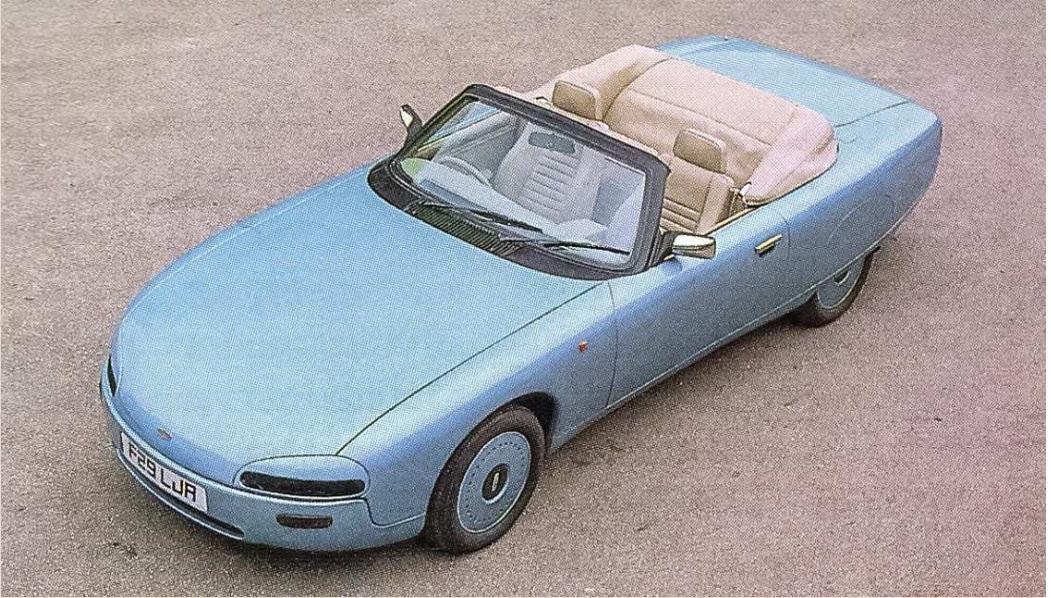


# Railton F28 Fairmile

*By Neville Barlow*



That man, William Towns was at it again. You might remember the story of his car, the Guyson, that we featured in the magazine some time ago. This time it is a Jaguar XJS that he decided to reshape to his ideas. The question was asked “why would anyone want to turn a £40,000 XJS into a £105,000 car?” Perhaps to fulfil the man’s desire to stand out from the crowd. That in a nutshell is the Fairmile, a 1969 XJS V12 convertible wearing an aluminium body designed by William Towns.

This is indeed a rare car, especially as only two were ever made. Towns had no intention of stripping the XJS down to its chassis, instead choosing to fit new aluminium panels over the existing steel body. When he met John Ranson, a self-made millionaire, who was a car enthusiast, it was obvious their thoughts should turn to discussing ways to produce a low volume sports car. Here was a man who could finance and turn Towns dreams into reality. This car would be better than his earlier Guyson and would be an upmarket, exclusive gentleman’s tourer.

Towns handed over his drawings to a firm called Park Sheet Metal in Coventry. The Manager, Tim Payne, said it would not be an easy job as no one had worked out how to engineer such a vehicle. When they mounted the panels, they found the doors, bonnet and boot would not open or close.



It took many hours of fiddling with locks and hinges to make sure everything worked properly. The car was painted in metallic burgundy and its debut at the Earls Court Motor Show in 1989 showed a price tag of £105,000.

A second car was built and painted blue to which Towns made some alterations. This car was called Railton 29 Claremont. In 1992 a magazine article stated he was still developing his cars but the appetite for cars costing over £1000,000 had dried up. The total number of cars sold was zero. Towns died from cancer in 1993 so with no cars, and no designer, Railton pulled the plug.

Both cars still exist and recently F29 Claremont was sold for £67,000.

The name Railton came from Reid Railton who was Technical Director of Thompson and Taylor who designed Malcolm Campbell's world record land speed cars of 1931 to 1935. Also, John Cobb broke the world land speed record in his Railton Mobil Special.

Even such a prominent inventive and enthusiastic man as William Towns.



*Neville*