1959 to 2019 SP250

DAIMLER & LANCHESTER OWNERS' CLUB

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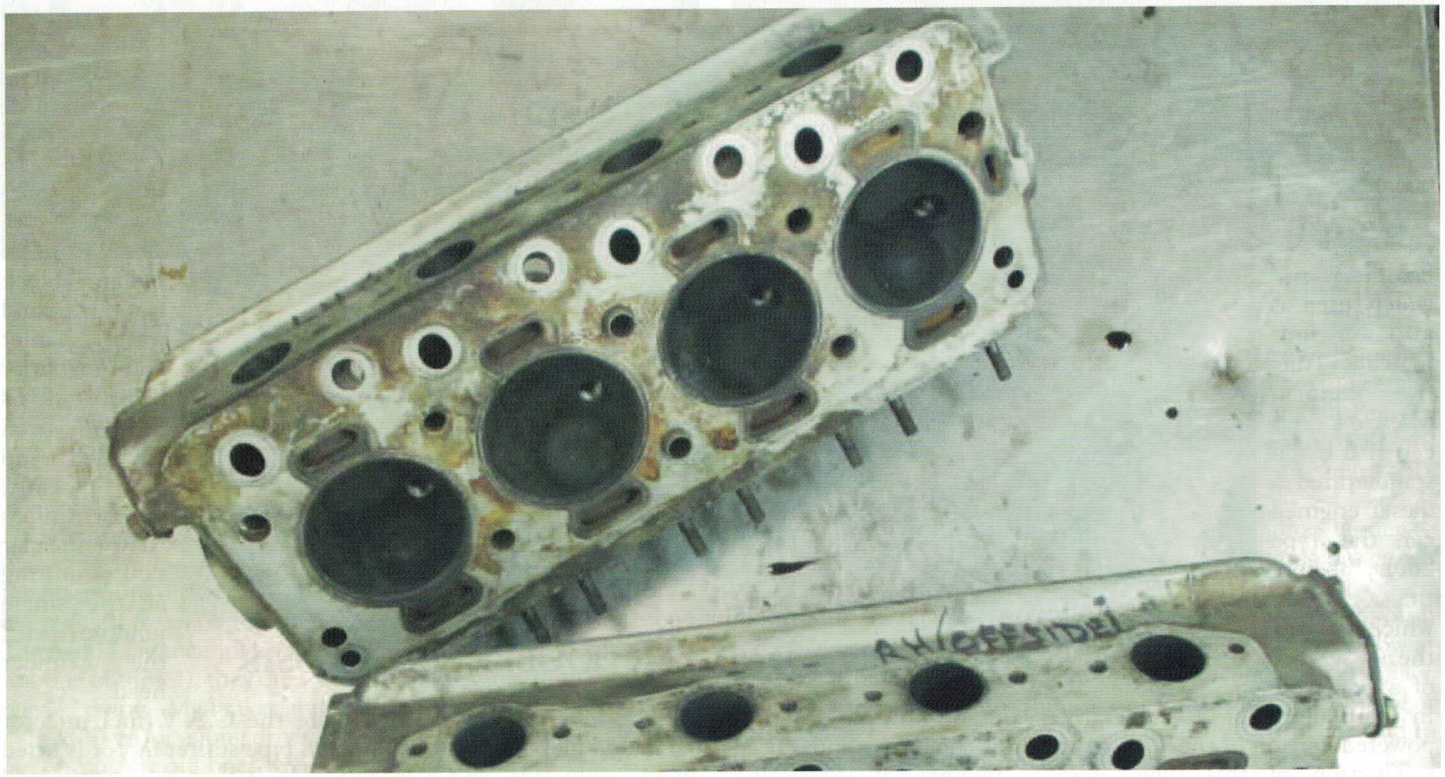
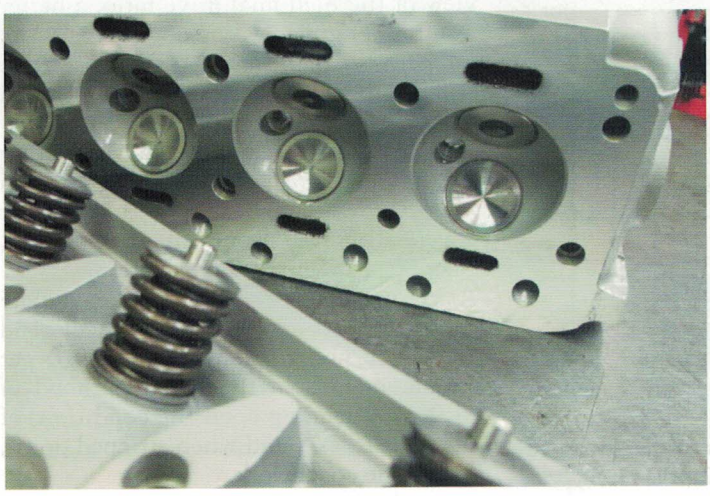
Eric & J&E Engineering Services

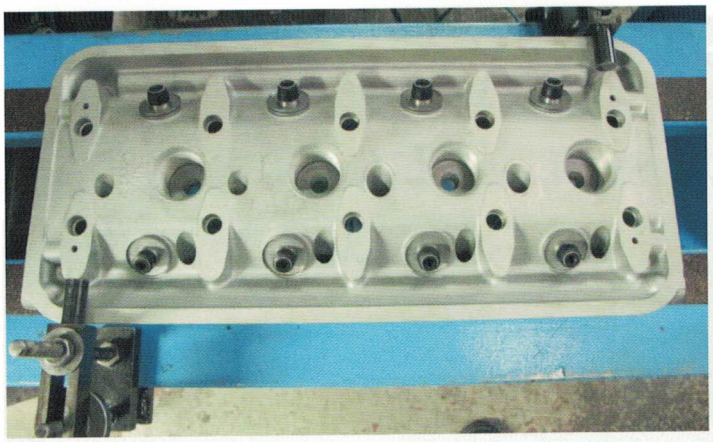
RICHARD LONG



Precision high quality, engine shop machining can be expensive - but mediocre engineering work will always be very expensive!!
Eric, my 1968 Daimler V8-250 saloon with 50K miles needed a bit of work on the cylinder heads. The usual symptoms of worn valve guides and a handy reserve oil capacity in some of the spark plug tubes were the main points; I have no doubt that many V8 owners can relate to this. With the engine requiring removal for my auto to manual gearbox conversion (further articles in due course) it seemed the ideal time to have the cylinder heads overhauled. One particular process I was keen to adopt was the use of K-Line inserts, which fit inside the valve guides and provide an unimaginable improvement on valve tolerances. I am fortunate to have a number of good engineering machine shops within Sussex but I was looking for a company that really knew their stuff and that I would have no qualms about using for this overhaul and perhaps other additional work at a later date.
Although I knew the existence and rationale behind K-Line inserts I really wanted to understand more before proceeding. Enquiries via the Net found me researching a company called J&E Engineering located in Rossendale Lancashire – local to Sussex as you can see!! I was immediately impressed by the quality of the website and in particular the attention to detail on the vast number of machining processes carried out by the company. This was not your common corporate website with commonly used library pictures but actual photographs of work that has been completed and also work in progress. Helpfully, J&E Engineering Services also went in to detail about K-Line inserts and on reading through the details, I decided this is a company that knows what they are talking about & doing.
The following day I telephoned Jonathan Atkin, he is the proprietor and engineer who does all the machining work at his premises. During the twenty minute conversation which probably felt like a telephone interview to Jonathan, we agreed a date to meet at his workshops with my cylinder heads. I have to say I was very impressed with his business manner, technical knowledge, understanding of what was required and the fact he was prepared to spend time on the telephone discussing the requirements but not in a rushed fashion. Perhaps the icing on the cake for me personally was his previous work with Daimler and Jaguar engines. I had already sent Jonathan photos of the removed heads, which actually looked in decent condition. I can say right now that for me to do a nigh on 600 mile round journey, in one day, to visit









his workshops must have been a good sign for the work ahead!! Additionally I was not prepared to send the heads via a courier and I also wanted to view the workshops, which Jonathan encouraged me to do.

In late July I caught up with Jonathan at his premises. He inspected both cylinder heads in great detail and this was prior to any physical testing. Initial standard procedure is for the heads to be pressure and crack tested before any further work is carried out. With that being satisfactory, the heads would then have a surface fly-cut, K-Line inserts fitted, valve seats cut at 3 angles, valve stem oil seal modification with seals, vapour honing, full core plug replacement, full set of new inlet (chrome silicon-alloy steel) & exhaust valves (214 stainless steel). In essence the heads were going to be fully overhauled and likely to be ready within two or three weeks. Jonathan also provided a realistic estimate of the cost to carry out the work.

A few weeks later I returned to J&E Engineering to collect the overhauled heads. I had also asked if "we" could re-seat the spark plug tubes with new copper rings and seal them in place with Loctite 5980 – he was more than happy to do this at no extra cost. On presenting me with the two overhauled cylinder heads, I was blown away by the sheer quality of the work that had been carried out upon them. Jonathan explained in full what the process had been from start to finish. This included showing the various machines that had been used to achieve the quality precision work I wanted and received. I can hear you saying that is all very well but at what cost to achieve that level of machining craftsmanship ?? Including labour and parts it cost £840, that is NOT per head but for both of the cylinder heads!! A very nice touch, is that Jonathan presents you with a photographic record via USB stick of all the work carried out on job; that says to me "here is a company that prides itself fully on the quality of its work and machining procedures".

So, who is Jonathan Atkin who resides in the North-West, producing exceptional levels of engineering craftsmanship for classic vehicle owners?? A highly qualified engineer of many years who worked within the Triumph TR circles. The call for running his own business came knocking and with his father (recently retired) they have been in business for two decades, in fact the company is celebrating its twentieth anniversary this year. Jonathan now runs the company on his own carrying out all required machining work in-house. He is constantly investing in his company to provide the most-up-to-date levels of machinery to reflect his impeccable machining work; in fact he has just invested in a new pressure / crack testing piece of equipment (Newclear 150) along with an investment of £80K.

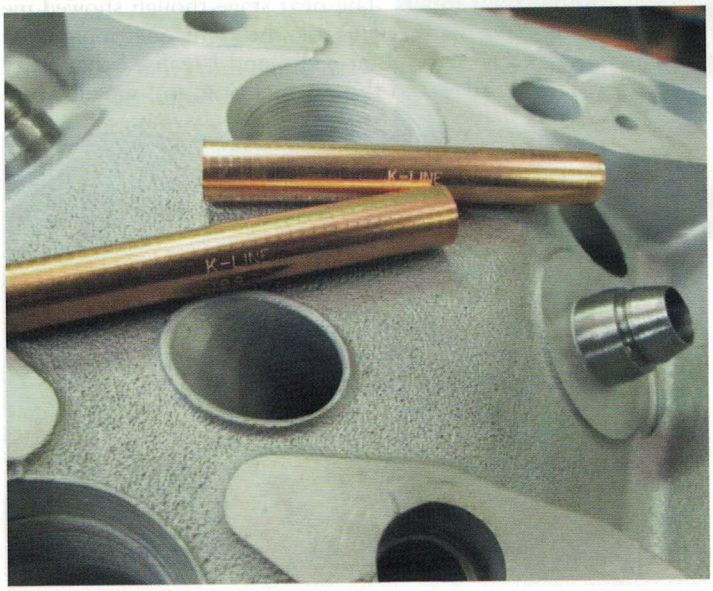
Jonathan's company is an excellent and substantial find – yes there are other companies out there, some are very well known within DLOC circles, BUT very few can deliver such high quality at sensibly pitched prices. Booking work in and returning to the customer is reasonable and not ridiculous; other companies are booking six to twelve months in advance, often catering for overseas work instead of UK work!! I already know that a couple of DLOC members / Forum users are in contact with Jonathan to have work carried out.

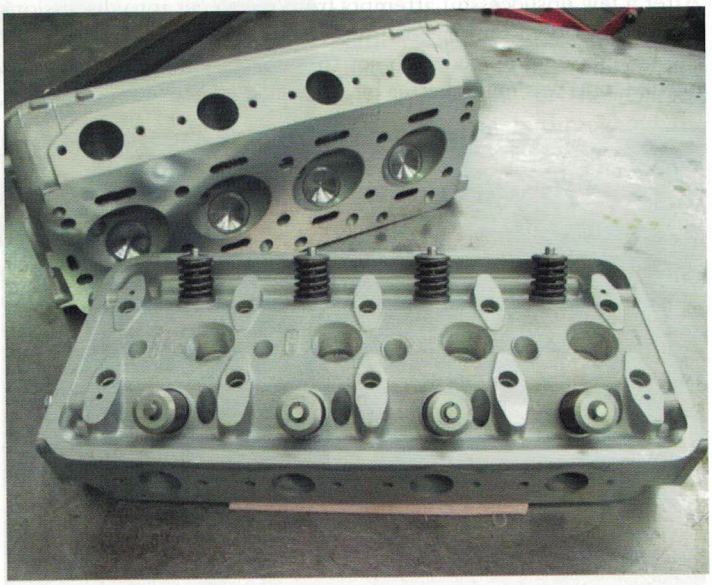
Of note, one of the many interesting machining jobs he currently has at the moment is a 1930's BSA engine which requires significant work, but one that Jonathan will make good again. If the above sounds of interest to you, may I suggest you have a look at his website and give Jonathan a telephone call; I know you will be very pleasantly surprised by a fresh approach and be in good hands.

Website and phone number: www.jandeengineering.co.uk
Tel 01706 222 662

As I write this article, I have noticed that Eric's engine block is cracked. Guess which company will be doing a full engine rebuild with a replacement block, along with in-house V8 full balancing of the crankshaft, pistons, clutch assembly and flywheel. Further articles on that project in due course.

Pictures speak a thousand words and here are just a few of the seventy-seven Jonathan gave me during the refurbishment of my cylinder heads from start to finish. Need I say more!!





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