



The ChipEx kit...



The key ingredients – paint, blending solution and polish.



Door edge before...



Johnny Graham at work on the 190.



...and after

Touch-up paint

for people who aren't any good with touch-up paint by Chris Bass



...and what's inside it.

If, like me, you are ham-fisted the thought of touching-in stone chips on your beloved Mercedes-Benz will fill you with horror. Whether you get too much paint on or not enough, the damage will probably end up looking worse than before you started. In recent times, the adoption of environmentally friendly water-based paints for the touch-in kits from Mercedes-Benz seem to have made the chances of success even smaller – I have heard more than one report of repairs made with these having mysteriously changed colour shortly after application.

ChipEx would seem to offer a better than fighting chance of making a superior job of it. This system is the product of co-operation between a chemist and an experienced bodyshop man. It uses good old-fashioned solvent-based paint, but with the added twist of a special solution that allows you to remove any excess paint without damaging the original finish.

I was issued with a kit to try some time ago, but such is my reluctance to tackle this

aspect of car care I hadn't got round to it before the Club SL Rally at Sandringham – where our faithful 190E was almost forcibly removed from us so the sales director of ChipEx, Johnny Graham, could demonstrate just how effective his product is. As this car is 18 years old, lives outside, has covered over 200,000 miles and spends most of its time on the M25 you can imagine that it is not short of the odd stone chip.

I have to say I was pleased to see someone else use ChipEx before I tried it. What became clear from the demonstration is that you don't need to be frightened of making mistakes –

you really can clean off excess paint without damaging the original finish.

You begin, of course, by thoroughly cleaning and drying the area to be worked on. Then you can get started with the paint and brushes also supplied – and you are positively encouraged to use your fingers, a side of a thumb or a cloth (also in the kit) to spread the paint. Once the paint is touch dry – it takes 20 seconds to a minute depending on the ambient temperature and depth of paint applied – you can clean off any excess with the 'blending solution' using a plastic spatula wrapped in a blue cloth all provided. Three

minutes later you can move onto the final stage – using the pigmented finishing polish supplied. It is recommended that the whole panel you have been working on is polished. Unlike the Mercedes-Benz touch-up kits there is no lacquer to add to the colour coat, even with metallic finishes such as the blue-black on our 190.

You can repeat the painting steps as many times as necessary to build up the level and use the blending solution to clean off the paint and start again if needs be. You are advised not to use ChipEx on recently painted bodywork – allow a month for the paint to cure fully.

ChipEx does not pretend that all traces of stone chips can be removed, but the effect is certainly far superior to that which most people can achieve with conventional materials – certainly by those of us in the ham-fisted brigade.

All you have to do is let ChipEx know the paint code for your car – you can find it on your car's chassis plate or on the data sheet at the back of the service book – and they will supply the complete kit. ChipEx can be contacted via 01295 258308 or www.chipex.co.uk and Club Members can obtain a 15 per cent discount off the normal price of £49.99 by quoting the code given in the Directory.