

How I Came to Join Jaguar (Part One) By Ron Gaudion

After completing a five-year Engineering Apprenticeship, (Turner & Fitter/ Toolmaker). With my interest in the motor car, I signed on a two year, two nights a week, Automotive Engineering Course, at RMIT, (Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). I then decided that I needed more experience in this field, so I thought the UK would be a good start.

After a six-week cruise on the S.S. Oronsay, I found myself in February 1955, in Coventry, the home of the motor industry. So, on the Tuesday, I started looking for a job. Over the next few days I approached, BMC, Rootes Group, Standard Motor Co. Crossley, no vacancies, so I thought OK try the motorcycle manufacturers, B.S.A, Norton, Triumph, same reply, nothing available. On the following Monday morning I approached Jaguar, the Personnel Manager said "sorry nothing available".

So, Tuesday morning I visited the Coventry Government Employment Office, the guy behind the counter asked "Can I help you?" I told him I was seeking employment in the motor industry. He said, "Yes we have vacancies in the following, Gas Welders, Fitters, Body Builders, Auto Electricians, and Tool Makers, which job would you like to apply for?" I told him the Tool Makers job, so he started filling in a form. I said, "By the way, which company is it?" He replied, "Jaguar". I told him that I had been there yesterday and the Personnel Manager told me there were no vacancies. His reply was, "You take this form and I guarantee they have vacancies for up to 20".

After a bite to eat, I returned to Jaguar. On entering the Employment Office, the Personnel Manager obviously remembered me from the day before, and before I had a chance to speak, he said, "I told you yesterday, no jobs". I passed over the paperwork, he pushed back his chair, went beetroot red and said "I'm terribly sorry, a memo came across my desk late Friday afternoon, I haven't had time to read it properly, I don't know anything about it, some new project. Go up the hall, second door on the left and see Tyril Smith, he is the Engineer handling recruitments".



Ron Gaudion crewed the winning D-Type in 1955, then moved to Ecurie Ecosse for the 1956, 57 and early 58 seasons - and prepared the 1956 and 57 D-Types. Ron is the only person to have a direct link to all three D-Type wins at Le Mans, and is a staunch member of the Gold Coast Register of the Jaguar Drivers Club of Queensland.

So, on entering Tyril Smith's office, I noticed a large black and white framed picture on the wall behind his desk, it was of a young fellow in racing leathers, standing in front of a dirt track bike, with a wreath around his neck and holding a very large cup. On his desk, typical engineer, was the odd blue print lying about, a camshaft & conrod, but the first thing to catch my eye was a very large piston with a valve imbedded firmly in the crown with the stem curled into a loop. Now, as it happens, my two brothers and I followed speedway in Melbourne, and I knew that the top riders were riding

bikes with J.A.P. single cylinder engines, so I started the conversation with "Looks like someone had fun with this lot". "Yes", said Tyril, "me, at 8000rpm, gave me a hell of a fright". Then for the next twenty minutes we discussed speedway. It turned out the picture was of him, after winning the British Championship.

He then asked, "What can I do for you". I showed him the paperwork, and he informed me that it was a new project to build 100 special sportscars, and that I was first on the block. He asked me when I could start, I said, "Next Monday, if you like". He said, "What's wrong with

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tomorrow”, (Wednesday) I said, “It’s ok with me”. So, he told me to be there at 8.30am, with my toolbox and overalls, and he would introduce me to Phil Weaver, the Superintendent running the program.

The next morning, he said to follow him and he proceeded to wind through the main factory, with MK 7’s being assembled on one line and XK 140’s on another. We then went over a lane into the experimental department, where Phil was waiting to meet me, after the introductions Tyril Smith left us to it.

Phil asked whether I could read a blue print and use a marking out table, I told him I could, and with that he took me over to a bench with a pile of blue prints. On the wall was a sketch of a sports car (D Type in the making) and a drawing of a sub-frame, Phil explained to me that the new design was called a Monocoque, no chassis but a sub-frame to hold the engine and gear box, and the front-end equipment, plus radiator and bonnet.

The sub-frame would be bolted to the front of the centre section, called the ‘Tub’, of stressed aluminium sheeting, called a Monocoque, and the rear suspension bolted on via trailing links, to the back of the ‘Tub’, plus the tail section riveted on to the body of the ‘Tub’.

My first job was to make, in 1/8” mild steel, patterns of the sub-frame sections, (approximately 47 items), in batches of ten. Phil would then have them case hardened, then pass them on to others to mass produce the various tubing, gusset plates, etc. for 100 vehicles.

The next job was, as sub-frames became available, various components would arrive, plus a tub or two and assembly began.

Moving on to the month of May, some five cars had been assembled then moved next door to the competition shop to have engine & gearbox fitted, brakes bled, instruments and pedals fitted, and the steering wheel. Then **Norman Dewis**, the test driver, would take them to nearby Lindley, a test track, to be ‘sorted’, then into the paint shop.

Towards the end of May, Phil approached me, telling me they had entered a team of

three cars in the 24 hour endurance race at Le Mans, in late June, and seven cars in all needed to be readied, consisting of three works cars, plus a spare, one for Briggs Cunningham from U.S.A, one for a Belgium entrant, and one for a French entrant. The first five were to become ‘Long Nosed’ models and the remaining two, production versions. However, the problem was, that his ‘works’ mechanics were still working on #4 and #5, and would not have the others ready in time, so, therefore could I pick one of the other employees and come into the comp shop and finish off #6.

I chose Roy Cole, who had been purloined from the Transmission Dept., to make up one of the first teams, and then we both began work. We started on # 6 and had it finished in five days. So, I asked Phil if he would like us to finish # 7. He was delighted because we had worked together so well.

Halfway through this final build, Phil came over and said “You being a ‘Colonial’ you would have a passport?” I said, “Yes, I do”. Phil then told me that he only had five full time ‘works’ mechanics and that each car at Le Mans needed two mechanics, would I like to be number 6. Of course, I was dumb founded and very pleased to be considered. Phil told me to take my passport in the next day and Mr

Lyon’s chauffeur would take me to the French Consulate to pick up my Visa.

That’s how it all happened. When Lofty England, Racing Manager, handed me a pair of white overalls, with the very large red Jaguar across the shoulders, I felt 10 Feet tall.

That was 1955, the year of that horrific accident, where 92 were killed and 85 injured, when the Mercedes disintegrated into the crowd of spectators. It was a hollow win for Jaguar.

Moving on to July, I was having lunch one day with Les Botrell, one of the ‘works’ mechanics. Les said he had been approached by Briggs Cunningham to join his team in North America, and also by Ecurie Ecosse, the Scottish team. He was to talk it over with his wife and let me know their decision tomorrow. They accepted the North American position. I approached Ecurie Ecosse and joined them, but that’s another story. ■

Acknowledgement to the Jaguar Drivers Club of Queensland and Ron Gaudion for this wonderful story. We look forward to Ron’s adventures with Ecurie Ecosse, in part two, in the next issue.



Jaguar team mechanic, Ron Gaudion poses with British Airways air stewardesses at the Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court Palace on September 1, 2017 in London, England. Ron was flown to the UK by British Airways for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Jaguar’s 1-2-3-4-6 finish at the 1957 Le Mans 24-hour race. The 5 Jaguar D-Types that accomplished the result were displayed together for the first time in 60 years.

How I Came to Join Jaguar (Part Two) By Ron Gaudion

WHY I JOINED ECURIE ECOSSE

I was very happy working for Jaguar but my interest was in gaining experience. Jaguar only engaged in three racing venues a year, Silverstone (their local circuit), the 24 hour at Le Mans and the 12 hour at Reims.

There was no indication that I would be a permanent 'team member', so I decided to have a chat with 'Wilkie' Wilkinson, the Chief Mechanic with Ecurie Ecosse, when he would be coming to collect two of the three cars, they had ordered with the team's transporter. When he arrived, I introduced myself and said, "I believe you need another mechanic," he replied "Yes, but you would have to see Mr Murray, our Patron. We will be racing these two cars at Aintree, over the weekend, come up and speak to him". So, that's what I did.

I asked Mr Murray what his agenda was for the next season, (1956), he told me he intended to enter fifteen events, both in the U.K. and on the continent. I quickly calculated that's 15x3=45 cars to be prepared and serviced under racing conditions, (great for experience). I said "Sounds good, what are the wages?". "Eight pounds ten shillings per week," he replied. "That's not much, I'm getting eighteen pounds at Jaguar," I told him. He told me even his top man 'Wilkie' was only paid ten pounds. (I realized later that in Scotland the going rate for a mechanic was eight pounds ten shillings, whereas in England it was twelve pounds) I then asked about expenses and was told it was thirty shillings a day, for each day you were away from base, which would cover meals and accommodation.

I said, "OK I will come over for ten pounds a week plus expenses". "Done", says he "When can you start?" I told him to give me a fortnight to give notice to Jaguar and then I would join them.

When I joined it was getting towards the end of the racing season, which runs for six months, March to August inclusive. Ecurie Ecosse had entered the three cars in the final race of the season at Crimond, an airfield circuit outside Aberdeen.

After that, Winter set in, so it was a good time to lighten the cars where possible and do some work on the overhead gear, this, Wilkie claimed would increase the engine rev limit from 5800 to 6200 RPM.

Who is Ecurie Ecosse (Team Scotland)

David Murray and "Wilkie" Wilkinson formed E.E. in November 1951. They encouraged three wealthy young Scots who were racing XK 120s to run as a team, with David Murray running the team as "Patron". E.E. were participating in race meetings throughout 1952/1953 with XK 120 roadsters. In 1954 E.E. purchased 3 Jaguar C types, with money from outside interests. In 1955 they bought the first 3 production D types, which they ran for the next three seasons.

David Murray: Was a chartered accountant, owned two hotels and a wine shop in Edinburgh. He also had a small garage, Merchiston Motors, in Merchiston Mews, a very old area, with double storey blue stone buildings on each side, originally the ground level were stables, with residences on the upper level, the Mews is still paved with large cobble stones. Merchiston



1955 Le-Mans start. Race won by the Jaguar Works Team (Mike Hawthorn & Ivor Bueb). A catastrophic crash killed 84 people.



Le-Mans 1955, with the No. 6 winning Jaguar. L-R Mike Hawthorn, Lofty England, Ron Gaudion and John Cooper

Motors occupied four converted stables, with spares and a small machine shop in the upper level on the north side of the Mews, whilst opposite on the southern side was E.E. in two converted stables, next door was the office/reception area and the upper level had David Murrays and Wilkies offices and toilets.

'Wilkie' Wilkinson: Was English, he had, pre-war, been a riding mechanic with George Easton at Brooklands Raceway, later he was with Billy Cotton (Band Leader) and finished up being chief mechanic for Bellvue Garage, running a team of M.Gs for the Evan's family, with an occasional drive.

The Drivers

Ron Flockhart: A mechanical engineer, a test driver for BRM, drove for Connaught F1 and also Austin Healy. A very quick, safe driver, who took his driving very seriously.

Ninian Sanderson: Who ran a used car yard in Glasgow was a little rough around the edges and liked to play jokes, was a good steady driver.

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1955 winning 'D' type Jaguar returning from Le-Mans. Taken at Elmdon airport/Birmingham with mechanics and technical staff.



Wilkie's wreck, Snetterton - first Race 1956. ('Wilkie' Wilkinson was chief mechanic with EE)

John Lawrence: Owned and ran a garage in the village of Cullen, on the North Coast, he was also a good steady, serious driver, particularly endurance races. He raced an XK 140.

Reserve Drivers

Ivor Bueb: Ex 'works' driver owned and ran a garage in Cheltenham, drove F2 and F3 cars.

Jack Fairman: An automotive engineer who worked for Daimler, also a 'works driver'.

Archie Scott Brown: Had disfigured short legs with a normal body torso, but without a right hand, this was due to his mother contracting Rubella during pregnancy. He used to wrap a bandage around his wrist to help hold the steering wheel. He was only 5 feet tall and because of his short legs we use to put in a special seat with an extra 4 inches in the seat and a 9-inch scwab behind him. A very quick driver, He drove a Formula 1 Connaught and was signed as a 'works driver' to Brian Lister, who developed the very successful Lister Jaguar.

Mechanics

Stan Sproat: Who joined E.E. in 1952. Served in the Navy during the war. A good all-rounder.

Pat Meehan: Apprenticed to Merchiston motors, an Irishman who was a part time E.E. mechanic, used for the Milli Miglia Monzapolis.

Myself: Full time during the racing season, March to August inclusive, late 1955 to February 1958.

Transport

We used two ex, Glasgow converted buses. A single decker 1928 Leyland Tiger, grey in colour, which carried one car plus spares. The other was a cut down double decker, which carried two cars, one above the other, with space behind the driver's cabin for personnel. It was a 1936 Leyland Tiger, green in colour, both many times around the clock.

Sandy Arthur, Transport Driver, was employed full time by Dobson Transport Company, on loan to E.E. for each season. He was responsible for spares, travel documents and in charge of our expense money. He drove the two-car transporter, Stan and I shared the other.

When the season finished Stan and I would rebuild the cars for the next season.

Off Season

There was five months over winter when there was no work to be done. I approached David Murray and suggested that I sign off for five months and return by the first of March. He was delighted as he would be saving five months of dead wages.

I visited the Merchant Marine office in Leith, (the Port of Edinburgh) and sat an exam for a Marine Engineers Ticket. I was successful, being allotted to the SS Marshal in Cardiff, as 5th Engineer, bound for U.S.A. Fortunately, for me, each time I went to sea, the ships were on round trips, returning in time to take up where I had left off with E.E. It was ideal for David Murray and me.

1956 Season

The first race of the 56 season was at Snetterton in South East England. We, that is, Stan Sproat, the other mechanic

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and I, had also fitted new brake pads over the winter months.

We arrived on the Friday, practice was on Saturday morning, one race in the afternoon and three short races on the Sunday. David Murray (DM) said when you unload the cars, do a few laps to bed the brakes in. So, Wilkie was in one car and Stan and I in the other two. After three laps we came in, DM said to Wilkie, "I had the stop watch on you, getting slow in your old age" (joking of course). Now, Wilkie, in all due respect, had prewar, been a riding mechanic for Billy Cotton, (Band leader of some renown) at the old Brooklands track, and later was preparing M.G's and driving them at times. He was a wizard at tuning SU carburetors, but hopeless when dealing with Webers fitted to the D Types, the XK 120's and the C Types which Ecurie Ecosse were running in '53 and '54 was, of course fitted with SU's.

Well, anyway, this comment from DM must have played on Wilkie's mind, because he said, "Stan, when you went passed me the car sounded a bit fluffy, I will take it out and check it". He was certainly going 'great guns' when he passed the pits, but was going far too fast for the right hand corner at the end of the short straight, locked up the front right hand wheel and proceeded into the freshly ploughed inner field, the nose of the car dug in, did 3 nose for tails, throwing Wilkie out on the first loop.

Naturally, the car was extensively damaged, with Wilkie sitting up in an adjoining furrow, with only a bruised knee. We didn't hear what DM said to Wilkie, but he was not at all happy, it meant the car going back to the 'works' for repair.

The team then raced at Oulton Park, Silverstone, then Goodwood before going to the continent for the next four races.

1956 Le Mans

Ecurie Ecosse had entered one car for the 1956 24hr Endurance race at Le Mans, drivers were Ron Flockhart and Ninan Sanderson.

Ron was a mechanical engineer, drove an Austin Healy, and was a test driver for BRM, he also flew a WW11 Mustang, a



1956 B.A.R.C. National Meeting Goodwood, Saturday 8th September - Ron Flockhart



Le Mans 1956. Peter Collins - Ron Gaudion - Stirling Moss - Ron Flockhart - Ninian Sanderson Far Right - "Wilkie" Wilkinson - David Murray.

very serious competitor.

Ninan had a second-hand car yard in Glasgow and raced an XK 120, he was an amateur driver who liked to have fun, a bit of a prankster and rough around the edges.

For the '56' Le Mans the works had entered 3 cars, our pits were adjacent to each other. Within the first couple of laps two of the works cars had an accident, at the end of the Mulsane Straight, hitting a spinning Ferrari, both Jaguars and the Ferrari were out.

The leading Jaguar, with Hawthorn driving, started 'missing' at the 12th lap, after numerous pit stops, changing plugs to no effect, the next time in the pits the bonnet was lifted with the motor still running, you could see a white mist pulsating, #3 injection pipe had a hairline crack, (it was the first race using the new Lucas fuel injection system). Fortunately, a spare set of pipes were carried under the passenger seat and after replacing the offending pipe, there were no further dramas. During this time of frequent pit stops, Hawthorn dropped from running 1st down to 12th, by the end of the race

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the Hawthorn/Bueb car came in a very credible 5th.

The single EE entry driven by Flockhart/Sanderson came in 1st, beating the Aston Martin driven by Moss/Collins, by 2 laps. **This was the first time that a private entry had won the Le Mans 24hr race.**

1956 Reims 12 Hour Race

Then onto Reims 12hr race, 3 works cars entered and one from Ecurie Ecosse. The race had been in progress for 11 hours and 57 minutes, the works cars 1, 2, and 3 and the E.E car in close 4th. Lofty had their signalling board out showing the finishing order, Haw, Ham, fair on the second last lap Jaguars running 1,2,3,4 in line astern. Come the last lap 100 meters from the finishing line, Duncan Hamilton dropped down to 3rd gear, planted the foot and passed Hawthorn to the line. Duncan was immediately sacked for breaking team orders.

Still more drama, here we were waiting on Flockhart to finish behind the works cars, but no Flockhart, on looking back along the pit straight, about 200 meters back, going very slowly was Flockhart, on the very last lap, on the last corner he broke a half shaft, fortunately all D types were fitted with ZF limited slip differentials, and he was able to crawl to the finish line and maintain his 4th place.

Why did Hamilton defy team orders?? Duncan had overheard one of the team mechanics saying there was no replacement in the immediate future for the D type and Jaguar would be retiring from racing after this season. So, being Duncan he wanted to go out with a big win. In truth the D type, after 3 years was past its use by date. However, Duncan continued racing D types at local club events, and on the continent, he owned 2 production models.

1957 Le Mans

Let's now fast forward to '57 'Le Mans, with no works entries, 5 privately entered D types would hold up the prestige of Jaguar, two from Ecurie Ecosse, one from Ecurie Belge, one from France and Duncan Hamilton with his car.

The two entered by E.E were Long Nose ex works cars, one being the fuel injected car. (*There by lies a tale*).

For the start of the '57' season, Jaguar sold the first of the long nose models to E.E., the second one being the fuel injected 3.8 litre model but Lofty England was reluctant to deliver the car before Le Mans. David Murray was on the phone weekly chasing it's delivery but Lofty kept making excuses.

The 'fact of the matter' was that Lofty didn't want Wilkie 'tinkering' with the fuel injection system, (*he did not have much faith in Wilkie*). So a compromise was suggested by Lofty to David Murray, send Ron down 10 days before, he can help prepare the car, we will bring him up to speed with the new injection system, the new quick change brake pads and a few other improvements and he can bring the car with the others we are preparing and deliver the car in time for scrutineering on the Wednesday. We, actually, arrived in Le Mans on the Tuesday.

Drama: - Just follow the car in front. Lofty, the morning we left the factory, "We are going to fly the cars over via Bristol



Oulton Park U.K. 1956. Ron Gaudion, Sandy Arthur, Stan Sproat.



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Freighters, 2 in each plane, from an airfield down south, I will be using country back lanes, keeping away from the highway, just follow the car in front". Easier said than done. Lofty was in the Hamilton entry, followed by Len Heyden in the French entry, Ted Brooks in the Belgium and me in the E.E. car, tail end Charlie. About half way going down these country lanes, it was easy going, no traffic, then all of a sudden, a farmer with a tractor/trailer, fed up with waiting for the cars to pass, shot out in front of me and for the next half mile I was forced to follow him at 20m.p.h (impossible to pass in the narrow lanes) until he swung left into an opening into a paddock.

Where was the car in front? Nothing in site, didn't know which airfield, so catch up if I can. So, then was my best drive in a D type, I dropped down to 3rd and stepped gently on the metal, at about 80m.p.h I selected 4th gear and would you believe I got 'wheel spin' doing 100m.p.h, yes, the road was slightly damp, due to a heavy dew overnight, so concentrating on the road ahead, and now doing a little over 150m.p.h, I spotted the car in front, a sigh of relief, no further drama.

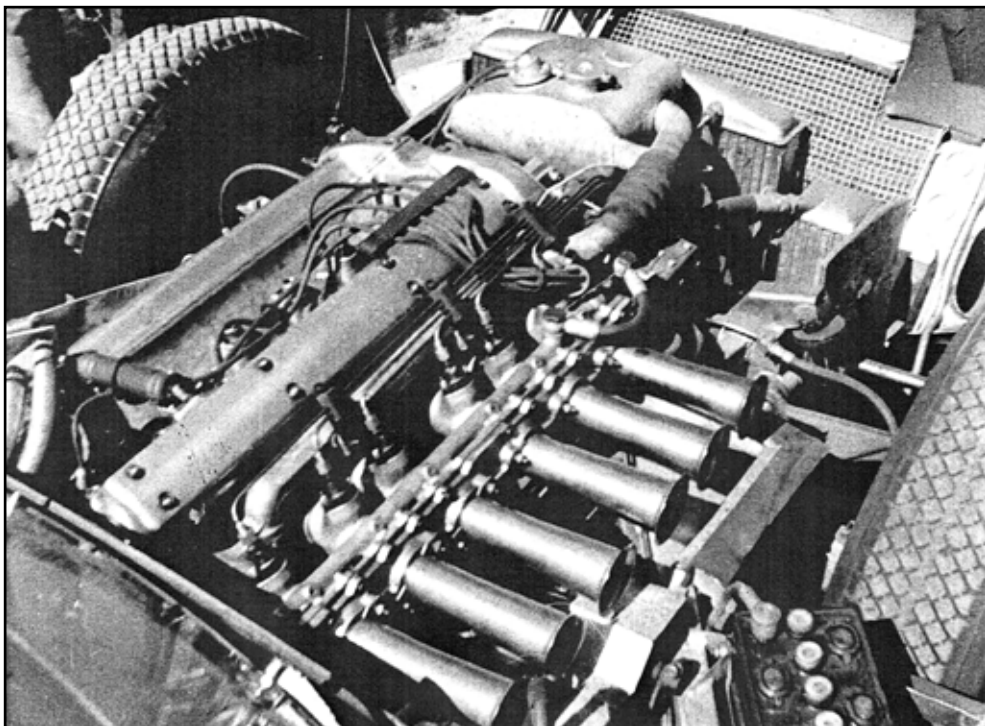
We landed in Cherbourg and drove the cars across France to Le Mans, I peeled off to the South towards Loeu, a small town where we had our base, in the Hotel Ricordeau, some 20 minutes from the circuit.

David Murray was there on the roadside with Sandy Arthur and the transporter, tail ramp down ready to drive straight in, lock up, ready for scrutineering on the morrow, the 2nd car was already on the top rails.

I won't bore you with the details, but suffice to say, Ecurie Ecosse came first and second with 'D' types in 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, a loan Ferrari coming in at 5th.

It must be said that it was the best performance by privately entered cars, up against the might of Ferrari, Maserati, Aston Martin and other factory teams.

We packed up, loaded the transporter and proceeded to the hotel welcome, where David Murray, in anticipation, had arranged a celebration dinner for the drivers, girlfriends, timekeepers and we humble mechanics, a great night.



1956 3.8 litre 'D' Type Engine with Lucas fuel injection and wide angle head.



Le Mans 1957 finish. Flockhart leads the 2nd placed sister Ecurie Ecosse 'D' Type of Sanderson/Lawrence over the line in a record distance travelled, which stood for the next 4 years

Trivia.

As my parents were to visit the U.K. and the continent on holiday, May and I, who had been engaged for 12 months, thought it a good idea to "tie the knot" during their visit.

I was to meet them in London on the 1st July, Monza was the previous weekend, not enough time if I was to return by transporter. I had mentioned previously to David Murray, my intention to marry and to meet my parents in London,

therefore I would have to miss Monza. No way says he; we have 3 cars running and we need you, let me think about it and I will get back to you. The very next day he said he had solved our problem. John Lawrence, who is driving his own personal XK140 DHC, is returning home on the Monday and would love to have your company, as far as London. ■

Editor - A big thank you to Ron and the Jaguar Drivers Club of QLD. Part 3 will appear in the February edition of CM.

How I Came to Join Jaguar (Part Three) By Ron Gaudion

Editor - part three and final of this wonderful account of Ron Gaudion's time with Jaguar and Ecurie Ecosse

1957 Monza (Monzapolis: Race of Two Worlds)

Next morning it was off to Monza in Italy, for the "Race of Two Worlds", Monzapolis, where the Americans wanted to race 10 of their Miniapolis cars, against European cars, it was for the following weekend.

With thick heads from the previous night's celebrations, our cases on board, off we go. The transporter moved one metre and "crack" the nearside rear spring decided to break the main leaf, so all out, wheels off, remove spring. While Stan and I were hard at work, Sandy had located a local spring works, who could make a new one, ready for the afternoon and after a bite to eat we were off.

Sharing the driving, we drove through the night, all of Tuesday (race finished on the Sunday, we lost Monday) and Tuesday night arriving at Monza in time for the scrutineering at 3pm on the Wednesday, (sleep, sleep, sleep) for practice on the Friday. Racing was on the Saturday.

Our drivers were Jack Fairman, Ninian Sanderson and John Lawrence. There was a case of Champagne for the first driver to be in front on the opening lap.

Jack Fairman, using all 4 gears, passed over the line first, to the utter surprise of the "Yanks", they had been lapping a lot faster than us, however their cars only had 2 gears. Jack used this to his advantage, however next time round there were three Indy cars leading.

The race was of 500 miles, broken into 3 heats, with 30 minutes in between. As it turned out the Indy cars suffered badly with suspension problems, on the rough track. The Americans needed the breaks to replace shock absorbers. The three 'D' types ran perfectly throughout.

The Indy cars finished 1, 2 and 3, the D types came in 4, 5 and 6, followed by 3 Indy cars, 4 had retired. If the race had of been 500 miles with no heats, we would have come in first, second and third. The Americans were impressed with our performance.

A Bit of Trivia.

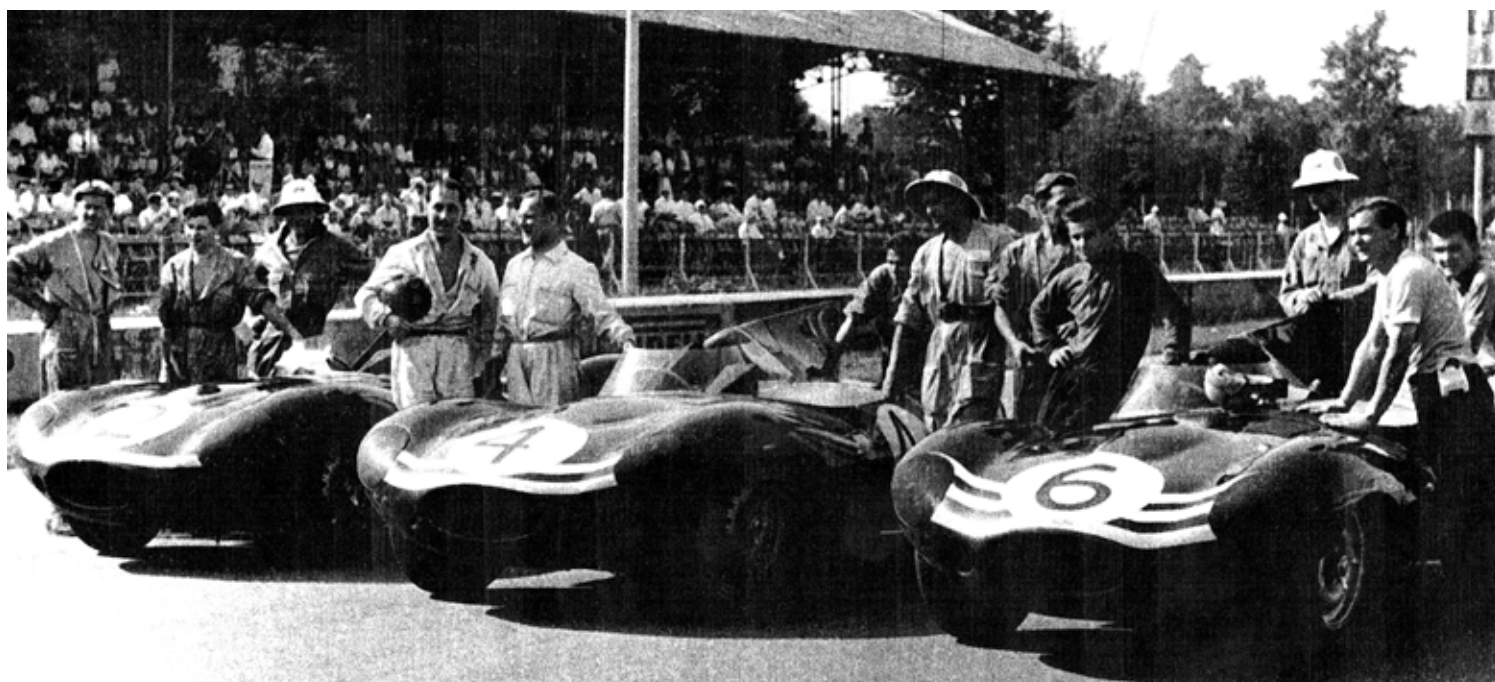
Jack Fairman's nickname was "Flashjack" Why? Because he was immaculate in his dress code, always in a sports jacket and cravat with a neatly trimmed moustache. After the Monzapolis this was changed to "Fearless Jack" Why? Because, during practice one of the D types threw a tread, due to the stress on the tyres of speeds in excess of 150m.p.h when on the steep banking at each end of the circuit. Dunlop, our tyre supplier recommended, due to the excess heat generated and

the down force encountered, the higher up the banking the less loading on the tyres. (Keep in mind the D type had a fully enclosed body, heat buildup was tremendous), therefore Fairman was circulating so close to the top of the barrier, that he took the bonnet handle, safety strap and the first coat of paint, travelling well in excess of 160 m.p.h, hence the well-deserved "nickname" Fearless Jack.

1957 - Milli Miglia

E.E. in 1957, entered one car in the Milli Miglia (1000 miles) on the 11th May, with Flockhart the driver, roughly 10 hours, only stopping every 250 miles for fuel. Starting at Brescia, first pitstop at Pesard, then Rome, Bologna, then back to Brescia. Using the highway down the east coast then through the mountains to Rome, then up through the centre back to the start - finish line.

Sandy Arthur, Pat Meehan and myself were to cover the race. Stan Sproat and Wilkie Wilkinson were to attend to a race in Spa, in Belgium the same weekend, taking one car in the grey transporter. Driving the green transporter with two cars on board, (we were whilst on the Continent to race in the M.M, Nurburgring, Le Mans, Monza and in Sweden) we left Edinburgh early morning on the 4th May, driving to the "cross channel" ferry at Dover to



1957. The three Ecurie Ecosse cars, two Long-nose and one production car on the grid at Monza for the "Race of Two Worlds". L-R Stan Sproat, Pat Meehan, (unknown), Jack Fairman, 'Wilkie' Wilkinson, Sandy Arthur, Ron Gaudion, and Ninian Sanderson.

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1957 grid at Monza for the "Race of Two Worlds". L-R 'Wilkie', (unknown), Sandy Arthur, Ron Gaudion, (unknown) and Ninian Sanderson.

Calais, then down the centre of France to Grenoble, then over the Cenise Pass into Italy.

We started to climb towards the pass, very heavy going, a lot of 1st and 2nd gear work, when the engine gave a cough and promptly stopped. With all the low gear work the exhaust manifold was glowing a "cherry red", causing the plastic fuel line (with internal tension spring) to collapse, touching the hot manifold and burning a hole, lost fuel pressure. Thankfully it didn't catch fire. No spare fuel hose in toolbox, what to do?

Fortunately, on driving through London, I had purchased a new shirt, which was within a plastic sheath, wrapping a part of the plastic around the fuel line, held in place with welding wire and held back out of harm's way. It worked well, as a matter of fact it held up until our return to Edinburgh. (There was no way we could get a replacement for a 1936 Leyland on the Continent).

As we approached the Border Control, the Officer came out of his office to tell us "the Pass is closed" due to a heavy fall of snow. No alternative but back track to Grenoble. We tried going by train, but when the transporter was on the flat top, it was too high for the tunnel. So,

via Nice, Monaco, Genoa, then north to Milano then east to Brescia.

Count Maggi, a promoter of the Milli Miglia, invited Ecurrie Ecosse to stay with him and the Contessa, in their beautiful ancestral home. Cassa Maggi (Castle Maggi) at least 400 years old, sitting on a hill, surrounded by 100 acres of a working farm of cattle, dairy herd, vineyard and a large vegetable garden with fruit trees. It was in the village of Coleno, a few miles inland from Brescia.

The castle and numerous stone horse stalls, converted into garages, machinery sheds and workshops, with servants' quarters above. Mr & Mrs Murray were entertained in the castle, whilst Sandy, Pat and I were to share the servant's quarters.

Count Maggi, pre WW11, was racing a Bugatti, his ride on mechanic, Baccoli, who had a gammy leg and used a cane, when walking, (due to an accident racing) was responsible for the maintenance of the cars, trucks, tractors and other farm machinery. The Bugatti was in one of the better restored stables. Baccoli was only too pleased to show us the finer points of this magnificent machine, and was delighted to inspect the 'D type'. He was mystified with the disc brakes and

torsion bar suspension and not having a chassis. Needless, to say, we were looked after like royalty by the staff.

It was an early start, 5am, cars were numbered by their starting time, with one-minute intervals, our car was numbered 513. Pat Meehan was at the start, I was at the first stop at Pesaro, Sandy Arthur was at Rome (half way) with the transporter, (just as well).

I had set up the first stop on the forecourt of an Esso Service Station, (Esso supplied a mini fuel tanker with hose and nozzle attached) just around from a sharp right-hand corner. The locals, numbering a couple of hundred, were crowded opposite and all over the roadway. As cars were accelerating from the corner, the crowd would part just wide enough for the cars to go through. This was a dangerous sport, as some would brag that they had touched the car on the way through. (No wonder some were killed or injured).

Trivia. Flockhart, who was in 13th position on starting, was now running in 5th position. He was in a hurry, stopping abruptly, strain showing on his face, jumped out, thumbs up (meaning everything was ok) and moved quickly behind me. I had flipped the lid of

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the fuel tank, inserted the nozzle and started filling, I then looked back and there was Ron, relieving himself on the rear wheel of the tanker. The crowd who had been quite noisy came to a hush and as the strain left Ron's tensed up shoulders, the crowd went ahhh in sympathy. Ron zipped up, turned round with a huge smile and wave, the crowd went crazy, shouting Bravo, Bravo. No one had thought of a comfort stop, we had provided him with sandwiches and lemon juice with a long plastic straw, but didn't think of comfort stops. We had all been up at 4am for breakfast and it was to be a 10 or 11 hour drive.

After Flockhart left Pesaro, I was to proceed to Bologna for the third and last stop.

Whilst waiting for Flockhart to appear, Taruffi driving a Maserati came through first two and a half minutes in front of the Marquis De Portago, (a Spanish aristocrat) driving a Ferrari. As the Ferrari approached the pits, it was quite noticeable that the front of the car was shuddering badly, both front wheels were bent and out of balance, obviously through hitting kerbs going through some of the villages. Alphonso, as he approached, was giving hand signals not to worry about changing the wheels, pointing behind him, just re-fuel.

As it turned out, it was a bad decision. Whilst re-fueling with 30 or more gallons of fuel, the mechanics could have quite easily have changed both wheels. Alphonso, knowing that Taruffi was only just ahead, was thinking that with the new auto-strada from Bologna to Brescia, he would be able to catch Taruffi and win this very prestigious event. Alphonso De Portago took off accelerating like a bat out of hell. On the auto-strada accelerating hard, when either one or both front wheels collapsed, sending the Ferrari into the spectators standing at the roadside, killing 11, himself and his navigator.

The Milli Miglia, being run on public roads, it was not possible to police 1,000 miles. Each year 2 or 3 pedestrians were killed by very fast-moving cars, this seemed to be acceptable until 1957. So, due to this horrific accident, the race has been terminated.



Count Maggi, a promoter of the Milli Miglia, invited Ecurrie Ecosse to stay with him and the Contessa in their beautiful ancestral home Cassa Maggi - at least 400 years old.

Meantime, word came through that Flockhart had pulled out at Rome. Due to the heavy fuel load, going over the very twisty mountain road, with the fuel sloshing from side to side, the tail section holding the tank, decided to part company with the main centre section, Flockhart just managed to make the Rome pitstop. Sandy Arthur, having the green transporter, was able to load the damaged car and head with Flockhart to the Nurburgring in Germany, for our next race, 1000kms.

Stan Sproat and Wilkie had taken the grey transporter, with our first ex "works" long nose to Spa, in Belgium with both races being on the same weekend, and then to meet up at the Nurburgring. David Murray had entered two cars in the 1,000kms at the Nurburgring. Drivers were to be Flockhart/Fairman and Bueb/Lawrence, in a field of 79 on the treacherous 14-mile mountain circuit, they finished 8th and 11th.

Le Mans

Then on to Le Mans three weeks later. It was decided that Pat Meehan and I take the grey transporter, with the damaged M.M. car to the factory at Browns Lane, for repair a.s.a.p. Pat taking the transporter back to Edinburgh and return to pick up the repaired car, three weeks later and meet us at Monza. Meantime, as Lofty had suggested, I was to help prepare our 2nd long nose, as mentioned previously. Scrutineering for Le Mans was on the Wednesday, practice

on Thursday, Thursday night and Friday. Race started at 4pm on the Saturday. All competing cars had to be in front of their designated pits by 10am. Gates then closed for any further entries.

Final scrutineering then took place. Officials with three different colours of paint, then put a dab on all four shock absorbers, a different colour on the battery, and another on the starter motor. If any changes were made during the race, it was immediate disqualification.

Only two mechanics could work on the car during pitstops with the driver counting as one. Therefore, the 2nd mechanic could not jump down until the driver was on the pit counter. Should it be necessary to change a wheel, then the spare carried in the car must be used first. A quick lift jack may be used, providing a small jack with tools are carried in the car, usually under the passenger seat. If the decision is made to change a wheel, the used wheel must be returned to the boot. In the D type, the fit in the boot is very tight and when the car has been re-fueled, the weight of the fuel distorts the shelf that the tank sits on (a rubber bag) at least 8mm and it is impossible to get a wheel in or out. So, therefore we had to do the change before re-fueling.

At 3.45pm the cars are pushed to the start line, side by side facing out. At precisely 4pm the flag is dropped, the drivers, who have been standing on the other side of the track, run across, jump in, start their engines and away.

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Back at Monza.

As noted in part 2, Ron was to meet his parents in London and would have to miss Monza. But Murray said 'No way' as he had 3 cars running. So he arranged for John Lawrence to take Ron back to London in his XK140 DHC.

We were all staying at the same hotel, after the race, John said, "Be in the car park tomorrow at 9am and we will head off". So, Monday morning at 9am, no John, 9-15 I ring his room, no answer, at 9-30 I ring again, no answer, I could only wait. At 10am John appears with a gorgeous Italian 'lady', he has a smirk on his face, sorry Ron I got caught up, I give him a smile and a wink, he then introduces Gabriella, and says we will be dropping her off at Lake Como on the way. (Gabriella's parents were living in retirement on the northern shore of this lovely lake).

So, off we go, being an XK 140 I'm sitting sideways in the back. We approach the ferry on the southern side of the lake and being a 'gentleman' John suggests we see Gabriella to her door. On arrival, after introductions, her parents insist we stay for lunch. We finally get away reaching the car at about 3pm. It was a beautiful sunny day, we decided to drop the hood. John says, "I will get you to London in time, don't worry". We head off towards the mountains and the Cenise Pass, (now open due to the warmer weather). Cruising along at about 85 m.p.h there was a long right-hand curve, John was drifting over the yellow centre line, and low and behold, on the apex of the corner were two motor cycle cops, talking to two young ladies. I looked in the side mirror and yes, both Polizia were kick starting their bikes and after us. I had visions of

spending the next couple of days in an Italian prison. So, John, put your foot down, they are after us. Now, we were in a right-hand drive vehicle driving on the right-hand side of the road, so I was the eyes looking ahead. We were now doing over 100 m.p.h and fast approaching a very large truck with a car coming towards us, can't pass yet and police gaining on us, oncoming car passes, now, John, first turn off, take it, a change down to 3rd, foot down, 4th gear foot down, up to 130m.p.h. police falling away, a turn off to the left, we take it and thankfully lose the Polizia. Later in the afternoon as we approach the Alps, storm clouds start to appear, time to stop and put up the hood. About 9pm, halfway into the mountains, all hell breaks loose, thunder, lightning and heavy rain, it's pitch black, John is driving with caution, when we



1957 Le Mans. The winning Jaguar driven by Ron Flockhart in red, alongside Ivor Bueb and Ron Gaudion, post victory with the Ecosse Team and 'XKD606'.

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Concours of Elegance at Hampton Court Palace on September 1, 2017 in London, England. Ron was flown to the UK by British Airways for the celebration of the 60th anniversary of Jaguar's 1-2-3-4-6 finish at the 1957 Le Mans 24-hour race. The 5 Jaguar D-Types that accomplished the result were displayed together for the first time in 60 years.

hear a loud backfire, engine stops, all dashboard lights off and smoke appears from under dashboard, we smell burning rubber, John de-clutches and selects neutral and coasts to a stop. Pitch black and rain pelting down. John says, "There is a torch in the glove box, you're the mechanic, fix it". On opening the bonnet, it was obvious that the coil bracket had broken in half, coil had fallen in between the cam covers and shorted out the main wire to the ignition switch.

My toolbox was in one of the transporters, my suitcase was in the boot, with, thankfully, a small coil of wire, how come? you may ask. At Silverstone, the last meeting we had attended in the U.K. before moving to the Continent, I had caught up with the Lucas Rep, and told him I wanted to purchase a small coil of wire, to rewire some of the wiring on my MG-TA, in need of some TLC. He said he didn't have any with him but would see me in Le Mans with a coil. He was true to his word, hence the life saver in my case. On opening the boot, low and behold, a plastic raincoat and the XK tool roll had the tools I needed. I cut off two lengths of wire, one to replace the burnt out one from coil to ignition switch, the other to tie the coil out of harm's way. O.K. let's go; a total of 15 minutes lost.

We made the Cenise Pass about midnight and as we moved into France the weather

was on the improve. We made Genoble for an early breakfast and caught the midday ferry at Calais for Dover. John dropped me off at the Strand Palace Hotel in London at 3pm, a couple of hours before meeting my folks. "I said I would get you here in time", says John. I thanked him and asked him if he had Gabriell's phone number, laughing, he thumped me on the shoulder, jumped in the car and headed off home to Scotland with his right arm out, giving me the finger in deep laughter.

After two days of catch up, I hadn't seen my parents in four years, although in constant contact by letter. I then caught the train to Middlesborough, taking the overnight ferry to Brussels. Stan and Sandy were there waiting for me. We left the grey transporter at the ferry terminal, to be picked up on our way back. We headed off in the green transporter with both Long Nose D types, to the 1000klms race at Kristianstad in Sweden, our last race of the season. Driver pairing was Fairman/Sanderson and Lawrwnce/Scott-Brown. In a field of 32, only 21 finished, E.E. finished 8th and 11th.

On our return to Edinburgh it was rebuild the cars and, for myself, it was getting ready for my impending marriage in three weeks' time.

I had met the love of my life, May, at a lovely ballroom, called 'The Cavendish',

close to Edinburgh Castle, my first month in Scotland, two months later I was away for five months as a Marine Engineer. On my return, I once again went to the Cavendish and May was also there, that's when we started courting, that was March 1956, and as mentioned earlier, married in September 1957, spending our honeymoon on the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey. We left in February on the MV Fairsea, and six weeks later we arrived in Melbourne and I introduced my new bride to Australia. I must say that May has loved Australia from her first day ashore, and 62 years later she thinks it is the best place in the world.

A month later I joined BP Australia as an Automotive Lubricants Engineer and three months later was Racing Manager for Victoria, as well. After 26 years with BP, I was offered a 'Golden Handshake' and retired on the Gold Coast, that was 1984, and we are still here. ■

Editor.- For readers who missed Ron's story, Part 1 was published in the October Magazine and Part 2 in December. Acknowledgement to the Jaguar Drivers Club of Queensland and Ron Gaudion for this wonderful story.