

City slicker

This Series 2 E-type is becoming a familiar sight around London, where it is used all year round

BACK IN the swinging Sixties, it was as normal to see an E-type driving down the Kings Road in Chelsea as it was on the French Riviera or Monaco. Today, with congestion, values and vulnerability, it is not so common. However, the owner of this Series 2 is perfectly comfortable driving along Oxford Street, or parking up for a leisurely breakfast at the weekend.

For security reasons, the owner would like to remain anonymous, but we can say that he is one of the new, younger generation who are finding E-type ownership rewarding.

There was nothing unusual about his entry into Jaguar tenure. He'd grown up familiar with his father's cars that, although favouring early Land Rover, also included such intelligent choices as the Bristol 401. And, of course, there was the E-type mystique.

The fastest car in the world in its day and no slouch today, it always held an attraction for the owner. He likes to share this interest with his father, who has moved away from London

since retirement, so it was essential that whatever car he bought, it should be capable of taking in long distances, while being equally at ease in a city environment.

Doing his homework, he soon realised that the fixedhead version of the Series 2 would be the most suitable choice. He understood that some work would initially be needed, but he didn't want a full restoration and certainly wasn't interested in having to deal with rust. But, where to begin? Sourcing a car from a US dry state or Australia is daunting without the right contacts. Searching the forums, the name Angus Moss at e-Conic kept cropping up. So, contact was made.

Angus listened, and agreed that a Series 2 was most certainly the right direction to go. They spoke about the shortcomings of the Series 1 and how the Series 2 went a long way to provide solutions. The 4.2-litre engine had replaced the 3.8 late in 1964, when the E-type also gained Jaguar's own, and much needed, all-synchromesh gearbox. A vastly improved cooling

system with two powerful radiator fans supplemented the modern radiator with extra air flow coming through the larger oval in the bonnet mouth. Brakes were a revelation, with three-pot calipers on the front completely transforming their efficiency.

Practicality and legislation had overruled aesthetics in some areas, as new regulations demanded all-round bumpers and larger front and rear lights. The glass headlight covers had already disappeared, but now, the light units were moved forward for greater lighting effect. At the rear, the numberplate was squared off, and the exhaust pipes adopted a bend to clear the plate.

Safety implications found their way inside, too, where it was thought that the original toggle switches, metal door handles and the mirror were an extra risk in an accident. Toggles became rockers, the window winders were slided down and made of plastic, and door handles were recessed into the door casing and positioned out of the way. The mirror became a plastic snap-off type. ▶



OWNER'S STORY

SERIES 2 E-TYPE



For certain export market cars, a gesture was made towards reducing harmful emissions. This meant replacing the three 2in SU carburettors with a pair of 1.75in Strombergs. Performance fell off the cliff, which was especially ironic as the overall emissions in everyday life were little different to the previous standard: readings had been taken under artificial test conditions, rather than replicating road use.

But, as Angus and many others reckon, the essence of the E-type is instilled in the Series 2. It is the silhouette that stirs the soul; bumpers and lights are mere appendages. Enthusiasts can wax lyrical about the finer details on the earlier car, but that's missing the point of the sheer pleasure derived from owning an E-type. More importantly, the driving experience,

with the better brakes, is probably better than the original. That, along with greater efficiency, gives the driver the reassurance that boiling up in traffic is not inevitable.

Angus was asked to source a car with a view to carrying out any remedial work in the UK. With his contacts in California, Angus soon located a very standard Series 2, manufactured in 1969. Buying a car without seeing it can be a risky business. Little was known about its history, except that the last owner was a lady from West Hollywood. Warnings were issued and sanity questioned. There was no question of flying to California to inspect the car when surely a specialist would be sought anyway. But that wasn't the rationale behind this purchase – the overriding factor was a perfect body.

A deal was arranged and, in November 2014, the E-type arrived at Felixstowe Docks before being delivered to e-Conic's premises in Letchworth. In the meantime, discussions were ongoing about any proposed work. By necessity, there was the left- to right-hand-drive conversion and, by preference, the replacement of the twin Stromberg carburettors to triple 2in SUs. Tired paint necessitated some body refinishing and, although British Racing Green was mentioned, the original Old English White was agreed on.

On arrival, it was apparent that this was a very sound E-type. When the dismantling started, every single nut and bolt came loose as though the car was just a couple of years old. A few days of fettling soon had the engine running, and very sweet it sounded too. So, for then at least, the engine and gearbox would remain in place. However, the complete IRS was to be removed for overhaul and conversion from 3.54:1 final drive ratio to 3.07:1. As for the body, there was no evidence of any welding or accident damage.

It was pretty good inside, too, although time had taken its toll on the seats and centre console. Retaining the best of the original parts, the seats could be retrimmed and any other doubtful areas repaired or replaced. A revised dash end assembly, required for the left- to right-hand-drive conversion, was obtained from Hutsons, along with the steering rack and associated components.

Everything was overhauled. The IRS was rebuilt with the diff' ratio change, suspension components were cleaned and plated, the heater stripped and rebuilt and all instruments cleaned and repaired. A



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BELOW: Supplied by E-type owner



new propshaft is always fitted as a matter of course. Fitting new universal joints to the old shaft with possibly worn splines is only a partial job – nothing but new will compensate for worn splines.

Gradually, it all came together. Improved front brakes from Fossway, upgraded alternator, uprated radiator and electronic ignition were all chosen with a view to improving reliability and usability while driving in London.

Original style Dunlop 185 x 15in tyres were used, while new chrome graced the freshly painted bodysell and a new windscreen was fitted. Angus applied the finishing touch of his trademark revised back panel, dispensing with the square numberplate to use the earlier oblong style and enabling straight-exit exhaust pipes to be fitted.

The rear lights were modified to incorporate reversing lights, lost through the conversion. Seeking better lighting, H4 headlights were used and with a relay, 12-volt power was directly sourced to make a very efficient system. Once fully assembled and its MOT obtained, the process of registering it in the UK was finally completed in May 2016.

There was no doubt in anyone's mind that an engine rebuild would be inevitable, but there was a whole summer for the owner to forge a relationship and discover driving an E-type for the very first time. He was absolutely thrilled with his car and delighted

in its use, be it in London or further afield.

That December, the E-type returned to Letchworth for the engine and gearbox rebuild. With the engine removed, they could thoroughly clean the engine bay, although it was never to be painted so that some of the original car would be left. It was also fitted with a new wiring harness.

To improve interior comfort and keep the heat at bay, the complete floor-pans were lined out with Dynamat, a sound-proofing material with insulating properties, too. With the rebuilt engine and gearbox fitted, it went through the normal checks and thorough road test so that, at the end of January 2017, it was again ready for collection.

The E-type has now been pressed into action since February 2017. Properly garaged, it isn't the only car for London duties as a modern Fiat 500 does the daily chore, itself replacing an original Fiat 500. But the E-type takes it all in its stride: a business meeting, a weekend breakfast in Kensington or a drive into the country. The surveyor owner always chooses the E-type if the meeting is out of London.

There are many other trips out too, visiting the family in the country, or off to Cheshire, the Brecon Beacons, Truro, Snowdon, King's Lynn and many other places in the UK. Gathering confidence, a trip to a foreign city is planned: to Rome this year. The preventative maintenance has paid off, with a virtually trouble-free

period when only a burnt-out coil blotted a perfect copy book.

I haven't travelled to London for an E-type feature since I first met Matthew Whiteman and his 3.8 E-type in Portobello Road in the late Eighties, although there was once a genuine D-type in a Kensington mews. Strolling from the underground, through the West End, I saw that this E-type is not unique. Two Morris Minors (one a convertible) were clearly everyday cars, while other gems lurked behind locked doors. And then I saw the E-type parked up, already attracting attention with passers-by wielding their phones or sneaking a selfie. Some had a story to tell of friends or relations with E-types.

As we looked for photographic locations, in one small mews (not suitable), a house door opened to see what the fuss was about. On spotting the E-type, a smile broke out and we were shown a 1973 Porsche 911. I later learnt that there is an Aston Martin DB6 nearby too, as evidenced by the photograph shown. The owners have yet to meet, but that is just a matter of time.

It is impossible to give any useful feedback on performance or handling. Yet perhaps of more significance is one on behaviour. This E-type is no lighter than any other; steering and clutch are just as weighted as the next car. That is not an issue. Apparently, journeys take just a little longer: caution over the length of the bonnet, resisting the urge to rush into a gap that may or may not be right and, of course, the pre-drive checks of oil, water and tyre pressures all absorb time. But that is a small price to pay.

Driving in the heart of London takes on a completely new dimension when it is an E-type, and with congestion control keeping the bumper-to-bumper snarl within limits, it is achievable, too. Without meeting Angus Moss, the owner reckons that this would never have been possible. He says it is the best thing he has ever done. **JP**