

# TOUR MASTER

This is no ordinary Mk 1 3.4-litre saloon; never faltering, it has traversed continents notching up some 17,000 miles in three years



WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY JIM PATTEN

**G**UY VINALL was born into a life with Jaguars, his father Tom owning many over the years. Fond memories include an early 3.4 saloon, traded up for the new Mk 2 in 1959.

The entire family, including the dog, would be loaded into the car and packed off for their holidays. An E-type followed, and it is said that Tom became the first person to be caught for speeding in an

E-type. Sadly, somebody stole that car, and it was replaced by one of the first S-types, a car that his father was not too keen on.

Tom, whose business was in the print industry, obviously enjoys speed and did quite a long stint racing motorbikes, including Manx Norton and Scott. At one point, his Sunbeam lived in the foyer of the British Motorcycle Museum. A growing family soon put a stop to two-wheel racing, so cars increasingly took their place.

Outside Jaguar, there was a vintage Bentley, the ex-Shah of Persia's Bentley Continental and a glamorous Lamborghini Miura S, finished in Verde Lime. Guy didn't stand a chance. With his father's healthy red blood pulsing through his veins, it was inevitable that he would take up the charge, too. Just as his children have done today.

With Jaguar firmly in the family genes, Guy gravitated towards XKs. Some years back he was talking to Nigel Dawes, who

had just started to build those fabulous XK 120 fixedheads with modernity in mind. The car in question was to have been Nigel's own but, with an Aston Martin in the offing, Nigel put the XK on the market. It had a number of original parts, like the two-inch sand-cast carburettors and Le Mans filler cap. Guy bought the car and kept it for 20 years. For some years after, the focus was always on XK (but with a Jaguar saloon in the background for convenience).

Back in the early Nineties, Guy was running an XK 140 drophead coupe. In 1993, he and his wife, Jillian, shipped the Jaguar to America for a 6,000-mile tour along Route 66 with the European club, CAAR (the Club of Ancient Automobiles and Rallies). It seemed like a good idea to have a UK-based club running on a similar philosophy, and so a small group of like-minded enthusiasts got together to form CAAR GB.

The underlying principle was having fun with old cars. From the outset it would not be a single-marque club, nor would it be so snobbish that only expensive cars would be accepted. Keeping the membership numbers small, though, they do expect people to get involved. Working together, they are able to tailor their trips to suit everyone and agree on a destination; they seek a stimulating drive that avoids main roads but takes in many interesting places along the





The tour group by The Queen Mary in Los Angeles on Route 89



Rhyolite, near Death Valley

way, dialling in stops for a couple of days, always in good hotels. Block booking allows a degree of negotiation, making these tours exceptional value for money. There are few rules, and this one is quoted from the website: 'To be a member, you must want to participate in some of our Rallies and at some stage contribute to the planning and organisation of future rallies.' With two rallies each year and an AGM where all members can put their ideas forward, it really is an all-involving club.

A glance on the club's history page shows some fabulous destinations. In 1994, it was Spain; from there on, the list shows home runs such as Yorkshire, the Lakes and Isle of Man, and then European destinations including Poland, Tuscany, Spain and Portugal, as well as the Baltic States. Moving further afield, the club went to New Zealand in 2005 and America's Route 89 in 2013, taking in Canada.

XKs had served Guy and Jillian well, but they were always desperate for more room. It occurred to Guy that life could be made a bit easier if he changed his mount to a classic saloon. So, three years ago, he began looking for the car that was inspired by his childhood memories: a Jaguar 3.4 saloon. He found a fine example with a manual gearbox with overdrive, finished in British Racing Green,



Mk 1 Roman Bridge in Iberia

with the rare factory-fitted, sliding, steel sunroof. An older restoration, it had hardly been used since. That would soon change as Guy had big plans for this Mk 1.

With the re-commission came a number of problems, though. The gremlins had been having an easy time during the car's slumbers and did not take too kindly to being awakened. Almost immediately, irritating faults dogged the car; the fuel tank leaked, the ignition system gave trouble, and much more. Guy had known Mike Wilkinson of M&C Wilkinson for some time and had been impressed by work he had carried out on previous cars, so Mike confidently gave the Mk 1 over to



Roman Stores at Villa Moron, Italy

Wilkinson to make the Jaguar ready to tour. As each effort of mechanical sabotage popped up, it was eradicated. It took time but eventually it was pretty much sorted. The engine was always extremely strong but Guy has no idea who built it. As he was determined to notch up the miles, a degree of modernity was sought.

Guy had owned a Mk 2 with power steering but found it lifeless and, with the many turns lock to lock, he was forever sawing at the wheel. He liked the look of the M&C Wilkinson power steering conversion and booked the car in for the work. Guy was also familiar with the T5 five-speed gearbox conversion, and it soon supplanted the original Moss gearbox. If nothing else, the revised steering helps him to get the car into his awkward drive at home in the Peak District. Guy is impressed when touring, too, reckoning the new system to be very controllable at all speeds. Guy had noticed that when touring with an Alvis TD21, the dynamo was struggling to keep up with the loading of lights, cooling fan and other electrical demands. To avoid that issue with the Mk 1, he had an alternator fitted. With the car now fitted with Coopercraft brakes, a decent cooling system, electronic ignition, five speeds and modern power steering, it was ready to tour.

Never a man to take half measures, the 3.4 saloon was shipped off with other club cars to America in 2013, where they would drive Route 89 – a trip to encompass Canada and the West Coast in California. It was an incredible drive, taking the car through a wide range of landscapes from high altitude to the low levels: Seattle, British Columbia, Alberta and the Rockies, taking in all of the big National Parks, Utah, Idaho and Death Valley – the lowest, driest and hottest area in North America – before finally shipping the fleet back home from Los Angeles.

Being ahead of the game, Guy mentioned the various terrains to Wilkinson, who prepared the 3.4 to run at altitude. On the run, that old Mk 1 pulled like a train no matter what the measured height of the road, such was the torque. Back home, it was off to M&C Wilkinson again for a post-trip check over, where not much was needed. A check on the brakes and a few touch-ups around the body about sums it up.

In 2014, there was a Guernsey get together before, in 2015, they were off on the Iberian Rally. This was another fantastic run. Guy is currently thinking of improving the lighting on the instruments and has been looking at the kits offered by The Better Car Lighting Company, which makes a lot of sense as this Mk 1 is often used at night. Again, the Iberian tour was trouble free for the Jaguar. Guy's theory is that if he can pre-empt trouble, he will. Next year's plans for the big tour are already listed on the



An extremely rare, steel, sliding sun roof



website: the Appalachian Mountains and Atlantic Coast; the second tour is still at the discussion stage.


Don't be fooled into thinking that Guy and Jillian restrict their use of the 3.4 saloon to the big tours, though as the car is out whenever the opportunity suits, and that can even be to do the weekly shop. Guy frequently chooses the Jaguar to go to the tennis courts, too – if there's a journey, and it is appropriate for the Mk 1, there isn't a moment's hesitation. Guy freely admits that he doesn't lose any sleep if there's the odd stone chip or two. The car was restored once and there's no reason why remedial paintwork can't be done again. In these three years, Guy and Jillian have covered over 17,000 miles, which is impressive given that most owners barely manage 1,000 miles a year.

We are already in the North and, with the perfect opportunity to see the Mk 1, arrangements are made. But our day with the saloon looks as though it is over before it begins. Unfortunately, Guy can't be here, but he makes sure his car is available, and M&C Wilkinson trailers the car to its premises. Then fog falls. Any thoughts of taking a drive cannot be entertained and so I am forced to be a spectator. But when the focus of my attention is this gorgeous 3.4 saloon, I am not discontent.



Thick rear pillars make for a very rigid bodyshell

On the face of it, the Jaguar looks like a pampered car, which in some ways it is. Anything it needs is provided. But, in return, it has to work and that means pushing off at a moment's notice at the whim of its owner. I look for battle scars and find none. I check the tyres for signs of irregular wear and find the tread perfect; this is one well-set up car. Under the bonnet, it is extremely tidy, so I suspect somebody has been hard at work. Inside, it is also spotless, with the leather looking as though it has hardly been used.

The next best thing to a drive is to move the car for our limited photography – I find the steering delightfully light, the five-speed gear-lever falling easily to hand. I'm taken back to my own Mk 1 and remember the ease at which that car absorbed the miles. This example has taken the philosophy one stage further and looks as if it will be travelling for a long time yet. The spirit of adventure is alive and well. 

Thanks to: M&C Wilkinson for making this feature possible. **Website:** [www.mandcwilkinson.com](http://www.mandcwilkinson.com)

CAAR GB is nominally open to new members but the numbers are strictly controlled to keep the tours manageable. **Website:** [www.caargb.co.uk](http://www.caargb.co.uk)



Top: Engine is the standard 3.4-litre unit and remains strong  
Left: Interior remains unmarked