

Fast Fleet

Ferrari 550

- Date acquired: December 2004
- Total mileage: 30,651
- Mileage this month: 2462
- Costs this month: £611 (new Pirelli rear tyres and Permagard treatment)
- MPG this month: 15.7mpg

It was one of those surprise phone calls that sounds too good to be true: 'Hi Harry, do you want us to give your car a special treatment that'll mean you'll never have to clean it again?'

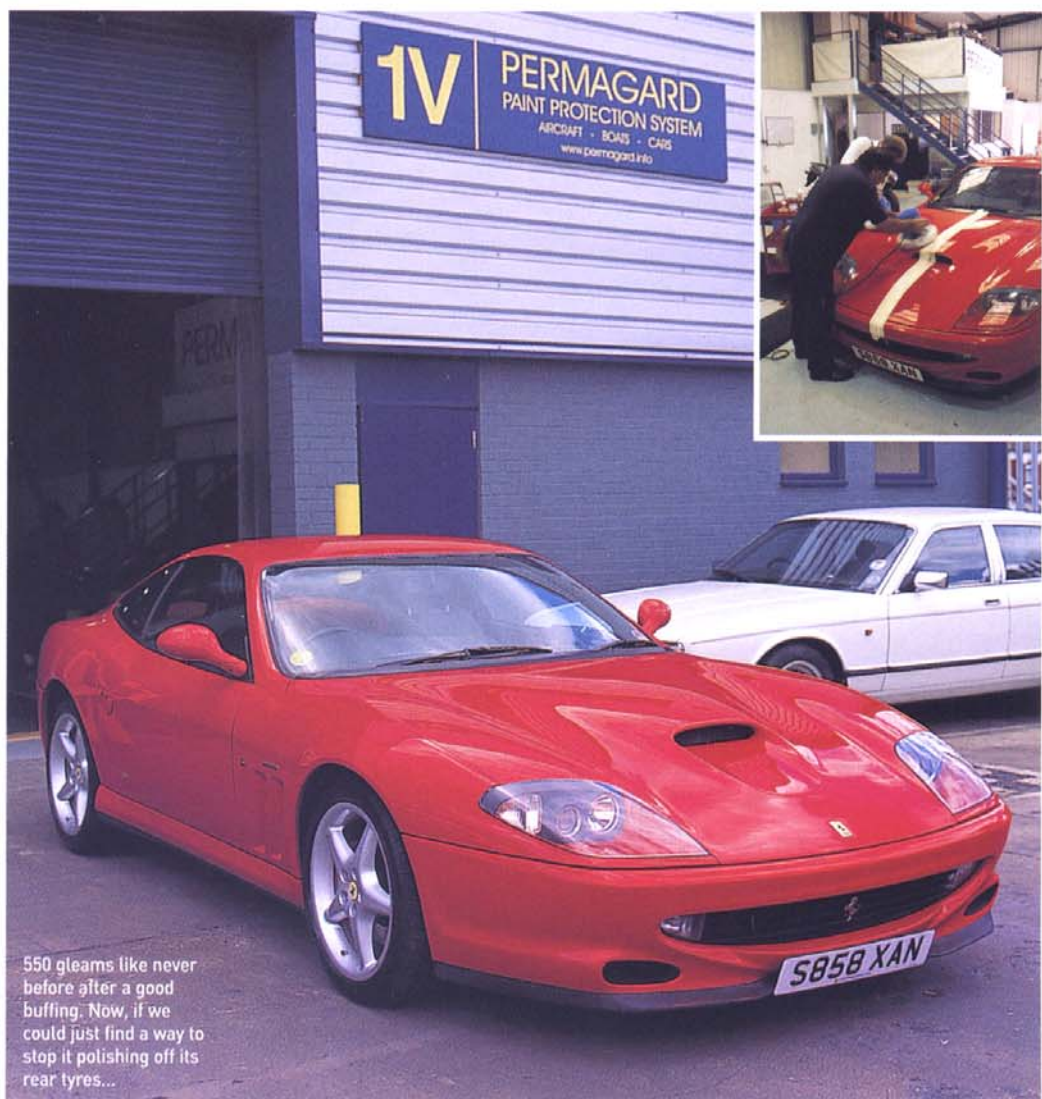
Now, as the rest of the team will testify, I have a long-standing aversion to cleaning cars. In fact I think it's some kind of medical condition. The symptoms are a general lack of enthusiasm to start the process, an allergic reaction to being soaked by a leaky pressure washer, and a bad case of tennis elbow if I apply any sort of polish to the paintwork. Naturally, a mechanical car wash is out of bounds to a Ferrari, so the only time the 550 ever gets properly cleaned is when it goes in for a service.

'Bring your car down to our new depot in Docklands,' said my new best friend, 'and we'll give your Ferrari the full Permagard treatment.'

So last week I found myself in a corner of London's Docklands that one day will be the epicentre of the London Olympics; in the meantime, tucked behind the City Airport is Permagard's first outlet in the UK. In charge of marketing is Mike Perry, who's the guy Horacio Pagani engaged to tell the world about his new supercar way back in 1998, hence the reason I'm taking Permagard a little more seriously than I might have done.

'The treatment originates from some boffins in the South of France who were looking for a treatment that would give boats more protection against the elements,' Mike explains. 'They came up with this 'Reactive Polymer' treatment that lasts way longer than conventional silicon polishes. Once the first Permagard has been applied, an annual top-up keeps the paintwork in perfect condition.'

It's a brave boast but, interestingly, London's normally cynical black cab community have already



550 gleams like never before after a good buffing. Now, if we could just find a way to stop it polishing off its rear tyres...

given it the thumbs up; their cabs' soft, black paintwork has always been a pain to keep clean.

It takes at least four hours to apply Permagard, starting with a water-based de-oxidising agent before the secret P5000 Polymer treatment can be applied. Unlike conventional wax-based treatments there is no T-Cutting to remove oxidation so all the original paint remains (Permagard is widely used in aviation circles where a check on paint

depth is part of the annual MOT-type examination).

The treatment costs around £140, the annual top-up £65. The immediate results are astonishing, with a glassy finish that beats anything I've seen before, though the real test is the coming months. If you want to find out more, visit www.permagard.info. And if it continues to work, expect to see a little-used power washer on eBay in a few months' time.

Harry Metcalfe

Lotus Exige S2

- Date acquired - October 2004
- Total mileage - 5250
- Mileage this month - 186

I've noticed that the sunshine has brought a number of Exige S2s out to play. Unfortunately, thanks to a surfeit of work, mine hasn't been one of them. However, I have a few trackdays planned, so it's just as well there are four new Yokohama A048s cluttering-up the office, awaiting fitment.

Richard Meaden

Ford Fiesta ST

- Date acquired - May 2005
- Total mileage - 2806
- Mileage this month - 1349

The white Fiesta looks terrific when it's clean. Which is almost never. Dried rain turns to grey and beige misting; road dirt streaks black and brown; insects explode into Technicolor smears of red and green. How on earth does anyone keep a white car looking good? The UN must get through a hell of a lot of T-Cut.

Richard Porter

Renault Mégane Trophy

- Date acquired - June 2005
- Total mileage - 6346
- Mileage this month - 3332

Driving home the other night, the rear view mirror decided to fall off and was left dangling by several wires. I stopped and pushed it back into place, but in the process managed to trap a sensor wire, which in turn has meant I now have no automatic wipers (rain sensor) and my 'auto lights' (light sensor) are now defunct.

Andy Morgan