

1956 - Jaguar Mk VII Wins Monte Carlo Rally

Jaguars performance in the most famous of all rallies, the "Monte" were consistently outstanding during the nineteen-fifties.

Monte Carlo Rally

The Monte Carlo Rally is the oldest rally car race in the world, and still continues today.

In 2020, being run in January, the pre-COVID-19 Rally went ahead as normal for the 88th time with 30 cars travelling a total distance of 1,500 km (935 miles).

However, in the 1950s the rally involved over 300 competitors travelling more than 2,000 miles over rough terrain and snow-covered alps. **Winning the Monte Carlo Rally in the 1950's was a big deal.**

The cars started at various points around Europe and following 'concentration' routes of around 2,000 miles to bring them to Chambery in Southern France. An average speed of 50 kmh had to be maintained throughout with competitors dealing with delays caused by anything from snowstorms to fog. The cars had to maintain the same average speeds over loose surface roads across the alps before reaching Monaco. There the leading 100 cars took part in a handicap time trial around the grand prix course and further



PWK 700 on its way to win the 1956 Monte Carlo Rally. Most of the Jaguar Works team drivers consisted of talented Irish amateurs. Winning the Monte Carlo Rally was no easy feat and out of the 351 cars that started, only 233 finished the gruelling 1956 rally.

navigation and breaking tests down the Col de Turini and other mountain passes to decide the final results.

Early 1950's

In 1951 Irishman Cecil Vard finished third in his Mk V Jaguar and in 1952 French-crewed Mk VII's finished 4th (Rene Cotton) and 6th (Jean Heurtaux). **Only 18 cars finished the 1952 race.**

Then in 1953, Ian Appleyard with his wife Patricia "Pat" Lyons, in their Mk VII (PNW 7) **finished second, a single point behind the eventual winner.** Cecil Vard finished 5th in his now obsolete Mk V with Jaguars (MkVII's) finishing in 8th, 11th and 15th to claim the Charles Faroux Cup Team Award for Jaguar.

Adams and Vard finished 6th and 8th respectively in 1954 driving their own privately entered Mark VII's.

In 1955, Jaguar again won the Team Award but failed to secure an outright win, and it was beginning to look as though Jaguar cars were destined to be the bridesmaids of Monte Carlo.

Following the horrific Mercedes Benz crash at Le Mans in 1955 and with the death of John Lyons at the same time, Jaguar decided to wind down its involvement in motorsport.

Monte Carlo 1956

However, Jaguar did proceed with a two car works team in 1956 with PWK 700 (Adams) and LWK 343 (Vard).

The cars started at Glasgow and battled icy roads down to the first checkpoint. The ice eventually cleared giving an easier run through England and France. Disaster struck the Vard car (LWK 343) when it was hit by another vehicle, and the delays to repair the Mk VII cost them hundreds of penalty points.



The second works Jaguar driven by Irishmen Cecil Vard, Arthur Jolley and Jimmy Millard in the ex Stirling Moss LWK 343, the same Mk VII that he used to success in British Touring Car racing. Unfortunately their 1956 chance of a win ended when they were hit by another car.

1956 - Jaguar Mk VII Wins Monte Carlo Rally (cont)



The winning dark green MkVII driven by experienced Irishmen Frank Bigger (left), Ronnie Adams and Derek Johnston (right). Seen here with five Team-trophies. The team also won £1,200 in prize money. The rally was cancelled in 1957 due to the Suez fuel crisis.

PWK 700 had better luck, reaching Monte Carlo without any penalty and only dropping a second to the fastest Porsche on the half mile braking test. On the very last day the Jaguar went into the lead.

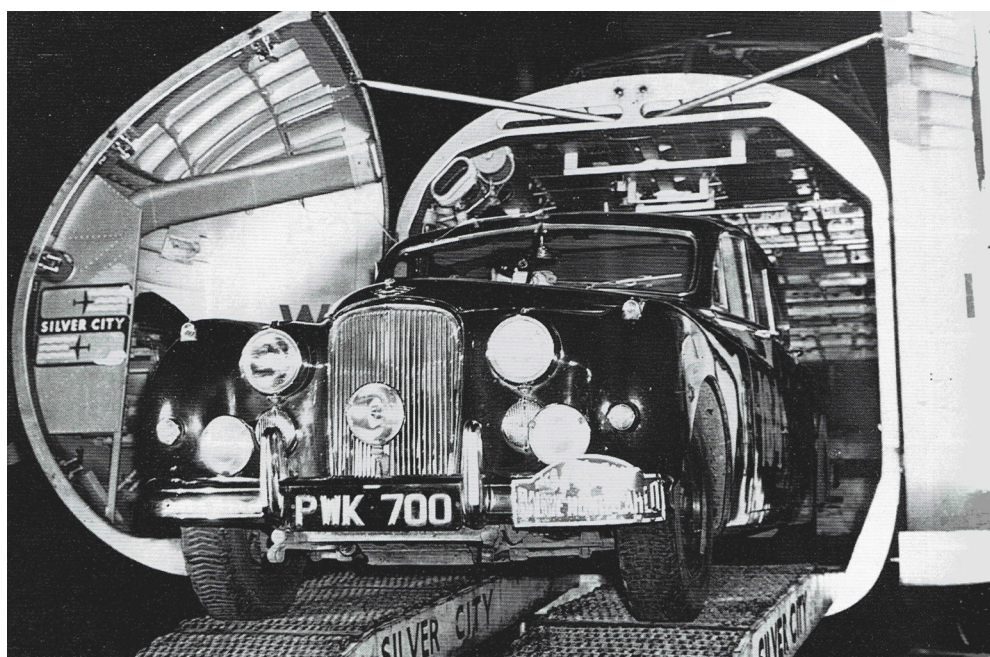
The final test was on a demanding 250-mile course through the mountains and over the rain swept Col de Turini with strict minimum and maximum speeds to be observed. When the results were announced that night they were confirmed as winners with a 3-point lead over the second placed Mercedes.

The following day, Prince Rainier presented the works team with no less than five trophies and £1,200 in prize money. The drivers then started a week of press and radio interviews and television appearances after the team and car were flown back to England.

Even with the great publicity, Jaguar refused to change their mind about ending full works involvement in rallying. Privateers in their Mk 7's entered the 1957 race but due to the Suez crisis and

petrol rationing, fuel coupons were not issued for rallying and the January race was cancelled. With the launch of the 3.4 Mk 1 a month later in February 1957, large Jaguars were of no further interest

to rally drivers, and although the rallying Mk VII's gave way to the smaller saloons, they left their mark in the motoring history books with the only Jaguar to win the Monte Carlo Rally. ■



After its win in 1956 the Mk VII was flown back to Coventry in a Silver City Bristol Freighter. Jaguar arranged to get the team and car back as quickly as possible to maximise publicity. At the time, winning Monte Carlo was almost as important to Jaguar as winning Le Mans.