

Oldest Surviving Daimler SP250 Discovered

The oldest surviving SP250, prototype XHP 438 (Chassis 100002), has been discovered and purchased by Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust.

Background

The Daimler SP250 sports car was built by the Daimler Company from 1959 to 1964. It was the last car to be launched by Daimler before its parent company, the Birmingham Small Arms Company (BSA), sold it to Jaguar Cars in 1960.

Prototypes

XHP 438 was the third of three SP250 prototypes built. Most of the design and testing for the SP250 was carried out by the first two prototypes, chassis numbers 100000 and 100001. Both these cars were subsequently dismantled.

The body of 100002 (now the oldest remaining SP250) was moulded in lightweight fibreglass, and although it was a prototype, it was very close to the final design of the production cars – and was in fact later sold as such.

History XHP 438

The prototype was initially used as a press car. At the end of 1959 the car went back to Daimler for a brand new engine and a “tidy up”. In February 1960 it was sold to Jack Brabham Motors of Surrey who in turn sold the car to a Donald Harley.

Harley sold the car in 1962, and from then on the SP250 sold four more times, moving around England frequently until in 1978, when the car went to Holland. The owner took the SP250 to Canada, where it was stored for almost ten years.

In 1987 the car was auctioned, and two Canadian brothers, Gary and Doug Titosky, realised how important the Daimler was and took the car to Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. The SP250 then stayed with Gary and Doug for the next 30 years during which time it was partially restored.

The SP250 was sold to the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust in 2019 and since then the Trust has been working hard to source original parts to further restore the car.

Production

Only 2,654 SP250s were produced in five years of production, far short of the projection of 3,000 per year by the second year of production.

However, over 20,000 of the 2.5 litre V8 engines were produced, over 17,000 of which powered the Daimler V8 version of Jaguar’s Mark II saloon. A further 2,000 of the 4.5 litre versions of the engine were built to power the Daimler Majestic Major saloons and limousines.

Trivia

The SP250 was launched as the “**Daimler Dart**” in April 1959 at the New York Motor Show. Chrysler, whose Dodge division owned the trademark for the “Dart” model name, ordered Daimler to change the name under threat of legal action. With little time to come up with a new name, Daimler used the project number, SP250, as the model number. ■



The oldest surviving Daimler SP250, prototype XHP 438 (Chassis 100002), has been discovered and is now in the safe hands of the Jaguar Daimler Heritage Trust.