

Members Cars - Andrew Byles

My XJC Passion

My first Jaguar was a silver grey metallic 4 door XJ12L Series 2, that I bought in May 1985. The only car I ever wanted to replace it with, was an XJC V12.

2G1297

This did happen, when I bought chassis number 2G1297 a 5.3 litre V12, silver grey metallic with blue leather interior. The car was a little visually scruffy, but mechanically excellent, as it was maintained by Reg Lee.

I stripped the car for a quick tidy up and with a temporary respray and found it had never been in any major accidents.

There were 3 previous owners, of whom, I knew two. The original SA owner gave me the brochures he had, before he ordered the car, which had prices written on the brochures in pen. The mileage was a well documented 168,000km.

I used it in a partly tidied up condition, for a few years, as an everyday drive. It was used in club events including circuit sprints and motorkhanas.

One green triangle run, turned into a rush, as lunch was in Meningie and I realised it was 12:18, and we needed to meet everyone in Mt Gambier by 2:30. The trip was made with a fuel stop and 10 minutes to spare. The injected 12s are reasonable on fuel when cruising lightly



at state limits, but a lot more thirstier than carburetted 12s at 5000+rpm

After a company car was added to the garage, the coupe had done 334,000km, it was time to convert it to the 6.0 litre V12 that I purchased in 1997. The complete front, from a bent 1994 XJ12 (XJ81) with 1,803 miles only, was imported from USA. The importing was reasonably straightforward, except I required the whole wiring loom and all ECUs, which at first glance, I'd received. Later I realised the small loom, that connects the main loom, with the transmission was missing. This one loom from JRA was approx. \$4000. I managed to buy one from a UK dealer for \$700. (Remember, this was before internet was widely used).

Fitting the engine to most people, would appear relatively simple, but to retain the 6.0 litre ECUs and wiring, demanded extensive wiring extraction and an additional loom from another Series 2 to ensure the original coupe wiring remained intact (because one day I might want to restore this thing!)

The 4L80E transmission was a time consuming job to fit, as it needed the transmission tunnel to be stretched and a new mount made, approximately 8 inches rear of the original. The entire interior was removed while the floor and tunnel were heated to stretch it. The gearshift luckily was able to be connected to the T400 shifter from a late S2 V12. Next trick was getting a brake light signal to the trans ECU to ensure the lock up converter released when braking – achieved by using rear XJ81 light relay pack to protect ECU from higher voltage.

The engine had a full flow oil cooling system which required reworking the original bypass oil cooling pipework and hoses.

A one-piece new tail shaft was made by Hardy Spicer. A brand-new diff centre was assembled by Reg Lee with new 3.31:1 gear.

Upon assembling everything and starting, 1 cylinder was leaking on a near new engine. A strip down found it was indeed a new engine, with a cracked liner and broken rings in 2 other cylinders which had evidence of being like that since first assembled. The engine was reassembled with new rings and 1 liner of the correct size.



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While the engine was out the underside and under bonnet were stripped and repainted properly, as was the entire body with new OEM rubbers. I modified the radiator top panel to accept the XJS 6.0 litre cold air ducts, which were still available new at the time.

Following the engine fitment and shake down, I had the seats re-trimmed in the correct 1977 model year bright red Connolly leather. The exception was the front seats, which were obtained from a 1989 XJS, but re-trimmed with pleats running vertically the same as XJC seats. The console was re-trimmed in leather rather than ambla. Door trims were done by Dash Original, which despite being pricey, are superb and worth every cent.

Getting a speedo to work with a 4L80E in an older car, proved to be a challenge. Eventually I had Reg Lee build a 1989 ABS hub and I set up a speedo module from an XJS. Beale instruments informed me it would cost more to calibrate and connect everything than just fitting a magnetic GPS speedo module to the back of the S3 electronic speedo (I had bought new Series 3 XJ12 speedo and tacho from Solitaire so they matched)

The exhaust manifolds and pipes were blasted internally and externally and ceramic coated. Optional OEM stainless steel mufflers were used. 25 miles per gallon was easily achieved on a trip to Canberra. The downside of only

stopping once, for fuel on the trip, was, the front s/s mufflers were dull red with heat, on arrival at my host's home.

With having bought, repaired and sold more than 35 Jaguars in the time I had the coupe, I decided to sell it, as it wasn't getting used. I put a For Sale sign on it at a Jag Day (see image) and an enthusiast from another state found it (with help from Phil Prior).

After nearly 28 years I had sold an object of obsession.

Whenever I sell a car, the model seems to go up in price afterwards, so I decided to buy a cheaper XJC to "hedge my bet".

2G1504

Guess what, - another Silver grey metallic XJ 5.3C!

This one has near perfect velour seats (not much else) and has not been registered since 1993 with documented 153,000 km. Sold new in August 1978 by Lance Dixon Leyland, the car still has its original purchase receipt and books. Surely this would be near the last, if not the last XJC sold in Australia. I am the third owner, the last owner had owned it since 1983 or 84.

As with all XJCs, If the tops of the doors are not rusty, the doors have been repaired, or the car has never been washed! This one has rusty doors and hadn't seen a garage in thirty years, but fortunately it had well fitting sheepskin seat covers from new and no fade on the Garnet velour. The vinyl roof was torn off to prevent rust forming under it after it split in the sun.

I have replaced water pump, hoses, brake hoses, brake caliper seals, fuel pump, all filters, replaced ignition switch, ignition coil and ignition system to enable the car to be driven onto a trailer and into the driveway of our most recent home (see image).

This starts another XJC story!

Andrew Byles
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The scruffy one is the current XJ-C that will be restored once I've finished my XKR5.0