

Sitting Trouble

MINI Matt shows us the typical problems with the MINI's front seats and how to fix them with a replacement frame

Words & pics: Rob Hawkins

If your MINI's front seats have stopped reclining, won't lock or feel wobbly, then the internals of the seat frame may have broken. This is, apparently, a common problem and is usually caused by a broken cable if the seat tilts but doesn't slide, or a broken part of the seat frame if it doesn't recline, tilt, lock or the seat back has excessive play.

Fixing a broken seat frame involves stripping the trim, covers and components (airbag, seatbelt tensioner, lumbar support mechanism) before it can either be repaired or a replacement found. Replacement seat frames are available in the form of just the seat back, or a complete seat (consisting of base and back).

Problems need to be avoided when stripping and rebuilding a seat frame. Always ensure the ignition is switched off before removing the seats. If the seats are removed with the ignition switched on, the airbag light will be activated and has to be reset by a MINI dealer.

Similarly, be careful when handling the plug connectors for the airbag and seatbelt tensioner. If static electricity crosses the contacts on one of these plugs, it may activate the airbag or tensioner!

Set aside half a day to strip and rebuild a seat using a replacement seat frame. Special tools include a range of Torx bits and a trim tool (looks like a large bent and forked screwdriver). Most of the work is quite fiddly with the removal of plastic plugs and long u-shaped clips.



Parts and Prices

— supplied by MINI Matt

Secondhand complete seat frame (without covers, airbag and tensioner)	£75
New plastic seat back cover	£30

Contact Details

MINI Matt

01952 463800
07813 689072

Web: www.minimatt.co.uk

Email: newminibreakers@hotmail.co.uk

Fitting a replacement seat frame



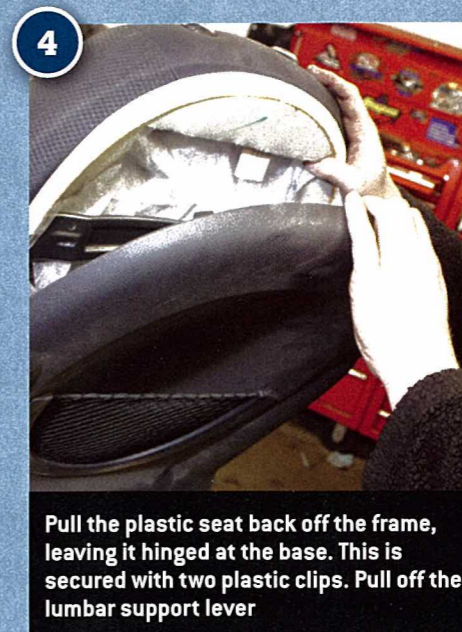
The front seats in the MINI are retained with four Torx T40 bolts. Slide the seat forwards to get to the rear bolts, then back to get to the fronts



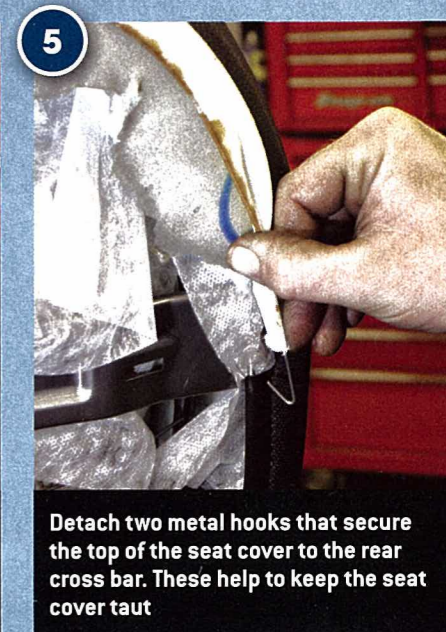
Make sure the ignition is switched off. Disconnect any plug connectors (heated seats, airbag and tensioner), then carefully remove the seat



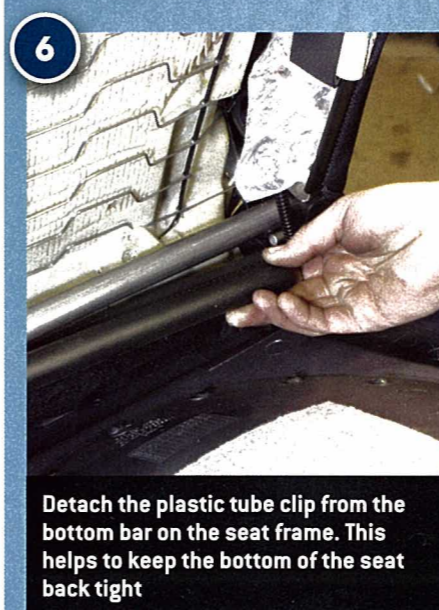
With the seat removed, pull out the headrest. Pinch the plastic spring loaded clip on the top of the seat back to release the headrest's legs



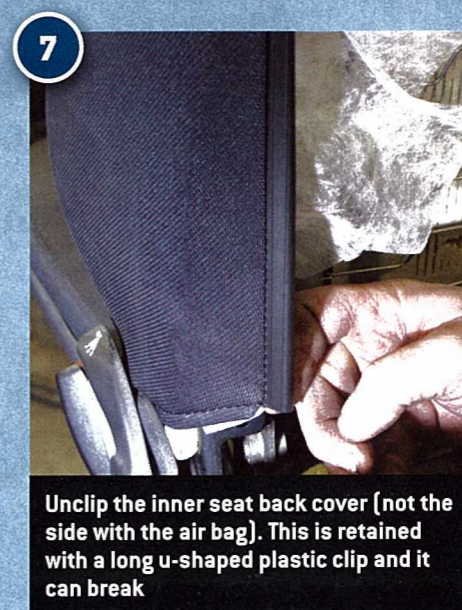
Pull the plastic seat back off the frame, leaving it hinged at the base. This is secured with two plastic clips. Pull off the lumbar support lever



Detach two metal hooks that secure the top of the seat cover to the rear cross bar. These help to keep the seat cover taut



Detach the plastic tube clip from the bottom bar on the seat frame. This helps to keep the bottom of the seat back tight



Unclip the inner seat back cover (not the side with the air bag). This is retained with a long u-shaped plastic clip and it can break

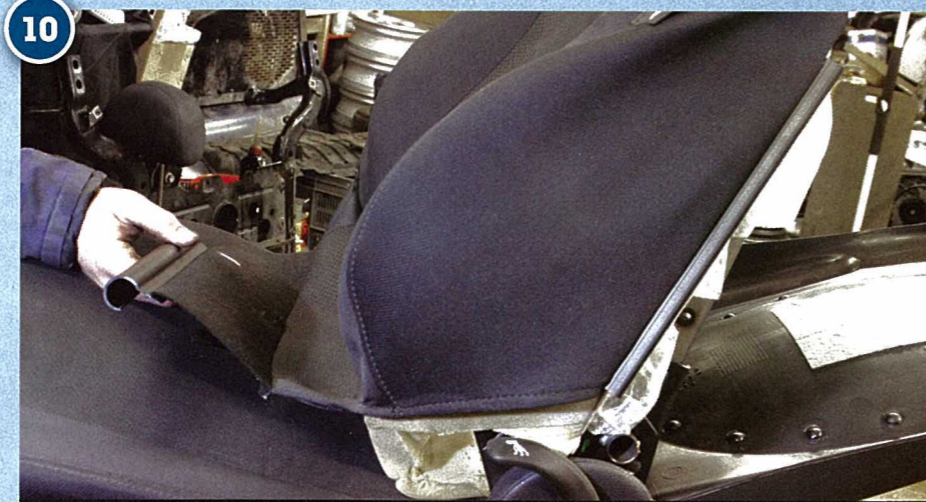


Pull back a cover for the metal airbag clip. Unhook the clip shown here from the webbing on the seat cover

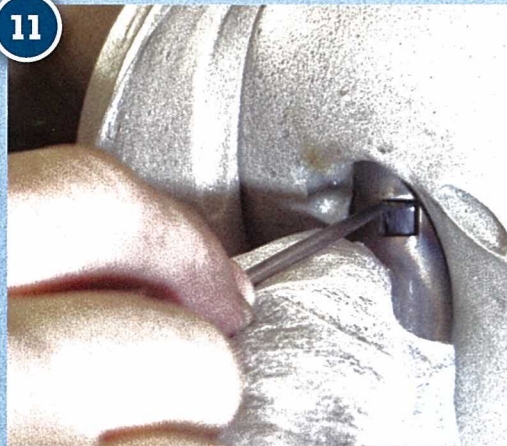
Fitting a replacement seat frame (continued)



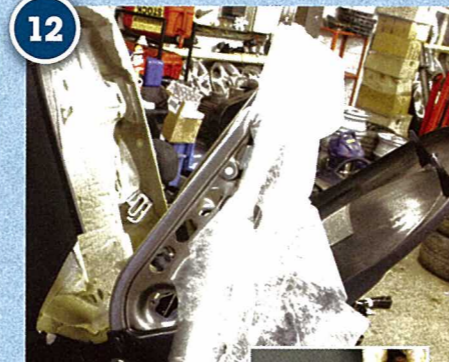
9 Unclip the side of the seat cover where the airbag is fitted. This is retained with the same type of u-shaped plastic clip as in step 6



10 Push the bottom of the seat back cover through the seat frame and onto the seat base. The seat back cover cannot be removed yet



11 Pull the seat back cover up off the seat frame. Use a thin screwdriver to push the clips in for the headrests (two for each leg) and pull out the plastic sockets



12 The cover for the seat back can now be removed by pulling it forwards and off the seat frame. Push a screwdriver into the plastic sockets to force out the clips



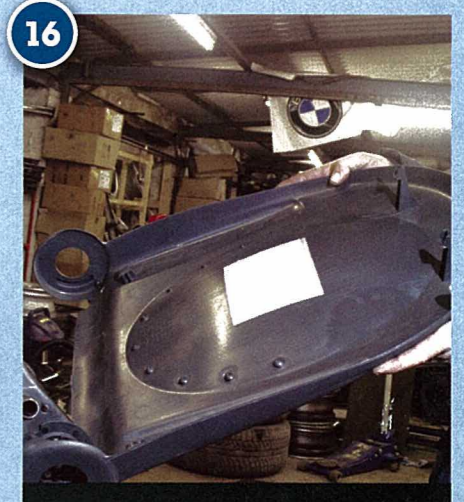
13 Pull the plastic cover off the lumbar support lever. Undo two Torx T20 screws to remove the lumbar support mechanism. Unhook the four springs for the lumbar support webbing



14 Tilt the seat fully forwards. Undo the Torx T30 bolt in the centre of the recline lever, then remove the plastic lever



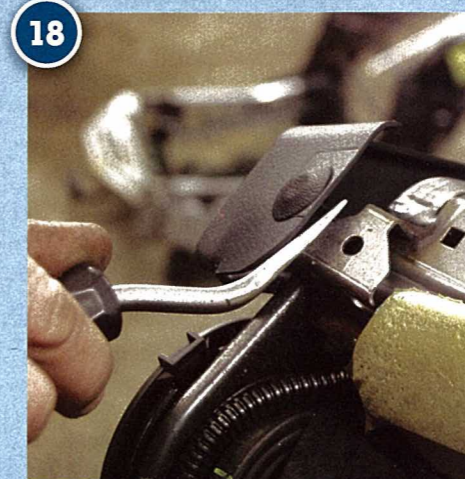
15 Remove the tilt and move lever by unclipping a cover off the centre of it, then undoing a Torx T30 bolt



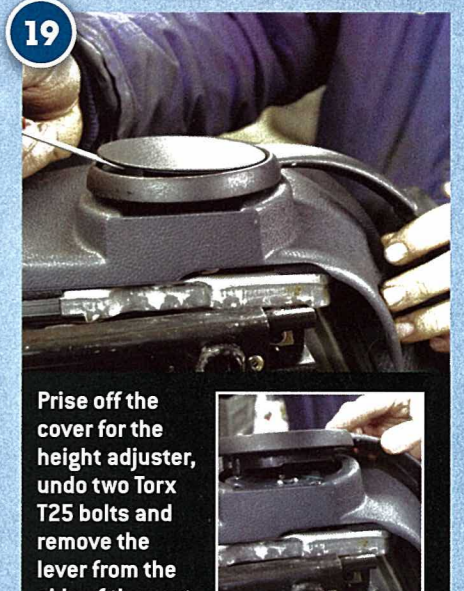
16 Detach the plastic seat back rear cover by unclipping it from the base of the seat back where it pivots



17 Turn the seat over and unclip the seat base cover at the back. This is secured with a long plastic u-shaped clip and will probably break in places



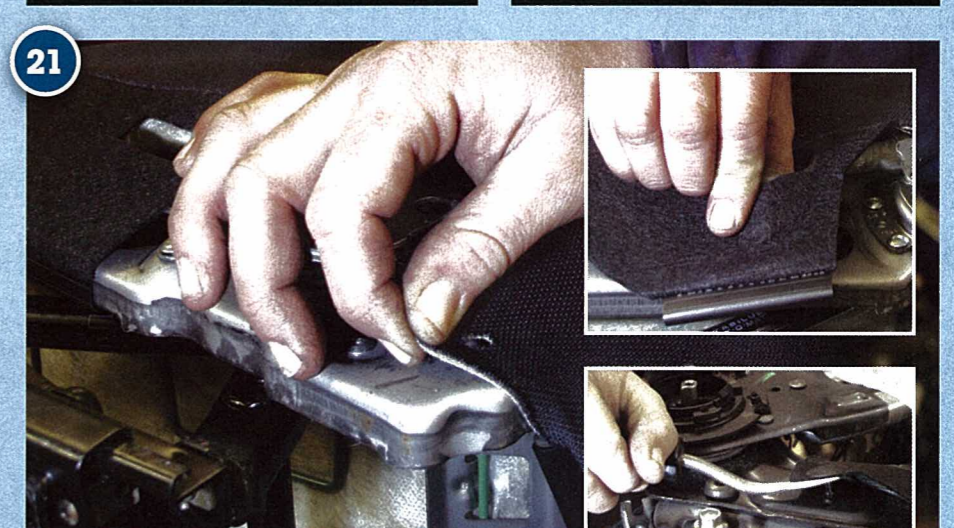
18 Unclip the plastic seat base side covers from the rear of the seat base. These are retained with a plastic plug that can be released with a screwdriver or trim tool



19 Prise off the cover for the height adjuster, undo two Torx T25 bolts and remove the lever from the side of the seat



20 Remove the plastic side covers for the seat base. The rear plug on each cover was removed in step 18. There are two clips left to detach

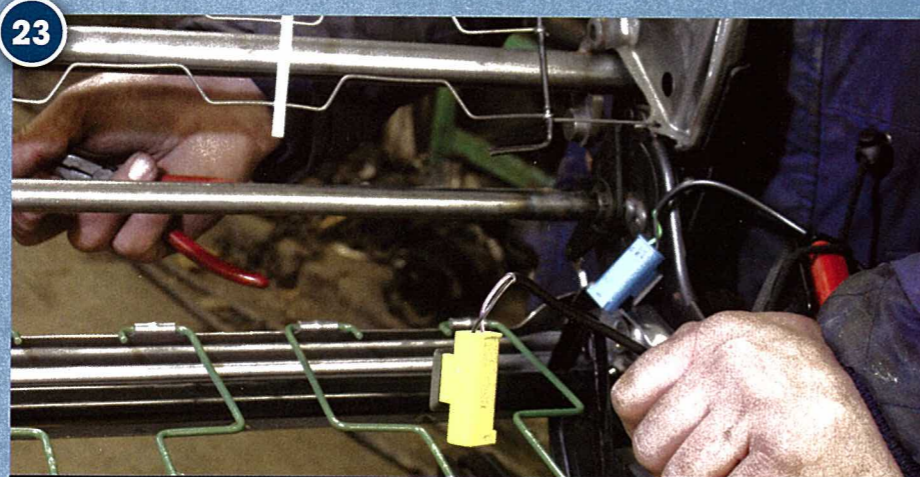


21 Detach the sides of the seat base cover, retained with a pull tag at the front, a u-shaped clip in the middle and a plastic plug at the rear

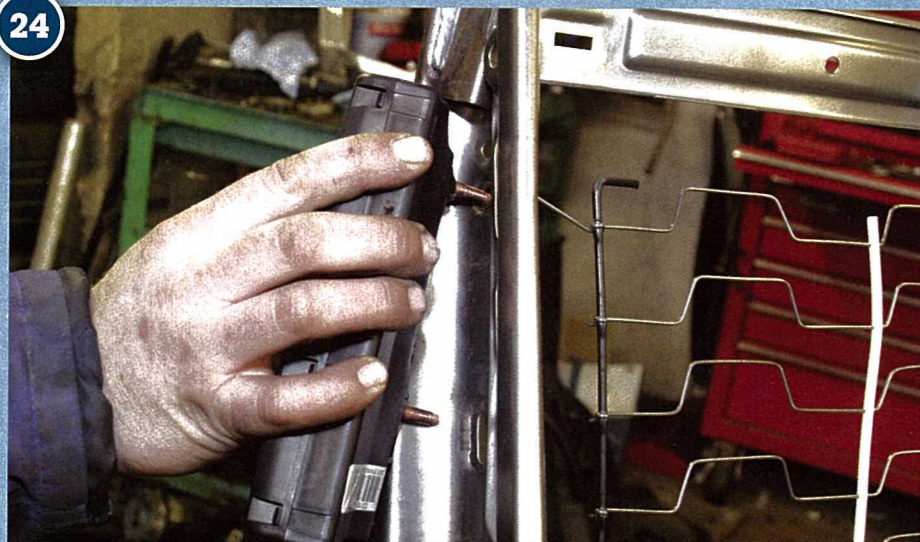
Fitting a replacement seat frame (continued)



22 Pull the seat base cover forwards and detach the front of it from the seat frame. It's retained with a full length u-shaped clip



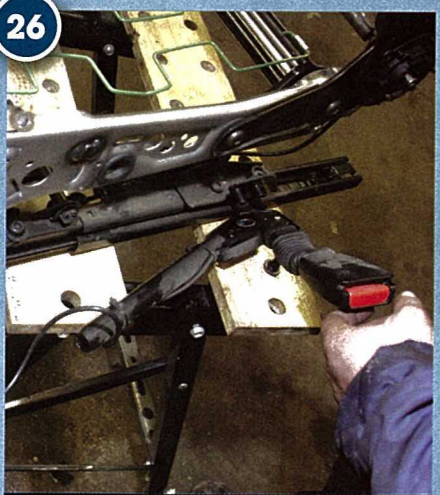
23 Pull the airbag (yellow plug) and tensioner (blue plug) wiring through the seat frame to their respective components



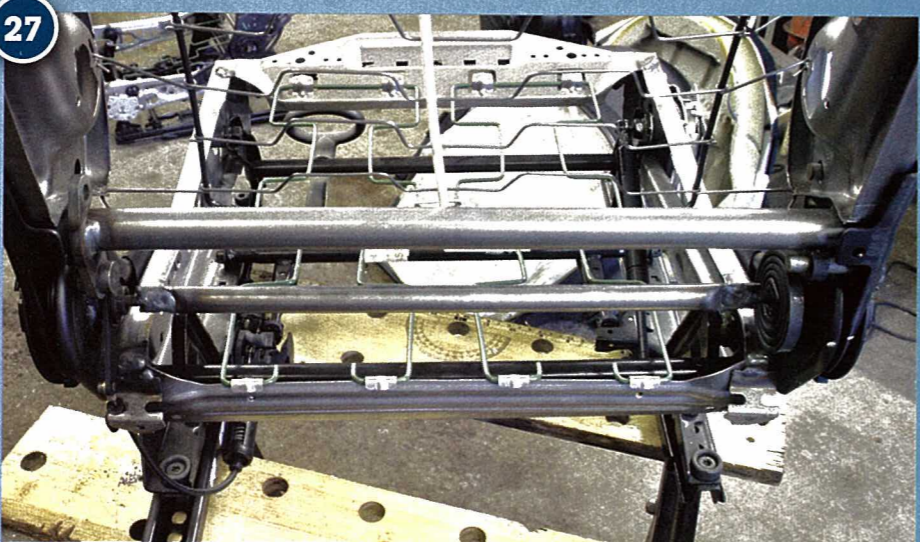
24 Remove the airbag, secured with two 10mm nuts. Carefully remove it from the seat frame, ensuring you don't touch the two contacts on the yellow plug



25 Place the airbag aside and cover the end of the yellow plug with masking tape. If static electricity causes a short circuit across the plug's contacts, the airbag could be activated



26 Cover the contacts on the blue tensioner plug, then remove the tensioner by undoing one Torx T50 bolt. Place aside with the airbag



27 Inspect the condition of the seat frame. In most cases the pivot mechanism on the seat back breaks. If required, the seat back can be replaced by undoing four Torx T50 bolts

KELSEY BOOKS

www.kelsey-books.com

All Kelsey reprint books are compiled from serialised features from the magazines shown on the book covers. They are printed on the finest paper ensuring the best possible quality.



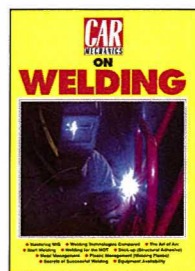
TRIMPH TR6
A step-by-step DIY restoration guide. 100 pages (most in colour) and 350 illustrations.
£14.95 + delivery



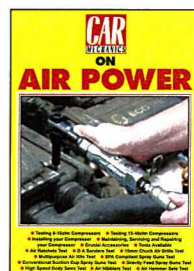
TRIMPH SPITFIRE RESTORATION
Best ever step-by-step DIY Spitfire restoration. 100 pages.
£14.95 + delivery



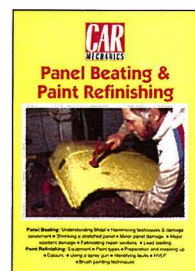
TRIMPH STAG
A step-by-step DIY restoration guide. Over 100 pages, many in colour.
£14.95 + delivery



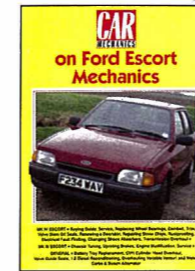
WELDING ON
Includes all the DIY welding methods available and how to use them. Plus plastic welding. 96 pages.
£12.95 + delivery



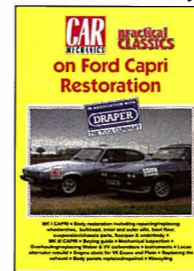
AIR POWER ON
Comprehensive account of air power for the DIY/small trade workshop. 72 pages in full colour.
£10.95 + delivery



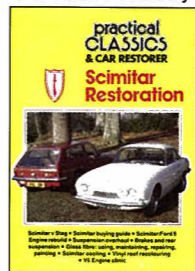
PANEL BEATING & PAINT
The best work on the subject of panel beating ever produced. Over 90 pages many in full colour.
£12.95 + delivery



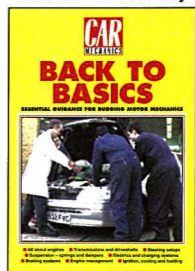
FORD ESCORT MECHANICS
Escort mechanics plus buying guide, uprating, alternator and carburettor rebuilds.
£14.95 + delivery



CAPRI RESTORATION
1.6 & 2.8i restoration and bodywork on a MK1. Plus Pinto engine, V6 Essex engine & carburettor rebuilds.
£14.95 + delivery



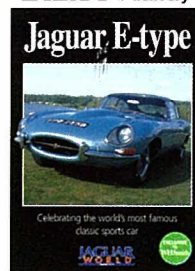
SCIMITAR
Includes mechanical overhauls, glass fibre repair and painting, buying guide etc. 70 pages.
£8.95 + delivery



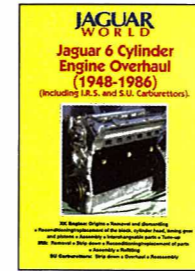
BACK TO BASICS
A crucial guide to modern motor mechanics.
£14.95 + delivery



CLASSIC TEST DRIVE
132-page compilation of modern day tests of your favourite classics.
£9.99 + delivery



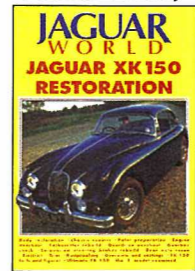
JAGUAR E-TYPE BOOK
132-pages packed with advice on buying, maintaining and modifying.
£9.99 + delivery



JAGUAR SIX-CYL. ENGINE OVERHAUL
In depth engine rebuild, including IRS and SU carb overhaul. 94 pages (many in colour).
£12.95 + delivery



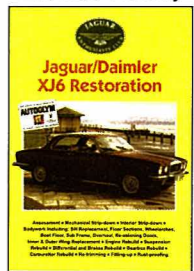
JAGUAR XK120 RESTORATION
Comprehensive restoration guide includes chassis, bodywork, engine etc. A4, 128 pages.
£16.95 + delivery



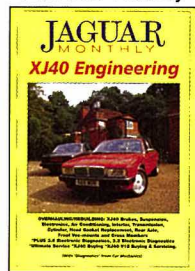
JAGUAR XK150 RESTORATION
The most comprehensive step-by-step restoration of an XK150 ever. A massive 170 pages in full colour.
£16.95 + delivery



MK2 JAGUAR RESTORATION
Step-by-step DIY restoration guide. Over 100 pages, mostly in colour.
£14.95 + delivery



JAGUAR XJ6 RESTORATION
Best step-by-step DIY restoration of this model ever undertaken. 128 pages and over 450 illustrations.
£14.95 + delivery



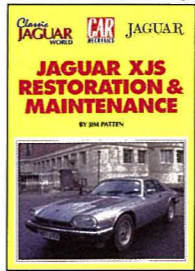
XJ40 ENGINEERING
History of the model, plus step-by-step guidance on maintaining this popular Jaguar saloon.
£12.95 + delivery



XJ SALOONS SERIES 1-3
Contains essential background on the original series of XJ saloons (1968-1986), plus some maintenance advice.
£12.95 + delivery



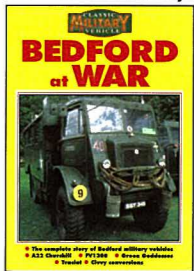
JAGUAR X300/X308
Practical advice on buying, owning and maintaining the last two generations of classic XJs, the X300 (1994-1997) and the X308 (1997-2002).
£12.95 + delivery



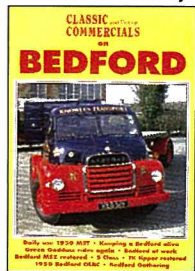
JAGUAR XJS RESTORATION & MAINTENANCE
Restoration of c1988 3.6 with easy to follow steps.
£15.95 + delivery



JAGUAR XK8/XKR
What it's like to own and drive. This book is essential reading for any XK8 owner or enthusiast.
£12.95 + delivery



BEDFORD AT WAR
108 pages, fully detailed history of Britain's only true classic military vehicle.
£16.95 + delivery



BEDFORD
118 pages. Detailed marque profile covering a wide range of Bedford models.
£16.95 + delivery

Post coupon to: Books Department, Kelsey Publishing Ltd., PO Box 13, Westerham, Kent TN16 3WT. Tel: 01959 541444 Fax: 01959 541400 E-mail: books@kelsey.co.uk

Please send me: (prices shown exclude delivery)

<input type="checkbox"/> Triumph TR6 Restoration (Practical Classics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XK120 Restoration (Jaguar Enthusiast) @ £16.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Triumph Spitfire Restoration (Practical Classics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XK150 Restoration (Jaguar World) @ £16.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Triumph Stag Restoration (Practical Classics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Mk2 Jaguar Restoration (Practical Classics) @ £14.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Welding (Car Mechanics) @ £12.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XJ6 Restoration (Jaguar Enthusiast) @ £14.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Air Power (Car Mechanics) @ £10.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XJ40 Engineering (Jaguar Monthly) @ £12.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Panel Beating & Paint Refinishing (Car Mechanics) @ £12.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XJ Saloons Series 1-3 (Jaguar World) @ £12.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Ford Escort Mechanics (Car Mechanics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar X300/308 (Jaguar World) @ £12.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Ford Capri Restoration (Practical Classics/Car Mechanics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XJS Restoration & Maintenance (Jaguar World) @ £15.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Scimitar Restoration (Practical Classics) @ £8.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar XK8/XKR (Jaguar Monthly) @ £12.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Back to Basics (Car Mechanics) @ £14.95	<input type="checkbox"/> Bedford at War (Classic Military Vehicle) @ £16.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Classic Test Drive @ £9.99	<input type="checkbox"/> Bedford (Classic & Vintage Commercial) @ £16.95
<input type="checkbox"/> Jaguar E-type Book @ £9.99	

DELIVERY PER BOOK: £2 UK, £4 IRELAND/EUROPE

I enclose my cheque, made payable to KELSEY PUBLISHING LTD, for £.....
(or) please debit my VISA MASTERCARD AMERICAN EXPRESS DELTA CARD

No:
Valid from: Expiry date: Issue No:
Signature: Security Code:
Name:
BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE
Address:
POSTCODE:

E-mail (optional):
By quoting your email address you have agreed to us sending you details of other special offers and promotions in the future. If you do NOT wish to receive our further information from Kelsey