

Getting into Leather & Vinyl



The seats and trim of many tractions have now lost their new look, to put the matter mildly. Surely the situation is a challenge to the D-I-Y Tractionist. The following notes are the result of my initial investigations into the subject and are presented as generally untried but in good faith.

Leather: The Slough products had seats faced in Connolly leather, a substantial British product now usually reflecting the ravages of the Antipodean climate. Checking local sources reveals a very promising leather from

Howe & Co. Pty. Ltd.
103 High Street,
Preston Vic. 3072. (Contact Richard Speight
Technical Officer on 44-1241)

This leather is thinner and more supple than Connolly's and is designed to cope with Australian conditions. It is fitted to local Ford Fairlanes, LTD's, etc.

Howe's Cherry Wood in their antique range is a very good match for the deep blood red original. Other antique colours include chocolate and tan.

Howe's will give CCOCA members wholesale prices as follows (October 1981):

First grade hides - \$25.00 per m²
Seconds (some scars, could cover by joins) -
\$18.50 per m²

Rejects (scars, brands etc. - use for insert
panels etc.) - \$12.00 per m²
(Antique colours - \$3.00 per m² extra)

Each hide is about 4m². Two or three hides are needed to do the facings for both the front and back seats, depending on the grade and standard of finish required.

I am advised that this leather can be sewn on a domestic sewing machine if a triangular section leather needle is fitted. A commercial "walking foot" may be needed if joining to old leather.

Barbour Threads Pty. Ltd.
92 Cambridge Street
Collingwood Vic. (41-6652)

suggest a cotton/polyester blended thread, e.g. Terko metric 36, as a light-resistant top thread, (\$17.45 per 4,000 m) and can supply pre-wound bobbins of bonded nylon for the bottom thread, e.g. metric 40.

Scovill Pty. Ltd.
79 Lt. Oxford Street
Collingwood Vic. (44-4544)

can supply sewing machine needles for leather and vinyl (variously \$11-\$60 per box of 100). Sewing centres and other retailers would probably supply in smaller quantities for both thread and needles.

Very fine stitching should be avoided as it may weaken the material. Six-eight per inch (three or four mm) is used on seats, four-seven per inch (three-and-a-half-six mm) is used on trim, depending on location (look at originals).

Waproo Pty. Ltd.
315 Canterbury Road
Canterbury Vic. (836-0277)

make promising products for existing leather: for cleaning, Joseph Liddy Saddle Soap; for restoring, Joseph Liddy Jay-EI Beeswax leather dressing; colour touch-up, Waproo Brush-on Colour Change and Neutral Leather Dye. (have tried all and they seem very good).

Vinyl: I am still trying to find a source or good substitute for the deep-grained English vinyl. The nearest I have seen is Nylex Public Transport Seating at

VyAub
17 Lincoln Street
Richmond Vic. (429-3499) (about \$10.00 per m²)

Original vinyl can be re-used (see FD 5 (3) Oct. 1981) and if faded, can be re-coloured by spraying.

B.S. Stilwell Ford P.L. (paint shop)
142 Cotham Road
Kew Vic. (80-4485)

sell a vinyl spray (more like a dye) at \$19.00 per litre, colour matched to your (unfaded) sample, in 500 ml., one litre and four litre lots. You should pre-clean the vinyl cloth with a general purpose thinner/solvent from Stilwell's (\$7.00 for four litres) and apply two-three coats of finish. This approach is used in restoring vinyl roofs. Coverage: one litre of finish is enough for a Falcon vinyl roof.

The original vinyl was probably also antiqued by rubbing a dark toner into the grain and removing the surplus from the high areas with a cloth after the base colour was achieved. Possibly this could be achieved using a dark toner such as one from Watty's wood antiquing kits. Modern vinyl is given a final thin protecting coat of clear fabric lacquer. This may also be advisable for re-coloured material e.g. as used by Nylex etc. I would suggest that any of these steps of superimposed treatments be tested on scrap first.

Hope these comments help you to get your traction "in trim".

Bill Graham

Seen in doctor's surgery - February copy of *Vogue* containing photo of Jeff Pamplin and his traction.

If this happens more often, our roving reporter may have to buy a copy!

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