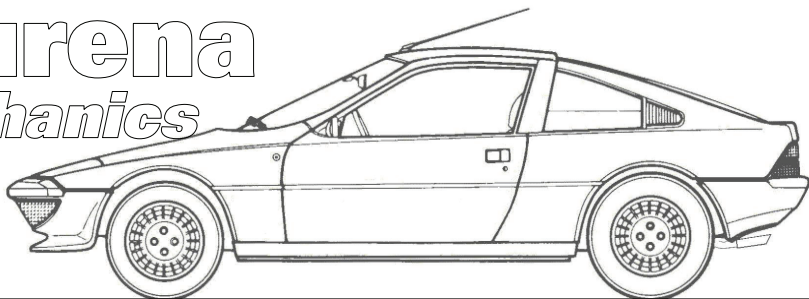


Murena *mechanics*

Geoff Keep



Radiator Matrix Protection

My old Series 2 Bagheera, which I had many years ago before the Murena, had a sheet steel panel between the front bumper and the radiator. This had a duct in the middle for the radiator air intake, with a wire mesh grille, plus a hole in each side for the convoluted tubes to direct cooling air to the brakes. Whilst the original panel was made from the thinnest possible gauge steel and inevitably succumbed to rust,

Matra Automobile had at least thought about

providing some protection for the radiator matrix. Alas, the Murena has nothing, leaving the radiator matrix at the mercy of flying stones, and debris, of which there is more today with poorly maintained roads, and small bird or animal strikes.

Having had a radiator damaged beyond repair some years ago and the replacement now looking decidedly tatty, (*photo below*) I have often pondered about how to fit a mesh grille. With a couple of wet days where I was confined to the garage, I decided to give it further thought. I didn't

want to nail anything to the bumper



moulding and neither did I think that the radiator was man enough to support a grille. I'm also not keen on irrevocably modifying the car or drilling unnecessary holes.

The Design

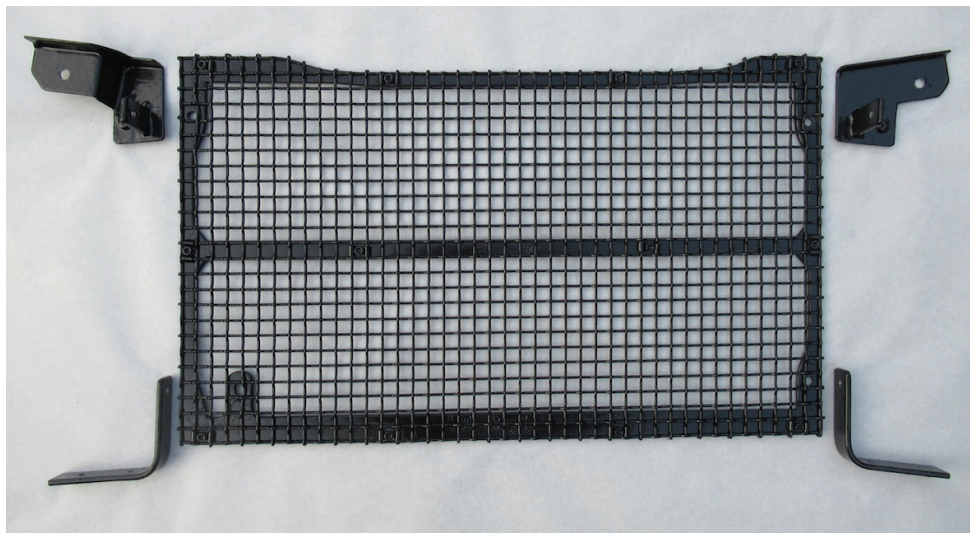
To cut a long story short, I reckoned that there was sufficient space between the radiator and the bumper moulding to squeeze in a grille, the top of which could be suspended from the horn mounting brackets. The bottom of the grille would fit behind the bumper moulding, but in front of and clear of the cross tube that lifts the headlight pods. The bottom of the grille could be attached to the deflector plate, underneath the bumper and radiator, which is suspended from the headlamp cross tube mounting brackets. As the original deflector plate is little thicker than baking foil and can barely support itself, this was remade in 1.6mm stainless steel.

A 20" x 12" frame was made from mild steel section. An A2 sheet of stainless steel (s.s.) mesh was purchased from The Mesh Company for £23.99, including delivery -

they have a huge range from which to choose. The mesh was attached using twelve s.s. clips and M4 cap head socket screws, tapped into the frame. The upper brackets were fabricated from 2mm mild steel sheet. The upper and lower brackets were tapped to accept M6 s.s. screws. The photo below shows the grille and the mounting brackets, and the photo at the top of the next page is a closer view of the brackets. The photo below it shows the new s.s. deflector plate, fitted with the lower grille mounting brackets.

The grille and frame and the upper mounting brackets are not symmetrical as the radiator is slightly offset to the right hand side. In addition, the top of the grille frame dips in the middle to clear the bonnet catch cover plate.

Surprisingly, I was able to design, build and fit the new grille without having to remove the front bumper. There is sufficient access through the radiator duct apertures to fit the upper mounting brackets. The grille can be inserted from below. Once the grille is



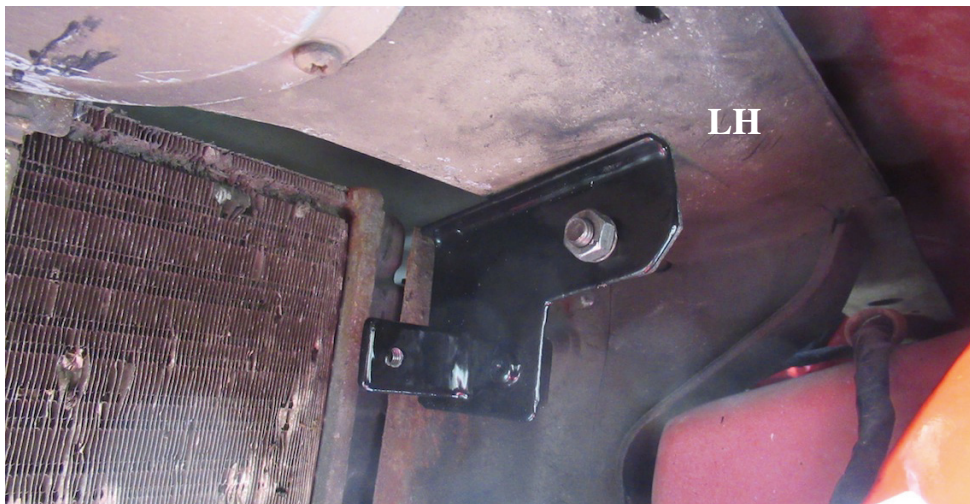


attached to the upper brackets, the lower deflector plate can be fitted and the bottom of the grille bolted to the lower brackets. The whole grille assembly takes literally a couple of minutes to fit or remove and the car can be readily returned to its original condition, if required.

The Top Brackets In Place

The photos on the next page show the left hand and right hand upper brackets in position, respectively. The picture at the top of page 5 illustrates the grille in place, with the horn refitted to the LH bracket. The photo below it, shows the lower



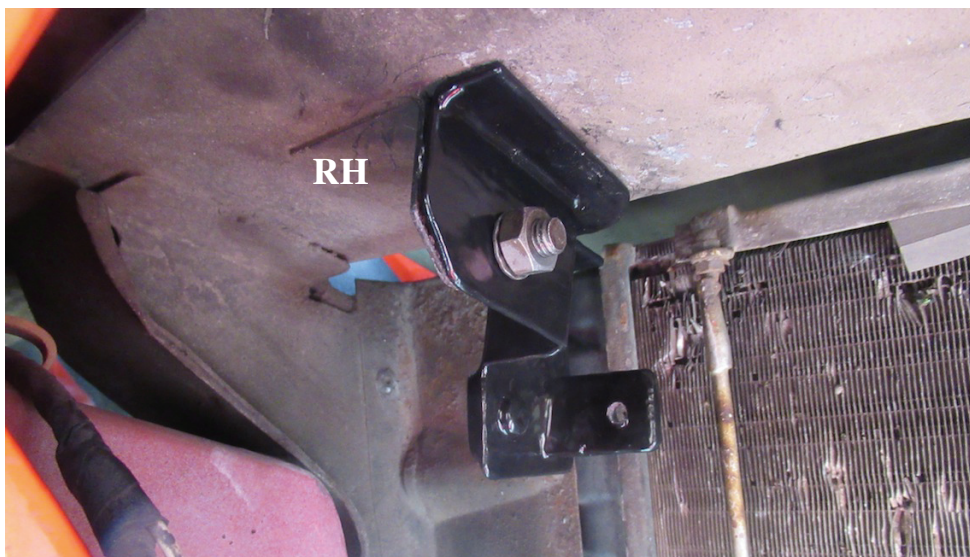


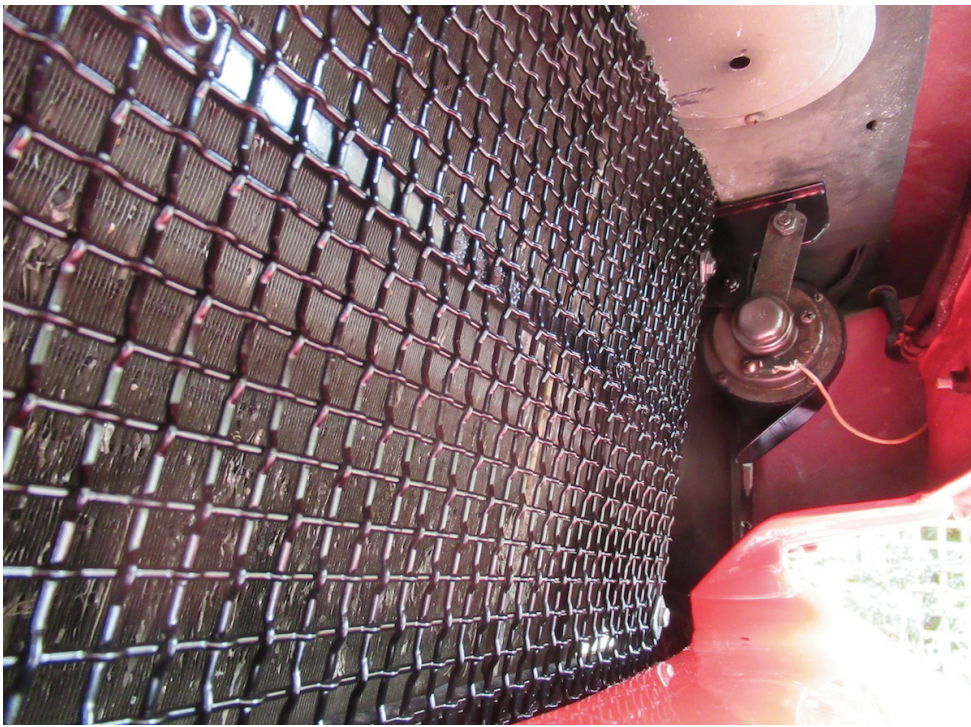
radiator deflector plate from below. The final photo on page 6 shows how the bottom of the grille fits between the bumper moulding and the headlight cross tube.

Confirmation of Poor Head Casting

Living where we do, we are within commuting distance of the old Ryton factory. I regularly encounter ex-Talbot employees, who stop to chat when they see

my Murena. I had an interesting conversation with a chap who enquired whether I had ever encountered problems with cracked cylinder heads? He said that this was a frequent issue with the Tagora engine, when the model was in production, leading to numerous warranty claims. They even discovered several engines with cracked cylinder heads on brand new cars, delivered directly from the factory!







As it is highly unlikely that brand new cars would have been overheated or run with a weak mixture, it would suggest a weakness in the design of the cylinder head? All the cracked cylinder heads I have seen had cracked in the same place - between the exhaust valve seat and the adjacent waterway, on number 2 cylinder.

My experience is that some cylinder heads are better than others. Some crack at low mileage, without warning or reason, whilst good ones are almost bullet proof.

Geoff Keep provided the material for this article which I have produced Roy Gillard