

JAGUAR RACING CARS

A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 9

By Neville Barlow

Broadspeed Jaguar XJC

How on earth did a Jaguar XJC become landed with the Leyland brand printed all over it? What was Broadspeed, a successful saloon car racing company with Minis and Ford Anglia's mixing with a beautiful Jaguar XJC? I hope I can explain how this rather surprising situation came about.

The Wilson Labour Government (1964-70) came to power at a time when the British manufacturing was in decline and they decided that the remedy was to promote more mergers particularly in the Motor Industry. Chrysler had already bought into the Roots Group and Leyland Motors had acquired Standard Triumph in 1961 and Rover in 1967. Tony Benn who was appointed Minister of Technology brought pressure to bear on the industry.



British Motor Holdings Ltd offered to buy its major supplier of car bodies, Pressed Steel and 12 months later merged with Jaguar cars. In 1968 under further pressure from the Government a wave of mergers occurred, including BMH merging with Leyland Motor Corporation to form British Leyland Motor Corporation (BLMC).

Why did Sir William Lyon agree to merge with BMH?

He was about to retire and was anxious about the future of Jaguar, largely because his only son, John, who was to take over leadership of Jaguar had recently been killed in a motor accident on the way to Le Mans. His death seriously affected Sir William and Lady Greta. Also Jaguars supplier of motor car bodies, Pressed Steel, having now joined BMH, he assumed if he did not do so he might lose his major supplier and not be able to manufacture future Jaguars.



British Leyland Motor Corporation was partly nationalised by the Labour Government in 1975. Despite containing profitable marques such as Jaguar, Rover and Land Rover its troubled history with the Trade Unions, caused it to collapse. All of Britain's Industry had come under the control of militant unions such as 'Red Robbo' whose dedicated and expressed desire was to bring British Industry to its knees. These unions had eliminated secret ballots and at their many stop work meetings, committed communist workers intimidated those who wanted to work because they had to vote by a show of hands. Assaults, threats to families and burning of cars became common place! It was only much later when the Thatcher Government came to power that secret ballots at Union meetings restored an element of peace in the union movement.

The Labour Government under Sir Ron Ryder recommended that the mess that was BLMC should now be reformed as Leyland Cars. The period during which it was controlled by British Leyland was not a happy one for Jaguar. The re-organisation of British Leyland meant that for a time Jaguar Cars Ltd disappeared as a company name. It became a subsidiary of Leyland Cars. Ralph Broad believed the Jaguar V12 engine had competition potential and the idea was discussed with Leyland's management. It was decided to prepare a Group 2 Jaguar XJ-S to confront BMW and Ford in the European Touring Championship. However to help increase the sales of the XJ range, Leyland wanted the XJC to be used. The marketing men won out and the big Coupe was chosen. Jaguar management were horrified and tried to distance Jaguar from the project but the huge popularity of going Motor racing again gripped the Nation and it was labelled as a Jaguar Works team with the Leyland name.

The XJC was an odd choice considering the cars weight and complexity however British Leyland gave Broadspeed two cars and told them to turn them into Group 2 racers. The Jaguar Coupe was heavier and larger than the BMWs they would compete against. A hectic development took place. The interior was stripped out and it only had one bucket seat but



retained the walnut veneer dash and electric windows! The body received flared wheel arches, brake cooling ducts and the body lightened by caustic dipping and a considerable amount of drilling and removal of surplus metal.

The engine was a race prepared 5.3litre V12 bored out to 5.416 cc with 12 to 1 compression, forged pistons and race cams. Power was said to be 559 Bhp at 8,000 rpm. The early cars suffered from engine oil surge which they tried to resolve with

baffles but it was never successful, however, it helped when regulations allowed a dry sump to be employed.

Despite the massive power output the XJC was still a 1.5 tonne car. Stopping became a major concern, so Broadspeed called on Lockheed to produce bespoke eight piston callipers for the front. The rear still retained the inboard brakes, which meant the time to replace the rear pads during a

race was impossible. The Jaguar Shop Manual recommends when replacing rear brake pads, first remove the entire back axle!

The development process was delayed by blowing up three engines and crashing one of the cars. The intention was to compete in the 1976 Championship from the first race but the cars were not ready until the sixth race that year which was at Silverstone in the RAC Tourist Trophy race.

Leyland made no secret that their aim was not only to go racing but to win at all costs. This would be an all-out British effort and the team would run in patriotic red, white and blue livery, with support from Jaguar. (At least they were recognised)

Thousands turned out to see these monsters and were jubilant when Dereck Bell took pole position, nearly two seconds faster than the best BMW. Not many people recognised that this car was still a prototype. However, much was expected from it. Dereck Bell led the opening stages and established a track record. Tyre wear became apparent but was only a small interruption. David Hobbs took over and continued to race spectacularly until a driveshaft broke and he lost a wheel. This was a promising start but the fact he did not finish was galling. It was decided to forget the next races for that year and concentrate on more development.

The 1977 car had 19 inch wheels, a modified front spoiler and even more power. Driver Bell was joined by Andy Rouse, John Fitzpatrick and Tim Schenken. At the first round at Monza, Fitzpatrick qualified on pole but there was a problem. Jaguar had lost two engines in practice due to oil surge problems because of the high cornering forces. Fitzpatrick took the lead in the four hour race and disappeared into the distance. However, at the one hour time the car cried enough as it had run a crankshaft bearing.

At Salzburgring Bell and Rouse were on pole and Schenken and Fitzpatrick qualified fourth. At one point in the race they were 1st and 2nd but both were out with drive shaft failure. The cars did not compete at the next two rounds as Broadspeed and Jaguar (not Leyland) tried to sort out the problems.

Czechoslovakia was next and even though the JXCs were 1st and 2nd in qualifying both had gearbox failures. Bell and Rouse were out after a quarter of an hour and spent ages in the pits. The Fitzpatrick and Schenken finished (the first finish) in a lowly 16th place.

At Mugello Italy, neither car started due to drive shaft problems.



For the German Nurburgring, Jaguar brought 12 engines. Fitzpatrick qualified on pole and set a track record from a standing start! He had the same old oil surge problem and was out early. Bell and Rouse finished a deserved second place after having brake problems late in the race.

Next race was Zandvoort and another disaster.

At Silverstone both cars qualified on the front row. As usual they shot off into the lead but because they had to stop twice for fuel, as opposed to once for the BMWs, they had some catching up to do. Fitzpatrick retired with a broken half shaft but Rouse charged after the leading BMW but spun off and retired. He was classified as finishing 4th.

Zander in Belgium was the last appearance of the Broadspeed prepared cars. After running 2nd and 4th they were both back in the pits and retired, after an hour and a half, one with a dropped valve, and the other one with gearbox trouble.

The Broadspeed Jaguar XJC was an infuriating, what if car. Dereck Bell summed it up by saying "I enjoyed the cars and they could have been good if they had been persevered with a little longer" British Leyland pulled the pin and the cars were sold to privateers and collectors.

However the Jaguars soared again. In 2006 Broadspeed XJ12C registered as BELK-001 was acquired by historic car racer Chris Scragg. The car was meticulously re-built and all the old problems were recognised and re-engineered after 18 months. Testing took place in August 2009, the first time in 32 years the car had been on the track.

On the 29th of October 2009 at Mallory Park, in the Touring 70s class Chris qualified 4th. By lap 8 he started to feel more comfortable and moved up 2 places into 2nd. He hunted down the leader over the next 5 laps, passed him and won by a clear 23 seconds. The first Jaguar Broadspeed to win a race!



In May 2014 at the Donnington Historical Festival he ran in two races. The first he sat in 2nd place but a pit stop dropped him back to 3rd. Later in the day he took the lead early and was never headed. On July 25th 2014 Chris was at Silverstone in the Super Touring Classic Car Trophy race where he was a credible 2nd.

To many pundits the Broadspeed Jaguar was regarded as a huge debacle. Politics, a hugely rushed preparation and simple lack of time to put things right were the main problems. In the end they decided to try another year. Chris Scragg proved once and for all the car was a winner if only it had been given more time.

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