

Survey of Rear Number Plate Panels on the Jaguar XK 120

A new design for the XK 120

During the development of the XK120, William Lyons experimented with various design for the Rear Number Plate Panel. Clausager (in his book "*Jaguar XK 120 in Detail*") shows some of these "design experiments" with on one occasion using an old Mk IV Rear Number Plate Panel but a next attempt had a simple Number Plate hanging at the bottom edge of the Boot Lid.

Later body designs only had a Number (License) Plate fitted on a (much flatter) Boot Lid, but no clear "deep drawn" Number Plate Panel as we know it from later XK 120s.

The XK 120 introduced at the London Motor Show in November 1948 didn't have any Number Plate Panel, only a plate with "Jaguar" at the front and rear. Once production had started, the XK 120 received a specially designed Rear Number Plate Panel that changed several times over life.

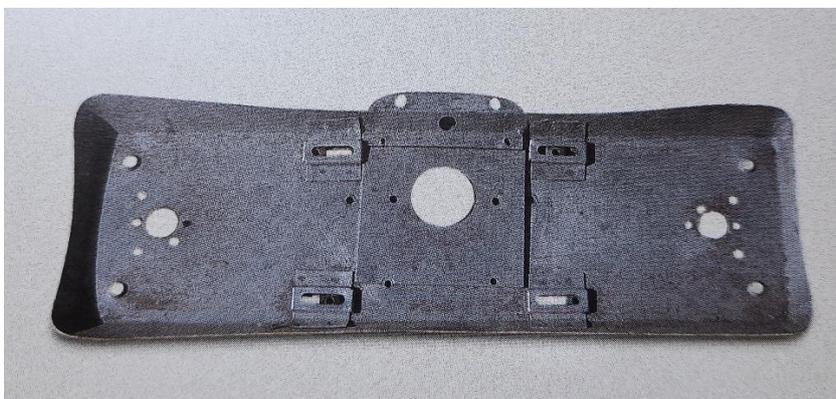
XK 120s from start production till March 1950

The first 240 XK 120 bodies manufactured in aluminium alloy, received Rear Number Plate Panel C.2941 made for the USA and Canada or C.2946 for all other countries. These first Panels were made of aluminium, but already had the design and dimensions of all later Panels: the circumference of these panels is identical for all later versions as the Rubber Seal (Piping) length remained the same (5 ft).



First Rear Number Plate Panel C.2941 for US and Canadian market

Urs Schmid is his book "*Anatomy of a Cult Object*" shows a picture of a C.2946 Plate, as used for "all other countries". This Plate is basically identical to C.2941 but it is possible that it had additional features in order to facilitate the installation of lighting equipment or reflectors according national legislation. Schmid also shows a Rear Number Plate panel with indicator lights mounted at both sides of the Number Plate.



Rear Number Plate Panel C.2946 for other countries than US and Canada (Urs Schmid)

These early Rear Number Plate Panels were fitted on the Boot Lid using 4 wood screws (countersunk slotted), screwed through Panel and Boot Lid, into the inner wood structure of the latter. The vertical wooden ribs at the lower section of the Boot Lid are placed about 19" apart. Although Jaguar doesn't refer to these wood screws in the first Jaguar XK.120 Service Parts Catalogue J8, published in October 1950, owners of early alloy models report the use of such wood screws, probably of the Jaguar type N° 10 (3/16" or 4.8 mm in diameter) and with a length of 2½ to 2⅞ inches. Jaguar, however, doesn't refer to the use of such wood screws in none of their J.8 SPCs (typical Jaguar part number would be M.110/20R or M.110/22R). Most photos show a fully painted Rear Number Plate Panel including the head of the wood screw, which points at a Panel that is put on the car at the assembly line before painting. This is further supported by indications from owners that the backside of the Rear Number Plate Panel is not painted (in body colour).

Note that C.2941 and C.2946 had the bracket for the number plate and reverse lamp (Lucas type 468 with part number 53159/A) fitted at the inside of the Rear Number Plate Panel. In fact, this aluminium lamp bracket consisted of two parts spotwelded to the main plate.

Note that all Rear Number Plate Panels (1948 – 1954), used ¼" ANF/UNF (hexagon head) set screws (Jaguar part number NS.125/4D) for fitting the Registration/License Plate for which caged nuts were spotwelded at the back of the Plates.

Finally, later J.8 Spare Parts Catalogues refer to the use of four 2½" long BSF ¼" set screws (part number FS.504/20H) to bolt the Number Plate Panel to the Boot Lid. As no examples have been found of XK 120s that used these set screws, we assume that these were proposed as a service solution to replace the original wood screws.

Rear Number Plates from March 1950 onward

The first XK120 SPC of October 1950 mentions already a third Rear Number Plate with Jaguar part number BD.4256. This is the first version made of deep drawn steel sheet and with the bracket for the number plate and reverse lamp spot welded at the outside in a recessed section.

These Number Plate Panels of March 1950 onward (with BD.4256 as the new version for the US and Canadian Export market and BD.4257 for all other countries) got a "blind" construction with "cage nuts" for bolting the panel to the Boot Lid. The exact difference between the two versions BD.4256 and BD.4257 is unknown.



Rear Number Plate Panel BD.4256 for US and Canada

The ¼" ANF/UNF (hexagon head) set screws for fitting these Panels to the Boot Lid were now spaced at 15" and were only ½" long (Jaguar part number NS.125/4D) . The four short brackets with cage nuts were spotwelded to the outer rim of the Panel (see photo above).

Final version of the Rear Number Plate Panel

Sometime between late 1951 and autumn 1952, other modifications were introduced. Although the Panel remained basically identical to the former version BD.4256 and BD.4257, it now had a 12.5" spacing distance between the set screws that held the Plate on the Boot Lid. Another modification was that the brackets with the cage nuts were longer and spotwelded in the centre (not to the outer rim of the Panel; see photo below). These Panels had Jaguar part number BD.5644 for all countries except USA and Canada and part number BD.5645 for USA and Canada .



Rear Number Plate Panel BD.5644 or BD.5645 with different brackets for installing the Plate on the Boot Lid (Urs Schmid)

Note that the mounting brackets were not welded to the outer rim of the Panel by the factory: this was a common modification to prevent the bracket with the caged nuts would flex and insufficient pressure was obtained to hold the Rubber Seal in place. All nuts and bolts remained the same as used for the previous version.

The Rubber Seal C.2944 had so far been body colour but during the production period of this final Plate changed to unpainted black.

Bob K.