



The FELLOWSHIP of the Motor Industry

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NORMAN DEWIS OBE

1920 - 2019



Norman pictured with FELLOWSHIP Vice Chairman Peter Leake

The FELLOWSHIP of the Motor Industry joins with the motor racing world and the wider motor industry in mourning the passing of Norman Dewis OBE, a good friend of the FELLOWSHIP, at the age of 98.

Fellows who were present the last time that Norman gave a talk to the FELLOWSHIP will never forget his extraordinary recall of his 51-year career in the British Motor Industry.

Norman started his career in the motor industry in 1934 at the age of 14 when he walked into the Humber plant and asked for a job. After a year, he moved to Armstrong Siddley where he started an apprenticeship at the age of 15.

After a period serving in the RAF during the war Norman joined Lea Francis and was bitten by the racing bug with a 500 cc DNC Special. However, by 1951 he began to feel that his future lay elsewhere and a phone call from Bill Heynes the Jaguar Chief Engineer set Norman on course for a lifelong career at Jaguar.

On joining Jaguar, he was immediately drawn into an intensive development programme that was to have an enormous impact on the motor industry, the development of the Dunlop disc brake.

As part of the development programme disc brakes were fitted to a C-Type for the 1952 Mille Miglia which Norman shared with Stirling Moss. This caused considerable bewilderment with the scrutineers who had never seen a disc brake before. During the race, Moss demonstrated that the C-Type could significantly out brake the German competitors.

Norman then explained how Jaguar went on to race a C-Type in the 1953 Le Mans, however they were nearly disqualified for having two No. 18 cars on the circuit at the same time!

In 1953 Norman was asked to take an XK 120 to Jabbeke highway in Belgium for high speed testing. Sitting on a sorbo rubber cushion on the floor and under a Perspex canopy, which only opened from the outside Norman achieved a mean average speed of 172.412 over a measured mile making it the highest speed ever achieved by a production car at Jabbeke, a record that still stands today.

In 1955 Norman was part of the winning Jaguar team which included Mike Hawthorn who won the race in a D-Type. Norman explained how the race was marred by a dreadful crash when the Mercedes driven by Paul Levegh, trying to avoid the Healey of Lance Macklin went into the crowd killing 80 people.

Norman famously survived barrel-rolling an XJ13 at 135mph. In an interview with Motor Sport magazine he explained it was one of many high-speed accidents, which were sometimes deliberately provoked. In 2000, he told *Motor Sport*: "You need to know what happens when a tyre blows at a car's top speed. So, the tyre blows and you just hold onto the car, hope it stays on the road. This is the job of a test driver. You have to do these things."

Hailed by Jaguar as Britain's greatest test driver, Dewis retired in 1985 but remained in the public eye until recently. He drove at the Goodwood Revival, acted as an ambassador for Jaguar and gave sharp-witted talks of a life lived at full pace.

He will be hugely missed by everyone who had the privilege of knowing him