The exhumation of 661097

Mike Downey reports on the discovery of an XK 120 with a racing past

Not long ago my good friend Greg Sanderson rang and said, 'Get yourself round here next Sunday, I've just bought an XK 120.' This Jaguar, chassis number 661097, was stored in a shed on a property owned by the late Lance Hill in Bowral since 1974. Needless to say I immediately consulted the XK bible *The Jaguar XK 120 in the Southern Hemisphere*, written and researched by the Reverends Elmgreen and McGrath, both keen members of the Church of 'Lofty' England.

It was sold new in June 1954 to Eric Wendt in Queensland, who paid £1,989 for it. He raced and sprinted the car over the next few years, recording a time of 129.31mph at Leyburn racetrack in August 1958. The car was fitted with two sandcast SU carburettors and a modified cylinder head. By coincidence, 660159 recorded 132.25mph at Bathurst in 1963 driven by George Phipps. That Jaguar now resides about five minutes' drive from Greg's new purchase.

Wendt sold 661097 in 1960 to Lance Hill, who owned a well-known antique store in Bowral. Lance had been a keen motorsport competitor in the 1950s and '60s. The Jaguar was last registered circa 1974 and has sat in a shed at the rear of Lance's shop ever since.

A sunny morning welcomed us to this shed where the car was to be dragged out into the exiting Covid-19 era. I hope the photos do justice to the Sunday exhumation! All I can say is, 'Good luck, Greg.'

•   Top: towline attached, the car begins its journey. Note the muddy floor and through-flow air-conditioning
•   Above into the sunlight for the first time in 47 years

- Above: onto the tow truck. The young chap on the left asked if we were taking it to the Bowral tip!
- Left: superb interior… the epitome of a genuine 'barn (or shed) find'. Oh well, the flap on the door pocket looks pretty good
- Below left: an engine too! The Good Lord will probably be called out of retirement to cast his blessing on it
- Below: here's the proof: a lovely shiny chassis plate