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## LOOKING BACK ON A CLASSIC COLLECTION

# The collection that Jack built



Jack Meredith has amassed a collection of 15 classic and vintage cars. Pictures by Sandy McCook



The Alvis emblem

Finding a garage big enough to house two cars can be enough of a challenge. **Philippa Gerrard** spoke to Jack Meredith, who has to find space for 15 classic motors

**L**ike many other boys of 17, Jack Meredith was obsessed with cars, the more unusual the better.

However, unlike most teenage boys, Jack's first car wasn't a battered old Vauxhall or a hand-me-down Ford. Instead it was a 1969 Jaguar Mark 1.

Far from buying it at a local garage or even a car showroom, Jack purchased the motor from a nearby police station.

"At the time the police used to sell various artefacts to the public, and this happened to be one of them," said Jack.

"The Jag was reportedly used as a getaway car in a bank robbery, and it was my first ever classic as well as my first ever car.

"I was just 17 when I got

it and it was in a bit of a state.

"I really cut my teeth on it in terms of mechanics."

From there Jack bought and sold a series of sports cars, from MGs to Triumphs and everything in between.

"I was even lucky enough to buy a Jaguar E-type at one point," said Jack, now 66.

"At the time I bought it for about £2,000 which was a bargain for the wonderful condition it was in.

"I had it for several years and it was a fantastic car to drive.

"Today a model like that in top condition easily can fetch up to six figures."

But Jack's hobby was destined to be put on hold for well over a decade as his career as a barrister for overseas oil firms took off.

Keeping classic cars proved difficult while moving from place to place, and over the years Jack has lived around the world from the Middle and Far East to Africa and the US.

Now semi-retired and settled in Drumnadrochit on the shores of Loch Ness, Jack finally has time to indulge in his passion for vintage and classic cars. And with 15 motors currently in his garage, he seems to have more than made up for lost time.

"At the moment I've got cars ranging from a 1902 Oldsmobile Curved Dash all the way through to a 1999 Toyota Supra Turbo," he said.

"I regard them all as antiques of the 20th Century.

"It's quite fascinating to look at the technological changes you can see throughout the years.

"For example the 1902 model doesn't have a steering wheel, and I suspect the people who first bought it likely just had a horse and cart previously.

"There is a huge change when you reach 1924 though, and the V61 Cadillac Suburban V8.

"Cars now look like cars rather than some sort of cart, and after that, improvements became more about style.

"Up until the '70s, cars seemed to reflect the fash-

**"The London to Brighton remembers the repeal of a law that you had to have a man with a red flag in front of the motor"**

ion of the day, and you can see the impact of art deco and other different styles on each model.

"It's impossible to pick a favourite out of my col-

lection - it would be like picking a favourite child.

"Every car has a different feeling.

"In the 1954 Alvis Grey Lady for example, you can revel in the era of the last of the gentleman's transport.

"It's totally different to the 1982 Cosworth which is about plain raw power."

With so many motors to choose from, Jack makes sure they all get their fair share of days out and is a regular at various car shows across the UK.

"A favourite of mine is the London to Brighton Veteran Car Run, which is one of the longest-running motoring events in the world," Jack said.

"It's an annual event and to be included you must have a car which was built before January 1905.

"It commemorates the repealing of a law which meant that you couldn't drive a car in urban areas without someone walking in front of the motor with a red flag.

"This was to warn others how dangerous cars were," he laughed.



A Ford Cosworth rally car



A Cadillac from Jack's collection

"But more locally I'm particularly looking forward to the second edition of the Loch Ness Classic Car Tour which is in June.

"I very much enjoyed the run last year which took us through almost 200 miles of wonderful scenery. There is no entry fee and instead drivers get sponsored to raise money for charities around the Highlands, so I like that aspect too."

Jack is well used to thinking of clever ways to use his unique car collection to raise money for charity.

"People love to get their picture taken with a classic car," he said.

"I often take various cars to different shows and let people sit inside for pictures if they put money in my charity tin.

"My house is also right

on the route of the Great Glen Way, so I sometimes park a classic car there with a bucket on it so passers-by can snap a selfie with the car and leave some money in return."

And with 15 motors sitting on his driveway and only one pair of hands, it's no wonder Jack is keen to share his wonderful collection with the world.