

# Flagships



1950 - 1961 Mark VII/VIIM/VIII/IX

1961 - 1971 Mark X/420G plus 1968 - 1992 Daimler DS420

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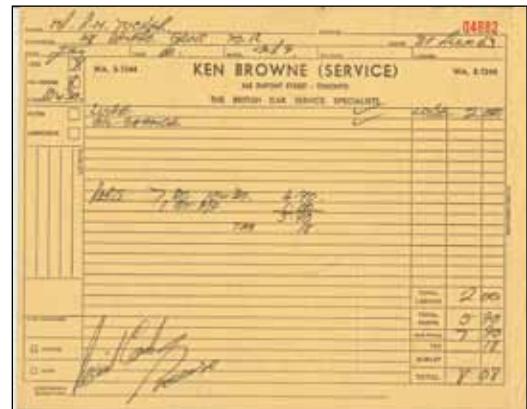
*The sorry state some Mark VII to IX models get in to. Dave's Mark IX sits between two cars destined for scrap.*

preserved XJ Series 3 Sovereign. Cared for over nearly 30 years, I sold it a few years ago to a local mechanic who I knew would look after it. However, last week I received a call from another new owner who asked about the car's history. During our conversation, he indicated he was not into polishing or spending money on upkeep, preferring just to drive old Jags, sometimes at very high speed, before trading them. Hopefully, I'm wrong, but I suspect the Sovereign's days are numbered – but I digress.

Touch burl walnut, my Mark IX continues to evade the crusher's jaws. But, like all things, preservation doesn't last forever, often only as long as the life of a devotee. I know of many owners whose children have about the same passion for old cars as they do for china tea sets and brown furniture. Even if one is lucky enough to secure a spot for 'Bessie' (my name for the Mark IX) in the local car museum, even these safe harbours come and go too. In fact, unless one is the lucky owner of an original Le Mans-raced D-type, the odds of any car surviving much beyond the enthusiast's own lifetime, are tentative at best.

## The cost of ownership

With these thoughts in mind, I rummaged through the small mountain of maintenance and repair bills invested



*How prices have changed. This oil change cost a mere \$8 in 1963.*



## A road more travelled

Dave Tucker has been involved with Jaguars for some time and his love of the Mark IX is easily seen in his literary prowess in delineating his association and dare I say, his 'affair' with said beastie. There can be no finer representative of the Flagship genre than David. He takes up the story from here.

### Preserving a Mark IX – dispatches from the frontlines

A couple of years ago, I visited Budd's, my local Jag dealership in Oakville, Ontario, where I was invited to look over a couple



*Dave in his younger days with the Mark IX. A Donny Osmond lookalike, complete with bell-bottoms!*

of Mark IXs they were sending to the wreckers. The cars had been part of a restoration project undertaken decades earlier but, sadly, never completed. I was told I could take any parts I needed from them. Unfortunately, both cars were so far gone I could find little to salvage. Before I left, one of the staff snapped a couple of pictures of my own Mark IX wedged between the two wrecks.

Looking at the pictures today, they serve as a stark reminder of how restoration and years of TLC can quickly be reversed. It reminds me of the book *Genevieve: A Love Story*, a must-read for any lover of the Mark IX. It tells the tale of Harry Smedley's rescue of his own car, after rashly selling it and then rediscovering it a few years later: bashed, abandoned and rotting in a farmer's field.

A similar fate may await my lovingly

in the Mark IX, a grey (Cornish over Misty Grey) beauty, bought roughly 60 years ago by my father. These invoices and receipts include the usual spring and fall maintenance, covering oil and lube, plugs, points, oil and gas filters, periodic brake pads, hoses, fan belts, wheel alignments and mufflers (before the days of stainless). And let's not forget tyres and balancing (four sets to date and counting), multiple batteries, undercoating and licensing/insurance renewals (60 years' worth), occasional minor bodywork and paint, labour and replacement costs for failing fuel pumps, burst frost plugs, wiring harnesses, a generator, sagging leaf springs, a radiator re-core, steering box and master cylinder rebuilds, disc rescoring and most recently, timing chain replacement and a valve job.

Nor does this include the cost of additional cosmetics, including one stripping and repainting, leather repair and respraying, or the hundreds of dollars lavished on waxes, rubber dressing and polishes. It would probably take the better part of a week just to add it all up. Suffice to say, if I'd had children, the grand total with tax would probably have paid for their upkeep right through Harvard!

As a long-time owner, the cost of parts and labour creep higher every year. Even factoring in inflation, the days of the \$8 dollar oil and lube are a distant memory. Like healthcare for the elderly, parts wear out, and major interventions become necessary. Routine adjustments turn into overhauls, roadside surprises multiply, parts become hard to find and experienced mechanics under the age of 90, scarcer than hens' teeth.

## What's it like to keep a car like this on the road for 60 uninterrupted years?

Keep any car long enough and you're sure to come away with a story or two for the grandkids (if you have them).

My father bought the Mark IX after the first owner, the head of a Toronto-based insurance company, traded it in for one of the new slab-sided Continentals. With the recent debut of the Mark X, my dad got a lot of car for his money. 'The Queen Mum', as we called her, has stayed in the family ever since, never off the road except in the winter months.

The Mark IX is like many Lyons cars: over-built. That's a very good thing when you keep a car as long as I have. In fact, I'm still using the original shock absorbers and contrary to jokes about Lucas being the 'prince of darkness', the car has remained mostly maintenance free electrically. As well, all the chrome



*The Mark IX being readied for a repaint earlier in its life.*

still gleams and remains un-pitted, thanks to regular polishing. The absence of plastic parts has also meant most things can be refurbished and brought back to a high standard, without resorting to replacements. Waxing the wood and leather and storing the car in a dark garage have kept both in a very high order. Even the original carpets look nearly new, simply by keeping them clean, protected and shampooed.

But having kept the car on the road this long, it is inevitable that things eventually wear out or need refurbishment. Plus, despite careful, regular maintenance, there are no warning lights to tell you when something is about to go terribly wrong!

I've had burst radiators, hoses and a master cylinder go on the highway, a steering box failure which nearly resulted in me taking out my neighbour's hedge and a simultaneous brake, horn and turn signal failure on a busy stretch of road. In this last instance, an irate driver concluded I was intentionally hogging the road and needed to be taught a lesson. To do this, he deliberately cut directly in front of me, then slowed to a crawl! Only years of experience driving the car prevented a rear-end appointment with destiny.

## In my father's time

Even when he ran the car, there was no assurance we'd arrive without incident. In our first year of ownership, a frost plug blew, turning a three-hour trip into a 16-hour ordeal. The following summer, the problem repeated itself during a five-hour trip to Chicago. In the middle of downtown rush hour, my dad and I struggled to find water and patch up the hoses in 90-plus-degree weather. The remainder of our trip to the 'windy city' was spent trying to find a mechanic willing to work on it. After rejections at no fewer than eight repair shops, we ended up at a gasoline-alley place in a rough part of town. This was during the beginning of the race riots. When we eventually got the car roadworthy, it was time to return home! But the adventure didn't end there.

Shortly after entering Canada on the return leg, we found ourselves being followed by a tornado! We were stuck on a long, straight country road. We sped up well over the speed limit, but it just kept coming. It was getting dark and unable to dodge the cyclone, we pulled off at a motel, taking shelter in our room's bathroom, praying for the best. As the storm passed, the sound of the wind and rain seemed deafening. By now, it was pitch black, but the roof and windows held. We figured it must have miraculously changed direction at the last moment. We finally retired to bed around midnight, fearing what we'd find in the morning.

Miraculously, the next day, we looked out and there was the Mark IX, wet but undamaged, waiting like a faithful dog where we'd parked her, having suffered not so much as a leaky sunroof. My mother came out to greet us when we finally got home. As we took the luggage out of the boot, she remarked how clean and bug-free the car looked, given the long journey! She asked us about the museums and galleries we'd visited. Instead, we apprised her of the varied and interesting repair shops we'd encountered along our odyssey.

I think it was after that particular trip my family decided the car wasn't really a car at all, but rather a naughty pet, misbehaved but loveable and devoted, to be forgiven for the occasional poop on the carpet.

## In later life

Around that time, an ad appeared, promoting the E-type, showing a young man washing his Jag, the cutline reading: 'If you think you can buy a Jaguar and forget it, forget it!'. I took the message to heart, assuming the responsibility for washing, waxing and polishing. I used up my mother's paste wax on the wood and made frequent trips to Canadian Tire to stock up on saddle soap. I even convinced my mother to sew a tea cosy for the wood fascia over the dash, to



*Dave Tucker in later years, again posed with the Mark IX – slim, with hair and a lucky B.*



prevent it fading in the bright sunlight.

By the 1970s, the Mark IX was strictly a hobby car. My dad and I scraped down the wheel arches and undercarriage and invested in multiple cans of Tremclad rust paint. At the time, they manufactured a colour that was a near-exact match to the Cornish/Mist Grey exterior, so I was able to match the wheel wells without having to resort to basic black. This early work served it well. Combined with the previous undercoating and keeping the car off the road on wet days, that same underpaint is still holding 50-plus years later.

It was inevitable that the cleaning and polishing would extend to the engine and after a year of hard work, chaffed skin and sore elbows, the car was entered in its first Ontario Jaguar Owners Association concours. It managed a second in its category with 98 points. The next year it came first.

A few years later, disaster struck when vandals poured acid on the bonnet, when it was parked in an underground garage. Since the car had had previous minor bodywork, I decided to have it fully repainted. My father and I stripped the car and cleaned everything meticulously before post-paint reassembly. Later, I re-entered the car in the same concours section, receiving higher points and another first place. I remember the judges remarking on how beautifully the car ran and how well preserved it was in general. I was even able to display a good deal of the original factory and dealer literature. Given the car had never been off the road or had an off-body restoration, I was gratified the hard work was paying off. It felt like I was preserving a piece of history, my Grade II listed property on wheels. It was a part of my own family history too.

Until just a year ago, I continued to take the Mark IX to the same shop and mechanic where my dad first had the car serviced. Sadly, Gus has retired now but he is still a regular source

of invaluable information, support and friendship. He is truly the silent partner in the car's preservation.

I have also been blessed working with Brian, a vintage Jaguar parts authority in Toronto, sourcing hard-to-find parts. After a project is identified, Brian sources items and once everything is collected, the car goes into the shop. This way, major jobs aren't held up for weeks and months and the car is spared languishing in the back of the shop or, worse, out in the lot.

### After all these years

I still get a thrill getting behind the wheel, hearing the motor fire up and settle into a joyful purr. I have never tired of its art deco lines and classic proportions either. Its preservation has involved sacrifice but now that most of the mechanical refurbishment is complete, I hope to just get out and enjoy the Queen Mum again this summer. It seems we have grown old together. But I intend to keep us both active for as long as possible, as seniors should.

Today, electric technology and climate change threaten to turn a once-pleasant gas-driven hobby into the equivalent of smoking or farting in public. Finding a place to buy high octane petrol (and eventually fuel in general) or locating a mechanic that is more than a computer technician, will become new challenges to face, all conspiring to see my classic reduced to scrap, like the Mark IX's two less-fortunate relations at Budd's depicted herein.

With few exceptions, the majority of hobby cars are cherished generationally. A 1914 Armstrong Whitworth does not resonate with someone who grew up salivating over late 1960s/early 1970s American muscle cars. Millennial car buffs (yes, they exist), gravitate toward early 1990s cars, usually German or Japanese makes, recalling their youth when computers were still mostly dial-up. Most abhor wood dashboards

and folding tables, viewing them as grandfatherly, ecologically damaging and simply out-of-step with the times. We all have our day, it seems.

I think too, about the personal energy spent preserving my Mark IX. I had a successful career as a filmmaker and later as a university professor. I see these occupations as threads running through my life. They motivated me, provided me with purpose and passion. Today, my partner of many years remains a continuing source of happiness, joy and emotional support. The Mark IX offers the final thread, a satisfying and pleasurable hobby. When I'm not writing, reading, pursuing the arts, or gardening with my wife, I'm out in the garage communing with the Mark IX. She is family too.



*A well-presented engine bay.*



*The Mark IX as it is today, still resplendent inside. That's original leather ...*



*... and woodwork.*



*The Mark IX being readied for concours judging.*