

CLASSIC DRIVER

Timeless Classics: Jaguar D-type

Lead

When it burst onto the international scene in 1954, the Jaguar D-type was at the cutting edge of race engineering. The 'D' represented a huge step forward from the C-type, which – although highly successful and hugely desirable – was nevertheless a racing car adapted from the XK120 road car.

The D-type, on the other hand, was a fully fledged racer from the start, with a design brief that essentially demanded 'functional efficiency at all costs'.

While form came second to function in terms of the brief, the result was extraordinarily beautiful – with one of the best-loved silhouettes in the whole of motoring history. That characteristic fin, however, wasn't present on the earliest D-types, but was a later product of wind-tunnel testing, an aerodynamic approach then in its infancy.

Three Le Mans wins



More importantly, the D-type was an instant success on the track, winning Le Mans outright in 1955, 1956 and 1957 – first as a works entry, and then in the hands of the renowned privateers at Ecurie Ecosse.

At the very heart of the D-type was an alloy, semi-monocoque chassis, riveted and welded to produce a lightweight – but extremely stiff – structure, its development relying heavily on WWII aircraft technology. Jaguar (with Dunlop) had pioneered the use of disc brakes, and they had already proved their worth on the later C-types. It was only natural, then, that Jaguar should apply similar technology, with servo assistance, to the far more technically advanced D-type.

The tennis-playing ice racer



Any one of the 54 examples of the D-type produced for privateer customers is a rare gem, but the 1955 car pictured – chassis XKA 530 – has a particularly intriguing history. Its classic Jaguar 3781cc straight-six engine, with three twin-choke Weber carburetors, was retro-fitted by the Jaguar factory in December 1959 (and is now estimated to produce around 300bhp), by which time its original 3.4-litre engine had proved effective enough to ensure multiple first-place finishes... many of them on ice.

The car's early ice-racing history is thanks to its first owner, Curt Lincoln of Helsinki, a tennis player on Finland's Davis Cup team. He took delivery of the British Racing Green car in April 1956 but, in the hope of avoiding excessive import duty, he asked the Coventry factory to make the car appear 'used'. It was therefore delivered with intentionally scuffed pedals, a second-hand steering wheel and an odometer clocked... forwards.

The world's most colourful British Racing Green D-type?



The car continued to live a colourful life, with only space to mention a few highlights here. There are its many races in the hands of Timo Makinen; and the fact that it's believed to be the only D-type to have raced in the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Or the fact that – as the current owner is more than happy to attest – it was once the subject of a controversy as to its real identity: a controversy that was settled with such certainty that it's enough to make potential owners smile. As so often happens, there appeared to be two cars claiming chassis number XKD 530, a situation summarised by one expert as follows: "It seems difficult to rectify the situation, unless some benevolent person should decide to purchase both cars and exchange the front sub-frames and the legal documents, resulting in only one single car claiming to be XKD 530."

Which, believe it or not, is exactly what happened. Both cars were bought and sent to renowned restoration expert Chris Keith-Lucas (of CKL Developments in East Sussex), who took them apart and reassembled the genuine XKD 530 with the correct, original parts. That is the car you see here – a car that went on to run in the Mille Miglia retrospective (four times), and at the Goodwood Revival, to name but two events. This [highly original and authentic D-type](#) will be offered for sale by [RM Sotheby's at Amelia Island on 14 March 2015](#).

Photos: Patrick Ernzen ©2015 Courtesy of RM Sotheby's

Gallery

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