

The Coventry Cat



Official Newsletter of the Jaguar Association of New England

April 2020

More than just a Car Club ...

An XK Appreciation Issue



Blue Moon at Amelia Island

Photo Courtesy of Carl Hanson

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The President's Message, April 2020

The Coventry Cat is the official publication of the Jaguar Association of New England (JANE), a non-profit organization of Jaguar enthusiasts that is a regional chapter of the national Jaguar Clubs of North America (JCNA). JANE is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

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Today we seem to face a pandemic of fear and uncertainty. The coronavirus is liable to strike just about any of us at any time. Meanwhile, at JANE, we are trying to provide a small diversion to today's insistent drumbeat of bad news. Our new issue of the Coventry Cat is a reminder of things Jaguar from a not-so-long-ago time for some of us, but also from a time before others of us were even born. Either way, we have tried to provide

some entertainment for the membership by dedicating an entire issue to the XK Jaguar models we know and love so much. We have a good number of these remarkable cars in this club, and more are being uncovered for restoration each year. It's amazing how popular these cars were in the Northeast.

So while we may be cancelling our group events for who knows how long, we can still reminisce about our beautiful machines and look forward to the day when we are all together again. I hope you enjoy this issue and will find it fitting for these times.

Keep em on the road.

From the Top Of The Scratching Post

By Dave Moulton



A message from your humble editor

by various club members and friends. I hope you'll enjoy it as much as I've enjoyed pulling it together. And I want to thank ALL of the various contributors and authors – they've done a tremendous job. **You guys rock!**

Meanwhile, it has been one of THOSE months. As you may have noticed, we now seem to be in a new, different and quite troubling world. It may be a while before we can resume all of our amiable, pleasurable and rewarding club activities. For now, I hope you'll join me in wishing

This issue of the Coventry Cat is a special issue. I've been working on it for months. It is devoted to the original XK Jaguars, as remembered, restored, owned and experienced

the best of fortune in these difficult times for JANE's extended family: the Wayside Inn (and, most definitely, Marvin!), the Larz Anderson Automobile Museum, Lime Rock, Thompson, Palmer, Tamworth and Monticello racetracks, all of our various sponsors and commercial friends, our Jaguar dealers and, most of all, Jaguar Land Rover, our marque.

They all are facing quite hard times right now. Pray for them and wish them well.

Thanks!

For obvious reasons, we have no events or calendar to share with you at this time. Dean Saluti sends his regrets, and advises that as soon as we begin to get a sense of when our mobile and social world can commence again, he will prepare a calendar of events for us. Also, there will be no Membership column this month.

On the other hand, we do have The Cat's Meow, a message board that will run on a weekly basis for the duration. Keep a lookout on Constant Contact as well as on our website. All is not lost.

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A Member Shares How A Car Became An Old Friend

The \$125 Jaguar XK140 Roadster

By Don Holden

When people see my 1956 XK140 MC roadster, I like to tell them how my younger brother Phil bought it in 1967 when he was at West Point, for \$125. And then, as Paul Harvey used to say, I would tell them the rest of the story.

My brother was a sophomore at West Point when he bought the Jaguar from a graduating cadet who was buying a new car, a Corvette. The Jaguar was in such bad shape that it had to be towed down to my parents' home in Potomac, Maryland. The passenger rear wing was so badly rusted that it was flapping when towed. The engine and transmission were not working and the body had numerous rust spots. And, as I was later to find out, it had been in an accident.

When I saw the car, I told Phil I thought he paid way too much for it. A dollar in 1967 was probably the equivalent of \$10 today, so he had paid perhaps \$1200 in today's dollars for a car in terrible condition. Phil told me that another cadet said that the disc brakes on the car were worth at least \$100 (in those old dollars). My brother didn't even know that the XK 140 had drum brakes – it was the XK150 that had disc brakes on the front wheels.

That summer Phil worked on the car so that he could drive it to West Point for his third year. He was able to spot-weld metal from an old real estate sign on to the fender so that it would attach to the body. He also reinforced other panels and repaired the engine and transmission.



The Jag in 1967. That's my brother Phil on the ground.

With a new inspection sticker, he was able to drive the car back to New York where he was able to keep it at a girlfriend's house since cadets were not allowed to have a car (or a horse or a wife). He continued to use the car during his senior year when cadets were allowed to have car. When he graduated, he drove the Jag to artillery school at Fort Sill in Oklahoma. While at Fort Sill, he had a valve guide come loose, causing the valve stem to come down into the piston. When he took the head off, he found that the valve stem had broken through the piston, but had not damaged the cylinder head. With the help of a machine shop, the cylinder was thinly re-bored and a new piston and valve stem were inserted. Some of the engine parts were worked on in the Visiting Officers Quarters (VOQ), where sheets and towels made nice cleaning cloths. When the VOQ manager told him that this was not allowed, my brother, being a West Point graduate, asked the manager to show him where in the VOQ regulations it said working on a car's engine in the VOQ was forbidden. Today, if you visit Fort Sill, you will find that working on car engines in the VOQ is quite specifically not allowed.

After artillery school, Phil left his car in Potomac while he served in Italy. For the next several years my other two brothers drove the Jaguar to high school. Since it was continually burning oil, they didn't bother changing the oil. Meanwhile, my mother wanted the car off the driveway where it was leaking oil, as well as no longer being very drivable.

So, I bought the car from her for \$1. That was a good deal, but I had to come down from Cape Cod to get it. I decided to try my luck and drive it up to the Cape on a Saturday. It needed a push to jump start it, but I was off. I made it to all the way to Fairhaven, Massachusetts, where the engine stopped early in the evening. I called my wife on the Cape and asked her to find a tow bar and come pick me

up. Somehow, she was able to rent a tow bar and we towed the Jag to the Cape. There, I found out the problem was with the points, quickly fixed. But because the car was burning so much oil, it wasn't driven until we moved to our new house in Needham in the fall.

In Needham, I had a garage where I could work on the engine. I took the head off so that I could replace the old valves. I found a trained Jaguar mechanic in Walpole, MA who had an oven that could heat the engine block to 300 degrees so that the valve stems could be easily inserted. Fortunately, Phil came up to visit me on leave, and he helped me put the engine back together after we also replaced the journal bearings. Replacing those bearings made a big difference in maintaining the oil pressure.

For the next three years, I used the Jaguar as a second car in the summer until one day when I was taking my two children for a short drive around the neighborhood. My 8-year-old daughter told me she was seeing smoke by her feet. Then she said she was seeing flames. I immediately stopped, opened the bonnet and saw that there was a fire by the fire wall. I did not have a fire extinguisher (I always have one now), but I was able to put out the fire with a cloth before the oil-encrusted body caught fire.

The fire was the result of the primary wire shorting out against the firewall due to a failed grommet in the firewall. I needed to replace all the wiring and so I ordered a wiring harness, but never found the time to replace the old one. When we moved to Amherst, New Hampshire, the Jag sat in the garage collecting both dust and persistent queries from my children about when was I going to get it running again. It wasn't until my last child graduated from college and one was getting married that I thought it was time to get the Jag running again, possibly in time for his wedding in four months.

(Continued on page 6)

A Member Shares (Continued from page 5)

The mechanic I used was in Charlestown, NH, on the Vermont border, one hour away. He was a Haitian-American who grew up in the UK, served in the British Army and worked for a Jaguar dealer in the UK. He said he was not sure that he could have it running by the wedding, but would start work right away if I would do the wiring harness. It took me several trips to his shop to replace the wiring harness, but it took him three years to complete the mechanical restoration.

Then I decided to have the body fixed. The mechanic recommended a friend who was the service manager at a local Ford dealer who was starting up his own restoration business. I was his first customer. He quickly found that he needed more than one car to work on at a time and went back to his old job. My car became a weekend and nights project. He would send me pictures of his progress and I would send him money. And while I was looking for a "driver" class restoration, he wanted a show car as his first restoration car.



As you can see, the car needs a little work.

Earlier, I mentioned that the car had been in an accident that my brother was unaware of. We found that the passenger side front wing had been cut in half and

the front half replaced with the fender off an XK120. The headlight mount was a different size and had a metal shim to accommodate the XK140 headlight. The shape of the fender was also slightly different and had to be reworked to match the left side.



An XK120 fender on an XK140

So I got a show car – three years later. But wait! Now I needed a new leather

interior. Fortunately, I was able to order a leather kit from Bassett and have a local auto upholsterer install it in less than six months. I still had more work to do, finding authentic pieces such as side curtains and a tonneau cover to show the car in the driven class. Then, last year, I received a Best in Show – Driven Class at the JANE Concours in Sturbridge.

When my wife asked how much I spent on this seven-year project, I told her that I no longer wanted or needed to know. I probably could have bought a Jaguar in as good or better condition for the same or less and had it seven years earlier! However, I now feel I am driving a very good old friend when I take the Jag out on a nice day in the New Hampshire countryside. And that is my story of the \$125 Jaguar "barn find."



A few year later, my old friend is finally ready for a parade!




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Before there were XKs, there were SSs!

By Stephen Ring

You know you are a senior citizen when you can start a sentence with, "When I was a kid . . ."

So, when I was a kid, back in the early 1950's, television was starting to appear in every house in the suburbs of New York City. I remember when we got our television, I was just starting all-day school, which meant I could only watch television while I was eating breakfast or after I finished my homework.

The first show in the morning (television wasn't 24 hours then), was the "Today Show" hosted by Dave Garroway, with Jack Lescoulie, Frank Blair, Betty Furness and Dave's pal, a chimpanzee named J. Fred Muggs. From day one, I was hooked. In fact, the news magazine format, pioneered by Garroway, is still one of my favorite types of television programs. Dave always ended the "Today Show" with this one word wish ... PEACE.

Dave Garroway was also a car guy, and not just a car guy but a Jaguar car guy. Dave drove, maintained, and raced his beloved 1938 Jaguar SS100 at Bridgehampton and Watkins Glen.

When the supercharger he installed blew up, he replaced the 3.5 liter engine with a new (then) XK120 engine and transmission. This wasn't the only modification, as he also replaced the front headlights with huge lights and had the interior done in alligator skin.



Dave under the dashboard (we've all been there!). Note the alligator-skin dashboard and steering wheel!



Dave hard at work on the supercharger he added to the original SS100 engine

At the JANE March 2019 dinner meeting, Wayne Carini talked about "Dave's SS100," as it will always be known, which is now in his collection. My wife, Barbara, and I were immensely happy that we were able to attend that meeting and hear Wayne talk about this car.



Dave out for an early spring drive in 1950!

The “Lightweight” XK120 Jaguars

By Frank Grimaldi

The Jaguar XK120 sports car was recognized as an iconic design the moment it was introduced. Jaguar’s main focus at that time was actually the saloon car market and the XK120 was built primarily as a testbed for the new dual overhead cam six cylinder engine to be used in the Mark VII saloon.



XK120 Prototype, Earl’s Court Show, October 1948 (Jaguar Sports Cars, Skilleter)

The bronze color prototype XK120 was an OTS (Open Two Seat) roadster (#660001) built on a shortened Mark VII chassis and its coachwork was hand built in aluminum. Aluminum was plentiful and relatively cheap after the war and car bodies were easily fabricated in small batches. Since no more than 200 XK120s were ever intended, building every one of them with all aluminum coachwork was very practical.

That prototype was introduced in London at the Earl’s Court Motor Show in October, 1948. Demand was so overwhelming that Jaguar head William Lyons immediately began making arrangements to set up volume production. The production cars would use steel stampings for the main body but would retain aluminum panels for doors, bonnet and boot lid. Creating a volume production line takes time, so all XK120s leaving the factory until mid 1950 were hand built with full aluminum coachwork. These were all XK120 OTSs. Years later some people called these cars ‘lightweight’ XK120s, although they were only about 50 pounds lighter than the 2912-pound ‘steel’ versions. If examined side by side, original aluminum XK120s are almost indistinguishable from the later cars.

We all know the XK120 name had been chosen to indicate its 120 mph top speed. What is not well known is that this estimate was pure marketing hype until May 1949, when XK120 OTS (#670002) performed multiple speed runs in Jabbeke, Belgium. The Royal Belgium Automobile Club confirmed official speeds of more than 127 mph with full roof and side curtains and 133 mph with a small aero screen and passenger seat tonneau cover.



Ron Sutton on the Jabbeke Highway showing aero screen and undershield used to reach 133 mph (Jaguar Sports Cars, Skilleter)

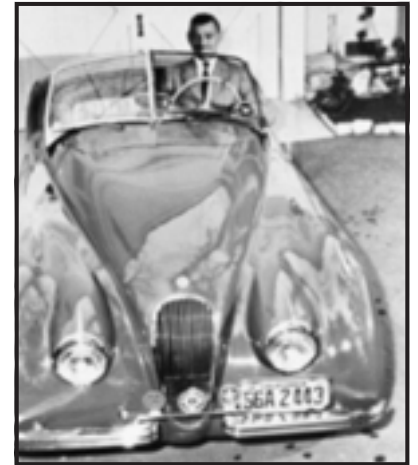
In August, 1949, the Daily Express BRDC Race meeting at the Silverstone racetrack held its first ‘all comers’ race for standard production cars. This race was an excellent way to quickly reveal any weakness in the XK120, and especially in the new XK engine.

To minimize possible embarrassment to the company, Jaguar provided three ‘works’ cars to private race drivers who entered and raced the cars under their own names. The ‘48 show car prototype (#660001- 6#) dropped out with a flat tire, but the Jabbeke record car (#670002 - #7) and (#670001 - 8#) finished First and Second. Encouraged by these results, six aluminum XK120s were supplied to selected race drivers for international races in 1950.



1948 Prototype (#660001 - #6), Jabbeke record car (#670002 - #7) and (#670001 - #8) Silverstone August, 1949 (Jaguar Sports Racing & Comp Cars to 1953, Whyte)

Between July, 1949 and September, 1954, a total of 7,512 XK120 OTS roadsters were delivered. 242 of these were all aluminum from the original hand-built process – 58 RHD (Right Hand Drive) and 184 LHD (Left Hand Drive). Virtually all aluminum XK120 production went abroad, most to the United States. Clark Gable was the first movie star to cruise his 1949 XK120 OTS (# 670003) along Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. His was the first XK120 delivered to the West Coast. Tyrone Power, Humphrey Bogart and many other celebrities soon became XK120 owners.



Clark Gable and his 1949 XK120 OTS, his first of four XK120s (photo Jaguar)

Lyons knew how the prestige of the LeMans 24 hour Endurance race in France could improve sales. For the 1950 event, three works XK120s were provided, again entered by private drivers. Although two finished 12th and 15th overall, the third car was leading the race for 21 hours when its clutch failed.

Now winning LeMans became the Jaguar priority and Lyons commissioned an entirely new car for the 1951 race. This new sports racer would have a more streamlined body and would be based on XK120 components mated to a much lighter tubular frame. This would be the Jaguar XK120-C, also called the C-Type Jaguar, and it would weigh only 2240 pounds.

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Three XK120-C sports racers were created to win LeMans 1951 (MotorSport, fabcars.com)

For Lyons, winning LeMans in 1951 was such a high priority that he also ordered the building of three very special XK120s to serve as stand-in entries should the C-Type not be ready in time. The three “stand-ins” were designated XK120 LT-1, XK120 LT-2 and XK120 LT-3. Although similar in appearance to the all aluminum XK120 OTS, these were much lighter. The LT bodies were made of magnesium which is 33% lighter than aluminum. Each body was to be mounted on a light tubular subframe for final assembly to a lightened XK120 chassis.



XK120-LT Magnesium Bodies created in case new XK120-Cs were not ready in time for LeMans 1951 (<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/17259/lot/53/>)

Front wings, cowl and grill opening were one piece and engine access was through a small lift off bonnet. The rear half of the body was also one piece, including both rear wings. There was no boot lid at all. Doors were standard XK120 shape, but cut off at the sill line. The LTs also dispensed with unnecessary internal panels. An XK120-LT would weigh 2520 pounds, 336 lbs. lighter than the 2856 pound all-aluminum XK120s.

The three XK120-LT bodies were completed well before LeMans and each stood ready for a lightened XK120 chassis. These three cars would be the “real” lightweight XK120 Jaguars.

The Jaguar C-Type development was also completed well before LeMans and early tests proved their worth as strong contenders for the LeMans win. As a result, no LT body was ever mounted on a chassis. The three XK120-LTs were immediately redundant and were unceremoniously cloistered at the factory, never to take center stage as Jaguar standard bearers at the 1951 or any other LeMans race.

For the 1951 LeMans race, the factory submitted its very own race entries for three C-Type race cars (XKC-001, XKC-002 and XKC-003). Within the first 4 hours, the three C-Types had established themselves in the first three positions. Soon disaster struck when oil delivery pipes to the engines fractured on two of the cars and they were forced to withdraw from the race. However, in the first race for the brand new Jaguar C-Type race car, Peter Whitehead and Pater Walker brought XKC-003 #20 home first overall.



Whitehead and Walker (XKC-003) #20, First Overall in maiden race, 1951 LeMans (<https://www.motorsportmagazine.com/database/drivers/peter-whitehead.com>)

The three XK120-LTs would certainly have been forgotten had Charles Hornburg, Jaguar’s Western US distributor, not visited the factory shortly after the 1951 LeMans race. He spotted two of the LT bodies, LT-2 and LT-3,

immediately bought them, had each fitted to a standard XK120 chassis and shipped to California. LT-2 was built on RHD OTS chassis #660748 and LT-3 was built on RHD OTS chassis #660741. Hornburg called his LTs “Silverstones” and they had active lives racing in the USA. Hornburg’s green car, LT-2, was raced by a number of different people but his white LT-3 was usually raced by Phil Hill, who would later become the first US-born Formula 1 World Driving Champion. Phil Hill achieved third place finishes at Road America in Wisconsin in August and in Palm Springs, California in October, 1951. Both of Hornburg’s cars were racing in Reno later that month when LT-2 was badly damaged after spinning off the track and into boulders.



Phil Hill and XK120 LT-3, 3rd Overall. Palm Springs CA October, 1951 (GettyImages/BernierCahier)

The ‘Phil Hill’ LT-3 continued racing in the United States through 1952 and was then sold to a St. Louis Jaguar dealer who raced it in local races. By 1974, LT-2 resurfaced and was sent to England and LT-3 had secured a safe home with one of America’s foremost Jaguar enthusiasts.

Bob Berry was a Jaguar employee in the publicity department who also raced his personal 1952 XK120 OTS in 1953. Berry improved the

(Continued on page 10)

Lightweight (Continued from page 9)

performance of his car dramatically for 1954, when he not only acquired a D-Type engine, but also LT-1, the last of the very special lightweight magnesium bodies, which was still sequestered deep within the factory. Berry lightened LT-1 even further by removing the boot floor and spare wheel tray. Even the 'heavy' wooden floor boards were replaced with thin aluminum sheet. After months of work, he had installed the body onto his XK120 chassis and "his LT-1" was more than 100 lbs. lighter than the other XK120-LTs. During 1954 and 1955, Berry ran his LT-1 in almost twenty races across the British Isles, accomplishing podium finishes in ten of them.



Bob Berry with XK120 LT-1 at Oulton Park in 1954 (Jaguar Sports Racing & Comp Cars to 1953, Whyte)

Berry's LT-1 eventually found its way to North America, where it was raced for years. My search for the serial number of Berry's original XK120 chassis, now bearing the XK120 LT-1 body, has been unsuccessful. However, it has apparently been restored to its original LT-1 configuration and resides in a private collection.

Denied their role as the Jaguar standard bearers at the 1951 LeMans race, the three XK120-LT bodies were finally discovered and became XK120-LT race cars as intended. However, racing competition was in a rapid growth period, so they were soon overshadowed by the more sophisticated C-Type and D-Type Jaguar rac-

ers and by the increased competition in Britain, Europe and the US.

The three XK120-LTs remain very special and rare examples of Jaguar's racing history and are the true XK120 "Lightweights." A number of replicas have been created and often appear for sale at prestigious auctions. Most retain the unique features of the LT bodies but have been reproduced in aluminum rather than magnesium.

Regardless, a serious enthusiast must covet any opportunity to own even a reproduction XK120-LT. It is true the XK120-LT was denied a factory racing history, but it was created with the sole intention of representing the factory in the 1951 LeMans had C-Type development not met expectations. An XK120-LT is unique, immediately recognizable and far more rare than the C-Type (11 Works LeMans cars, 45 Production cars), its 1900-pound successor the D-Type (17 Works LeMans cars, 45 Production cars) and the 242 original all-aluminum XK120 OTSs.



XK120 LT-1 Recreation on XK120 chassis 671751

(<https://rmsothebys.com/en/auctions/lf15/london/lots/r152-1951-jaguar-xk120-lt1/180891>)

References:

Jaguar Sports Racing and Works Competition Cars to 1953, Andrew Whyte

Jaguar Sports Cars, Paul Skilleter

<https://www.racingsportscars.com>

<https://www.motorsportmagazine.com/database/drivers/peter-whitehead>



XK120 LT-1 Recreation on XK120 chassis 671751 (<https://rmsothebys.com/en/auctions/lf15/london/lots/r152-1951-jaguar-xk120-lt1/180891>)

These photos show SN 671751, an XK120 LT-1 Recreation. The details are faithful to the original and immediately identifiable. Note the small bonnet on the one-piece nose, the short doors and the one-piece tail, including rear wings and no boot lid at all. If you would like to search for an LT reproduction, here are a few XK120 LT-2 serial numbers that have been For Sale in the past: S667062, 679035, 660343. If you can find one, shopping bags of money may be able to pry one loose for your collection.

The 242 all-aluminum XK120 OTSs are also very special and rare. They look so similar to the later 'steel' cars it is possible that a few may have actually changed hands privately over the years without their provenance being realized. It is unlikely that one will surface for sale again without everyone knowing exactly what it is. If you are interested, here are all the aluminum XK120 OTS serial numbers, so be on the lookout for one of the following: XK120 OTSs RHD #660001 thru #660058, XK120 OTSs LHD #670001 thru #670184

It will still require shopping bags of greenbacks, but the bags should be a little smaller than those required for a reproduction XK120 LT.

Good Luck!

Restoration Can Be A Lot of Work, A Lot Of Time . . .

By Adrian Curtis

Thanks for asking me to do a small report about the restoration of my 1953 XK120 DHC. I'll confine that to the body work which took place over a year and a half.

The car went to the body shop in late 2013 and came home early 2015. It then took me over 2 years more to complete, way over budget of course . . . the two rounded fender panels, after bead blasting, showed up too thin and worn to use. Wray Schelin hammered two new panels of original shape and gauge, which my body man then welded in place. The body was painted Pearl Grey, a late XK120/140 color.



This is where we started.



New sheet metal has been added . . .



Well, the front doesn't look too bad



Things are progressing . . .



The bonnet is close to ready



Why, it's almost finished. Right!



Time to fit the rear wings . . .



Made it! Ahhhhhh!

A Not-So-Conservative XK120

By Stephen Ring



Barry and his 120.



Here you can see the headlight treatment and grille a little bit, as well as possibly a “Continental” spare tire and custom tail-light housings.

When I hear the name Barry Goldwater, the first thing that comes to mind is his title “Mr. Conservative,” the title by which Barry is best remembered, ever since his book “Conscience of a Conservative” was published.

But Barry Goldwater was more than just a political person. Barry was the grandson of Michel Goldwasser, who was born in Russia and emigrated to the gold fields of Sonora, California, where he ran a saloon. “Big Mike,” as he was known, then moved his family to Arizona, which his wife felt was safer. In Arizona, the family name was Americanized to Goldwater and there they became prosperous dry goods merchants.

Barry enjoyed growing up in the “Old West” where he became an avid amateur radio operator, photographer, Native American dancer (Hopi Nation), UFO activist, aviator and car guy. The interests he developed in Arizona stayed with him his entire life.

In 1953, Barry purchased a new Jaguar XK120 DHC. Not satisfied with the 120’s beautiful lines, Barry sought out George Barris of Barris Kustoms, California and had him redesign the car. In 2010, this same 120 was sold on eBay, needing a total restoration . . . which I hope it got!

The Never-Ending Quest For Horsepower

By Stephen Ring

Sometime, when you are working on a problem, you find yourself so engrossed that you miss the obvious solution.

Many JANE members participate in Vintage Sports Car Racing. In their quest to get the maximum horsepower out of their vintage motors, a lot of time, talent and high-tech equipment are required. The late Steve McQueen, movie actor, car guy and Jaguarphile, was faced with the same problem with his 1957 Jaguar XKSS. McQueen consulted with all the experts of the day and tried many of their suggestions, to no avail. Until . . . one day, on the movie set of a Western he was filming, Steve looked up into the loving eyes of his horse and ... SHAZAM! The answer just came to him, a bolt out of the blue California sky, just like in the comics. If you want to add extra horsepower to your motor – just add a horse (just kidding).

Actors and movies are sometimes best known for the various automobiles that were featured in the movie. Herbie will always be a Volkswagen; Bond is linked with Aston Martin, even though James drove many different cars in his movies. Yet Steve McQueen’s favorite automobile was his “green rat” 1957 Jaguar XKSS, not the 1968 Ford GT40 or 1970 Porsche 911S from the movie “Le Mans,” or even the 1968 Ford Mustang from “Bullitt.”



“I’m sure I picked up at least a horse from this addition.”



“And sometimes, the extra horse is even friendly, as well!”

From Riches to Rags to Riches

The Amazing Story of the First XK120 Coupe Showcar

By Carl Hanson¹ (Reviewed by Roger Phinney² himself)

INTRODUCTION: JANE members who participated in the “Tour of Nova Scotia” in 2006 may remember Roger Phinney, one of the BATANS³ members who helped make a success of that event. Roger told me that he had owned 57 cars over his lifetime, 26 of which were British and 14 were Jaguars! With that introduction, let’s get on with this fascinating story.

ROGER’S WILD RIDE: In March of 1961, Halifax, N.S. native Roger Phinney, while visiting California, bought a red XK120 coupe in Long Beach from a guy for \$450. The owner wanted \$500 for it, but Roger talked him down \$50. It had “Moon Disc” wheel covers, white sidewalls and a racy-looking chrome stripe tape over the top. Photos taken at Roger’s motel show these “features” the day he bought the car.



Roger Phinney’s XK120 coupe at a Motel in Long Beach the day he bought it.



2XK120 coupe showing “Moon Discs” and chrome stripe

The “Moons” were the first to go as he found the original hubcaps in the trunk. He also purchased a set of 16” trim rings from a speed shop and removed the chrome stripe. Now it looked like a real XK120! Roger says, “The door fit and front fender lines looked flat and straight and the California paint job looked terrific.” He was amazed that all it was worth at 10 years old was 450 bucks! It did use oil aplenty, the fumes of which wafted into the cabin, and it boiled over several times in L.A. traffic. (Sounds familiar to a fellow XK120 owner!)



Roger (left) and ?? at a Pontiac dealership in L.A., with the car ready for a trip across the country!

Jaguar World Magazine and other publications erroneously report that Roger purchased the coupe from this Pontiac dealer. Not true, says Roger! But he doesn’t recall why that photo was taken. Cleaned up and fluids changed, the 10-year-old Jaguar was ready for Roger’s trip across the United States back to Nova Scotia, assuming frequent stops for oil. His route was north from L.A. to San Francisco, then East through Reno, Salt Lake City, Wyoming, Nebraska, Iowa, Chicago (for a

golf course stop), Akron, Ohio, NJ and up the coast to Bar Harbor, Maine. There is where he came to a full stop.

Not sure he could register it in Canada, Roger sold the car in Bar Harbor. But something turned out to be amiss with the title. Oops! Suspecting a stolen car, our friend Roger found he suddenly had a non-negotiable invitation to spend a night in jail while inquiries were made 3,000 miles away. Next day, the issue was happily resolved and Roger boarded the next ferry to Nova Scotia, the beautiful XK120 coupe left behind.

But that’s not the end of the story! Read on. You need to know about “Riches to Rags to Riches!”

RICHES --THE GENEVA MOTOR SHOW 1951: As the first international motor show to be held after World War II, the “Salon International de l’Automobile” at Geneva, Switzerland, was THE place to showcase new models. In March 1951, Jaguar surprised the world again with the introduction of the XK120 coupe, as they had at Earl’s Court in 1948 with the XK120 Roadster. The March 7, 1951 issue of the British magazine Motor reported on the car as a “refined version of the two-seater” that should appeal to Americans!

The XK120 coupe show car was silver with a red interior and disc wheels and spats. Burlled walnut dashboard, fine leather seats, opera lights and roll-up windows added to the refined feeling. Exterior changes from the two-seater, besides the

1. Long-time member of JANE and owner of the earliest XK120 coupe in the country.
2. Key character in the story. Long-time resident of Halifax, N.S. and Jaguar enthusiast.
3. British Automobile Touring Association of Nova Scotia...now you know why we use its initials!

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attractive roof, included a body lift of one-inch to allow for additional headroom, rubber shims between body and chassis, and the introduction of turn signals. To accommodate the larger twin filament bulbs, the original chrome sidelights on the front fenders of the roadster were replaced with larger housings adapted from the Mk V saloon. The Mk V sidelights were subsequently installed on the show car and the first 39 coupes. Following the Geneva show, the coupe was also shown in Frankfurt, Germany.

Interestingly, this car was not given the first chassis number. (XKs are registered by chassis number, with the coupe series starting at 679001.) It had the number 679002. So it apparently had been preceded by another coupe. The actual build dates on #1 and #2 are not recorded in Jaguar archives, suggesting that they were prototypes.

After completing the show car circuit, #679002 was returned to England, refreshed, and forwarded to the West Coast distributor Charles Hornburg in Los Angeles in January, 1952. The first owner was a serviceman who had seen it in Germany, but who couldn't buy it there without going through military "standard procedures" to get it to the US.

What does this excursion into history have to do with Roger Phinney? Read on!

RAGS – FORLORN OLD CAR: Little is known about the life of the car in the ensuing years, but here is what we do know. This was Roger Phinney's XK120 coupe! After he sold it in Bar Harbor, the car reappeared back in California with a series of owners, finally ending up derelict and rotting under a palm tree in Turlock, CA until 1991.



XK120 coupe abandoned

And this is where the story gets interesting!

RAGS – RESTORATION: Somehow the word got to an Australian aircraft engineer named Percy Dixon who enjoyed collecting British cars, that there was an old Jaguar coupe languishing in California that looked interesting because of its early features. Dixon had the car shipped to Australia for restoration, where it was discovered that this was #679002, the Geneva Show car! Moreover, the chassis was covered with punched numbers and odd weldments.

Research showed that the chassis was not just one made for a coupe, but was in fact one of the three first chassis for the new XK120 Roadster, and the one used for the "lashed up" show car at Earl's Court in 1948, later installed in one of the race cars. The early roadsters were often raced and sometimes wrecked during demonstrations of their capabilities. According to Jaguar archivists, the company was loath to cut up and destroy assemblies already made due to the scarcity of resources. A section of the factory, called "Experimental," re-used them for developmental purposes. It turns out the chassis for this car showed some repaired damage apparently from racing shunts

and had up to five numbers, partially obliterated by etching, before finally ending up as #679002, the one used for the show car!

So, Percy Dixon became aware of the provenance of the car during his private restoration. Sadly, he died in 2013 before he could complete the job. The car was acquired by JD Classics in October of that year and returned to the UK. Complete restoration by that well-known firm started in January 2014 and was documented in Jaguar World issues August – November.

Back to riches! Read on!

RICHES – PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS: Complete and careful restoration of #679002 took place at a furious pace in order to participate in the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance in August 2014. Every effort was carried out to maintain its authenticity, including installation of the rubber shims between body and frame.

Success! The car won its class, Post War Touring Category, at Pebble Beach! Refer to Jaguar World, April 2015 issue, for details.



#679002 after Restoration

But wait, there's more!

After returning to the UK, #679012 was in a private collection and was offered for sale for £355,000 (ca. \$425,000). Who is the new owner? And who would have thought that \$450 in 1961 would grow a thousand times in less than 60 years?

Now that is quite a story!

A Progress Report on 1952 Jaguar FHC 679924

By Tom Brady, owner/restorer

In the spring of 2017, I reported to the club on progress I had made on the restoration of my 1952 Jaguar XK120 fixed head coupe, chassis number 679924. My brother and I had bought it for parts in 2013, after it had spent 50 years outside in a Worcester back yard and had no wheels, drivetrain, interior or rear axle. Defying all logic and just plain common sense, I decided to restore it.



Original eBay auction photo that sealed the deal!

Over the next three years, I found most of the missing parts it needed and solved many mysteries about how things went together. I worked with three shops and many friends to create a very nice car from very little. One shop rebuilt the engine (purchased in a parts deal), another fabricated much of the replacement sheet metal, and another put it all together and made a car out of it.

I picked it up in the fall of 2016 and began work on the brakes, engine, interior, dashboard, wiring, and all the intricate details of the engine bay, which of course took a lot longer than I expected. When you start with nothing, it takes a lot of research to assemble what you did not take apart and can only imagine.

Winter of 2017 came and went; so did the summer and fall. Winter of 2018 also came and went, as did the summer and fall. Then, a miracle: Cliff Lewis, a fellow XK120 owner, bet me

\$100 that I would not have the car on the road by the summer of 2019. Inspired by the financial and credibility challenge, I got really serious about it.

Obtaining an early-style dashboard was quite a challenge. I found original wood pieces and sent them to Canada to be stripped, re-veneered and finished. I had all of the instruments rebuilt. I obtained a new wiring harness from England. I installed LED lights in the instruments, abandoning the infamously dim original incandescent lights. I installed all new dash wiring.



The dash about to join the board

I installed the original gas lines after a thorough cleaning, along with a rebuilt (by my brother) Harting fuel pump, an upgrade to the original SU. I installed a rebuilt dual master cylinder and cunifer brake lines, with brass-sleeved wheel cylinders (and stainless pistons on the rear).

I pulled in the wiring harnesses and made up all the connections to the dashboard, engine compartment, and boot area, using wiring diagrams from several sources. I relocated my battery to the front frame rail on the passenger side, to eliminate the long cables of the original location behind the seats. I bought a sealed AGM racing battery and designed a battery box that Steve Turschmann fabricated very nicely in aluminum.

I had Steve's help and advice

throughout the project, along with much assistance from Paul Gavaza and Dan Crook, all Turschmann garage buddies. We would regularly get together on Sunday afternoons to share stories about our various Jaguar projects and experiences, and blivate about important things.

Anyway, I tested the lights and all the electrical systems of the car, one by one, and everything worked, no blown fuses, no fried wires and no blown bulbs: a tribute to the wiring colors, good diagrams, and perhaps Joe Lucas?



Headlights work!



Taillights, too!

I spent quite a bit of time sealing up the new floors with strip caulking and getting the oblong washers to fit right. I had to custom trim the wood panels in the floor as well as the boot so they would fit properly and drop into place. Then I had to make up a parcel

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15 The Coventry Cat

tray and figure out how everything behind the seats went together and was upholstered (an ongoing project). I installed the rugs in the cockpit and boot, along with the clips that hold the jack, jack handle and lug wrench. I installed the door panels and wood.



Beginning on the interior.

I installed the dual exhaust system, aluminized steel pipes with a stainless straight through muffler, as originally designed: rude, crude, and socially unacceptable. I had the distributor refurbished, with new bearings, a new vacuum advance and a custom advance curve to accommodate the B head, 9:1 Mahle pistons, dual exhaust, mild porting, and custom curved valve seats that my engine has. I rebuilt the carburetors and installed them with thermal spacers to eliminate hot starting problems. Steve Turschmann masterminded the rebuild of my transmission and Special Equipment generator, with me kinda helping. Thanks again, Steve!

I had the radiator recored and installed new hoses throughout. I filled the engine with break-in oil and turned it over to verify oil pressure. All was good. I installed all the engine electrics and checked for spark. All was good. Then the big day: I turned the key and the motor immediately fired up. No smoke and loud as hell! All was really good!

Within a week, I had an inspection sticker and sent a picture of it to Cliff,

the driving force behind this final effort to make the car roadworthy. Below are pictures of the inspection sticker on the car as I found it, and the latest sticker, 55 years later!



***1963 sticker,
when the car was parked***



And now

At the end of June, I took the car to British Car Day at Lars Anderson Museum and was awarded the Museum Choice Award. Carl and Sing Hanson parked their incredible XK120 FHC,

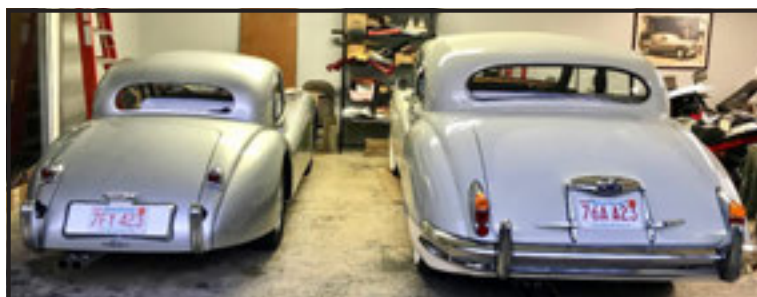
the first FHC imported into the USA, alongside mine for the first time, something we had looked forward to since I started the restoration. It was a great day.



An exquisite pair of coupes!

To date, I have driven the car 1200 miles, including 200 miles this “winter.” I have been refining various things, including engine tune and brakes. I installed wedges under the seats to tilt them back further and gain some space. Our Turschmann garage group collectively purchased a dual Air Fuel monitor, and analyzed and set our carburetors with it. Mine ran so rich I changed out the needles with leaner ones. We also purchased a front-end alignment tool and set our toe, caster, and camber. Now the car tracks nicely and runs beautifully, although plenty loud. I continue to learn the idiosyncrasies of the Moss gearbox, and shift it slowly and deliberately. This year I intend to take it to many events, having enough confidence in it (and my driving of it) to use it as a regular car. I hope to see you soon!

And, thanks again to Cliff Lewis, who actually paid off his bet at the JANE Concours last summer, after delivering a nice presentation explaining the bet.



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Gallery



A Family Portrait, from a Jaguar Tech Session in October, 2019.

Left - Right: Bruce Murray – 1961 Red Mark 2 Saloon; Ken Lemoine – 1959 Cream XK150 DHC;

Carl Hanson – 1951 Light Blue XK120 FHC; Tom Brady – 1952 Silver XK120 FHC

John Brady – 1954 Green XK120 DHC; Cliff Lewis – 1953 light blue XK120 DHC; Frank Grimaldi – Dark Blue XK140 OTS

Photo by: Cliff Lewis



An XK Dashboard! Perfection?

Photo by Cliff Lewis

***A Letter to the Editor from Down Under
That Poses A Question:***

– I am in the process of finishing off a book with Terry McGrath, *The Jaguar XK140 in the Southern Hemisphere*. In the course of research, I made contact with the son of the first owner, the car in question being an XK140 DHC RHD (chassis A807028DN) with a rare 7S engine, sold new in 1955. This XK140 was ordered new through the Jaguar distributor in the Sudan, collected from the factory door by its former Lt. Commander buyer, and then in fact went to spend its early years in the then very difficult location of Aden. Its fate is unknown to us.

Anyway, a story handed down to the first owner's son from his mother, which I thought your members might enjoy, was as follows: "The car had an annoying and mysterious knocking sound. It turned out, on the removing of a panel, that some wag at the factory had used a bit of wire and a piece of an orange crate to rig up something to annoy the future purchaser of the car."

I wonder if any other owners have made similar finds on Jaguars? This is similar to a story I have heard once or twice about other makes, but I don't recall such a story about a Jaguar before.

Regards

John Elmgreen - Jaguar XK Motoring Historian
Sydney, Australia

Co-author of:

The Jaguar XK120 in the Southern Hemisphere (still available, by the way, at www.jtpublications.com.au).



Rudy Zimmerman writes: I purchased this 1956 XK140 Drop Head Coupe in January, 2015 from a private seller in California, with 62,000 miles on it. It's a numbers-matching car, except for the transmission. Sometime in its life it was modified with an automatic transmission, vacuum assisted brakes, power steering and air conditioning. In 2016, I replaced the automatic transmission with a 4-speed/overdrive manual gearbox from an XK150. The seat coverings and carpeting were replaced in 2017. In 2019, I replaced the power steering with the proper rack and pinion steering. The car has participated in the 2017 and 2018 New England British Reliability Run.

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April 2020



David Wesson writes: 1957 XK150 OTS, purchased in 1999. Hard to believe it has been so long. We like to make scenic lunch runs with another couple who also have interesting cars. The Jag shares a 3-car garage with 2 Packards. Fall is the best time to drive it!



Ken Lemoine writes: I bought this car in December, 2018. I bought the original version of it in 1973 when I was a junior in college. The day I put it on the road was the day I met my wife. I sold that car when I bought my house in 1978. This car cost more than that house did in 1978. It is one of the last five XK150s shipped to the US before they built the first XKE.



Ralph Murray writes: I have owned this 1959 XK150 OTS 3.4 with 4-speed/overdrive (SN 830052 – the 52nd LHD OTS built) since 1979. I took it apart, sent out the body, had the interior redone, collected all the necessary parts, chrome, etc. etc. and put it back together in the Fall of 1980. Did a major engine rebuild, rewiring in the mid 1990s. I am the 3rd owner. The car has 75,000 on the clock – I have put on about 40,000 of them in my 40 years with the car.



Marguerite and Russ Dennis and their Grandson in July 4th, 2018 parade in Cotuit, MA

Photo courtesy of Russ Dennis





Stu Forer writes: I bought this XK120 in 2003 from Dave Sturdevant, who had raced it in SCCA. I had previously had an Aston Martin DB2/4MKIII which my son flipped twice at Lime Rock due to a mechanical failure. I decided at that time that I wanted a vintage race car that was a fresh build. JANE member John Fuller and I had two similar XK120s built for vintage racing. Since 2004, the car has entered at least four VSCCA races each year. It has won many races and concours. Despite the fact that I am 78 years old, I will continue to race it in 2020. My first event is the Spring Sprints at Lime Rock on May 1st and 2nd. All JANE members are welcome and there is no admission charge. Ex JANE president Michael Kaleel and possibly John Feng will be at the KTR transporter as well.

Photo by: Ed Hyman



Two JANE 1958 XK150s meet for lunch in Naples, FL in January. The cars brought their owners, Jim & Gena Collins and Margurite Dennis along.

Photo by: Russ Dennis

1964 Jag MKII, 62,000 miles, silver blue with original dark blue int., automatic trans., very good looking,



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1956 XK-140- around 62,000 miles, black with beige int., four wheel power disc brakes and power steering, alternator, five speed, chrome wire wheels, This car has a MC Series head and up rated. For more information, please call John Hall at 774-551-6837.



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