

FORD FIESTA

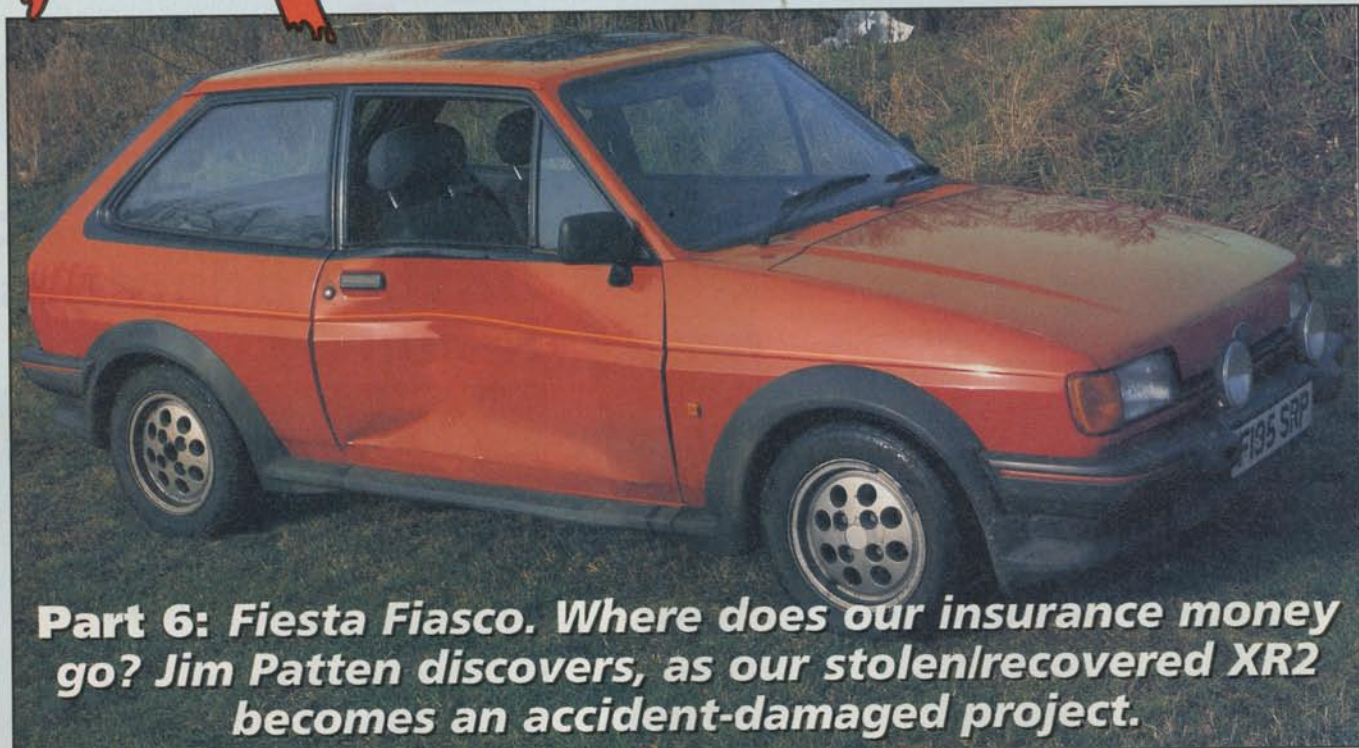
XR2

STOLEN RECOVERED PROJECT

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Part 6: Fiesta Fiasco. Where does our insurance money go? Jim Patten discovers, as our stolen/recovered XR2 becomes an accident-damaged project.

It wasn't my fault, honest. I wasn't even sitting in the car when it happened. Yes, it's actually true. I had just popped into CPL, a film processing laboratory, when I felt a tap on the shoulder. "I've driven into your car and I think the door is pretty badly



1. Er, 'scuse me, sorry, but I've just hit the door of your car!

damaged." All credit to his honesty but the guilty party was right, it was badly damaged.

A TANGLED WEB

I was still able to drive the car by slipping in through the passenger door, but with no glass in the driver's door, it was bloody cold. And there was always the danger of that odd piece of glass popping up and doing damage. But at least I was able to get the car to the Romford Bodyshop, a workshop I have used extensively and been delighted with. They are insurance approved and hold VBRA and AA status. But that was not good enough for this particular insurance company.

My telephone receiver burnt as I tried to get the most efficient line of action. I had no problem with the staff, in fact Margaret Hankinson at MSL could not have been more helpful. A hire car arrived the following day but I was told that I could not use the garage of my choice unless I paid for

the work and claimed the money back later. So I waited. Okay, if their recognised garage is good and approved, that's fine by me. Except that the garage happened to be in Rainham, Kent. Even the garage owner was surprised. It would take three hours of transportation just to collect the vehicle. The assessor arrived promptly and we both agreed that a new door would



2. Back home, insurance assessor Brian Coalbran examines our XR2 and decides that the final account for damage will be in the region of £800. Glass's Guide quote value at £2,175 @ 83,000 miles. Assessed pre-accident damage of our XR2 at market retail; £2,200.

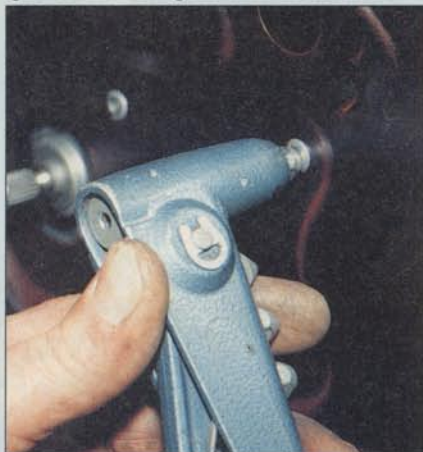
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3. Another Glasses Guide, this time door glass being guided out of the seats and into the vac. Every effort is made to remove all traces of glass, even the finest pieces.



6. Some packing was needed behind the hinge to get the door fitting perfectly. Note the screws removed from the dash to gain enough 'give' so that the hinge bolts can be accessed.



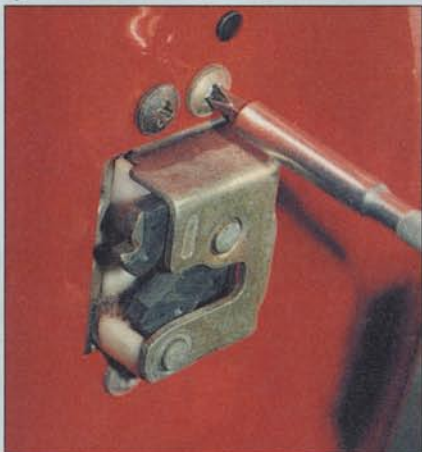
9. Window winder mechanism is secured to the door frame by pop-rivets – yuck. Door handle and other furniture are obvious and straightforward.



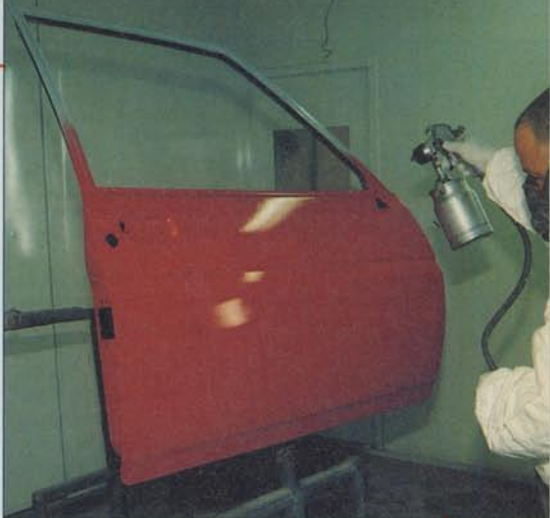
4. The new door from Ford is flattened off to highlight high/low spots and prepare for primer and paint. It has been trial fitted on the car first.



7. Knowing exactly where to find the hinge bolts helps when fitting the door as most of the work is done by feel. Doing it with 'your eyes shut' has never been truer.



10. Door locks were unscathed. The transfer was a matter of finding the right holes for the screws. Lock rods look awkward but positioning was obvious.



5. Getting the colour match right is always a tricky business, especially red, as it has a tendency to bleed out when exposed to sunlight. The second attempt got it spot-on.



8. Door glass and runner are fitted through the top of the door and then the winder arm wheel is fed into the slot of the runner.



11. We used Comma Wax Seal aerosol to get in to all the corners. Using an aerosol near a paint shop is risking life and limb. Silicones become airborne and will affect the paint.

be needed along with internals as required. About two days work in total. Time passed as we tried to resolve the geographical conundrum. Eventually a garage in Southend-on-Sea became our nominated shop. Still not close but certainly nearer.

Southend Finishers Ltd., did a fine job and turned the car around in a few days. They collected it by their transport and I drove it home from them.

Now here's the sting. The incident occurred on January 26th. I finally collected the car on March 11th. That's some six outrageous weeks and some considerable cost. Even if the hire car was substantially discounted to say, £200 per week, my maths make it £1,200. Add to that the £800 repair costs and the transportation takes it close to write-off. All for one door!

For such a routine job this is scan-

dalous. I was ready to leave the car at the Romford Body Shop. The assessor could have viewed it there and dealt direct with the repairer. Then, a fax authorisation from the Insurers would have set the work in motion. One, or maybe two weeks at the outside.

I make no apologies for my soap-box outburst because something is wrong. An extra £1,000 was paid out through this accident. That's the equivalent of

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FORD FIESTA XR2

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four £250 comprehensive policies. It's all so unnecessary. The sooner we lose the recognised garage system and adopt one where any VBRA approved garage can be considered, the better.

MIND THE DOOR

It was all so straightforward. The door was quite firmly jammed in the hole. A good drop kick from inside soon had the old door open. Hinges are secured by two nuts situated behind the 'A' post. Ideally, the dash should be removed but with a bit of fiddling, they can just be reached. It was confirmed that no further damage had occurred on the 'A' or 'B' post. Indeed, all paint was still intact. The new door was delivered by the local Ford dealer and tried for fit. Then, it was quickly flattened to identify the high and low spots and duly attended to before being despatched to

the paint shop. The correct paint code is located on the vehicle identity plate fixed on the front slam panel. Unfortunately, the first attempt was a shade out so a re-mix was called for and this time, the match was perfect. Only the main door skin is in body colour, the upper frame is black.

There followed the fiddling and fettling to make alignment perfect. A couple of slim packing pieces were needed behind the hinges to get it just right. Apparently, some panels are not always the perfect fit we expect. Even hinges have had to be re-located in the past.

When it came to swapping over the internals, most of them were just bent bits of old metal. The locks and catches came through okay though. The actual mechanics of the swap were simple enough, literally unbolting, lifting out and fitting into the new shell. If you have never done a swap like this before, it pays to make a sketch or a few notes. The original door trim was able to 'go again' which was a shame, because we still need to track down a door pocket. But at least our car looks as good (if not better) than before.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

BODY REPAIR:

Southend Vehicle Finishers Ltd,
22-25 Rutherford Close, Progress
Road, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9.
Tel: 01702 510241

WHEEL REFURBISHMENT:

Lepsons, Units 23-24 Newington
Enterprise Centre, Wardwell Lane,
Newington, Sittingbourne,
Kent ME9 7ER.
Tel/fax: 01795 844022.

WHEEL ALIGNMENT:

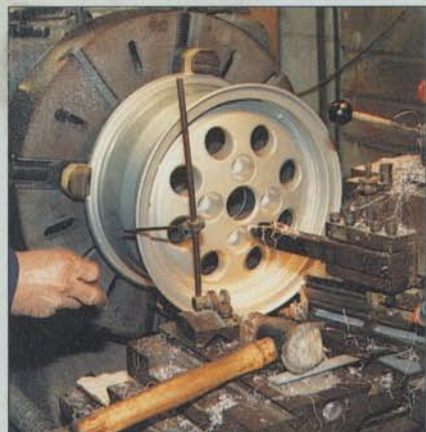
Universal Tyre Co, The Garage,
Hatfield Road, Witham,
Essex. CM8 1EF.
Tel: 01376 513213.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

While our XR2 was in sick bay, I took the chance to sort the wheels out. Ian Marsh of Senator fame, had been sounding off about Lepsons, a company specialising in refurbishment of alloy wheels. Well, for once, I listened. Putting a set of slave wheels (with almost new tyres) on our car, I took the pepperpot alloys off to Kent. As most of our tyres were shot, something had



12. Finally, a sheet of plastic covers the inside of the door to protect the casing from any stray damp that might be floating around.



14. Set up for true on the lathe so that any corrosion can be taken out. This will also highlight any buckled wheels. They're just scrap. Amazingly, many wheels looking the same are often different. It's not uncommon to find two different types on one car.



15. We just had to have the polished rim. This requires the removal of the tiniest slither of aluminium but it does look so good... Can't help it, it's the poseur in me.



13. A truly nasty sight, as our beat up and corroded pepperpot wheel joins a selection of motley wheels all game for a makeover.



16. Finished and ready for a new tyre, our pepperpots look fantastic. Might just get some contrasting centres to set them off.

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17. Inside the Seat Ibiza hire car was just like the snug bar in an East End pub. Comma Auto Refresh soon called last orders.

to be done anyway.

Each wheel was stripped of tyre and valve before being dipped into an acid vat. After bubbling around for a while, they were lifted out and thoroughly cleaned off. Then they had a spin on

COST SO FAR

Brought forward.£1,737.37

Alloy wheel refurbishment ..£146.88

TOTAL£1,884.25

Service and general maintenance costs are excluded.

the lathe to lick off any corrosion and generally tidy the rim up. Next process was the powder coating and a spell in the oven. By now they looked absolutely spanking, but we decided to go one stage further and have the edge rim polished. So it was back on the lathe for the final stage. There's a little more up-keep required for the polished rim, but Comma have an alloy wheel cleaner that will be just perfect for the job. Lepsons charge just £25 (plus VAT) for any size wheel (including classic wire wheels) and can carry out repairs for a small extra charge. They will also supply and fit new tyres as well as balancing. Bring the car to their workshop at 9.00am and you can collect at 5.00pm with a gorgeous set of re-furbished wheels. Alternatively, a collection and delivery service is available around Kent and London – or there's always Parcel Force.

I had noticed that the Fiesta had been pulling badly, so I popped in to see my tyre buddies at Universal Tyres. The tracking was out some 17mm. Stuart told me that tracking should really be checked a couple of times a year. Considering that the check is free (at Universal at least), that's hardly a problem. The £12.50 (plus VAT) adjustment is less than 25% of the cost of just one new tyre (185/60 x 13) for the Fi-

Comma Auto Refresh simply removes odours from the car interior. Just spray onto carpets and roof linings and leave to dry. This remarkable product, which contains natural lemon grass extracts, will neutralise tobacco, pet and stale odours from the car interior, leaving it smelling clean and fresh with just a hint of lemon. Comma Auto Refresh – yet another example of complete care in the automotive world from Comma.



esta, so it's a puzzle as to why more motorists don't do it. To be honest, I haven't, but I will. Each of my cars will be making the trip. They'll be sick of me by the end of the month.

Oh, by the way. My hire car was a Seat Ibiza 1.4. Although almost new it reeked of tobacco fumes. I just couldn't handle it so I gave it a good spray with Comma Car Fresh. Do you know what? It actually worked. Killed off all of the unsociable odours.

NEXT MONTH

Back to normal as we fit a new clutch pawl and the final road spring.