



Imperial War Museum Duxford (152)

Wed, 14th Oct 2015, Imperial War Museum Duxford

Lot 40

Estimate: £40000 - £60000 + Fees

1971 Jaguar E-Type V12 Coupe

Registration No: GGF379J

Chassis No: 1S50156BW

Mot Expiry: Sept 2016

- As used and enjoyed by footballing legend George Best

By 1971, Jaguar's jaw-dropping E-Type had been in production for a decade. Despite continual improvements, new emissions legislation in the all-important American market threatened to strangle the big cat's performance. Jaguar responded by giving its revered sports car fresh claws in the shape of a 5343cc V12 developed from the stillborn XJ13 Le Mans project car. The new engine was both effortlessly powerful and eerily refined. With some 272bhp and 304lbft of torque on tap, the Series 3 E-Type once again had 150mph in its sights. A revised wheelbase yielded better cabin space, while a wider track front and rear, new anti-dive front suspension geometry and fatter tyres improved the road holding. Imbued with a more muscular stance thanks to its flared wheelarches, re-profiled wings and larger grille, it also benefited from vented disc brakes and a restyled interior.

Contrary to folklore, not all Britons are besotted with the so-called 'beautiful game'. However, it has produced a few stars over the years that were of such quality as to catapult them from mere football heroes into super-beings. Few would dispute that George Best is of that category. Born in Belfast in 1946 he left school in 1963 to turn professional with Manchester United. He quickly mesmerised the world with his dribbling skills in an era when pitches frequently resembled ploughed fields. English and European Footballer of the Year awards confirmed his international celebrity; a role he performed to the max courtesy of the inevitable hedonistic cocktail of alcohol, girls and fast cars - who wouldn't presented with such opportunity? He certainly worked his way through a fair number of the latter, including several Jaguars, at least three of which were E-Types - a Series 1 Roadster, Series 1.5 Coupe and the Series 3 Coupe now on offer.

Although, supplied by H. R. Owen to London accountancy firm Shorman Morgan Ltd (perhaps Best's or his agent's?), and issued with the same registration it wears today - 'GGF 379J' - on June 24th 1971, there is ample proof that the superstar either discreetly owned or had use of the Fixed Head Coupe between 1972 and 1974 and probably from new. Occupying the same Huddersfield address as Best's agent, Sportsmedia Ltd became the Jaguar's second registered keeper on July 11th 1972. However, some six months' before then the celebrity footballer was snapped behind the E-Type's wheel by a Daily Mirror photographer as he arrived at Wilmslow station to meet Carolyn Moore - the speaker grilles visible in that photo remain in situ to this day. The same paper pictured him lying on the car's bonnet in May 1974,

while 'GGF 379J' was the vehicle in which he left Old Trafford for the final time, following his famed bust up with the then manager Tommy Docherty (footage of which is shown on an accompanying DVD or can be viewed on www.georgebestjag.com). According to the vendor the E-Type subsequently spent a long time in the sun of Southern France before returning to these shores.

Finished in its original colour of Dark Blue and trimmed in Blue velour, the Series 3 currently displays an unwarranted 67,000 miles and is described by the vendor as having an 'excellent' V12 engine, and 'good' Coupe bodywork, paintwork, interior trim and automatic transmission. If cars could talk there'd be a queue of purchasers a mile long for this Jaguar. Whatever, its celebrity status certainly adds a certain cachet to an already desirable period Jaguar.