



THE NEW JAGUAR

420



*1967 Jaguar promotional photograph that was also used in their official brochures.*



# Feature: Jaguar 420/Sovereign

The Jaguar 420 and its Daimler Sovereign equivalent were introduced at the October 1966 at the London Motor Show and produced for two years.

## Design

One can trace the history of the 420 all the way back to the 2.4 saloon. The Mark I led to the Mark II in 1959, with the 'S' Type arriving in 1963.

Despite clear styling differences, all shared the same wheelbase (2,727 mm - 107.5 in).

To clarify the differences that defined each model variant, the Mark II added a larger engine, wider rear track, larger rear window and restyled doors to the Mark I, while also standardising features that were previously optional.

The 'S' Type added independent rear suspension and a longer boot, twin fuel tanks and a re-styled front end to the Mark II. During production, the manual gearbox was upgraded, too.

To all these improvements, the 420 added some of its own - enough to warrant its own model designation.

In styling terms, the 420/Sovereign was essentially an 'S' Type with that car's curvaceous nose made much more linear, the better to match its rear styling (which was not altered).

Contouring around its four lamps was relatively subtle, with small peaks over each, and its flat frontage sloped forward slightly. The square grille with central divider matched that of the 420G.

The low-set fog lamps of the Mark 2 and 'S' Type were replaced by a pair of inner headlamps at the same level as the main lights. The inner lamps were lit on main beam only.

Dummy horn grilles were added below each inner headlamp to break up what would otherwise have been a large expanse of flat metal on either side of the radiator grille.

The tops of the front wheel arches were flattened to match the squarer lines of the nose. The slimline bumpers dispensed with the centre dip which had characterised the bumpers of the Mark 2 and S-Type. All this was done to improve the car's aesthetic balance compared with the 'S' Type and to create a family resemblance to the Mark X/420G.

No attempt was made to give the 420/



*David & Margaret Bicknell, 1967 Old English White 420 (4.2 Litre)*

Sovereign the same front-hinged bonnet as the Mark X/420G and it retained a rear-hinged bonnet of similar dimensions to those of the 'S' Type.

## Interior

Changes to the 'S' Type's interior to create the 420/Sovereign were driven mainly by safety considerations, with the wood cappings on the doors and dashboard replaced with padded Rexine and a wooden garnish rail on the tops of the door linings.

The clock was relocated from the tachometer to the centre of the dashboard top rail, where it was powered by its own battery. The 'S' Type's pull-out map tray below the central instrument panel was not carried over although the 420 retained the same central console and under-dash parcel tray. The seats of the 420 were of slightly different proportions from the 'S' Type, although they appeared very similar.

## Engine

The 4.2-litre XK engine of the 420/Sovereign was fitted with the straight port cylinder head and 3/8-inch lift cams.

Even with only two SU carburettors instead of three, the six still produced 245hp (182kW) in the 420 and was more powerful than any factory Mark II or 'S'

Type and could easily deliver a 125mph (200km/h) top speed.

## Power Steering

A novel mechanical feature that the 420/Sovereign shared with the 420G was Marles Varamatic power steering, which was offered as an option on the 420 but was standard on the Sovereign.

Built by Adwest Engineering Co Ltd of Reading, England, it was a "cam and roller" system in which the non-constant pitch of the cam resulted in a variable steering ratio, with the lowest gearing being at the straight ahead, rising rapidly to either lock.

The rise in gearing (equivalent to a drop in ratio from 21.6:1 to 13:1) occurred almost entirely within the first half turn of the steering wheel from the straight-ahead position. The effect was to give very light and relaxed steering at the straight ahead, with quick reaction when cornering. There was no adjustment in the behaviour of the steering in reaction to road speed. A very few of the last 'S' Types were similarly equipped.

## Mechanical

Other mechanical refinements the 420/Sovereign had over the S-Type included:

- Replacement of the Borg Warner Type 35 automatic transmission with the stronger Model 8.



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- A more efficient cross-flow radiator in place of the S-Type's smaller vertical flow type.
- A dual-line hydraulic braking system replacing the S-Type's single line system.
- Twin 2-inch HD8 SU carburetors (cf. the S-Type's twin 1.75-inch HD6 SUs).
- Brake discs featuring a peripheral cast-iron anti-squeal ring.
- A Holset "Torquatrol" viscous coupled engine cooling fan.
- Negative earthing (the S-Type was positive earth).
- A pre-engaged starter instead of a Bendix pinion.
- An alternator rather than the S-Type's dynamo.

## Performance

A Motor (UK) road test in May 1967 reported that for a combination of speed, comfort and safety the 420 is as good as any in the world, regardless of cost.

A North American perspective was provided by Road & Track, whose December 1967 report concluded:

*Jaguar's big seller in the U.S. remains the E-type sports cars, but the 420 sedan offers just as unique a combination of qualities in its own field. For a reasonable basic price of \$5900, Jaguar offers brisk performance, outstanding*



*The seats of the 420 were of slightly different proportions from the 'S' Type, although they appeared very similar. Daimlers were fitted with higher grade leather seat centre sections.*

*braking, excellent handling and ride, quality finish, and luxury in abundance, all in an automobile that's easy to manoeuvre in today's maddening traffic.*

A road test by Wheels (Australia) in August 1967 enthused:

*While they can continue to build and sell cars as good as this, there is*

*hope for the man who cares about his motoring.*

## Daimler Sovereign

Whereas the Daimler 2½-litre V8 released in 1962 differed from the Jaguar Mark 2 in having a genuine Daimler engine, only the Sovereign's badging and aspects of interior trim differentiated it from the 420.

The market perception of the two marques Daimler and Jaguar, which the material differences between them sought to foster, was that the Daimler represented luxury motoring for the discerning and more mature gentleman whereas the Jaguar was a sporting saloon aimed at a somewhat younger clientele.

In the Daimler model range, the Sovereign filled a gap between the 2½-litre V8 and the larger and more conservatively styled 4½-litre Majestic Major. Prices in the UK of the basic 420 and Sovereign, as quoted in the Motor magazine of October 1966 were:

- Manual o/d: Jaguar £1615, Daimler £1724
- Automatic: Jaguar £1678, Daimler £1787

In return for the ≈6.5 % difference in price, the Daimler purchaser obtained only a few substantive advantages but would have considered the cachet of the Daimler badge to be well worth



*The introduction of new safety legislation resulted in the traditional all wood cappings on the doors and dashboard being replaced by softer padded Rexine (artificial leather cloth).*



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the extra money; indeed, the Daimler name attracted buyers who disliked the Jaguar's racier image.

In total, the Daimler differed from the Jaguar in having:

- A plastic insert on the rear number plate housing bearing the Daimler name. On the 420 the cast number plate housing bore the Jaguar name and on the Sovereign, this remained beneath the plastic "Daimler" insert.
- Wheel trim centres, horn button, oil filler cap and seat belt clasps carrying the stylised D rather than the title Jaguar, a Jaguar's head ('growler') or no badging at all.
- Ribbed camshaft covers bearing the inscription 'Daimler' rather than the polished alloy covers on the Jaguar.
- All of the 420 extras as standard, including a heated rear window, overdrive on manual transmission cars and power assisted steering.
- A flying D mascot at the forward edge of the bonnet in place of the leaping cat Jaguar mascot ('leaper') above the radiator grille.

- A fluted radiator grille with stylised D badge in place of the smooth crowned and Jaguar-badged grille.
- Arguably more carefully selected and matched walnut veneer trim.
- Higher grade Vaumol ventilated leather seat centre sections.
- Better quality covers for the sun visors.

## Production

In 1967, its first full year of production, the 420/Sovereign easily outsold the other Jaguar saloon models still in production and at a cost of around £200 more than an 'S' Type, effectively ended buyer interest in that model.

Nevertheless, relatively few 420's were made in total due to the fact that the Coventry factory stopped making the Jaguar 420 in 1968, just over two years after production began and with just 10,236 produced. The Daimler Sovereign continued into 1969 and 5,824 were sold.

When the XJ6 was launched in October, 1968, it swept the 'S' Type and 420 aside and would go on to make its own mark in the Jaguar story.

## Summary

Amongst Jaguar's post-war models, the 420 is perhaps the least known. Obscure as it was, the 420 was an important model for Jaguar, serving as a "proof of concept" for the XJ6 that would arrive in 1968.

The almost immediate success of the XJ6 meant that the Jaguar 420 and its Daimler Sovereign equivalent are largely forgotten today, and largely under appreciated. This is reflected in prices for as little as \$6,000 for a drivable, but poor-quality example, up to a fully restored car struggling to reach \$40,000; half that of what a restored Mark II would achieve.

This is despite the fact that the fourth and final evolution of Jaguar's post-war compact saloon was clearly the best. ■

*Information for this story from various publications including Jaguar World, Jaguar Magazine and Wikipedia.*



Colin Williamson, Warwick Grey 1967 Daimler Sovereign 420.