

FIGARO PROJECT PART 5 DASH, SEATBELTS AND LEDS

Picking up from where we left off last issue, there is a little more disassembly to do on the Figaro's interior and a couple more repairs to make before we can put it back together for the drive home.



Last issue we detailed how the guys at The Figaro Shop in Didcot had helped us remove the dash from our Figaro in preparation for replacing the cracked top with one of their leather-covered items. This issue, TFS's Ant Absalom showed us how to fit the new top, and also how to retension the seatbelt – the driver's one has always been slow to retract, not enough to be dangerous or fail the MoT, but enough to make it more vulnerable to getting shut in the door. This is apparently a common problem on Figaros.

While the dash was out, we also took the opportunity of replacing the dash light bulbs with brighter LEDs, as the dials had always been difficult to read at night. We have a lot to squeeze into this issue and only three pages to take it all, so instead of waffling on here we will crack on with the pictures and let them tell the story. We did promise to include details of the costs for this stage of the project though, so here they are:

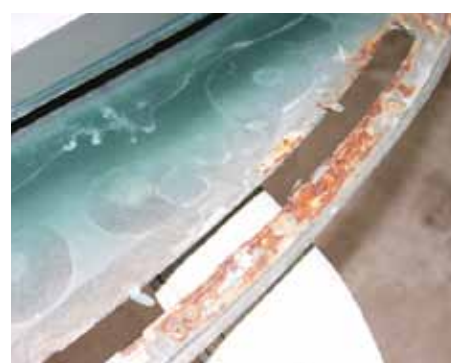
- Leather dashboard top: £350
- Handbrake lever surround (used): £42
- Speaker cover grilles (refurbished): £60.98
- LED dash bulbs: £22.46



1 The plastic dash structure itself is quite brittle, presumably not reacting well to the aging process. Ours was cracked in a couple of places, but this break was not in a critical position.

- Door card popper (x3): £5.98
- Rear chrome shield (Fleur de Lys): £22.87
- Heater control knob: £30.54
- Driver's door window relay: £105

As you can see, some of the little details such as heater control knobs can be eye-wateringly expensive, but that is the price you have to be prepared to pay for owning



2 This is the underside of the old dash top, showing the metal clips that are folded over the dash structure to hold it in place. The metal top will support the fragile plastic section pictured in step 1.

such a rare and unusual car, and a model that was never officially imported into the UK. Perhaps the better way of looking at it is that we are lucky people like The Figaro Shop are able to supply so much from stock. Certainly owners of many other more mainstream classics would give their eye teeth for that kind of availability!





3 Note that Ant had very carefully trimmed the leather with a sharp craft knife in a couple of spots because otherwise the added thickness of the leather cover...



4 ...would have made the gap too narrow for the plastic demister vents to clip into place. These are quite vulnerable where the thin cross-piece vanes are located, so you don't want to force them.



5 We saw last issue how the plastic dash was crumbling slightly at the ends where it was secured to the car. This is so common that The Figaro Shop have a template for repair sections in this area.



6 So Ant made up a metal reinforcing plate and glued it across the whole area using a two-pack adhesive. We left it overnight to cure before reassembling.



7 This area is quite a tight fit against the screen pillar, so once the adhesive had fully cured, Ant sanded off any excess that had been squeezed out.



8 Reassembly then really was a reversal of the dismantling process, though the cover at either end over the securing nuts and studs had to be stuck down with silicone because of the thicker leather.



9 We are getting ahead of ourselves slightly, but this was the dash after everything had been refitted, adding a touch of class to what is already a very upmarket interior.



10 Meanwhile, we had tackled that sluggish seatbelt. The hood storage cover catch is electrically operated, but you can also release it by tugging on a cable on either side in the boot.



11 That gave good access for removing the rear seat. The back panel has two screws at the bottom, then pulls out and up, but these locating pegs were very tight.



12 With the seat out, we could then remove the side panel which covers the seatbelt mechanism, having already removed the plastic cover across the top of the door opening.



13 All of this was to gain access to the mechanism itself. Before removing it, we did make a precautionary check that the locking mechanism was working correctly by tugging sharply on the belt.



14 With the seatbelt and its mechanism on the bench, the first job was to pull the belt out as far as it would go. A bit of fabric cleaning wouldn't go amiss, but that can be done later on the car.



15 With the seatbelt unwound to its full extent, the mechanism was under tension and trying to pull it back in, so Ant pegged it with a pick through this hole.



16 With the spring pressure removed from the equation in this way, the end of the seatbelt could then be prised gently from the spindle with a second pick.



17 Taking great care not to damage the material with the pick, the plastic end through the belt's loop could be removed and then the belt pulled through the other way and out of the spindle.



18 Turning the spindle against the spring pressure without the belt inserted meant that the retracting pressure could be increased, but we didn't want to make it so tight it was uncomfortable.



19 Ant decided that one full rotation of the spindle was all that was needed, then he threaded the belt back through, inserted the plastic plug and wound it all carefully back in.



20 One final job to be done at this stage before we could begin putting the Figaro back together was to replace the bulbs in the dash instruments with brighter LEDs. As well as the six instrument bulbs...



21 ...there was also one for the gear selector and another for the aircon. LEDs only function in one direction, so we reattached the battery and checked they worked before final reassembly.



22 We had already removed the wiring and microphones to the non-functional aftermarket alarm, and now we could remove the alarm's siren from under the bonnet too.



23 Unfortunately the rear fog light that had been fitted when the car was imported to comply with UK regulations had taken its feed from the alarm wiring, so Ant had to solder in a new feed.



24 And finally, we were missing the shield-shaped piece of trim at the back of this brightwork. Fortunately The Figaro Shop had a new replacement on the shelves and it clipped into position.