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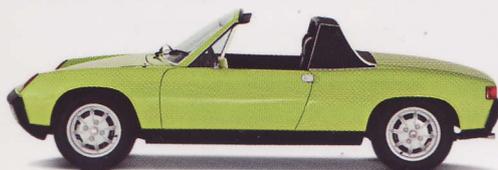
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# OUR CARS



Blasting the £1million-plus Cobra with sodium bicarbonate removes all trace of paint and filler



## ALL GEARED UP FOR 166.1MPH



### 1964 SHELBY COBRA MKII FIA

Run by Kevin Kivlochan, [classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk)

**TIME OWNED** 8 years 8 months **ENGINE** 4727cc, V8, ohv **POWER** 409bhp @ 6500rpm **PERFORMANCE** Top speed: 170mph; 0-60mph: sub-5sec  
**MILES THIS MONTH** None **COSTS** £4905

WITH LE MANS CLASSIC IN mind Alan Smith of Cobra specialist Thunder Road Speed Shop and I decided on two additions to the many jobs on our rebuild list. They're both needed because the circuit de La Sarthe throws up a different challenge to other race tracks.

First, the length of the Mulsanne Straight means I'll spend a significant proportion of each lap bouncing off the rev limiter, while the Cobra's lack of aerodynamics means I'd have a top speed of 170mph whatever the gearing, because the front of the car will lift above this, making the

steering go light. So I need to gear the car to give a top speed of approximately 170mph. I won't bore you with the maths, but a 1:3.31 differential ratio will give a theoretical maximum of 166.1mph. Perfect. A swift call to Gerry Hawkrige at Hawk Cars (01892 750341) and it was sorted.

The second tweak was fitting a Cobra Le Mans hard-top. In 1963 two Cobras in the 24-hour race were fitted with three-quarter length hard-tops to aid aerodynamics, and I wanted one like those. Once again Gerry Hawkrige came to the rescue

– his company makes the special hard-tops complete with a two-piece bootlid that's designed so the extended roof doesn't foul the aperture. Gerry had laminated a lightweight top for us, so I took the car to his workshop and we got down to work.

The first job was unbolting the complete windscreen assembly and raking the screen further back to improve aerodynamics and – hopefully – top speed. Next we offered the hard-top up to the car and carefully positioned it, using alignment points taken from the door shutlines. We then set the screen to suit the front moulded edge of the hard-top and securely clamped it in place.

After that we needed to do a lot of tweaking and measuring to ensure the side window apertures were correct and parallel,

otherwise the windows wouldn't slide in their channels. To ensure a good fit the hard-top needed careful trimming where it meets the rear bodywork and wheelarches; no two original cars are the same shape here, so it always takes a while to get it right.

The rear deck needed building up to provide a flange for the hard-top to sit on, so we applied gelcoat to the aluminium, let it cure, then laid glassfibre on top. After it had gone off, with the roof in place, we fabricated two metal attachment brackets to fit inside the corners of the roof next to the rear door shuts. We bonded these securely to allow a pair of  $\frac{3}{8}$ in bolts to pass through them so we could attach the hard-top using the two hood stick ferrules already on the car.

Then we made side window frames to slot into the ferrules in the doortops, using longer centre pins with a threaded end so that a Nyloc nut provides extra insurance against losing the windows at speed. Similarly, we

Discover what the Classic Cars team has been up to over the past month



Opposite left, from the top: offering up the hard-top; fabricating the side windows; bolting in the rear screen  
Left: building up the rear deck. Above: it fits!

bolted in the rear window rather than using a glazing rubber – one of the original Le Mans cars lost its rear screen on the Mulsanne Straight. We also drilled a row of holes in the Perspex to prevent pressure building up and forcing it out at 170mph.

With the roof removed and the edges trimmed and tidied where the flange had been bonded on, we reinstalled the roll-over hoop. It cleared the hard-top by 1/8in. Spot-on.

Next the Cobra went to Roy Grantham at Soda Blast UK (0121 706 7772) to have all the paint and filler removed. Roy's technique involves blasting the body panels with sodium bicarbonate, using compressed air to accelerate the crystals to almost 600mph. Unlike an

abrasive, sodium bicarbonate particles remove contaminants as they explode on contact with the surface, lifting them without causing damage. The process also breaks down hydrocarbons, making it highly suitable for cleaning grease-covered equipment or engine parts. Afterwards, he just rinses it off and the water-soluble soda disappears.

The result? I've removed 45kg from the car in filler alone – and that should make my 170mph target even more attainable.

*Kevin's Cobra is looked after by Thunder Road Speed Shop of Woking, not Thunder Road Cars of Waltham Abbey. The correct contact details for Thunder Road Speed Shop are tel: 01483 763399 or log on to [www.thunder-road-shop.co.uk](http://www.thunder-road-shop.co.uk)*



Cobra back to basics after its blasting

ALI COBB, ROSEYARD PHOTOGRAPHY



The Jensen gets its first outing since last August

## BACK ON THE ROAD AT LAST



### 1973 JENSEN INTERCEPTOR SP

Owned by Simon Harris, [classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk)

**TIME OWNED** Three years **ENGINE** 7212cc, V8  
**POWER** 330bhp @ 4800rpm **TORQUE** 410lb ft @ 3600rpm  
**PERFORMANCE** Top speed: 140mph; 0-60mph: 7.6sec  
**MILES THIS MONTH** 350 **COSTS** £0

**MY NEIGHBOURS MIGHT** have been grateful, but I was rather disappointed not to have disturbed them very often last summer with the sound of the Jensen thundering into life. The lack of action was mostly because the weather was appalling, and knowing the tendency of Interceptors to rot when exposed to water discourages me from venturing out in the rain unless it's absolutely unavoidable.

But some pleasant spring days this year made me keen to bring my SP out of hibernation and find a suitable adventure to blow off its winter cobwebs – so a 400-mile trip from home in Peterborough to Conwy in north Wales and back was just the job. I was planning to attend a get-together with the Welsh Motoring Writers, hosted by Seat – although I'm no longer based in Wales I'm still attached

to it by birth. WMW colleague Steve Rogers of North Wales Newspapers has long been a fan of the Interceptor, so if the car was capable of reaching Conwy, I thought I'd treat him to a ride.

It hadn't turned a wheel since last August and I now discovered the battery was faulty and wouldn't retain a charge; thankfully the supplier replaced it free of charge.

After a brief test drive the technician who looks after the car also reported it being 'a bit lumpy' (I understand that's a technical term). Maybe a jaunt to north Wales wasn't such a good idea after all.

I can confirm that the car did indeed feel 'a bit lumpy' for the first few miles, but the further it travelled, the better it felt.

There was one minor problem though: when I last refuelled the Jensen a litre of super unleaded cost less than £1. At Keele services on the M6 I filled up with 64.75 litres. That will be £88, please.

About 500 miles and £236 worth of petrol later, the Jensen feels and sounds as satisfying as ever. Looks like it could be a good summer. And an expensive one.



A few miles cured the lumpy running