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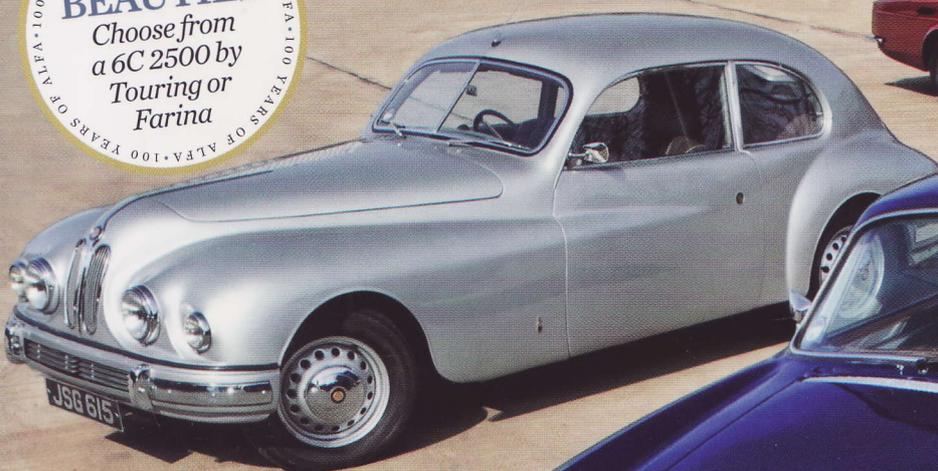


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## COBRA JOINS THE FLEET



### 1964 SHELBY COBRA MKII FIA

Run by Kevin Kivlochan classic.cars@bauermedia.co.uk

**ENGINE** 4727cc, V8, ohv **TIME OWNED** 8 years 6 months  
**POWER** 409bhp @ 6500rpm **PERFORMANCE** Top speed: 170mph;  
0-60mph: sub-5sec **COST NEW** £2732 **VALUE NOW** £1million-plus



Kevin's Cobra is no newcomer to the track – here Keith Schellenberg gives it some welly at Croft on August 30, 1965

YOU MIGHT HAVE seen the Cobra and me at Goodwood. Or Silverstone. Le Mans, maybe. I got the car in October 2001, when I'd already been racing historic cars for 11 years.

But this year I was in a quandary: to race in the Le Mans Classic, or not? You see, I competed in the 2004 event, driving the Willment/Bob Oltoff Le Mans Cobra Prototype, owned by great historic racer and friend Shaun Lynn. My first practice was at night, and I vividly remember what Shaun told me before I left: 'Kev, take a mobile phone. The car hasn't had a complete shakedown, so if you get a problem you can call us and let us know.'

So, mobile phone in pocket, I climbed into the cramped cabin and roared away. The Mulsanne Straight, a 6km (3.7-mile) stretch

of road known affectionately by local French farmers as the D338, is an eerie place. The combination of darkness and music from the open header exhaust reverberating off the aluminium roof, with seemingly no way of escaping the cabin, has a strangely hypnotic effect when you're cocooned in a 170mph-plus capsule. At the end of the straight you take the tight right-hand Mulsanne Corner down towards Indianapolis – only in 2004 I never got there.

The straight to Indianapolis is lined by sunken fields that yield a dense mist, and unfortunately for me a Sunbeam Tiger had dumped the contents of its sump. The Cobra skated off, and I was sent spinning like a passenger in a rather expensive waltzer. The rare aluminium nose of Shaun's



Kev hands the Cobra to the race prep experts at Waltham Abbey-based Thunder Road



Now you see it, now you don't – big single fuel tank is making way for twin tanks

## 'The difficult decision was whether to confront my demons and enter or put the entry form out of sight'

car kissed the barrier and I have never had to make such a difficult phone call in my life. Needless to say, I don't carry a mobile phone any more.

So the difficult decision I faced recently was whether to confront my demons of six years ago by entering the event or to put the entry form out of sight. It sat on my desk for about six weeks – then I finally succumbed and posted it.

So now to the other torment of the historic racer, the winter rebuild. A historic race can be won or lost by a fast driver, a fast engine or a faulty fuse. So with reliability in mind I delivered the Cobra to Alan Smith at Thunder Road ([www.thunderroadcars.com](http://www.thunderroadcars.com)), one of the best Cobra specialists not on US soil. A consultation there with Alan

and Alec led to a long list of jobs: a complete strip-down, re-wire, crack-testing all suspension components, new Pete Knight racing engine, gearbox rebuild...

The large single fuel tank (around 125 litres) is being replaced with the more practical twin long-range tanks fitted to FIA Cobras in period, which clears space in the boot for a spare wheel (or possibly a few beers). Plus there'll be a new exhaust system and headers, overhauled Koni dampers, suspension and brakes, plus lights for the night race and too many other small items to mention. Just don't tell my wife.

Next time I hope to be able to tell you that the Cobra jigsaw is coming back together and ready to race. Wish me luck.

## IT'S MINE AT LAST!



### 1962 JAGUAR E-TYPE SERIES 1 FHC

Almost owned by Phil Bell [phil.bell@bauermedia.co.uk](mailto:phil.bell@bauermedia.co.uk)

ENGINE 3781cc, in-line six-cylinder TIME OWNED 24 hours  
MILEAGE 89,632 POWER 265bhp @ 5500rpm TORQUE 260lb ft @ 4000rpm PERFORMANCE Top speed: 152mph; 0-60mph: 6.9sec  
COST NEW £2196 VALUE NOW £27,000

Christmas Eves in the late Sixties were nights of sleepless anticipation as my mind raced through the possibilities of what morning would bring: Aston DB6, Mini Cooper, Jensen Interceptor – or maybe something else from the big glass cabinet on the counter of Congleton's best toy shop.

Fast forward to 2010 and that old feeling was back. Finally, a month after laying down a deposit on a Jaguar E-type S1 fixed-head coupé, the call came from owner Colin to say it was ready. Oil leak, gear selection problem, cracked clutch fluid reservoir, split suspension ball-joint gaiter and more were all done. All I had to do was show up with a banker's draft after a night's sleep. Some chance.

The next day my old friend Rob showed up to take me there and act as back-up transport. I'll never forget his look of disbelief as I loaded tools, tow rope, jump leads and fire extinguisher into his boot.

After a cooked breakfast at Colin's it was time to hand over the cheque and load up files of receipts and photos from the restoration, assorted spares and the car's old

California black number plates. According to the registration sticker this car was last on the road in 1980. Including Colin's recent test drive he'd only done around 75 miles since completing the restoration a year ago. I was about to add 100 miles to that.

Twisting my ignition key in the aluminium dashboard of my E-type, thumbing the starter button and hearing my XK engine thrum into action was a life experience to savour. And the day just got better. M5, M6, M1 – the XK seemed hungry for three-figure speeds yet the only sound apart from a light whistling of wind around the door frame was a relaxed drone from the exhaust. Nothing squeaked, rattled or whined.

In one of those moments that underline the E-type's universal appeal a couple of young guys in a Toyota Corolla GTI drew alongside, gave a thumbs up, and sped off.

Back home I allowed myself one final look at my Jaguar – just to confirm this wasn't just another Christmas Eve dream – before locking it away for the night. The adventures have only just begun.



Have E-type, will travel – Phil savours the moment of finally bringing his dream car home