

Jaguar XK120 - Part 2

By Neville Barlow

1951

Alpine Rally: Nub 120 and the Appleyard's repeated their previous years success.

Tulip Rally: The Appleyard's took first place, with Swiss fighter pilot Rolf Habisreutinger's XK 120 finishing second.

The Abbott XK 120: On April 7th 1951, Jaguar cars sent a rolling chassis, number 660750 to coachbuilders Abbott of Farnham. A Mr David Stuart Mitchell of Tauranga New Zealand had commissioned them to build him an XK 120 4-seater.



All panels were hand beaten of aluminium and fitted on the ash wood frame. The Abbott design was a lengthened XK 120 to create the extra space for the additional seats. The side profile was subtly altered by placing the boot further behind the chassis. Some people said it looked well balanced, but others thought it looked strange. It was fitted with a radio, a tow bar and an extra pair of fog lamps. It was shipped to New Zealand in 1952.

One of our club members Bruce Jamieson remembers it well but said it was not the prettiest car he seen. Many people thought this car had disappeared. However, when my article appeared in our Jaguar magazine our Editor Peter Davies received a phone call from Ray Larsen at Waimak Classic Cars to say he owned it for many years and in fact had brought it back from a rather derelict condition.

He also explained that he had sold the car to someone in England but did not know if it was still "alive".

But yes, it is still running. After 66 years it has undergone a complete restoration in the Netherlands. It has taken 5,000 hours of painstaking work and is recognised as the only 4-seater XK 120 in the World. Nice to think a little of New Zealand's history has been brought back to life.

Darwin to Alice Springs record: On August 2nd 1951.



Two young Brisbane men, Les Taylor and companion Dick Rendle set off in an XK 120 Jaguar, to drive the 1500 kilometres in under 11 hours.

The road the two men saw shocked them as it was a narrow, sand-blown, second-class country road that snaked between hills and gullies dipped down to cross countless creeks and climbed up mountains.

Some of the hazards came in the form of unfenced cattle, mobs of kangaroos, wild pigs, wild camels and birds.

They worked out that they would have to average 160 km/h for the whole trip. The police said they were crazy and would not give them a permit.

But they were determined. They were going well when disaster struck. Les slowed to 145km/h through a blind corner and ploughed through a mob of wild horses. The car spun one and a half times and ploughed into bank.

The left-hand front wheel was bent as was a steering rod. Hammers and levers were used and away again.

Most of the time they were travelling at between 160 and 190. Another lucky escape came when doing 210km/h the Jaguar hit a rise and was airborne for 50 metres.

However, they arrived in Alice Springs taking 10 hours and 32 minutes. The smoking Jaguar had set a record average of 145.89 km/h for 1536.7 km/h.

That open road world record was to stand until 1955 when Stirling Moss in a Sports racing 300SLR drove to victory in the Mille Miglia.

In late 1951 Leslie Johnstone drove solo in Jaguar XK 120, also JWK 651, at Montlhery again, for one hour achieving 131.83mph (212.159kph).

This sowed the seed for another record attempt next year.

Le Mans 1951: While all this was going on the Jaguar factory entered three of their racing XK 120's code named Jaguar "C Type" for the 24-hour race. The drivers were Stirling Moss and Jack Fairman, Leslie Johnstone and triple Mille Miglia winner Clemente Biondetti, and eventual winners Peter Whitehead and Peter Walker.



Jaguar JWK 651

Jaguar XK 120 winner at 1951 Le Mans 24 hour race

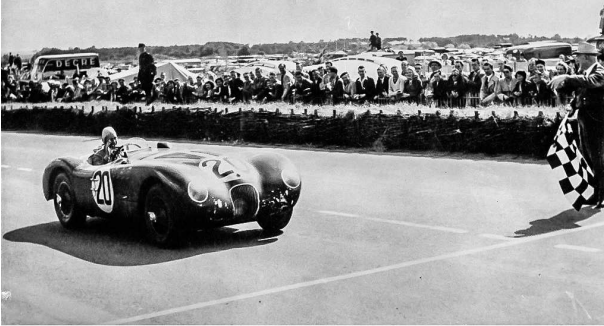


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After 3 laps Stirling was in the lead. He was sent out to break mainly the Ferraris, by repeatedly breaking the lap record. At the 4 hours mark the Jaguars were 1-2-3. Just before midnight, after leading for 7 hours, Moss's car broke a conrod. Soon after, Biondetti was stopped by split oil tank. The Walker/ Whitehead car inherited the lead and finally won by 9 laps! This was the first victory that for this car, that it had ever started.

1952

In August 1952 Stirling Moss, Leslie Johnstone, Jack Fairman, and Herbert Handley, drove a stock standard XK 120 around their favourite track, Montlhery, for 7 days and 7 nights, which included stops for tyres and fuel, at an average speed of just over 100mph (162kp/h).

Each driver took a 3-hour stint and Stirling said, "It became very Boring". Each lap took 42 seconds. With the rain and fog each driver had different ways of keeping awake. One dreary night Stirling noticed a group of mechanics playing cards on a table, on the edge of the track. He felt that the table was moving closer to the track each lap. He was then sure when he went by close enough to blow the cards off the table! Another time he thought he was hallucinating when he saw a witch, complete with a broom and stick, disappear over the top of the track.

Another time he noticed a table getting closer to the track, until there was only a 6-foot gap for him to roar through at 125mph.

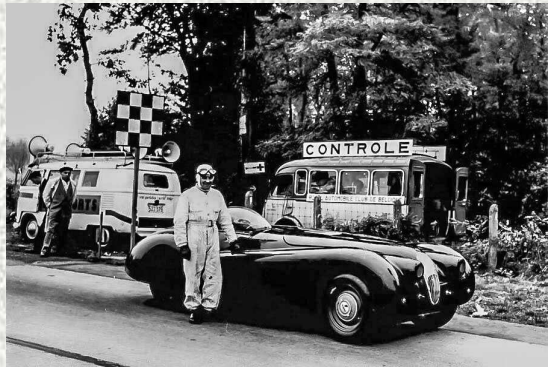
At the end of the Marathon, they had covered 16,851 miles at an average of 101mph (163km/h). The black board at Montlhery read; FOR SALE -JAGUAR-SALOON-CAREFULLY RUN IN.

1953

Le Mans 1953: Jaguar were back at Le Mans determined to better last year when all 3 cars retired. The Jaguar XK 120 "C Type" won again, and the other two cars were placed 2nd and 4th. Duncan Hamilton and Tony Rolt won at an average speed of 105.85mph (170.35km/h). This was the first time the race had been won at over 100mph.

Disc brakes were a novelty in 1953, and they definitely gave the Jaguars a great advantage.

Jaguar XK 120 winner at 1953 Le Mans 24 hour race



Jabbeke Flying Mile: On 21st October 1953 Jaguar test driver Norman Dewis drove a modified Jaguar XK 120 to a two-way average flying mile of 172.412mph (277.412km/h). The car had several aerodynamic modifications, including a distinctive bubble-shaped, air-tight canopy. This effort was recorded as a World record for an under 3.5 litre engine car. It is now part of a Classic car collection