

Grill or Grilled – Rare or Well Done

Ross Bridson

Comments by two of our more prominent members recently has prompted me to write this article for the magazine. One was made at a recent club night as some were generally comparing notes about car build progress and I just happened to idly mention that I had just finished making my grill. "Oh that's easy – when are you going to make that bonnet of yours?" came the comment.

The other occasion was at the car show and was in the context of a deep discussion between the **other** club member and someone intrigued by my car. When I walked up and was introduced as the originator and perpetrator of the car I was asked "Where did you get your grill?" Quite matter of factly I replied "I made it" to which my fellow club member responded "See I told you!"

So, it would seem that the mystery and mystique of scratch building cars varies from person to person, and reactions to it can range from the 'ho hum' to awe and disbelief. It would also seem that many of us so called car constructors balk at the thought of building even minor components from scratch with the excuse – "I can't", or "I haven't the skill", or "I don't know how". Well to quote the old Qantas ad – "You can....!" And if I can, and have done – then you certainly can and many could do a far better job.

Anyway, enough of the twaddle. This article is about building my grill, so if you get the urge you might like to give it a go. Bearing in mind that I haven't ever made one before, there were no plans; just an idea percolating in my head, and the knowledge that "if I don't make it, I won't have one cos I can't afford to pay anyone to make it and a real one won't fit!"

With that motivation I set to. This was to be a replica of a Morgan Plus 8 grill which essentially amounts to 14 vertical bars curved to suit the rounded nose of the car. The options were to make it from solid aluminium bar, or from stainless, or from brass (chromed). The last two options required that the bars be made from flat

strips formed into a channel – not a happy prospect especially when dealing with stainless. Neither was I looking forward to the prospect of the cost of chroming brass. Still, the choice was decided for me since I could not find suitable alloy extrusion anywhere, and stainless is far too hard to work.

So, brass it was to be. Getting the stuff turned out to be a challenge since few places sell brass off-cuts. However, my lucky day arrived, and the firm supplying the brass even offered to cut the strips for me. "Now, what width did I want again?" I thought to myself quickly as we hovered by the guillotine. Bang, bang, bang In about 2 minutes all the strips were cut to width – and I was out of there very thankful for the extra service and the thought of "No cutting. Yeah!!!" Next day, reality struck with a Tim Taylor grown. "Ohhh Noooo !!!" All the strips were 3mm too wide. I had not allowed for the effect of forming the strips into the U channel and now I had to cut the strips down to the right width. Four hours later !!!!! Why hadn't I planned things better. Well that's how scratch building goes sometimes (actually a lot of the time).

For forming the U channel I had come up with a scheme for making a set of special geared rollers (you can just see them in the photo) with each of the rollers having the profile of the top and bottom of the U. The idea was to feed the strips into the rollers, crank the handle and 'hey presto' a formed channel was the result. Good idea and with a bit of practice might have worked OK but the first strip didn't feed though the rollers quite right and I didn't have enough spare strips to keep on practising. So, I simply bent the channel by holding each strip between alloy channels in the vice and folding each leg of the U over. That worked quite OK.

So I had all the required bars but they were straight and the grill was curved. That's when the rollers really came into their own. I could feed each bar through the rollers, and with a bit of pressure in the right direction (up, down, left

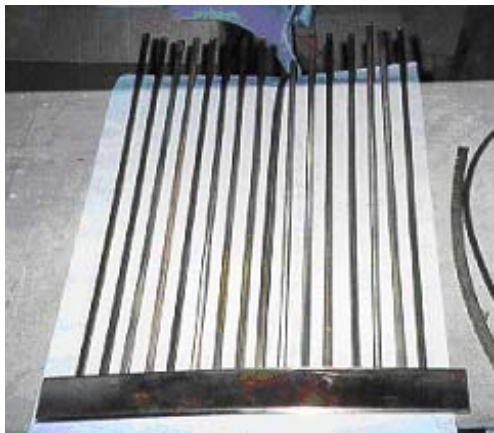
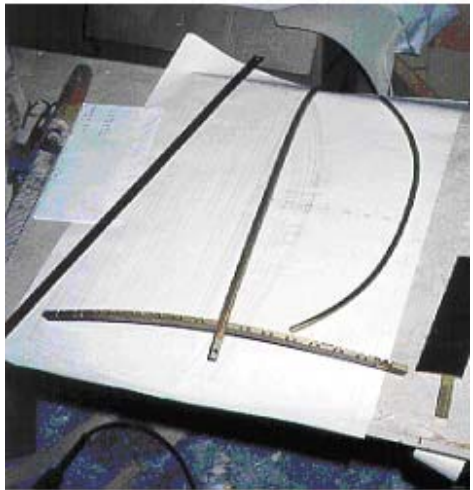
or right) I could gently curve the bar. This was where most of the crafting came in because I found that although the bars visually run parallel to each other in the finished grill, in order to achieve that effect each bar had to be curved both left to right as well as front to back. That involved a lot of fiddling and fitting. I found it very difficult to compare one bar with the next without having one permanently fixed in place – they tended to flop around being such a strange shape. So although it made it really difficult for chroming later, I silver soldered each finished bar in place before I curved the next.

The top and bottom supports for the bars were made out of brass – the top was an old curtain rod (about 8 mm dia) and the bottom one out of 12 x 6mm bar on edge, slotted to accept the legs of the bar 'U'channel. That made the whole assembly quite rigid, and provided the mounting points for fixing the grill to the glass nose cone.

I am pretty pleased with the final result and was actually one of the more pleasurable jobs I have performed on the car. It wasn't really that hard and so perhaps you were right after all John.

One final word about chroming. It was suggested to me by the chromer that I should have taken the individual bars to the him to be polished before I assembled them together as it would have been far easier and therefore much cheaper. After it was polished it could then be silver-soldered together and taken back for chroming. He apparently had a really difficult job getting the linisher between the bars. In my case I don't think it would have worked as I had the difficulty of curving the bars as mentioned before but it might be a useful tip for someone to tuck away for a future occasion.

So with that part of the project now finished my thoughts wander not to grills automotive and making mistakes but to grills culinary and cooking steaks. Roll on summer and BBQ's and motoring with wind in my hair and a grin on my face.





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