



## Bump up the volume

**Ewan Pearson** documents the subtle changes that took place in XK 150 bumpers during the model's production run

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Firstly, I must confess that I don't find bumpers and over-riders very interesting, so this is a bumper article not a bumper article – geddit? But I do want to reciprocate to all those authors whose helpful articles I have read, and our membership, if I can. I had to get a bit involved with my bumpers because I am interested in accuracy, and when my latest (second) XK 150 arrived from New York in July 2015, pretty much as a rust-bucket plus boxes of bits, I soon found that I had a load of the wrong parts. But at least I got two rather rusty bumpers with over-riders, with all three bits on the rear one dented, as well as leaning out in a 'man-splaying' fashion. See photo one.

I had wanted to spend as little money and time as possible to get this car going on the road. So after being forced into a major rebuild of almost everything, I just polished the bumpers and over-riders, and refitted them. As happens, as everything else got more 'proper', the bumpers started to show the car up, even though I had persuaded myself that the obvious dent in the rear one was 'character' and the thinning chrome was 'patina'. I was about to get both bumpers and bits fixed and rechromed when I thought I'd just check a niggling query that I recall reading about in one of Philip Porter's brilliant books: ah yes, there are two rear bumpers for this model, but which have I got, and is it 'proper'? I had to do a lot of research and snooping, from which I found had the wrong rear bumper and over-riders. I'd like to save you that time.

The big picture is that for XK 150s there is one front bumper

with two over-riders, but two rear bumpers and four rear over-riders. Also, weirdly, the rear bumpers changed well before the rear lights did, so that date change is no guide to the proper bits. It turns out my car was 'late bumper but early lights'.

For you front-bumper nerds, I won't ignore you, but because there's only one bumper and two identical, straight over-riders on the front of the XK 150, each with one bolt, that end is simple. Be satisfied with the part numbers in the table below, please – I am not going to dwell on them further.

I'll do rear over-riders first, then bumpers. I'd read that the over-riders on the XK 140s and XK 150s were essentially the same, whether front or back. Not true! The front over-riders are the same on both models (C.9756) with one bolt, whereas rears have two bolts. At the rear, there are three different over-rider pairs depending on the model – one for the XK 140, two for the XK150 – and date. The XK 140 rear bumpers wrap only around the corners of the cars and not across the back, and their over-riders have to attach at a relatively severe angle so that they 'point' straight backwards; 140s have a mirror pair of over-riders, one per bumper.

Now the *really* interesting stuff: the front and rear over-riders for the XK 140 and the two versions for the XK 150 look very similar. Indeed, they look exactly the same from the fully chromed side that is on public view. They are the same height, width and shape, and the rears each attach with two bolts to their bumpers. You can bolt any matching pair of the variants on any of these cars and you'd get by, legally but not 'proper'.



I suspect they were all made in the same press but then altered as the two changes came through.

The difference in the rears is determined by the angles at which the three variants bolt on. This required different cut-aways on the side nearest to the centre of the cars, and thus different angles for the welded-in mounting plate. As a result, the rubber beading on the two edges slightly differed in length – ah, that’s why! That said, the lengths specified, at 5½in for the inner and 6½in for the outer edge, give an excessive difference probably inherited from the XK 140. You just cut off the excess after fitting.

I bought a whole load of these critters in terrible condition (nine in all) to try to get a pair of ‘proper’ ones; pleasingly, that succeeded. The two variants for the XK 150 rear over-riders are very hard to distinguish from each other. The only ways I could tell were, a) to have one of each and compare on an actual bumper to see which one points straighter back – they both splay a little – or b) to measure the angles of attachment, which is not an easy task. I realise it’s unhelpful that I can’t just give you a simple measurement; maybe someone else can. Pictures don’t help either.

Because they are handed, there are a total of six different rear over-riders on the XK 140s and XK 150s – see table one. By the way, the over-riders for the 2.4 saloon are narrower, but a similar height, so they can easily get mistaken for XK over-riders.

Table one

XK series	Chassis-number range	End date	Numbers in range*	Models	L&R over-rider part numbers
XK 140	All		All	XK 140	C.9689 and C.8346
XK 150 Early bumper and over-rider	(No RHD OTS) 831001-831249 827001-827208 837001-837661 824001-824606 834001-835744 <b>Total (33.3%)</b>	9/58 9/58 9/58 9/58 9/58	n/a 248 207 660 605 1,743 <b>3,463</b>	n/a OTS LHD DHC RHD DHC LHD FHC RHD FHC LHD <b>All</b>	BD.16187 and BD.16188
XK 150 Later bumper and over-rider	820001 & subs 831250 & subs 827209 & subs 837662 & subs 824607 & subs 835745 & subs <b>Total (66.7%)</b>		Est 89 Est 1,924 Est 456 Est 1,349 Est 762 Est 2,237 <b>6,917</b>	OTS RHD OTS LHD DHC RHD DHC LHD FHC RHD FHC LHD <b>All</b>	BD.15591 and BD.15592

\*Total production numbers vary slightly depending on source.

### XK 150 rear bumpers and the lights mystery

Production started in 1957 with the over-riders set near the corners, behind and below the rear light cluster. Photo two shows a good view of the set-up from my copy of the July 1958 USA pocket-sized sales brochure (yes, that really is a Jaguar sitting in a Jaguar).

At some point in early 1958, Jaguar decided to change the rear lights so that the indicators flashed orange; the brake lights stayed red, and they added a red reflector below. This was well in advance of new safety legislation, with most car makers voluntarily changing to orange rear indicators from 1963 in the USA and in the UK in 1965. I speculate that the early switch was a Jaguar sales strategy, citing safer lights. Someone might be able to say – it’s not in any of my relevant sales literature. The bigger safety point I have seen was the new Dunlop disc-brake set-up, not these lights.

A taller rear light assembly was produced. To keep these lights low down and pointing backwards, Jaguar realised that it had to move the over-riders more centrally to behind the corners of the boot, not the wing, so as not to obstruct vision of the rear lights from behind.

From September 1958 the XK 150 changed to an ‘interim’ version with the over-rider moving in towards the centre by 3in on each side. This was after some 3,460 cars had been produced, well ahead of the new rear lights being fitted. You can see the difference in the holes in these pictures of my car (photos three to five). The modification to the bumpers would have been simple, only moving each of the four drill holes towards the centre before being chromed, but the over-riders were now on the less-curved part of the bumper, so they also had to change, very subtly, and that meant a tiny change to the angle of cut-aways and the welded plates. The change is so slight to the cut-aways on the sides that I doubt most people would see the difference, but the part numbers changed (see table one), conclusively showing they had been modified.

The change to the rear lights occurred later, after a further c3,140 cars had been produced in the interim set-up. The delay in changing lights requires a significant explanation but I don’t have one. I speculate that it was down to designing, approving or producing the new lights from Lucas, part number L627 replacing L549.



Jaguar changed the rear light cluster in October 1959, over a year after the bumper change had been implemented. The revised bumper arrangement was already suitable, so was able to continue. Hence there are two key change dates, September 1958 and October 1959. Photos six and seven show the third and final configuration.

My research sources differed on when the two changes happened, but they all agree that it happened on well-catalogued chassis numbers that are shown in the Parts Book (Vol 2, pages 22-23, 103 and 187). I cross-checked against the XKdata website and conclusively pinned down the changes as Sept/Oct 1958 and Oct 1959, which is consistent with Bernard Viart but not Steve Kennedy. This is shown in the table below. 🚗



Table two

XK 150 series	Chassis-number range	End date	Numbers in range	Models	Bumper bar part number	L&R light cluster part numbers
Early bumper and light cluster	(No RHD OTS)		n/a	n/a		C.5518 and C.5519 (Lucas L549)
	831001-831249	9/58	248	OTS LHD	BD.12948	
	827001-827208	9/58	207	DHC RHD		
	837001-837661	9/58	660	DHC LHD		
	824001-824606	9/58	605	FHC RHD		
	834001-835744	9/58	1,743	FHC LHD		
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,463</b>	All		
Later bumper but early light cluster	820001-820055	10/59	54	OTS RHD	BD.15601	
	831250-832105	9/59	855	OTS LHD		
	827209-827463	9/59	254	DHC RHD		
	837662-838458	9/59	796	DHC LHD		
	824607-825038	10/59	431	FHC RHD		
	835745-836489	10/59	744	FHC LHD		
<b>Total</b>			<b>3,134</b>	All		
Later bumper and late light cluster	820056-093	10/60	37	OTS RHD		C.15436 and C.15437 (Lucas 627)
	832106-174	11/60	68	OTS LHD		
	827464-663	10/60	199	DHC RHD		
	838459-9010	10/60	550	DHC LHD		
	825039-369	10/60	330	FHC RHD		
	836490-7095	11/60	605*	FHC LHD		
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,789</b>	All		

\*Gap of 10,000 between chassis numbers 837,000 and 846,999

**Footnotes**

1. Not every chassis number became a finished car, and a handful went as bare chassis to other car builders, so the numbers in all rows represent a maximum number of XK 150s produced.
2. The DHC (LHD and RHD) and FHC RHD second change dates are uncertain because XKdata does not have cars listed in these months for the exact changeover cars, so I have used the nearest cars before and after to select this change date, shown in red.
3. Sources for chassis data are from JDHT Research Guide No.0001C, the Jaguar XK 150 parts book and from Viart (p344), and for total production is from Philip Porter's book *Original Jaguar XK* third edition, p375. I have not been able to match up numbers exactly between these sources because I don't have numbers produced in each range, hence these numbers are my best estimates.