

A Rewarding Drive

Ian Lamming test drives the new Jaguar XE

In truth, most of us have forgotten how to drive while, perhaps, some will never know.

That's because cars have become so clever they actually do most of the driving for us.

For those who experienced motoring pre-electronics, in a world where anti-skid meant not driving too fast for the conditions, anti-lock not hammering the brakes, in an era of correcting under and oversteer, sometimes at the same time, driving a certain type of car in certain conditions leaves you perspiring with fear and nostalgia in equal measure.

So it was with Jaguar's delightful new XE...in the snow. A lusty 2.0 diesel engine and rear wheel drive dredges the grey matter for memories of skillful car control. What a challenge; how great the rewards?

Too much torque and the back end steps out one way, the light steering pushing the front the other and a snaking dance of disaster ensues. Dip the clutch – yes this was the six-speed manual thankfully – and control swings back to the driver as the memories of winters past flood back, or should that be slither.

Getting home becomes a chess match of car, conditions and nerve, particularly crossing the perpendicular bunds of frozen slush left by countless wagons on the A66, which had to be breached Bond-style with power, a crash and a slew to the central refuge.

Just half a mile from home – an improvement on the two flooded miles of the previous week – XE is finally allowed to rest by the kerb. There is just no way I would attempt our track at the risk of blocking it for the neighbours.

I'm not sure if the XE has done well or the driver – perhaps it is a bit of both.

But driving the new XE through the elements has proved a lovely reminder of what life on Britain's roads used to be like.

What isn't yesteryear is the XE's stunning good looks and fabulously opulent interior, both masterpieces of glorious design.

When conditions are fairer the 2.0 diesel romps up a full head of steam with decent economy and performance and the ride and handling are typically Jaguar in that they are peerless.

Specification is excellent and the package complete, particularly if I had noticed the snow tyre socks in the boot that would have improved grip in the white stuff. Oh to have finely honed observation skills to match my winter driving prowess.

Fact File

- Jaguar XE
- Engine: 2.0 turbo diesel
- Power: 180PS
- 0-60mph: 7.4 secs
- Top speed: 140mph
- Combined miles per gallon: 67.3
- Transmission: six-speed manual
- CO2 g/km: 109

