

A GT40 From Scratch

by Mick Ridley >>

About 18 years ago I got interested in kit cars, buying whatever kit car magazines were available.

DAX had just released pictures of their white GT40, GTD had done a yellow replica of the Lola T70 and there was another GT40 featured in the magazines, but I can't remember whose it was.....

GTD had an open day at their Poole factory and I went down to have a look; there were several GT40s in various states of build, and they were also giving rides to potential customers in the GT40 and T70 demonstrators. Being only 29 at the time, dressed a little scruffily and driving a BL Marina (well someone had to own one - but hey, they were cheap to run), I wasn't offered a ride.

But I wasn't going to let that stop me.

So, the decision, was made; I wanted, a GT40 replica, and I would do whatever it took to own one.

I couldn't afford to buy a chassis, so I would have to make my own. The Internet didn't exist in those days, so I would have to design and build it, with no one to ask for advice.

I had more money.....(I was soon to realise, I would never have any spare cash with this project).

I loved the look of the wheels and tyres on the GTD Lola T70, and so bought these sizes. They are 15x6J at the front, and 15x10J at the rear. They had used 50 profiles on the back and 60 profiles on the front. (I now wish I had used 50 profiles on the front, but that's something I'll have to live with).

The suspension units were the same as DAX, but with my chassis design, the front units were too long, so these were shortened by an inch.

I bought the seats from John Brown Wheels in Southampton, along with the steering wheel and silencers. Again, that company still exists.

I used a Triumph Herald steering rack, as I was advised that this was good by a man who was racing Group C cars at Thruxton circuit. I hadn't a pass for the pit lane, but I just had to get in and so walked past Security - nobody stopped me, but my heart was in my mouth.....

A friend of mine, John Bradbury, who sadly is no



The first thing I had to do was to buy all the major components.

I acquired an old Rover SD1 for about £100, the only part to be used being the steering column and engine. The engine was stripped, crankshaft re-ground, bores honed, a new oil pump, timing gear and rings fitted and the heads were reconditioned. The only non-standard part was a mild road cam, from Oselli Engineering in Witney (They were very involved in Rover V8 tuning all those years ago and are still trading at www.oselli.com).

With the engine built, I bought a Renault 25 gearbox with drive shafts from a local scrap yard and obtained a bell housing from a kit car manufacturer - so then I had my basic engine and gearbox. As I didn't have much money, the Standard SU carbs and 4-into-2 cast exhaust manifold would have to do; these could all be changed at a later date when

longer with us, had a Mk2 Granada, into which he had fitted a Rover V8, so this was bought, and the front uprights and vented discs were used. It only had drum brakes on the back, but these would have to do for now. My first engine had points ignition, but this one had electronic ignition, so I swapped it onto my car.

To start my chassis design, there was one more piece I needed and thereby hangs a tale. My friend 'Hippy Les' had a Reliant Robin three wheeler. He was giving me a lift into Andover one day (my first and last ride in a Reliant Robin), and as we rounded a bend at about 40mph, there was a loud knocking noise and we were shortly overtaken by a wheel and tyre. Les had just done the brakes, and forgotten to do the wheel nuts up tight. The next thing I knew, we had rolled and ended up, upside down, on the wrong side of the road. Luckily we were both OK, which is more than could be said