

# Realising a Dream



**The Editor visits CMC in Shropshire who have hand-crafted the most amazing bespoke Jaguar for member Michael Hughes.**

## From Mind to Matter

Michael Hughes was a regular customer of CMC, they previously had supplied and restored an E-type Series 1 coupe for him and restored the well known Rixon-Bucknall XK140 based special that Mike

owned about 25 years ago, sold and then re-purchased, still owning it today.

Out of the blue one day Michael emailed CMC with the idea of them building him a rather special sports-racer based on 1950s styling. CMC, always keen for a challenge agreed and a series of emails followed

with pictures of period cars, sketches and ideas from Michael which CMC needed to convert into a suggested design.

This is where one of their skilled operatives, Peter Southam came into play. Peter is highly skilled at interpreting design requirements into real 3D metal. The ideas and sketches were transposed into real designs by Peter's sister who is an artist and is also the wife of Tim Griffin, another CMC employee and panel-beater.

With a design agreed upon with Michael, the next and one of the most expensive of moves was to design and build a suitable

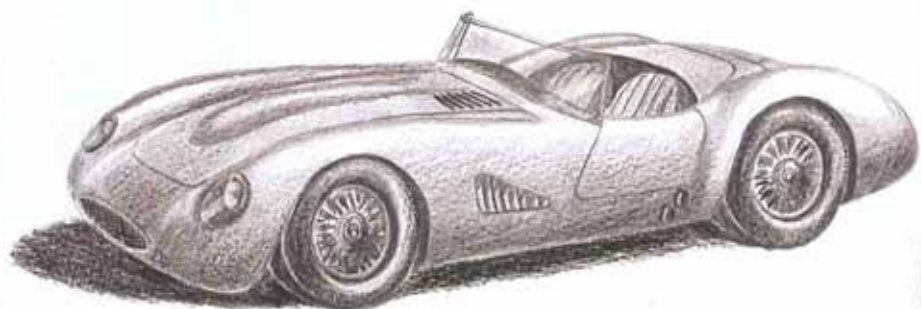


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chassis. The chassis design not only dictates the size of the finished car but is also vital in ensuring good handling characteristics, stability and structural integrity. It was Michael himself who came up with the idea of basing the size of the car on the Jaguar D-type and then, with the help of John Arnold from the Mallory Park race circuit who had previously been involved in the Revival D-type replica project, was able to acquire one of the Revival chassis. This then formed the basis of the new car.

Now the bodywork could be worked on and CMC built the necessary wooden

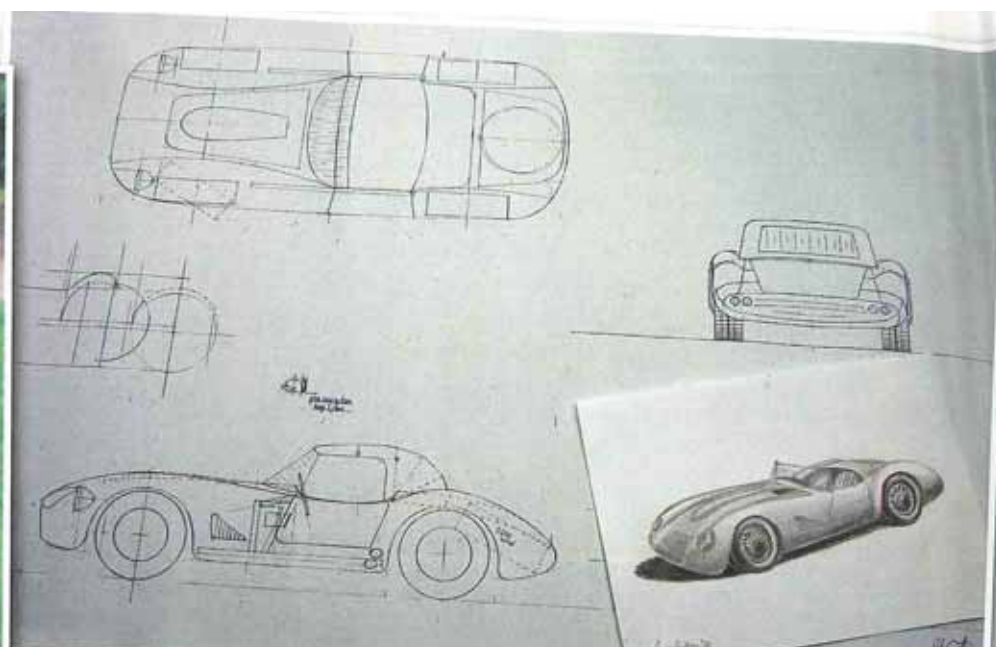


*Kaese Struben '09*

*A series of sketches were done to interpret Michael's ideas into a real design and remarkably the final outcome turned out to be very close to the original drawings.*



*Some detail of the internal body structure unique to this car.*



A range of other drawings from the many produced before the project got underway.

bucks onto which the hand-crafted aluminium panels would be formed. Virtually everything was bespoke to this car, not only every body panel but things like the windscreen, specially laminated (the tool alone to form the screen cost £2,000!). The whole design was a tribute to the ingenuity and expertise of the CMC staff. Take things like the bonnet hinges which were specially designed and made so that, when the bonnet opened they allowed it to cantilever away from the bulkhead.

The next task was to build the interior, again with a lot of input from the financier and eventual owner, Michael Hughes. A great deal of thought went into the design and execution including

the choice of instruments, design of the seats and ensuring that there was room for everything including the comfort of the driver. All this work was also done by CMC.

Michael also wanted the space to accommodate a full-sized spare wheel and for the car to have a boot, not an easy task in such a car but CMC achieved it.

The drive train was to be XK straight six based and this work was entrusted to Rob Beere (well known for his racing engines). The rebuilt XK unit with high lift cams, triple Weber carburetors and much more develops over 320bhp with a whopping 350lbs ft of torque, all mated to a five speed gearbox and XJ40 rear axle.

Although the car is essentially a two-seater open-top sports, Michael considered it important that it offered good weather

protection to make it a practical car in the UK. CMC came up with an MGB hood and frame that was converted and modified to fit and not only looks good but is an excellent fit and keeps the weather at bay. Michael also wanted it to be practical in that he didn't want a lot of aggro putting the hood up and down and so CMC engineered that it could be folded back into its own space behind the seats and covered by a hinged tonneau panel.

### The Ups and Downs

The whole project took about two years to complete from preparing sketches to finished build. There were lots of hurdles along the way but surprisingly, with the purchase of a ready made chassis, the body



Peter Southam, a key skilled panel man from CMC did most of the bodywork on the car.

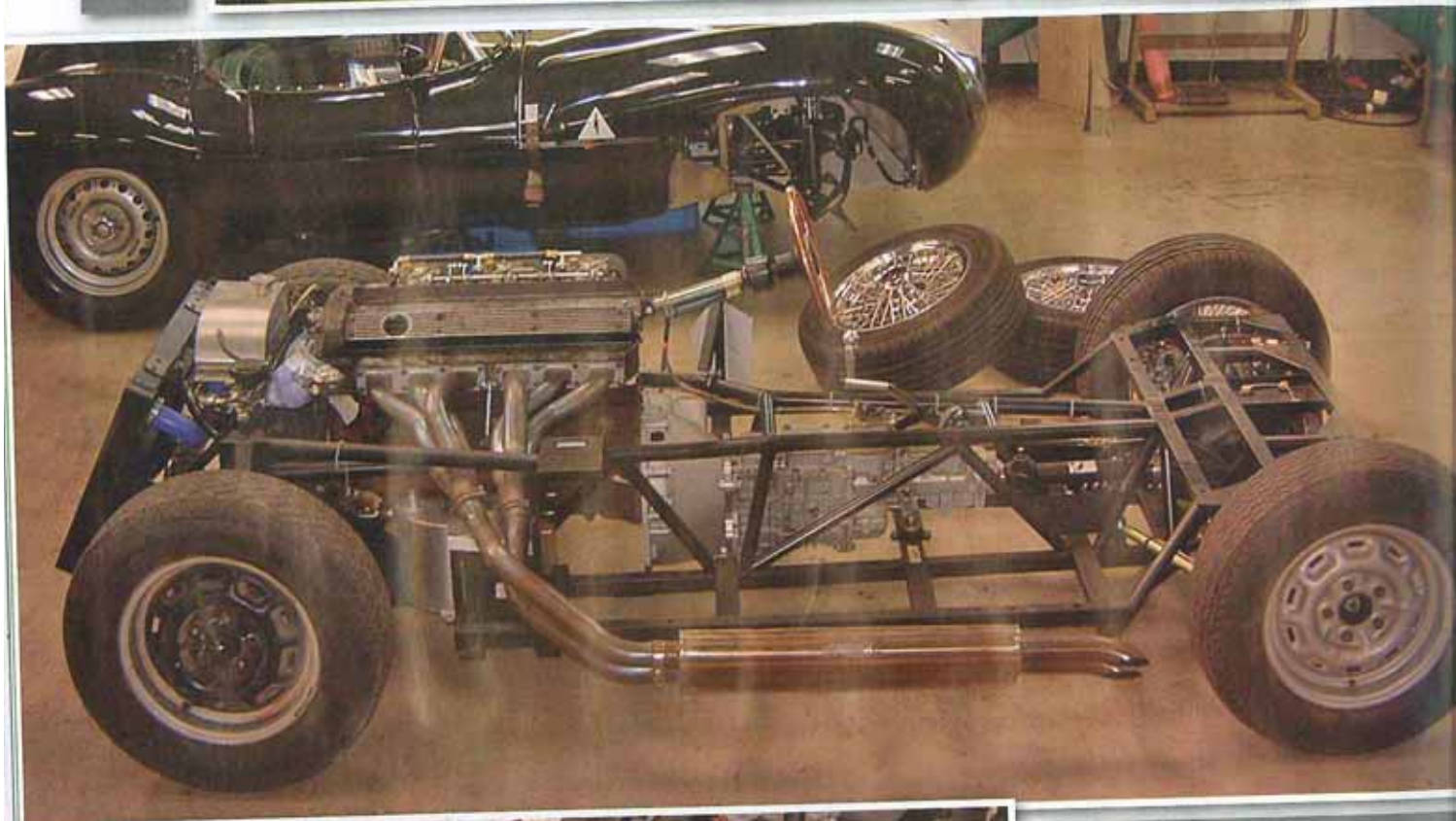


Wooden bucks were made up onto which the individual alloy panels were formed

Jaguar enthusiast Mike Hughes sitting in his own creation.



The intricacy of the work can clearly be seen here in the bonnet. Most of the alloy was of 1.5mm thickness with special framework for the bonnet, boot and door areas.



Pretty conventional rear axle/suspension from an XJ40 mounted into the Revival chassis box section.

Above: The Revival D-type chassis purchased for the car, here trial fitted with an old XK engine to work out the detail of mountings, etc.

fit and finish went well. There were issues like ensuring sufficient engine cooling, getting the position of the controls, pedal gear lever in the right place, modifying the axle mounting, etc. The exhaust was a trial because it had to feed through the front wings and down the inside of the sills. This led to issues over excessive heat, blistering paintwork, etc. The answer was to wrap the exhaust system in heat resistant bandage.

The interior is built around Michael so there is little adjustment if someone else wanted to drive the car. The extent of Michael's detail even went as far as the seat belts with the buckles and fasteners derived from a 1960s Ferrari!

All this detail didn't come cheap. Over 1,500 man hours were spent on the bodywork alone and then there was the paint and mechanics, paintwork and final assembly.



*More suspension detail.*



*Michael considered it important to have a reasonable boot to accommodate a full-sized spare wheel and an overnight bag!*



*An American 5-speed gearbox for the car.*



*The hood has its origins in an MGB but had to be substantially modified for this purpose and looks quite neat.*



*The neat installation of the XK power unit with Webber carburetion and bespoke manifold.*

It didn't end there as Michael had gone so far he went the final mile with the ultimate detail. Like the steering wheel which was from an XK, professionally cut down and re-laminated for the job.

With the car taking many styling cues from fifties racers like Ferrari, Maserati, Lister and, of course, Jaguar, the final touch was the paint finish and Michael chose a Maserati colour, Nuvolari silver. ■



Beautifully hand-crafted and finished leather interior of the car. You can notice a couple of Jaguar items like the specially cut-down XK 4-spoke steering wheel and the leather covered ashtray from a Series saloon. The rear panel behind the seats hinges back to reveal the hood stowage area.



Above and below: The well fitted tonneau cover.



The specially made seats to Michael's requirement, complete with special 1960s Ferrari belts.



No, not even these headlamp covers came from, say an E-type, they were specially designed and made.



Even the windscreen is unique to the car, the tooling costing more than the actual screen!



The final touch, a unique badge for the car incorporating Michael's initials, the Bridgnorth emblem (where builders CM are based) and the Jaguar name.