

Essex Thameside News



Nº 223, November 2025

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Chairman's message

Steve Rider

chairman@jecessexthameside.co.uk

Hello Essex Thameside Members,

With the shorter nights and generally lower temperatures I am sure that I am not alone in arranging for some of our prized possessions to be safely tucked up till the spring. We have previously provided an 'idiots guide' of do's and don'ts for the winterisation of our older cars and will happily re-circulate a copy if requested by members.

It has also been that time of year for me to arrange servicing, take out extended warranties, invest in new service plans and the like. With several of our 'fleet' being supplied by Grange Motors, I was pleasantly surprised by some of the prices quoted by them compared with the mainstream Jaguar-published offers. I also know that I am not the only member who has taken out a service agreement or warranty with them. Again, I will happily provide details if anyone is interested in order to compare prices etc.

With regards to this newsletter, thanks go to Karl Page for his interesting article on his 'repatriated' XJS. There are clearly a number of potential advantages in obtaining an import, especially if your garage or dealer has already taken the pain out of the process. Dealing with the relevant paperwork might seem daunting, but it is not always problematic, as I'm sure that some of our members who have brought in vehicles from abroad can confirm.

I am also indebted to our regular scribe Neil Shanley, who

has still managed to contribute some articles despite spending some quality time this month across the pond.

As part of our plan to provide food for members every two or three months, we indulged in copious quantities of baked potatoes at our October club night. With Halloween being imminent, the night had a spooky theme with a quiz and a number of members entering into the spirit of the night with suitable costumes. Consequently a good night was had by all. We also had a representative of the local Porsche club join us, to meet and discuss potential joint activities such as breakfast meets and a barbecue.

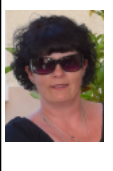
It is now less than two weeks until the Classic Car Show at the NEC in Birmingham and I look forward to meeting some of you there.

Finally, our annual Christmas Bash, at the Pontlands Park Hotel on 6th December, is fast approaching. For those who have registered to attend and paid their deposit, the balance of £44.50 per person (£89 per couple) is now due. If you have not already done so, please contact Neil Shanley and ensure that your payment is made before our deadline on 15th November. It should be another great evening and I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Happy motoring

Steve

Committee Members

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Events Diary

Club nights start at 7.00pm on the last Tuesday of every month (except Tuesday 16th December 2025)

Shows, Events and Visits

6th December Annual Christmas Bash, at Pontlands Park Hotel [*Contact Neil Shanley*]

Others - for information only

8th–10th November Lancaster Classic Motor Show at the NEC, Birmingham

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'This Way' by Neil Shanley





From the Land of the Rising Sun to Essex

Life with a Japanese-born XJS

by Karl Page

There's something undeniably special about owning an XJS. It's not just the sleek lines, the long bonnet, or the way it turns heads. It's the stories these cars carry—and mine has travelled a fair few miles to get here.

My 1993 4-litre facelift coupe is a bit of an oddball in the best possible way. Originally built in the UK, it was destined for the JDM (Japanese Domestic Market), where it spent its early years cruising the streets of Tokyo (or so I like to imagine). After around 25 years with one Japanese owner, eventually it made its way back home to the UK, and in 2022, I became its proud owner. Why had the car made this journey? Well, the collector/dealer I bought it from had been sourcing cars from Japan for many years (as have quite a few UK dealers it seems), because

of the general high quality of Japanese re-imports.

Japan has for many years been a good source of right-hand-drive Jags that were manufactured on the same production lines as the UK market and built to the same standards as the UK, but adapted to overseas markets with minor adjustments. Importantly for buyers of older models, these are vehicles that have enjoyed an easier life before being re-imported; the higher standard of care, lower mileage and superior rust-free condition due to Japan's climate, the absence of road salt and a rigorous vehicle inspection regime (known in Japan as "Shaken"), typically puts these Jags head-and-shoulders above used UK models.

Hence my XJS has a few quirks that make it stand out to the discerning eye, and often spark



conversations with fellow enthusiasts. The main idiosyncrasies are the speedometer and odometer that read in kilometres, which keeps me on my toes (and occasionally guessing). Others include additional side lamps and reflectors, a stereo system that needs converting to UK frequencies and a rear number plate panel that's shaped like it's trying to be different just for the sake of it. It's like the car is saying, "I'M NOT LIKE THE OTHER XJSs."

When I first got the car, it was in decent shape - but as any classic owner knows, "decent" is just the beginning. The first year was a bit of a mechanical adventure - the differential was leaking oil all over the place, which in turn ruined the brake discs and pads. Just finding a mechanic prepared to take that job on took a long time. Needless to say, labour costs are high with a car like this, so it's not a cheap run-around. Having said that, driving the XJS is a joy that modern cars just can't replicate. There's a sense of occasion every time I fire it up. The engine growls with just the right amount of drama, and the ride is smooth, elegant, and unashamedly retro. It's not

about speed—it's about style, presence, and the occasional thumbs-up from strangers.

At car shows, the XJS always draws a crowd. People are curious about its Japanese heritage, and I love chatting about its journey, its quirks, and the work that's gone into keeping it on the road. It's more than just a car - it's a conversation starter, a time machine, and a reminder that good design never goes out of fashion.

So if you spot a slightly eccentric XJS with an oddly-shaped number plate and a cheeky grin, come say hello. Chances are, I'll be nearby!

Karl Page

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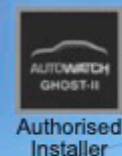
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A Look at Lavenham

by Neil Shanley



This is always a good, well-attended show upon which the weather looks kindly, and today's gathering was no exception. This year's exhibitors were requested to book online with a fee of around £11, which covered the car, driver and one passenger. Knowing that many of our members may consider individual bookings a bit of a "faff", our committee's event organiser, Ian Croxson, arranged a bulk booking so that our members just needed to pay their entry fee to the Club who would do the rest. Sadly, it appears that more and more shows are adopting this third party online booking approach. What do you think of it?

For those who have not been to the venue, what is Lavenham like? Nestling in sleepy Suffolk, Lavenham is a delightful town with many interesting sights to visit, not least its famous Guildhall and the 15th century church which stands guard over the sports field where the show takes place. In case you didn't know, Lavenham was once one of the country's wealthiest towns. Its prosperity came from the wool trade in the 15th and 16th centuries and its grand, timber-framed houses were built by the families made rich by this business. However, cheaper and lighter

cloth from Dutch refugees who settled in Colchester, together with cheaper European imports, badly affected the indigenous producers resulting in following generations in the town not being able to afford to update and re-build their housing stock, leaving it much the same as you see it today. These largely unmodified Tudor buildings have now become, almost by accident, a town-sized time capsule of life five to six hundred years ago.

It's always good to enjoy a Sunday Lunch when at the Show and there's nowhere better than the Swan Inn. This hotel is as Tudor as they come and, during WWII, was used by the men and women of the USAAF Eighth Air Force, with some mementoes still on display in the bar. Unfortunately, it was fully booked when I enquired, so an alternative – The Greyhound – a few doors up the High Street made a suitable alternative. Whilst in the town, we visited the excellent farmers' market just a couple of hundred metres away, another "must see", with many food stalls and an abundance of art and craft vendors to tempt you with "must have" items that you never thought you needed before. And don't forget the art display in the church; the quality of the paintings was very high and most were for sale at a reasonable price.



If you are a petrol head, the Classic Car Show was the place to be with a wide range of British, European and American vehicles from most decades of the last century. There were far too many for me to list here so I'll mention a few that caught my eye. Obviously, there were the Jaguars. Our club fielded about fifteen cars AND there were a couple of other Jaguar club regions next to ours making it a good turnout for the marque. Opposite our stand I saw a blue Nissan Figaro cabriolet. A cute little thing but not as old as it looks being based on the original Nissan Micra. It was never intended to be a production car so, to be eligible to purchase one of the limited vehicles produced, you had to buy a lottery ticket and take your chance. It proved a huge success and, after the planned



2,000 were built, a further 20,000 hit the showrooms. They were only sold in Japan, but you do see many over here since the Japanese drive on the same side of the road as we do.

Fast Fords are very much in vogue and they were represented here by an immaculate 1987 Sierra RS 500 Cosworth. Ford/Cosworth made 5,000 of the 3-door Sierra RS

Cosworth and then took 500 of these for homologation into the World Touring Car Championship – so, a rare car. This example was bought in 2000 with only 6,388 miles on the clock. For the more technically minded, it has a 2-litre, 4-cylinder petrol engine making 224 horses with a maximum speed of 154 mph and a 0-60 time of 6.2 seconds; not bad for 1987.



fastback based on the inexpensive Plymouth Valiant and came with a choice of 6-cylinder or V8 engines. Its special feature was the large glass rear window. The same idea was used by

Ford when their humble Ford Falcon was used as a base for the famous Ford Mustang. Although they were contemporary – the Barracuda debuted just two weeks before the Ford –

the Plymouth did not achieve the success enjoyed by the Mustang. This was mainly due to its close resemblance to the small family runabout upon which it was based, unlike the Mustang which sported an entirely new body. In their launch year (1964), the Barracuda sold 23,443 units compared to the Mustang's 126,443.



Somewhat older was this 1931 Humber Snipe tourer W1642. Only 62 tourers were manufactured, with just three known to have survived. Interestingly, the colour of the radiator badge denoted the colour of the original upholstery, in this case a reddish hue. Its price new in 1931 was £455, equivalent to around £40,000 today.

There were several American cars on show, but one that you don't see often over here was parked next to an Austin A40, which you do. It was a 1966 Plymouth Barracuda. Made by the Chrysler Corporation, it was a two-door



It was good to see a Daimler 420 parked on their club stand nearby. I don't see many at shows so it was interesting to compare it with my Jaguar 420.



After all the car viewing, it was time to relax with a cup of tea – well we are driving – and bask in the sun.



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The Lodges Coaches Show

by Neil Shanley



On Sunday 17th August, we woke up to yet another fine day in this unusually hot English summer – a perfect day to enjoy our yearly visit to High Easter, the venue for Lodges Coaches Classic Car (and Buses) Show. Spread over their ample field and garage complex, you are greeted with a vast and eclectic mix of classic cars, buses, coaches, auto jumble and memorabilia – plus a couple of giant breakdown lorries. The cars are in no particular order or groups and a M.A.S.H. helicopter, not often seen at such shows, flew in to complete the gathering. Continuing the aviation theme, a fly-past of WWI and WWII planes, including a Spitfire, could be viewed towards the end of the show. Something for every taste.



So, what were the highlights for me? Well, standing head and shoulders – literally –



above the crowd was an Oshkosh tow truck. Never heard of one? It is from a corporation that designs and builds speciality trucks and equipment for the military, aviation, fire and many other uses and has been around since 1917 in Wisconsin, USA. Parked next to it, and partially dwarfed, stood a Kenwood tow truck, also from the States. You had to be impressed.

Nearby, and slightly smaller, stood a London Routemaster bus and a 1939 Bristol double-decker.



In the garage behind, you could see model planes, together with much memorabilia from the coach trade. Lodges' collection of coaches included a 1931 Gilford as used in "Dad's Army", a 1920 Model TT coach, a 1948 Bedford still in regular use, plus many





more examples of machinery from the 1960s. I did like the rare, twin front-axle Bedford Duple. The last time I saw one of those, it was hanging over a cliff road in "The Italian Job".

It wasn't all buses, however. There were some – actually a lot – of very well-presented cars like the Armstrong Siddeley convertible, possibly a Hurricane, next to an MG Midgette – probably the best I've seen. G D Culpin were displaying a 1910 Lion Peugeot under restoration to add further interest. It wasn't all '50s and pre-war stuff, though. The

Japanese cars of the '70s are becoming popular as their rarity grows. Take the immaculate Toyota Celica on show, for example. Once common, but now a rare sight. Much newer, but still rare, was a Lamborghini Diablo in striking purple. Even Sue can tell the make from those rakish lines.

There were so many first-rate British cars on show that it is hard to mention them all. That goes for the American iron also. My stand-out US car was the 1938 Packard Super Eight convertible in RHD form. With its Art Deco lines, 'dickie' seat (or 'rumble' seat as the Americans have it) and its twin wing-mounted spare





wheels, it was a true delight. This unrestored example boasted built-in stowage for golf clubs. That's class. Weighing in at significantly over two tons, it has a 5.2-litre strait-eight engine to haul it around rather majestically. This car was once owned by Scottish entertainer Andy Stewart.

There is always a good selection of Detroit products at Essex shows and here was no exception. In fact there were too many to describe here, but I must mention the 1957 Chevrolet Bel Air coupe brought by a young couple. Apparently it has been in their family for many years.

Derek Matthewson (Bangers and Cash) was at the show again. This time, Sheldon Nichols of "Dream Car Fixers" accompanied him to present the awards. Derek chose a green Triumph TR3 as best in show with a 1939 International truck, beautifully restored, as best commercial vehicle. His choice of car that he would most like to drive home in was a blue Alvis TE21. (Richard take note). As Derek said, the show is a very pleasant, gentle, village affair and a joy to attend.



Our members present included Ian Croxson, Vaughn High, Martin Saward and Jean Pearce (who came in Martin's latest acquisition, a Daimler Double Six), Geoff Monk and Sue Sharpe, plus Graham Cook, together with myself and Sue. To attend, you need to call or book online beforehand, but the entry fee is just £5 on the day, so it won't break the bank.




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