

August's club presentation was by club member and classic car journalist Graeme Hurst, who shared the highlights of 12 interesting cars he's been lucky enough to feature to date.

# The Hurst Collection



## 1: Tucker Torpedo

'Tomorrow's car today' was how the Tucker was marketed in 1948. A radically styled, rear-engine saloon boasting equally radical technology, the Tucker was the brainchild of entrepreneur Preston Tucker who

wanted to market a car that was simpler to maintain and importantly safer than the competition in the immediate post-war era. His car featured torque converter transmission and torsilastic (rubber-bushed) suspension. Safety features included a central headlight that turned with the wheels and a specially designed windscreen rubber that allowed the glass to 'pop' out in the event of an accident. Sadly, Preston's creation battled to gain traction after spiraling development costs. He famously marketed accessories to aspiring customers to raise cash but fell afoul of the authorities who accused him of fraud. He won the ensuing court case but by then his business was ruined and only 51 Tuckers were made. This is no 49, which I spotted at a show in London and subsequently featured in Classic & Sports Car.



## 2: Citroën DS19

The DS' debut in Paris in 1955 has gone down as one of automotive's most memorable for the car's futuristic looks and technical specification; indeed, it has been described by a colleague of mine as 'a car waiting for a future that's yet to arrive'.

Underneath its beguiling skin sat a clever hydra-pneumatic system that controlled the steering, brakes and suspension.... the latter giving the car an unrivalled (in the era of leaf-sprung live axles) magic carpet ride. I featured this early 1957 example after spotting at the 50th celebrations for the model in Paris in 2005. Australian Bob Dircks had owned it for close on 30 years by then and racked up 120,000 miles, 10,000 of which were around Europe before and after the anniversary event. He was a hugely entertaining character and a borne engineer who concocted his own hydraulic fluid from canola oil and anti-freeze!



## 3. Alfa-Romeo 6C 2500

Alfa Romeo's stunning coach-built 6C 2500 was a favoured choice for the rich and famous in the late 1930s. And infamous too: this example was owned by Benito Mussolini who used it for private getaways with his mistress Claretta Petacci in the 1940s. Theirs was a love story that took an ominous (and almost opera-like) script when the car was used in Mussolini's attempt to flee Italy in the last days of WW2. Loaded up with letters from Churchill and gold bullion, the Alfa was driven to the border by Petacci's brother with Claretta alongside while Mussolini was disguised as an army corporal in a truck just behind. The ruse was uncovered en route near Lake Como and, after refusing an offer of freedom on three occasions, Claretta was famously executed alongside Mussolini. The Alfa was later secreted out of the country by a US army officer before it fell into dis-repair in the 1950s. It was bought for \$300 in the 1960s and its history later uncovered. It was fully restored in Italy about 15 years ago and has been a centerpiece of many a European concours event, which is how I managed to feature it in Classic & Sports Car 10 years ago.

## 4. Jaguar XK120

Jaguar's XK120 was the model that secured Jaguar's future when it was launched in 1948. Produced as a stop-gap to showcase Jaguar's new twin-cam engine while the new Mk7 saloon was being developed, it received such positive acclaim by war-weary and design-starved motoring customers, it stayed in production (in various forms) until 1961. NUB 120 is the most famous of all XKs and was the car Ian Appleyard and his wife Patricia (daughter of Jaguar founder William Lyons) campaigned to enormous success in the Alpine Rallies in the early 1950s. It's been in Jaguar's ownership ever since Appleyard traded it in for a later example in 1953 and remains totally original and wonderfully patinated. I was fortunate enough to drive it when Jaguar loaned it as part of a 75th anniversary feature on the marque in Classic & Sports Car.



## 5. Jaguar XKSS

With just 16 built, the XKSS is one of the most collectible Jaguars of all time. Which is kind of ironic given that it was a marketing attempt to flog a race car: when Jaguar found itself with a surplus of Le-Mans- winning D-type, its marketing department suggested

converting them for road use. A windscreen and passenger seat was hastily added, along with cursory bumpers. Sadly, a disastrous factory fire in 1957 saw the D-type's tooling reduced to ashes and so the project came to an end. For many years, XKSSs were seen as a step-child in the Jaguar family and quite a few were converted back to D-types. That's all changed in the last 20 years or so and all 16 are back to being an XKSS and hugely valuable. I drove this one as part of a Classic & Sports Car advertorial piece back in late 2011. With a price tag of £5m it remains the most expensive car I've taken on the road to date.



## 6. Jaguar C-type

The C-type was Jaguar's attempt at making the XK120 competitive by ditching the heavy ladder chassis for a light space frame clothed in a low-drag aluminium body in what was designated the XK120C with the C standing for competition. It was a stroke of genius: being lighter and more slippery through the air

gave the C-type (as it became known) huge clout on the track and a privately owned example won Le Mans outright first time out in 1951. This example is famous for its first owner: Juan Manuel Fangio! He bought it new at a Belgian motor show and Jaguar boss William Lyons ever mindful of the power of celebrity gave him a healthy discount. Fangio never got to compete with it as he was signed with Maserati but, luckily, I did when I was asked to race it in the Targa Florio back in 2012 for Classic & Sports Car.



### 7. Ferrari F430

In 2007 Kimi Räikkönen won the F1 Drivers' Championship and Ferrari celebrated with a weekend of racing at its private test track in Mugello, Italy after the F1

season closed. Ferrari UK offered Classic & Sports Car the chance to take its F430 press car down to join in the fun and I spent three days getting there with a route that took myself and a mate over the Furka and Susten passes in Switzerland, made famous by the car chases in Goldfinger. The trip ended with a PR shoot of all three UK cars in central Florence on the last evening but that nearly had me spending a night in jail after the police intervened. Turns out the shoot's director hadn't bothered to apply for a film permit and the Piazza Republica was off limits. Thankfully the transgression was settled with a 25 Euro fine and a ticking off from a gorgeous lady Polizia officer: 'you could've damaged this beautiful car!'



### 8. Rolls-Royce Phantom II Continental

In the early 1930s a young posh Englishman called Robin McAlpine finished his civil engineering studies and his father (who

ran a construction company) suggested he take a 'gap year' to visit a few engineering projects in the US. It would be a gap year like no other as the father ordered a new Phantom II Continental in which his son and two chums would make the journey. And some journey it was: the trio drove 3267-miles across the US averaging 466 miles per day at an average speed of 55mph, quite some feat for the time across what was a depression-ravaged landscape. The crowning moment of the trip was the car's participation in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, then in its infancy. And that's where I spotted it some 75 years later in 2011. Its incredible original patina and history made it feature worthy for Classic & Sports Car.

### 9. Land-Rover Series II

Off road vehicles come in many makes and sizes today but re-wind 60 years or so and a Land-Rover was the only choice for a trans-continental adventure. And that's what a



young Australian by the name of Philip Kohler who was finishing up employment in Zambia ordered when he wanted to drive from Cape Town to London in 1959. He took over two years to do so and documented his adventure which saw him work on the set of the film Hatari. Fast-forward to 2015 and the Landy was unearthed from the front garden of his London home after Philip passed away. Still bearing the hand-painted detail of all the places Philip visited, its owned by a UK colleague of mine and was featured in Classic Car Africa in 2018.

### 10. Hudson Great Eight

The late Heidi Hetzer and her beloved Hudo are well known to the club after she visited our shores as part of her 80,000km+ round-the-world tour back in



2016. And it was her attendance at a Natter that led to me featuring her travels in Classic Car Africa. The photo shoot took place the day Hudo was unloaded after being shipped from Argentina and a few days before he ran a big-end bearing. That led to a prolonged stay in the Mother City while a replacement engine was flown in and fitted. Once running, Heidi embarked on trip around southern Africa before shipping Hudo to Spain to finish her circumnavigation of the world in time for her 80th birthday in June 2017. She returned to South Africa in 2019 at the end of a 25,000km trans Africa adventure but this time at the wheel of a pink Land Cruiser!



### 11: Austin-Healey 3000 Mk1

Back in the 1960s an Austin-Healey was a seriously desirable piece of kit for any man with an ounce of petrol in his veins. And for women too it seems: when the late Jessica Perritt's husband got a company car at the mine he

worked for shortly after ordering his 3000, he asked his wife if she'd be ok driving it she said she certainly would! And she wasn't wrong: forty plus years later Jessica was still behind the wheel on a near daily basis when I met her in Durban back in 2004. By then long a stalwart of the local Healey club branch, Jessica's ownership made such an impression on the readers of Thoroughbred & Classic Cars that one person wrote in asking to buy a copy of the lead pic as his wife wants to hang it up as 'proof that woman CAN enjoy classic cars too!'



### 12: Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost

This one probably needs little introduction as owner Bob Johnston was a much-loved member of the club before his passing 10 years back or so but, for more recent members, Bob and his 1921 Ghost were

something of a legend in Rolls-Royce circles. He first saw the car in the late 1930s while a school boy in JHB and would later by chance buy it for the princely sum of £230 in 1947. Six decades of ownership followed during which Bob and his wife toured Europe in the 1960s (Bob had a picture of the car parked underneath the Eiffel Tower) and later the US in their Ghost which was largely original barring one re-paint and two engine rebuilds. I featured it in Thoroughbred & Classic Cars in 2005 and later drove with Bob from Simon's Town to a Natter, with Bob proving that the Ghost could make the entire trip in top gear!

