

The Morgan Dash: Brown Wrinkle Paint and Tan Carpet Problem

Robert Couch in Sunny Sequim

I would like to offer the following addition to the tech article on refinishing Morgan dash panels. Having been a Morgan restorer for 30 years, I have had to be able to have the right parts and right finishes so as to be able to present my customers with the most accurately restored Morgans possible.

For years a company called Illinois Bronze supplied a number of wrinkle spray paint colors including one called British Brown. I could never figure out why a company in Illinois would make a British Brown wrinkle paint, but it was a perfect match for the pre-62 Morgan dash panel. I say pre-62 Morgan because in case you are wondering about brown and black panels. All 1950-61 Morgans came with cream switches and gauges and had the nice chestnut brown panel with the nice cream glove box carpet. A word on the carpet in a minute. When Morgan changed to black gauges in 1962, it meant, you guessed it, black dash panel and black carpet. Illinois Bronze is in fact the company that supplied most of the auto specialty companies with their special spray paints like wrinkles and hammer tones, but unfortunately they stopped making the British Brown wrinkle paint years ago. Yeah, I know, I should have bought 500 cans of it back in 1980.

There is hope though. I have had a specialty powder coat company custom mix a perfect match of powder for me. It took 6 months and three tries before I was happy with it but they stuck by me all the way, wanting to help me with what I needed. It helped to send them a nice picture of one of my restorations. It sort of inspired and lit a fire under them. I had to buy five pounds of the stuff, enough to do about a thousand dash panels. Please don't all 1,000 of you call and line up at once as I only have enough left to do 997 cars. The advantage of the powder coat over the paint is of course durability.

If you have a 1962 or later Morgan here is some technical info on the proper procedure to spray the stuff from a can although most good powder coaters would have black wrinkle powder in stock and even I would go that route these days. Though getting a perfect wrinkle finish can be a real pain in the can, I will settle for nothing less. There is one procedure that is very important to achieve a really successful wrinkle finish. Any way you prep the metal, the paint will wrinkle. But what I would hope you want would be that perfect wrinkle that is uniform and without defects (fisheyes and some heavy, some light wrinkle) in the finish.

Slippery is the important word. The wrinkle needs to move to do its thing. If you sand blast or glass bead the panel to strip it, it must be sanded down really smooth with 400-600 grit paper. Even if stripped in any other way, a good sanding will help.

The other important point is no primer. I have worked on hundreds of Morgans and I have never seen one factory car brown or black dash that had primer under the wrinkle paint. The reason is the primer makes it hard for the wrinkle to move as it cures. This fact comes right from the manufacturers of wrinkle paint. Three heavy uniform coats are needed.

Now one last thought. All the panels I did I heated from

underneath very carefully with a torch in order to speed the curing process and prevent a gloss finish. If over heated, like bubbling, the paint will not wrinkle in spots and you must strip and respray. I know, I mucked up a few in 30 years.

The powder coat is so much easier. Wrinkle paint if left to itself will cure with a slight semi-gloss finish which is not original on the Morgan. I suspect that the company that supplied the panel baked the panels in some sort of oven. So there is hope for you pre-62 Morgan owners. Your panel can look again like the one in the picture.



Carpet - the original supplier for Morgan carpet in the 50s, 60s and 70s was a company that made 100% wool carpet called RB which stands for rubber back. It is just like the Wilton 1, 2, and 3 carpets but it was slightly thinner than the thinnest Wilton carpet and cost less. Wilton carpet also has a rubber backing to it. The nice thing about the rubber backing is that you can cut

this carpet and it will never come apart on the edges as it is held together by the rubber coating on the back.

Ever buy some of that yucky vinyl plastic carpet and trim it and have the edges all come apart? That's what carpet binding was invented for. In 30 years of Morgan restoration I have had my chance to see some pretty beat up Morgan glove boxes but I have never seen a glove box with carpet coming apart at the edges. Dried out, rotten, discolored, yah, but still intact along the edge.

This RB carpet is that nice 100% wool carpet that was used in most fine British sports cars for years. The Wilton has also been the choice of carpet for years in Rolls Royce and Bentley cars.

A few years ago Morgan went over to the vinyl carpet, maybe to save cost but boy does it look cheap. I remember the first interior kit that I got for an early +8 that I was restoring that had this vinyl carpet with it and the carpet ended up in the trash bin, that stuff was not going into one of my fine restorations. What to do? I bought Wilton 3 carpet which is just barely thicker than the original RB carpet. It's 100% wool and rubber backed and comes in lots of nice colors but not the original light RB tan used in the pre-62 Morgan glove boxes.

Now the bad news is the RB carpet company is out of business like so many other fine old British companies. There has been, as far as I know, only one USA supplier for this carpet. The good news is that I bought the last of the original tan RB carpet they had. Yards of the stuff, probably enough to do hundreds of glove boxes.

There is hope to get that Morgan dash looking new and original again without any questions or stress, except maybe hooking up all those wires behind that dash panel! Call me I can help. Have fun.

Dr. Robert can be reached at 360-582-9020.

Editor's note: Wonder what happened to Illinois Bronze?

"In 1990 Sherwin-Williams added the well-known Krylon and Illinois Bronze lines of aerosol paints to its holdings."

Source: www.answers.com/topic/sherwin-williams-company

A response from Sherwin-Williams in an email on 2/28/07: "Wrinkle finishes were used in automotive applications for interiors and some engine parts in the 50's. We sell two wrinkle finish aerosol products under the Krylon brand that can be used: 3370 Black Wrinkle Finish and 3380 Red Wrinkle Finish."