



Classic and Sportscar - June 1994

RACERS' REUNION by Simon Taylor

Goodwood is the scene for this historic meeting of E-type racers, two of them Lightweights. Simon Taylor track tests the famous trio.



What better place to exercise a trio of early 1960s British racers than Goodwood? It looks a bit forlorn on this cold, wet morning in early March but I can well remember its sunny garden-party atmosphere of 30 years ago.

Long gone are the grandstands which, packed with tweeds and summer dresses, used to greet each chequered flag with a ripple of polite, middle-class applause. The chicane, with the neat brick parapet at the apex that Behra famously demolished when his BRM's brakes failed, is now recalled merely by a line of old tyres. The paddock is a windswept, empty place, and only memory's eye sees the orderly rows of simple wooden booths, with Salvadori elegantly leaning on a cockpit and Hill bristling

about his business.

Happily, poignant nostalgia for days gone by can now be tempered by anticipation; the current Earl of March is following in his grandfather's footsteps.

The wonderful Festival of Speed held up at The House last year was an extraordinary success, and will be repeated this coming June 18. Better yet, the local council has now approved in principle plans for racing to return to the circuit, and the intention when the necessary work has been done is for it to host four historic race meetings a year.

So much of Britain's post-war motor racing history was enacted here you forget that the former



Westhampnett Airfield was a proper race track for fewer than 20 years. It's only right it should return.



Anyone over 40 can remember the impact in March 1961 of the Jaguar E-type's announcement - a car as glamorous as anything from Modena for little more than £2000. I first saw E-types racing at the 1962 Easter Monday Goodwood, the day of Stirling Moss' dreadful accident. Roy Salvadori was at the wheel of John Coombs' grey car, its BUY 1 registration now changed to 4 WPD. Weary after his afternoon's work, which included two Formula 1 races in the Bowmaker Lola and a IO-lapper in the Coombs Jag Mk 2, Salvo put the E-type into the bank at Madgwick. It was this accident that sent the car back to the Jaguar competitions shop for a rebuild and development programme, which culminated in the lightweight E-type series.

The trio of E-types assembled in the Goodwood rain represent three stages of the car's competition development. The first, 9023 DU, is a factory-prepared steel car with iron block, used by Briggs Cunningham and John Fitch to win the GT class at Sebring in 1962.

With its alloy monocoque and block, 5114 WK is 250lb lighter. It's seventh of the batch of 12 true factory lightweights, one of three run by Cunningham at Le Mans in 1963. Current owner Campbell McLaren has kept the specification just how it was in its heyday.



If it's history you want, 4 WPD has lashings of it. As BUY 1 it was one of two to make the car's victorious racing debut at Oulton Park on April 15 1961. It became the prototype lightweight and was raced by Graham Hill, Roy Salvadori, Jackie Stewart, Dan Gurney and Jack Sears. Later it made the name of the young Brian Redman, and current owner Gordon Brown preserves it with the wider rubber under flared rear wings that it wore in Redman's day. In this final form it thus represents a further step on from the Cunningham cars. Mike Lawrence tells you more of the three cars' history later on.

Lynx Motors International, which has done so much down the years to preserve important parts of Jaguar's racing heritage, looks after both Cunningham cars for their owners. Boss John Mayston-Taylor buckled me into 5114 WK first.

Walt Hansgen and Augie Pabst sat here at Le Mans in 1963: stationary and silent, it feels much like a standard 3.8 E-type inside, the cosy little cockpit naked of carpet and trim but with the usual dash layout and the familiar three voluptuous humps down the long bonnet. Sit up straight and your crash-hat clouts the roll-bar, but the workmanlike bucket seat with its original leather holds you well. There's a leather-rim wheel, an oil temperature gauge on the transmission tunnel and the switch for the





Kenlowe fan: the neat little alloy gearknob denotes the five-speed ZF box, fitted by the factory after the original all-synchro four-speed gave up on Hansgen at Le Mans.

It starts on the button, the hard straight-six boom from the twin tailpipes unsullied by silencers, with the six intakes of the Lucas fuel injection gulping audibly. The little ZF lever slots into first and we're splashing down the pitlane and on to the soaking track.

The first chore is a couple of slow laps in formation for photographer Childs. Surely these pedigree racers won't like pottering along behind a Jeep at 30mph? But I'm burbling along happily enough at 1200rpm in third: then the Jeep pulls off and, although the plugs are a bit fluffy at first, the lusty big six soon dears its throat and goes singing round to 5000rpm.



It's still drizzling and very wet, and the Lightweight gives a little wriggle of wheelspin as I accelerate hard in third down to Madgwick. Offline, Goodwood is quite bumpy. Every puddle and wooden sleeper probably has a tale to tell, and I don't want to be clumsy in these conditions. Through the long, slightly uphill right-hander I try to feed in the power progressively, and the rear end sits down reassuringly. It doesn't feel like it's going to bite me yet. The brakes are light and powerful, and the ZF box is a dream- snick, snick from cog to cog.

Now we're accelerating hard in fourth through Fordwater, rain blowing off the long bonnet and coursing over the screen despite the single wiper. The S-bend at St Mary's has an awkward falling apex for the right and then an adverse camber for the left. There's a lot of standing water here and it helps to go slow in, fast out to get the car pointing the right way for the short blast to Lavant.

This is a wonderful two-apex right: cope with the first part and you can stay hard on the power for the second, taking fourth coming out and fifth before the flat left kink that follows. There's a long plume of spray in the mirror and the engine note is a hard howl as we pull

4200 rpm in fifth in the rush down to Woodcote, which comes up a lot quicker than I expect. So it's - blam - into fourth and - blam - into third, and the Lightweight's nose stays glued to the apex. Then hard on the brakes for the chicane, an easy twirl right and left on the light, responsive steering, and then gloriously up the gears past the pits again. This Jaguar is a pussycat.



Positive steering, progressive handling, smooth brakes, light clutch and steering: a nice car for a 24-hour working day at Le Mans. In fact, this is a racing car you could easily go shopping in. Clearly, Campbell McLaren and Lynx between them have got the car absolutely right.



The rain's relenting as I get aboard the Sebring car, while Brian Cunningham, Briggs' London-based grandson who is carrying on the family tradition as a serious Formula 3 racer, climbs into the Lightweight. The steel car is similar inside but, driving off, there's an immediate difference: the good old Moss box, slow and heavy after the ZF. The only way is to treat it like a crash box, double-declutching deliberately if nasty crunches are to be avoided.

John Mayston-Taylor explains that this car's new owner, Michael Burt, hasn't yet finished dialling out some suspension gremlins, and certainly it feels more nervous. Bumpsteer makes it weave under braking into Madgwick, and if you try to get the power on as early as the Lightweight it runs wide through the puddles.

But its essentially predictable nature still comes through: the track is a bit dryer now, except at St Mary's, and trying to keep up with Brian in the Lightweight I begin to get into a rhythm and start to feel more at home. When this car is fully sorted it'll be a delight.

All Jaguar's work in saving 250lb to cope with the Ferraris certainly makes a difference. The engine in 9023 DU, with wide-angle D-type head and Webers, feels almost as powerful, but following Brian in the

Lightweight on to the Lavant Straight I have to watch him ease inexorably away.



So to 4 WPD, the most famous of them all. This has the Moss box too, and also probably the strongest engine, with instant response from its sliding throttle fuel injection and a truly symphonic exhaust note. It is beautifully turned out, and in the cockpit I'm met by its original trim and the standard E-type woodrim wheel. Gordon Brown squeezes himself into the harness-less passenger seat to make sure I don't mistreat his old friend. It's raining hard again now, and on its big tyres this car feels different again, but it's certainly quick, going from third (pause) to top out of Madgwick and blasting hard through Fordwater to St Mary's.

Here I nearly tie myself in a knot, because the left-hander is tighter than the right-hander that precedes it, and after getting the right-hand bit more or less right I find myself arriving too fast for the still very wet left-hand bit. The nose starts to run wide and out of the corner of my eye I register the owner's hands grasping the top of the dash. Roy or Graham would no doubt have given 4 WPD some nonchalant right foot and a bit of opposite lock to get the nose back to the apex. But I'm wary of how quickly those wide back tyres might let go through the puddles. So I just scramble round in an inelegant, under-steery moment, the E-type's forgiving nature seeing me through. I feel better back in the paddock when Gordon tells me that, minutes earlier, Mike McDowell, revisiting the car in which he'd done so many test miles three decades earlier, actually spun 4 WPD at St Mary's...





Three wonderful cars, all different in feel, but all endowed with that smooth, torquey rush of power, that hard, boomy exhaust note and that light, stable handling. I'm reminded again that the Jaguar E-type is one of the great cars of all time: if they were as rare as Ferrari GTOs they'd be just as sought-after.

Come to think of it, a genuine Lightweight E-type is rarer than a GTO, since only 12 cars were built against 29 of the Ferraris. I can't blame Campbell McLaren for buying his twice - or Gordon for hanging on to his for life.

Mike Lawrence charts the History of the Lightweights

When the E-type was announced at the 1961 Geneva motor show, it was obviously going to be raced-but not by Jaguar. The company withdrew from racing in 1956 but kept its competition department open, supposedly to service private owners. In fact, works cars were supplied to certain teams: Ecurie

Ecosse was virtually the works Jaguar team in 1957. It was no surprise, however, that some of the first E-types were delivered to motor racing privateers. Briggs Cunningham in America was one, and in England cars went to John Coombs and Tommy Sopwith, the two team owners who had been most successful with Jaguars in saloon racing.

The British cars were driven from Coventry to Oulton Park in April 1961 and one of the delivery drivers was Mike McDowell, then an engineer with Jaguar who later ran the Coombs team. Mike recalls that first race.

"Both cars suffered from excessive brake wear and fuel surge problems and we drove them back to Coventry after practice to try to rectify it. Roy Salvadori drove for Coombs and Graham Hill for Sopwith. Roy led the race until he had brake problems - there hadn't been time to change the brake discs on his car - and that dropped him to third, but Graham won from Innes Ireland's Aston Martin DB4 GT."

Salvadori then won with the Coombs car at Crystal Palace in May, beating Jack Sears in the Sopwith car, and two Ferrari 250GT SWBs. Roy might have won again at Brands Hatch, but the car began misfiring and Mike Parkes swept by in his Ferrari. Mike drove the Sopwith car at Snetterton and won from Salvadori. These were good results with virtually standard cars and, in a brief season, Salvadori finished the year with a second and a third, by which time E-types had become a common sight on British circuits.



At the end of 1961, the Coombs car, BUY 1, was re-registered 4 WPD and, during the winter, it received an aluminium bonnet and hardtop and a new monocoque in lighter gauge steel. It was also fitted with a D-type wide-angle cylinder head with triple Weber 45 DCOE carburettors, larger brake discs, a brake servo, stiffer suspension and a 26-gallon fuel tank. Basically a works development car, 4 WPD was still not yet a Lightweight.

International sports car racing changed in 1962, the classic events were primarily for GT cars and Ferrari had a new contender: the 250 GTO. It was more powerful than the B-type and lighter; it was not quite as aerodynamically efficient ('aerodynamics' was a word Ferrari people had to look up in the dictionary) but its wider track, better weight distribution and a lower centre of gravity made it a better-handling car. This much you'd expect, since the

250 GTO was a bespoke competition model, while Jaguar was popping out 5000 E-types a year. During 1962, E-types appeared at most major races and, depending on your point of view, either failed to hack it or did amazingly for a mass-produced car. In the Daytona Three-Hour race Walt Hansgen drove the car now registered 9023 DU and finished fifth in class while at Sebring Briggs Cunningham and John Fitch won their class.

Finished on April 24, 1961, 9023 DU is one of the earliest left-hand drive E-types left. It's not a Lightweight, but is a fine original example of an early racing E fitted with aluminium bonnet, hardtop and bootlid, D-type cylinder head, three Weber 45 DCOE carbs, a racing exhaust manifold and other competition accessories like drilled pedals, uprated brakes, rear axle oil cooler and aluminium covers over the lights. It's good for about 250bhp.

Like many Cunningham cars, it didn't often race. It ran once in Europe at the 1962 Le Mans test weekend, where it was still tired after Sebring, and did a few SCCA races in the States in '63. It was brought back from America in '74 and now belongs to Michael Burt.

The E-type's most distinguished international result in 1962 came at Le Mans when Briggs Cunningham, co-driving with Roy Salvadori, finished fourth in a works coupe behind three Ferraris. In fifth place was an E-type driven by Peter Lumsden and Peter Sargeant which had been on course for third place before it stuck in top gear.

At the end of the season Salvadori took 4 WPD to fourth place in the Tourist Trophy behind three GTOs. During the 1962 season it was mainly driven by Graham Hill who won his first World Championship that year. At Oulton Park in April Graham drove like a hero but was beaten by Mike Parkes in Equipe Endeavour's new Ferrari 250GTO. It was really no contest - Parkes was a superb driver who became an important member of the Ferrari team - but

Hill made the Jaguar look better than it should.

All season, Hill could mix it with the Ferraris on occasion, and even beat some of them, but it was obvious the 250GTO was the car to have, so Coombs bought one. This gave Jaguar a prod and the company decided to make a wholehearted commitment. The story goes that Coombs, although he denies this, lent his Ferrari which Jaguar stripped and then couldn't reassemble because a cleaner had swept up most of the bolts, which were metric.



Over the winter of 1962/3 4 WPD was turned into the first Lightweight and then Jaguar built another 11. They differed in detail, but all had an aluminium roadster body with right-hand drive and also in aluminium were the hard-top, monocoque, engine block and cylinder head with wider valve angles than the D-type head. There was a dry-sump lubrication system, Lucas fuel injection, Dunlop magnesium wheels, stiffer chassis and a wider wheelbase. The original had hoped to shed 150lb but actually lost 250lb which made it lighter than the 250GTO.



Most Lightweights produced 300-310bhp (a Ferrari 250GTO had 300bhp) but, by the end of 1963 development on 4 WPD had raised power to 344bhp thanks to the use of a sliding plate throttle and tuned exhaust. The only other Lightweight to receive these mods was the Lindner/Nocker car which ran at Le Mans in 1964.

A Lightweight hallmark is the ventilated boot lid which dispels heat from the rear brakes, and many also have little valances behind the front wheels to satisfy the scrutineers at Le Mans. They maintained the wings didn't cover enough of the wider-than-standard wheels. A ZF five-speed gearbox was usually fitted, but its weight caused the aluminium cylinder block to distort, which could signal gasket trouble, and many aluminium blocks today bear telltale welds at the back.

There were two more semi-Lightweights with a steel monocoque; a roadster and a left-hand drive coupe. Dick Protheroe's special-bodied aerodynamic coupe (CUT 7) is usually included as a semi-Lightweight, although some argue it was a separate works prototype.

In international racing in 1963, Kjell Qvale's Lightweight finished seventh at Sebring, while Peter Lindner's led the GT class in the Nurburgring 1000km until the engine let go. Dick Protheroe took his coupe to second overall and first in the GT class in a race at Reims, perhaps the Lightweight's finest achievement. Salvadori was third in the Tourist Trophy with 'Tommy' Atkins' car, Jack Sears fourth in 4WPD.

Driven by Graham Hill in British events, however, 4 WPD was unbeatable. At Snetterton in March, in latest Cooper Monaco sports-racer. Then he beat Mike Parkes' 250GTO in the Sussex Trophy at Goodwood, but it ended the Ferrari's monopoly in Brit races.

Hill won again at Silverstone in May and July. In 1963 Graham raced the car just four times and each occasion won with it. However, they were short sprints without a truly international field. For the Tourist Trophy he opted to use Coombs' 250 GTO - and won.



Three Lightweights were used by Briggs Cunningham, although they were owned by the works; Cunningham was the frontman. Of the 1963 Cunningham-entered cars 5114 WK was also at Goodwood. At Sebring a Cunningham Lightweight finished eighth, beating all the AC Cobras, but there's doubt as to which one. The confusion arises because, as works cars, the chassis and engines were swapped around between races; 5114 WK certainly ran at Le Mans in 1963, but retired with a broken gearbox. When the sister car of Cunningham and Grossman had a shunt, 5114 WK's undamaged bonnet was pressed into service and it eventually finished ninth.



and for '64, and the Lightweight was at the end of its serious racing life. One reason was the arrival of the AC Cobra and Ferrari 250LM; another was that wheel widths were increasing and the E-type couldn't accept them, but did not impress in it. Dan Gurney drove it at Silverstone, but could finish no higher than eighth.. The fastest drivers in the world.

Reluctantly, Coombs agreed to test a youngster recommended to him by 'Lofty' England, head of the Jaguar competition department. In damp conditions the youngster broke the class lap record at Silverstone and was signed. Jackie Stewart drove for Coombs on many occasions after that, but rarely in 4 WPD. He won first time out at Crystal Palace was second to Jack Sears' Cobra in his second race, beating Salvadori's Cobra and Parkes' GTO, and retired with a puncture in his third and final race with the car. On Stewart's insistence, the five-speed ZF gearbox was replaced by a Moss-Jaguar 'box which 4 WPD retains.

At the end of the season Coombs sold the car to Charles Bridges of Red Rose Motors in Chester and Bridges had it sprayed red. It was then driven by another promising youngster, Brian Redman, who raced it 22 times in 1965. He was beaten only once, by a Ferrari 250 LM. Redman shunted the car at one point and it was returned to the factory for a replacement monocoque.

At the end of the year Bridges sold it to a friend, Gordon Brown, who permitted him to race it. Bridges drove 4 WPD with success in British events in early 1966 until Digby Martland turned up at Oulton Park with the prototype Chevron B3 (with a 1588cc Ford-Cosworth twin cam engine), and beat him. He retired from racing and Gordon Brown took possession of the car.

Gordon's a marine engineer who's owned a succession of Jaguars including an ex-works XK120 (JWK 977) that ran at Le Mans in 1950 and had C-type rear suspension, and the ex-Dick Protheroe XK120 (GPN 635) 'The Ancient Egyptian'. He used 4 WPD for speed trials and sprints between 1966 and 1970. Then it was garaged and has been seen in public only three times since: at a tribute to Graham Hill in 1976, at the 1000 E-types Meeting at Donington in 1991, and here. During late 1990 and early 1991 it was rebuilt and the components refurbished, but it remains remarkably original.

Reunited with 4 WPD, Mike McDowell said: "It feels like any of the great E-types and I've driven many of them. Every one of them is wonderful, with bags of low-down torque and plenty of go. They were never as good as a 250GTO but they were always predictable and forgiving."

Brian Cunningham drove Michael Burt's 9023 DU in a test day at Silverstone last year and was delighted to be reunited with it. He's certainly aware of what the Cunningham name means to motor racing: "I'm here to learn my trade as a racing driver partly because of my grandfather. I want to carry on what he started and one of my goals is to win Le Mans," he explains.



"Although Michael's car is not as well sorted as Campbell McLaren's Lightweight, and there's 60bhp difference, I felt driving it was more of an honour because my grandfather raced it. If I got the chance to race one I'd jump at it."

