
A 'Slice of Jaguar' for Breakfast at JD Classics

30 March 2012 | Roger Dixon

We'd never advocate eating a rare or endangered species of big cat. But, if anything to do with the Jaguar marque whets your appetite, well, why not head along to Essex Jaguar specialist JD Classics, which occasionally opens its doors for a Sunday 'Breakfast Morning'.

Located on the estuary of the river Blackwater, the historic town of Maldon, Essex, is perhaps better known for its vintage Thames sailing barges than for classic sports cars, but times they are a-changing.

Turning into the Wycke Hill Business Park on Sunday, 25 March and joining the throng heading through the gates of JD Classics, I was confronted by classic cars parked everywhere: Triumph TRs, Porphes, MGs, Caterhams, even a 1960s Corvette (and a good selection of classic Jaguars).

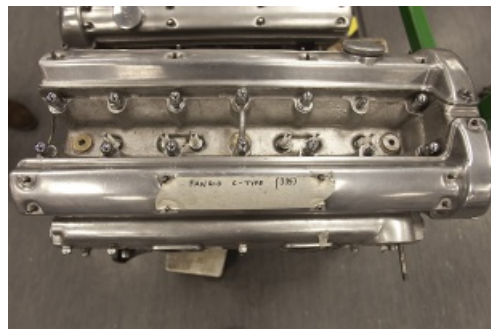


We have become accustomed to historic race and road cars being prepared to a flawless level, yet, on entering this treasure-trove of showrooms and workshops, you soon realise just how high are JD's standards. Clinically clean and well-organised, the five showrooms, competition department, service workshop, bodyshop and the engine build/machine area were all open to scrutiny, with members of JD's staff on hand to answer any questions.

I was told that it only takes half a day to prepare for these Breakfast Mornings - which shows how immaculately kept they must be during the normal working day. Each showroom or workshop was filled with a selection of mouth-watering machinery in various stages of preparation. Sympathetically restored, finished cars (many of which were for sale) displayed workmanship and attention to detail of the highest level. These were restored classics, not rebuilt ones.

No doubt it's this standard of workmanship that persuaded Jaguar Cars to entrust JD Classics with the preparation, maintenance and trackside support for its Heritage Racing Programme this year.

Although they are not all 'Heritage' cars, JD is servicing and supporting no fewer than 11 entrants at the Mille Miglia this May.



The other weekend, 'Breakfast' enthusiasts were spoiled for choice: not only could they inspect the official Heritage cars, but also look at pretty much any other type of classic/race Jaguar, many of which sported illustrious histories. In addition to the cars from Coventry, there were others to admire, ranging from Minis to a Ferrari Enzo.

One that I have to mention is the 1966 Lotus Cortina 'PHK 614D'. Although not drawing attention to itself, the ex-works car was raced in period by Jim Clark, Graham Hill, Pete Arundell, Jacky Ickx, Sir John Whitmore and Piers Courage. It's watching the three-wheeling antics of Messrs. Clark and Hill in this very car that injected the motor racing drug into yours truly.

At 10:30 sharp, F1 journalist Alan Henry hosted a Q & A session with a panel comprising legendary Jaguar chief development driver Norman Dewis and ex-works Le Mans racer and multiple saloon car champion Win Percy. Among a host of interesting tales, Dewis recounted the times when the notoriously parsimonious Sir William Lyons would "coast his Jaguar into the works courtyard with an empty fuel tank so that he could fill up from the company pump," and the sensation of record-breaking in an XK120, achieving a maximum of 173mph.



With Percy in fine form, telling the story of his infamous 240mph crash in a Silk Cut Jaguar XJR8 at Le Mans in 1987, it was inevitable that the session had to be extended by half an hour beyond its allotted time.

I am reliably informed that somewhere in the JD facility complex visitors could get some breakfast... but I was too engrossed sampling the delights of the mechanical kind, so didn't find it. Well, you can eat bacon any day of the week - I was there for a slice of Jaguar.

Feeling hungry? The next JD Classics Breakfast Morning is on 3 June, is totally free, and will most likely have 'Le Mans' as its theme.

Photos: Roger Dixon

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