

## **Rocker Panel Curvature**

**Hello all,**

**I find it rather common that even today, Healey owners are often not aware of the compound curvature that should be in the outer rocker panels.**

**When new, the lower edge of the front wing swept smoothly and gracefully with a gentle curve from the front wheel arch down through to the rocker panel. The curvature was not finished when it reached the rocker panel, and continued through most of the length of the panel. Also the rear wing dogleg carried this same smooth bottom edge line, still gradually tapering to the rear wheel arch opening.**

**A number of factors have not been done correctly when repairing these areas, and this dates back to when the cars were still very young.**

**1. Folks often used a metal break to fashion the lower repair areas of the rusted out front wing. A break can only bend straight contours, not the compound curved ones found on the Healey panels. In later years people would purchase the offset edge repair panels for this area. Usually these are at least properly curved along the bottom edge, but are designed for the home repair hobbyist to weld them in with a lap joint. Of course this results in a lot of heat across a virtually flat panel usually resulting in warpage and filler to try to correct it.**

**2. Often the body man glanced at the offending rotted rocker panel and went back to his metal break and fashioned new rockers there too. Another mistake, leading to straight rockers. These were welded in and the bottom edges of the door to rocker seam resulted in a nasty mismatch. I have one car in the shop right now suffering from this. The fellow who welded in the (in this case commercial) straight rocker panel circa 1978 found the mismatched door bottom edge and actually did metal repairs to the doors to straighten the bottom edge, resulting in a straight matched gap. Two wrongs to try to make a right!!**

**3. Many of the home made and commercially available rear dogleg patch panels also come with the offset repair flange, again resulting in a lap joint and filler. Also the bottom edge of the panel that turns under needs to taper from front to back, so the rear edge at the rear wheel arch doesn't kick out at the bottom.**

**Study the two pictures I am attaching. The green BJ8 suffers somewhat from all the above. I apologise I don't have a better quality picture to illustrate these points. The second picture with the duotone BT7 shows all these points**

**very well. Note the curvature of the front wing continuing into the rocker panel, and the smoothness of the line flowing on into the rear dogleg.**

**Knowledge is a terrible thing. Now that you realize these things, go look at your own car and others, and see how many have been done poorly.**

**Back to Doug Reid's original inquiry about proper fitting rocker panels.....About 1979 or so, someone tooled up to press both the 4 cylinder rocker panel and the 2" longer 6 cylinder rocker panel. These incorporated the proper curvature. If one takes a 3ft straight edge and sets it along the length of the outer top edge, there should be almost a 3/8" gap in the middle. Also, if you place this same straight edge horizontally along the outer face the contour should have the straight edge rocking slightly. In other words the outer surface that shows should not be straight either horizontally or vertically.**

**Now for the real kicker....even these properly contoured rockers need to have the length of the outer surface shortened at the back by about 1/2" where the rear dogleg overlaps the rocker....on both the 4 and 6 rockers. Knowing this will avoid a lot of headaches as you try to fit up your panels.**

**I'm copying this to John Sims so he can post it to his site with the accompanying pics.**

**Rich Chrysler**

**Subject: Re: rocker panels**

**Sorry Rich, can't say. Didn't see them myself, and if I'd seen them I wouldn't have known they should have a compound curve, whatever that is! But my restorer was enthusiastic about them.  
Jack**

**Rich C wrote:**

**Jack,**

**An important question re the Kilmartin rocker panels....  
Do they have the proper compound curve throughout their length? Or are they straight when viewed from front to back?**

**Rich Chrysler**



