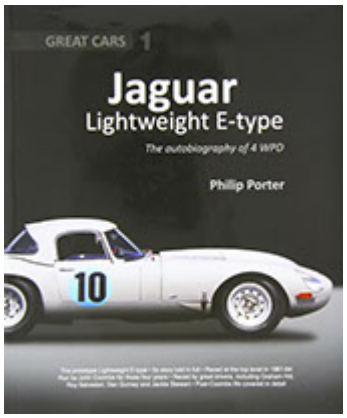
Jaguar lightweight E-type: the autobiography of 4WPD

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Philip Porter is a well known Jaguar enthusiast and historian. He owns amongst others HP 9600, the original E-type fixed head prototype and as well as founding the Jaguar XK and E-type clubs, he has written extensively about the marque. His latest book, the Autobiography of 4 WPD tells the development story and racing history of the prototype Lightweight E-type.

And a fine read it is: Porter explains how the E-type was conceived through racing experience with the C and D-types and devotes a fascinating page to the special, the E2A prototype built for Briggs Cunningham to enter at Le Mans in 1960. He goes on to show how the production E-type was too heavy to compete with the Ferrari 250 GTO; 4 WPD was an all-aluminium E-type constructed to meet the Italians on equal ground and was the first of the batch of 12 lightweight E-types. Porter goes on to detail 4 WPD's competition career through its great mid sixties seasons and on into its rather less interesting historic racing period.

Marque enthusiasts will find that the first third of the book merely retells the already well documented E-type competition story and indeed the prototype lightweight itself is not mentioned in its own book until page 85. This illustrates just how hard it is to sustain an entire book about one car. Peter Wilson just about pulled it off with his book on the Jaguar XJ13. But the famous V12 was unique in several ways – notably its radical engine (Jaguar had hitherto built only straight sixes) and its mid-engined configuration. Wilson's is also a very much an engineering account which helps to sustain it.

The Autobiography of 4 WPD is a lavishly illustrated historical work – the archive photography alone would make it an absolute pleasure to have on the bookshelf and it is well written. Whether it adds very much new to an admittedly interesting, but much visited subject is a moot point.

Kieron Fennelly