



# Service Provider

Beechdown Garage is one of the South West's leading independent Jaguar specialists. We discover the company's origins and uncover the core values of its owners, Nigel and Shirley Winnen

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**T**HERE ARE two things you need to know about Nigel Winnen's sales techniques – he's passionate about Jaguar and hates unnecessary paperwork. As a result, buying a car from Beechdown Garage must be like dealing with an old friend. There's no hard sell or inflated promises. Instead, he lets his beautiful cars sell themselves and only gives information that's genuine and relevant. Nigel's interest in Jaguar began at an early age and was partly thanks to its many victories on the racetrack. "My enthusiasm for Jaguar started in the 1950s," Nigel told me, "when they were winning at Le Mans and I used to see grainy black white images of C and D-types on television. It was hero worship really." By the time Nigel was in his early twenties he had bought a Mk 2 3.4, which was soon followed by two E-types. In 1971 Nigel started working in

the motor trade, finding a job with a Cornwall-based independent dealer whose approach would heavily influence his own. "The owner was a part of new breed of dealer. He would sell anything from Aston Martin DB6s to Ford Corsairs but always concentrated on good quality, low mileage examples. I learnt the trade from him and it was a great grounding." From there, Nigel went to London to work for a Leyland dealership, something he says was an eye opener. "We'd receive a Morris Marina, brand new from the factory, and one side would be specified as a De Luxe and the other side a Super De Luxe," he says with a laugh. Spells at several other main dealers followed, including a couple of Jaguar franchises. Although he had fulfilled his ambition to work with the marque, Nigel admits the 1970s and 1980s wasn't an easy time to sell its cars.



"When I started selling Jaguars, we never had enough cars. We used to make our money on used examples because new models were thin on the ground. And then it went downhill after that and the cars' poor quality harmed Jaguar's popularity." Nigel would next work for a BMW dealer. With the German company starting to produce the kind of well-built cars it's now famous for (such as the first generation of 3-Series), it was a completely different experience, as was selling the just as reliable Hondas that followed.

Yet Nigel remained a Jaguar man at heart and so in 1986 he and his wife Shirley decided to start their own dealership in Paignton to specialise in the British car. Twenty-six years later, they're still there.

"I was tired of working for other people," he explains. "My attitude to business is very different from a lot of dealers I'd worked for. It's a very pressurised environment with little time spent getting to know what the customer wants. I prefer to sell cars in a relaxed manner and I hate paperwork. I've just sold a black XF to an old customer – it's a £30k car but I did it on a handshake."

He continues by telling me that accountants now run modern, big dealerships. "I know they need to do the volume," he says, "but I'm not a volume salesman. Never have been, never will be. Customers have to almost be on a conveyor belt with little quality time spent getting to know them."

"I am embarrassed when people come here after visiting other dealerships and they say they were ignored or even worse, talked down to."

Nigel is adamant he won't tell his customers what they want to hear just to get the sale. "If they ask a question I will give them the right answer – or if I don't know I will go and find out."

Today Beechdown Garage is one of the leading independent Jaguar garages in the southwest of England and specialises in later models such as X308s, X-TYPES, XKs and XFs. With Jaguar's products becoming slightly more mainstream and better quality over the past five to ten years, Nigel



Nigel and Shirley Winnen stand alongside an XK 4.2 coupe

admits his job is becoming easier, pointing to that black XF as a great example.

Yet he's still happy to sell more classic models. "We've sold XK 120s and E-types in the past but unless you're involved in the classic market all the time it's easy to lose your way. But I've got nothing against buying or selling classic Jaguars – the hardest problem is finding stock. There's only two of us and so our energies are concentrated on the later cars at the moment."

All of Beechdown's cars are sold with a full service and thanks to having the correct diagnostic equipment on site, any issues are easily and correctly sorted. Unlike multi-brand dealerships whose salespeople have to sell many varieties of car, Nigel is an expert on one brand and his knowledge of these cars is second to none. "Take that XK," he says, pointing to the beautiful silver 4.2-litre X150 just outside his office door. "If the battery goes flat on that, I have to take the rear number plate off to gain access for keyed entry to the boot where the battery is."

Who would know that? Any general used car dealer who has an XK on their forecourt wouldn't know how to get to it."

It's because of this knowledge franchised dealers will happily point their own customers in Beechdown's direction. "A Jaguar dealer called one Friday recently and asked could we help one of its customers who was coming to Paignton for the weekend and needed a wheel speed sensor. It's nice to know main dealers have confidence in us."

With an army of loyal customers, confidence is word closely associated with Beechdown Garage. Confidence in the cars it supplies, but more importantly, confidence that the level of service they will receive will always be second to none. 



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