



# An accidental restoration

**Kevin Bates** recounts how a worn valve guide on his Series 1 FHC led to major restoration work

As the Essex region Rep for the E-type Club, during the pandemic I met with JD Classics while most staff were on furlough. Back in August 2021 I arranged for a visit to the premises with the members of the Essex region and a few friends. Sadly, the weather precluded me from bringing my car, but I arranged to drop it in for a bit of a health check a day or two later.

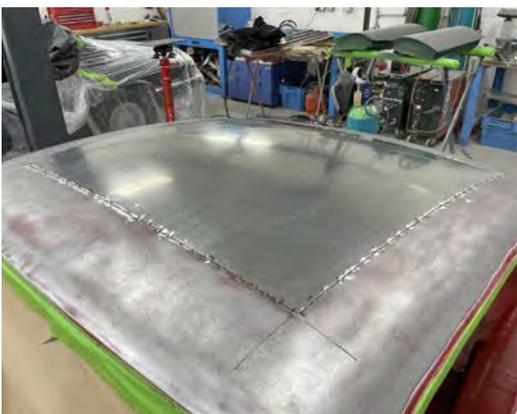
My initial thoughts that a valve guide or two may need replacing proved correct and we agreed to deal with that, along with a few other minor maintenance issues. I made the decision to go to JD Classics primarily due to the standard of their work, rather than cost.

As often seems to be the way with these things, what started off as a relatively straightforward repair job ended up being something far more involved. Work commenced, and as the engine came apart it was clear that the restoration carried out in 2002 was not all as it should have been.

After some deliberation, it was agreed not only to address the top-end problems, but to carry out a full engine rebuild. Since the engine was out, one aim was to make the car more driveable, since I have problematic knees due to playing too much sport over the years.

- Top: Kevin's outstanding Series 1 FHC following its latest restoration, during which it was returned to its original 'solid roof' configuration.
- Right: What started as an investigation into worn valve guides ended up developing into a complete engine rebuild.





- Top: The car in the JD Classics workshop early in the restoration process, complete with what was originally thought to be a factory-fitted sunroof.
- Middle: Sunroof removed and bodyshell partially stripped awaiting further work.
- Above: The hand-made roof infill panel fitted prior to blending in to the original roof.
- Above right: Once removed, it was discovered that the sunroof components had in fact been fitted in 1977!

As the work progressed, I found myself considering, somewhat controversially, filling in the sunroof which we believed had been fitted from new (January 1962), as when it was removed, we discovered it was actually fitted in 1977!

My car (860191) and another similar car in long-term ownership (860189) are flat-floors, despite being a few numbers outside of the generally acknowledged chassis-number range for those cars. The consensus is that there are a number of crossover cars and that these two are clearly among those. Interestingly, 860189 was one of three Dunlop

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- Left: The now 'solid-roof' bodyshell and bonnet sprayed in grey primer.
- Middle left: Further painting underway, with bonnet, doors and rear door removed.
- Below: Taking shape, with installation of the interior trim panels next on the agenda.
- Bottom left: The finished car pictured in the picturesque grounds of Hylands Park, Chelmsford.
- Bottom: Stanley the spaniel enjoys a little reflected glory as he exercises on the beach.



test cars, so that may possibly explain the floor, and perhaps my car was one of the other two.

After a lot of soul-searching, I agreed to return the car back to its original configuration, and the car was stripped to allow the roof to be filled in. JD Classics probably thought I was mad to begin with, as the car was presentable with the sunroof, but over time we all agreed that returning to the original 'solid' roof was right for the car.

As is always the case, there were a few challenges along the way, but using an English wheel, technician Nick hand-made an infill panel and skilfully blended it in to the original roof. I now look at the car and can't believe it ever had a sunroof.

I never planned to have car repainted, but

found the process fascinating and I have the utmost admiration for Reece, who carried out the refinishing work on my car. Interestingly, at the beginning of the painting process the car was primed in grey, but the final primer coat was a colour close to the car's original Carmen Red top coat.

Meanwhile, as work on the body was underway, the engine rebuild was progressing, which was entrusted to the expert hands of engine expert Paul. When the work was complete, he would run the rebuilt engine on the dyno to check that all was as it should be.

As with many businesses, people come and go, which can slow things down a bit, but during the reassembly of the car Duncan and Roy were a constant and they gradually brought the car back to life.

A change to a negative-earth electrical system allowed the fitment of a hidden Bluetooth MP3 player, so I now have the ability to play a wide

- Below: The car in its original 'sunroof' form amongst good company prior to the JD Classics restoration.
- Bottom: A new lease of life and a return to the original factory-specification 'solid roof' for GAS 854 following restoration.

choice of music. The car also now has electronic ignition, upgraded cooling, a rebuilt gearbox and to top it off a new set of tyres.

The most bizarre part of the process turned out to be the day I collected the car. I usually take Stanley the spaniel (who had by now become the



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workshop dog) to Hylands Park, Chelmsford, in the morning, and on the day we collected the car, JD coincidentally took the car there to take a few pictures. As we drove in (with my everyday car), my E-type came the other way!

The restoration journey was not without problems along the way. Would I go through it again? I'm not sure, but if I did I think I would start with a completely new project car. I now have an outstanding early E-type, but maybe I need to try something different and start afresh with a roadster. There again, maybe not!

All I need now is for the Essex members and I to agree to a regular meet-up. Ideas welcome, and please contact: [kpbates@aol.com](mailto:kpbates@aol.com)

- Left and below: Two of the photographs of GAS 854 taken by JD at Hylands Park, Chelmsford, on the day that Kevin collected the car.

