

# ALL BELTS & NO BRACES



**WE VISIT QUICKFIT  
SAFETY BELT SERVICE  
OF STANMORE**

We classic car owners have a list of views as long as the Kings Road on how far or not our cars should be modified. The ultimate purists say not at all, some less conservative keepers sanction amendments in the interest of greater safety, while others welcome upgrades in performance. Then, of course, there are the customisers, for whom visibly personalising their chariots is the over-riding priority. The editor recently had cause to question his own opinions, as there were problems with the driver's seat belt of his E-Type Jaguar. The options were: find a way of preventing the existing fixed lap and diagonal system from falling off the shoulder when manoeuvring, or upgrade to an inertia reel set-up that would be non-original and require fresh holes to be drilled in the body. He takes up the story.







**Opposite page:** 'would this match the colour of my eyes?' - the editor selecting from a wide choice of styles and colours of seat belt webbing.

**Above and below:** the chosen parts being assembled and then installed

My car was restored with a number of new panels in 2005 and, though a very nice car, has no particular history, so I had no problem with creating a few holes in the name of safety. Furthermore, aside of not working properly, I found the fixed-point belts fiddly and anachronistic when compared to the inertia systems we've all enjoyed in our modern cars for decades. So, the next challenge was to find a company that not only had experience of equipping an E-Type with such belts (I didn't fancy my car being a guinea pig), but scored highly enough on my 'do I want these people working on my car' list of criteria. Following a lengthy spell of Googling, and chatting to like-minded owners and members of the classic car trade, I found the same

name kept cropping up - Quickfit Safety Belt Service of Stanmore, North West London.

The resulting phone call was going to be key - would the voice at the other end convince me to entrust them with my pride and joy? The answer was yes. Manager Pawel Podchorodecki was at pains to ensure I was happy about the minor level of drilling required, and listed the options in regard to the style and colour of the webbing, whether I wanted plastic or metal buckles etc. Interestingly, while various companies make seat belts and a number fit them, Quickfit claim to be the only one that does both which, among other things, allows them to provide a very impressive turnaround - ie if they have the car by

noon latest, there is time to spec. the belts you want, and then have them made and fitted the same day.

My process began at 10.30am on one of those sunny August days we've now forgotten ever occurred. Pawel brought a selection of webbing styles in a complete rainbow of colours for me to compare with the interior trim, and decide if I wanted the belts to blend with the upholstery or be more contrasting - bright yellow anybody?! My knowingly conservative choice was to match grey with grey and retain the car's original chrome buckles - the only mod to those being the addition of a modestly-sized 'Jaguar leaper' to each one; the child in me couldn't resist the

**Continued overleaf>**

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**Above:** this trio of images aptly conveys the neatness of the installation.

**Below:** the business of manufacturing and fitting seat belts requires a vast range of webbing, bolts and threads etc

option! In seemingly no time at all the full array of components had been gathered together, the mounting brackets stitched into place on the webbing by a clearly expert seamstress, and the finished articles transferred to the workshop for fitment to the E-Type. Just four new holes were required – one on the top of each inner wheelarch for the upper mountings, and one either side of the rear bulkhead for securing the reels, while the buckles were duly recycled as planned. And the result? Suffice to say that I'm delighted with the fit and finish of the new belts and, for the first time since acquiring the Jaguar six years ago, feel both comfortable and completely safe at the wheel.

## QUICKFIT SAFETY BELT SERVICE - A BRIEF INSIGHT

This family business was founded in 1962 by Bill Quick, who twigged that while there were numerous companies manufacturing belts, there was a dearth of knowledge over their installation. Within a few years he was operating a fleet of no less than 30 green Mini Vans, via which trained personnel carried out fitments at docksides, car dealers etc. Quickfit's services have

often been prompted by changes in seat belt legislation, and anchorage points becoming compulsory in 1965 certainly helped that period of the company's business to a climax the following year – from which point belts increasingly became a factory-fitted item.

The firm then diversified into car alarms and the installation of child safety seats, becoming such an authority on the latter as to be regularly consulted on the subject by the leading seat manufacturers and major retailers. Then began a lengthy period of installing belts in buses, which at its peak numbered 3,000 fitments a week. It was in 1982 that Bill's son Stuart (now the Managing Director), entered the company, and in 1994 that the move into seat belt manufacture took place. These days Quickfit makes product for school buses, the military, the aviation industry, and even such specialist requirements as bassinets. However, systems for classic cars are currently the main focus, for which the eight-strong team can:

- Refurbish or repair existing belts
- Adapt existing belts – eg to fit round a roll cage
- Create and fit replacement belts

Needless to say, some fitments are much easier than others, and considerable fabrication is sometimes required when installing safety systems into older cars that pre-date such technology. A good example is the lovely S Type Bentley convertible being worked on at the time of our visit, for which suitably sturdy mounting points had to be created from scratch, with due allowance for the aesthetics of the car.

Finally from Stuart, an invaluable warning for those in the process of buying classic cars: "Check the quality of the belts, and if you have any doubts about their efficacy, then request a Certificate of Conformity." It seems that there are cowboys out there who are happy to produce home-sewn seat belts that will certainly never have been dynamically tested (as are all Quickfit systems), and would almost certainly fail if asked to perform for real – a sobering thought.

Further details about Quickfit can be found at [www.quickfitsbs.com](http://www.quickfitsbs.com).

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