

Vignale Part 2

VIGNALE RESTORATION CONTINUED..

By Bernard Littlewood

06/02/2016

After giving the spare wheel cradle a good wire brushing I painted most of it with black enamel paint. The door cappings were then given a good rub down with wet or dry and three coats of Jenolite rust converter was applied to the corroded areas. The other side of the glove compartment frame was the glued using Araldite and the radio facia repaired area was filed and a layer of stopper applied.

2 hours

09/02/2016

I used wet or dry to either remove all the paint or flat back the solid paint on the four door cappings, radio facia, ash trays four trims, two ash trays, glove box and frame then gave them all 3-4 coats of primer filler.

5.5 hours

10/02/2016

I spent the morning flattening back the primed parts from yesterday then gave the cappings, trims and glove box parts 3 coats of ARSENAL white, then the Radio facia and ash trays 3 coats of ARSENAL red. I then spent some time figuring out the best way to carpet the car. In the afternoon I started cutting carpet to shape, very laborious and boring but I had the gear box tunnel and front foot wells rough cut by tea time, they now have to have edging sewn onto them!

6 hours

11/02/2016

After masking off the white areas of the 4 trims and 4 door cappings I sprayed the remaining areas ARSENAL red.

2 hours

12/02/2016

I managed to set my sewing machine to sew the edging onto the carpets, but I wasn't pleased with the results so I used contact adhesive. By the end of the day I had made and "edged" the front footwell, gearbox cover, propshaft tunnel and the rear foot wells,

3 hours

16/02/2016

Six boring hours spent today cutting templates then carpet then gluing edging onto most edges, I also made covers for the areas between the A posts going back to the bulkhead, but at the end of the day the interior of the car was looking good so it was worth it.

6 hours

17/02/2016

Today I fitted the door cappings, it took a bit of time as I had to "reform" some of the door edges. I then re fitted the door cards only to find that the fit was far from perfect with the addition of the door cappings, lucky I'm not after a concours restoration. I then turned my attention to the glove box and after an hour searching for the lock components I was still missing the latch.

5 hours

18/02/2016

As the weather forecast for the next few days was pouring rain I thought that I would address some of the outstanding jobs that required me lying on the floor under the car so I raised the car onto 4 stands with the wheels clear of the ground then removed the wheels. I then filled the rear axle with oil, adjusted the brakes all around and then adjusted the handbrake, the rear N/S brake was still rubbing slightly with the adjuster fully closed, but as the shoes are new hopefully they will bed in over a few miles (if I ever get the Vignale on the road).

I then made the remaining front suspension bump stops out of blocks of buffer rubber (as used on the back of lorries etc), fitted them and tightened up the inner and outer track rod ends on both sides.

Next I made holes in the carpet of the front driver footwell for the accelerator pedal bracket and I bolted the bracket in place. Last jobs of the day were to remove my temporary lashed up bottom radiator to water pump hose to take with me to the Stoneleigh show as a sample and then strip down and paint the rear view mirror bracket.

5 hours

19/02/2016

An hour spent today cleaning the rear faces of the road wheels and attempting to un seize the sun visors, exciting stuff!

1 hour

Total 479 hours

23/02/2016

I managed to un seize the sun visors and strip them to the component parts so the metal parts were given 3 coats of ARSENAL red. I then painted the inside faces of all 5 road wheels with a red rust preventative paint. My mate Al had reconditioned the windscreen washer motor, so with the connections made I tried the pump and it worked, thanks Al.

I then made front inner wings/splash/mud guards out of sheet steel using cardboard to make the initial templates, these were then given 2 coats of red rust preventative paint and left to dry. 6 hours

24/02/2016

I fitted the front wings/splash/mudguards after giving the rear of the wings a good coat of Bilt Hamber Hydrate 50. I then sealed the edges to the outer wings with black sealant and painted them with Waxoil underseal.

The radio/CD player was then wired up to a single speaker that I was able to conceal behind the passenger side dashboard, there is no room on the driver side so I may buy a small speaker and fit it to the radio fascia.

The outer faces of the roadwheels were then painted Hammerite Cream. 5 hours

25/02/2016

The new rear view mirror I bought at the Stoneleigh Show had different hole fixing centres so I removed the trim where it is located and filed the holes to accommodate them, the filed areas were then touched up with ARSENAL white paint. I then re fitted the road wheels (as I was tripping over them in my garage) and turned my attention to making a new "tongue" out of a bit of brass for the glove box, very fiddly, but it seems to work (famous last words?). The sun visors were then fitted and removed repeatedly until I had managed to get them to sit straight by bending the swivel shafts in my vice. 4 hours

26/02/2016

I installed the glove box assembly, the rear view mirror and trim then spent an un enjoyable few hours fitting the new ARSENAL red piping around the rear door apertures and the B post.

64.5 hours/month 3.5 hours

01/03/2016

After giving the rear parcel shelf and the area where the rear seats fit a wire brushing I painted them with red anti corrosion paint. I then fitted a grommet where the fuel line passes through the floor under the rear seat. As I had bought a new bottom radiator hose to water pump housing from the SMC spares secretary I removed my made up one and fitted the new one, I found that it rubbed against the front N/S inner wing so I removed it and cut 1/4" of an inch off each end which cured the rubbing issue. Next I fitted the driver side heater pipe and the accelerator pedal, then with a plastic scrapper I started to remove the remnants of the heated rear windscreen "grid" after trying to soften the adhesive with cellulose thinners. After about 30 seconds I gave up and had a few beers. 3 hours

02/03/2016

Gritting my teeth to get me through the boredom I finished removing the rear heated windscreen grid. I then cut a piece of ARSENAL white PVC and fitted it under the rear windscreen rubber, the width of the car. With this in place I fitted the new parcel shelf cover, and rear seat.

The cooling system was then filled with anti freeze and water and I started the engine to warm it up enough for the anti freeze to mix and circulate.

I then decided that instead of making a new fuel tank cover that I would cut the rotten bottom 8" off and make a hardboard piece to rivet it to the original. I managed to cut the piece to shape before having to pack up for the day. 5 hours

03/03/2016

Using pop rivets the repair panel was fitted to the fuel tank cover and 3 coats of black stone chip paint were applied. 0.5 hours

04/03/2016

I fitted the fuel tank cover, flywheel inspection cover ,secured the exhaust with stainless steel tie wraps and wire brushed then painted the spare wheel release mechanism. 2 hours

Total 512 hours

08/02/2016

After applying copious amounts of copper grease to the spare wheel release mechanism and hinges the 5 components were eventually (awkward on your own) bolted in place with the spare wheel in position. Next on the agenda was the windscreen washer pipe and connections that I had bought at the NEC. With these in place a dribble of water appeared at the jets so I'll have to fit another pump motor, probably "piggy back" it to the original.

I then fitted the in line fuel filter (with steel inlet and outlet connections), connected the fuel line and poured 6 litres of fuel into the tank. Making sure that the fuel tap was on the reserve tank setting I manually operated the fuel pump in an attempt to draw fuel through with no luck. I re attached the battery and after priming the carburettor with easy start I started the engine for the short time that the easy start would fuel it in the hope that the pump would draw fuel through but it didn't. I then connected my one man brake bleeding pump to the fuel line just after the filter, but I found that the pump wasn't working (no wonder it wouldn't bleed the brakes the last time I tried it), so I attached a long clear pipe to the filter and sucked the fuel through, stopping as soon as the fuel reached the glass bodied filter. I then remade all the fuel line connections, but time had run out for the day so I wasn't able to attempt to start the engine. 3 hours

10/03/2016

As the original rear bumper was very pitted and corroded I had been looking for a replacement at the various classic car shows, one that I bought was usable but not quite long enough, but as it was only £10 I had bought it. To get it to fit I cut it in half, drilled holes to match the Vignale mounting brackets and bolted it on, the gap in the middle was 4 1/2" so I formed cut a piece of aluminium checker plate to the same profile as the bumper and 6" wide, covered the edges with edging trim, then fitted it to both parts of the bumper by drilling holes and bolting it on, I then fitted a TSW badge in the centre of the plate, far from perfect, but marginally better than the original bumper and it gives me time to try to locate a good bumper or one that is good enough to have re chrome plated.

I then started the car and was pleased to have the fuel being fed from the petrol tank, however, when I pulled the choke cable the knob assembly detached from the inner cable as the action on the Solex carburettor is very stiff. I stripped the carb to find out why and found that the choke mechanism internals are worn so I decided to fit the Weber (with the new jets). I then repaired the choke cable by soldering the inner cable back into the knob assembly. I then started the engine again and although it revved up nicely it was a bit lumpy on tick over, but this could be due to the leaking manifold to partial exhaust joint. I then gradually lowered the car onto its 4 wheels.

5.5 hours

16/03/2016

I picked up the recovered front seat frame and B post trims and after a bit of fettling I had the trims fitted, the seat runners fitted and the seat frame in place. I then repaired the seat adjuster by using a piece of new Bowden cable for the one side and drilling a bolt so that I could clamp the cable in place. 2.5 hours

17/03/2016

I fitted the front seat base and the gear lever. With the battery attached I started the engine and let it warm up. The front and rear registration plates were then fitted and it was time for the Vignale's maiden voyage. Putting it in gear I tentatively let out the clutch and the Vignale crept forwards, out onto the road and into second gear. I stopped at the corner of my street and put the car in reverse to take me back to my house. FANTASTIC! The engine stalled and took a bit of starting so I added another 2 gallons of fuel. I then took the Vignale around the block turning right, then around the block turning left. FANTASTIC! The engine continued to stall when I came to a halt so I adjusted the ignition timing slightly and took the Vignale as far as the ASDA roundabout near my house with the intention of taking it along the dual carriageway to the M4 before turning back, but the engine kept stalling so I didn't risk it. I have an air filter on order so I will fit it when it arrives and try to tune the carburettor a bit more. All in all my first impression of the Vignale out on the road is far better than I expected FANTASTIC FANTASTIC FANTASTIC!

1 hour

Total 524 hours

19/03/2016

After using a rotary brass wire brush mounted in my cordless drill to remove as much rust as possible from the hub caps I polished them with Solvol Autosol then cleaned them with cellulose thinners. In an attempt to delay the rust from reappearing too quickly I gave 2 of the hub caps 4 coats of clear lacquer, but when they had dried they looked as if they had been painted with aluminium paint so I removed the lacquer with thinners.

2 hours

22/03/2016

Today I fitted the new air filter to the Weber carburettor and adjusted the tick over and air screw. I then fitted the Vignale crossed flag emblems to the rear wings, the hub caps and wheel trims and the ENSIGN badge to the front bonnet.

I then took the car for a run to the M4 and back and it ran well even though the engine still stalled when I came to a stop.

1 hour

31/03/2016

I took the Vignale for a run to the M4 and back and found that it was still stalling when I came to a stop. Although there is only a partial exhaust on the car I don't think that it would effect the carburetion to this extent. I checked the points gap and found that they were on their limit and would only just make the 0.016" gap so I fitted a new set and set the timing statically. I tried the car around the block and the engine still stalled when I came to a stop so I adjusted the tick over until the engine did not stall when I took it around the block by adjusting the throttle stop an 1/8 of a turn after each circuit.

I then added some small saddle clamps to the Bowden cable which operates the front seat adjustment to prevent the cables from slipping,

Using some aluminium patterned plate I made and fitted tread plates to the sill tops on the front door apertures and fitted the new old stock rear tread plates.

30/5 hours/month 5 hours

05/04/2016

After adding 2 gallons of petrol to the tank I reconnected the battery and the engine burst into life on the first turn, I reversed from out under the carport and waited for A to arrive. When he did he jumped into my Zafira and followed me to Longlife Exhausts as I had booked it in for a new stainless steel exhaust manifold and exhaust. The Vignale went very well although I don't know if it was my fault through trepidation or if the gear box has an issue with gear selection when the oil is warm as getting it into 3rd and 4th was a bit hit or miss. The Vignale made it to LongLife (a total of about 12 miles) with no other issues than the vague 3rd and 4th gear selection, cruising along on the rebuilt engine at 50mph). When I arrived at Longlife, however, I was told that I would not have the car back for 3 weeks instead of the expected 1 week, but there was no point in taking it back home as I couldn't drive it any distance with the temporary exhaust pipe that I had fitted.

11/05/2016

Today the Vignale was finally ready for me to pick up from Longlife. When I arrived I was dismayed to see that the car was extremely dirty, but the exhaust and manifold looked good. The car started on the second turn and sounded nice although the tick over was high. I drove it home and tried to adjust the carburettor, but it would not tick over at less than 1200 rpm so I removed the Weber carburettor. I found that the throttle butterfly was not sealing correctly so I adjusted it until it was perfect, but on re fitting the carburettor the problem was still there so I fitted the original Solex and was able to get the engine to tick over at about 500rpm, I took the car for a run around the block and it seemed "flatter" than it was with the Webber (which is to be expected) but it didn't cut out after hard braking so I will try it out over a greater distance when I get the chance. I also adjusted the handbrake cable.

3 hours

18/05/2016

The car started on the first turn of the key but it needed the choke on for a while before it would tick over. I took it for a run and found that even when at full operating temperature I had to pull out the choke to achieve any power.

After a lot of internet digging I decided that as usual there are many people with different opinions so I contacted Fast Road Cars and after a few e mails I was advised that the Venturi on my Weber was not big enough for the engine size so with no other plausible avenue and for a very good price I ordered an new Webber, watch this space!

2 hours

Total 533 hours

27/04/2017

The rear springs have made a great difference to the car's "ride", it now negotiates bends better and doesn't "roll" as it did on the old springs and bushes.

Today I addressed a couple of small "detailing" jobs, after a bit of previous cleaning and painting I bolted an old Spitfire coolant expansion bracket complete with bottle to the steering box bracket, with a new piece of pipe connecting it to the top of the radiator cap pipe. I also removed the steering column cowls and lubricated the steering column with TF2 in the hope that it eradicates the occasional squeaks that occur as I intend to drive the car to Haverfordwest in a week's time using it as a wedding car for my sister in law.

1 hour/month 1 hour

Total 552 hours

16/06/2017

After a faultless run to Haverfordwest with the Vignale behaving impeccably and then attending a few shows it came to my notice that there was a slight "scuffing" noise that was hard to detect but which seemed to be coming from the rear O/S wheel. With the car jacked up and on stands and with the handbrake off I could just about make out a slight noise when I span the road wheel. It could very well be a bearing as I hadn't reconditioned the axle, but by backing off the brake shoe adjuster to its lowest setting the noise seemed to improve/decrease, time will tell.

½ hour

17/06/2017

I found an ACU SPARK electronic ignition module kit in a box of my spare parts (I think it was one that had been sent to me by mistake when I ordered a positive earth kit for an early Herald and I only realised that it was the wrong one after I fitted it and found that there was no spark at the plugs, so I didn't know whether it was any good or not) so I installed it in the Vignale, there was no pulse at the HT leads when I checked it with my strobe timing light and the engine wouldn't start so I deduced that the module had been damaged when I had previously fitted it to the positive earth car. When I examined the points base plate I noticed that the earth cable looked a bit frayed so I decided to make up a new one which left me with no time to re fit the points set up.

1 hour

23/06/2017

I had to fit the points set up ready for a run on 25th, but I thought that I would try starting the engine with the electronic mode still in place and the engine started! As the run was only a 40 mile round trip I decided to leave the electronic module in place.

¼ hour

25/06/2017

On the run the car performed faultlessly on the outward journey but on reaching higher speeds on the return journey the car wasn't pulling as well as it should making me believe that the timing may need more adjustment or that the module was faulty (but these usually either work or don't).

I'd have to check this out before the run the following weekend as it was a longer run along two motorways.

28/06/2017

I took the car for a run up the M4 and found that after 65mph the car was not running or pulling as smoothly as it should so I checked the ignition timing and found it to be correct. I then removed the electronic ignition module and replaced the points set up. I then took the car back onto the M4 and it ran faultlessly, so the points set up will stay until I buy an optronic ignition set up.

2.75 hours/month 1 hour

05/07/2017

On a 100 mile round trip to Somerset the Vignale performed faultlessly apart from the odometer and tripometer failing on the return leg, the speedometer, however, was working. I disconnected all the dashboard instruments, removed the console and steering column shrouds then removed the speedometer. When I stripped it down I found that the eccentric cams on the tripometer and odometer had broken. I had previously bought a spare speedometer off eBay, it was for a column change phase 3 Vanguard and didn't have a tripometer, I also didn't know if the ratio's were the same and if the speedo would be accurate, I couldn't cannibalise it to repair my original speedo as the internal parts were different. I tested the "new" speedo to find it was seized up, but after careful cleaning, lubricating and turning it with my battery drill I managed to get it to work, I also ran both the speedos at the top speed of the drill and they both settled at 45mph so I was hoping that the ratio's were the same and that I would get a true speed reading from the "new" speedometer. I then fitted the speedometer, instruments and console and took the car for a run using my sat nav to check the accuracy of the speedo, thankfully it was smack on! I then spent a few minutes adjusting the clutch fork as first gear was getting hard to select, hopefully adjusting the clutch will help, time will tell!

2 ¼ hours

10/07/2017

Since I had changed the car from positive earth to negative earth the wiper arms were positioned so that they parked on the passenger side, at the time I didn't consider this an issue, but in practice it meant that the wipers didn't entirely sweep across the driver's view so I stripped the wiper motor down and changed its internals so that I could park the wipers on the driver's side. I then had to dig out of my shed wiper arms which were cranked in the opposite direction to those fitted.

1 ¾ hours

27/07/2017

While stuck in a 4 mile queue on the 2nd Severn Crossing on a day when temperatures were 29 degrees in my TR4A with the heater on to help keep the engine from overheating (which I prevented, just) my thoughts had turned to how my Vignale would cope with the ethanol fuel now in use. The Vignale has its standard fan mounted on an extended boss to keep the fan close to the radiator and I had had a larger veined core fitted to help prevent overheating, but I thought that an additional electric fan would be worth looking at. I bought a brand new one at an auto jumble for only £10 as the thermostat and connections were missing, but as I wanted to fit a separate switch for me to turn the fan on if/when needed this was not an issue, so today I removed the grill and fitted the fan to the lower side of the radiator on the left hand side using tie wraps, I then used a 14amp fused connection straight to the battery and earthed the other cable to check that the fan was going the right way and blowing air through the radiator and not pushing it away. With the positive connection made I then ran a cable into the cabin and fitted it to a toggle switch whose other terminal was earthed. With the grill re fitted and the front of the car given a coating of cavity wax the fan installation was complete. It will be interesting to see if the electric fan (when not switched on) impedes the air flow through the radiator!

6 ¼ /month 2 ¼ hours

06/11/2017

The alignment of the rear O/S door hadn't been very good since the new door seals had been fitted. I thought that the hinge screws would loosen easily as they had been given a coat of copper grease on assembly, however, all 8 screws were solid and it took a large Philips screwdriver with a spanner on the hex shaft to slacken them off, one of the heads was virtually destroyed carrying out this process. With the screws slackened off and the latch adjusted I was able to achieve a good door alignment.

I then removed the window winders, interior door handles and door cards from the front doors to enable the door cards to be modified as the window winders are chaffing the vinyl covers.

The front and rear bumpers were then removed as the current plan is to have them painted, the rear bumper is in too poor a condition to have re chromed.

2 hours

17/11/2017

One of the modifications that I hoped to make was to the front brake/suspension set up. The reasons being two fold, 1) – The vertical links, lower trunnions and all the wishbone bushes are unobtainable, and 2) – I would prefer a disc brake set up for safety. At the TR show in Malvern I had bought a complete set up of TR4a – TR6 wishbones and vertical links complete with hubs, all used and cheap and thus suitable for me to “offer up” to my Vignale to see if a TR set up could be modified to suit, if they were they would be modified where necessary then rebuilt and fitted.

I put the Vignale on my car lift, jacked up the front end and removed the front N/S road wheel, hub, brake drum, brake backing plate and vertical link. I found the following differences between Vignale and TR – TR top and bottom wishbones too short, TR stub axle too small and Vignale stub axle would not fit TR vertical link, TR vertical link trunnion “thread” set at different rake angle. As the bottom TR wishbones are cast steel I did not want to cut and weld them and all the other modifications required would still leave me with the original vertical link which will eventually need replacing, even making new steel sleeves to allow fitment of Poly bushes instead of the screw in type original bushes to the top and bottom wishbones would still leave me with the original vertical link. I had been looking for a Vignale 6 Disc brake set up for 3 years with no luck so new options had to be explored. While I was working on the car, Craig from Lazarus cars called in, he was “blown away” by the steering and suspension set up and when he finished laughing suggested that a Jaguar XJ 6 set up may be able to be modified to suit, it may mean using Jaguar wheels, but the hub stud PCD is so very close that the original wheels may still be used with “floating” wheel nuts.

So I would have to start trawling the internet to try to find the necessary parts at an acceptable price (still this would be covered by the sale of the TR parts).

3 hours

Total 566 hours





