

PROJECTS

SHARE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE GOOF+ TEAM AS THEY STRIVE FOR PROJECT-CAR HEAVEN

Chris's Polo



NAME: Chris Hope
FROM: Peterborough
AGE: 25

CURRENT STAPLE DIET: Tunnock's Caramel Wafer biscuits and Irn Bru
RECENT REVELATIONS:

DVD box-sets should be sold with warning stickers – where the heck did my weekend just go!?

DRIVES: VW Polo (9N3), Toyota MR2 Mk1 (currently off-road having its sills welded) and a non-German hatchback which shall not be mentioned within these hallowed pages

WISH LIST: K&N panel filter – I'll start small; girlfriend doesn't like me touching her 'baby'

CURRENTLY GETTING DEAFENED BY: Various gems from Last.FM's 'classic rock tag' radio

BIG UP: Jack Cable from Chips Away, 0800 028 7878, www.chipsaway.co.uk (or you can get Jack direct on 07814 457823)



In other news, the red Mk2 breadvan has been sold, so we're down to just one Polo now...

After the new Polo has been bashed, Chris calls on Chips Away to put the damage right

YES, I KNOW, NOT PARTICULARLY EXCITING IS IT? THAT SAID, DESPITE ITS OBVIOUS 'MUMSY' CHARM THIS CAN STILL BE A FUN RIDE. Handling is a little dull and suspension is softer than a newly-born kitten, but whimper through its low revs and this 1.4-litre four-pot can be quite urgent in the middle band, something which other road users don't always anticipate.

It's a surprisingly competent cruiser too; economy is a little disappointing given what I'd heard from various motoring sources, but in terms of comfort it has to be one of best small hatchbacks in which to tackle three-hour motorway jaunts to catch up with friends and family in the North East – quiet, supple and easygoing.

It's not the significantly tighter and sharper

GTi; the budget simply wouldn't stretch to such extravagance, but it fits the bill as a reliable commuter wagon, which will happily strike further afield. Besides, strictly speaking it's the girlfriend's ride, not mine. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean it isn't my problem when things go wrong...

"You did what?"

I won't dwell on the ins and outs, but shall we say that one night I arrived home to learn that there had been an "I'm still getting used to the turning circle" moment in a local multi-storey car park: scraping a barrier on the way down a ramp she'd left the Polo with a 'gash' under its nearside headlamp – all the more noticeable thanks to its appealing, stealthy metallic black paintwork. Certainly, it was beyond my touch-up and polishing skills, so I retreated inside to

grab the *Yellow Pages*.

Seen as this was one of our faithful dailies, smart repairs specialist Chips Away caught my eye – they cut out the hassle of leaving your car at a bodyshop; their fully-equipped mobile workshop (a T26 TDI van in this case) comes to you instead.

Following an estimate, Peterborough area specialist Jack Cable arrived to repair the damage. Apparently, despite the somewhat misleading company name, repairing paintwork scuffs and scratches such as this makes up about 90% of his working week (of course, Chips Away also have the expertise to repair kerbed alloys, chipped windscreens and even tears in leather trim).

You'll be forgiven for thinking that these sort of repairs are reserved for the likes of top-end luxury machines, such as an A6 or a Merc



1 The process begins by keying up the surface to give the filler something to stick to



4 On goes a fresh coat of paint, bear in mind all of this is done on a driveway at home!

S-Class, but a lot of the cars that Jack works on are in fact new Golfs, Sciroccos and so on – cars that owners have carefully chosen and want to keep looking great.

Putting it right

Jack began by sanding back the damage to leave a rough, but clean finish: the ideal surface for applying filler to bring those 'divots' back up to level again. Once dried, Jack set about sanding backing the excess to the original contours of the vehicle – this is where Jack goes into his Zen-like state, as he tries to 'feel' out any imperfections. In between his meditations he adds that this is the most time-consuming bit: "how well you do the prep ultimately decides how the final repair comes out."

It looks a mess at this point, but the surface is smooth and, more importantly, keyed which allows the primer to stick to the panel. After applying primer, it's dried under a pair of heat lamps. It's then sanded back with a mixture of flattening liquid and rock wool, the aim being to remove as many imperfections as possible.

Next is the clever bit: the paint code is taken from the vehicle. From that, Jack is able to match any factory production colour. Inside his T26 'lab' paint is mixed from scratch, combining several separate colours, each accurately measured and weighed to within a



2 On goes the primer coat, covering the newly repaired surface



3 'Welcome to my lab!' Jack mixes paint with ruthless precision



5 Finishing touches as Jack buffs the panel before it gets the final approval

tenth of a gram – a steady hand doesn't even begin to cover it...

Equally, applying the freshly-mixed paint requires just as much skill. Jack imparts some pearls of wisdom here: "never be static, don't hold the gun solid and you should already be moving when you're on the trigger." He also adds "try to use different angles of approach to avoid zebra-style thick and thin lines too."

The final stage is where everything can go wrong. With the paint dried it's time to spray on the lacquer. However, it's the drying part that's the problem: it takes roughly 45 minutes to an hour to set and during this time Jack needs to ensure the heat lamps don't make the lacquer too hot. Overcook it and the finish will be bubbly and full of pin holes. If this happen



Before Jack's repair the Polo was scuffed with a matt black divot under the headlamp. Afterwards you'd be extremely hard-pressed to notice it'd been damaged at all

there's no choice, but to start from scratch. Thankfully, this didn't happen and after a quick once over with some fine wet and dry paper, finished with some thorough polishing the job was done.

Verdict

I reckon the final result is fairly miraculous, especially given the conditions, but Jack wanted to make clean that this is a repair: "We're not turning back time here, if we can get up to 98-99% of what it look liked before that's a result."

That said, all repairs are backed by a life guarantee while you own the vehicle, so if anything does happen (the repair deteriorates, you're not happy with the finish and so on) they'll come and sort it free of charge.

I'm told not to clean it for three days as the solvents are still setting and some shampoos can cause a crazing effect in the lacquer – I'm sure I'll cope... **GOLF+**



With the facelift, this Mk4 Polo looks a lot more menacing than it actually is. We can't argue with Jack's handiwork though!