

# GT heaven in

The ninth AUTOSPORT 3 Hours retrospective is held at Snetterton this weekend. **MARCUS PYE**

It's as iconic a confrontation as Ford versus Ferrari: Jaguar and Austin-Healey go head to head in a 1960s scrap to savour at Snetterton on Saturday. The ninth HSCC AUTOSPORT 3 Hours retrospective – again using an all-GT format following last year's experiment – outnumbered the eight contemporary events of '57-'64, and has attracted another strong entry. Courtesy of Jeremy Welch and his client Julian Thomas, last year's second-placed Healey 3000 and an E-type provided another perspective on the action this coming Saturday.

Conceived a dozen miles apart in England's heartland – Jaguar's E-type in industrial Coventry and Donald Healey's 3000 in historic Warwick (although early Healeys



Jeremy Welch gives Pye some pointers

were built by Austin in Birmingham, hence the double-barrelled monicker, the 3000s were made at BMC's Abingdon plant) – the standard-setting models beloved

worldwide are strikingly similar in overview, yet refreshingly different. Both Grand Tourers used proven parts and demonstrated their mettle on race tracks. In the latter's case,

"The Healey's a strong car, and the engine's pretty unburstable"

Jeremy Welch

on gruelling rallies too.

Let me introduce the two protagonists. In the red corner is the Austin-Healey: square-jawed, stockily-built and with the stance of a fighting dog. A glint in its eyes and smiling mouth bely its snarl as its opponent approaches. Slinking into the blue (OK, silver) corner is the Jaguar, unmistakably feline with the rear musculature of a rampant big cat. This is going to be some confrontation, for the 3000 and

**AUTOSPORT 3 HOURS TIMETABLE**

SATURDAY JUNE 13		SUNDAY JUNE 14	
0900-0930	Testing	0900-1120	Qualifying
1030-1115	Qualifying	1135-1355	Races 6-8
1130-1225	Races 1-2	1410-1440	ARCHIE SCOTT BROWN TROPHY
1400-1700	AUTOSPORT 3 HOURS		
1715-1810	Races 4-5	1455-1745	Races 10-14



85

# East Anglia

**samples two of the iconic machines that will star in Saturday's centrepiece event**

E-type models' CVs are both valiantly impressive.

Each packs a straight-six punch. The Healey's engine is a three-litre single-cam overhead valve (OHV) workhorse, its iron cylinder block sourced from Austin's big Westminster saloon and topped by an aluminium head, breathing through triple Weber DCOE carburettors, like the E-type's. The 3.8-litre Jaguar XK powerplant, which excited on its debut in 1948, is a twin overhead cam unit which, in this pure competition instance, uses the homologated aluminium block and wide-angle head housing larger valves for enhanced gas flow.

Both left impressions on me as a lad in 1967. Having watched, enthralled, as John Chatham and

Stewart Hands grappled in big Healeys at a gruesomely soggy Castle Combe, my previous sampler in one was as a passenger in Chris Clarkson's racer at 2014's Autumn Classic launch.

Also 48 years ago, the contrasting Jags of arch-rivals John Quick and Warren Pearce coloured my earliest E-type memories. A couple of very ginger laps at a frantically busy Donington in Andy Jenkinson's lightweight evocation in 2007 provided no driving clues.

Now I would gain proper insight. Immaculately prepared, the cars sat in echelon before the Denis Welch Motorsport truck in Snetterton's paddock. With rain en route, I wanted to get started. The Healey – in which Jeremy and his late father finished a sensational ▶



**Disc-equipped cars 'dance' when pushed**

ALL PICS: HOYER/FEBREY







## DENIS WELCH RACING

Yoxall, near Burton-on-Trent in Staffordshire, has long been the hub of the universe for big Healey racers and connoisseurs, for it is from here that the Denis Welch Racing emporium has built its reputation as a world leader in the development and preparation of the 3000 in particular.

Run for the past decade by Jeremy Welch, DWR is dedicated to furthering the work of his late father Denis (1944-2014), whose spectacular sideways driving style in gruff Healeys fully demonstrated their capabilities, endearing him to rivals and spectators.

“Dad was brilliant in a car, but he drove with pure talent rather than an engineering mind,” says Welch Jr. “I was fortunate to discover engineering at school, so focus on the cars we prepare, the engines we build and the vast range of parts we make from a different direction. We have a fully equipped machine shop in-house and employ CAD designers to make the best quality components we can.

“Although renowned as Healey specialists, we also do a huge amount of Jaguar business. While building my E-type we soon realised that we couldn’t buy the parts we needed, so we made it another speciality. DWR currently stocks 250,000 items [£1.1m-worth, from FIA-approved Healey cylinder heads to Jaguar wheels] in what has become a one-stop shop supplying mail-order customers worldwide.”

► second (to a pro-driven lightweight-spec E-type) last year, ‘won’ the toss. My first shot in a racing car since 2012 would also be my baptism on the full circuit, previously explored only in an MSV BMW M3 road car.

Heart thumping, I twisted the red ignition master key and, with fuel-pump switch flicked down and carbs primed by a couple of squirts from the right-hand pedal, prodded the starter button. “Use 7000rpm, the engine likes seven,” said Jeremy before the engine caught, having instructed me to use the clutch to engage overdrive – essentially an electromechanically triggered longer gear, operable in third and fourth, switched to the right of the upright steering wheel. New to me, it would

be interesting to see the revs drop down the Senna Straight.

I liked the Healey’s straight-backed seating position which, with a high eye line and relatively short nose, helped me position it accurately in the corners, keeping away from kerbs, which can hook the unwary into the infield barriers or damage the underpinnings or driveline. Worm-and-peg steering naturally doesn’t feel quite as pin-sharp as rack-and-pinion (per the Jag) during low-speed cornering, when it’s relatively heavy, not that aces like Welch notice. They use ‘power assistance’ (hefty foot on loud pedal), whereupon the pendulous live-axled tail is checked by a ZF-plated limited-slip differential.

Kept on song – anything above

4000-4500rpm when the Webers stop spitting and the torquey engine climbs onto the cam – it pulls heartily with a fierce rasp. When revved fully, urgent acceleration is felt down the two long straights and momentum is maintained into the braking areas with the overdrive facility. Towards the end of my run, when au fait with the circuit and pushing a little harder, I could feel the back end dancing, as Jeremy explained disc-braked Healeys do. Drummers are not prone to this, apparently, but it’s all comfortable and controllable, reminiscent of locking the rear wheel of a bicycle and sliding it.

Once a bit of momentum is carried through the twisty Agostini-Hamilton-Oggies-Williams sequence of corners it becomes great fun on treaded tyres. Because the compact Healey likes to change direction with keen throttle response it’s a wieldy tool, so it’s easy to understand how it bats above its weight when enterprisingly driven in historic endurance races.

“It’s a strong car and the engine’s pretty unburstable, but it comes into its own when it’s wet,” grins Welch. “That’s why Dad and I got the memorable result last year. Healeys used to finish well up in the Spa Six Hours too, but there are so many Ford GT40s now that the days of finishing in the top 10 are long gone. Although I’ve not driven a Chevron, stopping them from competing in the Snetterton race has made it a more level playing field, which can be seen from the entries.”

For the next session, under darkening skies, the E-type beckoned seductively. Racelogic boss Julian Thomas’s car was built to FIA-homologated specification by the DWR team last year. Unlike the 1950s-rooted Healey, whose bodyshell straddles a steel girder chassis, the Jaguar boasts a unitary monocoque centre section – in 5303 VB’s case, the lighter alloy option rather than the road-spec steel – evolved from the triple Le Mans-winning D-type, with a tubular steel subframe carrying the engine.

The most striking body derivative in period competition was the ultra-svelte ‘low-drag coupe’, which this example mirrors, characterised by lines of perfectly spaced rivet heads across its roof and wings. ►

## THE RACING HEALEYS & E-TYPES

Introduced in 1959 – by which time Austin-Healey marque’s greatest racing successes had been achieved with the 100M, 100/6 and its fabulous 100S models – the 3000 was outgunned on the biggest racing stages but found its metier in international rallies. Despite their strength on mixed surfaces, and in club events, no 3000s finished at Le Mans, but skill and perseverance brought a class win for Paul Hawkins/Warwick Banks (who finished behind the best-placed Sprite, which proved a giant-killer in top hands) in the wet ‘65 Sebring 12 Hours.

Jaguar’s racing record with its E-type ran in parallel with Healey’s, as its glory days with C- and D-types were not to be repeated. Enzo Ferrari’s V12 GTOs were more powerful, but Briggs Cunningham/Roy Salvadori and Peter Lumsden/Peter Sargent finished fourth and fifth at Le Mans in ‘62. The lightweight Es arrived too late to reverse a trend, but series production-based models dominated Marque Sports (and later Modsports) races through the 1970s. Like the big Healeys, though, their striking presence lives on in historic racing, in unprecedented numbers.



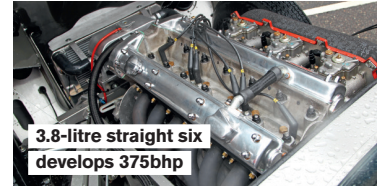




Rain stopped play, but not enjoyment



Jag's driving position snug but perfect



3.8-litre straight six develops 375bhp



Light internals mean E-type starts quickly

► Even more wind-cheating than uberstylist Malcolm Sayer's immortal original, it's taller than the legendary genuine lightweights (the 'last' six of which, unbuilt in 1963, are now being crafted by Jaguar and sold for seven-figure tags), with a more bulbous roof and flared tail. The 'low-drag' has huge presence from any angle. Squatting aggressively on its haunches, ready to pounce on and savage its prey, it doesn't look any different on track.

Although there is a little more cockpit room than in the Healey, the body-hugging single-seater seat – which Fun Cup graduate Thomas and mentor/team-mate Nigel Greensall prefer – makes access and egress trickier. Once behind the wheel, however, the ergonomics were nigh-on perfect for me too. Starting the engine is a similar ritual, but with lighter internals the XK spins up quickly. I'm instructed to use 6000rpm and, even with the

customary throttle blip to shepherd a lower gear in, not to change down too quickly or too early because that's the easiest way to overrev the engine and risk damaging the 'box. With the circuit now an engaging melange of fast and technical sections I was up to a pace sooner, the Jag's agile handling and usable power inspiring immediate confidence. With around 375bhp on tap from its 3.8-litre engine (about 100bhp more than the Healey's smaller 'six pack') and homologated by Jaguar to run 113kg lighter at 920kg, the E-type accelerates very briskly with an encouraging exhaust howl and less audible induction noise. Using the same gears to negotiate the 11-corner, three-mile circuit, and with a slicker downchange making second an easy choice for Agostini, I was getting going when rainspots hit the screen with increasing regularity. Whereas the Jaguar's longer wheelbase telegraphed the independently-sprung chassis'

intentions well through Riches and the Brundle/Nelson complex, the live-axled Healey wanted to be thrown at corners like Hamilton and Williams and steered on the gas. That might have taken me a couple more stints to really enjoy, but I declined Jeremy's kind offer of another go in the wet after our torrential tracking lap, arranged in the lunchbreak by Snetterton's ever-obliging management. What I did notice in the smooth-riding Jag was that harder exits from Williams brought results. We were approaching the Esses at 5800rpm (almost 140mph, Julian noted) towards the end of my run, where the brakes were shaving speed off straight and true, albeit with a little less feel than those of the Healey. It's not power or retardation but the consistency of grip levels over a three-hour race – the cars are on the same Dunlop L-section tyres, wider on the Jag's peg-drive rims – that will determine the outcome. And a little help from the traffic! 🚗



Agile Jaguar E-type confidence-inspiring

## 2015 AUTOSPORT 3 HOURS

2015 HSCC/GTSCC AUTOSPORT 3 HOURS, for Pre-1966 GT and Pre-1963 Sports Racing Cars

**AUSTIN-HEALEY 3000** Jeremy Welch/Mark Pangborn; Chris Chiles; Chris Chiles Jr/Paul Ingram; Chris Clarkson/David Smithies.  
**JAGUAR E-TYPE** Julian Thomas/Nigel Greensall; Martin O'Connell/Andrew Kirkaldy; John Clark/TBC; Klaus Bergs/James Denty; Read Gomm/Andy



Kirkaldy: in E-type

Keith-Lucas; John Burton/Rob Newall; Simon Butler/Martin Rich/Jon Crouch.  
**JAGUAR XK120** Christopher Scholey/Nick Finburgh.  
**LOTUS ELAN** Mark Halstead/Stuart McPherson; John Davison/Ed Morris; Martin Eyears/Joe Twyman/Gregor Fiskien; Will Goff/Michael Goff; Mark Midgley/Simon Drinkall/

Tony Worthington; Andrew Garside/Andy Newall.  
**MGB** Beverley Phillips/Chris Phillips/Oliver Phillips; Brian Lambert/Barbara Lambert.  
**TVR GRANTURA MKIII** Malcolm Paul/Rick Bourne; Joe Ward/Richard Bull.  
**MORGAN +4 SLR** Simon Orebi Gann/Calum Lockie.  
**TRIUMPH TR4** Allan Ross-Jones/Daniel Ross-Jones.  
**PORSCHE 356** Steve Wright/Ian Clark/Nick Fulljames.  
**SHELBY MUSTANG GT350** Nick Sleep/Bill Wykeham/Joel Wykeham.  
**COOPER T39 BOBTAIL** Adrian van der Kroft/TBC.  
**LISTER-JAGUAR** Barry Wood/Tony Wood/Alasdair McCaig.



Lockie: Morgan

### CONTEMPORARY WINNERS

- 1957 Ken RUDD (AC Ace-Bristol)
- 1958 John LAWRIE (Lotus Elite)
- 1959 Jim CLARK (Lotus Elite)
- 1960 Dickie STOOP (Porsche 356B)
- 1961 Mike SALMON (Jaguar D-type)
- 1962 Mike PARKES (Ferrari 250 GT)
- 1963 Jim CLARK (Lotus 23B)
- 1964 Jack SEARS (Willment Cobra Coupe)

### HISTORIC WINNERS

- 2007 Simon HADFIELD/Michael SCHRYVER (Chevron B6)
- 2008 Simon HADFIELD/Michael SCHRYVER (Chevron B6)
- 2009 James & Jeremy COTTINGHAM (Chevron B8)
- 2010 Alex AMES/Gareth BURNETT (Chevron B8)
- 2011 Nick FLEMING/Luke STEVENS (Chevron B8)
- 2012 Nick FLEMING (Chevron B8)
- 2013 Nick FLEMING (Chevron B8)
- 2014 Chris WARD/Alex BUNCOMBE (Jaguar E-type)