

# JAGUAR RACING CARS

## A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 2

*By Neville Barlow*

Whilst Jaguar found great success with the XK120 sports car, there was no doubt it would be the saloons that would sustain the company's finances. The Mark V11 was the car that was designed to have new XK twin overhead camshaft engine that was first seen in the XK 120 sports car.

Times were still difficult after the war and Jaguar models were basically the same as their pre war models. In some quarters, from 1945 to 1949 they were known as Mark 1V. It took until 1949 for a new model, the Mark V to appear, however, it was only produced for one year. Some of these were assembled

by the Shorter brothers in Auckland. Our oldest club member Truby Hollister-Jones proudly owns a lovely old Mark V, adorned with the national flower of Wales, a yellow daffodil.

There was speculation that Jaguar's next model would be the Mark V1. However, Bentley already had a Mark V1, so William Lyons did not want there to be any confusion with what he saw as one of his competitors. Perhaps he also thought that naming his new model a Mark V11, it would convey the idea it was better than the Bentley.



So in 1950 it was released in Britain and launched as the now famous "Grace, Space and Pace". Its performance, road behaviour, appearance and finish was regarded as remarkable. The 'Daily Mirror' newspaper said it was a world beater and 'Sporting Life' commented it was sleek, streamlined, a six seater with every luxury fitment possible.

The styling echoed the XK 120 with swept back front wings and full spats covering the rear wheels. The huge radiator grille and solid chrome bumper gave it an impressive appearance. It was a big car, 16 feet long and nearly 6 feet wide. Power was initially 160 bhp, but the later Mark V11M produced 190 bhp. The car was said to have a top speed of over 100 miles per hour (161 kph). This, I found to be true as I had the good fortune to drive my parents Mark V11 as a teenager on several occasions!.

Before the Jaguar Sports cars were winning at Le Mans the Mark V11 saloon had made its appearance. Like the XK 120 it also attracted a good deal of attention from American buyers, who bought some £30 million worth of these cars within months of its introduction. They loved its size, its powerful engine, that was more than equal to their V8's and of course its voluptuous curves.

Film stars from Hollywood were greatly taken by the car, with the likes Marilyn Munroe seen adorning a Mark V11 on several occasions.

### **Race and Rallying**

The Mark V11 was no slouch. Factory entered cars won the Daily Express International Trophy for Production Touring cars at Silverstone, five years in a row and twice took the top 3 places. Stirling Moss won in 1952 and 1953, Ian Appleyard in 1965, Mike Hawthorn in 1955 and Ivor Bueb in 1956.



*Marilyn Monroe's Mk VII*

Stirling Moss said "I have the warmest affection for the old Mark V11, for although it looked like a waddling dumpling and made such a business going around corners, it was actually

very well balanced and light to drive". It has been said that racing a Mark V11 Jaguar in the early 50's seemed as logical as trying to water ski behind the Queen Mary. It would blunder up to a corner and appear to attempt a Western Roll. However, it was spectacular round the corner and could blast down the straight faster than any other car of its age.



*Stirling Moss's Mk VII*

In January 1956 a Mark V11,

driven by Ronnie Adams, Frank Biggur and Derek Johnstone, won the Monte Carlo Rally. Also in August 1956, Paul Goldsmith drove a Mark V11 to victory in the 100 mile Nascar Grand National race and averaged 59.2 mph.

In 1954 Jaguar built a lightweight Mark V11 with the intention of racing it, however, for some reason KRW 621 never did race. It had a magnesium body and many modifications. Chris Keith of CKL Developments who looks after Mark V11 registration, KRW 621 believes 3 light weight bodies were made, but only this car has survived. The car was sold to the famous Jaguar test driver, Bob Berry.

He never raced the car and it was purchased by Rowan Atkinson (Mr Bean) who did race it at the Goodwood Revival. In was in his car collection for many years along with a Rolls Royce, Aston Martin and McLaren. The car also had some tenure with Stirling Moss before he passed the car to its present keeper who intends to let it be raced.



The car boasted a 3.8 litre D Type engine, which now produces 320 bhp. It has Disc brakes, E Type wheels and that light weight magnesium body. It is said to be a Tiger in Elephants clothing! The 1957 fire that burned furiously through the Jaguar factory destroying all the D Type jigs and several semi completed D Types. Also burned out were nearly 300 Mark V11's. Obviously this was the end of the Mark V11 and also the D Types, The turning of surplus D Types into

XKSS's was also abandoned.

The Mark V11 was a well sort after motor car and from 1950 to 1957 over 30,000 were made. It attracted many famous customers, none more so than Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen mother, who took delivery of her car in 1955. She kept it for her private motoring until 1973. It was finished in a special metallic version of the royal colour Claret.

In the late 1950's, Frank Mooney, a New Zealand test cricket player who kept wickets for New Zealand, took up a bet that he could travel from Auckland to Wellington in his Mark V11 in under 7 hours. Those were the days of no motorways and not all roads were sealed. He completed the journey of 675 miles with 25 minutes to spare! Remember this was 65 years ago. The police concluded



*Burned out Mk VII's*

that he must have spent a considerable time travelling over 60 mph (more like 100 mph) and even though they never did catch him, thought about prosecuting him.

Frank admitted his speeding and the police accepted a fine which was only a fraction of his huge win bet. I believe this Mark V11 had some major mechanical upgrades.

Many people who have attended the Leadfoot Festival, would have seen a red Mark V11 racing up the hill.



*The Queen Mother's Mk VII*





*Dave Ingram's Mk VII*

This is a 1957 Mark V11 which Dave Ingram has raced for many years. He raced at Raupuna, the Levels, Manfield and Hampton Downs as well. Also finished second in class in the first and second Targa Rallies. Dave Ingram is a Jaguar man through and through. He has been President of the Nelson Jaguar club and is now involved in the Waikato

Jaguar Club. To my knowledge the only member of our club to own a Mark V11 is Ralph Riseley.

In the early New Zealand Grand Prix's held at Ardmore there was always supporting races before the Grand Prix. In the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1956 two MkV11's were entered in the Saloon Car Handicap. They were driven by Tom Clark and Frank Cantwell. Frank recalls that even though he was known as a sports car driver he entered his Mark V11. This was the first time he had raced it and he was in for a real shock. The big thing he noticed was the complete dissimilarity between driving on the road and on the track. He commented that if anyone drove on the road as he had to drive on the track they should be locked up and the key thrown away. During the warm up laps he was trying to be gentle to his nice new Jaguar, but almost all the others were passing him. When he followed suit and put his foot down, the smell of hot brakes and a hot engine made him pull into the pits and scream. "Where is the fire extinguisher, the cars on fire?" His engineer quietly told Frank that was normal and to "get out there and drive it like it was someone else's car".

On race day he followed Tom Clark's Mark V11. Clark was also entered to drive in the Grand Prix later in the day and so should know what he was doing. Frank managed to copy Clark and got a lesson in driving.

To watch the car in front and see the inside wheels off the ground and watch smoke pouring off the tyres was unforgettable. The race results were T. Clark first, F. Cantwell second.

By 1957 the Jaguar Mk1 had arrived and the much lighter car was a far better racing machine than the Mark V11,

*Neville*



*Mk VII's racing*