

JAGUAR RACING CARS

A MONTHLY SERIES - Part 3

By Neville Barlow

In 1957 the final development of the design arrived in the form of the XK150. It had larger windows than the former model and had side windows that wound up. It also had a wider oval radiator grille with 16 slats incorporating a red plastic badge containing the words XK150 in silver. Wrap around bumpers front and back as first seen on the Mark VII.

The chassis and running gear of the XK150 was substantially the same as the XK140 but the coachwork looked very different. The body was given a raised waist line with bulbous doors and front wings, that allowed the interior to be 4 inches (100mm) wider. The wrap around windscreen gave a definite glamorous feeling. Power for the early models was 190bhp.

Resources were stretched at the Jaguar factory following the big fire. Amazingly after only 2 days

clean up, production of cars was recommenced. They were only able to produce the Fixed Head Coupe and the Drop Head Coupe in 1957. In 1958 the Roadster arrived. Also, in this year a more powerful engine was employed pushing it up to 220bhp. This was later increased by the advent of the 150'S' engine and power increased to 250bhp. A year later the XC 3.8 litre arrived, further increasing power to 265bhp. This car was bigger and heavier than its predecessors and as near as you could get to an XK saloon.

The 1959 models being the last of the line, there was the option of Automatic Transmission. Disc brakes all around were standard and triple carburetors were also included.

In May 1959 Roy Salvadori, a well-known professional sports car driver tested the XK150 Fixed Head. He said it was the fastest saloon car, by a 2 second margin, that he had ever tested. But the fact that the car can accelerate from 0 to 100mph in 21 seconds is only half the story. It is the manner in which it does this and the feeling of practically boundless power in comparative silence that impresses equally. I believe this is the first time that the XK150 Fixed Head Coupe has been tested by any British Motoring Journal and indeed the model only became available some few weeks ago. Hitherto the 'S' modification has been confined to the open two-seater.

The general trim of the 150 inside is truly remarkable and I never cease to marvel how Jaguar do it, for the money. The quality of materials, workmanship and finish is almost impossible to fault.



The impression left by the car is that something near to the ultimate has been reached in usable performance. A person buying this car, it would be near impossible to make a more reliable or exciting purchase.

An advertisement appeared in an American publication praising this car, it said: 1959 Jaguar Roadster. Only 7,500 Americans can get a new Jaguar this year. You just can't mass produce a superb car like the new Jaguar XK150 Roadster. Witness the painstaking workmanship, the clean smooth flowing lines, the sports car simplicity. This newest Jaguar is the proud inheritor of Jaguars racing traditions. Yet roominess, luxury and ease of handling make it the road car sans pareil.

In December 2015 a 1980 XK150 3.8 litre Drop Head Coupe, at a Bonhams auction sold for £427,100. It was one of only 264 3.8 litre DHCs with overdrive and left-hand drive. It has been restored to concours condition and has already won several events. The engine is the 'S' version producing 250bhp with a 0 to 60mph of 7.3 seconds.

The 3.8 litre engine was available with the 9.1 compression ratio but for countries with poor quality petrol, lower 8.1 or 7.1 enabled these cars to run more suitably.



Only 4 Fixed Head Coupes with Automatic Transmission were imported to Australia and Roadsters were very rare. Apparently, the Drop Head Coupe was quite popular because the powerful Australian sun could be kept out of the cockpit when required.

The XK150 was produced until the end of 1960 when it made way for the E Type. Records show that very few of these cars were raced. Most owners, especially in the USA preferred to use them as touring cars. The Racing stats in the USA show that they only had 131 Starts with 5 wins, 8 seconds and 10 thirds. Although the XK150 had not been designed as a competition car, its performance and handling were so impressive that some rally drivers, tried their luck, and chose to use it. In 1959 Legourd and Gallier drove it in The Tour de France for a class win and Hadden and Viven also scored a class win in the 1960 Tulip Rally. In 1963 it was seen in the Lyons to Charbonnieres Rally driven by Barbier and Liangre.

Only 7,500 Americans can get a new Jaguar this year . . .
 You just can't mass produce a superb car like the new Jaguar XK150 Roadster. Witness the painstaking workmanship, the clean, smooth flowing lines, the sports car simplicity. This newest Jaguar is the proud inheritor of Jaguar's racing traditions. Yet roominess, luxury and ease of handling make it the road car sans pareil.

In case you need an excuse to buy a Jaguar:

New Features - Four wheel disc brakes, four door windows, roll up windows, convertible top. Has the XK150 and XK160 models and the Jaguar quality maintenance service.	Performance - The latest Jaguar engine provides solid running power for start and stop driving. The Jaguar suspension system provides easy, pleasing, tireless driving.	Handle Value - You get unfathomably high value in every Jaguar. Check out our list in the book, stands up to thousands of miles beyond expected "normal" standards.
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Historical car racing in Britain is a really big business. Major meetings are held on a regular basis at many of the famous tracks. There is always a Pre 1963 saloon car event which suits the XK150. Back in 2004 Andrew Keith-Lucas ran 3rd and Richard Goom 4th in a British Racing and Sports Car Club meeting at Castle Coombe. Andrew's wife also drove regularly in the 150 and dominated the women's divisions. Paul De Havilland first appeared in 2006 with a third but in later years won a number of races. In 2013 he was fastest in qualifying and 2nd in a race at Brands Hatch. In July a Jaguar XK150 team of De Havilland, Marc Gordon and Chris Scholey won the team prize at the Brands Hatch Super Prix meeting.



Jaguar XK150 - Mark Gordon driving



Jaguar XK150 - Historic racing car

In 2017 at the Masters Historic racing at Spa, the B1 class win fell to Marc Gordon and Nick Finburg. Marc was at it again in October 2018 at Castle Combe Autumn Classic, in a field of 23 finishing 3rd. In the 72nd Goodwood Members Meeting in The Tony Gaze Memorial Trophy race, in May 2020 Andrew Keith in his XK150 battled with a Ferrari 250GT finally securing 2nd place. So, there is still a small number of 150s showing the flag for Jaguar.

Racing in New Zealand

Of the few XK150s to race in NZ, Bob Gibbons appears to be the most successful. His car landed at Pipitea Wharf in Wellington on the 9th of February 1958. It came with Disc brakes and wire wheels and had just 44 miles on the clock. A 1959 speed test showed a top speed of 132 mph and a quarter mile standing start of 16.3 seconds which was identical to a C Type Jaguar. With this car Bob, in the next 2 years won numerous Hill climbs, standing quarter miles, flying quarter miles and sprints. He raced mainly in the North Island at places such as Featherston, Wairapapa and Ohakea and Teretonga in the South Island.

He had great fun in recalling a time when said he was "bowling" along the Motorway, with a rather nervous passenger who was frightened of high speeds.

When this person looked across at the Rev Counter and saw it registering 45, she was greatly relieved. Unbelievable to her they were probably doing around a 100mph. It again proved what a quiet car at speed it was!

In 1962 Phillip Golpin raced an XK150 3.8 litre Roadster that used to be raced by Sybil Lupp.

This car arrived in New Zealand on 31st March 1961 and was sold to Golpin in 1962. He raced mainly in the Levin area, for a couple of years.



Willis Brown and Dean Russell also raced 150s at this time. Not many cars could beat the 150s at the flying miles.

It must be remembered that these cars are now 60 years old. In many countries they are still winning Concours events and are very much valued by their owners.

Total production was Roadster 2264 Fixed Head Coupe 4446 Drop Head Coupe 2673 making 9385 in total.

One of our members, Bert Loveridge from Morrinsville, recently purchased a very much admired XK150. We first saw this car at the Rotorua Vintage Car event in January this year and again at the Model Car Collection run at Kopu near Thames.

Two of our new members who we recently welcomed into our club, Glenda and Rex Bentham also have an XK 150. It is a 1958 model in British Racing Green.

We look forward to seeing it on some of our upcoming runs. Also, worth a mention is that Donald Campbell of Bluebird World Record fame also loved his XK 150.

Some of our older members would remember Warrick and Betty Holmes, whose place at Thames we visited several times, to view their Jaguar cars.

They had an extensive history while living in Tasmania, with the Tasmania Car Club. When they came to New Zealand, they brought with them an XK150.

They later purchased another 150 to occupy their garage with 4 other Jaguars.

Warrick passed away in 2018 and an XK150 and an XK were sold to Jordon Roddy from Australia who is probably recognised as the foremost experts in Jaguar lore.

However, there is another XK150 in the club and it arrived in September 2013.

It is owned by Don and Lynley Bowater and here is their AMAZING story as told by Don:

The Mistress

My wife calls you the Mistress because I spend so much time with you. She is right, you are a great Mistress – beautiful, fast and a good performer. I know a lot about you, but you do



keep some secrets from me. This I do know – you were born at Browns Lane, Coventry, England on 12 May 1958 and you were named S 830432. A beautiful Jaguar XK 150 OTS. You differed from your sisters, the FHC and the DHC because you looked lower, longer, sleeker and much sportier. Your cunning designers had increased the length of your bonnet, moved the windscreen back by about 2 inches, removed

the quarter lights on the doors and carefully folded your hood out of sight behind your seats. A vast improvement compared with your sisters. Black with black interior you looked resplendent and on 6 June you were shipped off to New York.

You were destined for the high life and that is what you got. A fabulous garage right on Central Park, parties in the city and at the Hamptons. Many very fast trips to Boston and Martha's Vineyard and occasionally, down to DC. Yes, you certainly mixed with the 'in crowd', and on many occasions you were the Belle of the Ball. Your small lithe body, excellent handling and exuberant power put you well ahead of the crowd, even if it did engender some unpleasant comments from the buxom locals as they wallowed with their enormous tail fins and glared at you with their quadruple headlights. I know you didn't like being called 'that skinny foreigner' and worse. Speed was your forte, why, even your handbook recommended that for full power, your overdrive should not be engaged until 100 miles per hour. Those local girls could hardly keep up with you despite their enormous cubic inches, and you still had a gear in reserve.

Life was just great for three years and then on 15 March 1961 disaster struck. Your life was never the same after that. That was the date that the all new Jaguar E Type was first revealed in Geneva. You were yesterday's news; all the attention was focused on the new Jaguar. You described it to me as being just like being an only child and then getting a new sister and you were so angry you couldn't decide whether to throw a conrod or just loosen off a few tappets. In the end you just let your timing chain rattle. For three years you sulked, right in the back of the garage – never used, never serviced – just neglected.

Eventually you were sold to a nice young couple, but being parked on the street in Manhattan was not your cup of tea. Left out in the rain and, even snow on some occasions. It was too much. Fortunately, they decided to start a family and they sold you to a young fellow in South Carolina. You said it was all very tiresome – weed, ban the bomb protests and the anti-Vietnam war protests. You saw it all but were delighted when you were sold to a military chap. He was based in Pensacola and flew for the Blue Angels – just 24 he was. That was a real change to your lifestyle, plenty of discipline, cleaning and polishing, and high-speed runs. At some stage he had an aircraft engineer repaint you bright yellow and I can understand how you were embarrassed about that.

Eventually you ended up in California. That turned out to be your worst nightmare as you not only suffered neglect but first-hand experience of domestic violence. You were used and abused, but you failed to recognise that at that stage of your life you were just a worthless has-been. You were well into your thirties, sagging, scarred and scratched. No longer elegant and spritely. That was when Nick Clements of European Collectables in California found you. Your luck had the potential to change as he took you under his wing in 1995.

Soon afterwards Paul Salt from New Zealand heard about you and some of your sisters, and before long you were all rounded up and, on a ship, bound for the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Your luck continued to improve and it was a great day when you came under the care of Johnny McKitterick in Christchurch.

You certainly didn't look much then, but Johnny and his panel beater son Jack, could see your potential. They set to work and did a full nut and bolt restoration on you including changing you over to right hand drive.

They painted you Carmen Red, renewed your black upholstery, gave you brand new wire wheels and a new hood. You were very proud of your new self and strutted about with your feathers puffed. What wasn't obvious at that stage was that under your bonnet Johnny had worked some magic. He gave you a 3.8 litre block, a straight port head, D type cams and 3 double barrelled weber carburettors. You were faster than you had ever been and enjoyed the club day races and hill climbs – mainly I suspect because you usually won!

The highlight of that era (and I suspect your whole life) was that well documented occasion when Johnny was taking you to the Easter Jaguar Rally and on the South Canterbury roads you came across a group of E Types travelling to the same event. A race ensued. You remembered that terrible time back in New York when those flashy things were first released and gave it everything. They didn't stand a chance as you roared away from them, beating them easily.

You were first registered in NZ on 7 August 1997 and you stayed with Johnny for nearly eleven years. He passed you on to Murray Wheeler, also in Christchurch and you were with him for 5 years. That was just fine except for the Christchurch earthquake.

It created a problem of where to store you, and it was cleverly resolved by sending you up to Nelson to be displayed at the Wearable Arts Museum. I know you found that rather boring but at least during that time the good gentlemen at Victory Motors completely reconditioned your engine and replaced the webers with triple SU's.

It was at the Wearable Arts Museum that we first met. During an Easter trip to Nelson we visited the museum, and there you were in a long line of classic cars.

There is no doubt in my mind that you were the stand-out exhibit and your image was firmly fixed in my mind. I never even dreamed we would meet again.

Some years later I was in a position to buy an XK 150 and I saw one advertised in Christchurch. I rushed down for a viewing and only then did I realise that our paths had already crossed.



The Mistress

Maybe it was indecent haste, but by 24 September 2013 you were with me. It was about that time that I discovered that while you are very beautiful and exciting, you are also rather demanding and require quite a lot of looking after. You had been premised on speed with wire covered headlights and suchlike. Together we changed all this to bring you back to your original beauty.

Lavished with tender loving care you responded well. You carried the 11,000 miles you had travelled since your makeover very well, and at 55 years old you were still just great.

Since then we have travelled more than another 11,000 miles together and now at the tender age of 62 you are still splendid.

Those 11,000 miles and seven years that we have been together have been wonderful. Trips all over the North Island, countless car shows and other occasions, and always without a hitch and 100% reliability. Well that is nearly true, there was the occasion when you tried to kill my wife by breaking a stub axle.

That really was unnecessary and it serves you right that you had to come home on the back of a truck.

Oh yes, there was also the occasion in the middle of winter when you let your generator fail. We had to drive for hundreds of miles through rain and snow without the heater fan or windscreen wipers as we conserved battery power for your spark.

Yes, you are still loved, and although your incontinence is rather annoying, I have to agree with you when you say that if you stopped leaking oil, it would mean you didn't have any

Don Bowater

A delightful read. Thanks very much Don.