

## Steering wheel restoration, an alternative

by Paul Alting van Geusau

Most of the original Roadster steering wheels that I have seen show an appearance similar to the one in the photos below and there is often also a lot of rust under the broken plastic layer! So, in most cases restoration of the steering wheel involves a total cleaning of the steering wheel, preferably with sandblasting after taking off all the plastic covering.



Specialist companies in the UK offer re-covering of steering wheels and also have a large choice of colours available so you can have your steering wheel redone in the colour you like. However, costs are quite high and I heard of complaints about the new coating

being sticky, in particular in hot weather. I do not know if this is a problem related to a particular company but it shows that a high-cost job is not always satisfactorily done.

Thinking about a simpler alternative I considered powder coating (see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powder\\_coating](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Powder_coating) ) used for wheel rims. Powder coating polymer material has excellent strength and many colours are available at relatively low cost. Moreover powder coating is carried out by many companies so you'll easily find an address in your neighbourhood. I contacted a Munich company and they were prepared to try it out on my steering wheel.

The original coating is quite thick (about 1 mm) and smoothes out some quite deep ridges, in particular at the areas where the steering wheel spokes join the rim. Here the spokes are assembled in an aluminium casting but the casting does not really joins the rim smoothly. However, this did not pose a problem because a special filler is available which withstands the high temperatures involved during curing of the powder coating. The thickness of the coating layer when using the powder coating process is limited to about 1mm, but with a filled and smoothed rim, a layer thickness of 1 mm is sufficient and the newly covered steering wheel does not look different when compared to the original one. Cost, including sandblasting, was €85, which I consider to be a very reasonable deal. The pictures below show the finished steering wheel. Like new!

