

Hand built in the North.



MEET THE ICONIC FERRARI DINO, MADE IN COUNTY DURHAM...

WORDS LINDA JANE WESTPHAL

DISMANTLING a toilet cistern at the age of four to see exactly how it worked signalled young Chris Paddon's fascination with engineering. Even his mother's dismay when, on pulling the chain, she then flooded the bathroom, didn't damp his passion for trying to make his own improvements. In his twenties Chris spent every spare hour working on a variety of cars until at the age of 30 he took on his first kit car.

"It was possibly an early midlife crisis," he jokes, "but the truth is I wanted an open top car that I could 'play' with. I felt proficient enough to take on a build and I had the space to do it. I researched the market and then choose a kit at the budget end of the

market called a Robin Hood that took about a year to build."

However, when his son came along in 2009, he realised that this wasn't the right car for the planned father and son trips out and in 2011 he headed down to the kit car show at Stoneleigh to start to look for a new project. His shopping list included a car that had a roof, ideally a convertible, and that he would be able to build on to an existing car to remove the complexity of the Individual Vehicle Approval process.

"There were several kits that looked tempting, but the JH classics DGT stood out as a car that looked astonishing," says Chris. "The DGT is based on an MR2 MK2, which carries many design traits of the original Dino 246 GT, including the curved rear window. It's almost as if Akio Yoshida, →



INGREDIENTS FOR A DINO KIT CAR

John Hurst (JH Classics)

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who designed the MR2 MK2, had penned the design Dino. I just loved the whole concept.”

The owner of JH Classics, John Hurst, chatted to Chris about the basic build process at the show. He had just started manufacturing Kit cars after a number of years out of the industry, pursuing other interests. He was mainly offering turn key cars, built by himself in his workshops in Somerset and had priced up a home build car, but hadn't sold any as it was brand new to the market.

Even though he liked John and his approach instantly, Chris was meticulous in his research including a trip to Somerset to visit John at his premises, and research articles in the motoring press before committing to the build.

The Kit required to complete the conversion was split into several packages to make it easier to purchase in sections rather than all at once. Main panels, including

doors, boot, engine cover boot, hinges and fixings were £5150, wheels £2200, Bright work, bumpers and chrome trims £2100 and lights and ancillaries £600. In addition, John offers a complete replica interior for around £3,500.

“It's been challenging but really enjoyable and John has taken on many of the modifications and feedback I have given him so it has worked out really well for both of us,” says Chris.

“My son loves his trips out in the Dino and whilst it will never be an original Dino 246, it is a sympathetic replica of an iconic car, which is in the top 10 most desirable cars in the world and it certainly gets a lot of positive attention wherever we go, which is lovely and really gratifying,” he adds.

Chris now regularly attends the kit shows with John and his team to talk to prospective buyers. He talks us through his build process.

FINISHED FERRARI PICTURES JADE PHOTOGRAPHY WWW.JADEPHOTOGRAPHY-ONLINE.COM
BEFORE SHOTS CHRIS PADDON



HOW TO MAKE A FERRARI DINO

Once the kit was ordered, I purchased a 1999 MR2 targa for the donor car. The dismantling involved removing the bolt on panels, including wings, bumpers, lights bonnet and boot and a little fettling to get the car ready to receive the new bodywork. I then moved onto trial fitting the parts to the donor car before moving onto fitting the panels, working from the back of the car, then onto the doors and finally the front clam shell. The most important element was the alignment of the body, matching the swage lines and panel gaps. As most production cars have quite large tolerances, the kit is manufactured to allow for this and requires work to complete the final alignments.

Once the main body was on the car, it was a case of working round the car, panel by panel rubbing down to spot the highs and lows and applying fibreglass fillers to build up where required. I was then put in contact with another John Hurst, who runs Auto Refinish in Consett. They had experience of restoration work, having completed finishes on cars used for TV programmes. Before the car was ready to go for final preparation and paint, I worked round trial fitting all of the lights, bumpers and wheels to ensure the final fit was as easy as possible and wouldn't need to disturb the paint. I also took the opportunity to tidy up the engine bay, which included spraying the plenum chambers in red crackle paint to add the Italian touch.

Once with Auto Refinish, I realised that there is an art to prepping a car for painting. Over the course of the next two months, Nigel, who was the main guy working on my car, worked over each panel, sanding, filling and smoothing out every imperfection and working through every panel gap to get them as parallel as possible. Once complete, the car was primed in a polyester high build primer then guide coated and rubbed down again to a smooth finish. Then on with the grey primer and guide coated again and rubbed down to a glass like finish. The car was rolled into the paint booth to have its coat of Ferrari Rosso Corsa 300 applied. As the car couldn't be baked due to it being fibreglass, it was left to stand for two weeks to allow the paint to harden.

Over the next few months I refitted the interior, with new carpets, steering wheel and gear stick, then on with the lights and the bright work and then the car was ready for its MOT, which it passed with flying colours.

On the drive back from MOT, I noticed a dreaded sign coming from the back of the car – a steady plume of white smoke from the exhaust could only be one thing... a blown head gasket. After pricing up the parts, it worked out more cost effective to replace the whole engine, which I sourced from Paul Woods at Woodsport. It took three days to change the engine, including changing the fuel rails, clutch, gearbox and wiring. The whole process was straightforward, with the engine dropping out of the bottom of the car, having removed the suspension, engine mountings and coolant pipes etc.

As the paint was so fresh, I needed to be extra careful. Unfortunately there were a few little marks that Autofinish corrected to bring it back to show standard and the car was as good as new.

