, handling is everything you'd expect of a mid-1960s BMC saloon

