

# John Williams - An XK120 Rebuild

- # Jaguar XK120 open 2-seater
- # Manufacture date 7 September 1951
- # Dispatched ten days later to Hoffman's USA
- # I bought the wreck 40 years later.

## The Story

We had recently arrived back from the UK, the building industry had collapsed over there like a set of dominoes falling, after the 'dot.com' bubble burst.

The day before we arrived back in Adelaide the State Bank collapsed. So, we were cash strapped, the money should have been spent on a set of garden swings and trampoline for our 3 young children.

For some unfathomable reason the money went on a rusty wreck much of which was in cardboard boxes stuffed in

the boot. I had been through the process before when I was 17 with a similarly rusty wreck of an Austin Healey 100/4 and with even less cash to spend on a reassembly. So not a total beginner.

## Step 1

Day one of the project: join the JDCSA and suddenly the doors are open to a whole wealth of encyclopaedic knowledge and tried and tested practical experience.

Thank you again to all those current and past members who very patiently answered innumerable evening phone calls on how to do something.

## Step 2

Cut the body in half and use an over hanging tree branch to block and tackle the body off the chassis. The 2 bits went down to 'Big John' at Noarlunga who

had a 'big shed' big enough to sand blast large maritime board offshore buoys.

When I got the call to come down and see the results of the sand blasting, 'Big John's' first question was, "what do you want me to do with it now?"

It was obvious that the first 40 odd Ohio winters with liberally strewn rock salt on the roads had taken its toll.

## Step 3

Go on holiday. We took the whole family back to the UK, hired a car and visited every known supplier of XK bits. At the time I didn't know that there was a wealth of Jag bits in cardboard boxes at the back recesses of wrecker's yards in South Australia.

Coming back through customs after a 24hr flight with 3 young children in hand and trolley load of bits and a



*The de-construction*



*Shot-blast and paint*



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couple of XK cills strapped to a rope across my shoulder, there was a look of pained bewilderment on the face of the customs officer, nothing was said, he just waved me through.

## Step 4, 5 and 6

The usual: -

- Weld the bits back together again.
- Get the block machined.



*The re-assemble*

- Look at the Popular Mechanics magazine on how to rebuild an XK engine on a budget.
- Bolt the things back together and assemble on chassis.
- Take the rolling chassis for a careful spin with a timber crate for a seat screwed to the ply floor panel.
- Brakes, steering, engine all work.
- Order 2 or 3 times the quantity of paint you would normally need, and then teach yourself by trial and error how to spray paint a car.

## Step 7

Test drive. Take the car for its very first test run to Broken Hill (XK Border Run) on what seemed like the hottest day of the year.

On the way do a speed test on one of those more remote endless straight roads. As the needle rose on the speedo, we felt a warm wet sensation on our laps.



*The best part - driving the XK120 OTS regularly*



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Those shiny new stainless-steel core (welsh) plugs, (that the machine shop said would be much better than those thick old rusty soft metal ones used by Jaguar), had come flying out under a muted 3.5 lbs pressure or there abouts.

Now there is nothing better to make the day of a pack of Border Runners than a full-blown breakdown in the middle of the Australian Outback.

As luck would have it there was some serious SA Jaguar 'royalty' to hand, some going back as far as the inception of JDCSA and beyond.

A Jaguar 'workshop tool' part no. 47A mod B was fashioned from a star dropper found in the adjoining paddock and bent to the required angle (to get under

that impossible tight space behind a hot exhaust manifold) by one of the more beefier Jaguar experts. Stick the end of the star dropper up the hollow part of a tow bar fitting at the rear of an XJ6, and lean on it heavily.

Luckily, I had premonition that something like this might happen and had some nice soft thick brass replacement core plugs jangling like loose change in my pocket.

Happy days and something I'm afraid you never live down.

Driving partners then kindly but very reluctantly gave up the contents of their water bottles to refill the radiator and we were on our way again.

[Step 8, 9, 10 etc.](#)

Keep driving your car regularly, the more trips we do the fewer surprises there are, hopefully.

In the last 30 years my XK has done 4 Classic Adelaide's, numerous border runs, weekend return trips to Canberra and the like; virtually trouble free. Thanks again to all you members that have made this car journey possible, without you it would have been a different story.

**John Williams**

*Editor: Great story John. Thank you very much. Another special Jaguar rescued from the wreckers.*



*John Williams - My favourite XK photo*