

Removal, Repair and Reupholstery of Rover SD1 Headlining and Sunroof Panel.

Ever looked around when sitting in the SD1 and thought - God what an awful mess? Filthy dirty, covered in nicotine stains, bits hanging down, really old and manky! No! Not ones reflection in the mirror? The headlining! Well something can be done about it with a couple of weekends to spare and a week or two to lay the car up whilst a local coach trimmer does the business. It's tricky - but here goes.

First, find an upholsterer in Yellow Pages or Practical Classics and ask about the SD1 headlining and the availability of lining material. Its slight furry finish is backed by a thin foam laminate which gives it its body and provides the means of applying adhesive without soaking into and spoiling the material. A local Bedford upholsterer (Tony Baldassare 01234 359277) not only did re-trimming of classic cars but also had a stock of matching material, which is/was also available through the Rover SD1 Club at that time, 1994-96. So do the homework first! On two occasions, both (then current) SD1 headlining were re-trimmed using this proven, easy to follow procedure!

The chosen re-trimmer will be expert in upholstery but not necessarily expert on SD1's. There are a lot of man-hours in the removal and refitting of the headlining and this will escalate the cost, three or fourfold. To save a shed load of money remove the headlining unit and deliver it to the re-trimmer when he is ready to start. Here's how!

Removal of Headlining.

In approximately the following order remove the suite of interior trim storing all the fixing screws, plugs, buttons, etc in small plastic bags taped to each item as removed.

- "A" post plastic trim panel.
- "B/C" post trim panels, courtesy lights, seat belt guide and upper anchor.
- "D" post trim panel, rear courtesy lights and upper seat belt anchor.
- "E" post trim panels (upholstered with headlining material).
- Grab handles - carefully note the number and position of fibreboard spacers that are essential for correct refitting of the handles.
- Sun visors and their plastic retaining clamps.
- Rear view mirror. This requires some brute force to prise/pull the mirror off its base. The base can then be unscrewed.
- Now support the front of the headlining. If using a helper prepare them for aching arms and boredom. If working solo, make up a "T" piece support, or use a clean house broom and some cushions wedged or otherwise positioned to hold it up.
- Remove the sun roof decorative cuff, pulling it away from the rim of the opening. It is very durable and can be cleaned in a washing machine with the weekly wash.
- Watch out for at least eight (8) small metal clips that come away with the cuff or may still be clipped to the rim. They fix the loose fabric of the headlining to the rim. Go slowly so as not to lose them. If they are missing, look for them trapped inside the channel of the cuff.
- Through the open tailgate, half remove the upper section of the tailgate door seal to expose three neat little hangers that hold up the rear of the headlining through three slots and simply clip over the upper rim of the tailgate opening.
- Before removing them, be prepared for gravity grabbing the headlining, so have a helper positioned on the rear seat to take the weight and the ease down the support so that the whole unit can exit the car through the open tailgate, the only way out!

- The headlining is fragile, made from compressed/moulded cardboard. If unable to store flat, on-edge in a dry room is OK to avoid warps until it goes to the trim shop.

Choosing not to re-upholster the headlining, the local expert charged only £65 (mid 1990's prices) including "E" post covers and sufficient spare material for the aperture. Removing all old material and bits of perished foam is essential to achieving a lump free finish to the new material using spray-on adhesive.

Re-trimming the sunroof aperture is a different proposition altogether. It can only be re-lined with the sliding assembly removed from the car as follows.

Removal of Sliding Sunroof Assembly.

- Removing the sunroof lid is explained in the workshop manual, but it's tricky.
- Free the lid by undoing four screws along its front edge with lid fully open.
- Slide the sunroof forward until it is about an inch from being shut.
- Lubricate the rubber seal with something slippery like fairy liquid or silicon grease.
- The tongues at the rear of the sunroof lid will disengage from a pair of 'hold down' springs under the rear edge of the opening. Tape the aperture edges to protect paint!
- Gently but firmly extract the lid forwards and upwards without damage to paint.
- Now is a good time to inspect the sunroof lid and mechanism for rust caused by condensation. This is a major issue, certainly needing attention, so be prepared to deal with some repairs and apply rust prevention wax before re-assembly.
- It was shocking to find severe corrosion on an eight year old Vitesse when the lid first came off in 1994. The gasket/seal retainers had virtually disintegrated. Sixteen years on, the replacements are still 'as new' so the Waxoyl did its job admirably!
- With the lid removed observe the sliding mechanism and how the worm drives terminate on two adjustable clamps.
- Operate the sunroof electrically backwards and forwards to study how it works, what slides on and over what, and scrutinise for wear and inadequate lubrication.
- Look also for broken guides and any misalignment. Broken rail support parts will certainly impede smooth operation. Obsolete spares must be had from a donor car.
- The way to remove it is to undo the nuts that hold four adjustable clamps in position on the sliding assembly and the slide rails.
- Mark the position of the clamps with a soft pencil BEFORE removal.
- Undoing the nuts a bit at a time lends itself to understanding how these special floating clamps work and more importantly how the nuts, washers and shims are assembled. Take care, those shim positions are critical!
- Slightly adjust the fore/aft position of the sliding assembly to get all the nuts loose.
- To help refitting, later, sketches or photographs of the fixing arrangement will be an invaluable aid-memoir. Either way, the mechanism comes out from the top.

Reupholstering the Sliding Sunroof Assembly.

- On the workbench observe how/where the fabric is shaped, fixed and glued in place
- Use the original fabric (carefully removed) as a pattern to make a brown paper template. Cut the new material using the template.
- Cut loose the thin plastic trim (with four holes) stitched to the front of the original lining material to be, perhaps, re-stitched to, or (later) refitted over the new material that can be otherwise stuck in place with adhesive at the front edge.

- It's definitely a job for clean hands, which is a problem because the sunroof mechanism will be filthy. Clean it up thoroughly with white spirit before the dressmaking stage.
- Use spray adhesive to fix new material in place. Evostick used sparingly is also useful to get strong corner bonds.
- Make sure that the folded over material does not foul where the lid sits inside the top front edge when it is eventually dropped into place otherwise the lid will not position correctly onto its fixing screws.
- If high, it will sustain damage imparted by the sunroof aperture when fully open.
- Some experimentation (on the bench) will be needed to get it right. Alternatively deliver the sliding assembly to the upholsterer for him to renew the lining material.

Now everything is ready to refit, clean hands are essential, and, despite it being an old cliché, the refitting sequence really is the reverse of removal (ah la Haynes) but with the following very pertinent handy hints. For success, please study them carefully!

Refitting the Headlining.

- Ensure the courtesy lights wiring is correctly taped in position.
- Be sure to support front and rear of the headlining as it feeds through the tailgate.
- Make up three 3" thick wire hooks to suspend the rear from the three slots in the hatch rim to allow total concentration on the next most difficult part of the process.
- Support the headlining with a prop, as during removal and refit all items detailed at that time, loosely at first, to locate the unit correctly before tightening them up.
- Cut through the material at the centre of the sunroof opening and trim it to about an inch and a half from the rim. Please! Please! Do not cut too close to the rim corners.
- Fold the loose material around the rim and fix it with the metal clips saved at the removal stage. Extreme care cutting carefully into the corners is the key to success.
- When the loose material is all neatly folded around rim, a sparing application of adhesive will help keep the lining in place.
- When dry, fit the decorative cuff over the whole kit'n'caboodle (material/clips/rim) to secure the central aperture.
- Be sure to get it right first time otherwise, upon removing the cuff for a second try, the clips have to be retrieved and the material may get damaged. Trim off excess.

Refitting the Sliding Sunroof Assembly and Lid.

- Definitely a two person job to lower into position without damaging any paintwork.
- Loosely refit the clamps to the assembly and the sliding rails.
- Suffer from a dodgy memory? Then rely on those sketches, photos and pencil marks made at the time of removal.
- At this stage the assembly must be adjusted laterally on its cradle so the lid is nicely centred. The prior pencil marks are CRUCIAL to this. Tighten the fixing nuts.
- Grease all the sliding parts before the lid goes on. Use rubber lube on the lid gasket.
- As an alternative to using a thin screwdriver and torch, tie some very strong polyester thread around the rear fixing springs.
- With the sliding assembly an inch or so open, as the lid slides into place, pull up on the thread and raise the springs over the retaining tongues on the lid
- Secure the lid with its front fixing screws and make sure it sits well down.
- Check for smooth operation and be particularly vigilant that the top of the lid does not foul the rear edge of the aperture.

- If it does, the lid is sitting up too high on untrimmed fabric on the sliding assembly.
- Refit any remaining interior trim panels, courtesy light fittings, seat belt anchors, rear view mirror base etc, “E” post trims, not forgetting to position the plastic spacer behind the screws to prevent distortion when tightened.
- Grab handles fibre spacers must be correctly positioned to allow the end trims to snap into place.

If things go to plan, be well pleased with the resulting improvement to the interior but it does have the disadvantage of highlighting interior defects elsewhere. Also it gives a big incentive to ban nicotine production inside the car because this job is definitely not required too frequently. Please advise any errors and omissions and if you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

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