E-type 9600 HP

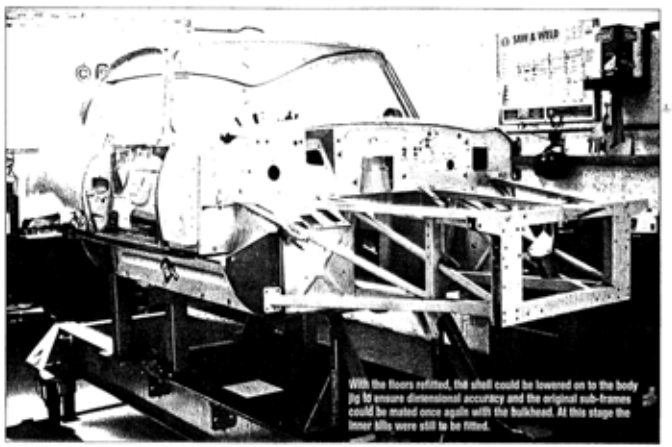
part 3

Philip Porter continues the story of how his ex-development and press E-type is being restored

SINCE my last report in the September issue of *Jaguar World*, the team at Classic Motor Cars (CMC) have been continuing to work flat out on 9600 HP. Apart from the bodyshell, progress has also been made with the engine, gearbox and rear suspension. Meanwhile, for my forthcoming book on the car, I have stepped up the pace of my research into the history of the car and the many interesting people who have played a role in its life.

After spending some time upside down, the main sub (complete with new floors) was returned to CMC's specially designed body jig. It seems that almost every aspect of the body is walking up time with a vengeance. With an almost fanatical desire to retain all original metal wherever possible, or faithfully reproduce every idiosyncrasy, this approach is inevitably extremely time-consuming.

One example of this is the doors which also exhibit variations in construction from later production cars. CMC have very carefully repaired the inner door frames. Once they were sound and dimensionally correct, they were fitted, minus their skins, to the shell for checking. The repaired skins were then refitted and the doors fitted once again. Sufficiently good gaps were achieved leaving just minimal leading, as original, to make a first class job.



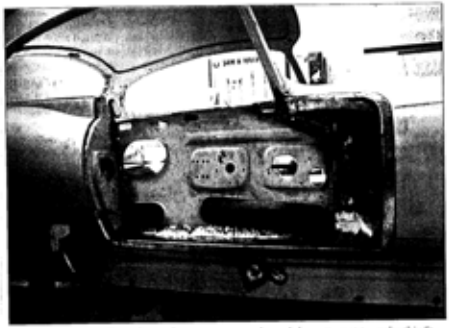
With the floors refitted, the shell could be lowered on to the body jig to ensure dimensional accuracy and the original sub-frames could be mated once again with the bulkhead. At this stage the inner sills were still to be fitted.

The inner wing construction on a fuelbead E-type is pretty complex and can be a nightmare for restorers. It has certainly been a challenge for panelbeater Tim Griffin who has now been working constantly on the body for several months.

Once the shell was the correct way up again, the main sub-frames could be refitted. The bonnet frame, which fits to the front of the sub-frames, via the so-called "picture frame", is different on early cars and 9600 HP incorrectly had a later type (probably fitted when it had its accident) but specialists RA Smith were able to help with a correct replacement.

With the frames fitted, CMC technical director Andrew Tart was able to make a start on the bonnet while Tim was concentrating on the main shell. Andrew decided to tackle the bonnet in an unconventional way. Rather than build it up as a unit, which consists of centre section, outer wings, front valence and various internal strengthening and ducting panels, and then attempt to make this fit the shell, he decided to try a different plan of action. He built it on the car.

He started with the front valence, which attaches via a pair of hinges to the bonnet frame, and achieved a square and level fit to the rest of the car. The centre section, which is quite flat and thus very flexible, came next and was adjusted on the hinges to suit the scuttle by using shims in the



Following extensive detail repairs and the letting-in of small sections of new metal, the doors minus the outer skins were try-fitted to check for gaps and overall fit.

Above: The contour of the bonnet wheelarches has had to be altered by peeling back the new metal to expose the wire, welding in a small section, trimming this and re-folding it over the wire.

To carry out various repairs to the 'A' post areas, the bulkhead outer skins were removed to reveal the structure. As is usual practice, panels were held in place with Mole grips before committing to welding.

Right: Tim Griffin is seen welding up the new number plate panel which he had just fabricated. The spidery remains of the gutter can be seen above the new panel.

usual way. The inner strengthening panels and ducting were then glued in place to give the structure some rigidity.

With the original E-type bonnet tooling now very tired, the bonnets supplied today most certainly do not simply bolt on. They need considerable "fitting" which can involve cutting away excess metal, adding metal and even some re-profiling. With 9600 HP it became a very major task as CMC remained true to their principles and high standards.

The next panels to be fitted were the wings. As many people know, the earlier cars had external bonnet locks and the small chrome escutcheons are a good way of identifying early E-types. On 9600 HP so much is different, as you would expect of a handbuilt prototype, that it is not surprising that the locks are positioned slightly further forward than early production examples. As the original wings were ruined, this meant further modifications to the replacements.

Around this stage, Andrew handed over to panelbeater Baz Cope who continued with the bonnet while Andrew immersed himself in his main area of expertise, namely the engine. Baz, who builds racing cars for a hobby, found the bonnet quite a challenge and even he cannot quite believe the time it is all taking.

Much of the work is very intricate. He has, for example, had to alter the wired edges on the wheelarches to achieve the correct profile. Additionally, at the rear of the right-hand wing where the panel curves down to meet the sill, the panel was short by about ¼ inch. This does not sound much but there is no way of stretching the metal to fit as it is wired edged. Thus a further metal section had to be shaped, wired and welded to the wing to achieve a good fit.