

Mini adventure re-lives the

ITALIAN JOB

When Michael Caine arrives in Italy on a nostalgic charity fundraising event later this year he's likely to cause quite a stir with the international media. Partly because he'll be driving a mini car kitted out in full 'Italian Job' trim and, of course, because he bears the same name as the star of the cult 1969 film!

Not a lot of people know – until now that is - that Michael, from Onchan, and local businessman and friend Ian Sims of Baldrine, are taking part in the annual Italian Job children's charity fundraising event. And after lobbying the organisers they have been told they can donate a major chunk of the cash they raise to the Isle of Man Children's Centre.

Michael and Ian acquired a 1993 Mini Classic 1275 from a private seller in Bradford for the adventure, and have been working on it for several months. The car, which was not in the best of health, has been completely stripped down and rebuilt with new suspension, brakes and a full



Stop the rot – new skills are welded into place.



Picking up the mini in Bradford.

re-spray. It's also being given the full retro 'Italian Job' look with bonnet straps, three point fixed roll cage and three Cibie Oscar spot lamps.

The finished car will join around 100 others associated with the original film, and take part in a fantastic 2,500 round trip from the UK to Northern Italy. The route taken by each team to the starting point of the event at Stresa in Italy, is left entirely to their discretion, but they must arrive for scrutineering by October 26th.

Most of the vehicles taking part are minis, and as part of the event they will be travelling en masse to a variety of historic venues, following some of the routes taken by the real Italian Job minis in the film. The itinerary includes a



rally day on the hills overlooking Stresa, along with other similar events in the Veneto region. There will also be the chance to do a couple of laps on the famous Monza circuit, a day at the Adria Raceway, and a spin or two on the famous Lingotto.

The fundraising event has taken place every year since 1990 and has



Full service! The mini's engine is removed from the shell at the Autocrash premises in Douglas.

raised around £2 million for the National Children's Home. Under the rules of the event participating teams contribute 15 per cent of the cash raised to 'The Italian Job Development Fund,' 5 per cent to a local Italian children's charity, and 80 per cent to the NCH. In Mike and Ian's case half of that will go to the IOM Children Centre. The figure currently stands at over £2,000 from more than £4,000 pledged by local companies and individuals.

Companies including Spectrum Windows, JG Kelly Homes, Lowry Homes, The Paparazzi Restaurant, Viking Office System, Glen Cooper, James Caine's (Mike's own firm), Autocrash, The Steam Packet, Synergy IT and Harding Lewis Limited, have all helped out. But more support is being canvassed by Mike and Ian, who are meeting all their personal costs out of their own funds: 'We are certainly not attempting to fund a 'holiday' for ourselves, we are raising money for very worthy charities,' explained Mike. Companies who offer support will have their logos displayed on the car and their

details on Mike and Ian's impressive website at Italianjob.info

The event itself has consistently attracted massive worldwide media coverage since its inception 17 years ago, and with Mike bearing the same name as the film's most famous cast member, he's expecting considerable interest: 'The organisers seem quite excited by my name,' said Mike.

Meanwhile the car is nearing completion ahead of the trip, and as our photographs demonstrate, it's been a long, hard job to get it to full 'bank robbers' specification.



Pristine! The re-sprayed shell ahead of the re-build.