

JAGUAR RACING CARS

A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 1

By Neville Barlow

One of the most momentous occasions in Jaguars history should not have occurred. This was the surprise display of the XK120 sports car at the Earls Court Motor Show in 1948. William Lyons and his engineers headed by William Heynes, produced a 6-cylinder twin overhead camshaft engine to power a large new saloon car labelled the Mark VII.

This Vehicle took much longer than anticipated to arrive, so a hurriedly put together sports car was used to showcase their amazing engine. It hardly bears thinking about that if the Mark VII had arrived on time the XK120 would not have been needed. The XK120 was in fact the originator of the long line of Jaguars most important and successful cars namely the XK140, XK150, C type and D Type.

At the time, some people doubted this car named the XK120 could actually achieve its stated 120 mph. In May 1949 Jaguar test driver Ron Sutton, at Jabbeke in Belgium, drove the car through the flying mile at 132.5 mph. (213.3 kph). This was with the second XK120 built and was described by the "Observers Book of Automobiles" as the fastest production car in the world.

In 1950, driven by Leslie Johnson and Stirling Moss the XK JWK651 completed 2579 miles in 24 hours at an average speed of 107.06 mph, which included stops for fuel and driver changes. A sign appeared on this car saying - "For sale, carefully run in"!

In 1953 Norman Dewis, again at Jabbeke, on a closed off highway, drove a modified XK120 through the flying mile at 172.412mph (277.47 kph). Hollywood was very quick to notice this incredible new vehicle and Clark Gable purchased the very first X K120 to reach America. He later purchased a second car. Obviously, the car to be seen in!



Race Record

In August 1949, Leslie Johnson drove the Jabbeke car to victory in the 'Daily Express One Hour Production Car Race'. This was XK120's first race victory and Peter Walker also driving an XK120 finished 2nd.

The Silverstone Production Car Race was won by Peter Walker from Tony Rolt, 2nd with Johnson finishing 8th after spinning in oil. Jaguar won the teams prize.

The Tourist Trophy held at Dundrod, held in heavy rain saw a 1 - 2 - 3 victory for Jaguar, with Stirling Moss winning, on his 21st birthday, ahead of Whitehead and Johnston. This was Stirlings first drive in a Jaguar and brought an offer of the lead Jaguar driver.

The first victory in America came in January 1950 when Johnson won a production car race at Palm Beach Shores.

In May an XK120, driven by Phil Hill, finished first and Don Parkinson, in a sister car was 2nd, at the inaugural Pebble Beach Road Races.

In 1954 in Australia an XK120 FHC driven by George Anderson, Chas Swinburne and Bill Pitt was first at the Mount Druitt 24-hour race. The Nascar race was won by Al Keller, held at Linden Airport, New Jersey, U.S.A. Foreign cars were banned from this series after this race! Perhaps the last XK 120 victory.



Rallying

In 1950, Ian Appleyard, in an XK120 won the Alpine Rally. This was an endurance race that spanned multiple countries through the Alps, winning him the coup d'Alpes.

He also won in 1951 and 1952 without penalty in the same car and was one of only three people to win consecutive rallies in the 22 years of this event.

In the Tulip Rally Appleyard took first place with Swiss fighter pilot, Rolf Habisreutinger's XK120 2nd.



XK120's in New Zealand

In 1951 and 1952 a number of these cars were imported into New Zealand and proved to be among the best production sport cars around. Racing, however, was mainly sprints, hill climbs and beach events. Prominent drivers were Ron Roycraft, Bob Gibbons, Hugo Hollis, Jock Tutton and Sybil Lupp.

In February 1955, Ray Archibald won the Hamilton Trophy race and in March Bruce Cook won the Ohakea Sports car race in a much-modified ex works XK120. In January 1956 Ray Archibald was 2nd in his car with a C Type head, to Tony Gaze in his HWM Jaguar.

One of our very early club members, Harvey Kingston (he was also a member of the Taranaki Jaguar car club) bought in 1956, the ex Tutton, Sybil Lupp and Mcflatt XK120. He used it not for racing but for pleasure motoring. Because he lived in an area with several long straight roads, he occasionally ventured out on moonlight nights and really put his foot down! Apparently, the local Traffic Officer go to know of this and one night lay in wait. He was so overawed by the melodious and intoxicating sound of the exhaust note that he forgot to take chase. Little hope, as the XK120 often hit 130 mph. Harvey's father was told, "I will get him next time".

It is believed that between 1949 and 1961 around 70 XK120's were imported to New Zealand. I remember when

I was a lad about 10 years old my father took me to a car show. I sat in the XK120 and marvelled at the interior and was especially taken by the bulging button in the centre of the steering wheel and was astounded to see the last figure on the speedo was 140 mph. Just nearby was an MGTf1500. Dad jokingly said "I'll buy you one of these". I replied "No thanks I'll have the Jag". So, the die was cast.



William Lyons quickly became aware that he had a world beater on his hands. He had seen other manufacturers such as Mercedes, greatly increase their sales of saloon cars after racing successes. The Jaguar C Type (officially known as Jaguar XK120C) was a racing sports car built between 1951 and 1953. The car used the XK120 running gear but had a lightweight tubular frame, designed by Jaguar's Chief Engineer William Heynes. The car had an aerodynamic aluminium body co-developed by Bob Knight and later Malcolm, Sayer. A total of 53 C Types were built with 43 going to private owners in the U.S.A.

This C Type used the 3.4 litre twin cam straight 6 engine but power was increased from 160 bhp to 205 bhp (153 kw). The early cars had drum brakes but in 1953 had disc brakes all round.

Le Mans in 1951

The Car driven by Peter Walker and Peter Whitehead was one of the three cars entered by Jaguar in the 1951 24 hour Le Mans. It was the only one to finish and won handsomely. It was the first race ever for a C Type and to finish first was indeed spectacular.

1952

This year was a disaster for Jaguar because they altered the air intakes on all of the C Types and none of them finished.

1953

The C Types bounced back this year and not only won again but were placed 2nd and 4th. This time the body was lighter and the SU carburetors were replaced by 3 DCo3 40mm Webbers boosting power to 220 bhp. Further weight was saved by using a rubber bag fuel tank and of course the disc brakes also played a big part in the win. This was the first time Le Mans had been won at an average speed of over 100 mph (161 kph).

Jaguar D Type

This car was specifically built and designed to win Le Mans 24-hour race, between 1954 and 1957. Innovative monocoque construction and aerodynamic efficiency with aviation

technology produced a very slippery car. The XK based engine powered the D type. It now produced 245 bhp thanks to a revised block, larger valves and the triple Webber carburetors. It now had the potential to top 170 mph.

The 1954 Le Mans race was somewhat of a disappointment with most D Types hampered with fuel starvation. However, the car driven by Duncan Hamilton and Tony Rolt finished 2nd.



Three weeks later the D Types won the Rheims 12-hour race.

The 1955 race at Le Mans will always be remembered for the most horrific and catastrophic accident in motor history. Driver Pierre Levegh and more than 80 spectators died when his Mercedes crashed and vaulted the safety rails. Mercedes withdrew from the race and the D Type driven by Mike Hawthorn and Ivor Buck won as they liked.

After the 1956 Le Mans 24 hours Jaguar withdrew from motor racing. Their results by the factory team were disappointing. However, William Lyons was finding it difficult to support a racing team and also develop several upcoming saloon cars. The E Type was also in an embryonic stage.

The privateer team Ecurie Ecosse team of Ninan Sanderson and Ron Flockhart saved Jaguar's blushes by producing their first win. Jaguar did, however, support some of the privately entered cars and were delighted when in 1957 D Types finished 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 6th

To show how dominate Jaguar were at Le Mans, here is a list of their successes.

- 1951 first
- 1952 no finishers
- 1953 first, second and fourth
- 1954 second
- 1955 first and third
- 1956 first and fourth
- 1957 first, second, third, fourth and sixth.



The Jaguar D Type over 11 years has scored 164 outright wins. It is thought that only 71 D Types were produced.



In August 2016, the 1956 D Type that won at Le Man, was sold for £16.8 million (NZ \$29.9 million). It was the most expensive British car ever sold.

In 1996 I saw it in a London show room for £400,000, what a bargain!

Neville