



GIMMEE DAT DING !

by Tim Morris



BEFORE

Big 9" x 5" dent above the rear wheel

Chuck Berry's playful ditty runs fitfully through my head as I apprehensively watch the flying dentman tapping the solar red paintwork on the rear wing of my MGF. How did we get to this situation I hear you ask ?

The history of the ding begins one Thursday with a trip to my local tyre outlet. With tread beginning to resemble the head of Telly Savalas on the nearside rear tyre a replacement was needed before setting off early next morning on a trip to the continent. Sitting in the waiting room reading two year out of date car mags and avoiding surfaces resembling the walls of your local coal mine (pre Thatcher of course) the tyre was eventually changed and the car returned. Now a quick glance and all appeared well. A short drive back home and a quick clean up to get the soap off the tyre walls and again no ding noticed. Time to go in to the local town centre and forage for last minute supplies. Don't you always find that you have run out of imodium just before a trip abroad ? Duly stocked up and walking back to the car resplendent in late afternoon sunshine no ding was noticed. Once more back home with the F parked on the driveway I unloaded and began to go through the checklist of essential items to take – strong mints, suitable CD collection, Imodium, Clean T shirt, Wife , polish and cleaning equipment. All ready to go so the car sleeps for the night in the garage.

Bright and early next morning we bound downstairs tripping over the sleepy cat and throw everything in to the boot of the F. Happy to be leaving these shores I reversed the car out of the drive avoiding the wife who was standing

on the pavement looking curiously at the rear wing . “Did you know you’ve got a big dent in the rear wing ?” she innocently intoned. “No dear” I replied “Oh” says she “ You don’t really want to have a look then - let’s go to France”. So off we go with me thinking she’s have a little joke at 6.30 in the morning. It was not until we got to the tunnel that I parked the car up and sauntered around to the near side – aaaaaaargh the dear thing was not rib tickling after all for there facing me was a huge ding above the rear wheel stretching from the top of the wheel arch to above the curve . Philosophically I thought there was not much I could do it about it now – even a few bangs on the wing around the ding failed to pop it out again. Never mind the French will just have to be disappointed upon spying this fine English Sports car resplendent with fresh obvious dent. I would just have to slide down into the leather seats as French schoolchildren would point and snigger as we passed and elderly gents with onions on their handlebars stared in disbelief as they wobbled in the slipstream. With the ignominy of the French Trip over we headed back to England's fair motorway system and cursed the wretched members of the Lane Two Owners club so pleasingly absent from the continent.

Time had arrived to sort the ding out. I had spoken to a friend who had used the services of DentsaAway, the dents branch of chips Away with very pleasing results. I thought I’d give them a go – not finding a suitable Dents Away person in my area I scoured the yellow pages and found www.dentman.co.uk . Giving him a ring he wanted three photos of the ding to be e-mailed so he could assess the damage before arriving.

In the meantime, with patience not being a virtue, I decided to have a play myself with a patent plunger I happened to have in the garage. Carefully attaching the rubber lips to the surface of the ding and sealing the vacuum a sharp tug and resounding ping resulted in the ding popping out. “Thank Goodness” says I “It’s popped out and I don’t have to spend any money”. “Oh dear” says I again “the big bits gone but the residual smaller dent and ripple is still all too glaringly obvious – Dentman was still needed. He phoned me back that night and I explained what I had done to an intake of breath and silence on the other end of the line. “That was probably not a good idea” says the dent expert – “You really needed to release the tension in the surface of the metal before pulling the main dent out – I’ll be right around and sort it out for you”. Suitably chastised and having learnt another lesson about less haste etc I awaited the arrival of the Flying Dentman.

Martin Leach turned up on Friday afternoon on his motorbike having ridden down from South London which is his usual domain. Now the painless removal of a dent is

really something of an art form involving steel rods and much manipulation. The first problem to overcome is access to the back of the wing – not an easy prospect on the F which, being a two seat convertible, has extra strengthening. However there is a small hole underneath the carpet in the boot area through which you can access the panel itself. The other method of access for this area is via the side pods – removing these you can gain access to the whole of the front of the rear wing. If the dent is more inaccessible Martin has another method of actually drilling a hole in the rear of the panel or the door jamb area to insert the rods. Once finished this can be covered with a rubber grommet – this is a last resort option though and not one to be taken lightly.

Back to the manipulation – with a combination of rods and special lighting to see the dent the bodywork rippled and the ding gradually faded from view. The next task was to gently reshape the metal to the sensuous curve of the Fs upper wing and return it to its silky smooth sheen. With a panel beaters hammer and protective rod Martin teased the more stubborn ripples back into shape miraculously leaving no marks at all on the paintwork. With just over an hour of time gone the job was finished and the ding no more. One relieved MGF owner breathed a sigh of relief and could now drive down to Totally MG at Kempton Park with head held high once more.

The mystery of how the dent actually appeared has still not been solved – was it the tyre men or the town centre car park – or on the driveway at home – or some mysterious gremlin in the garage. I guess I'll never know but at least I know a man whose magic manipulation can work miracles. (Just don't tell the wife !).



AFTER

With little more than the curve of the wing to ruffle the reflections