

**The List**

*Your dream drive made real*

# 'The faster you go the better it gets'

Philip Martin's car past is largely made up of nippy roadsters and hatches, bar a brief spell of rotted Jaguar Mk2 ownership. Can a fine example still set his pulse racing fifty years later?

Words RUSS SMITH Photography JONATHAN JACOB

**T**oday could have been a disaster. I arrive nice and early at the Classic and Sportscar Centre's North Yorkshire base to the news that the Mk2 we're due to borrow has a sticking brake caliper, and its replacement hasn't been delivered yet. Old cars, eh? My look of panic is swiftly turned to one of relief by boss James Szkiller. 'It's alright, we've got another Mk2 for you. It's one we've already sold but the customer is happy for you to use it today. It's just being collected from storage and checked over.'

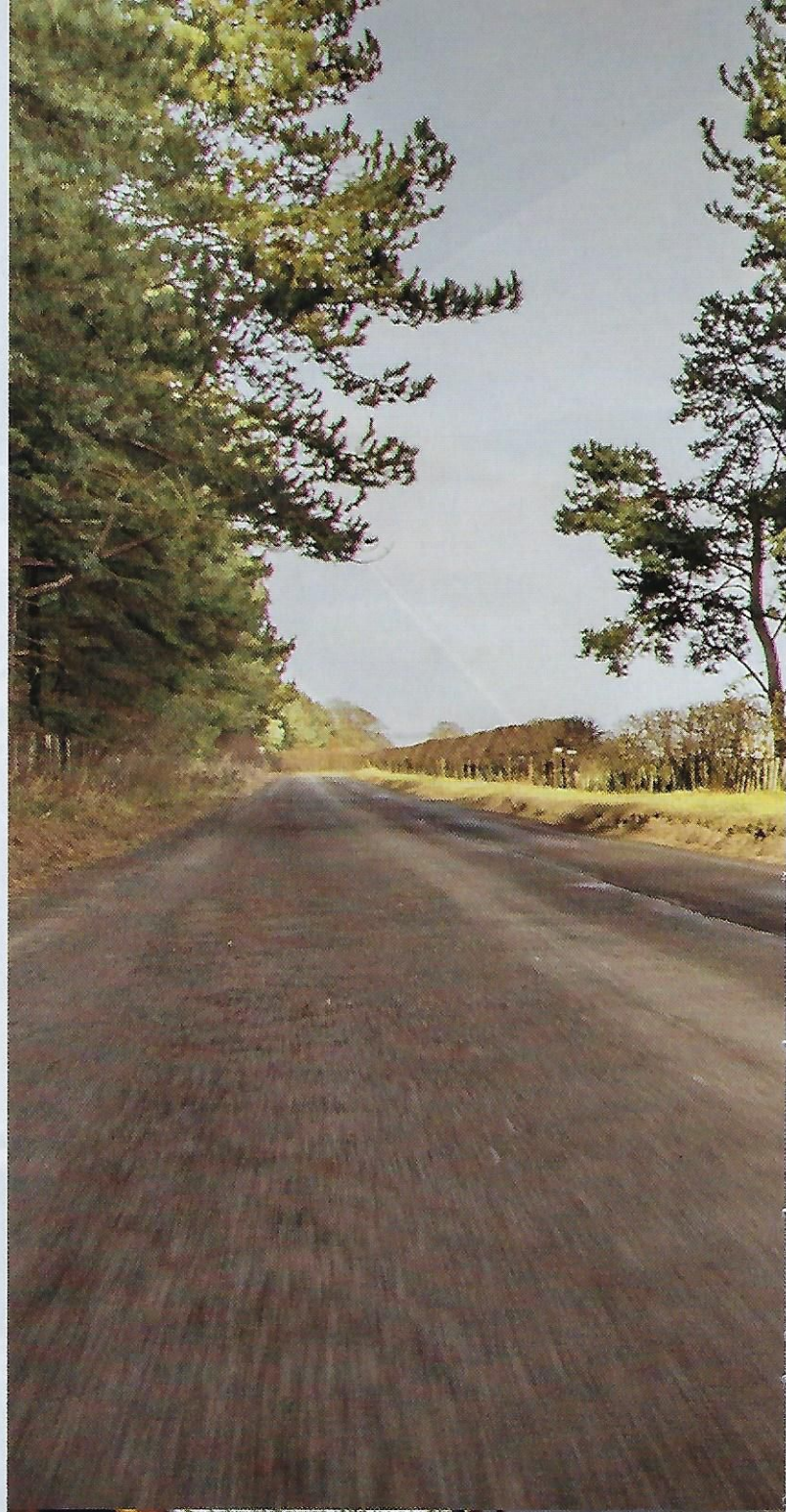
So there's time to accept a cup of tea and enjoy the vast and atmospheric barn that houses the company's stock. At which point our reader Philip Martin walks in and I put him in the picture. With the smile that will become

a permanent fixture today he replies, 'Waiting's not a problem - I could never get bored here, there's so much to look at.'

This is a good point to introduce the twist in the tale of this issue's dream drive - Philip has not only driven a Jaguar Mk2 before, he's owned one too. But before you cry foul, that ownership was 47 years ago, didn't last long, and the 3.8 in question was a £350 banger that created more wishes than it fulfilled. Philip takes up the story, 'It was an utter rust-bucket that refused to go unless you gave it a healthy dose of Easy-Start. It was almost impossible to get it into second gear too. I once took a couple of relatives from London to Edinburgh in the back of it and the floor was so full of holes that they got soaked through the seat. But I loved that car for six months before someone made me the £500 offer I couldn't refuse, and I've never forgotten it. What I've always wanted to know is what it's like to drive a good one.' And so, almost half a century later, Philip will finally get his wish today, in a Mk2 that's worth something over a hundred times more than the last one he sat behind the wheel of.

The signature growl of a Jaguar straight-six draws us outside; our car has been delivered and its gunmetal paint glows in the wintry morning sun. Philip's glowing too. 'It's beautiful. Right now, I almost daren't touch it. I'm excited and nervous in equal measure.' He doesn't even mind that we've short-changed him a bit - this is a 3.4, which is down by 10bhp on the 3.8 of Philip's dreams. 'I'm sure I won't be able to tell. Up close I'm reminded of the *Grace, Space, Pace* advert Jaguar ran and note how apposite it is. I know beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and also that some foreigner [Enzo Ferrari] once said that the E-type was the most beautiful car ever made, but others, including me, beg to differ.'

Getting in requires a little thought - it's a surprisingly small door for a mid-sized luxury saloon - but Philip is soon in place, fondly stroking the wheel and admiring the dashboard. 'I love those flick-switches. The later flush 'safety' ones fitted to other Jags were a



#### PHILIP'S DREAM DRIVE LIST

**Citroën DS23 Pallas**  
'For its dramatic, futuristic design which hasn't dated.'

**Renault Avantage**

'One button to open all the windows and the full-length sunroof at once. What a design.'

**Bentley Turbo R Red Label**

'Brilliant value for what you get and so understated. A true luxury wolf in sheep's clothing.'

**Rolls-Royce 20/25 (with partition and chauffeur's suit and cap)**

'This model is for the owner/driver and represents terrific value today.'

**Citroën SM**

'As above but with added Maserati quad-cam V6 engine.'

**Citroën Traction Avant**

'Its innovative spec at launch was so far ahead of the competition.'

**Tatra 87**

'With an air-cooled rear-mounted 3.0-litre V8 engine this epitomises quirkiness doesn't it?'

**Peugeot 406 3.0 Coupe**

'Not yet fully recognised as a classic, but such smooth flowing lines.'

**Renault Caravelle**

'Because I love the looks. And rear-mounted engines.'

Philip familiarises himself with the controls - the Moss gearbox will require his undivided attention



'I had one in the Seventies that was an utter rustbucket – I've always wanted to know what it's like to drive a good one.'

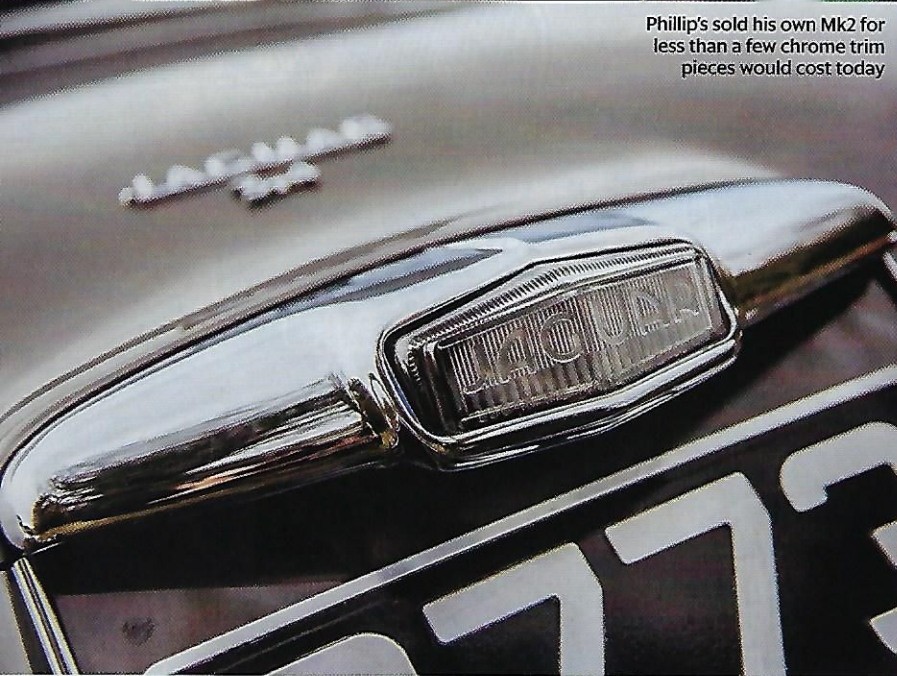
Our reader's previous encounter with the Jaguar marque wasn't a particularly inspiring one



As Phillip quickly found, the Burman steering is unassisted



It's 400cc smaller than his dream 3.8, but Phillip still relishes the opportunity to exercise the Jag's straight-six



Phillip's sold his own Mk2 for less than a few chrome trim pieces would cost today



step back, to my mind? He turns the key and thumbs the starter button. 'There's something about doing that, rather than merely tuning a key, that encapsulates the whole classic car experience and gives me a thrill; stupid maybe, but I just love doing it. And listen to it - it's great to hear that engine; I could just sit here and rev it.' A gentle nudge is needed to remind Philip what we're here to do before he slips the Moss 'box lever into first and heads off.

We swing right for a brief blast of A64 before a left onto the quiet but good road that runs through Wintringham and up into the Yorkshire Wolds. 'The steering feels so light, is it a powered system?' he asks. 'That was optional, I think'.

Slowing and turning into a layby, Philip answers his own question; he has to heave the wheel as he scrubs speed off. 'My biceps will be keeping fit today! Still, it's remarkable how quickly it lightens up. The large wheel is lovely and it self-centres very easily and quickly. The clutch is also nice and light, though the gearbox is a bit notchy.

'Thinking back to 1971, it's telling that a car I drove so long ago still resonates with me today after taking the wheel of this 3.4. The noises are familiar - the whines from the transmission and the growl of the exhaust are so enticing. But this car feels so much tighter than I remember. It has to be said that in both cases the gearbox is the most unattractive aspect with its slow changes that you often need a few attempts to complete. But that is a

well-known fact that owners are prepared to live with (or change) for the other benefits available, of which there are so many.'

At which point the gear knob signals its displeasure at Philip's comments and comes off in his hand, to a roar of laughter. 'Old cars!' To be fair, we were warned that the knob in the car was just a temporary one, marked with the wrong position for reverse, while a correct Mk2 part is awaited. 'It does have a saving grace in the overdrive, which works instantly and drops the revs down considerably for quiet cruising. I also like the tiny red telltale light above the steering column that reminds you when it's engaged. I'm also surprised, with the engine quietened by the overdrive, that there's very little wind noise with this, which is unexpected in what is basically a Fifties design.'

It draws our attention to other comforts, and with the car now fully warmed up we realise that we're not. 'It has a heater... of sorts,' comments Philip. Then I find a well concealed cold-air vent flap lever in the wide oddments slot below the dashboard's switch panel and shut it off. That ventilation draught's probably a real delight in summer months - it would certainly keep your sandwiches fresh - but less so in a frosty Yorkshire. The change is almost instant, 'Now I can feel the benefit of the heater,' says Philip, with some relief.

We're properly out in the sticks now, with just the occasional blink-and-miss-it settlement like Cowlam or Helperthorpe to break



'Give it some welly and it changes character completely, becoming more akin to a sports car'

up largely empty roads that are allowing Philip to really give the car its head. I notice he's already going deeper into bends, braking less and powering through. 'This is not only a docile family car you can take your granny to the shops in, but give it some welly and it changes character completely, becoming more akin to a sports car with its tenacious grip on corners, leaf springs notwithstanding. I always think that Jaguar's S-type, while better specified, lost something in the upgrade to independent rear suspension.

'Not that I'm a fan of sports cars; I've had those and don't like them. And I've never quite understood the attraction of exotics. Where can you legally use their potential? This - a sports saloon - is my ideal car. There's enough challenge and pleasure in driving it at achievable speeds, in comfort. The suspension is not soft but very compliant, you don't feel the bumps on these country roads too badly and the steering feedback is very good; light and direct too. I love it!' he laughs again, cranking the wheel hand-over-hand to nip round a tighter junction.

'The faster you go the better it gets. It's not like the diesel I drove up in - you have to keep giving it lots of welly. The

brakes are up to the job too, smooth and progressive in the way they pull you up, though with no actual sharp bite. OK, it's no Peugeot 205 GTI, but then I'm no longer a GTI owner. I did have one of those until recently but had to stop kidding myself; I didn't belong in it any more. I thought I was a boy racer in my dotage but despite the fantastic handling I decided that I was just a poser. Still, I did double my money on it in two years when I sold it through Anglia Car Auctions last April.'

A layby in the valley by Scardale Plantation provides a handy stop-off for further reflection and to let the car cool down for a while, and Philip is gushing with praise for the Mk2; in fact I think he's a little bit in love. 'Why would anyone want to drive a modern car when they could be out in something like this? There's simply no contest, this has so much character to it. To my mind character is non-existent in a modern box.

'I've always loved old cars but I can't actually explain why. I suppose it probably started with the Austin Sevens I began playing with after ending up in a ditch with concussion on my Talisman Twin motorbike. That convinced me

### 1962 Jaguar Mk2 3.4

**Engine** Iron block/alloy head 3442cc in-line six-cylinder, dohc, two SU 175in HD6 carburetors  
**Power and torque** 210bhp @ 5500rpm; 216lb ft @ 3000rpm  
**Transmission** Four-speed manual with overdrive, rear-wheel drive  
**Steering** Burman recirculating ball  
**Suspension** Front: independent by wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers and anti-roll bar. Rear: live axle with semi-elliptic leaf springs, radius arms, Panhard rod and telescopic dampers  
**Brakes** Discs front and rear, servo-assisted  
**Weight** 1399kg (3080lb)  
**Performance** Top speed: 120mph; 0-60mph: 11.9sec  
**Fuel consumption** 18mpg  
**Cost new** £1669  
**Classic Cars Price Guide** £10k-£32k



Philip says the Mk2 strikes an ideal balance between performance and comfort

that four wheels were much better than two. And I was lucky to quickly gather a group of friends with similar interests, including a really helpful 750 Motor Club member who lived locally to me in Norfolk. I guess it just grew from there.

'Now we see them as things of beauty, and the Mk2 is certainly that. Even the engine looks fantastic. And just look at this...' Philip fingers the burr of the walnut dash. 'So lovely, so smooth, real class. I've also been surprised, coming back to the Jag after all this time, how modern in performance it still is. I didn't expect that.'

Car admired, photos taken, fat chewed, light beginning to fade, it's time for a final run back to the Classic and Sportscar Centre for it to be prepared for its new owner. Philip needs no second bidding. 'I could do this all day,' he beams. He pretty well has.

'Along with the wood and leather there's a faintly oily smell that's typically old Jag, at least in my memory, especially when idling. It's lovely, and I don't recall any other classic I've driven that has that.' Sweeping through the S-bends into Wintringham then down the long tree-lined straight back towards Knapton - the end of the line for our day out - Philip is even easing his previous position on the gearbox. 'Now I've got used to it it's still not the best, but the change from first to second is absolutely delightful.'

And then we're back outside the barn, Philip, only half-joking, says as he kills the engine, 'I've come to the end - it's horrible!' We console him with that all-purpose British panacea, a cup of tea. The keys are gone but his enthusiasm is still at full flow, 'I was thinking about my love for the Mk2. I'd already discovered that what I had thought was the ideal classic car - a convertible of some sort - is nothing of the sort. Hard experience with an MX-5 has taught me that when it gets hot and sunny, I want to be in a cool environment with a hard top.'

'That's what I craved and it's now obvious that the concept of the sports saloon is, to me, the ideal compromise. Sorry if I'm a bit slow, but the more I think about it the more I like the idea, because to me they have the best spec of all - comfort and performance. Not that I don't mind the wolf in sheep's clothing idea either.'

'So, if the Mk2 is the top of that particular tree, perhaps the Triumph Dolomite, Daimler Majestic and Audi quattro all come under the same heading? But this Jaguar has been fantastic, absolute fun, pure unalloyed pleasure. I've loved every minute.'

**Thanks to James and Andrew at Classic and Sportscar Centre, North Yorkshire, (classicandsportscar.ltd.uk)**

### PHILIP MARTIN'S CAR CV

Philip has always enjoyed old cars, from early years with Austin Sevens to the Renault 16 that he refuses to part with



#### AUSTIN SEVENS

'Sixty years ago this was one of the first cars I owned, modified to independent front suspension. During my teenage years there were always several Sevens in the driveway with their engines being rebuilt. None of them cost me more than a tenner.'



#### AUSTIN LIGHT 12/6 SPORTS

'It had a plucky six-cylinder sidevalve engine. I think it may have been a Newbury model, but 1959 was a long time ago - Austin club folk will know for sure. Featured in plenty of memorable camping holidays with friends.'



#### FIAT 500

'Bought in 2009 as a wreck and restored. I got it for nostalgic reasons because I'd owned one in Malta in 1976, also with the full-length sunroof. I sold it when someone offered me huge money - I couldn't say no.'



#### RENAULT 16 TS

'I had one from new in 1972 when I lived in Malta. Bought this one from a Renault Classic Car Club member and exhibited it at the NEC for model's 50th anniversary in 2015. Perfect suspension for atrocious Norfolk/Suffolk roads. Definitely a keeper.'

#### [Want a Drive?]

Classic Cars will make a dream drive happen for one reader in every issue. Send us your list of the ten cars you'd most want to drive and why, along with a CV of the classic cars you've owned to classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk. Be prepared for the photoshoot glamour of an early start and a long drive to get there.

