

Triumph Stag - Soft Top Renovation

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Experience with renovation of a canvas soft top

Applicability

The experience and opinions presented are relevant to canvas soft tops. They are not relevant to plastic soft tops.

For mohair tops, the same procedures can be used. For plastic tops, we suggest the following:

1. Mix one drop of dish washing liquid with ten litres of clean water.
2. Apply water to plastic with a soft cloth or foam.
3. **DO NOT** use a brush or hard strokes because you will tear the plastic.
4. After rinsing with water, remove the plastic from its frame.
5. Place it in your recycling bin so that it can be remade into something useful.
6. Buy and install a canvas or mohair top.

If; however, we wish to persist with a plastic top, other Renovo products will need to be used.

What is a “Canvas Soft Top”?

“That thing on top of your sports car (often black in colour) when you have a top which is not a hard top or some plastic thing”

“It is used for keeping rain, summer sun, bird crap, wind, nosey people and other things intruding into your space. Unlike a hard top, it can (except for MGs) be readily put up or retracted to suit your environment, needs or mood.”

What is “Canvas”?

The type used for soft tops is a plain, tight weave, heavy cotton cloth called “Duck” from the Dutch word for cloth, “Doek”.

It was originally made from hemp. No, you can't smoke it! It is also made using linen for other less demanding environments.

What is “Double Duck”?

Typically, those who are trying to impress others but know nothing about the complicated art of weaving use this term.

A “Double Duck” weave is a “Flat” weave that is also called a, “Double-filling” weave.

So what? All you really need to know is that it is a tightly woven, heavy cotton cloth that can be called, “Canvas, Duck or Double-Duck”. Leave the rest to the experts.

Basic requirements for renovation

- one canvas soft top
- one **Renovo Restorer** kit
- small paint brush (I used 25mm wide good quality).
- stiff bristle domestic scrubbing brush
- foam washer
- **LOTS** of elbow grease
- time and patience

Approach

1. Follow the directions on the Renovo bottles or their website (www.renovoaustralia.com.au).
2. Call Neil at Renovo if any questions (0430 164 123). He has direct experience with Stags and is very helpful.

Main Steps

1. **Dusting** - brushing and/ vacuuming.
2. **Clean** – Renovo Cleaner.
3. **Colour** – Renovo Reviver
4. **Sealing** – Renovo Ultra Proofer

The Don'ts

1. The “Don'ts” listed by Renovo on their website.
2. Think that you know more than others with experience (I know this is sometimes hard!!).
3. Don't undertake any of the tasks, other than drying, in the sun.

Condition of Soft Top Canvas (Figures 1 and 2)

- 40 years old.
- Discoloured.
- Dry
- Wear tears on both sides and front.
- Not cleaned for at least 12 years.



Figure 1: Prior to treatment



Figure 2: Side wear

Dusting

This was done by simply brushing down with a domestic dustpan brush followed by vacuuming with a domestic vacuum cleaner.

If there are bird crap or other dirty spots that needed to be removed, follow the Renovo instructions. I didn't have this problem.

Cleaning

I cleaned mind three times. I was still getting dirt out by the end but was tired and was getting to the stage of diminishing returns.

All cleaning was done in sections comprising half the area between each top support and the sides.

First Clean

1. Pre-wet each section.
2. Applied cleaner with the paintbrush (Figure 3).
3. Left it for about 20 minutes for cleaner to do its job.
4. Started to scrub but did not get any lather.
5. Applied more of the cleaner to each section.
6. Scrubbed immediately and got lather (Figure 4).
7. Rinsed grey coloured water off with water.
8. Left to dry.



Figure 3: The Easy Bit – Pre-wetting and cleaner application



Figure 4: The Hard Bit - Scrubbing

Second Clean

Same as the first except that, I only waited only about five minutes after application of the cleaner for each section to dry before scrubbing and getting a lather (Figure 4).

Third Clean

1. Applied another layer of cleaner immediately after rinsing off the dirty lather from the second clean.
2. Scrubbed until lather was a dirty grey colour.
3. Rinsed with water.
4. Left to dry overnight for about 16 hours.

In the morning after drying the top was a more uniform grey colour (Figure 4).



Figure 5: Dry top after cleaning.

Colour Application

This is a lot easier. You could almost do it to music (Strauss not Led Zeppelin!).

You still need, however, to be methodical and do a section at a time (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Application of first coat of "Reviver".

It is NOT painting; it is application of a dye that will soak into the fabric.

I used single stokes working from the centre outwards for each section on the top and to bottom on the sides.

After application of first coat, I let it dry for about two hours before applying the second coat. It was about 30 degrees in the garage. It may take longer under other atmospheric conditions.

I used 500ml for the two coats; it was just enough. The area of the Stag soft top is just a bit less than 3m².

It still looked patchy at this stage. However, Neil advised to let it dry and see how it looks. He also stated that it will not look like a brand new top, but it will be a lot better that it was.

Tick, tick, tick.....patience, Six hours later, it looked a lot better!

I then consulted some other experts (my two next door neighbours!) about whether I should buy another bottle and put on another coat. The unanimous decision was; no.

I was concerned that it would look too good and it would show up the rest of the car. In addition, I was running out of time to get it ready for the annual *All Triumph* car show.

I decided that it was probably not necessary but would hurt. I got a new bottle of *Reviver* from Keith McCracken and another coat was applied.

This final coat was applied using stokes along the longer axis of the car; perpendicular to the direction used for the other two strokes (Figures 7 & 8).

It did look better.

Sealing

Owing to *Renovo* directions, it was about 26 hours before I started to apply the *Ultra Proofer*. The *Ultra Proofer* was applied according to the *Renovo* directions.

I used a 50mm wide clean paintbrush as advised by Neil. It went on easily and quickly. I let it dry overnight.

The final coat was put on by 7am the following morning and allowed to dry in the shade of my garage.

The 500ml bottle was more than enough for two application on the 2.2 m² Stag top.

The outcome of the “Neil water test” is shown on Figure 7.



Figure 7: Water Repellant after Sealing.

“Neil’s Never Do’s”

1. Never apply silicone or wax based products to canvas or vinyl tops as this can result in very ugly discoloured patches as the stuff sets and bleaches in sunlight.
2. Wax & shine car wash is a major culprit on canvas tops (“Just wash the top while I’m at it”) as is Armorall which people use to make vinyl tops shiny (for a while).
3. Don’t use household window cleaning products on clears or plastic window tint film. Also, keep this stuff away from canvas tops if you clean your GLASS windows. They often contain chemicals that are OK for glass but can damage plastic and adhere to canvas.
4. Never leave bird, and particularly bat/flying fox poo on canvas. It will cause severe bleaching. Bat poo

can eat into ducro clear coat - I know, it happened to one of our cars!

5. Never use stuff like turps or metho on clears or you risk permanent damage.

Neil’s Other Hints

Canvas Cleaner

1. Dampen the top with a light hose spray then brush on the cleaner.
2. Let it sit for about an hour.
3. Get a bucket of hot water and agitate (don't scrub too hard!)t with a softish brush dipped in the hot water - I use a dust pan brush. This should cause the top to “suds up”.
4. Hose off then allow to dry.
5. For “mature” cars, a second clean is not a bad idea if you have the time & energy.

Water Proofing

To test your canvas-waterproofing, tip some water on a flat part of your top - it should bead immediately and stay in beads for some time afterwards. If it soaks in straight away, you have a proofer problem. Do this test a few times each year and particularly before your wet season.

Thanks to

- Neil McAllister, MD of Renovo Australia:
 - 0430 164 123
 - www.renovoaustralia.com.au
- Keith McCracken, Keith McCracken Automotive, 114 Brown St, East Perth:
 - WA supplier of Renovo products.
 - 08 9221 4448