

THE STORY OF 1600 HP

The life and restoration of one of the very
earliest right hand drive E-types

WORDS: ANDREW ROBERTS PHOTOGRAPHY: SAM SKELTON



Any E-type is one of the few cars that merits the much-overused term "iconic", but this is a very special example of the range. 1600 HP, Chassis Number 860005, is the fifth Fixed Head Coupe with RHD and the first with internal bonnet latches. Its custodian is Paul

Knott, who says: "Almost since birth, my twin passions have been E-types and aeroplanes", and in 1985, when in his 20s, he bought his first example of the former. "It was a 1970 Series 2 2+2, which I owned for six years, but family pressures meant I had to sell it in 1991. My focus then moved to aeroplanes,

and I gained my pilot's licence, but when I recently stopped flying, my passion for E-types resurfaced."

Paul then embarked on a quest for a quest which matched his exacting criteria. "What I wanted was a really good Series 1 that had been fully restored. It also had to be 3.8 Fixed

Head Coupe because in my view it has that purity of line. This is nothing to do with what Enzo Ferrari said about the E-type; it is my personal opinion." As the oft-repeated story goes, the great man allegedly told Jaguar's test driver Norman Dewis: "What a beautiful car, we have made nothing better than

that. The only problem, Norman, is it doesn't have a Ferrari badge on it".

Another of Paul's requirements was "it had to be an original right-hand-drive car rather than a converted left-hand-drive model." In April 2023, Country Car Auctions was advertising just such a Series 1 on their Facebook page,

but Paul did not place a bid - "such an E-type seemed beyond my dreams."

However, 1600 HP did not sell, so Paul contacted the auction house to enquire what sum the vendor would accept. "I knew I had to find the deposit money, and the process took me ten days." Finally, the E-type was his: "Not »

ENJOYING YOUR JAGUAR EARLY E-TYPE RESTORATION

just a beautiful 3.8 FHC but the first with the internal bonnet lock as the previous four cars had external locks. My Jaguar was a development car, and it is full of quirky details." As well as the GRP transition tunnel, and the flat rear bulkhead, there is the screw hole for the bonnet lock catches, the Lucas "Butlers" rear number plate lights, and a three-point carburettor linkage. Paul also notes that 1600HP has welded bonnet louvres, which appeared only on E-types made until Christmas 1961. Jaguar installed bonnet pressing machines during the factory holiday period shutdown.

Power for 1600 HP is from the high-compression engine with a 9.0:1 compression ratio, while further intriguing details are the seats and the wheels. Regarding the former, the very early models used 16-inch rather than

15-inch wheels as Browns Lane needed to use their surplus XK150 stock. In addition, as a UK-market car, it has painted rather than chromed wheels, while the E-type Roadster seats are due to the fact that Jaguar originally had no supplies of Coupe seats. Chassis No. 860005 began life at Browns Lane as a hand-assembled production prototype dating from August 1961. As Jonathan Wood notes in his indispensable book *Jaguar E-Type – The Complete Story*: "production only built up relatively slowly. Up until the middle of August 1961, output was almost exclusively concentrated on the roadster, with 372 examples built. Over the same period, only eleven fixed-head coupes were produced. From there on both body styles were regularly manufactured."

At first, 1600 HP was destined for John Surtees, but, as Paul notes,

"in mid-September, the order was changed." Instead, Browns Lane dispatched the FHC on the 18th of September 1961 to New York City. Alfred Momo, of Briggs Cunningham fame, was the NY dealer who supplied the E-type to the president of Jaguar Cars North America. Any visitor to their premises at 32 East 57th Street would surely be mesmerised by such a car, which the company's US concessionaire also displayed around the country. Such promotional efforts were essential, given the importance of the States to Browns Lane; 80% of production was destined for that export market. The E-type's appearance at the New York Motor Show in April 1961 caused a minor sensation, and *Road & Track* wrote: "The car comes up to, and exceeds, our great expectations." That December, *Car and Driver* was equally effusive: "Our first

impressions on taking over this car are not easy to describe. The car is beautiful to look at from any angle, and it was said by many, who saw it in the flesh for the first time when meeting our test crew, that pictures so far published had all failed to do justice to its appearance."

Jaguar's US concessionaire employed 860005 until 1967, when they sold the

Jaguar to the first of several owners. By 1984 the E-type's custodians were a Stephen and Cheryl Mamros of Lower Burrell in Pennsylvania. At one point, there were plans to convert 860005 into a hot rod with a Detroit power plant -fortunately, this ghastly plan was never realised. Paul's blood still runs cold at the idea of 1600 HP being transformed

into a 'street rod', for this is the material of nightmares. However, two years later a Mr. Richard B. Lott of Monclova, Ohio, discovered the E-type, and he recalled on <http://www.xkedata.com>: "Mamros acquired the car as a rolling disaster. His intent was to use the rear end for a "hot rod" project, but he never gotten to it and had run out of garage space. »



"My Jaguar was a development car, and it is full of quirky details"





The bonnet had been stripped to bare metal and not refinished. The rest of the body had been painted white... with a paintbrush. Virtually all of the leather, vinyl, carpet, and cloth was removed from the interior. The dashpad was split in half. The bumpers had been removed and thrown inside along with a few spares (like a new, boxed original dash and console aluminum set). But the car had never been wrecked except the under-nose pan (which had seen too many parking blocks) and was the only piece of sheet metal requiring repair or replacement. With fresh gas in a coffee can and a new battery, it actually started but it was not remotely drivable. But it was solid, and all the original parts were there."

With a new battery and an infusion of petrol, the E-type returned to the road, and in November 1989, Lott had it restored by Elite Classics of Monclova, Ohio, under his supervision. "The vehicle was totally disassembled, and the monocoque dipped. Every

"A decade later, the burning question remains - does the E-type live up to Paul's hopes and dreams?"

component was rebuilt, renewed, or replaced." The process was completed in September 1991, and by 1992, the E-type was "Best of Show" at the Concours D'Elegance in Dearborn, Michigan." Lott sold the Jaguar in 1996 to the Japanese collector Matsuo Yoshida, and Paul thinks 1600 HP returned to the UK circa 2012. Two years later, it underwent a further major restoration by Classic Motor Cars.

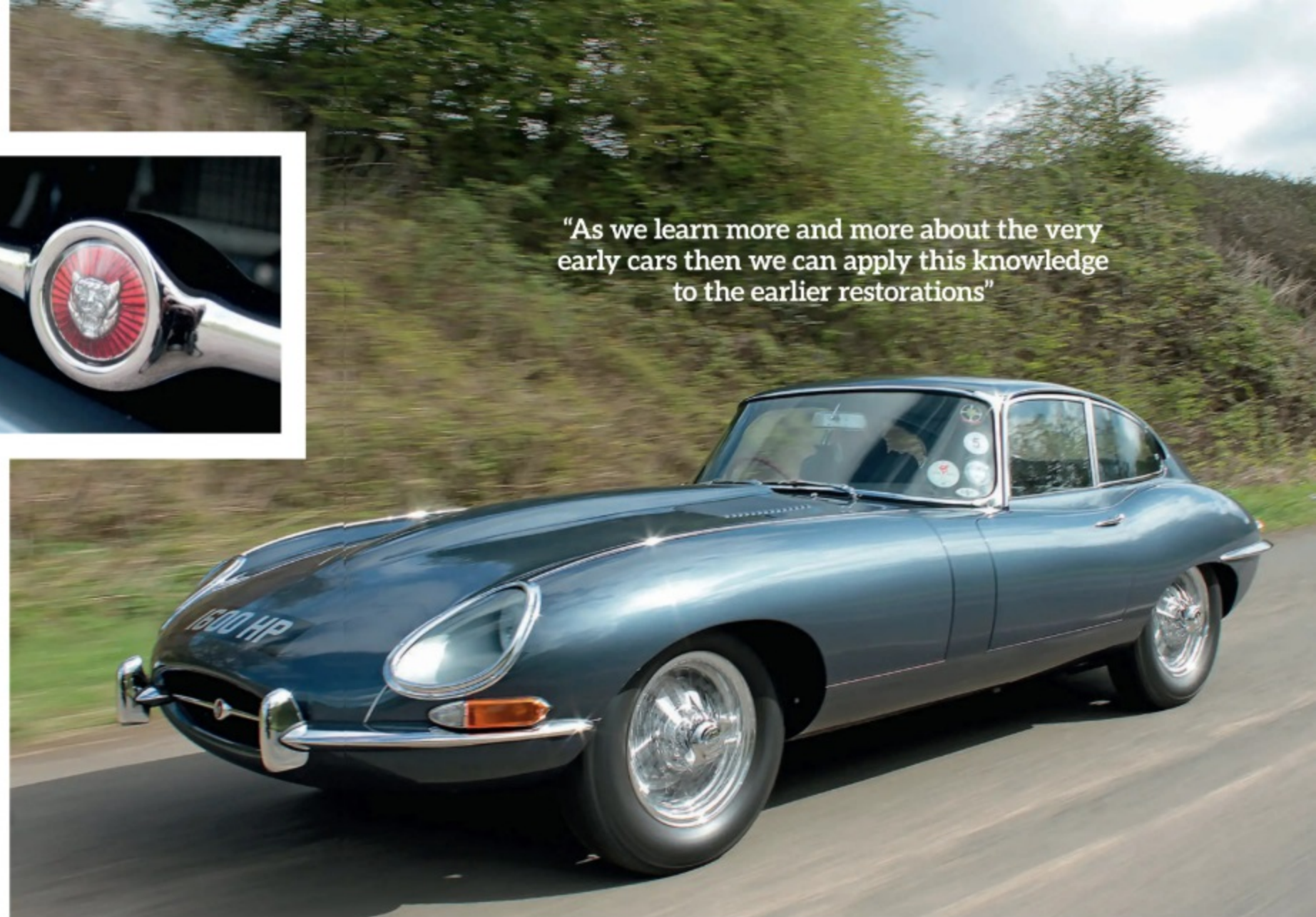
A decade later, the burning question remains - does the E-type live up to Paul's hopes and dreams, which date back to the 1960s? His answer is: "This car is everything I wanted and dreamed of - and more. Not only is it a Series 1 FHC, but owning a car of

such provenance makes it even more special. My original goal was an E-type that I could regularly drive, but this one is so precious that I can only drive within an hour's radius of my house. I do take it to local shows, but I never drive it in the rain." Naturally, as with any great car, 1600 HP has its minor drawbacks. The seats were the subject of adverse comments from the motor press of the early 1960s, while Paul observes: "At the age of 63, I have to practice making an exit and entrance from the E-type if I do not want to look like a complete fool! It seemed easier with my first one, but that was a 2+2, and I was a lot younger then!" Further issues include the heater,

which was not a Jaguar strongpoint at that time, and the driving position. In June 1962, the company responded to customer complaints and revised the front floorpan to create more space for the occupants' legs. Paul remarks: "If you are tall, there is just not enough seat adjustment. The position of the steering wheel can be altered, but you still have to adopt a "bent knees" look when driving, and joints can become cranky when you are a certain age." The Moss gearbox is another challenge, and in 1961, *Car and Driver* complained: "The transmission has such poor synchromesh that gears are never changed needlessly." In Paul's opinion: "The lack of synchromesh on bottom gear is very noticeable, and as it is a four-speed box, you feel as though you are about to run out of ratios when travelling at 40-50 mph. In fact, you can use fourth gear when driving down your local high street. My car was fitted with another five-speed box when it was in the USA, but a previous owner »



ENJOYING YOUR JAGUAR
EARLY E-TYPE RESTORATION



“As we learn more and more about the very early cars then we can apply this knowledge to the earlier restorations”

returned to its original format on the E-type's return to this country. I do not want to fit overdrive or modify the transmission in any way as this is to be a car in completely original condition.”

But these elements are mere trivialities compared with the experience of owning one of the world's oldest E-type FHCs. In Paul's words: “You have to look at it in terms of other sports cars of that era. Just look at the technical specification: all-disc brakes, independent rear suspension, and monocoque bodywork. I also own a 1960 Daimler SP250, and there is no comparison; in fact, I would put the E-type on par with a Rolls-Royce.” In addition, 63 years ago,

no other sports car could offer such a combination of performance and value for money. 1600 HP would have cost £2,196, compared with £3,967 for an Aston Martin DB4 or £6,326 for a Ferrari 250GT Farina Coupe. In terms of driving, “the only elements this Jaguar has in common with my 2+2 are the view over the bonnet and that famous aircraft cockpit-style instrument panel. As an aeroplane fanatic of many years, this greatly appeals to me. I have never driven a 3.8-litre version with a standard compression engine, so I cannot make any judgement about how the power in my car differs. I just know this E-type more than fulfils my dreams.”

Since acquiring 1600 HP, Paul has ‘spent a load of money on detailing, down to the original slotted head screws that finish off the indicator clusters.’ Moss Jaguar Ltd. undertook this exacting work, and the company's owner Angus Moss says: “As we learn more and more about the very early cars then we can apply this knowledge to the earlier restorations.” Paul believes such painstaking attention to detail is essential - “I regard myself not so much the owner of this E-type as its custodian.” As for the public reaction, “it is usually one of amazement, and when at shows, they are often fascinated to read the little card in the windscreen detailing

its background.” Their responses to the 1600 HP echo *The Motor* report from the 1961 Geneva Motor Show, where visitors regarded the E-type “with something close to incredulity.”

Such responses are wholly understandable on seeing the Knott FHC, for after more than six decades it still conveys that shock of the new in all its Opalescent Dark Blue glory. To have an idea of how such an E-type must have appeared to the average British motorist of that era, take a look online at the newsreel footage of the Jaguar being evaluated on the M1. It is a vehicle that looks so different to the police Ford Zephyr Mk. II Estate hovering in the background and the other traffic as

to be almost surreal, and that is before its performance is even mentioned. Over six decades ago, a car capable of 150 mph would have seemed virtual science-fiction to the average Hillman Minx or Standard Vanguard owner.

Perhaps the best way to summarise the importance of Paul's E-type in terms of both Jaguar's history and post-war motoring is to quote two famous press reports. The first is the *Autocar* road test of 1961: “Critics will find precious little to complain about and competitors will be hard put to match any of the main talking points of performance, handling, ride comfort and price.” As Paul says, the E-type really did stand alone. The second is

from the great L.J.K. Setright, who wrote: “It would have been absurd not to be obsessed with it; the very idea that it was possible to buy in the 1960s a mass-produced two-seater of modest size, dramatic appearance and quite fantastic performance for less than £2,100 (apart from tax) smote the entire motoring world with a sense of awe that it had not felt since the unveiling of the original XK120.” Paul says, “I am responsible for a car that is a historical artefact I can use and enjoy.” And 1600 HP will continue to evoke that sense of awe for generations to come. ■

THANKS TO: Paul Knott and Angus Moss of www.mossjaguar.com