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1951 JAGUAR XK120 LT2 SILVERSTONE

1951 Jaguar Works Lightweight LT2 XK120

- Prepared by the works team as a back-up for Le Mans 1951
- One of two lightweight single piece magnesium alloy bodies finished by Jaguar
- SCCA race histoxry- 2nd in class at 1951 Elkhart Lake, 4th in class at 1952 Pebble Beach and 1954 win in Aspen
- Repatriated to the UK and raced for nearly 50 years
- Recent CKL restoration

One of three lightweights prepared by Jaguar as a standby for the 1951 Le Mans – with unique magnesium-alloy coachwork. Raced in period by Jaguar importer Charles Hornburg and others, LT2 is an exceptionally important survivor from Jaguar's era of 1950s Le Mans victories.

With readiness of the new C-Type an open question, Jaguar head William Lyons ordered construction of three special lightweight XK120s to guarantee Jaguar's appearance at Le Mans. Three special bodies were constructed by Abbey Panels, in light magnesium alloy formed around a tubular steel framework, making the LTs the sole *superleggera* Jaguar and entirely different from the standard production alloy cars.

Built up alongside the new C-Types, unique features abound. Sharing its gorgeous silhouette with the XK but with the resemblance terminating there, the magnesium alloy coachwork is all in one piece with no boot lid or bonnet, and a lift-out panel gives engine access. Rear wings integral with the body fully enclose the aft section, shallower doors compared to a standard 120 sit above externally visible sills, and undertrays improve underbody airflow.

Other special fitments included an enormous 40-gallon fuel tank for Le Mans, a large quick-release filler, alloy-rimmed Dunlop wire wheels shared with the C-Type, and alloy bucket seats. Mounted on a standard XK120 chassis with the 3.4L XK straight-six engine, two were completed by Jaguar (LT2 and LT3), the third (LT1) remaining unfinished until purchased by Jaguar's own Bob Berry for his own chassis. The C-Types were in fact ready in time, capturing the first of Jaguar's famous five Le Mans victories of the 1950s, and LT2 and LT3 remained at the factory. LT2 on chassis 660748 was finished in Racing Green with Suede Green interior.

LT2 and LT3 were spotted on a June 1951 factory visit by Charles (Chuck) H. Hornburg Jr., Jaguar's west coast distributor. With a Bel Air home and a dealership on Sunset Boulevard, Hornburg pioneered Jaguar's crucial United States market, famously declaring "I'll take them all" after seeing the new XK120. A believer in "Race on Sunday, sell on Monday," a Hornburg XK120 with Phil Hill gave Jaguar its first American win at the inaugural Pebble Beach Road Races of May 1950. Thus LT2 and LT3 were shipped to America looking to continue his winning streak and promote Jaguar sales, given the very unofficial moniker "Silverstone."

Collected on arrival by Phil Hill and Argentinian Jorge Malbrand, the pair were driven to Wisconsin for their debut at Elkhart Lake on August 26, 1951. Malbrand in LT2 finished second in Class C and fourth overall, and might have won but for a spin, and Phil Hill in LT3 third overall. At Reno Nevada's State Cup in October, racer Bill Breeze got the LT2 drive – but an off after 16 laps resulted in a broken collarbone for the SCCA pioneer, LT2 reappearing next season. Sherwood Johnston (later with the Briggs Cunningham team) raced LT2 to seventh at the Pebble Beach Road Race of April '52, and eighth overall and fourth in Class 3 at San Francisco's National Golden Gate races in May.

Sold on after San Francisco, LT2 entered a twenty-year period in Colorado, briefly with Whipple Jones of Aspen before joining Charles Fifield, whose wife Marjorie was the sister of noted team owner Temple Buell. Around this time, LT2 received a C-Type

style nose (possibly to address overheating difficulties). She appeared at events in 1954-55 including the Aspen Road Races (winning the over 1500cc class in '54), Torrey Pines, Pebble Beach again (second in Class CM in '55), the brilliantly-named Buffalo Bill Hill Climb at Lookout Mountain (first overall and first in class in '55), the Cheyenne Races and the Denver Naval Air Station.

Around 1957 LT2 was acquired by Paul and Adrienne Wigton, of Brighton, Colorado. Owners of a repair shop and important figures in the early years of Continental Divide Raceways in Castle Rock, the lightweight was raced by both Wigtons until around 1965, with an engine swap to American V8 power. Amazingly Sir Stirling Moss drove LT2 when invited to the track and signed the tail of LT2 – with the signature possibly hidden under paintwork to this day.

Returned to the UK in 1973 by dealer racer Stephen Langton, certain restoration work was undertaken by Aubrey Finburgh's Classic Autos and by the fledgling Lynx, including reinstatement of the original-style nose. LT2's very long-term owner Chris Jacques (of the well-known toy and game maker Jaques of London) acquired her in 1976, in a sale arranged by the young Chris Keith-Lucas, and a restoration undertaken from 1984. On completion in 1988 she visited Jaguar's Chief Engineer Bill Heynes at his home in Warwickshire.

Jaques was fastidious, enthusiastic and historically minded, and the coming decades saw LT2's fame assured. A founder of the XK Racing Series of the Jaguar Enthusiasts Club, Jaques duly won the championship in LT2 in 1999 and 2000. Latterly LT2 raced including at Goodwood with Rob Newall, Le Mans Classic with Bill Meachem and Rob Newall, and Laguna Seca with Colin Youle. She was displayed at top concours including Pebble Beach, and even appeared with Alain de Cadenet in Victory by Design.

A regular visitor to specialists CKL Developments during this period, LT2 is accompanied by a technical report from expert Chris Keith-Lucas, who has known the car for decades.

LT2 is a highly significant artifact from the Jaguar's greatest era of success in long distance racing. Somewhere between an XK120 and a C-Type, and works prepared for Le Mans, she is fascinating to onlookers and outstanding to drive today. Eligible for any world-class collection, certain to be made welcome at all the world's greatest events.

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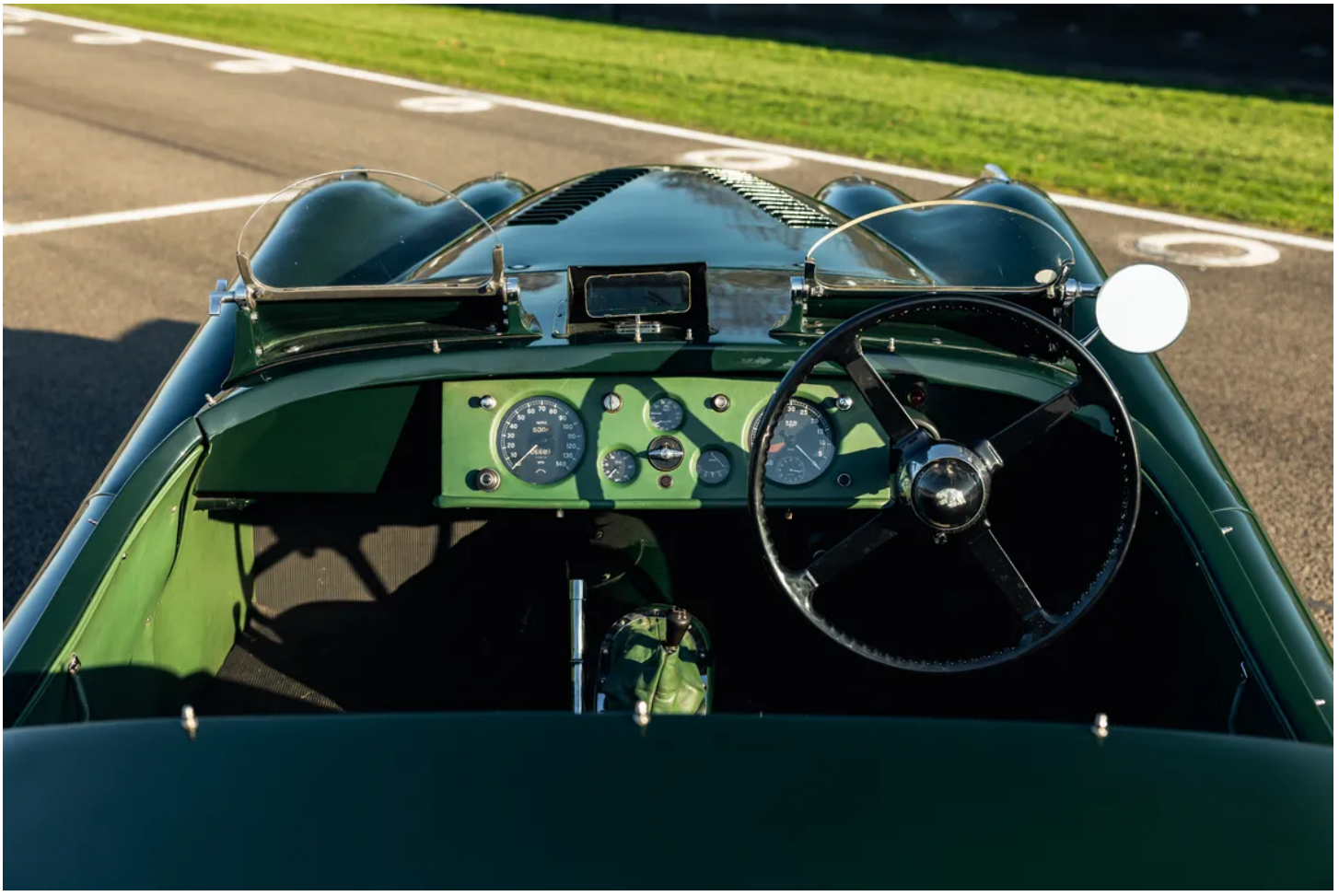

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