

# SPECIALIST SPOTLIGHT

## Southern Classics



Let me set the scene in and around the workshops of Southern Classics. Nine E-types line up for various jobs from a Series 3 with severe accident damage through to a fuel-injected car, full rebuilds, a service and one being built for the racetrack. One XJ-S was having bodywork while another sat for evaluation. A brace of Mk 2s were in the bodyshop for full back-to-metal restorations while a gorgeous Aston Martin DB5 was being prepared for paint. An owner of a 2½-litre Riley RME wandered in. It had been 14-years since the bottom of the car had been repaired at Southern, it was now back, albeit a tad late, for the top section and roof. This car is used everyday!

Owner of Southern Classics, Steve Berry, has been in the business for 27 years and with Southern Classics since 1980. He was made manager in 1992 and finally bought the company in October 2001. He moved the business to the current location in 2005 where the layout and buildings better suit the operation. The main workshop area is reserved for stripdown and mechanical work, while a separate building houses the metal side, cutting, welding and fabricating. At the rear lie a pair of modern spray booths complete with paint mix, linked to Glasurit and computerised for greater accuracy. A small machine shop takes care of those awkward jobs, not to mention a trim shop nearby.

Ten long-term staff are all experts in their art, a good proportion of these are former AC employees who would have worked nearby. Steve has seen many changes in the business. Ten years ago he reckoned most of the work was focused on concours and originality. These days most want modifications so the owners can get out and use their cars, so it is important for the company to be on top of developments and improvements.

The workshops are fitted with the best possible equipment, and that includes a body jig to deal with any damage. Insurance work has become something of a speciality; Southern work directly with the insurance companies to make sure that the car is repaired to the correct standard.

Yes it's all about Jaguars but they have no problem in dealing with other makes, customers are often multi-make owners.

*Jim Patten*

Data file:

Name:

Principle personnel:

Specialises in:

Contact:

Southern Classics

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