

The Rest of the Story, Desmo Leaping Jaguar

In 1922, a 21 year old named William Lyons, started a motorcycle side car company in England and named it Swallow Sidecars. Despite the economic stagnation of the 20's, the company prospered. In 1926 the growth led to expansion and name change to Swallow Sidecar and Coach Building Company. As a normal progression Lyons Coach Building outfitted an Austin Seven with his own body calling it an Austin Swallow 2-seater. Lyons was now in the car business. However, he needed a larger vehicle to compliment the 2-seater. So in 1929, he obtained a batch of obsolete FIAT chassis and the FIAT Swallow was born. The next years Swallow cars were produced on Standard and Swift chassis and in 1931 the sensational S.S.'s were launched which had an extraordinary low and dramatic body.

There were a number of S.S. car models that were produced throughout the 30's. The first was the 6 cylinder S.S.I which was produced 31-35 and very popular. The smaller 4 cylinder S.S.II was produced 33-35. However, by the mid 1930's Hitler's Germany was dominating the news and the name S.S. for a British car was ringing with negative popularity due to the negative connotation of the German Secret Service. The S.S. name was falling out of favor with the Brits so a name change for the company was needed.

In searching for a new name, it is said that Lyons reflected on a moment when he was in Cecil Kimber's (Managing Director of MG) office admiring a statue called Tigress sitting on the desk. This statue was the same as mounted on the front of the MG MK III 18/100 Tigress (production 5). Lyons, who appreciated the statue so much is said to have appropriated the statue concept for his new car but changed the breed of the cat.

So in 1936 Lyons debuted a new model called the SS Jaguar, with the periods purposely dropped after the SS. The car also sported a new Jaguar mascot and the Jaguar car company as we know it today was born.

And now you know MG's influence on Jaguar and the rest of the story.

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Leaping Jaguar, on 1936-49 radiator cap, produced from 1936 to 1939.

Made from brass & chrome plated. Used on some SS models, but was not approved by Jaguar.



Marked Desmo, Copyright on the front and back of the base. The very early versions had a longer, more rounded tail and they also had a round flattish base.