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Staying Power by Paul Skilleter

Lynx Motors International, famous for the Lynx D-types and the stylish XJ-S Eventer, is nothing less than a British institution, says Paul Skilleter.

It scarcely seems possible, but it's 26 years since I first visited Lynx - and the feature which subsequently appeared in *Thoroughbred & Classic Cars* magazine was one of the earliest, perhaps the very first, on the company to ever have appeared in print. Be that as it may, I have enjoyed keeping in touch with the company ever since, and I was pleased to head once more for Sussex earlier this year to update myself on its progress.



The company had been founded in 1971 by Roger Ludgate-who, although not wealthy, supplied most of the start-up capital - and Guy Black who provided the expertise in the early years. While no-one now working at Lynx was present back then (the original partners sold out many years ago), nevertheless there has been a strong thread of continuity. A number of today's employees have worked at Lynx for years and for over a decade now Lynx has been under the guiding hand of John Mayston-Taylor. He has more than maintained the company's traditions.



Interestingly, diversity remains amongst these. During my visit a wide variety of cars other than Jaguars were in the immaculate workshops - including an Aston Martin Virage being comprehensively re-engineered, a DB 2/4 Mk 2 in for an engine rebuild and chassis upgrading, and a 1968 Ford GT 40 being made track-worthy.

This conforms with what I wrote in 1976, which is that, while Lynx is largely Jaguar-orientated, "other similar cars can be rebuilt as well, or design projects undertaken."

On my first visit I noted the wide variety of reproduction parts Lynx had evolved for C- and D-types, and sure enough, even more patterns and parts were on the shelves when I looked round the stores this year. In fact the machine shop, managed by Stan Demeza, is still very much a key element of the business. "There are two main reasons for that", says John Mayston-Taylor. "Firstly the ability to make one-off parts for prototype work, and secondly so that we can if necessary make our own parts. We've lost count of how many pattern parts we buy in that don't fit. Others may take pride in getting them to fit after three days, but in business you can't do that - you can't charge £100 for fitting one bolt.

"Also, it brings in outside work - if a small run of, say, ten components are needed, we can often do the job cheaper than a specialist machining company with CMC machines, because we don't have the complicated setting-up processes to do."

This side of the business has perhaps developed more than any other element and I got the impression that Lynx's forte is the re-engineering of cars from square one - it relishes the challenges which doubling the horsepower brings, ensuring that all this extra power can be exploited usefully and with safety.



There were still plenty of Jaguars in the building, of course - on our arrival we were met with a spectacular line-up of E-types. These included at least three featured previously in *Jaguar World*: the unique ex-Briggs Cunningham steel-bodied competition roadster, the even more remarkable 'time warp' original-paint lightweight E-type, which Lynx revived after it spent some 33 years in storage, and the modified 650bhp V12 Series 3 monster we reported on in our July 2002 issue. Then in the panel shop was the fifth Lindner E-type replica the company has built, a gleaming projectile in aluminium which would shortly be ready for paint. E-types seem to be a much larger part of the business now than in 1976 when, from memory, they didn't feature at all. That's really a sign of the times - E-types with a competition history, and certainly all the factory lightweights, are talked of today in the same breath as C-and D-types, the classic sports racers that were so much Lynx's 'bread and butter' 30 years ago. Road E-types, upgraded for today's conditions, are also becoming part of Lynx's staple diet.

"We made the decision not to fill the workshop with just anything", maintains John, "but instead to concentrate on fewer cars and projects which we can do properly."

I consider Lynx to be nothing less than a British institution: the company is one of the first names which springs to mind when one thinks of a British restoration company, and for bespoke engineering and the willingness to take on the most far-out projects, it is still hard to beat. Even after 31 years.