

WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER 2016 NEWSLETTER

XK update, upgrade or upstage

Making your Jaguar XK do what you want



"What can I do to improve my XK", is one of the most common questions we get. The first question we ask is "What do you want?" Replies generally fall into two main categories - comfort/convenience or better performance but often both. On one hand we get things like lighter steering, brighter lights and better gear change, and on the other; more power, better gearing, more gears and better

brakes with a lot of variations in between.

However there is another factor in the equation we need to consider before we can answer, and that is the driver. There are basically three types of XK owner: the purists who want to keep their cars as original as possible, the pragmatists who want to overcome the problems that Jaguar could not overcome when their cars were new and the performers who want every part performing to the highest possible level irrespective of originality.

I do not intend to debate the rights and wrongs of modifying cars away from their original specification - that would take forever and we would never all agree. However as I am constantly asked by owners from the three groups what advice I would give them to make their cars better, faster, easier to drive, stop quicker, be warmer, have better lights, etc, etc, I will try and give some ideas for you to mull over. In other words what is possible. However there is not room to go into great detail in just one newsletter so I have put in some links to where you can find more information. But of course we are always at the end of a phone or email to help you. If you have something you want to follow up on - just let us know.



This may sound obvious but if you have an issue with your car - be it poor performance, bad brakes, wandering steering or whatever - you should first make sure that those issues are not due to lack of maintenance or assume that they are normal. For example drum brakes often get criticised for their poor performance when all they need is servicing. Likewise

steering and suspension can spoil the enjoyment of a car because a bush or bearing needs replacing. Particularly now that the MOT test (the UK annual safety inspection for vehicles) is no longer applicable to all but a few late XK150s, worn components can easily be overlooked.

Factory Updates

When the XK120 was first unveiled in 1948 it featured the latest technology of the day: in particular the engine design. Having said that brakes, steering and gearbox had progressed little since the 1930s, nor had the electrics or lighting. Its performance made the 120 a popular car to race, and racing is always good for the breed. Working with Dunlop, Jaguar became the first car manufacturer to line-fit disc brakes after having developed them with the C-type in racing. Rack and pinion steering found itself a standard feature on the XK140 having proved its merits in the C-type too. However I don't propose to go through all the mods that Jaguar introduced through the XK range. If you want to find out more details on this, Philip Porter's excellent book *Original Jaguar XK* is your best bedtime reading.

So let's look at some of the areas where upgrades are possible/available starting with wheels.

Wheels



The most common modification on early XK120s years ago was to change the disc wheels to wires. However today disc wheel cars are quite sought after but if you do want to do this then you will need to replace the wheel hubs with splined ones and kits are available. There are also body mods to be done as the rear spats can't be used with wires. There is a wide choice of wire wheels including varying widths and finishes. This means that you can fit wider tyres, which is particularly important if you are

racing.

Carburettors



One of the most effective ways to give an engine more power is to get more air and fuel into it. Fitting larger carburettors or more of them is the easiest way to do this. SU carburettors were fitted to all XKs with twins on all but late 150 S models, which had three, as on the E-type. There are several possible conversions to larger carburettors or triple fitments and the ultimate is to fit triple twin choke Webers if you like power and pumping gas.

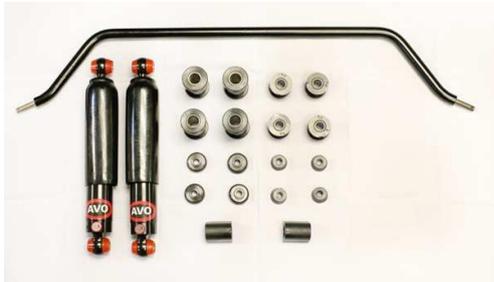
Electrics



The wiring on XKs is hidden away and old wiring poses both a fire and reliability hazard. Rewiring is often the answer and for this our replacement loom is a must. As to upgrading, then replacing dynamos with alternators or fitting high power lightweight starters are two popular mods. Converting from positive to negative earth is also something that can be necessary in some cases.

Electronic ignition means no points to worry about and the ultimate ignition conversion is the fully adjustable electronic distributor. Improving the car's lighting speaks for itself.

Axles and Suspension



There is not a lot you can do to the front suspensions of XKs if all is in good order. Polybushes are a low cost and simple way to improve the front end, with a pair of adjustable front shock absorbers considered a must by many. Our front suspension upgrade kits include poly bushes, AVO shock absorbers and a heavier anti roll bar. These

transform the handling and are great mods. Various rear axles as well as many different axle ratios were used through the years but these are not as interchangeable as might be imagined - so check before you try to swap an axle or differential. Fitting our uprated links to 120 lever arm shockers is another good upgrade but better still change to telescopic rear dampers.

Five speed gearbox conversion



Moss gearboxes are not everybody's cup of tea. Not only do you need a certain expertise to be able to change gear without crunching but also the ratios are far from ideal for today's traffic. Four years went into the development and testing of our five speed gearbox conversion with its direct bolt on case and it features all new components.

This upgrade makes gear changes a joy - unless of course you are a purist and just love to play tunes on the throttle double declutching through the box.

Cylinder heads and exhaust



Although the XK engine was produced for decades, it was regularly upgraded and over the years with several different cylinder heads fitted - each giving a bit more power than the previous one. Fitting a better head is a good way to upgrade but it is not always a direct swap. Our exhaust manifold options and stainless exhaust systems give more power and improve the looks of your car.

Engine blocks



Like the heads, various blocks were used on XKs and of course capacity went from 3.4 to 3.8 and later in the E-type to 4.2 litre. Knowing the differences is important if you are changing engines.

Brakes



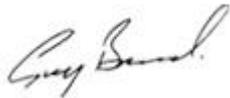
Drum brakes were standard to XK120s and 140s with disc brakes introduced on the XK150. Although well maintained drum brakes are pretty efficient, if used heavily they do suffer from fade (diminished performance when hot). They can also be prone to pulling to one side or the other. The answer is to fit front discs on 120s and 140s. The disc brakes on the 150 were on all four wheels but modern calipers are far superior. Our front disc and caliper upgrade includes the three piston caliper as used in our 120/140 kits, which is far superior to the original 150 unit. Steel braided brake hoses are not only more durable but also they make the pedal firmer. A brake servo (booster) kit reduces the pedal pressure needed so makes driving more pleasant and our kit comes with all necessary parts to fit it.

Other items



As well as the major items mentioned, there are numerous smaller upgrades we offer to improve performance or make maintenance easier. For example replacing the old paper oil filter with a modern cartridge filter means less mess and better filtration. Lightweight alloy fuel tanks and radiators save weight and in the case of the radiators help cooling, as do our special upgraded engine cooling

fans. XK120 and 140 wipers are like something from the dark ages but our wiper upgrade kit has a high performance motor and can be wired for two speeds. The heaters too on the 120 and 140 were grim but we offer a heater replacement to make winter driving far more tolerable. I hope this has given you a bit of a better understanding of what is available to update or upgrade your XK. Whether this will enable you to upstage anyone remains to be seen. Our kits are available for you or your garage to fit but we can of course do the whole job for you. If you do replace any of the original parts then do put the old items away in a safe place. One day you might find a buyer for your car who is one of the purists I mentioned. He may well want to bolt back those parts that you have taken off or at least keep them with the car.



Rallying - Preparation & Safety First

Rallies are great fun, but before you take part you need to ensure that the preparation work on your XK has been done. We can all take part in our cars, you just have to decide the level at which you wish to participate, and your budget of course. Before participating at any level there are a few safety preps I would advise you to check first.

Most of the preparation for a Classic rally is common sense. However, you can experience a lack of local garages and facilities to take pity on you should you falter at the roadside. So here are my top safety tips.

- 1) Fit a safety cutt-off switch for the XK electrics and position it so that both the driver and passenger can access it. I would suggest that It should be just behind the seat or under the dash.
- 2) Check the wiring harness and battery cables. When routed through metal panels, they should all pass through rubber grommets. Wiring should be tidy and clean. Inspect all connectors for corrosion and fit new ones if in doubt - we have too many customers with tales of fire damage due to the lack of an inexpensive grommet!
- 3) Check the ignition system and keep spare spark plugs and caps with you. Preferably use watertight plug caps and good quality high tension leads.
- 4) Make sure the battery or batteries are, the correct size and amperage for your XK and also that they are fixed securely. Ensure that there is no possibility of metal objects shorting across the terminals - for example, tools inside the battery box area of an XK 120.
- 5) Fit a fire extinguisher in the cabin area where it can be easily accessed.
- 6) If possible, fit seat belts and make sure they are fitted very securely and work correctly, as per the manufacturers' instructions. You might not believe it, but we have seen seat belt

anchor points fitted through wooden floorboards. All this means is that you, the seat and the floor will leave the car together!

7) Check the braking system closely or have it checked by a professional as this is THE most important part of the car. Spend some time getting the handbrake working properly because you will need it on a rally. Check wheels, spokes, tubes and tyres. Make sure they are correct for the car and are properly fitted. They have to do more than just look good.

8) Check the fuel system for leaks and replace gaskets if necessary. Don't just tighten joints if you have a leaking union or carburettor. Make sure the flexible hoses are of the correct specification and are in perfect condition. Insulate electrical cable connections that are close to any fuel system components, and fit a fuel shut-off valve for extra safety.

If anything else should fail on a rally or a tour, it is an annoying setback but, hopefully, not a tragedy or a catastrophe.