

### Scratching the Itch...

*The Restoration of 55-59-NU*

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In 2018 I started to get a well known feeling. After restoring two Minis (a 1000 Special and a Clubman 1275GT), two Suzuki GX100s, a 'Frogeye' Sprite, an MGB GT, several Volvos (142, 144 and a 164 which I was still driving) I got that itching feeling...

And I knew what would be next, the car that was always beating my MGB GT on the circuit: an Imp.

So I started searching. I didn't realise how hard it would be to find the right one. I even sold my Volvo 164 as I needed money to finance the project.

By the end of 2018 I had not found one on sale so I put up an advertisement seeking an Imp for sale. I received a reply from Nico Verhoeven in January 2019. He wanted to sell his original Dutch 1970 Sunbeam Chamois; we exchanged lots of e-mails and calls and in

**Picking the Imp up from Nico. Fred and Marc (on left)**

*Photo supplied by Fred Schukkink*



April 2019 I went to collect the Imp.

Nico asked what car I would bring to pick up the Imp because there were some parts that would be included in the sale. I told him I would bring my Volvo 740 with rally car trailer. I also decided to take our VW van and my rally team friend, Marc; it turned out to be a good decision.

When we arrived at Nico's place, having loaded the Imp

**"Good thing we brought the van!"  
The many spare parts that came as  
part of the deal**

*Photo: Fred Schukkink*



at another location, there was a pile of parts waiting for us. The van was filled and we took it all back home to Oldenzaal.

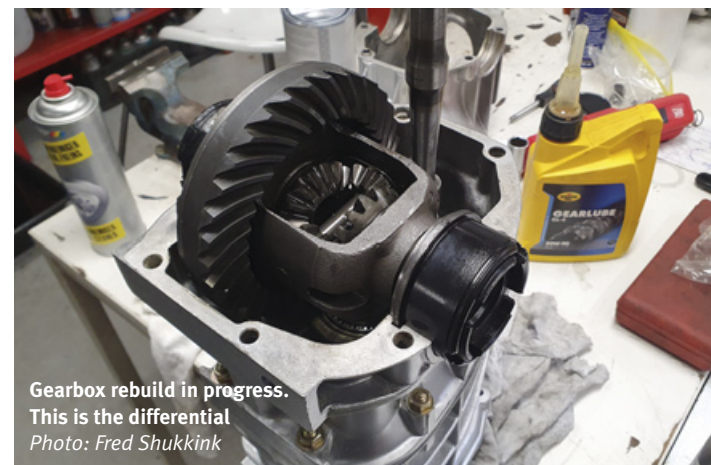
Back home and after unloading and storing the Imp I began sorting through the pile of parts that came with it, the handbook and Parts List were a great help identifying some of the parts.

Although I have never built an Imp before and therefore had limited knowledge, it was clear several parts were missing. There was no interior and several other essential parts from the car were also missing. There was a chunk taken out of the front (done for mounting an extra radiator), the storage 'bins' either side of the rear seat together with some metal out of the B-posts were missing. I had some contact addresses from Nico to help me locate the parts.

I found a parts car owned by Ernst-Paul Keizer which provided

**The missing storage 'bins' reinstated**

*Photo: Fred Schukkink*



**Parts in dry, warm storage until needed**

*Photo: Fred Schukkink*



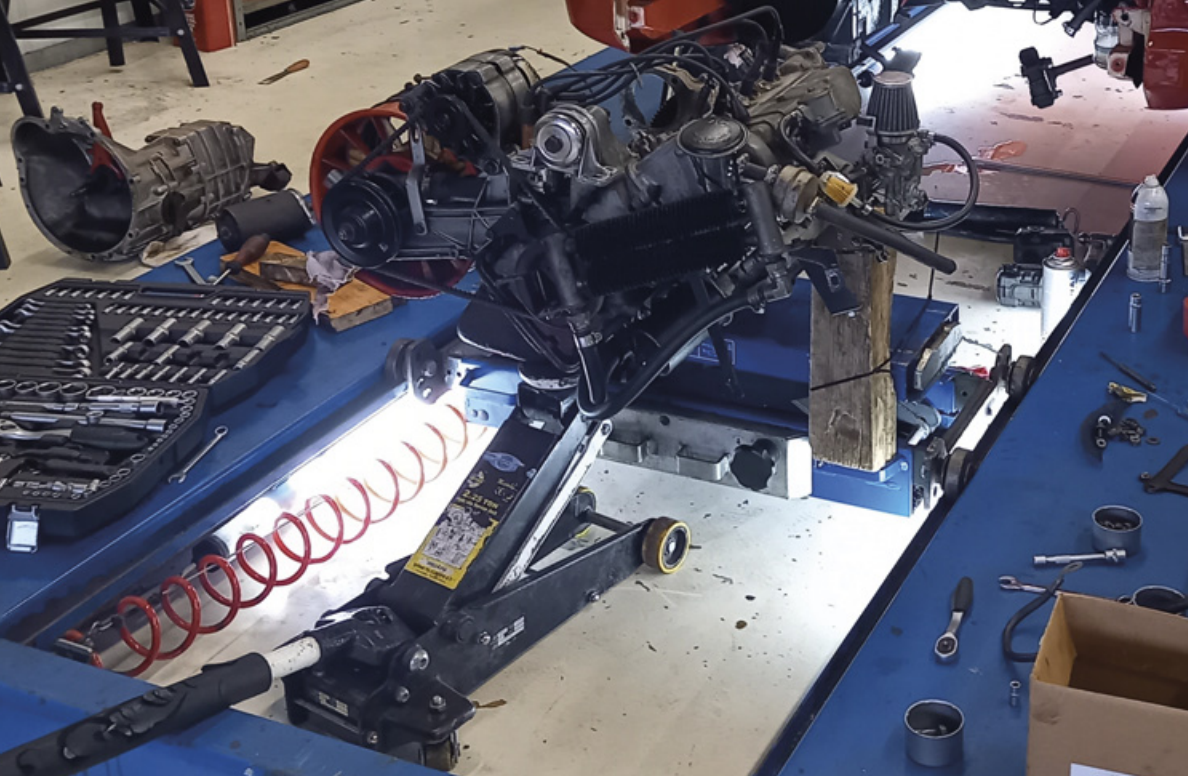




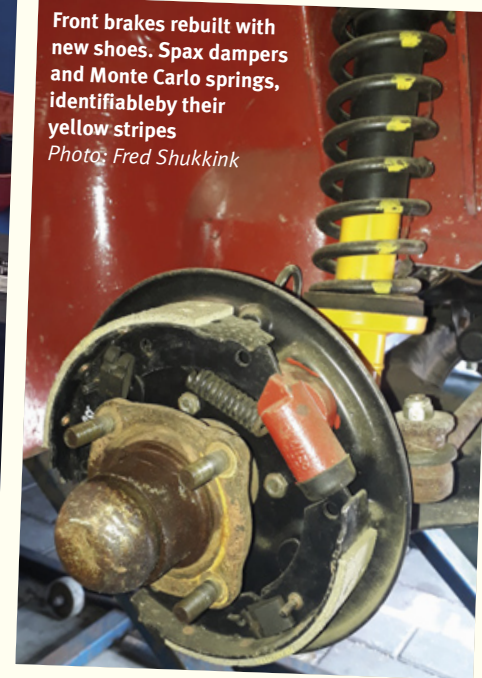
September 2020:  
Fresh paint transformation  
Photo: Fred Shukkink



After the paintjob rebuilding  
the car started in earnest  
Photo: Fred Shukkink



Front brakes rebuilt with  
new shoes. Spax dampers  
and Monte Carlo springs,  
identifiable by their  
yellow stripes  
Photo: Fred Shukkink





the storage 'bins' and B-posts. Ernst-Paul owns a number of Imps and is very knowledgeable. It was a nice day and we had lots of fun removing the parts.

Other parts I found at several locations; many came from the UK of course and I thank Graham and Malcolm Anderson and Robin Human. Also Roy McBride (South Africa) and lots of others followed.

I then took the car apart. The engine and gearbox remained in place as they seemed good. As the engine bay had been freshly painted in the right colour I decided to fit up the engine bay first – radiator, hoses, etc – not realising I would give the car a full respray later.

Because my Imp didn't have its original engine I placed an ad and also asked around to try and locate my original engine. It was like looking for a unicorn but, hey, if you don't ask...

The next job was welding the parts taken from Ernst-Paul's car into my car. This was done by my good friend Gertjan, restoration welder and engineer, and step by step the body got back its missing metalwork.

Gradually while I was working on the car other bits and pieces fell into place, and what wasn't there I searched for or ordered from the UK. Much of the work under the car was done by Nico.

Many parts were already powder-coated and looked very good, but I decided to take it all apart to be sure everything was correct.

After checking and rebuilding all the mechanical parts I started sanding the car ready for primer.

Then a medical stop intervened. My left hip had to be replaced. Work resumed, albeit more slowly from then on.

Next was the electrics. Part of the loom behind the dashboard had burnt out, so I replaced it and also added a fusebox with a fuse on every cable running from the engine bay into the car.

The winter was not a time to be in a cold shed so I started cleaning up the numerous small parts indoors, storing them on shelves until they were needed.

As the weather improved I got ready to start building up the Imp. But then a second hold-up came: my right hip also had to be replaced.

At last I was fixed. Now I just had to fix the car!

Work was resumed again and by the end of the summer the car was almost finished. On its first test drive the gearbox didn't seem right. Advice was sought through the club and social media, the upshot was the gearbox had to be rebuilt. I had one spare gearbox and another for parts. A gearbox rebuild was beyond me but living nearby was another Imp owner who had experience of rebuilding *Mini* engines and gearboxes! He agreed to do the job. I ordered a lot of parts from Malcolm and the work began.

You will recall I had a search running for my original engine. I got a message from somebody who told me he had my engine, complete with the matching number. He came over to me and I

swapped the engine for one of my spare ones from my shed. He was happy and I was over the moon.

In the meantime, while waiting for the gearbox overhaul to be completed, my attention turned to the wheels. They were cleaned and powder coated. We mixed the colour ourselves: a dark gunmetal grey. New tyres were fitted and a white lining to the rims was added to make them look a little different.

It was now December 2021 and finally the gearbox was ready. It was swapped with the defective one. On the ensuing test drive the rebuilt one works and shifts great.

The last small details were completed and the car was finished after two years. I could not wait for the good weather so drove a few kilometres around our city. The car is great fun, I love it! Of course there are things that I will change on it – there is another set of carburetors waiting and a Chesman cylinder head with cam.

Now the car and I are waiting for better weather. Going Dutch 2022 is on my calendar and I hope to see and meet a lot of new friends there.

Thank you to all those who helped return 55-59-NU to the road.



The finished restoration.  
White highlights on  
wheels a nice touch  
Photo: Fred Shukkink