

An engineer was sent to help fit the rollcage.

At least with track days, there is less chance of someone pushing you off in an over-ambitious overtaking move.

Rot-box To Racer - Part 2

Geoffrey continues the story of his rebuild, concentrating this month on the modifications made for possible competitive use.

by Geoffrey Laycock

Having cut sections from external panels to allow a visual inspection, the paint stripping revealed a nightmare of holes and damaged panels. It was far worse than expected and was yet another example of how pretty an E-type can appear until you dig deeper than the skin. Over the next 10 months, Rory proceeded to cut away and fit replacements for the inner and outer rear wings, the rear section below the tailgate opening, the boot floor, the entire bulkhead, screen pillars and even the top corner of the offside screen pillar, in which, he said, he had never seen rot on any previous example. Southern Classics have been remarkably patient, carrying out work over extended periods, taking into account my varying financial situation.

It was an easy decision to fit a complete replacement bulkhead rather than the separate panels but why do the suppliers of these major items make them so badly? Later in the rebuild, we discovered that the replacement heater box (obtained some years earlier) from the same supplier as the bulkhead did not match. The lack of accuracy in panels and poor fit of other parts became a familiar and seriously frustrating occurrence. I have to say that some replacement parts from the suppliers of such items are of poor quality, poor fit and not worthy of the prices charged.

As the rebuild continued, decisions about the car's future use were made. I had already ordered a full FIA-approved roll-cage, FIA-approved plumbed-in fire extinguisher system and other race parts.

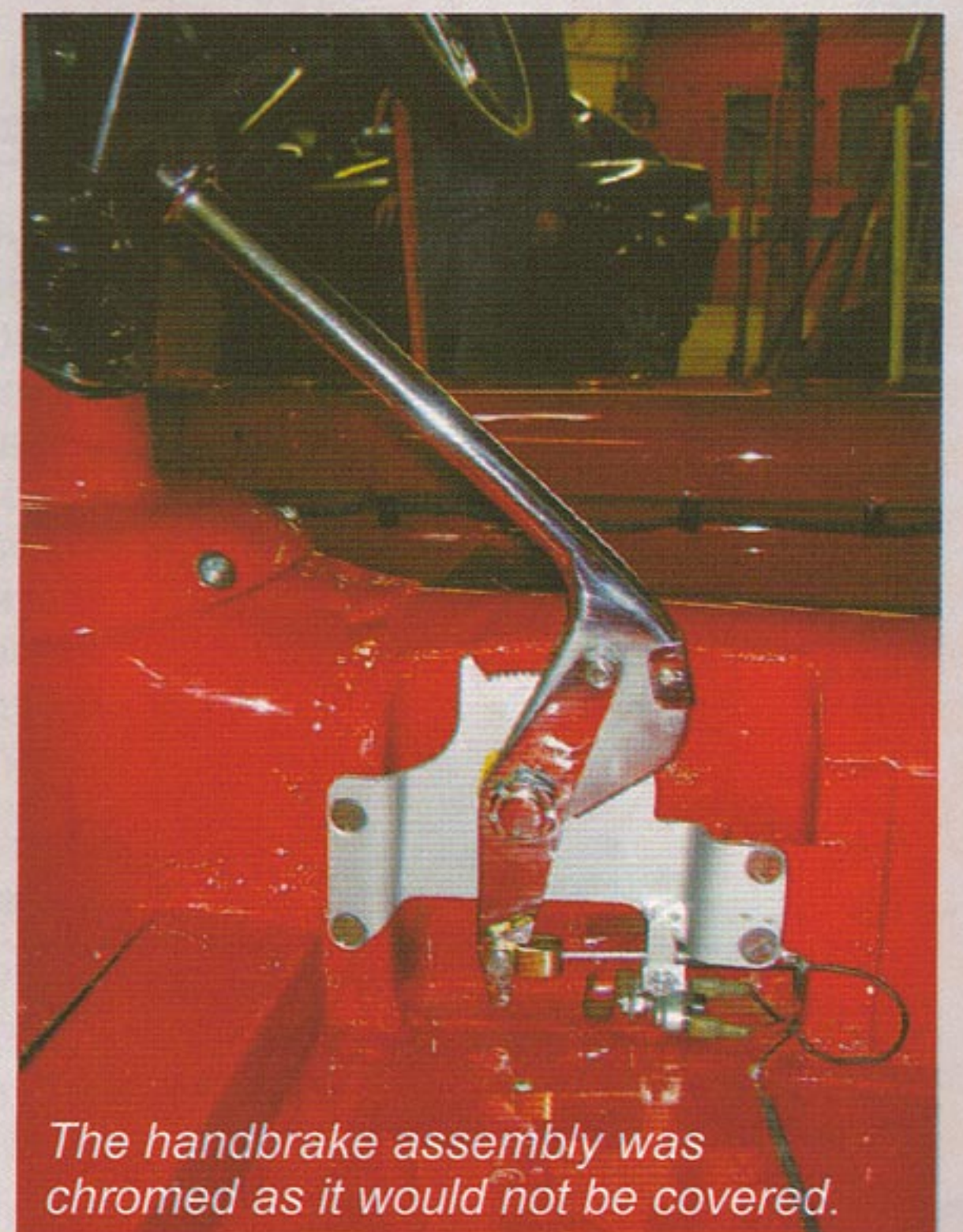
By this stage, I had decided that racing my 'beautiful vision of the perfect E-type' was becoming less and less likely. As time moved on, this decision became firmer and I finally decided KKB would be restricted to a road car with some track day use. At least with track days, there is less chance of someone pushing you off in an over-ambitious overtaking move. Unfortunately, even on track days there are less-than-talented drivers, so it will still entail some risk. I may also enter a few hillclimb events but many do have significant solid boundaries to the roadside, ready to catch out the errant driver.

Colour choice was difficult. I love dark blue and never really liked Carmen Red as it seems to fade quickly and look washed out. Having already bought Sabelt seats with black and red covers, I decided red was the way to go and chose Signal Red, which is a stronger, deeper shade. Southern Classics only use Dupont paints and the final finish was superb.

Early on, I had explained to SC the need for the interior of the body to have as good a finish as outside. I wanted a stripped-out racing car that was to the highest standard of preparation. That caused a few problems. Despite spending a very long time cleaning the bare shell, residual dust came out of the many internal cavities requiring more paint flattening than was hoped for. Once flattened and sprayed with a final coat, the finish on the inside is better than that on the outer panels of most of the cars you see! A tinted primer was used

inside and outside of the bodyshell, which I am told ensures a more even final colour and less chance of minor scratch damage showing through.

Whatever components were being worked on, they were completely rebuilt. Although working perfectly, the heater and choke controls were stripped, blasted, painted and fitted with stainless fasteners - just in case anyone looks! The serious rebuilding of minor components included more visible examples. The handbrake has most working parts covered up in a standard road car but in a race car they would be completely exposed. The pivot bolt, castellated nut and link strap were all



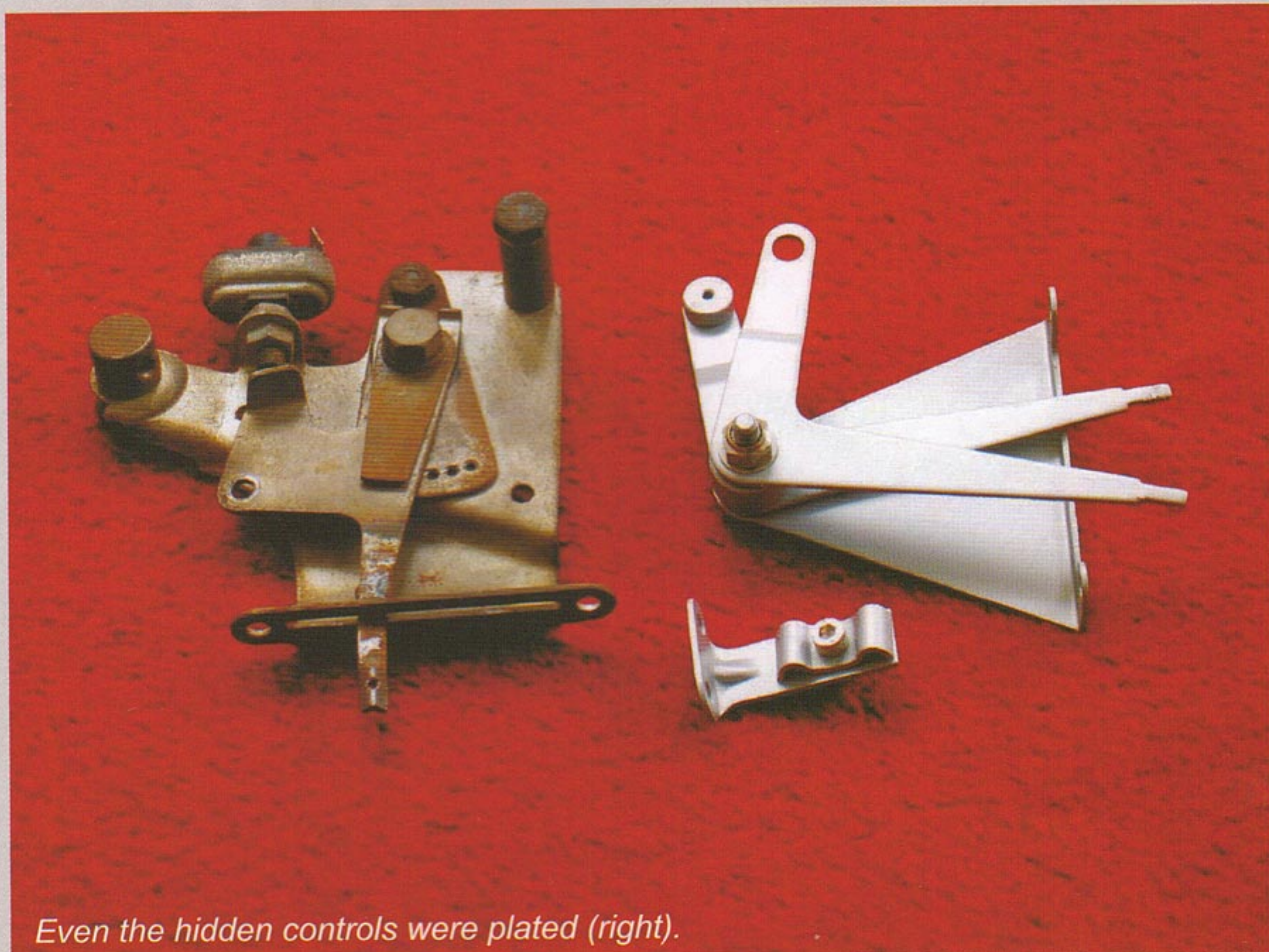
The handbrake assembly was chromed as it would not be covered.

Ordered from a top manufacturer, it was very late arriving and the finish was less than impressive.

chromed and new, with stainless countersunk set screws used for the mounting.

Once the outside was painted, it looked amazing - not just the paint finish but the standard of panelwork done by Rory. A good test (and a few body and paint shops might not like you to know this) is to position the car beneath strip lights. Then stand back and look at how the straight light reflection appears in the paint. Any dents or flaws show up rather well. With this car, there simply were no flaws to see. I lost track of how many days Rory spent on lead-loading, a technique used at the Jaguar factory on all new cars to cover up the rather agricultural panel joints in some areas. One really ugly original join between two panels was on the gearbox tunnel and that too was lead-loaded!

Prior to the painting, one of my tasks was to pre-fit the roll cage. Ordered from a top manufacturer, it was very late arriving and the finish was less than impressive. I had paid extra for red powder-coating and some had been scraped off during delivery. Having fitted the rear cage mountings - which required cutting out sections of the newly-fitted panels - and welding them into place, all seemed to be going well. I had needed to use a hydraulic ram to spread the main cage hoop but I had expected that. Fitting the front cage, which passes over the top of the windscreen and down to the top of each inner sill and which links the main hoop bars over the top of each door opening, was another matter. After struggling for a while, I checked various



Even the hidden controls were plated (right).

measurements and found the various sections were of different dimensions each side and a bracket on the main hoop was in the wrong place. After a discussion with the manufacturer along the lines of, "the problem with E-types is they were never very accurately built", I thought I was going to have a major battle to get things changed. A few dimensions were quoted and finally they accepted that something was wrong with their cage. They arranged its collection for correction and after many weeks, (as they had forgotten about it!) it was returned in even more of a mess than before!

To be fair to them, eventually they sent their top development engineer to Southern Classics and he built a totally new cage to fit the car. He also measured

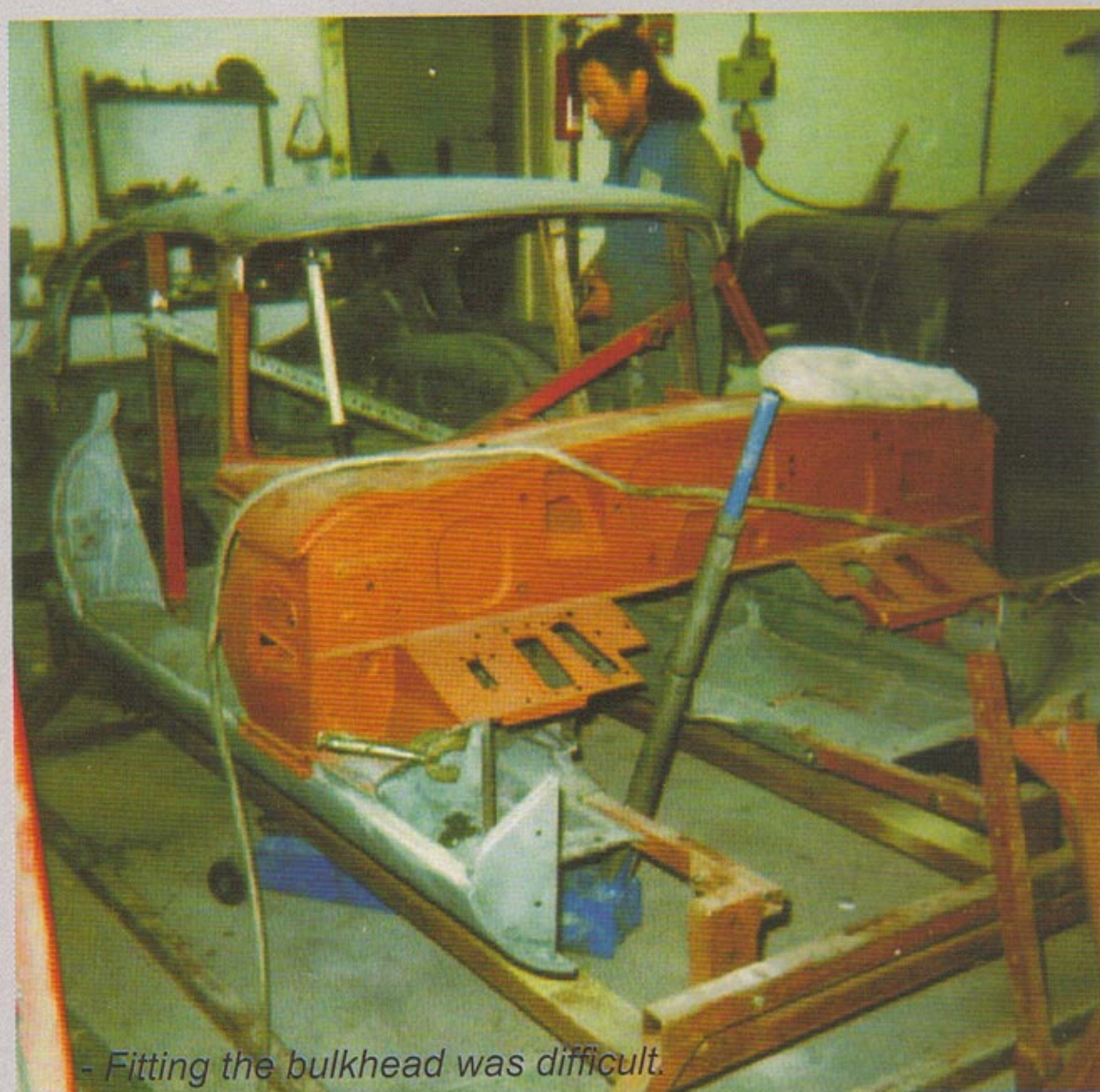
the car and admitted it was accurate within millimetres from side to side, unlike any he had seen before. Obviously, the car used by the company to make their original jig was not very accurate! *[Doesn't this just go to prove what Andy Hill said in Barratt Banter last month about 'replica' parts only being as good as the reference car from which they are copied? DB]* The finished cage is excellent; shame it was a farce getting to that stage. The cage was painted in body colour to match but not fitted until almost all the interior

trimming (limited as it is) and wiring, etc., were finished.

Other modifications to the body involved driver seat mountings and harness mountings. Just in case I decide to race, I wanted to ensure that the mountings would conform to the RAC Motor Sport Association Regulations. To do that involved drilling out the existing captive nuts (fitted on the underside of the floor) to allow the 8mm high-tensile bolts to pass through. Beneath the floor is a 4mm thick alloy section required by RAC MSA Regulations. In my case, I have fitted an L-shaped section beneath each pair of mountings for additional strength. It is obviously very important for safety to ensure the seat is secure but this also helps with driver confidence. Any seat movement (and it's surprising how much there is in some cars) can affect how quickly it is ultimately driven. The seats themselves were to be Sabelt high-back units with slots for six-point harnesses. The driver's seat was to have an inflatable lumbar support added. However, as with a few other aspects of the car, changes happened later. The Sabelt seats have been sold and the car now has beautiful replica seats, as fitted to the 'Lightweight' race cars. These consist of an aluminium shell, trimmed in Connolly leather by Suffolk and Turley - more period and totally gorgeous!

The harnesses are again Sabelt six-point and additional ring-bolt mountings have had to be fitted for the crutch and shoulder straps. All can be removed and holes filled with rubber blanking grommets if the car is to be returned to standard at any time. Whilst on that subject, the roll cage mounting plates are not easily removable but would all but disappear beneath standard carpet and trim.

To be continued



- Fitting the bulkhead was difficult.