

## WELCOME TO OUR WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER



Welcome to another Newsletter, which we hope will now become a regular and informative communication. We aim to bring you information, not only on new products but also on sometimes overlooked parts that have a dramatic effect on the performance and safety of our XKs.

### "It's an old car"

While vast amounts of effort go into the body, paint, interior and chrome, I am always a little frustrated that the best driving experience can be dismissed by the often sweeping statement I hear, "it's an old car, what can you expect?"

### Safe at 100 mph

Well, truthfully you should expect quite a lot. Even an early XK120, properly rebuilt to standard specification, can easily exceed 100mph safely and should provide rewarding and safe fun. So many times I test drive a very pretty looking XK only to be rather disappointed, and in some cases even scared to exceed 60mph!

### Stirling Moss Skills

If your XK shows signs of needing 'Stirling Moss' skills just to navigate 50mph sweeping roads, then it's time to treat the car to some professional help. Not only will it be the best thing you could do for the car but also will give you much more value return in performance and investment.

### Wake up to winter

The last Newsletter looked forward to summer, with some suitable tips. As winter, at least at this end of the globe, looms up at us, I have included some, I hope, useful advice about putting away your car or, for the more intrepid, upgrading your electrics. Mind you, there is nothing to stop you doing both.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Guy Bond".

## BROAD REPORTS: LAYING UP FOR WINTER

Most of the summer rallies are now behind us, here in the UK at least. The evenings are getting darker, the weather less pleasant and for some it may be time to start thinking about putting the XK into hibernation for another year.



Leaving the car in the garage, even for a while, without regular use does need a little preparation. If you are in the colder parts of the world, the first job is to ensure that you have either antifreeze in the cooling system or have drained it. The same goes for the screen washer - broken screen washer bottles are an expensive alternative to screen wash additive.

The next piece of advice may come as a surprise and that is to leave as little fuel in the car as possible. Modern petrol (gasoline) seems to go off rather quickly and leave a crystal-like powder behind, which can block jets and filters. I was at Silverstone recently where an XK owner was having problems with fuel overflowing from his SUs. We took off the float chamber tops and all looked well. But the residue from modern fuels is difficult to see and, when we cleaned out the float chambers, there was a lot of white powder that was causing the problem. Less fuel in the tank means less risk of blockages.

Beware of rodents too. One little mouse can do untold damage to the hood, trim or wiring and many a trimmer has been kept in business by the little critters. Experience shows that the best way to deal with them is to leave some traditional 'Little Nipper' traps around the garage or even in the car and use melted chocolate in place of the traditional cheese. Trust me; it works!



Some owners drain the oil before laying a car up but I prefer to change the oil ready to start a new season. However, if you do drain the oil or water and leave the car dry - tape a warning sign across the steering wheel so you don't forget and run the car without oil or water in it. I have to say that I prefer to have the car in full running order the whole time and at least once a month start it up. If you do this, first take it outside so you are not gassed but also run the car long enough so that everything is brought up to temperature. If you can't take it on the road try and make sure that you get as much temperature into the exhaust as you can to dry out the condensation that will inevitably get into it from not getting everything up to temperature.

Finally tyres: some suggest putting the car on axle stands to prevent flat spots occurring but I prefer to make sure the tyres are properly inflated and kept so. If you have got room then move the car occasionally so it does not always sit on the same part of the tyre treads.

### **Boosting your electrics**

The electrical system on an XK was the best in its day. That was before Kenlowe fans, quartz halogen bulbs and other electrical gadgets commonly found on XKs today. With the aforementioned items on your car, you will find that on a wet night with everything on, the ammeter will show a discharge even at high revs. That means a potential flat battery and wet nights are not a good time to break down.

But it is not just the charging rate. Batteries are a subject which I get quite animated about. I don't know how many owners I have come across who have bought two six volt batteries for MGBs and put them in their XK120 or 140s. Yes, they do look the same and initially work if everything is OK and the car starts easily. Inevitably they will let you down. My advice is to forget the twin lead acid six volt batteries and go for a single, modern, gel-type 12 volt battery, which will fit into one of the battery boxes. All you have to do is to change the earth lead and you have a much more powerful battery 1200 amps cranking and one that never needs topping up and lasts for many years. A no-brainer really unless you are ultra concours and must use the original type batteries.



However, even this type of battery needs charging. So if you have got an electric fan and quartz halogen lights then you need to change the dynamo for an alternator. There are various conversions on the market but to keep the under-bonnet looking correct, you can get one which is built into a Lucas dynamo body so it looks original.

Now your car has capacity for some more electrical items, you can upgrade your lights and even fit an indicator kit and electric washer pump all of which we can supply.



The other item worth considering changing is the starter motor. The lightweight high output unit we offer is not only half the weight of the original but more importantly draws less current and has 20% more cranking power.

My final plea with regard to electrics is to look at your wiring. To be honest, 50-year-old wiring in almost every case is potentially dangerous. The insulation has degraded to such a state that it often just crumbles away, leaving bare live wires near to the bare metal of the car. At best this could mean a blown fuse, at worst the car on fire and you could be driving at speed when it happens! It amazes me that people who would never dream of having such old wiring in their house are happy to have it in their cherished XK.



The thought of having their car rewired horrifies most XK owners but in actual fact it is not nearly as expensive as they fear and they can do most of it themselves, even if they are not electrically-minded. Because our wiring looms are made up in the same way as the original, when you fit one in the chassis it is obvious where most of the wires go. The cable colours are authentic so a wiring diagram will help with the rest. I do, however, recommend that before the battery is connected, you get an auto electrician to give the wiring a once over to make sure it is correct.

*Gray Beard*

## IN THE WORKSHOP

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We have three cars of particular interest in the workshop at the moment. The first is a C-type which we are rebuilding after it met a lamp post in Malta during a race there. Most of the damage is to the front suspension.

An ex-Dick Protheroe alloy XK120 is also with us to be prepared for rallying. Amongst the work we are doing is fitting all-weather equipment ready for its first rally this autumn.

The third car is an XK150S Roadster. This is having extensive Broadsport upgrades. The work we are carrying out includes fitting a five-speed gearbox, power steering and upgrading the brakes and electrics.

Possibly the biggest job we have at the moment is on an XK120 OTS, which has come from Malaysia. This car was a real disappointment. Externally it looked really good but, as we know, looks can be deceptive. The bodywork and paint had been really well done but underneath was a different story. Amongst the horrors were bits of suspension fitted the wrong way round and the rewiring was dreadful. The car has a new owner now and we are doing a complete chassis-up rebuild. The car will be prepared to road rally specification and the work will include a five-speed gearbox and disc brake conversion.