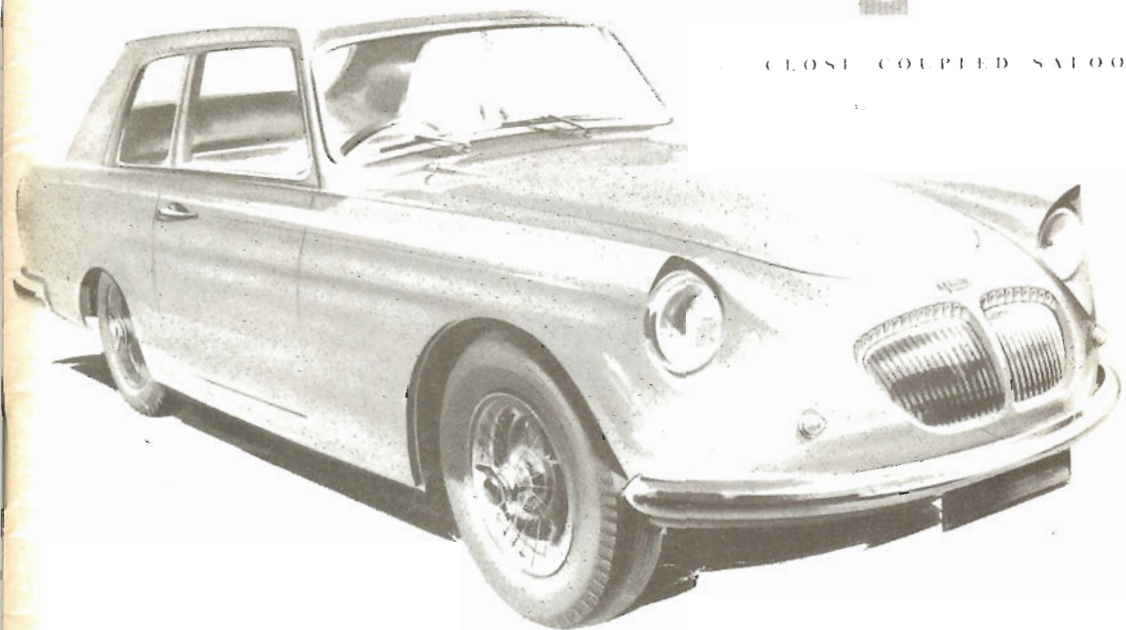


# THE DRIVING MEMBER



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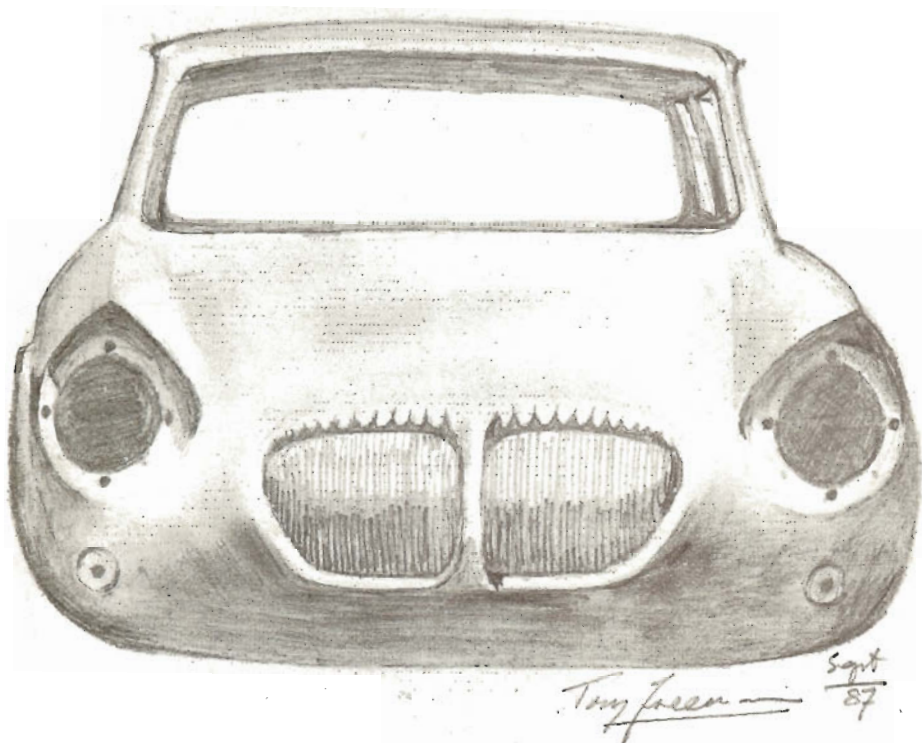
CLOSE COUPLED SALOON

Photo

Daimler/Jaguar

THE MAGAZINE OF THE DAIMLER & LANCHESTER OWNERS' CLUB

# THE VANISHING V8s



Front elevation of prototype bodyshell, originally labelled DN250. The author believes it to be in fact the DP250, as deduced from the Parts lists.

**There was quite a reaction to the front cover of DM in July 1987. Michael Riley investigated this and other mystery cars, and came up with some surprising answers:**

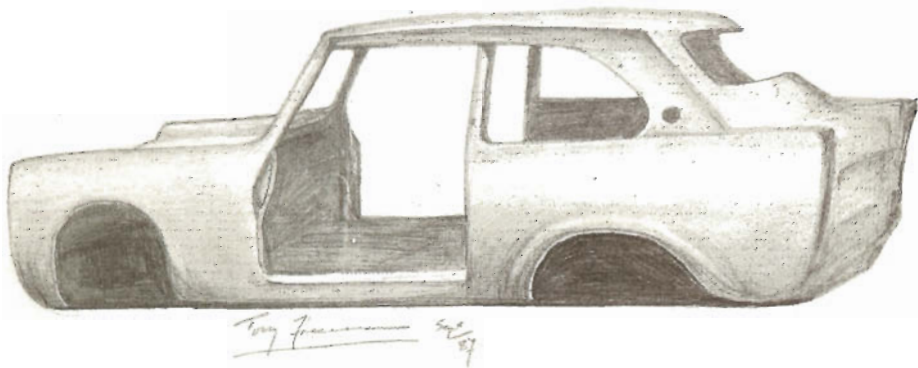
There has been a lot written about the gaps in the Daimler chassis alphabet, some is old hat, but new members have joined the club since then so here is a quick recap.

I believe 'I' and 'O' were not used to avoid confusion with 'one' and 'zero', as well as 'DO' being the recognised engineering abbreviation for 'design office' or 'drawing office'. Nevertheless, this still leaves something of a muddle, perhaps symptomatic of the state of affairs at Daimler, between the LM150 Lanchester Sprite and the DQ450 Majestic Major. We all know about the SP250, but that seems to be out of sequence and 'N' appears to have vanished without trace.

Some years ago, with the kind help of the Factory and the Coventry Museum, I was allowed to look through some of the old documents, which were quite a revelation. For the non-engineers amongst us, the procedure is as follows. For any major assembly, the Drawing Office prepares a partslist giving every item and the quantities needed to make that assembly. Once the production schedule is agreed, the Production and Buying Departments are given the list to ensure the parts are available and when needed. When the assembly is made, especially somewhere like Aston-Martin where one man is responsible for the entire engine, the fitter draws from the stores a box of parts that includes everything down to the last split-pin and spring washer needed. The storekeeper has prepared the box from his copy of the partslist. To help with cross references, one list will serve for all variations of the basic assembly, with a different list number for each variation.

I did not have access to all the parts lists but those for the engine assembly, the engine electrics, the gearbox, the water pump and pipes are all originally dated June-September 1958 (there are all sorts of later changes), all clearly entitled 'SP250/SP251, DN250/DN251 Prototype Only and DP250/DP250 LH'. The 'DP' is interesting, we understood odd chassis codes meant left-hand drive. However, what Daimler said and what they did, do not necessarily bear any relationship to one another. (There was a good example at the 1987 National Rally; the smart LHD German-registered SP ought to have been an SP251, but the chassis plate down by the radiator clearly said SP250 LHD.)

'DN' and 'DP' were certainly in the correct sequence in the chassis alphabet and it seems that 'SP' was the one out of sequence. It was always said that the new V8 engine was intended for a range of cars and many of the original drawings for various engine parts are titled 'DN250' not 'SP250'. Some of these are dated February 1957, but work got going in the late spring and early summer of 1957. Many of the later drawings into 1958 and 1959 are titled 'SP250' although 'DN250' appears occasionally. Therefore, it appears the DN250 was intended as the lead car in the new range. What was the 'DN250' and what happened to it? Here I had a stroke of luck.



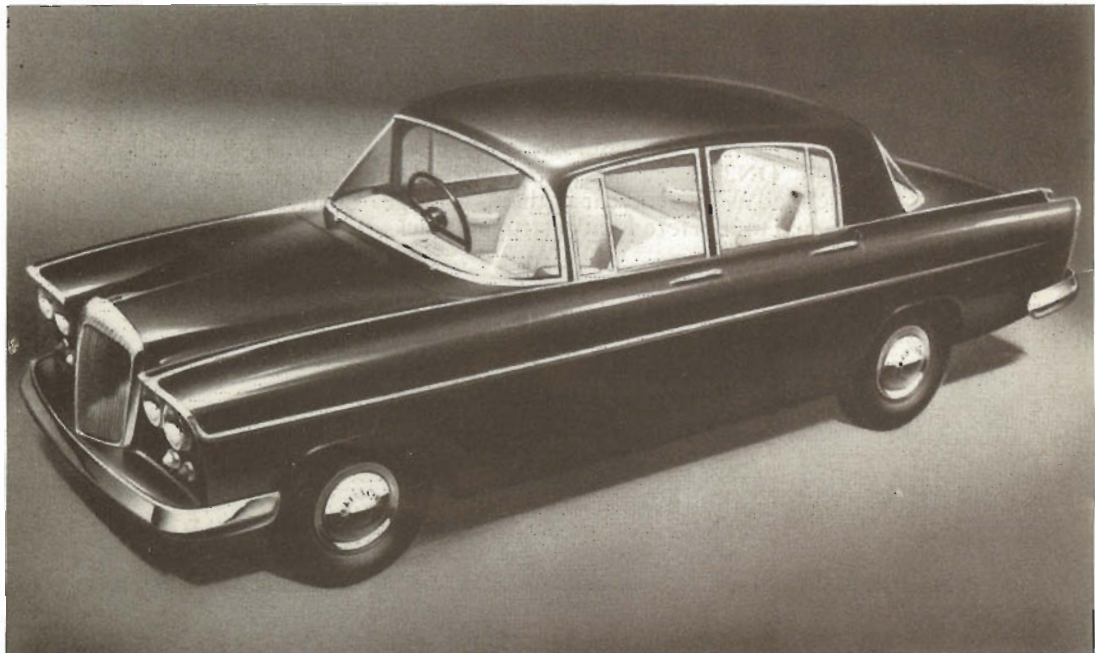
A second view of the DN250/DP250 bodyshell.



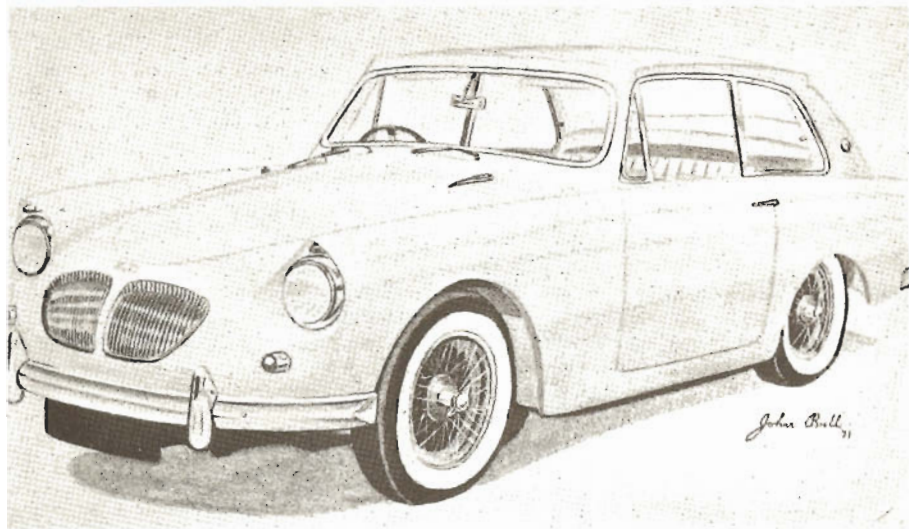
Normally there is a separate register of 'drawing sketches', which are the designers ideas on paper. There may be several, with an identifying number, offering different solutions to the same problem. If and when any of these is accepted for production, it is redrawn as a 'production drawing', fully dimensioned, toleranced, material specified, costed, etc. and given a number in the production drawing register. The drawing sketches are often lost or destroyed as they are superseded by production drawings.

Sketch No. 07542 is clearly entitled 'Project Sketch Suggested Radiator Shell DN250 Saloon'. It is dated 30 December 1958 and marked 'redrawn 23rd January 1958', which should read 1959. There are also some minor alterations, drawn in red crayon and dated 6th March 1959, which may have followed inspection of the first component produced.

The drawing itself is fascinating. The head-on view is not dissimilar to a 1960s S-type Jaguar, XJ6 Series 1 Sovereign, or even a DS420 Limousine. However, the side profile resembles the Daimler Conquest 104 profile with a steady convex curve leaning backwards from bottom to top and a definite V profile. Whilst the sketch on the DM front cover is only a sketch, I am pretty sure that drawing 07542 is the same radiator shell and the overall dimensions of 18<sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub>" high, 6<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" deep and 21<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>" maximum width just below where the fluted top joins the plain side sections look about right to go on to the Vauxhall body shell. I suggest the DN250 was the prototype Vauxhall Cresta bodied saloon and will offer further evidence that you may or may not feel supports this.



A sketch of what may have been the DN250 saloon.



**The Hooper 2-door special SP250 sports saloon. Is this the DP250?**

A well set-up SP with the correct silencers is a fairly quiet car and certainly does not have the eager puppy panting that one gets with, for example, the big Austin-Healeys. Nevertheless, the SP exhaust does bark a bit if you wind on the revs, which is not acceptable in a closed car. According to the list, the DP used different front and tail pipes from the SP: there are no part numbers, merely the comment "made to samples supplied by Daimler" but the same H-pipe and many of the brackets, clips, etc. are used. The most important difference is that the DP is shown as having two silencers on each bank instead of the one on each side of the SP. That would have reduced the exhaust noise of the DP 250 to about the same level as the later Jaguar-bodied 2½ V8 saloon, which is noted for its subdued exhaust.

Reading between the lines the DP250 concept is close to that of the E-type Jaguar which was well into the design stage when Jaguar acquired the Daimler Group. I would suggest the project was killed off because of this and underlying cost constraints. It always surprises me that ex-Daimler people, who must know the answers, seldom say anything. After all, it all happened thirty years ago, you are not revealing any vital commercial secrets! I look forward to any further light anyone can throw on the DN/DP/SP mystery.

Michael Riley.