

1953 BN1 (Healey 100) restoration project – present state

Ed Driver



Initially when the BN1 arrived, I knew this was the car I wanted restore. This was more evident when I learned from John Harper, the registrar of the UK Healey 100 registry that this was an early Coronet Cream coloured BN1 in his registry (this does not mean it was first of this colour off the production line). There were 300 plus Healey 100's painted Coronet Cream to celebrate Elizabeth's coronation. Also in 1953 BMC painted a variety of Austin models in this colour.

Two friends, one who had restored two Healey 100's, and the president of the Pittsburgh area Austin Healey Club, viewed the car for me. They found a few minor problems and identified a major one, a severely damaged lower front cross member. This was not an issue at that time. A year and a half later the issues began to appear as I started to disassemble the 100. There was further excitement after I had the tub media blasted. RUST! It is a truism which I had known for a long time but decided to buck the current – never buy a car east of the Mississippi. The East is known as the rust belt of LBCs in the US



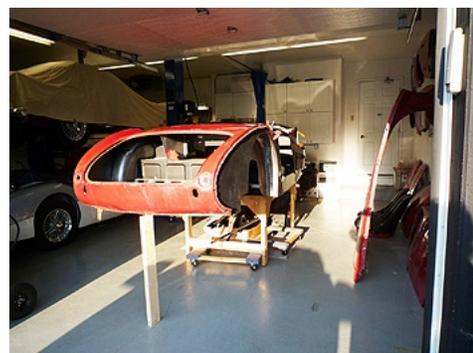
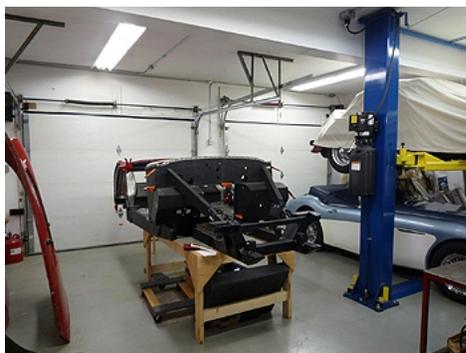
After attempting to patch the rusted out rails of the Healey chassis – a process known as chasing welds, the crossroad was reached. These chassis were original 14 gauge steel, two “D” pieces welded together. Well mine had evolved into 26 gauge thickness – the damaged lower front cross member and one side of the rear axle attachment site were entry sites for moisture. In addition it was evident that at one time the car was in a major collision, the front right chassis rail and the rear right of this rail were damaged. Surprisingly the diagonal measurements between the front and rear cross-members indicated a very square chassis. In addition to the rail rust, the rear wheels arches, the inner wings, the inner sills,

the outer sills, and portions of the A pillar, both foot wells, the floors which appeared to be soft drink advertising sheet metal, were rusted beyond repair. The true extent of the PO honesty was he never mentioned anything, especially the tubes of bathroom chalking pumped into the totally rusted out chassis rails in the cockpit area. The wool carpeting was totally glued in place as with the lining in the bottom of the boot, therefore my friends never had a chance of making a useful and successful examination.

So after a lengthy chat with two of my close Healey buddies in Winnipeg I elected to buy a new chassis and soldier on. The chassis was shipped from Kilmartin's in Australia to my door for approximately \$900 Canadian which included the shipping and all fees – approximately \$2200 C less then bringing in a more inferior chassis from “Europe”. The Kilmartin chassis has gusseted inner sills, a welded internal webbing in the centre of the chassis rails, and an adjustable shock tower plate to allow for camber adjustments, superior features.



The welding of rear bumper outriggers, emergency brake supports, front motor mounts, firewall and radiator supports, etc. is now complete. These along with the temporary affixing of other tub components is also complete. The last photo illustrates the rear shroud in place, albeit temporary, this tells me that the progress is in the right direction. My current problem is some sheet metal welding difficulties with the 19 gauge tub pieces. For the present -cheers!



E.A.D.