

An XK120 at The Crossroads - By David Seidel

The year was 1978 and I had just sold my sand & metal business which Carol and I had taken over from my father.

The introduction of Readymix Concrete had been the main deciding factor in our decision – changes had to be made. The sale took only one week after we had decided to close. My former employer, Duncan & Co had said to me 10 years earlier that if our business didn't work out, I could always go back. So, the decision was made to contact Duncan & Co. It took 5 long weeks for me to slot back into the old firm as a spare parts representative.

In the meanwhile, funds were getting low and I needed something to generate some income for my family.

Enter the XK120

By this time, I had amassed over the last 10 or so years an enviable and vast amount of Jaguar parts and cars. I had



about 25-30 engines, gearboxes, panels, associated woodwork and hardware, mainly 1937-1968. In other words, I had the lot, the sheds were full.

Then a project came up. I heard that an XK120 was being offered for sale in a damaged state "as is". It had hit another vehicle side on (T-boned) and in all probability would be wrecked by one of Adelaide's premier wreckers should he decide to purchase it.

I made a quick phone call and, as I knew the manager, I was given the contact details for the owner of the Jag. Within a very short time I had inspected the XK120 and was horrified. It was a gruesome sight, totalled seemingly beyond repair, so I bought it for my next project (with Carol's approval).

Upon purchase, it took over four hours to carefully winch it onto my car trailer, arriving home after dark. At home in the cold light of day this is what confronted me: the chassis was bent severely to the left, taking the steering with it; the radiator and grille were both mashed around the front of the motor; the two windscreens had both been head-hit and broken; the steering wheel had been impaled and broken and the splined part at the top of the shaft was bent; the engine and gearbox were in situ; the front of the bonnet and grille and both mudguards were all crushed, together with the two bumperettes.

So where do I start?

The front panels were cut and removed just in front of the bulkhead. That left the bulkhead intact with the windscreens. The radiator was also wrapped around the water pump which had the boat type



An XK120 at The Crossroads (Cont)

propeller fan embedded into it. After some further dismantling it became much clearer as to the amount of damage to the chassis and steering. The torque bars on each side were also bent at right angles. I had managed to find a spare straight chassis and a pair of rear spats in Adelaide (just in case they were needed).

My Next Step

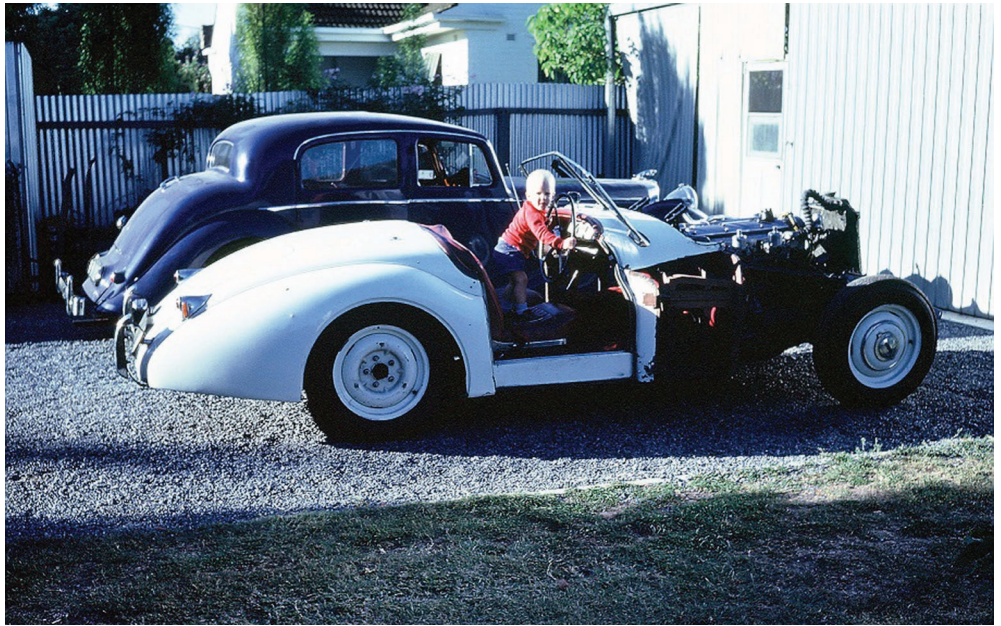
I contacted Max Sierp, who apart from being a major Volkswagen dealer located at Gepps Cross and specialised in chassis repairs on large trucks.

After he had a look, he stopped laughing and agreed to straighten out the chassis if I first took out the engine and gearbox and other frame items before taking the car to him. He was confident that he could not only repair the frame but also remake the crushed bracketry at the very tip of the frame.

This work commenced and took place over a period of some months. I ended up being able to supply from my stock all the damaged front-end components, large and small as he progressed with the straightening. In the end I got back a super straight rolling chassis which I could then build on.

The Engine and Gearbox

All the engine mountings were sheared off. I had a complete set. The sump was split and the bell housing cracked. The tail-shaft was also replaced along with the clutch pilot bearing and after



David and Carol Seidel's son Heath playing cars like his dad.

checking all other clutch components and the gearbox, they all restored well.

The Water Pump and Radiator

The water pump and fan blades (old type) were needing replacement and as luck had it I had some. After this I turned my attention to the radiator. A new core was sourced in Adelaide and the top and bottom tanks were carefully dent knocked, resoldered and assembled by a master radiator craftsman in Norwood.

I had even written to the Marston Radiator Works in England to see if they could supply new tanks but I received no reply. I found a near new grille in Adelaide.

The steering box

This proved to be a problem as the brass nut and worm in the steering box appeared at first glance to be the same as the MkV, but the worm and thread were different. After replacing the bearings and seals in the box, I still would have liked it to turn a little smoother.

At the other end of the steering shaft there is a fine spline for steering wheel adjustment which had been bent and was proving a problem to repair until John Skinner, a club member who had a specialist machine shop, took it under his wing and made a special tool to true it up. He then proceeded to chase out any damaged splines with a special piece of equipment to make a fine repair. This was successful.

I also had the correct diameter steering wheel (the MkV and VII both were the wrong diameter).

The windscreens

After taping these over I removed the old glass from each windscreen and had new ones cut which I fitted into the frames.

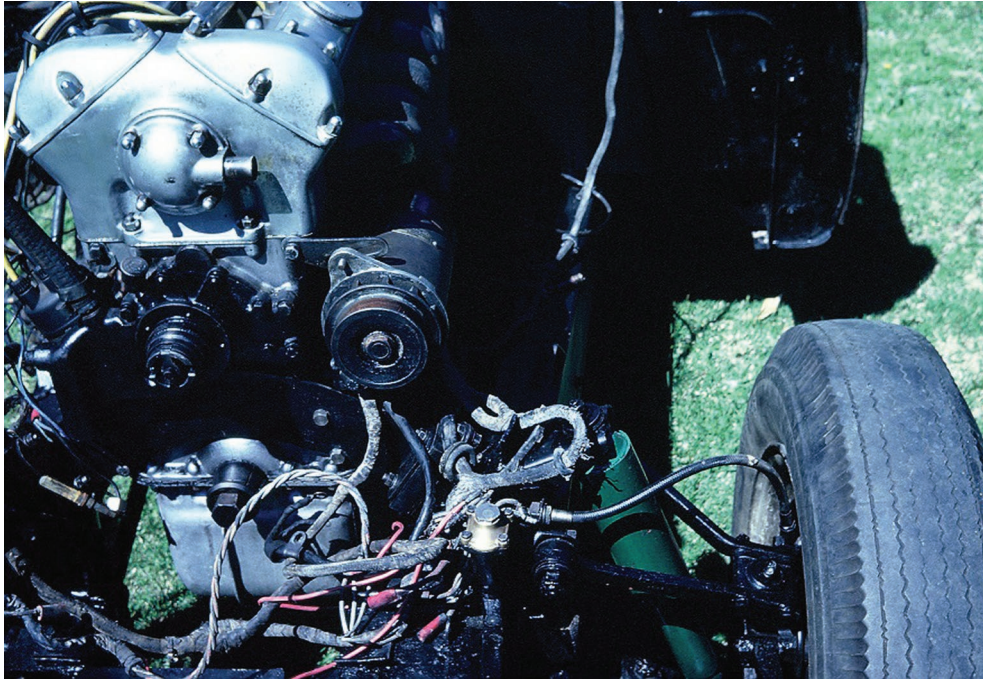
The bodywork

What a problem! The fronts of the two front fenders and the bonnet front needed repair and re-rolling. I encountered some hotshots who swore that they could make these panels, but being aluminium, they needed special and very skilful reworking.

(continued page 28).



An XK120 at The Crossroads (Cont)



To assist them, I supplied the complete headlights and pods as well as a grille but they still messed me around. I received much help at this time from a very trusting club member in Julian Lugg who had taken off his XK120 cowl and panels from his car and had lent them to me so that I could show these motor mouths what the correct shape should be.

Still no help or results. I soon discovered that their metalworking skills left a lot to be desired and that they would have had difficulty in opening a breakfast cereal box, so I took everything back from them and returned the front panels to Julian with much appreciation and many thanks. To this day I have not forgotten Julian's kindness.

The end is near...

My goal was in sight, but funds were getting low. I had by this time assembled the motor and gearbox back in the chassis and carefully folded the wiring loom up out of the way. Then I correctly wired up the engine to a running driving condition with no coolant leaks and good oil pressure.

This stage was a real achievement and a very successful project for me to save this XK120 from sure destruction. All the parts needed to resurrect this car from certain death were from my own stock in South Australia. The expertise needed was likewise forthcoming from very talented tradespeople (with one exception as previously stated) and

much help from JDC members, all in South Australia.

From memory, I sold the car, with all remaining parts and panels to complete the car, to some interstate enthusiasts and I hope it was finished to a high

standard and enjoyed – it deserved to be. As previously stated, I originally purchased this as a fund-raiser and it was not an easy decision to sell it, even at this stage.

Also, from memory (which is not as reliable as it used to be) I wrote a detailed story of this car in the Classic Marque in the year 1978. If you do happen to chance upon that article and it is a little different, I hope you will excuse me.

This was an epic period in our family's life which was undertaken over many months with much support from my wife Carol. When things seemed all too much, she gave me encouragement to continue on with this difficult rebuild.

I close with these thoughts: make the most of your membership of the Jaguar Drivers' Club of SA, have fun with your Jaguar and enjoy it.

David Seidel.

Editor: Thank you David once again for your ongoing stories. Another Jaguar saved from destruction.

