

# Victoria the 'Stalifornian'

**Tim Sears, Bordon, Hampshire**

After her 20-plus-year spell off the road, front garden restoration and Category C write-off in May 2011, *Victoria's* future looked bleak. As she sat there in the drive my first thoughts were that she would never see the road again. The impact from her crash had pushed the passenger door inside the car past the B-post which itself was several inches from its original position. The A-post was moved around the hinge mount, the roof had been pulled down and was creased at the top of the B-post. Inside, the front seats were touching each other where the passenger seat had moved across.

My injuries weren't serious but were enough to stop me working on my Imps for quite a while. There was nothing I could do to *Victoria* for now; at least this meant no rash decisions were made about her future.

A couple of months later fellow Californian owning club member Dave Craggs was on hand to assess the damage and at least make *Victoria* look a little less sad. This consisted of removing the rear side window which, despite being twisted didn't break, and removing the door which was not going to come off without a fight, having in effect sprung into the car and then opened back up inside. There was no way the door was going to pass the B-post without causing more damage. The answer was to cut the door to weaken it enough to be removed. Once the door could be opened, the eighth hinge screws were removed – amazingly, they came out easily and weren't bent. With the door and window removed, *Victoria* looked a little happier but her future was still in doubt.

August 2011 saw us holidaying in Cornwall with our Husky. We were staying with Sarah and the now late John Doughty. John, having heard of my accident had found a door to go towards *Victoria's* restoration. This was the point at which *Victoria's* future was secured.

Not having enough room in our Husky to take the door home, Bob Blackman (Cornwall ACO) came to the rescue and a few weeks later Bob dropped the door off on his way to the Goodwood Revival.

A ten-tonne PortaPower was then bought and the straightening began. I soon realised that pushing against the driver's sill section to straighten the passenger's side could damage the good sill.

The solution was to cut away the passenger side outer sill and then inner sill and leave the C-shaped section which was much easier to manipulate. The same approach was then taken with the rear wing front

section and B-post. The badly damaged part of the wing was cut away leaving the B-post much more accessible to the PortaPower, hammer and dollys. The delicate use of both club and sledge hammers saw the A-post straighten enough to be able to fit the replacement door. The PortaPower was then used to tweak the roof and B-post to fit the door.

By 2013 Dave had now donated a Stiletto shell to *Victoria's* cause, this would be cut up to not only supply the section of rear wing but also the scuttle, parts of the floor and rear suspension

Only the brave would  
contemplate repairing this.  
When it comes to Imps, Tim  
Sears is no coward!  
Photo: Tim Sears





**“There must be an easier way to replace the heater hoses...”**  
Photo: Tim Sears



**What’s a ‘Stalifornian’?  
A Californian with Stiletto  
body panels of course!**  
Photo: Tim Sears



**The end is in sight...**  
Photo: Tim Sears

mounts would go on to be used on other Imps. The roof would also be saved for future use.

2014 arrived and once the Stiletto rear wing section was welded in a new inner sill was made and fitted and then outer sill and sill extension added. At this point I considered leaving the Stiletto trim on the passenger side of *Victoria* but eventually sanity prevailed and the holes were welded and Californian trim holes drilled in the door and wing. The damaged headlining was removed by Rosie and a roll of trim material bought. A new headlining was made (relatively easy on a coupé) and stuck in place.

A couple of weekends and some long summer evenings and the new parts of bodywork were blended in and painted. A mechanical check over and *Victoria* was booked for her MoT test. This was now October 2014. Having not turned a wheel on the road for three and a half years I would be followed to the MoT test station by my wife Vanessa and daughters Demelza and Rosie in Vanessa’s everyday Mk1 Imp carrying tools and spares just in case. These were not needed and *Victoria* behaved *impeccably*, passing her MoT test with no issues or advisories. My MoT tester,

having seen photos of *Victoria*’s damage, was *impressed* how *Victoria* had turned out; he had worked in a body shop for four years and doubted they would have taken *Victoria* on. Rosie joined me on the way home from the MoT and with a big smile on her face said, “I’m so proud of



**A repair any professional bodyshop would be proud of**  
Photo: Tim Sears

you, Daddy”. This was just about the best compliment I could have received.

*Victoria* then had to wait six weeks for a VIC check before she would be road-legal. This was no major obstacle and involved just a quick look at the car at a VOSA test centre to check the car is the original one that was written off. Despite *Victoria*’s Registration Document showing her as a saloon and also not showing the correct engine number she passed and is now a regular sight on the roads around Hampshire.



**Rosie: “I’m so proud of you, Daddy”**  
Photo: Tim Sears