

Jaguar Saloon Cars

A monthly series - Part 8

By Tony Johnson

Daimler DS420 (HRH the Queen Mother's State Limousine) (1970-2002)

Daimler had always been the supplier of choice to the Royal family until 1950 when unreliability issues saw the switch to Rolls Royce who were granted the Royal warrant as suppliers to Her Majesty the Queen in 1955. HRH the Queen Mother continued to use Daimler vehicles including a 1959 Daimler DK400 bodied by Hooper. As was tradition this Daimler and subsequent limousines were finished in black or claret. The Daimler was eventually replaced a Rolls Royce Phantom V landaulet and again in 1970 with a Daimler DS420 which was the first of five such vehicles to be supplied over the next 22 years for use by HRH Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother on State occasions. Several other DS420s were also added to the Royal fleet over this period as well, with the last three built specifically for the Royal stable in 1992. The first of the DS420 limousines was most significant as several changes occurred during the build of this vehicle which were eventually adopted by the factory for future production. The most significant of these was the replacement of the second chrome strip on the outer edge of the body, replaced with a red pin stripe which was deemed less garish. The finished vehicle looked extremely smart and all future vehicles were finished with a pin stripe as a consequence.



Daimler DS420 Limousine (1st Upgrade) (1974-1979)

The first major change occurred with the removal of the small additional quarter window in the rear side window assembly as sealing problems led to this being replaced with a front edge hinged window instead. The original design provided a channel for the larger glass to be raised and lowered as with car door glass, but difficulties were encountered in preventing a build-up of moisture in the lower body panel as unlike a door this could not be adequately drained. At the same time as the redesign of the rear window with the removal of the glass winding mechanism, came a new rear interior treatment; one of the most significant interior changes adopted throughout the production of the DS420. Other notable changes included the removal of the second chrome body strip said to originate from a request from Her Majesty the Queen Mother who, when ordering a DS420, asked for this to be replaced with a pin stripe instead. The result was a less cluttered look which the factory adopted for all future DS420s. In addition, a rectangular boot lid number plate plinth replaced the original square unit. In all other respects the model externally remained much the same.



Daimler DS420 Limousine (2nd Upgrade) (1979-1987)

The 2nd series was not a specific update as such but identify those cars built with revised front bumpers as used on the Series 2 XJ saloons. The new bumpers were initially fitted to cars which retained the early Mark 10 side lamp assemblies and circular horn grilles, but these were upgraded in 1979 to rectangular side lights and horn grilles which were retained throughout the rest of the production life of the car. These horn grilles were identical to those used on the Series 1 XJ6 and Daimler Sovereigns although they had been out of production for six years. The exterior mirrors were also relocated from the front wings to the doors. The DS420 underwent a series of improvements and updates throughout production and although the cars were gradually modernised and kept up to date, some of the trim and luxury features were gradually deleted to keep the cars competitively priced.



Daimler DS420 Limousine (Final Upgrade) (1987-1992)

This was the most significant change the DS420 underwent. Most notable was the fitting of more modern rubber bumpers of the same design to those on the then current Jaguar and Daimler range. The deeper bumpers also necessitated the redesign of the grille which needed to be shorter than the original. At the same time the complete front was redesigned with the front mud guards lowered to gently slope down towards the front rather than continuing forward in the straight line as previously adopted. This change gives the DS420 a much more modern look when compared to earlier examples although the overall height of the car did not change. The interior was once again restyled with the loss of more wood veneer and although there was not an official standardised interior, generally less elaborate materials were used. Production of the DS420 effectively came to an end in 1988, with Jaguar finding it increasingly difficult to make the DS420 compliant with various regulations especially in the prime export markets. However, three DS420s were built for the Royal fleet in 1992 and were the last of the line. The limousine market was therefore left to the specialists who stretched conventional saloons for this purpose.

