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'They're all like that, sir'

Roger King uncovers more surprises in his latest XK 140 update – some of which were courtesy of Jaguar itself

Another day, another pile of bricks: welcome to part 15 of how to make a Lego Jaguar XK 140, without using any Lego bricks. The more observant amongst you might notice that bricks – the concrete variety – do, however, play an indispensable role in this particular project.

Photo one shows three concrete house bricks nestling in the right-hand door shell of my car. There is a reason for this. The door of an XK 140 drophead coupé comprises a hardwood frame, a steel door skin, a brass quarterlight frame, a vent glass, two glass tracks, a winder quadrant, a door latch mechanism and last, but by no means least, a heavy drop glass. This all adds up to a pretty hefty component that, due to its weight, is quite capable of changing the way the door shell fits into the hole in the side of the car. This can be even more pronounced if the flimsy original hinges and their bracketry are still installed.

The best way to allow for this extra loading when making bodywork repairs is to weight the empty door to compensate before aligning



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it – and having ‘borrowed’ the bathroom scales, I had worked out that three concrete bricks gave a pretty good weight approximation of all that aforementioned internal gubbins.

With the doors suitably weighted, I was now pretty happy with the general alignment (photo two). Now to get the floor sorted.

Time to come clean. Here, with the floor (photo three), I had effectively cheated – I bought a complete floor panel

from Bruce McLeod at Contour Autocraft. In my defence, this is a really difficult panel to make, due to the angled crease going across the car just in front of the handbrake mounting bracket. This is thick gauge steel and can only be done neatly with a brake press. Even Bruce has to send his panels to a commercial fabricator to get this fold done properly.

I still had plenty of metalwork to do because the rear seat panels were completely moth-eaten, so it was out with the

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spot-weld cutter and the cold chisel again. The left side was the worst, so that went first – see photo four.

The metal around here was like lace in places, as can be seen in photo five. When it gets like this, wholesale replacement is the only answer. When you see a report on any car for sale that includes the words 'a few little bubbles' regarding the body, this is what is lurking under the paint. A bubble means a hole, and a hole means new metal is needed.

The first job was a repair patch in the wheelarch, shown in photo six. And then, repair patches for the left side of the rear transmission tunnel, as seen in photo seven. This is shown in photo eight, welded in position but not finished. Note a new seat pan, a pretty simple panel made using measurements from the remains of the old one, is used for an alignment check.

Next, a new side panel for the seat side (photo nine) and the chassis riser box were finished off, shown in photo 10. The rear section is now starting to look a lot better. You know, it's definitely quicker to type about doing this rather than actually doing it...

One interesting discovery was made during this part of the job. The blasting and grey primer served to draw attention to some serious butchery in the rear inner wheelarch around the fuel filler box. With the wing off, this was easy to see (photo 11). What idiot had been let loose on my car, and why?

As photo 11 reveals, the top of the inner wing has a longish row of ball hammer blows, with a hole punched using a cold chisel at the rear. Research at the JDHT, and chatting with various professional restorers, revealed that

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this abandonment of sophistication is, believe it or not, factory correct. This is how the guy on the production line made space for the filler box to fit, and the hole is how he established a vent for overflow when filling. Now, there's British craftsmanship for you! That said, some years ago I inspected an Italian-bodied De Tomaso Pantera I was considering buying, and the internal metalwork on that made the XK look like Michelangelo's next job after sculpting David, albeit a little less revealing.

The work to make the filler box fit reminded me of my concerns when I first removed the rear wings. I could see that the front of the wings, where they bolted to the body towards the front of the wheelarches, appeared to have been cut with a pair of tin snips and new mounting holes made. This was how the factory modified them to fit to the DHCs and FHCs – I'm not sure about the roadsters, having never dismantled one. Looking at the cut edge of the wings brings home the

realisation that there's no other way to make them fit, so they must be right!

Photo 12 shows the repairs that were done to the right side of the rear bulkhead and seat area following completion of the left. Now, with these done, we were getting a lot closer to installing the main floor and the rear seat pans. With a lot of lining up (I'm getting good at that), and several more, smaller local repairs, the floor pan could finally go in – see photo 13.

With the floors now sorted, it was time to move towards the back of the car. Remember that rear valance, below the boot lid? Well, more horrors were about to be revealed...

Photo 14 shows what was lying under the lead loading in the lower right corner, where the rear valance meets the tonneau panel. I had removed the battered lead work with a propane torch, and wire-brushed out the molten lead. The car had obviously been hit in this rear quarter, and more investigation of the rear valance pointed to further damage all the way along the rear of the bodywork below the boot lid.

There was also rust in many of the internal panels (photo 15), where the blaster had been unable to reach the closed box sections. The operating theatre was put on high alert, and more drastic surgery than that originally contemplated was put into action.

Would it be successful? Would the patient survive? Would my XK ever play the violin again? Tune in to the next episode to find out... 🎻

