

Motoring

Keep in tune with what's new

Syd Taylor gets a rare chance to drive 9600 HP – the very first example of that 60s icon the Jaguar E-Type which was unveiled to the world in 40 years ago after a frantic dash from the Midlands

happened on
h 15, 1961 in
Parc des Eaux
overlooking
Geneva.

ing off headlines
le about the sen-
new 150 mph

that looked like
rise on earth, the E-
s revealed to the
ress – and a million
ere born.

better reflected its
E-Type and it
uch a part of the 60s
esties and Twigg,
h wouldn't know a
om a Ford knew
e extraordinary E-
uar, the logical cul-
of a line of sporting
ies that began with
ambition to
in racing.

he phoenix that rose
y flames that gutted
Lane in that devast-
that saw the end of
other things – the
ject which was the
festation of the prin-
the road-going D-
self a desirable car,
d to make the tran-
complete roadster
there was too much
r in the pedigree.
as if anticipating
nation of the line, it
he way forward to
dramatic and excit-
s car ever made.

Furious

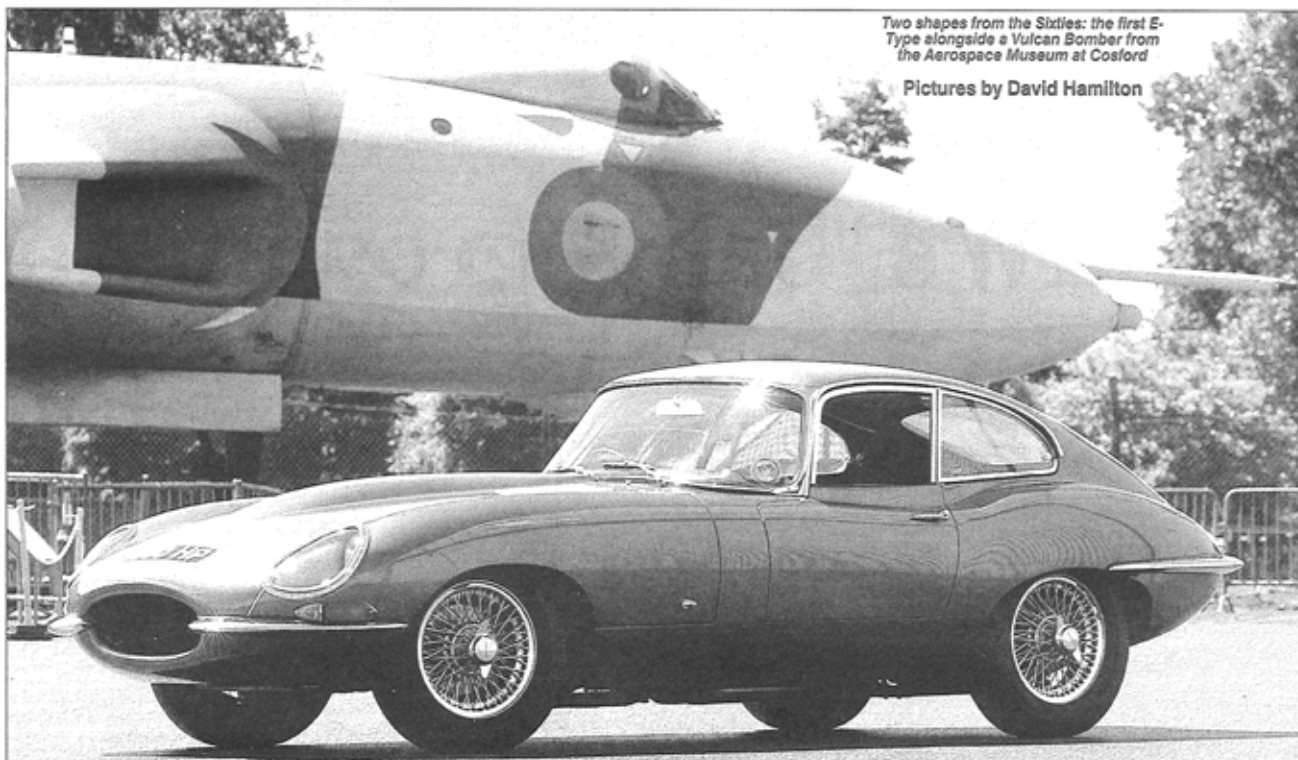
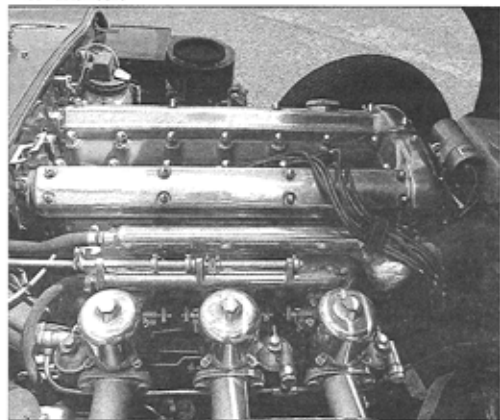
not hyperbole: this

an inkling of what
today's Motor Show
must have felt when I
at very same gun-
ny car. The car that
P.R. man and racing
b Berry had driven
the night from
in a mad dash to
all those years ago –
it the risk of time just
unch was about to

God Berry. I
ou were going to
said a furious Sir
Lyons.

IP is the oldest and
rable of all E-Types
it was that I became
a player in my own
ted memories –
the generosity of
dthorp, director of
tor Cars of Bridg-
d to the car's long
odian, Jaguar histo-
riographer Philip Porter,
nguish in a barn
as it needed strong
ing to bring it back
to better to handle
igning restoration
han Classic Motor
ere a team headed
wined automobile

Similarly, scribe lines
made by the engineers
on the bulkhead when they were
working out how to position
things, are faithfully pre-
served.



Two shapes from the Sixties: the first E-Type alongside a Vulcan Bomber from the Aerospace Museum at Cosford

Pictures by David Hamilton

Driving a dream – the first E-type

engineer Andrew Tart
somehow managed to
combine a newly minted
appearance with that evoc-
ative sense of the past.

That hint of slightly worn
leather and that aromatic
cocktail that only a hand built
automobile can conjure up
is, thankfully, preserved.

The combination is irre-
sistible. This is no reman-
ufactured car: it is a restoration
dedicated to authenticity
which is absolute, even down
to the Jaguar script badge on
the tailgate being set
crooked, just as it was way
back in 1961.

Similarly, scribe lines
made by the engineers on
the bulkhead when they were
working out how to position
things, are faithfully pre-
served.

It must be remembered
that this was a prototype with
panels made by hand rather
than being pressed. In
places non-standard mystic
apertures exist presum-
ably for access – but to what?
Could these handmade parts
have been hurriedly modified
to incorporate changes
during development?

Even the chassis number
875002 D/N is a mystery. On
the old XK's D/N indicated an
overdrive, but the E was
never fitted with overdrive
because there was no room.

Undimmed by time the E-
Type's charisma is a magnet
to the red-blooded every-
where – a sensuous design
of blended metals and
elegant lines. No car before
or since has managed to
combine such aesthetic suc-

cess with such devastating
performance in a package
priced within the reach of the
ordinary man with a twinkle in
his eye.

What it was that inspired
those senators of style, Sir
William Lyons and design-
aerodynamicist Malcolm
Sayers, we'll never know but
images of John Cobb's Mobil
Napier Raiton and Dan
Dare's Anastasia spring to
mind.

**• Our last sight of this
historic motorcar was
through a rain
drenched windscreen –
and the shape of prob-
ably the most beautiful
car in the world
wavered – almost dis-
solving like a phantom:
for the Jaguar E-Type
is, more than any other
car, a dream incarnate'**

Whatever it was, Jaguar
had out-Ferrari'd Ferrari and
every other supercar manu-
facturer in terms of sheer
desirability of the product.
Not only that, it was priced to
undercut rivals by an astor-
ishing margin. At just
£2,195/19s 2d it was unbe-
leivable.

When it's time to drive it's
not the easiest of cars to get
into. You straddle a wide sill
and sit on a small poorly-
shaped and thinly-padded
seat pushed back to give just
enough room behind the thin
wood-rimmed wheel, with its
drilled alloy spokes and
Jaguar's head emblem at the
centre.

Facing you is a haphazard
array of toggle switches and
white-on-black Smith's
instruments set into an

embossed aluminium dash
panel all combining to give
the interior its unique charac-
ter – typical of the days
before ergonomic obses-
sions stole a motorcar's soul.

Once settled, a glance in
the rear view mirror affords a
view through the authentic
Perspex rear window (one of
the weight-saving secrets
that helped the car achieve
its best one-way speed of
151.7 mph when tested by
Autocar) – a view ever so
slightly distorted that one
might imagine seeing the
very mist of time deform and
ultimately dissolve the
present, leaving a rearward
perspective that shines with
the glory of yesteryear.

As for the driving experi-
ence the dynamics are so
unlike the point and squirt
zippiness of today's sports
cars. This car craves a long
uncongested road so that,
like a lazy cat, it can unwind
at leisure – and being an E-
Type there seems no limit to
the potential of this marvel-
ous car and engine
package.

Unlike many other high
performance cars of that era
it is tractable and docile,
coping well with today's
traffic conditions – which is all
for the good because the
four-speed Moss gearbox,
with no synchronesh on first,
demands careful changes.

But all that really doesn't
matter because when you
open the throttle, the surge of
that straight six 3.8 XK6's
engine – which we now know
had bigger valves and was
gas flowed to give another
20/25 horsepower over a
standard engine – propels
you forward quickly enough
to despatch modern 'hot
hatches' which invariably

snap at your heels.

It still feels fast to drive and
I understand that when
driven hard it can give a sur-
prisingly good account of
itself. Obviously out of
respect for someone else's
cherished machinery it was
not for me to explore those
levels.

Modestly shod, grip is
obviously not up to today's
standards so you can push it
to its limits at lower speeds
yet always the body is con-
trolled with authority and the
handling is good and well
balanced with no menda-
cious messages.

Brakes, it must be said,
don't have an instant effect
even though the E-Type was
the first production car to use
discs on all wheels. It is as if a
car so dedicated to speed
resents the anchoring pull of

retrenchment.

People often ask what
makes the E-Type so special
and I think owner Philip
Porter sums it up best when
he writes: "Today we live in a
nanny state, but the E-Type
was a rebel and handsome
rebels often become roman-
tic idols. It is a reminder of a
freer less regulated age."

On rare occasions in
history certain socialists do
occur as if to afford us a
glimpse of what halcyon
days must have been like –
so one should not forget that
the E-Type appeared at the
same time as the new motor-
ways on which this secret
prototype underwent high
speed testing. If ever a car
was designed for such roads
it was this: if ever a road was
designed for such a car it was
the motorway in its glorious

unregulated days.

After some magnificent
driving and photography we
returned 9600 HP to GMC.
Then the rain came in tor-
rents. Our last sight of this
historic motorcar was
through a rain drenched
windscreen – and the shape
of probably the most beau-
tiful car in the world wavered –
almost dissolving like a
phantom: for the Jaguar E-
Type is, more than any other
car, a dream incarnate.

Thanks must go to Nick
Goldthorpe of Classic Motor
Cars of Bridgnorth (01746
765804) and to owner of
9600 HP, Philip Porter, for
giving permission to carry
out this test.

• Between 1962 and 1974,
72,529 E-Types were pro-
duced

