

# CHROME PLATING



*New XK 120 grille  
BD2877*

If a part such as a bumper looks relatively good, examine where any small knocks and dents are, as if they are behind any brackets, they require stripping, then brackets will need cutting out, dents repaired with correct tools to keep the shape, then brackets welding back in place, long before any actual plating takes place. All CAC's big bumpers go to body specialists with the correctly-profiled tools for straightening out XK Jaguar bumpers. Dented overrides and the intricately-curved XK 120 bumpers all tend to go for scrap, as they will not be cost-effective to pass to expensive tinsmiths to restore when new products are available exactly as original or often made to far better shape and quality than the quickly-knocked-together, cheaply-made, mass-produced Jaguar parts of the 1950s! As I have stated, nice curvy original XK 120 bumpers can easily come back with the 'jelly-mould look' from enthusiastic over-polishing!

Once a product is stripped back, then we can begin the building back up! Unless it is original Mazak (monkey metal) that was so commonly used post-war as a cheap, 'throw anything in the mix', die-casting medium. The die-casting process used pressure to force imperfections out of the poor alloy that was available, allowing for thin, slightly flexible castings with low reject rate. This was extensively used by Jaguar for panel embellishments, light fittings and handles. Once this material is pitted, it is beyond economical restoration as it is thin, very soft, so can easily be over-polished back a long way and quickly will no longer look like the part it should. XK 150 rear numberplate plinths are a prime example: as soon as you polish the top, the spine disappears and it looks more like a Mk2 Jaguar version! As a rule of thumb, if it's Mazak, it is again cheaper to buy a new one, and the new ones are made of a more resilient material known as ZA12. This is a similar aluminium-based alloy with more Zinc (which makes it heavier), that will last even longer than the original and will also stay more stable for rechroming once the plating is damaged or worn through.

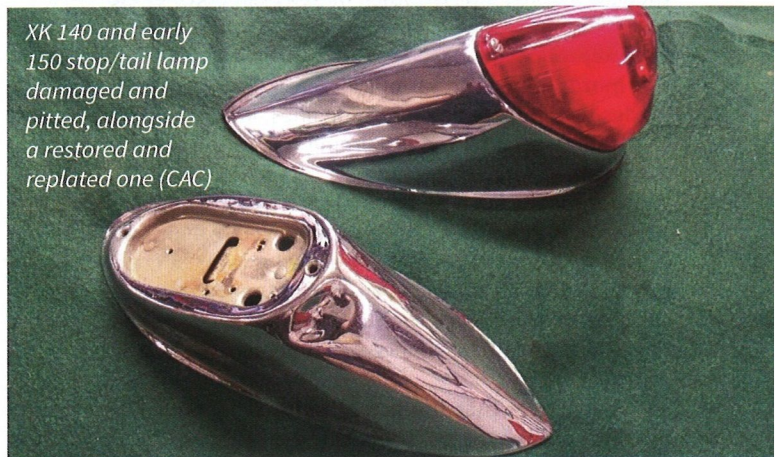
If you do think a part is worth restoring, such as a cast XK 140 grille, it can possibly be heavy coppered, but this is in fact multiple copper layering and polishing back, so expect very high labour costs, loss of detail and a massive weight gain as a top layer of light alloy will be replaced with heavier copper, before the nickel and chrome is applied. Again I recommend researching prices of new parts first, as they are often far superior to original items. CAC manufacture a brand-new unit on par with the price of restoring an original.

The best chrome plate has been known through time as 'triple chrome': this is a combination of a copper base coat consisting of a cyanide copper base, then an acid copper coat for good

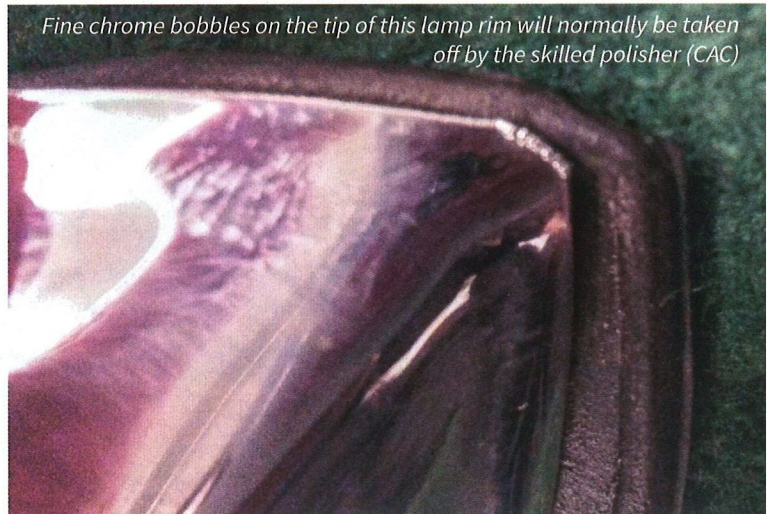
*New XK 120 rear bumper in bare steel and triple-chrome plated (CAC)*



*XK 140 and early  
150 stop/tail lamp  
damaged and  
pitted, alongside  
a restored and  
replated one (CAC)*



*Fine chrome bobbles on the tip of this lamp rim will normally be taken off by the skilled polisher (CAC)*



bonding and surface filling, then nickel and then a top layer of chrome. Cheaper plating misses out the copper stage but this reduces the bonding of the nickel to the product, so it may soon start to peel. In the olden days a more complex nickel strike base was used, instead of the modern cyanide copper method, but both are basically to prevent the acid copper from eating the part you are actually trying to plate!

The chrome plate must always be a consistent thickness. If too thin, the nickel will show through as a yellow-looking area or shadow (especially around holes) known as 'nickel blow' and if too thick, will give a grey finish, noticeable on curves and around edges where the current has been flowing through too powerfully, known as 'chrome burn'.

You may see the chrome plater as a single entity, but it is actually a combination of highly-skilled specialists. One has to know how to strip and prepare the item without destroying it,