

1958 Jaguar XK150 remained complete, but body corrosion was extensive



JUST WHAT SORT OF PERSON LEAVES A Jaguar XK150 in a garage for some repairs and never returns to collect it? That's what happened to a nine-year-old coupé in 1967. It sat there, with 84,000 miles on the clock, for some 20 years. The car remained complete but gradually rust took hold and became extensive; when it was discovered it was described as fit only for the scrapheap.

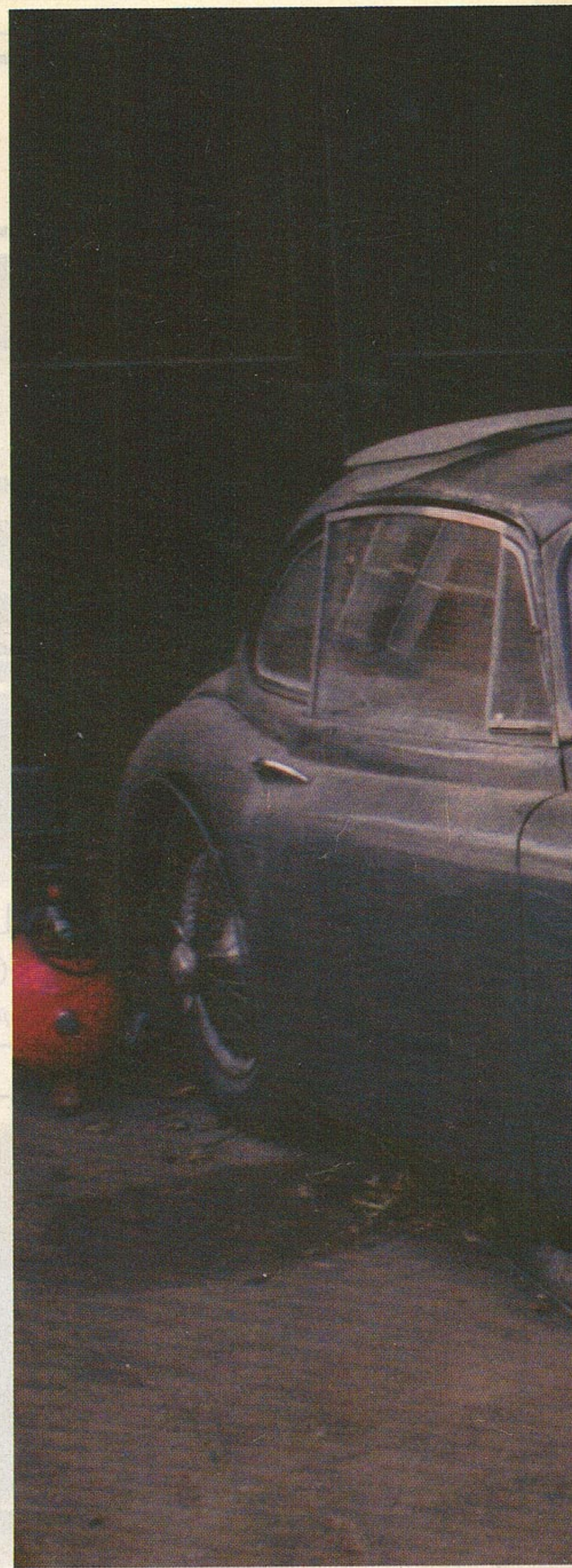
Classic car specialist Paul Kynaston in Devon rescued the car and it was from him that David Dalton bought it, in 1992, for £10,000. He found the car still had its original engine (V5515-8 – the last number confirming it had the standard 8:1 compression ratio) and was remarkably original in every respect. It needed major reconstruction, so this had to be entrusted to one of the best companies in the business: Southern Classics.

Thousands of pounds later, I was privileged to take the controls of a car David had hardly yet driven himself. It doesn't take long behind the wheel for you to realise that the XK150 is everything the 120 wasn't. It's a sophisticated grand tourer, with all the 120's rough edges pared away. There's lots of room inside and driving is no problem for tall drivers who couldn't manage the 120. The seats are comfortable and there's masses of storage space in the big door pockets.

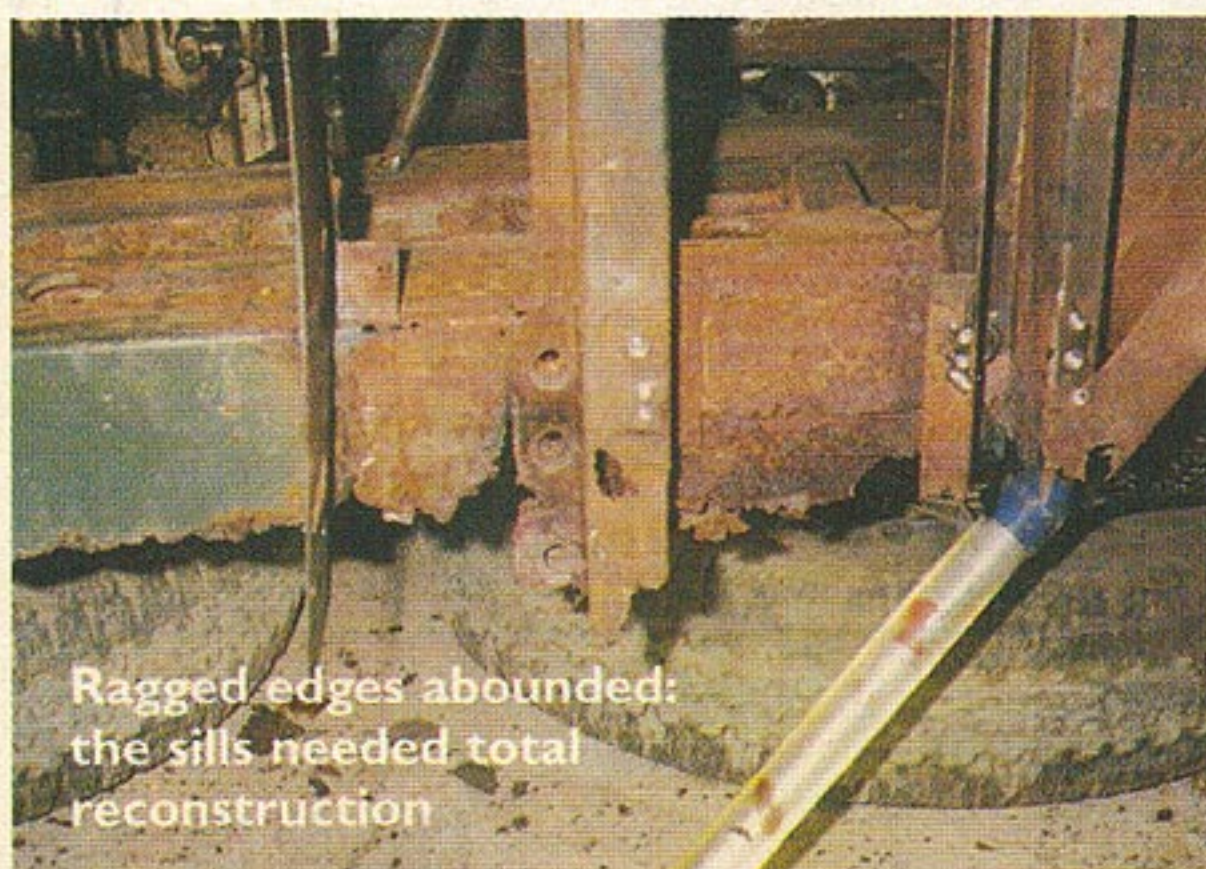
The throttle is light – a little too light at present, one of a number of details to be ironed out on a car that has covered only 80 miles so far since its rebuild. The steering, by contrast, is heavy – you need that big steering wheel – and serves to remind you that this car is no lightweight: easy to forget when you experience the instant throttle response from the torquey engine. For such a 'new' engine, it was most impressive: even with a rev limit of 2500rpm, it pulled energetically and with overdrive top available at a flick of the dashboard-mounted switch, top speed was still adequate for country roads.

Cornering brought roll, but nothing excessive, plus a gentle squeal at times from the Pirelli Cinturato tyres, which look just right on the car.

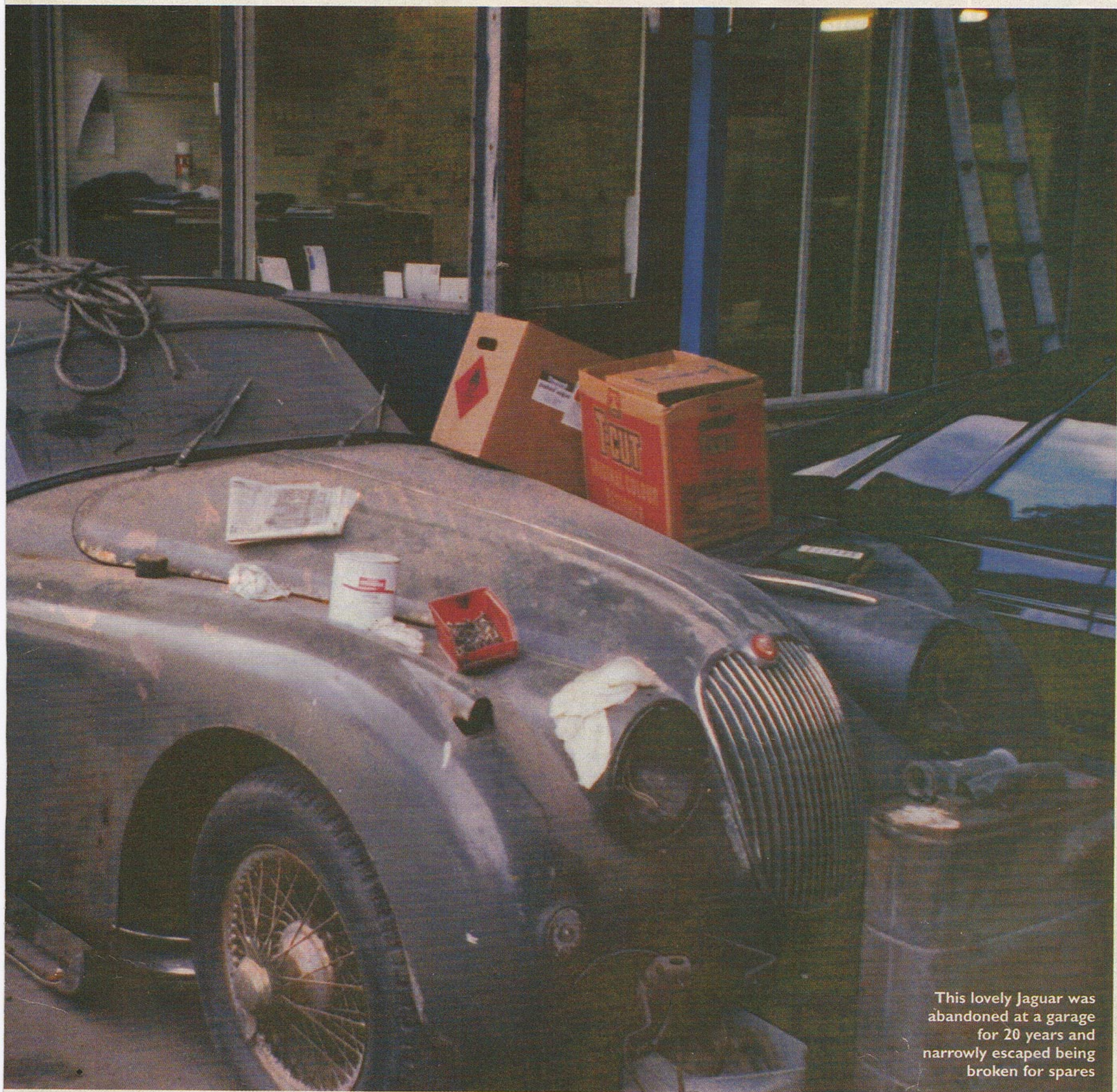
When *The Autocar* tested the XK150 coupé in February 1958, it found performance to match that of the XK120 coupé, with hotrod acceleration: its 0-60mph of 8.5sec was highly impressive considering the wheelspin experienced ➡



One fire,
two engine rebuilds,
five years and £50,000....
Was it really



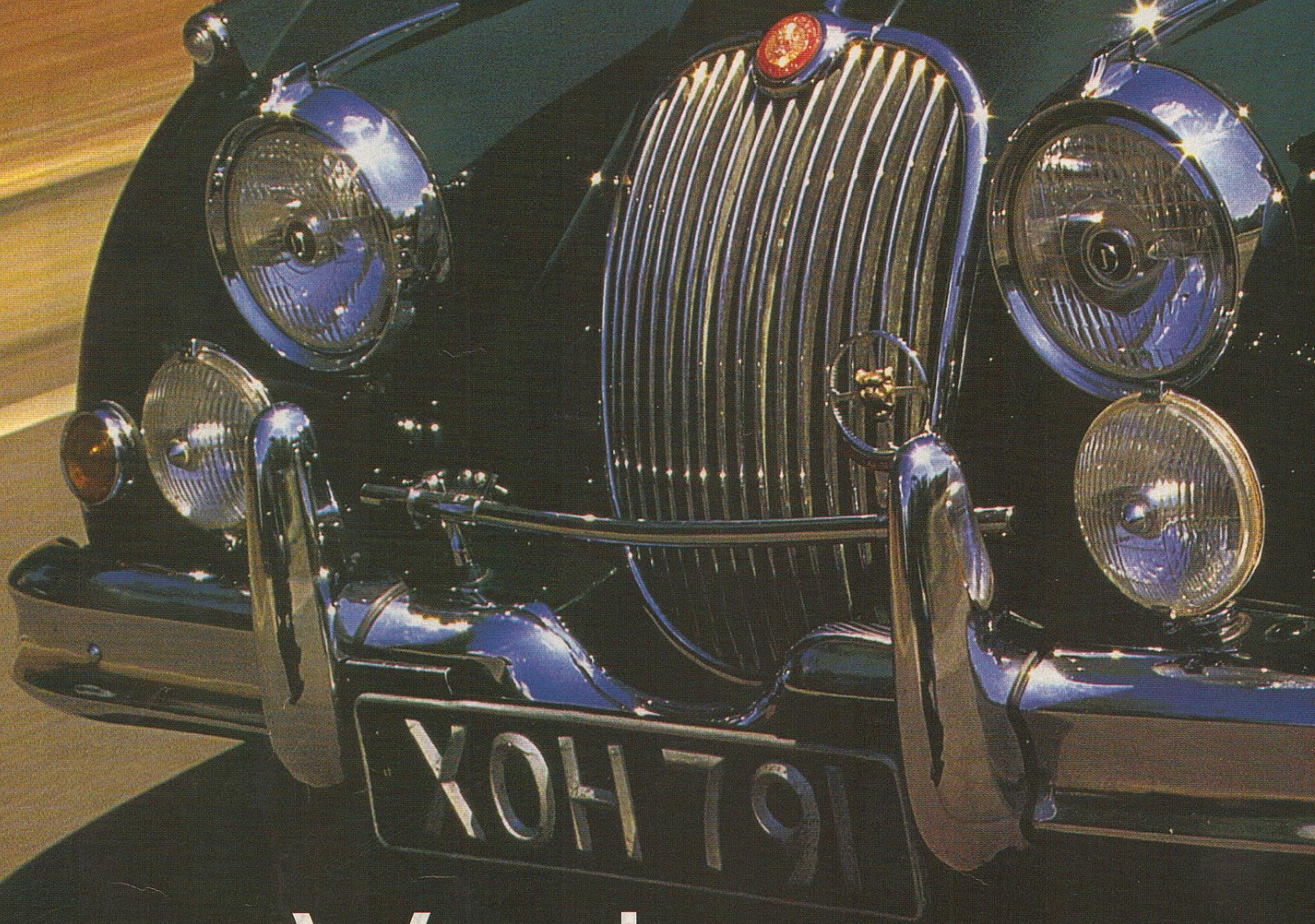
Ragged edges abounded: the sills needed total reconstruction



Twenty years ago, an abandoned, rust-ridden Jaguar XK150 coupé was destined for the scrapyard. Thousands of pounds later, after some hard lessons, it is on the road again. Malcolm McKay drives the end result

worth all the grief?

“The phenomenal engine flexibility was demonstrated by accelerating from 0-100mph – in top gear only – in 36.4sec”



Yes!





Heavy bumpers and grille were among the 150's weight penalties; it still did 125mph



XK150 was totally stripped for rebuild

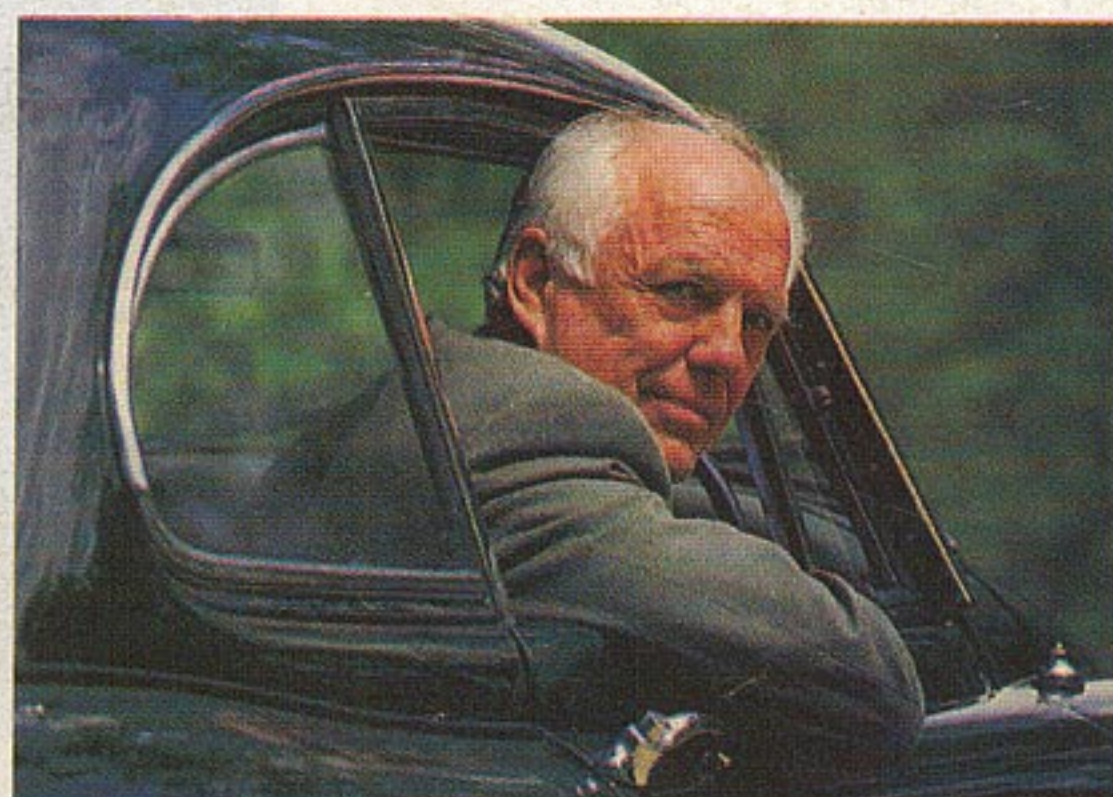
on wet concrete. At the top end, a maximum of 123.7mph was good, but not as good as the XK140 coupé's 129.5mph; the XK's growing bulk was telling against it. Still, there was precious little on the road (apart from old XK140s) that could match it and the magazine considered the compromise well worthwhile.


The phenomenal engine flexibility, a result of the modified cylinder head, was demonstrated by accelerating from 0 to 100mph in *top gear only* in 36.4sec (through the gears took 25sec) and the testers reckoned the car cruised steadily at 110-115mph in overdrive top. Overall fuel consumption of 20.5mpg was impressive too, considering the demands of performance testing, and the testers naturally raved about the brakes on what was the first four-wheel disc-braked car many of them had experienced.

Nonetheless, there were numerous criticisms of body and trim details: the full-length doors that caught on kerbs and had no door pulls, the central location of the instruments and the wipers lifting off the screen at speed. There was also evidence of some confusion as to the car's market, with criticism of limited rear seat space and non-adjustable front seat backrests; but the magazine concluded that, 'The Jaguar XK150 is undeniably one of the world's fastest and ➡

PHOTOGRAPH BY COLIN BURNHAM

A grand tourer *par excellence*, this XK150 will take owner David Dalton, below, to Spain soon





‘Brought back to life: a car that was described as fit only for the scrapyard’

safest cars. It is quiet and exceptionally refined mechanically, docile and comfortable... We do not know of a more outstanding example of value for money.’

Recreating that sensation of refinement, speed and safety in a car that has totally rotted would challenge any restorer. With plenty of experience of Jaguar bodywork, Southern Classics was not too daunted by the task David Dalton presented to the company back in 1992. The car was stripped and the body removed from the chassis. The chassis was then stripped and sandblasted before it was painted in gloss black; it was remarkably sound. The body, however, required new rear wings, sills, doors, A-posts, inner flich panels, boot floor and major repairs to the front wings. It was so bad that it was separated into several sections during the rebuild.

The exceptional quality of the work done is plain when you look along the sides of the car: they are absolutely straight and true. The alignment is millimetre-perfect, an astonishing achievement when so little strength remained in the original.

The most difficult part, according to Southern Classics’

Regrets, I’ve had a few, but then again, too few to mention...

David Dalton is unusually honest about the mistakes he made with his XK rebuild – some of which ran up thousands of pounds in extra bills and a couple of years’ delay in completion of the car. He wanted to do some of the rebuild himself, but lack of time and expertise cost him dear.

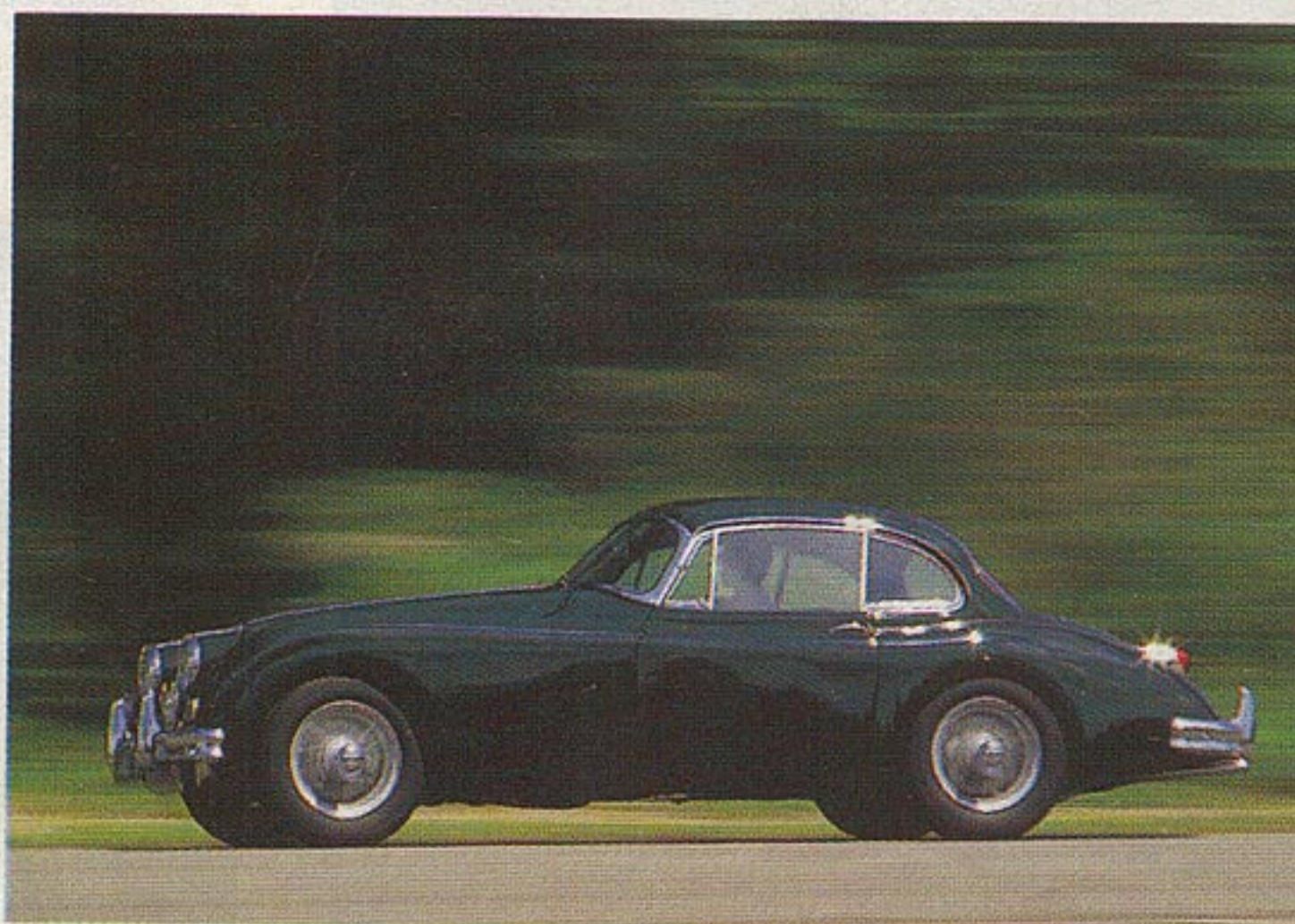
The original plan was for Southern Classics to restore the body and chassis, which, he reasoned, was the ‘difficult’ bit of the rebuild. He would sort out the trim and mechanical side. The car was complete and original, so he hoped to preserve as many of the original parts as possible by doing it

himself, cleaning and restoring rather than replacing.

One of the most tricky bits was replacing the windscreen washer pipes: he had to take out the whole dashboard, dash top and heater system to get at them. The rusty fuel tank also proved difficult, ending up with a coat of Slosh tank sealant inside and a layer of glassfibre on the outside.

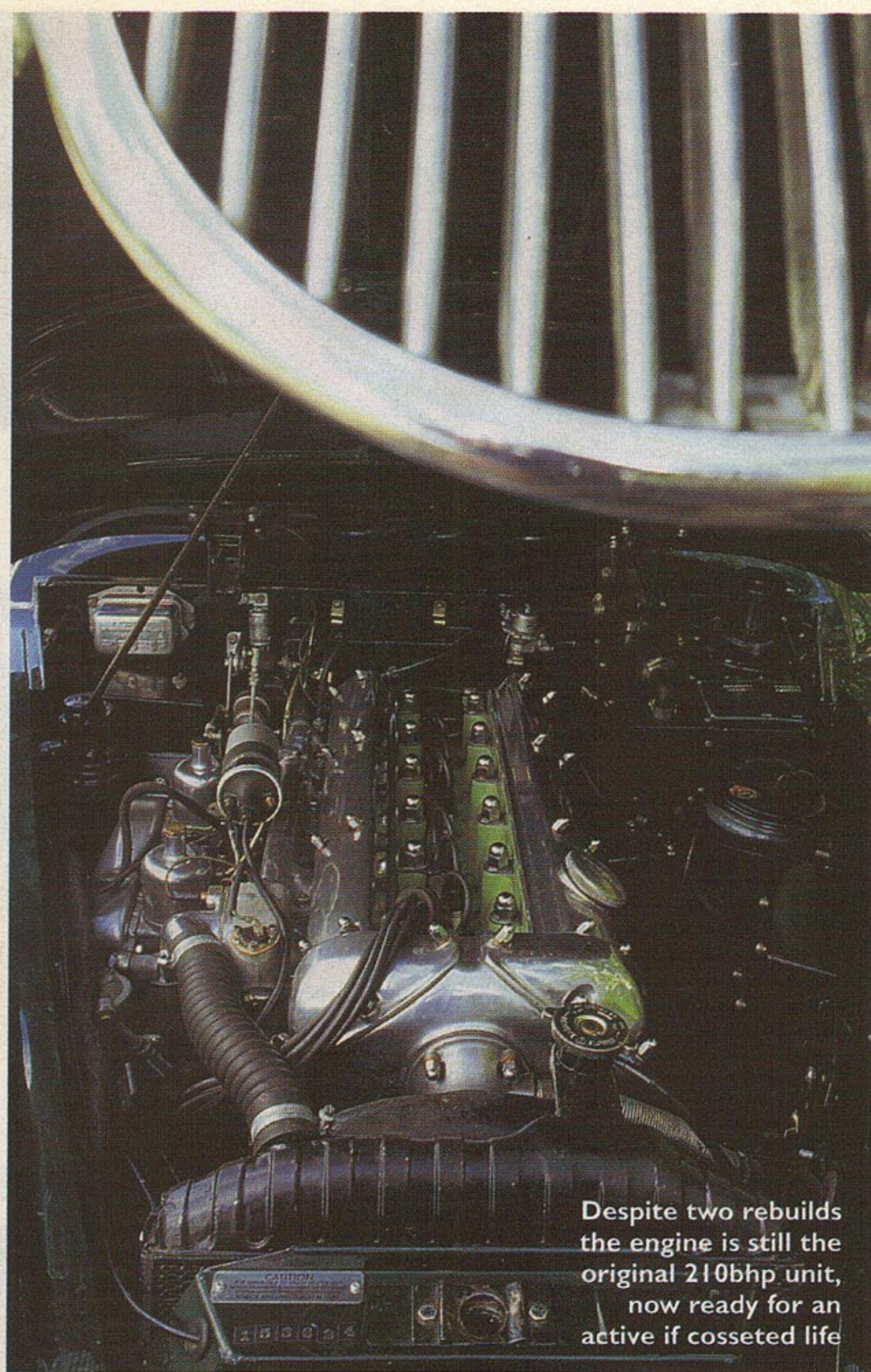
The engine was the most expensive mistake; having dismantled it and had it rebored, he reassembled it with the pistons back-to-front, then timed the inlet valves only, thinking the exhausts would automatically follow. However, the twin camshafts had moved out of synchronisation during dismantling and when the engine was run, valves hit pistons with expensive consequences. Southern Classics found one cylinder had been bored out of true as well and had to have it lined, so David would soon have encountered problems anyway.

Disaster nearly struck when David was fixing the trim materials. His drill went straight into the main cable between the two batteries, shorted it out and the cable caught fire. Other problems included the rear lights which were rewired upside down and the door handles which were refitted to opposite sides. David also refitted the rear window, unaware that the headlining could not be fitted with the window in place so it had to be taken out again.

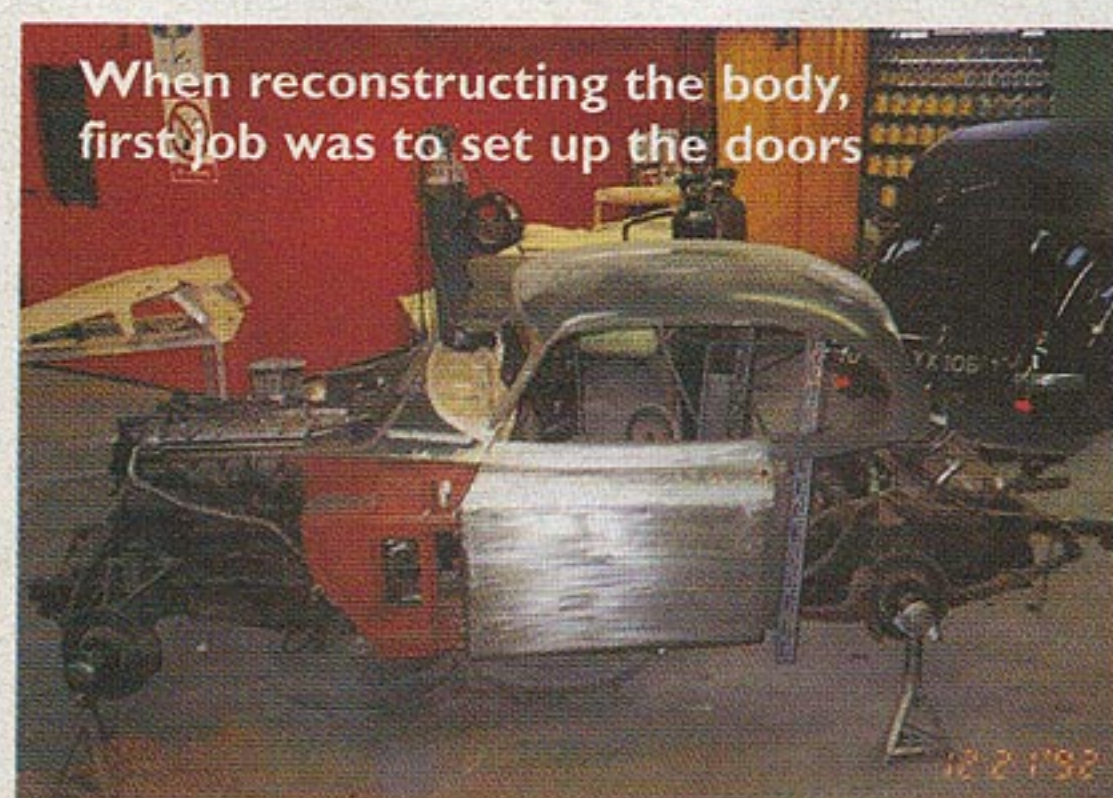




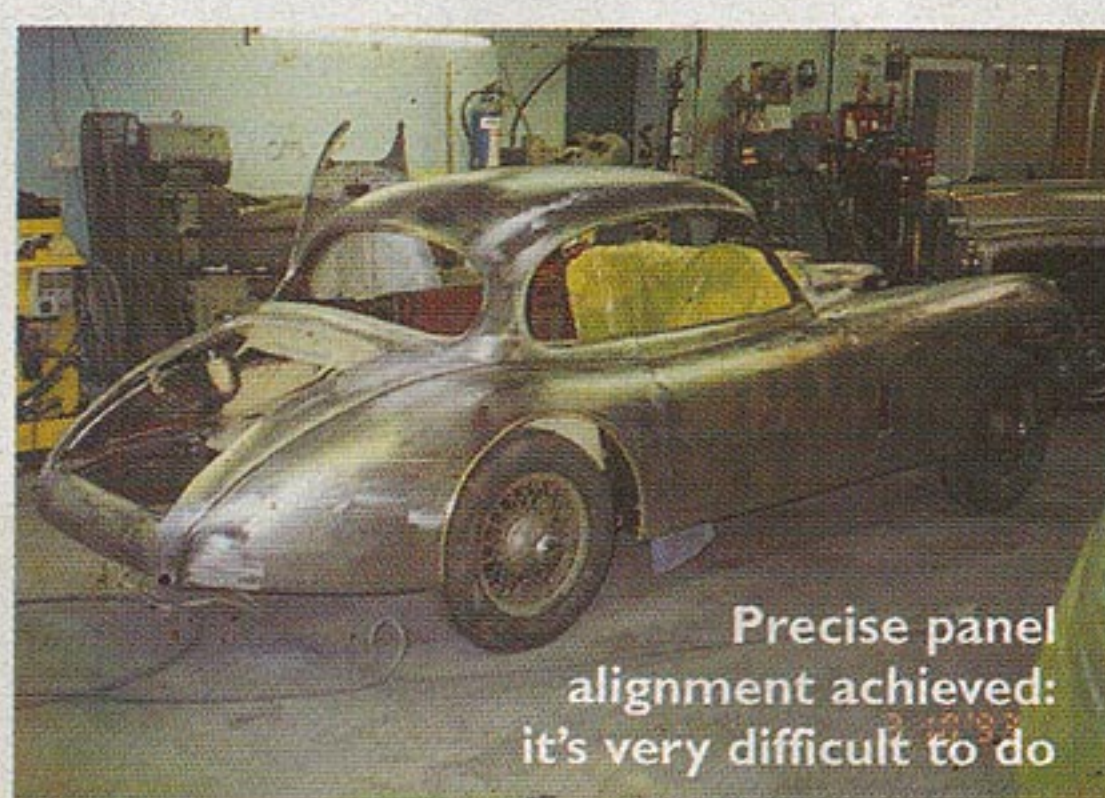
Leather-faced central instrument panel was not liked by some in 1957 but it looks great 40 years later



Despite two rebuilds the engine is still the original 210bhp unit, now ready for an active if cosseted life



When reconstructing the body, first job was to set up the doors



Precise panel alignment achieved: it's very difficult to do

Steve Berry, was working with poor quality remanufactured parts – especially door rubbers and seals, which prevent panels from fitting correctly. The way to get the superb panel alignment, he says, is to start with the doors. Getting the doors square to the sills and the sills square to the chassis is the vital first step, explains Steve, before attempting to fit the wings, bonnet, bootlid and so on.

To have this work done was not cheap, however; including dismantling and reassembly and fitting a new wiring loom, the bill came to a cool £28,427 in 1993.

David's plan was to carry out mechanical restoration work and trimming himself. Some of this he did, but once the engine rebuild went wrong, he bit the bullet and returned the car to Southern Classics, who sent the engine away for

a second rebuild, fitted a new headlining, carpets and sundry trim items and ran through the numerous bits and pieces needed to bring the car up to perfect order, such as a set of splined hubs to eradicate nasty clonks from the worn originals. Including £2350 for the engine, this added a further £11,000 to the bill. Over a five-year period, David ruefully admits to having spent no less than £50,000 on a car that, as yet, he has driven only a couple of miles.

He's well aware that if he were to sell the car right now he would be looking at a thumping loss, but that's not the point. He has the satisfaction of having brought back to life a car that was described as fit only for the scrapyard and he intends to get a great deal of pleasure from the car in years to come. First on the agenda is a drive to Spain in October. ●

Jaguar's sports car goes softer

Although the XK150 carried a strong family resemblance to the XK120, it was a much more sophisticated car. The restyling made it look more like the new 2.4 saloon and also gave far more interior width. Disc brakes were fitted all round for the first time on a roadgoing Jaguar, complete with vacuum servo assistance. Engine improvements – using the valves from the C-type head – boosted power to 210bhp at 5500rpm.

Inside, the instruments were moved to a central panel. This was in line with the more touring feel of the car brought about by extra space, extra comfort and even the option of Borg-Warner automatic transmission.

For most buyers, the greater sophistication and luxury was enough. The 150 was certainly not capable of the speed its name might suggest, but the fixed-head coupé could still manage a genuine 125mph. For those who wanted more speed, Jaguar progressively introduced the S specification engine, then the 3.8-litre version and finally the 3.8 S, in an attempt to keep up with the opposition while the E-type was developed.

Just to add to the confusion, there was the SE (Special Equipment) specification too, as on this car; it included a twin exhaust system, foglights, knock-on wire wheels and windscreen washers.