



JARRAH VENABLES



1955 Jaguar
D-type
XKD 545



Arguably Jaguar's most iconic and successful models
and one of the finest 1950s sports racing cars ever built

Just 71 D-types were constructed by Jaguar in period

Used many aeronautical principles in its design and construction
which proved groundbreaking in endurance racing

Hugely successful around the world with a hat-trick of
wins at Le Mans, plus in the 12 Hours of both Sebring &
Reims, not to mention countless successes elsewhere



Raced extensively between 1956-1964
in America, the Bahamas and Canada

Raced in the 1956 Sebring 12 Hours &
Nassau Speed Week

Winner of the 1956 Watkins Glen Sports
Car Grand Prix

Driven by Jake Kaplan, Russ Boss,
George & Mary Constantine, Bill Sadler,
John Cannon & Hugh Dixon

Fabulous provenance and continuous
history from new

Presented in superb road/race condition
with extensive spares



Right: Constantine on pole in XKD 545
for the 1956 Watkins Glen Sports Car





The Jaguar D-Type, like its successful forerunner the C-Type, was a factory-built race car intended for both works and customer use. Although it shared the same straight 6 XK engine (initially in 3.4-litre, then later in 3.8-litre form), it was radically different in both design and construction. Its alloy monocoque chassis copied a construction method commonplace in the aviation industry, yet it was revolutionary in motor sport. The chassis was essentially formed of two parts, its central monocoque plus a front subframe that was bolted to it and carried the engine, front suspension, brakes, bonnet etc. Another motor sport innovation copied from aviation was the use of a fuel safety bladder mounted within the monocoque.

The engine was dry-sumped and mounted at eight deg. in order to reduce the car's frontal area. This along with the smooth underbody, and on the works cars, a fin behind the drivers' head, greatly aided aerodynamic efficiency, which was of utmost importance to designer Malcolm Sayer, who had a background in aviation design. The D-Type's main goal was to achieve victory in the 24 Hours of Le Mans, plus other blue ribband endurance events such as the Reims and Sebring 12 Hours, so any increase in top speed was highly prized given the nature of these circuits. The D-type achieved a top speed of 172mph, considerably greater than that of its rivals. A dedicated production line was set up at the Browns Lane factory from which 51 customer cars were built in 1955, whilst 8 more were built by the separate Competitions shop (5 works cars, 2 for Ecurie Ecosse and 1 for Equipe National Belge).

A further 6 were built by the Competitions shop in 1956, totalling a production run of 71 D-types. During this time Jaguar had decided to build 25 unsold chassis into a limited run of 25 production road cars to be known as the XKSS. However a terrible factory fire destroyed 9 of the unbuilt monocoques and so just 16 XKSS were built in period.

The D-type made its competition debut at the 1954 Le Mans 24 Hours proving fast, but ultimately finishing second due to fuel filter issues caused by sand in the fuel. Just a few weeks later though Peter Whitehead and Ken Wharton scored it first victory in the Reims 12 Hours. Just six cars were built by Jaguar as works entries in 1954. By 1955 Jaguar had improved the design of the works cars by fitting a longer nose and longer fin. Both works and customer Jaguar D-types achieved countless successes across the globe during 1955-56, but Jaguar withdrew from racing at the end of 1956, leaving customers to campaign for honours.

Of course a few select teams enjoyed close works support, with Ecurie Ecosse being the top team. Indeed the team took back to back victories at Le Mans in 1956 and 1957, and the latter season was to prove the model's greatest at Le Mans with 5 of the top 6 positions filled by D-types.



XKD 545 was the 33rd customer D-type assembled, being completed sometime in November 1955. It received engine #E 2052-9, gearbox #GBD 153 and body #H 2045. Factory test driver Norman Dewis drove it at the MIRA test track on three separate occasions (as he did with every single D-type). Norman ran XKD 545 in for 200, then 75 then 30 miles respectively. Factory records show it was signed off as complete in early December and prepared for shipping to the USA on 16th December, as it had been allocated to Jaguar's US distributor, Max Hoffman. Hoffman specified a most attractive Pastel Blue paint with blue leather interior for the car.

In early 1956 XKD 545 was sold to its first owner, Jake Kaplan who wasted no time and entered his new car in the Sebring 12 Hours, co-driving with Russ Boss. The grid for Sebring was interestingly not set by qualifying times, but rather by engine displacement, from largest at the front to smallest at the back. Kaplan and Buss' D-type was one of 9 in the grid and they received race and grid number 12. The pair appeared to be running fairly well during the race, but retired after completing 120 laps due to brake issues. XKD 545 then next appeared at a Motor Press Day held at Thompson Raceway in Connecticut on 6th June where it was interestingly driven by no less than Briggs Cunningham amongst others, who gave rides to the press [quite why or how he came to drive it remains a mystery].

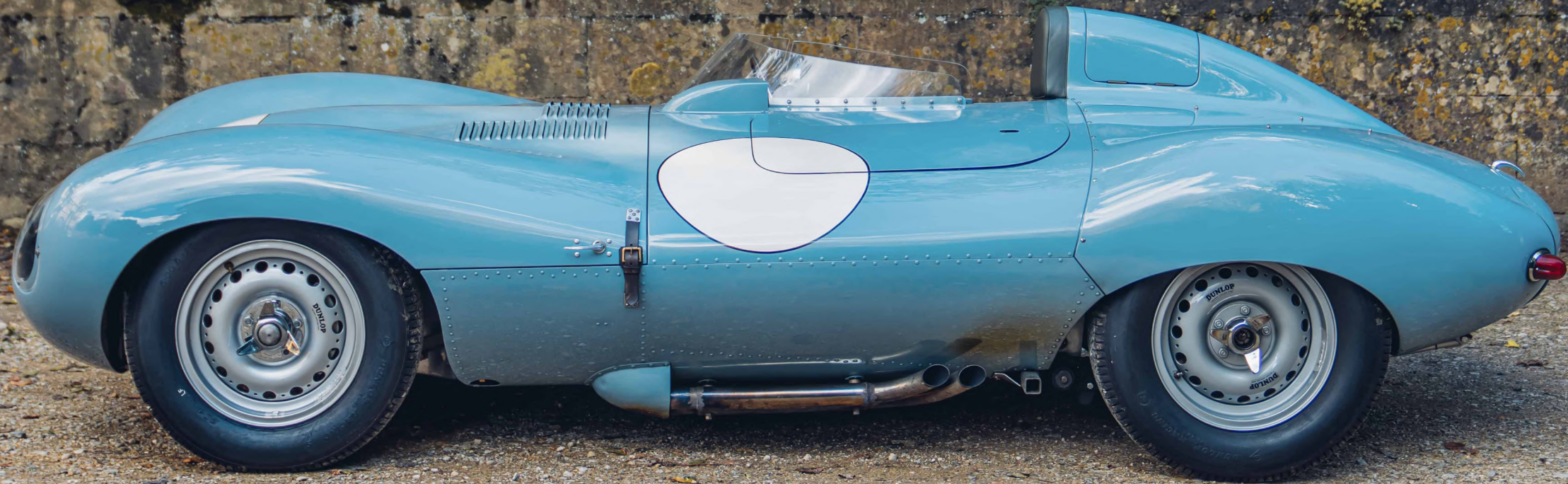


It is not known why Kaplan sold XKD 545 after only a few months, but he was running a burgeoning car dealership, so perhaps it was to dedicate his time to that enterprise. Interestingly Kaplan's Jaguar became one of the leading Jaguar dealerships in the USA, so he clearly had a strong passion for the brand. During summer 1956 XKD 545 was sold to well known SCCA racer George Constantine. His first race in it was at the Montgomery Airport Races on 19th August. However the car retired with mechanical woes. Constantine then raced the car in the SCCA Labor Day Meeting at Thompson Raceway, Connecticut on 1st/2nd September, finishing 3rd in one race, but retiring from the second race with the car locked in 3rd gear.

Two weeks later Constantine entered the car for the 1956 Watkins Glen Sports Car Grand Prix. This was to be a significant race being held on the newly redeveloped circuit. However construction delays meant the surface was only finished the day before, and a dispute between the SCCA and circuit management, caused the SCCA recommending to its members that they boycott the race due to the surface breaking up after qualifying (in which Constantine took pole in the main race). However a show of hands during the drivers' briefing showed all present wished to go ahead. Constantine romped away from the opposition to take victory having lapped all but 4 of the other drivers.

Right: XKD 545 at speed during the 1956 Sebring 12 Hours







On 12th October XKD 545 interestingly competed in the Jaguar Owners' Association event at Mont Gabriel Hill Climb in Canada where it finished 1st overall, although little is known about the other cars present. Constantine then ran XKD 545 again at Thompson Raceway where he finished an impressive 3rd behind John Fitch and Walt Hansgen, both also in D-types.

Constantine then had XKD 545 shipped down to Nassau in the Bahamas to participate in the Third Annual International Bahamas Speed Week. He entered two events, the Governor's Trophy (in which he finished 5th and the Nassau Trophy (finishing 5th again) whilst his wife Mary took 6th in the Ladies Race.

Thereafter Constantine used XKD 545 sporadically having bought an Aston Martin DB2/4. In 1957 he ran the D-type again at the SCCA Labor Day Event at Thompson Raceway, but retired. He then raced XKD 545 four more times, all in 1958, at Cumberland, Bridgehampton, Lime Rock and Montgomery, but retired from all four events, being involved in a multi-car tangle in one and being hit from behind in another. Late in 1958 he bought an Aston Martin DBR2, and sold the D-type to Bill Sadler of Canada. Sadler is only known to have competed in XKD 545 twice, during 1960, although may have used it more often. It is known that one race was the Carlin 300 at Harewood Acres, with the other race being the 6 Hour Sundown GP at the same circuit, although Sadler retired from both.

Left: Jake Kaplan (seated) talks with friends at the 1956 Sebring 12 Hours

In 1961 it was sold to fellow Canadian John Cannon who only used the car twice, albeit to great effect both times. Cannon won at Lime Rock, then again in the Grand Valley Grand National at Mosport, Canada. During his ownership Cannon repainted it cream.

In 1962 Cannon sold XKD 545 to Hugh Dixon who rebuilt the car painting it red with a 12 inch blue central stripe. Dixon raced it twice at Mosport (retiring) and St Eugene (result unknown), plus in two hill climbs at Mont Gabriel (3rd) and Mont Tremblant (3rd again). Presumably Dixon then stopped campaigning XKD 545 as it wasn't used up until 1967 when he sold it to the Vintage Car Store of Nyack, New York for \$3,900. The D-type was then next advertised in Motor Sport magazine in July 1969 for £2,750.

It was purchased by Peter Ashworth of England who rebuilt the car and in 1971 obtained the registration XKD 545J. Interestingly Ashworth raced XKD 545 at Mallory Park where it appears painted in cream again circa 1971. Ashworth used the car sparingly and around 1978 it was sold to Brian Classic, who presumably consigned it to Coys of Kensington. Bought from Coys by renowned Australian collector Peter Briggs of Perth, XKD 545 then spent over two decades in Australia as part of Briggs' York Motor Museum.



During this time it was partially restored by Classic Autocraft in Queensland and then completed in Perth. During the process it gained a tail fin and was painted dark green. Briggs then elected to sell the D-type via Christies' Pebble Beach auction in 2000. Renowned Brazilian collector and racer Carlos Monteverde then acquired XKD 545 and enjoyed it for just over 2 years before it briefly passed to Scott Gauthier of Scottsdale, Arizona, with whom it stayed for four years. Well known London dealer Gregor Fisker then sold the car to its penultimate owner Tony Pickering of the UK in 2007.

Pickering's son Gavin successfully campaigned the car with success in a variety of historic events throughout Europe, before XKD 545 passed to the current owner in 2014. Since then it has been campaigned with success in a variety of events in Europe, always being maintained with no expense spared. The car includes an impressive spares package including complete rebuilt wide-angle engine, another incomplete engine, original bonnet and door, a close ratio gearbox, rear axle plus many more items. In addition XKD 545 has an extensive amount of documentation covering its continuous history. Today XKD 545 presents in superb condition, not needing for anything and is ready for its next custodian to enjoy on the road and/or track.



Right: XKD 545 presents in immaculate condition today



Racing History of Jaguar D-type - XKD 545

Year	Race	Drivers	Qualifying	Race result
??/11/55	1 st Factory test - MIRA UK (200 miles)	Norman Dewis	N/A	N/A
??/11/55	2 nd Factory test - MIRA UK (75 miles)	Norman Dewis	N/A	N/A
??/11/55	3 rd Factory test - MIRA UK (30 miles)	Norman Dewis	N/A	N/A
24/03/56	Sebring 12 Hours - USA	Jake Kaplan / Russ Boss	Unknown	DNF
06/06/56	Motor Press Day - Thompson Raceway - USA	Briggs Cunningham	N/A	N/A
19/08/56	Montgomery Airport Races - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
01/09/56	Thompson Raceway - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	3 rd
02/09/56	Thompson Raceway - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
15/09/56	Watkins Glen Sportscar Grand Prix - USA	George Constantine	1 st	1 st
12/10/56	Mont Gabriel Hill Climb - Canada	George Constantine	Unknown	1 st
28/10/56	Thompson Raceway - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	3 rd
07/12/56	International Bahamas Speed Week - Governor's Trophy	George Constantine	Unknown	5 th
08/12/56	International Bahamas Speed Week - Ladies Race	Mary Constantine	Unknown	6 th
09/12/56	International Bahamas Speed Week - Nassau Trophy	George Constantine	Unknown	5 th

Right: Constantine congratulated
after winning the '56 Watkins Glen GP





Racing History of Jaguar D-type - XKD 545

Year	Race	Drivers	Qualifying	Race result
01/09/57	Thompson Raceway - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
18/05/58	Cumberland - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
??/06/58	Bridgehampton - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
14/06/58	Lime Rock - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
??/08/58	Montgomery - USA	George Constantine	Unknown	DNF
20/05/60	Carling 300 - Harewood Acres - Canada	Bill Sadler / Sagers	Unknown	DNF
??/??/60	6 Hour Sundown GP - Harewood Acres - Canada	Bill Sadler / Charlie Kolb	Unknown	DNF
??/??/61	Lime Rock - USA	John Cannon	Unknown	1 st
05/08/61	Grand Valley Grand National - Mosport - Canada	John Cannon	Unknown	1 st
09/06/62	Player's 200 - Mosport - Canada	Hugh Dixon	Unknown	DNF
30/09/62	Mont Gabriel Hill Climb - Canada	Hugh Dixon	Unknown	3 rd
15/09/63	National C'ship Races - St Eugene - Canada	Hugh Dixon	Unknown	Unknown
01/08/64	Montreal Racing Club - Mont Tremblant - Canada	Hugh Dixon	Unknown	3 rd
??/??/71	Mallory Park - UK	Peter Ashworth	Unknown	Unknown

Right: Start of the 1956 Sebring 12 Hours





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