The Ex - Jim Clark, Archie Scott-Brown, Bruce Halford, Border Reivers, Le Mans 24 Hours

1955 Lister-Jaguar ‘Flat Iron’

Chassis Number: BHL 5

Registration Number: HCH 736

- “An extremely important, truly historic sports-racing car, and its Clark connection gives it almost iconic status.”
  - Doug Nye, historian.

- Became the first works supported privateer Lister-Jaguar when rebuilt in 1956 with works Jaguar power by Tom Kyffin and Dick Walsh. Campaigned for Kyffin and Walsh under the Equipe Devone banner by Archie Scott-Brown, Bruce Halford and Brian Naylor.

- The only Lister-Jaguar to ever finish the Le Mans 24 Hours, with Halford and Naylor completing the 1958 edition.

- Bought by Border Reivers for their young driver, Jim Clark to race in 1959. Attributed by Clark as the car that taught him the most and he went on to take multiple victories in BHL 5.

- Bought by the current owner after most recently being part of a long term collection in Italy. BHL 5 was then subject of a full restoration at CKL Engineering with a particular eye on detail, and has been campaigned competitively since.

- Veteran of the best historic events in the world, including the Goodwood Revival and Le Mans Classic. A potential entry for the sports-car race at the Monaco Historique thanks to its early history, and brilliant choice for the Motor Racing Legends Stirling Moss Trophy.

“The flat-iron Lister-Jaguar - as 'HCH 736' became known - is perhaps the most famous of the non-works/non-Cunningham team cars. As 'the other Lister-Jaguar' run concurrently with the works' famous first prototype that was driven by Archie Scott-Brown through 1958, it was the Dick Walsh-run car which Bruce Halford and Brian Naylor drove at Le Mans, and then in 1959 became the Scottish Border Reivers' team's entry most notably for the youthful Jim Clark, and in which the World's greatest racing driver first developed so much of his supreme skill.
“Partly because it has been unused for so very many years it has re-emerged as an extremely important, truly historic sports-racing car, and its Clark connection gives it almost iconic status.” - Historian Doug Nye’s summary of BHL 5.

BHL 5 started life as one of eight Bristol-powered cars built in 1955. It was registered HCH 736, and bought by John Green before being campaigned around England for Green by David Hampshire, Peter Scott-Russell and Roy Salvadori with much success. Hampshire took the 2-litre class win at the British Grand Prix, and then went on to do the same with Scott-Russell at the Goodwood 9 Hours. Salvadori also took a 2-litre class win at the Castle Combe International, finishing third overall.

For 1956, BHL 5 was bought by Austen Nurse. Nurse went on to race through 1956, before crashing at the British Grand Prix, heavily damaging the car. The crashed Lister was then acquired by Tom Kyffin of Equipe Devone and Dick Walsh, who set about rebuilding the wreck. A new chassis frame was bought from Lister, the identity and registration were retained, and a Jaguar works-supplied 3,442cc XK engine was supplied. Aerodynamicist Thom Lucas designed a unique aluminium body which was created by Maurice Gomm in Byfleet, the look of which led to the title ‘Flat Iron’.
BHL 5 became the first of the privateer Lister-Jaguars, and also the first private Lister to receive Lister works support. The rebuilt BHL 5 made its race debut at the hands of Kyffin at Goodwood in September 1957. 1958 got underway with Bruce Halford racing BHL 5 in the Sussex Trophy at Goodwood in April, before Archie Scott-Brown took the controls for the British Empire Trophy at Oulton Park, where he took third place.

After a selection of other races including the Spa-Francorchamps Grand Prix for Sports Cars in May, where Scott-Brown lost his life in another Lister, the Walsh Lister-Jaguar ‘Flat Iron’ headed to France for the Le Mans 24 Hours. Driven by Halford and Brian Naylor, BHL 5 was fitted with a factory-supplied short stroke 2,997cc engine. The reduced engine capacity was to ensure the team were in line with the 3,000cc regulation limit for the World Sportscar Championship. The five privateer Jaguar D-Types and Lister ‘Knobbly’, which were also running at the 1958 edition of the 24 Hours, also ran with the 2,997cc unit.

Halford and Naylor were running well, up as high as sixth place before encountering several issues as night fell. A broken cam shaft, stuck gearbox and rear brake failure all hampered BHL 5, but it went on to cross the finish line at the conclusion of the 24 Hours in 15th place. BHL 5 was the only Lister-Jaguar to ever finish the Le Mans 24 Hours, and it is also the only three litre Jaguar powered car to finish.
After Le Mans, BHL 5 was refitted with the 3,442cc Jaguar engine and went to Crystal Palace with Halford, where it took second place. Halford then took sixth in the sports car race at Silverstone’s British Grand Prix two weeks later. Third places followed at Snetterton on July 27th, Brands Hatch on August 4th and Oulton Park on September 20th, before another second place, this time at Snetterton, on October 12th.

Over the following winter, BHL 5 was sold to the Scottish Border Reivers team to be driven by their super-talented young driver, one Jim Clark, having campaigned the Border Reivers’ Jaguar D-Type through 1958. The D-Type had been sold at the end of 1958 and Border Reivers was seeking a replacement. Clark had travelled to Brands Hatch in October 1958 with Border Reivers member Ian Scott-Watson to test the new Lotus Formula 2 car, the 16. Clark had impressed Colin Chapman straight away in his 10 lap run, and Chapman was stunned when Scott-Watson mentioned that Clark had not only never driven a single seater before, he had not been to Brands Hatch either!

Despite the promise of Clark’s first Lotus outing, the 16 suffered a misdeamour with Graham Hill at the wheel later in the day, when a rear wheel parted company, something which put Scott-Watson and Clark off the prospect. Chapman offered a few laps in a Lotus Elite, which gave Clark the opposite feeling to the 16, and Scott-Watson offered to buy one.

Even with the Elite joining the Border Reivers’ equipe, the large capacity sports-car shaped hole was still to be filled. Jock McBain of Border Reivers looked around for a suitable alternative and settled for BHL 5, at a cost of £1,500. Clark and Scott-Watson made the journey south to Luton early one Sunday morning to collect the new steed. As was the practice in those days, BHL 5 was driven back on the road by Clark himself. It was nearly a disaster, when on the first time of trying to stop, he hit the bulkhead rather than the brake pedal and narrowly avoided tail-ending the car in front.

On the A1, near one of the American Air Force bases, Clark encountered a Ford Thunderbird with three up. Pressing on in the Lister, he was surprised to find that he wasn’t catching the Thunderbird as quickly as he first expected. Estimating that he had already been travelling at around 120mph, Clark recalled that he had let the Lister have its head and was doing around 5,500 rpm in top gear when he passed the big Ford. That would probably equate to about 150mph.

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Clark wrote: “There were three people in the Thunderbird and I noticed he had no external mirrors and his internal mirror was blocked by the third passenger. It was Sunday morning and there was no other traffic on the road. He wouldn’t have expected anyone to pass him at the speed he was going. He must have got such a hell of a fright for the Lister’s exhaust pipes were on his side of the car. I just didn’t ease past him, I blasted past and I’d love to have seen his face.”

Having experienced near miss on the maiden journey with BHL 5, the first job on arrival at Border Reivers in Berwick was to aid driver comfort and room. Modifications were made by extending the cockpit through some panel beating around the back of the seat and removing the headrest.

Clark got off with a winning start, taking a triple at Mallory Park on March 30th, 1959. “The Lister taught me a great deal about racing, and I had fun with that car”, he recalled a few years later. “It was a beast of a thing, mind you, really vicious, but it was more fun than any except the Aston Martins I drove later. When we got back to Berwick we started to modify the Lister for I honestly don’t know how Bruce managed to drive it. It was so cramped in the cockpit. We managed to carve a bit out of the bulkhead behind the seats to push the driver’s seat further back. My first race with the car was Mallory Park where I had a field day, winning three races in the Lister.”

It happened that the race day at Mallory Park was the first time that Sally Stokes, Clark’s love of his life, saw the great driver. She recalled “I lived in Leicestershire and went along to Mallory Park with a whole lot of friends who were enthusiasts. In the five races of the day, three were won by this stranger from Scotland, I think in a Lister-Jag. He really impressed everyone with his driving. He was always very unassuming about it, but when you spoke to other people about it he was always the person to beat. That little bit quicker, that little bit neater in the corners. I think that’s what the other drivers admired about him.”

Now with a 3,781cc Jaguar engine, the car’s second British Empire Trophy meeting came on April 11th, Clark finishing in eighth place; sixth position followed in the Aintree 200 Miles race a week later before another victory for Clark and BHL 5 at Charterhall on April 25th. Non-finishes in May 18th’s Whitsun Trophy at Goodwood and Zandvoort on July 7th were then split by a win at Rufforth on May 30th.

Clark went on to take the Lister to fourth place in Aintree’s British GP meeting sports car race on July 18th. He was second in the over 2,000cc class and beat all of the works Lister entries. The two works Lotus’ of Hill and Alan Stacey were first and second, with Jack Brabham in John Coombs’ Cooper Monaco taking third. The race at Aintree was the first time that Clark fully appreciated just how determined that Stirling Moss was behind the wheel of a racing car. Moss had been delayed from the start in his Cooper Monaco, and Clark saw the Cooper loom closer and closer in his mirrors. Moss’ charge was halted when the Cooper faltered and the retired.
He then took second place at Mallory Park on August 2nd, fourth/first in class on August 29th at Brands Hatch, and victories on September 13th at Mallory Park and October 4th at Charterhall, the latter after a non-finish at the same circuit on September 27th.

“I learnt a lot from those first races”, Clark remembered of the Lister, “for I found it was a very lively car. You could drive it round the corner on the throttle whereas the D-Type was all stop or all go. The Lister was very much more progressive. It taught me quite a bit about brakes, in that I couldn’t rely on them. I had to nurse them back and make them work, without overheating them. I remember at Aintree once going to have the tyres checked before the race. I got up there and put my foot on the brakes and the pedal went straight to the boards. I pumped it and the pressure came back and that’s how we set off for the race! That was a great day for me...I finished second to Graham Hill in a 2½-litre Lotus, managing to beat all the works Listers.”

“The handling of the car was fabulous. For example at Gerard’s Bend at Mallory you could set the car up going in to the bend hard, and get round the corner without touching the steering again. If you wanted to come out tight you just put your boot in it, the tail came round and it was a matter of driving it round on the throttle the whole way. That really taught me quite a bit about racing, particularly about controlling a car by the throttle.”

With Clark taking multiple wins aboard BHL 5, it was Jimmy Blumer who took over for the remainder of 1959, running at northern England circuits until Border Reivers sold the Lister to Gordon Lee. During his ownership of BHL 5, Lee achieved a fifth, a fourth and a third place, plus a third/class win, and one victory, at Brands Hatch national and international meetings, as well as taking third position at Crystal Palace on May 21st. In time for the 1962 season, Lee sold BHL 5, which he had run with both full width windscreen and driver-only aero-screen, to gentleman racer the Hon. Richard Wrottesley.
Wrottesley campaigned BHL 5 with considerable club level success, with the car wearing the registration RSF 301 for a short time while Wrottesley also owned the by now badly damaged ex - Ecurie Ecosse long nose D-Type. From him, BHL 5 passed to Julian Soddy in 1965 before being reunited with Lee who had it fitted with a new, similar style body. On Lee’s untimely death, ownership then passed to Robert Cooper of Cooper Metals for driver Richard Bond in 1971. From Cooper, it went briefly to Antony Bamford for one race when the engine blew up, after which it returned to Cooper.

BHL 5 then passed through the hands of intermediaries Alain de Cadanet and Giuseppe Medici in Italy, and before being bought by Monza based car dealer and early ’70s Formula 3 driver, Adelmo Fossati. It was just two days after Fossati had taken BHL 5 to race victory at Monza, that his infamous kidnap for a huge ransom took place, during which he lost his life.

In 1981, BHL 5 was acquired by Giulio Dubbini, who would create the Coppa d’Italia for historic cars in 1987, as a worthy addition to his remarkable collection of historically important sports-racing and GT Ferraris, all of which were exercised on track. After Giulio’s death in 1990, BHL 5 was driven on occasion by his eldest son at events including Le Mans Classic, and it remained in the Dubbini family ownership until 2013 when it was sold.

Upon being acquired by the current owner in 2013, BHL 5 underwent an extensive restoration project with Chris Keith-Lucas of CKL Developments.
CKL went to a huge amount of effort to restore BHL 5 back to how it was in the days when Jim Clark was behind the wheel. Following the completion of the restoration, BHL 5 has been raced around Europe with success at events including Le Mans Classic and the Goodwood Revival, along with being a regular competitor in Motor Racing Legends’ Stirling Moss Trophy series. BHL 5 also lends itself to being a potential entry for the sports car race at the Monaco Historique, thanks to its early history.

With a freshly rebuilt wide-angle head, 3.8 litre Jaguar engine by Pearsons Engineering, BHL 5 has most recently been maintained by Martin O’Connell Racing. Accompanied with 2014 FIA HTPs, removable roll-hoop and spares, BHL 5 is a hugely significant part of both the Lister story and Jim Clark’s career, being the car which he attributed as teaching him the most.