

THE TRANSPORT OF JAGUAR CARS AROUND THE WORLD 03/ 2015 And how things go wrong sometimes.

By Neville Barlow

Some time ago a news item described how the car transporter ship The Hoegh Osaka was beached in the Solent off Southampton. It was done deliberately to save the ship. On board were 1400 cars, plus some heavy Army and agricultural machinery. Apparently, an armoured car weighing some 55 tonnes, broke loose from its tie downs and punched a hole in the side of the ship.

At least one deck was flooded and as the water poured in, the ship began to list 52 degrees. 3000 tonnes of water were eventually pumped out of the ship, and it was righted and towed back to port.

Through the port of Southampton is exported over 750,000 vehicles per year and the Osaka had at the time of capsizing 1200 Land Rovers and Jaguars, worth 30 million pounds and a single Rolls Royce Wraith worth 250,000 pounds.



Although only one deck was flooded, these cars may be written off. There is concern for many vehicles that may have been sitting at a steep angle for some time in the listing ship. This could play havoc with the number of complicated electrical and mechanical systems on these cars.

There is a possibility that the entire shipment could be scrapped as the manufacturers could expose themselves to potential mechanical litigation at a later date.

However, it must be pointed out that the Hoegh Osaka accident is a very rare occasion and the 1400 vehicles involved represent only .02% of all the vehicles exported through Southampton each year. The only other disaster like this one occurred several years ago when 4700 Mazdas were scrapped as a precaution.



The transport of Jaguar motor cars around the world is an intriguing process. From the factory production line to the Jaguar dealer, it is filled with numerous checks and extreme care to see that the finished product is delivered safely. Jaguar says, “Polished, prepped and protected against everything from paint chips to pirates. Jaguar goes to the ends of the earth to make sure its cars are delivered as they are built - Perfect”.

As the vehicles come to the end of the production line, the engine is fired into life for the first time. The driver’s job is to check that all instruments are working correctly, move the steering wheel from lock to lock, check head lights, side lights, indicators, windscreen wipers and washers, toot the horn 3 times. Also gently move forward and apply the brakes 3 times and only then drive gently to the parking area. It is now that the mobile checking is done.

First on the cobbles, to check the suspension, frame and mounts and then to the washboard for leaks.

Then the Vienna blocks are next, angle iron twists and turns on the rattle road. The handover teams also check the door seals and hinge bolts. 36 checks at one station and 61 at another.

By the time the teams are finished the car is ready for the long trip overseas. It is programmed in transport mode. The speed is limited to 5 mph, suspension on

high and zipped into a full body protection or pyjamas. This suit is hand fitted to every vehicle and fastened beneath to protect against potential stone chips and scratches on the journey. Clear plastic covers the windscreen so the car can be legally manoeuvred to rail, to vessel and to transporter.



Some 450 cars leave for overseas markets every single day. Each car has 25 audible scans from production line to arrive at the dealership. From Castle Bromwich the cars are transported by rail in specially constructed wagons. A team of dedicated rail team drivers carefully drive up specially adapted buck ramps onto the lower decks of a wagon. At 5 mph the cars are inched along the length of the 4 wagons, 22 cars per wagon. The drivers wear no belts, no buckles and the metal eyelets have been removed from their shoes. The cars are zipped up and the wagons themselves are sealed so no trees along the way can scratch the cars.

At Southampton the stevedores direct the cars to load ensuring the correct weight distribution for each deck and of course last cars on are the first cars off at the final port of call.

On the bridge of the sister ship Hoegh Africa is a prayer "deliver us from the hands of every enemy and harking foe, from robbers and wild beasts on the journey and from all kinds of calamities that may afflict the world". I wonder what prayer Hoegh Osaka had?

And so, the journey begins to over 50 markets around the world. From South Africa to China, Japan to the U.S.A. and of course Australia and New Zealand.

Neville