

Stop your P76 Rusting Away

By Robert Hutcheon

So you've owned your car for quite a while. It used to be in good condition but as time goes on you've noticed a bit of corrosion here and there and a damp smell to the interior. You keep saying to yourself, "One day I'll get around to doing it up". Well, if you keep saying that then one-day you won't have a car worth doing up. The time to act is now! Even if you do a little bit now and then, advanced corrosion can be stopped or slowed down. A lot of corrosion problems start in places, which are not normally seen and if left unchecked can devastate other sections of the car.

For those who have completely restored one or two, the areas of attention are usually well known.

Take for example the damp interior smell. Obviously the entry of water has caused this and will penetrate the carpet and underfelt and make contact with the floor pans. A little bit of dampness in the carpet may not worry some people but what eventually happens to the floor pans will worry you. Rapid corrosion will take place on the interior side, which will create firstly numerous pinholes and then larger holes. Once this happens, water can now enter from the opposite direction while driving in the rain and splashing through puddles and floods. Corrosion will progress further and as the car body relies on these panels for strength and rigidity, the car's safety is questionable.

The first thing to do before repairing the floor is to find out where the water is coming from! Try checking the large drainage tray, which contains the windscreen wiper/ wash set-up. Give it a good clean and then carefully examine the tray for corrosion and pinholes, check the sealant at any laps or joins, look beneath the washer reservoir and check the seal and flange around the edge of the windscreen. It may be easier to detect any holes in darkness by removing felt below the dash and carpet/underfelt, then place a light source on the tray side and view from within - any holes will emit light rays. Do the same thing in opposite, i.e. place a light source on the front floor and view from the external tray side. Repair any holes and corrosion to the best of your ability and reseal any suspect joins. Next check other areas for water entry such as flashing strips below doors or rear window. Repair these if necessary.

Once you've dealt with any leaks into the cabin then you can repair the floor. Completely remove all floor coverings, and seats if necessary. All holes can be easily detected with a light source in darkness placed beneath the floor. Repair all holes and corrosion to the best of your ability; reseal any suspect joins/seams and paint. Clean the underside of the floor, treat any rust, seal all holes and apply anti-corrosive paints.

Next check the interior floors and panels of the boot compartment. If there is rust, then unless you are careless with containers, water must be entering from another part. Once again it's no use repairing the base of the boot unless the source of water entry is stopped. The most likely spot is the rear window flange and seal. Remove the chrome trims, clean thoroughly and check for looseness of the seal or corrosion and pinholes. Repair all holes and corrosion, neutralise any rust, paint and caulk or replace the window seal. Also check that water is not entering from another source such as a faulty boot lid seal, perished flashings beneath external vents or corroded holes near the petrol cap. Once you are satisfied that all upper areas of water entry are attended to, then base areas such as spare wheel compartment, right hand compartment and boot centre floor panel can be repaired. All this takes time and patience but it is well worth the effort to stop water entering the cabin and boot compartments and make the car last longer.

Next, concentrate on other areas of the car body. One of these is the sill below the

doors. On some cars this corrodes badly but on most Leylands the central section seems to last quite well. Nevertheless, clean this section and examine carefully. Especially scrape away any rough looking paint as corrosion may be forming just below. A lot of these cavity type areas seem to rust firstly from the inside so that you may have fine looking paintwork but bad news working from within. It seems that the worst affected areas are at the rear of the sill immediately in front of the back wheel. I've found that not only is this part subject to internal corrosion but also erosion from small stones blasting from the spin of the front wheel. It seems that the metal spat accessories fitted at this part to some cars would provide protection from external erosion. Some members claim that the spats have caused corrosion beneath but this problem can be eliminated if they are installed with all the edges sealed. The next worst area is at the front of the sills immediately behind the front wheel. In most cases the flashing at the rear of the wheel arch has corroded or is not sealed properly. When you cut into this area for repair as much as 6 cups of sand and silt can run out of the cavity. Repair the sill and ends by cutting out all rust affected areas, repair any internal sections, apply rust neutralisers and anti-corrosive products such as fisholene or similar. Repair and close the cavity, clear all drain holes and then completely drench the internal part of the sill cavity again with an anti-corrosive product. Make sure that the front wheel arch flashing is repaired and sealed properly.

Rear wheel arches and area around the petrol cap can also suffer from corrosion. Repair these parts to the best of your ability and then drench the cavities with fisholene or similar. I've found that an oil can charged with fisholene is ideal for squirting from within the boot area or access by drilling holes to the internal part of the wheel arch then plugging after treatment with a removable patch. Consider doing this once a year.

If you remove the rear bumper bar there is a box section as part of the body. This is likely to suffer corrosion and can allow water to enter the boot compartment. Repair any defective areas, flood with anti-corrosives and replace bumper.

Within the engine compartment there is a box section as part of the body, formed with a couple of layers of sheet steel and contains an internal steel plate. The torsion bar, steering rack and cross member are bolted to these box sections, which are a very important part of the structure. Corrosion tends to take place near the bolted areas. If requiring repair it will be necessary to remove the attached components. Protection can be greatly increased to this box section by removing the front bumper and brackets and drenching the cavity from the front with an anti-corrosive fluid.

Examine other areas within the engine compartment such as around and below the battery, around headlights, seams, below the radiator, underneath any felt sound deadener at bulkhead, in the vicinity of suspension strut entries and about wheel guards. Repair any defective areas. You'll notice that there is a gutter tray immediately in front of the bonnet from which the water run-off enters immediately behind the headlights. I personally consider this a problem and have managed to divert the water from the gutter to the ground with 20mm irrigation pipe.



Don't let your P look like this!!

Lastly, ensure that bottoms of doors are draining properly, cavities are kept clean and consider drenching internals of the doors with fisholene or similar.

If you manage to check and correct all areas, ensure continuous maintenance and never miss an opportunity to put your car under cover then it should last a very long time indeed.