

HOW TO CUT (LEATHER) CORNERS

If you are fortunate enough to have original pannier bags, then your luck usually ends at the leather corners. More than half a century old, they will have dried out, be cracked and torn, in short: useless.

So they have to be replaced, and that is a not too difficult task, as you will see.

- 1- Start with removing the remains of the old corners; the steel reinforcing bits can usually be saved, after cleaning and de-rusting, and applying an anti-rust coating of some sort. I used zinc spray from a rattle can. If they are beyond saving, make new ones from thin (0.8 - 1 mm) sheet steel.
- 2- When you are at it, also have a look at the steel clips at the bottom of the bag; they are often broken, and although not strictly necessary to keep the bags in the frame (the Y-straps will hold them perfectly) you can make new ones if you wish. I used steel from an old hand saw blade, that I first annealed and after bending tempering to dark blue. Rust preventive was applied using the same zinc spray.
- 3- If the bag is very dirty, it can be machine-washed, preferably when SWMBO is not at home.
- 4- Copy the template from the sketch (1 cm squares). For a single corner, you can use thick paper or cardboard; if you want to make more, a piece of thin aluminium or zinc is better.

- 5- Make a mould from a piece of (hard) wood, thick 23 mm and 65 mm wide; slightly round the corners. Drill 3.1 mm holes as can be seen on the pictures, corresponding with the holes in the steel reinforcing corners. Also make at least 4 steel pins fitting the holes; 3 mm welding rod will do.

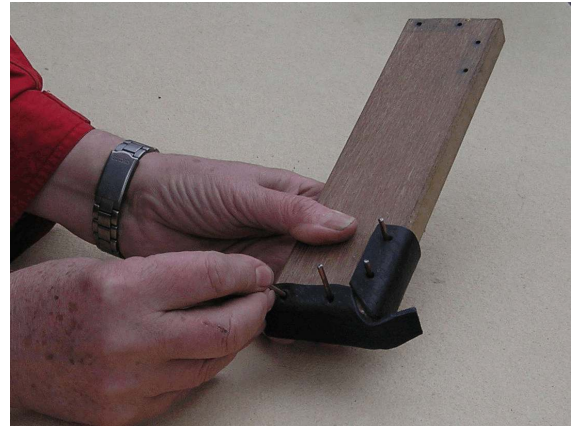


- 6- Find some saddle leather, 2 - 2.5 mm thick, black or brown will do. I used 3 mm but that was too stiff. Be careful with old leather from briefcases etc...; it will easily tear or break.
- 7- Cut the leather according to the template; the left and the right corner are mirrored! Punch out the 4 holes with a 3 mm hollow punch.



8- Soak the leather for 24 hrs in water.

9- Insert two pins in the mould, put the leather on these pins, and fold around the mould. Then, insert the two other pins. With 3 mm leather this will require some persuasion!



10- Let the leather dry for 24 hrs; do NOT use heat.

11- Now put the corner in place, temporarily fixing it with 3 mm screws and with the steel reinforcing corners in place.



12- Put the bag on the frame, and mark the place of the press fastener using a small hammer. Remove the corner, and put in a standard press fastener; if you don't have the tools for that, go and see your friendly shoemaker.



13- Attach the corner again with the 3 mm screws, and using 3 mm flat head copper rivets and washers, replace one by one the 3 mm screws. If the rivets are too long, cut them off at about 2 mm above the washer. Have a look at <http://www.handtools-uk.com> and search for 'copper rivets' and 'size 10'.



14- Avoid the normal hollow rivets; they will not withstand the rough life on a M20 bike, unless they are of the stainless steel variety. Use a split rivet to fix the small corner flap.

15- Now finish with some leather oil or wax.



Hans Muller
WDM20 58764
viaconsu "at"planet.nl
Version November 2010

