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MY FLEET



1972 ROVER 3500S
'CHRISTINE'

ENGINE 3.5-litre V8, baby!
TIME OWNED Nine years



1987 BMW 525E

ENGINE 2.7-litre straight-six
TIME OWNED Since May 2009



Suspension sits high with new springs and no engine in place.

To-do list

- Once Christine has proved herself reliable I'll begin a rolling restoration - one corner at a time.
- Take care of surface rust gathering on the BMW's front valance - ideally before winter.

SCARY THOUGHT OF THE MONTH

According to a receipt I found, when Christine was last on the road I was paying 77p a litre for petrol. That price has almost doubled and I now have over six litres of cars to feed!

Phoenix from the ashes

Last month, I bravely (many of the CM team said foolishly) promised that both Christine and my BMW would be MOT'd this month. If you haven't been following the saga of my Rover P6, this might not seem like such a tall order, but only a month ago the car was a stripped-out bare metal shell.

As I write, the BMW has a full MOT. The only points of note were a minor leak in the exhaust (poor considering it was replaced less than a year ago) and an advisory that the front suspension bushes were starting to wear. No problem - that's something I planned to replace anyway. So one down, one to go.

When I put Christine on eBay as an unfinished project, I sent a link to Mark Gray, editor of the Rover P6 Club magazine (www.p6club.com / 01902 689975), asking if he knew of a buyer.



The starting point - Christine's bare metal shell.

Just out of the spray booth with a coat of primer.



Dashboard and most of the electrics now in place.



“In reality this is a rolling restoration”

Mark replied he thought he could get Christine reassembled and back on the road in a matter of weeks. After Mark had given her a once-over in the CM workshop (and still felt up to the task), I hired the biggest van I could find and took all the pieces to Mark's place.

The next few weeks were a whirlwind of texts and phone

calls, some bad: “you need all new screen seals, we're missing a gearbox mount and the fuel tap is crushed,” and some good: “I've found your ignition keys in one of the boxes.”

Mark started by repairing the holes in the floor. Luckily his spares stock included a suitable rain gutter to replace the one that had rotted away, so that

was quickly welded into place. Priming and painting the bodyshell followed. Mark's daughter Maria painted many suspension parts, which were then fitted with Superpro bushes (www.superpro.eu.com).

The base unit was finished in the original Monza Red, then began the rebuild. I say rebuild though in reality this is now a

rolling restoration. Once Christine is MOT'd and reliable, I'll be doing cosmetic work, but in the short term the plan is just to get her running and back on the road.

Because Christine had been sat for several years, I decided to replace as much of the brake system as possible. Mark was happy to strip down the front calipers to check them but obviously insisted on new seals. With new front seals, pipes and hoses all round, and a rebuilt master cylinder, he advised also replacing the rear seals to avoid a weak link in the chain – plus it's a far easier job with the diff already off the car.

A call to Ian Wilson at Rover Classics (www.rover-classics.co.uk) sourced brake caliper reseal kits, screen seals and many other small but important parts. A search through David Manner's stock (www.jagspares.co.uk) showed parts 605600, 11365 and 11371 as pistons and seals appropriate to P6B front brakes, which David kindly provided.

I've spent much of the last six years looking through other people's restoration photos – it's a strange feeling when they're pictures of your own car.

At present, Christine's fully driveable. Mark's booking an MOT for the next week and is confident of a pass first time. I honestly can't wait. **CM**



Engine and running gear installed. At this point, she's driveable.