



The Centaur (77)

Tue, 21st Feb 2006, The Centaur

Lot 15

Estimate: £24000 - £26000 + Fees

1956 Jaguar XK140 Racing Fixed Head Coupe

Registration No: 420 AVT

Chassis No: S804840

Mot Expiry: 26.9.2006

Launched at the 1954 Motor Show, the XK140 boasted the same bewitching styling as its forebear but allied it to a host of important mechanical improvements. Chief among these was the adoption of rack and pinion steering, though, the fitment of telescopic shock absorbers (in place of the XK120's antiquated lever arm dampers) also had a noticeably beneficial effect on handling / roadholding. With its engine and bulkhead repositioned three inches further forward, the new model enjoyed a notably roomier cabin (the fixed and drophead coupe variants gaining occasional rear seats as a result). Available in 'standard', 'special equipment' or 'special equipment plus C-type cylinder head' guises, power and torque outputs ranged from 190bhp / 210lbft to 210bhp / 213lbft. Distinguished by its one-piece bumpers and simpler, more imposing radiator grill, the XK140 was among the fastest cars of its generation. Reputedly capable of over 140mph, it focused public consciousness on Jaguar's continued success at Le Mans (the Coventry marque winning the endurance classic in 1951, 1953, 1955, 1956 and 1957). 420 AVT was first registered in October 1956 and the Heritage certificate states that it was delivered to Byatt Jaguar and was finished in Battleship Grey with the grey interior. It also confirms the special equipment status of the car via the 'S' prefix to the chassis number but unfortunately at this time we do not have much information on its early years. There is a copy of a photograph of the car in 1964 in Newcastle in the history file (more on that copious documentation later), which is intriguing, but one would assume that this was Newcastle Under Lyme rather than the other better known place 'upon Tyne'. This would naturally be before the start of its racing days and whilst it was still a road car.

It is not known either at this time when it started life as a 'lightweight' racer but certainly the history file contains a photograph in the Jaguar Driver of May 1979 showing the Reverend Fellingham (he was famous for racing in his dog collar and so the car was known as 'The Vicar's Car') lapping a certain Roger Saul and AVT is stated as the first XK home in the thoroughbred race. A letter from the Reverend to a subsequent owner, a Mr. Allen Goodall, states the Reverend bought it in 1976 from Oldham and Crowther of Peterborough. It states that this was a second car and it was usually raced by either Martin Crowther or John (metal) Pearson. The specification is listed including stating that it was an 'overall lightweight (for an XK)', with Mk9 brakes with cockpit located twin servos, a 3.8 engine set further back than standard and what is most interesting is that it then had an original 'D' type head fitted - he rather self-effacingly states that this was sold when 'it became worth silly money'. He raced AVT in the 1976 TS Championship through until the

end of 1980 and in a few other suitable races - about a dozen races a year - but in 1977 he finished a very creditable fourth in the TS Championship especially as he only considered himself to be merely 'competent'.

It has changed hands several times over the years ending up in 1999 with Mr. Paul Carter, the renowned Bentley racer. He had decided that he wished to complete the Carrera Panamerica and decided that he would do this in an XK, because of its strength and reliable power plant, and set about finding a suitable car. When he found AVT with its contemporary history he knew he had found the right car. He set about a complete rebuild and restoration to a different specification because it would have to complete thousands of miles at maximum speed in largely inhospitable conditions. He sent the car to David Sedge of Maidstone, a well-known and respected Jaguar and Bentley engineer who set about making this a real contender. The car was completely rebuilt, there are photographs in the history file showing this, and strengthened where necessary with the engine getting a complete revamp with larger valves and a specification too great to list here - enough said when David still thinks of this as one of the best engines he has ever built. A Getrag five speed box was also built and a look in the history file at the wiring diagram and costs will be enough to show you the detail they went to in order to ensure the car would finish. In the event it was an impossible dream for Paul and it never happened albeit he managed to enter various rallies including the Monte Carlo retrospective and a host of races with a variety of clubs. Having spent some £60,000 'at least' on the car a chance conversation with Simon Hope of H&H Classic Auctions meant Simon was the new owner because he wanted to be able to do regularity tours and rallies as well as race a car and he thought that this would be perfect. Simon bought the car last year and had the car fully overhauled and the gearbox changed back to the original by David Sedge. He then had a test day at Mallory whereafter he sent it to the well-respected CMC organisation for some work, which included a brake overhaul, new tyres, and some general 'sorting' so he could go racing. He has only managed, due to work commitments, one race in the car at Oulton Park where he was the first XK140 home and certainly beat various cars that he would not have been able to do if this wasn't a competitive car (the relevant programme and race results are included in the history file).

Reluctantly for sale today due to the fact that Simon has changed his mind as to the direction of his racing and therefore, again with work commitments, cannot see himself using the car this year. It has been sent to ready it for sale to Don Law and any obvious faults have been rectified and it is now ready to hit the track again and take on the very best. Please Note: There is a copy of the invoice from Don Law in the history folder.

Please Note: This car is well known by Jeremy Wade, the well known XK dealer. It was first owned by a friend of his father names Gerald Woollam who was a solicitor from the Potteries and later by a Peter Lawson, an concours 'E' type owner, and part of the father and son partnership who own the Crown Garage in Leek. Jeremy also raced against 'the vicar' in period and has kindly supplied copies of a variety of photographs in the history file.