

AUCTIONS

Team Cunningham Lister Jaguar "Knobbly" to cross the block in Monterey[Kurt Ernst](#) on at 8:59 amSHARE [f](#) [t](#) [g](#) [p](#) [e](#)

1958 Lister-Jaguar "Knobbly," one of two such cars delivered to Briggs Cunningham in 1958. Photos courtesy Mecum Auctions.

Briggs Cunningham desperately sought victory at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in a car of his own construction. By 1955, he began to recognize that this goal was, perhaps, unattainable, prompting him to enter both a Cunningham C-6R and a Jaguar D-type in the annual contest of endurance. Though neither car finished the 1955 race, his purchase of the D-type opened the door to a long-term relationship with the Coventry-based purveyor of sports and racing cars, and this August, a Jaguar-powered [1958 Lister "Knobbly"](#) delivered new to the Cunningham team will cross the auction stage in Monterey, California, as part of Mecum's Colin Comer Collection.

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The Cunningham team may not have had luck at Le Mans in the Jaguar D-type, but others did. In 1954, a works-entered car finished second, while, in 1955, D-types finished first and third. The model won again in 1956, but in 1957 D-types dominated the race, finishing first, second, third, fourth and sixth. The net result of Jaguar's dominance was a change in FIA Appendix C rules limiting maximum displacement to 3.0-liters, a rule officially passed to slow new cars from Ferrari and Maserati. The measure also ended the reign of the D-type, which had relied upon its proven 3.4 and 3.8-liter inline six engines to win races.



Other events were also in play, including a February 1957 fire at Jaguar's Browns Lane factory that destroyed a number of D-types being converted into road-and-track XKSS models, along with tooling. Faced with the revised regulations, and with no successor to the D-type under development, Jaguar opted to end its factory racing program, opening the door for another manufacturer to build a replacement for

the D-type.

That company was Lister Cars, founded in 1954 by Brian Lister. Looking to improve upon the design of the D-type (and its predecessor, the C-type), Lister created a sports racer that was as low and lean as possible, complying with FIA design regulations, but just barely. Using aluminum bodywork of minimal height, the Lister's front fenders were pronounced, while its bonnet carried a prominent ridge necessary to clear the top of Jaguar's newly revised 3.0-liter six. The protrusions gave the car the nickname "Knobbly," but compared to the more elegant D-type, the Lister had the potential to be faster. In racing, function always comes before form.



Compared to the Jaguar, the Lister featured improved front to rear weight distribution and a lower center of gravity, combined with a weight savings of roughly 200 pounds. Though the car wasn't built by Jaguar, the Coventry manufacturer gave Lister its blessings along with its mechanical bits, and the very first team to request delivery of the new Lister sports racer was Scotland's Ecurie Ecosse. The Lister Knobbly prototype even carried EE (for Ecurie Ecosse) in its chassis tag, but the car ended up being delivered to another customer, on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

That an American team could take priority over the legendary Ecurie Ecosse speaks volumes as to exactly how influential Briggs Cunningham was on the world stage. Along with the first car built, the Cunningham team took delivery of chassis BHL 102, the Lister Knobbly to be sold in Monterey this August. Both were delivered to Alfred Momo's shop in Queens, New York, to be prepared for the 1958 running of the 12 Hours of Sebring.



Driven by Ed Crawford and Pat O'Connor, chassis BHL 102 fared better than its sister car, which burned a piston on lap four and was struck from behind by a Ferrari 250 TR piloted by Olivier Gendebien, nearly decapitating Cunningham team driver Archie Scott Brown. Three laps later, BHL 102 also retired from the race early, the victim of another burned piston (though some racing records attribute the retirement to a cracked block). Of the three other entrants (including a D-type from the Cunningham team) running Jaguar's revised 3.0-liter six, all would retire before lap 57 with engine failure.

For racing in SCCA competition, the FIA's 3.0-liter rule did not apply, so chassis BHL 102 was backdated with the proven Jaguar 3.8-liter six for its second race, at Virginia International Raceway in May of 1958. There, Crawford delivered a win for the Cunningham team in the preliminary event, followed by a second-place finish in the main event, an SCCA National. That would set the stage for BHL 102's entire 1958 season, during which Crawford earned two more victories and three additional second-place finishes. With Lister Knobbly chassis BHL EE 101, the two cars scored wins in 11 out of 16 events in the 1958 season, earning the Cunningham team the SCCA C Modified championship.



The 1959 season saw chassis BHL 102 score a podium at Montgomery and a win at Road America, but otherwise finish fifth or lower in entered events. While Crawford drove the car almost exclusively during 1958 (excluding Sebring and Road America, where Dale Duncan and Phil Forno were entered), 1959 driving duties were shared with a variety of others, a list that included Briggs Cunningham, Stirling Moss (at Sebring, the season opener), Walt Hansgen, Russ Boss, and Fred Windridge. In 1960, the Lister was raced in just four events by the Cunningham team, with driver Bob Grossman achieving the car's only podium for the season, a second place at Bridgehampton in August.



Following the 1960 season, Cunningham sold chassis BHL 102 to Chuck Daigh, who didn't campaign the car for long. After passing through a series of owners, the car was restored in 1984 and purchased by collector and vintage racer Steven Hilton in 2006, who exercised it regularly at both the Wine Country Classic and the Rolex Monterey Historics through 2012, when consignor Colin Comer acquired it. Still powered by a 3.8-liter Jaguar inline-six, it's been displayed at numerous concours d'elegance events as well, including the Arizona Festival of Speed, The Masterpiece Concours d'Elegance, and the Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance, where it appeared in 2015's *Cars of Stirling Moss* exhibit.



As for value, BHL 102's sister car, BHL EE 101, sold for \$1.98 million at auction in August 2013. Seven months later, the Lister crossed the block in Monaco, where it achieved a selling price of €1.18 million (then, \$1.62 million). Mecum has not provided a pre-auction estimate for chassis BHL 102.

Mecum's Monterey auction takes place from August 16-19 at the Hyatt Regency Monterey Hotel and Spa's Del Monte Golf Course. For more information, or to view other lots to be sold, visit Mecum.com.

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