

“RESTORING” AN OLYMPUS 35DC/35RD

Background

I had always fancied an Olympus rangefinder so when a 35DC came up on eBay at a reasonable price, I went for it. The listing mentioned that the seals were “soft”. When the camera arrived, the seller wasn’t wrong. The seals weren’t just soft, they were a gooey mess! In addition the vinyl had shrunk, was beginning to lift and the glue was seeping out of the edges. Still I had got it at a reasonable price, it was in good condition otherwise and it suited what I wanted to do. The 35RD is basically the same shell so all the instructions and measurements would suit this as well. There are 2 versions of the 35DC. Mine has the Batt Check Button next to the viewfinder. The other version has the Button on the bottom. I will cover the differences at the end.



The problem with the seals

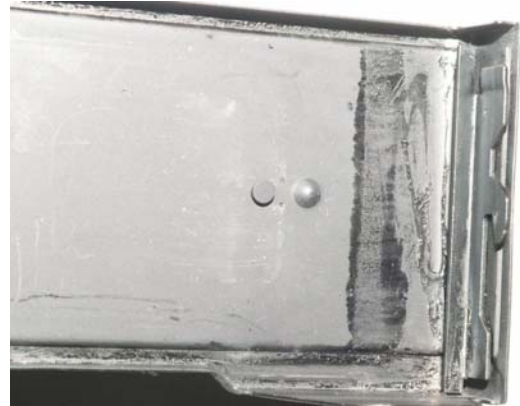


The body covering coming adrift

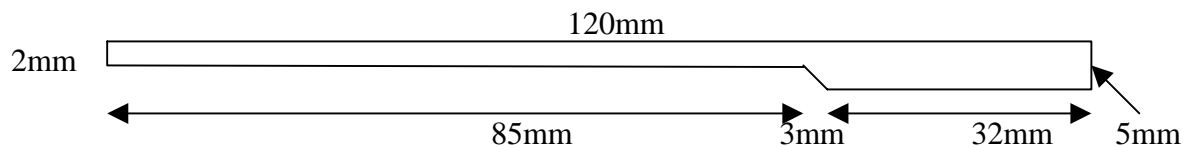
Seals

The first job was to clean the residue of the old seals. I removed the worst of the black goo as soon as I got the camera so as it would not break off and fall in where it shouldn’t. It was at this stage I took the photos. To make life easier, I removed the film pressure plate. The first job was to clean the entire old residue out. I normally start with the top of a Bic Crystal Biro. The clip part has a good shape and the plastic is not likely to leave scratches or damage the

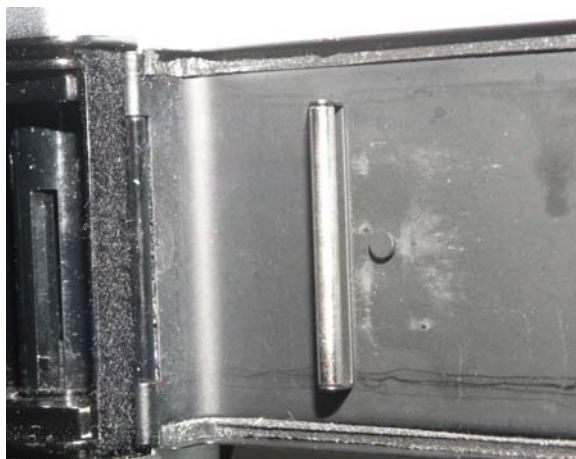
paintwork. Next I use the plastic stick from a cotton bud with the top cut off and a wooden tooth pick to remove as much as possible. I then moisten what's left with Zippo lighter fuel applied with a cotton bud (never apply it direct – no control). You should now have nice clean doors.



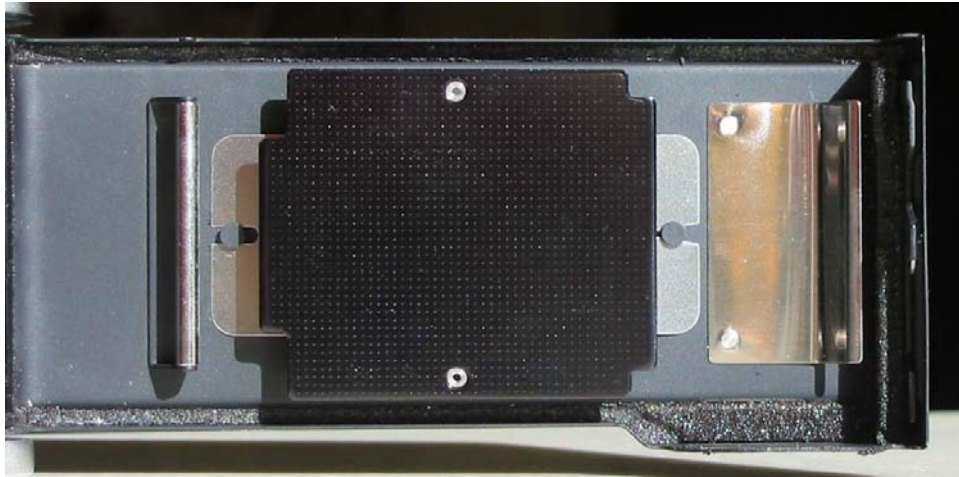
Next job is to apply the seals. I have one of the larger kits from Jon Goodman who advertises on eBay as “interslice”. His kits are remarkable value and have just about every type of seal you could want. I have now done 6 cameras with this kit and I have used less than a ¼ of what is supplied. The “hinge” seal is 46mm x 4mm. For this I used 1/16 fabric material as is usual on Pentax SLRs. The original was foam and you could use 1/16 neoprene if you wished. For the upper door seal, you need to cut a piece of 1/16 neoprene 120mm x 2mm. Start at the latch end and work toward the hinge. Once it's in place, cut off the excess. The bottom door seal looks like this:



Try it “dry” first. You may need to trim a little of the thick end to make it fit. Again apply from the latch end and cut off the excess at the hinge end when finished. The large piece at the latch end measures 42mm x 13mm and is cut from 1/8” ‘OEM’ open cell foam. I think this piece is not a light seal but to hold the film cartridge in place. Finally, the small latch end seal is cut from 1/8” neoprene. It need to be 2-2.5mm wide and is 46mm long. This is stuck on sideways. In the picture the sticky side faces the right. This gives a better light seal (or so Jon Goodman tells me). Replace the film pressure plate if you removed it and now you have a light proof camera again!



If you have the other version of the 35DC the back door will look like this:



The job is basically the same but you don't need the wide flat piece at the latch end.

Body Covering

The other job was the body covering. I made a mistake here and did the seals before removing the old cover. The glue on the old cover has started to fail and was a soft and very sticky mess. I have since done a 35RD and this was relatively easy. In this case, I had to peel the old covering off centimetre by centimetre whilst trying to release the glue. I tried my favourite lighter fuel but this failed. I then tried meths or denatured alcohol and this didn't work. In the end, the only way to get rid of the old glue was with white spirit. It needed quite a lot and basically, the way I worked was to peel the cover a bit, moisten the contact area with white spirit on a cotton bud and then peel a bit more and so on and so on. This got the old cover off but still left a residue of glue which had to be removed by putting a small quantity of white spirit on and then wiping as much off as possible before repeating the whole thing again. The only problem was on the back where some of the white spirit got on the foam seals and loosened those. Hence, the need for removing the cover before applying the seals! In the end it looked like this:



It is important that all the old glue and grunge is removed. Now came the hardest part – waiting for the new cover to arrive from Morgan Sparks at www.cameralather.com. This particular cover came from his vinyl range and is one of the cheapest. I have no connection with Morgan other than being a very satisfied customer. I chose a coloured kit but he does supply black ones that are a close match for the original and his kits really do take the difficult

work out of this job. He also does some lovely exotic ones as well! The kit looks very simple and is a piece of ease to apply.



I find the easiest way to do the front is to cut the backing back a bit and then gently moisten the glue with some lighter fuel on a cotton bud. In this way it is much easier to get the cover in exactly the right place. Once the fluid evaporates, the glue really does hold. And the end result looks like this:

