

HEADLINING HEADS-UP FOR XK AND XKR_s

BY PETER GAVAN | PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY CAMERON KNIGHT

Imagine you've spent weeks preparing your Jaguar for a special display day or Concours. On the big day, you hop in the driver's seat and feel a strange soft pressure on your head. Did you forget to brush your hair? Have an overnight growth spurt? No, the car's headlining has detached and is ballooning around your ears like the floppy lining of a Bedouin's tent. Disaster!

This is what happened to my 2010 XK coupe. It was a total shock. How could this be? My XK is a pampered puss; always polished, covered and garaged. It was perfect the day before, yet twenty-four hours later the headlining had completely let go. Just the edges were still attached, so it was hanging down in a soft beige dollop. I discovered this could happen to any Jaguar ten years or more old. I'd like you to be better prepared for it than I was, so be warned.

After speaking to several club members and car trimmers I discovered the culprit is the foam backing on the suede headlining, which is glued to the mounting board. Apparently, after 10 years or so the foam deteriorates (something to do with humidity) and lets go, in my case all at once. In some models, like the XK and XKR, you can practically set your watch by it. Some XJS owners I've spoken to have had similar problems. I was dumbfounded that this could happen to a prestige vehicle whereas you could drive a 20-year-old banger and never have this problem.

The car was virtually undriveable, so I started making calls. This was early December, making a 2021 fix unlikely. Steve Appino, of the Grand Tourers register, provided advice and contacts but they were either not taking new work or booked out until mid-2022. However, one suggested, if I needed to drive the car in the meanwhile, I should simply pin the headlining up with safety pins (and warned not to try and reglue it). Another suggested thumb tacks, which I found a much easier option. Securing the headlining is important because if it detaches completely horrible, orange foam particles rain down on your leather upholstery, leaving permanent stains. This was more than sufficient motivation. By the time I finished, my roof resembled a classic Chesterfield sofa. Not a bad look. It could catch on.

So, now the car could be driven but I still had to find someone reliable to do a factory finish level repair for my baby. I



Suede peeling

managed to get a tentative booking with a local trimmer, but I had no idea what sort of job they would do. This close to Christmas, I was at their mercy regarding cost and quality. I was not really happy, but out of options in the short term.

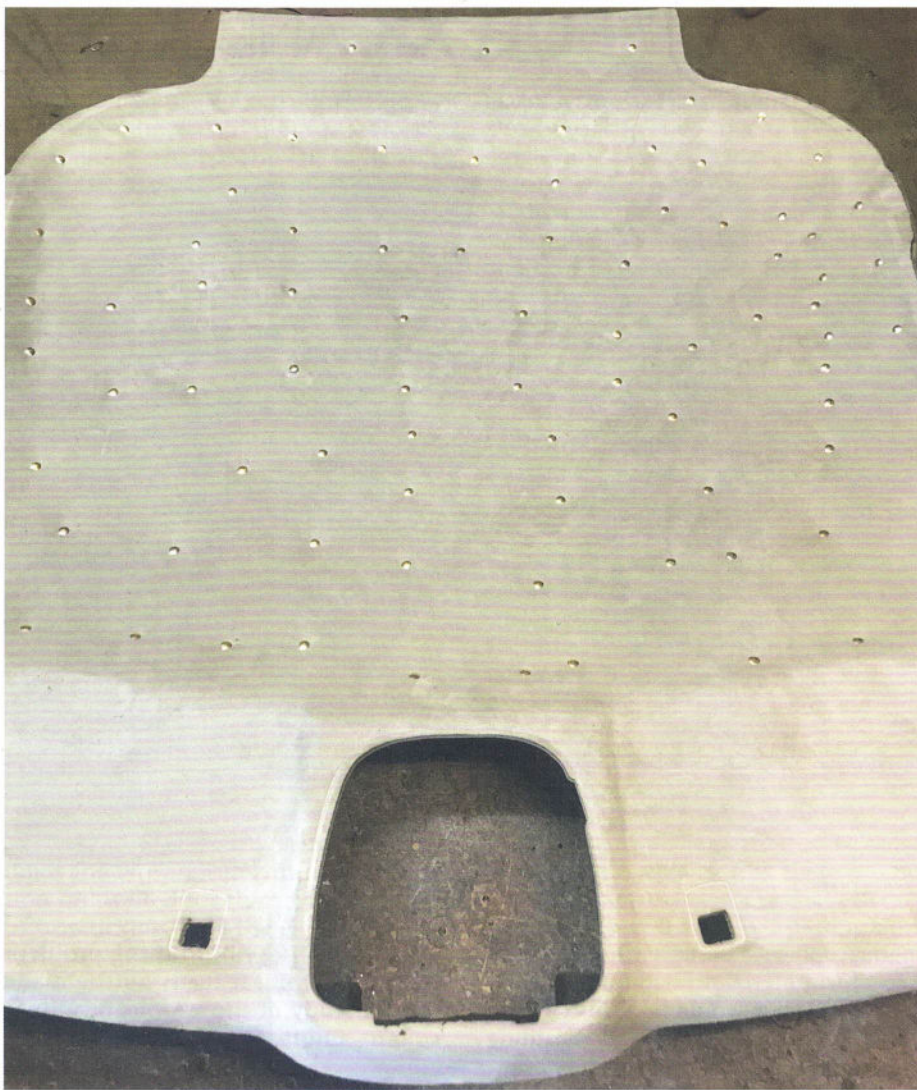
As the headlining was coming off anyway, I started exploring the possibility of retrofitting a reversing camera. This was something I'd always wanted but never pursued because I did not want an aftermarket display and I was worried about the disassembly required for routing the wiring. I had seen an advertisement in the club magazine for *OldJaguar.com.au*, who retrofit modern tech into older Jaguar models, and watched some videos of their work online. So, while waiting for a quote from the local trimmer, I spoke to Cameron Knight of Old Jaguar to discuss fitting the reversing camera.

Cam patiently explained that the camera wiring did not run under the headlining, but he was willing and able to do the job, regardless. He also told me that the XK's existing software was ready to accept the camera and so it would use the original display. He just needed to add the camera and run the wiring to the display panel.

I also discovered Cam was not only a JDCA member but also owned a 2009 XKR (featured in the cover photo November 2020) and experienced

exactly the same headlining problem the year before. It turns out he made quite a study of the various headliner colours and materials on the X150 XK and XKR models. Cam found that the original Canvas-coloured Alston Technosuede material from Scotland was no longer available. After an extensive search he found a perfect match, which meant there was no need to re-cover the sun visors or the rear C-pillar panels. Then, miraculously, Cam told me he could also fix my headlining because he had a supply of the material and an arrangement with the motor trimmer who had done his car. He would replace the main centre panel, A-pillars and side panels all retrimmed in matching Macrosuede. Not only that, he had already helped other JDCA members with similar problems.

This sounded like pure serendipity to me. I had stumbled upon a knowledgeable, professional technician who could not only do both jobs before Christmas, but was also a club member, an XKR owner, and had already done the hard yards sorting my problem for me. Not only that, his price was reasonable. Cam emailed a quote, before and after photos of his XKR's headlining and a video of the reversing camera in operation. Honestly, I couldn't believe my luck, so I promptly cancelled my tentative booking and confirmed with Cam for the following week. He would need the car for two to three days at his Seven



Thumbtacks



Headlining removed

Hills workshop and, adding the cherry on top of the perfect sundae, he should be able to provide a loan car.

Half an hour's drive on the M2 saw me arriving at Cameron's large, well-sorted workshop behind his home. To be honest, I was initially a little surprised to be dropping off the car in a residential area, but Cam explained the main reason he lived there was because of the huge garage/workshop that he had kitted out with everything he needs. When I thought about it, I was more comfortable leaving my car overnight in his locked workshop where he could keep an eye on it, rather than a deserted industrial complex. The car was secure, undercover and would not need to be moved, as Cam generally works on one car at a time.

With plenty of space at the front for two cars side by side, the left rear section is dominated by the long workbench arrayed with all manner of tools and electronic devices, rows of toolboxes underneath and his well-worn black Repco stool. Opposite the bench, broad banks of red tool drawers stand chest-high and half dozen mufflers stand on-end in the corner. Parts for his next job are bubble-wrapped and placed carefully out of harms way. Stacked vertically, his racing wheels and tyres are covered by a tarp and topped with his black, track-day helmet. Reversed in tightly against the opposite wall, his shadow grey XKR sits, with CTEK trickle-charger attached, ready to leap into action. This is the lair of a true motoring enthusiast.

The process would be: Day one, the existing headlining, side and A-Pillars would come out, ready to be picked up that evening by the motor trimmer. On the same day, the camera would be installed, wired and connected. Day two, the trimmer would remove and discard the old headlining from the mounting board and re-trim all elements with new Macrosuede. On Day 3, he would deliver them to Cameron's workshop, where he would reinstall them.

Fortunately for me, the loan car was available. After swapping across our E-toll readers, I left Cam to it. By the time I made my way home that evening, I received a text and photo from Cam showing the reversing camera successfully installed. He makes it look easy so, when I picked the car up, I asked him to explain the installation process. Afterwards, I realised "easy" was far from the reality.

From the camera, which is discretely located adjacent to the boot release button under the chrome lift handle, the wiring runs along the edge of the

hatch, then through the rubber bellows joining the hatch to the rear seat backs. From there it goes into the void behind the rear seats and under the rear centre seat squab. This squab lifts off, allowing the wiring to be routed into the centre console between the front seats.

He then had to remove the upholstered side of the centre console and run the wiring up to the display. To do this Cam had to carefully "pop" off the timber veneer panel around the gearshift to access the screws holding the sides of the console in place. To plug in the new video cable for the camera connection he had to again "pop" off the timber veneer panel around the screen assembly, then remove a half dozen screws and lift out the whole screen assembly. Finally, the camera function had to be enabled in the vehicle's software.

There was not a trace of the work having been done. I was petrified that retrofitting the reversing camera would result in a host of squeaks and rattles and so, unlike those with the confidence to tackle these sorts of jobs themselves, I'm thankful I chose someone who does it for a living. Not only was the job completed perfectly but Cam was also kind enough to sort out a few minor but annoying trim issues for me. Gratis.

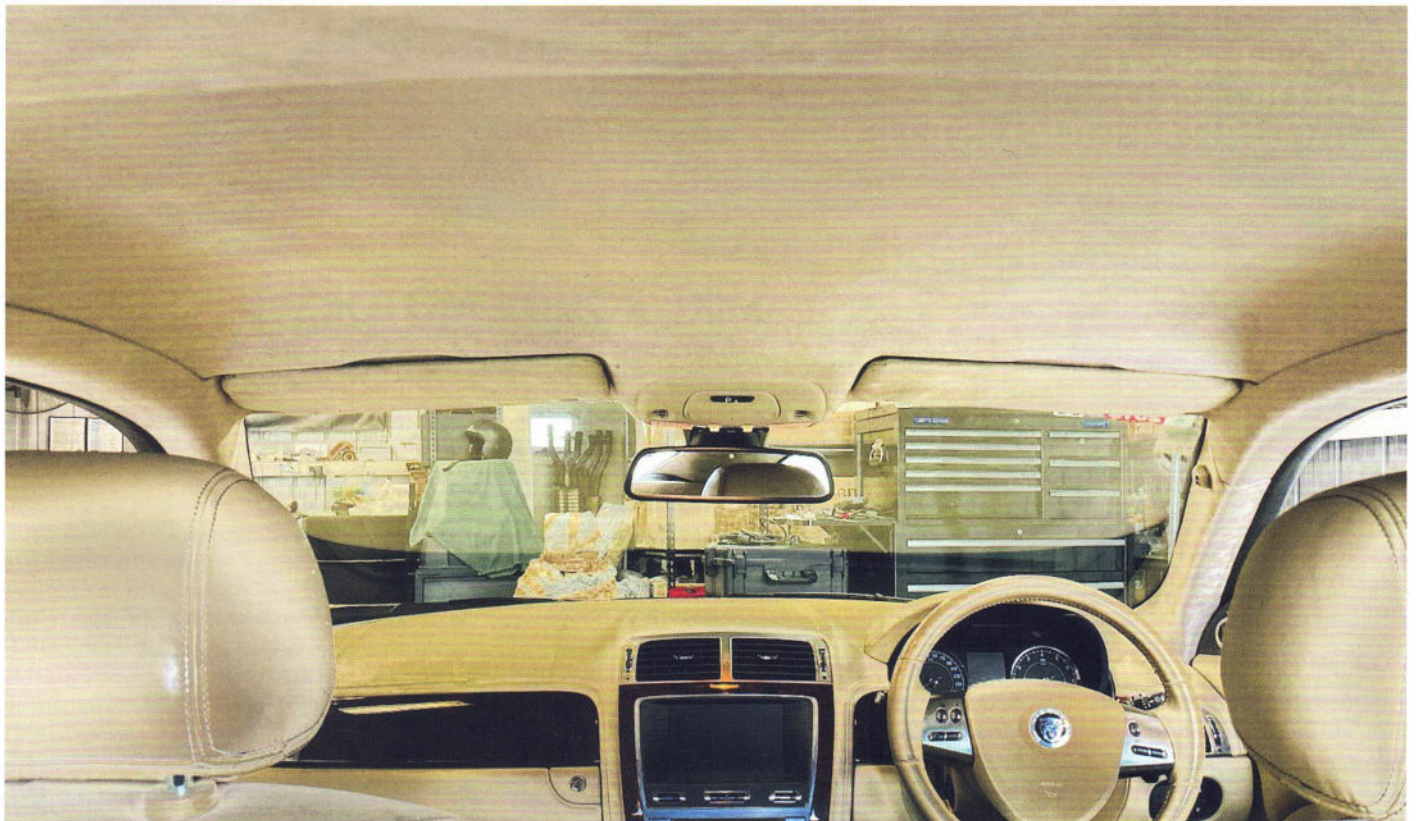
As for the headlining, Cam and his motor trimmer did an immaculate job, as close to factory original as imaginable. I am very particular when it comes to my XK and I was impressed. I would chal-



Screen as per factory

lenge anyone to notice it is not the original factory finish. I dropped the car off at 10 am Tuesday and picked it up again on Thursday at 4 pm with both jobs done to my complete satisfaction. Overall, it was a very positive experience and a pleasure meeting and dealing with Cameron and OldJaguar.com.au.

I would like to note, however, that "old" is a relative term and while XK/XKR coupes are destined to become classics, I like to think they are still relatively "young" models compared to Cameron's more mature clientele.



No droop!