



Jaguar Drivers Club of Natal

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NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2010 (3)

Dear Jag Enthusiast

This has been an interesting week as there has been many developments in the working world outside – the sharks have won the ABSA Currie Cup so congratulations to them. On a sad note, the petrol price will increase again Wednesday morning, just in time for the Christmas rush!

Interesting facts and articles

We have received an interesting article from our patron on the 40th Anniversary of the Jaguar E-type, which is included within this newsletter.

E-TYPE 40th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS AT DONINGTON

by
Peter Fielding

It was in 1998 that we drove our XK140 around the Donington race-track before parking amidst 523 other XKs to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the XK. Never in my wildest imagination did I ever think that I would be there three years later, this time to celebrate 40 years of the E-type.

The E-type sports car, a machine of such perfect proportions, feline grace and unashamed decadence that thousands of enthusiasts still regard it as simply the most down-right sexy automobile ever produced. Its place in history is assured, as it is a name that conjures up all that is fast and streamlined. It is arguably the most recognisable model ever produced and although other cars may come and go, the E-type is still the benchmark by which other sports cars are judged.

The anniversary, organised by the JEC in conjunction with the AMOC, comprised two packed days of racing, Concours, static displays and auto-jumble. In 1998 we arrived mid-morning on Sunday and were the last to leave at 19h00 so this time I was determined to make the most of the two full days.

I arrived at the Donington gates at 08h00 on Saturday – not in the XK as last time nor in my E-type but in a hired Ford. Although the gates were officially open, I beat most of the marshals. It was too early for much activity but there were a few enthusiastic traders hammering poles into the ground in light drizzle to secure their awnings. By 10h00 the sun began to peep through the clouds as I walked in the paddock amongst the modified XKs, E-types, XJs, Mk11s, Aston Martins, Lotus and Austin Healeys preparing for the morning's practice session. After a three lap classic parade comprising E-types, XKs, XJS, a few saloons and Astons, I was politely requested to vacate the pit lane as racing was about to commence. I joined the folk in the grandstand opposite the pit lane, overlooking the start.

During the day I walked repeatedly into the paddock and pits witnessing the final brake adjustments, tune-ups and tweaking that perhaps could make the difference between the podium and retirement. I wandered into a large marquee to video a magnificent red Aston Martin Zagato open racer, only to find myself amidst a drivers' briefing by the Clerk of the Course. As I was not attired in racing overalls, I retreated quickly to video the adjacent Lotus Elise racing team. By now it was busy with drivers and mechanics rushing in all directions, preparing for the day ahead.

But back to the racing. Race 3 was the Proteus Sportscar powered by Jaguar Challenge with E-types, C and D-type replicas, a Lister Knobbly and Kougars. This variety of cars provided a spectacular and gripping race. The racing programme continued throughout the day with Austin Healy, Lotus, XJS, XJ220, Aston Martin, Sunbeam Tiger, Ferrari and Porsche competing.

I walked amongst the many rows of E-types that numbered about 300 plus 20 Aston Martins and a handful XKs. A large marquee housed the Coventry elite namely the F-type, XK180, XJ13, none of which I had seen before in the metal. The D-type XKD505 looked magnificent – this was the 5th D-Type produced and won Le Mans in 1955 driven by Hawthorn and Bueb. The Duncan Hamilton C-type XKC004 was there too. This amazing array of Jaguar's finest would not be complete without a silver XJ220, identical to the one that took me around the Castle Combe circuit in '98. Another notable car was Philip Porter's E-type 9600HP, the press car used for the 1961 launch at the Geneva Motor Show. Philip was strategically positioned in front of the car autographing his latest book on its history and restoration. The very first roadster, 77RW was alongside, magnificently restored and also present at Geneva in '61. There was a display of all E-type variables from the first to the last. The JEC stand did a brisk trade in regalia while Nigel Thorley also autographed his latest publication on E-types.

It remained cool and cloudy for most of the day but the sun appeared occasionally.

The 40th Anniversary dinner-dance was held that night at the Belfry Golf Club not far from Donington. It was a glittering affair with Sir Stirling Moss as the guest of honour. After a delightful dinner, we were treated to a 45-minute question and answer session preceded by a brief summary of his career by Paul Skilleter. Moss spoke about Mike Hawthorn, the Mille Miglia and comparisons between Jaguar and Mercedes racing cars. He reminisced about his greatest race and gave us his opinions on Jaguar in Formula 1. He talked about the worst racing car he had ever driven and his impressions of Sir William Lyons whose 100 birthday is commemorated this year. The audience hung onto every word of this living legend as he humorously recounted those charismatic days of motor racing in the 50s and 60s. I was fortunate to capture it all on video. The evening concluded with dancing until mid-night. For me it was a time for renewing friendships made on the Cape 2000 Tour and XK50 while making promises to attend future JEC events.

Sunday dawned cool and windy but the sun popped through every few minutes. This was the big day when the E-type Anniversary Tour arrived and a very large number of E's was expected. I wandered around the paddock again viewing the race prepared cars, many of which had been absent

the previous day. 20 XKs were assembled, side by side awaiting their turn to be unleashed on the track. Although I viewed the racing from several places around the circuit, I enjoyed the grandstand the most as it was overlooking the start and pit lane. I could look down on these mighty machines, hear and feel the howl of their exhausts and smell the hot brakes.

The Tour E-types paraded around the track at 10h45 led by Moss in the C-type. Having completed three laps, he climbed into a 4x4 while Graham Searle, GM of the JEC, had the privilege of driving the C-type back to the display marquee. At lunchtime there was another track parade, this time 150 E-types led by 77RW, XJ13 and XK180. XJ13 is truly an unbelievable car. Not only is it unique in Jaguar's history and development but its shape and construction were visionary in 1966. Each time there was an incline on the track, more throttle was necessary resulting in a roar, crackle and burble as the V12 exploded to propel this monstrous machine forward. It was unlike anything I have heard before. How Graham Searle managed to hitch a ride in XK 180, I will never know!

Race 9 was the Broadspout Trophy JEC XK Challenge with a grid of nearly 30 cars supporting every model type. To see so many XK racers, roaring and squealing around the circuit was another great moment that I took with me from this unique weekend. I particularly enjoyed Race 11, the Lynx 40th Anniversary E-type Race. I had a great view from the grandstand as nearly 30 cars lined up on the grid. The crescendo of a variety of Coventry exhausts climaxed as the lights went out. There was much bunching at the first corner as five E-types left the track under a cloud of dust and the race was stopped. Out came the new X-type pace car, while a tow truck removed a damaged E and they were off once again.

There were 800 E-types present on Sunday - row upon row, bonnet to tailgate from one end of the field to the other. Never before have so many gathered together in one place. I wonder how many will return for the 50th Anniversary in 2011, but that's another discussion altogether. There was every colour imaginable and far more coupes than roadsters. I was particularly interested to note how few 3.8 cars there were compared with 4.2s. There were lots of 2+2s and plenty of V12s. Most were in good condition and many were outstanding but there seemed to be different interpretations of authenticity. There were also about 30 Aston Martins from the 1950 DB2 to the very latest models.

There was an auto-jumble of E-type spares. Wasn't someone in Johannesburg looking for a roadster hardtop? I had already collected a huge box from XK Engineering earlier in the week but it was fascinating just to look at the vast array of spares. During the afternoon I visited the outstanding Donington Grand Prix collection of historic racing cars next to the track comprising five halls, packed with every racer imaginable spanning over sixty years.

E-type 40, like XK50 in '98 was of profound significance. It was not only another milestone in Jaguar's evolution, but it demonstrated the huge interest that still exists in these great cars. Enthusiasts came from all over the world. I was fortunate to meet a friend from Ohio with whom I have been exchanging Jaguar bumper badges. It was a time for the most famous sports car in history to gather in unbelievable numbers 40 years after its creation. It was also an occasion for enthusiasts to meet for the first time and for old friendships to be re-kindled whilst memories of this gargantuan event could be retained and reflected upon when behind the wheel of an E-type in the years to come. There can be no doubt that the E-type is alive and well and likely to remain so for as long as the motor car exists and car enthusiasts consider speed and styling paramount.

So how did E-type 40 compare with XK50 in 1998?

A difficult question but one that I will undoubtedly be asked, so I'll try to answer it here. Certainly there were twice as many E-types as there were XKs. There were contemporary greats such as

XJ13, XK180 and the F-type as opposed to historic XKs, SS100s, C and D-types. At the gala dinners - Moss presented a fascinating insight to his racing career as opposed to Norman Dewis' hilarious accounts at XK50 of his Jaguar testing days. But XK50 had something else that could not be measured in numbers of cars or celebrity value. It had an aura of excitement which made the blood race and caused me to catch my breath each time I turned my head to absorb the total spectacle. Could it be that the passion for my XK exceeds that for my E-type?

Peter Fielding

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Future Events

Sunday 14 November

The offer to accompany the DECC on their run to the valley of 1000 hills for lunch is still open. We need to RSVP before the Friday 5th of November to secure the booking. This run is B.Y.O.B. The cost is R55 per head. Please contact Jack or Lynne to confirm that you are attending.

Thursday 16 December

The offer to join up with the DECC to enjoy the Christmas lunch at the Westville Country Club still stands. If any member has an alternate suggestion please advise.

Queenstown June 2011

Please be aware that the date for deposit paying is around the corner. If you are interested, please email Jack @ swanfield@telkomsa.net so that he can pass all information on to you.

Kind Regards

Steve Nell