

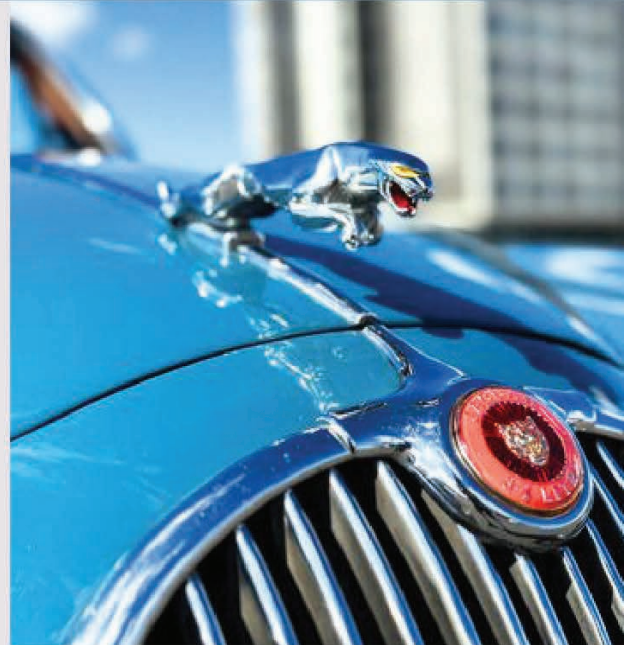
Fox on the run



by Julz Dalton

The dream car for many, is unattainable. It taunts you in glossy car magazines, or on websites, cajoling you to pay exorbitant prices because according to the seller, it's the best in Australia, if not the world!

You could pour your money into a restorer's delight, or maybe you have your eye on one that isn't for sale. The latter was my problem back in 2009. My dream car was a 1958 Cotswold Blue 3.4 MK1.



My husband, Andrew and I would visit the owners Kaye and Allan Shaw, fellow JCCT club members who lived in Cygnet in case they changed their minds. The car was Kaye's and she loved it, so it was always a polite no, with a promise of a maybe. Maybe. It's a word of hope, and that's all I had for years. Maybe one day this car would be mine. In the meantime, we bought and sold plenty of Jaguars. Some were MK1s, but I never forgot about that blue MK1 known then as Rosie.

Fast forward to 2017 when I called Allan Shaw who moved to Queensland after his wife's passing. I asked about the MK1 as I wanted to write an article for the club magazine and he told me it was for sale. "I'll take it," I said, and a price was negotiated. Fox was mine. All the maybes were now definitely, and she arrived back in Tassie a couple of weeks later on the back of a Ceva truck. The paintwork was nice, although a little blemished from a backyard respray in the '90s, but the headlining was new and the wood good. Rust bubbles were visible in three doors, the



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carpet was average, and the door cards were not original. The sill on the driver's side had been replaced with a handmade one. We are not in a hurry to replace it. It's not rusty, and we think it adds character. The interior was tidy and the seats were original. We ordered a Heritage Trust Certificate which informed us that Fox remained a fully matching right-hand 3.4 manual with overdrive. The paint and Dove Grey interior are correct, and the disc brakes and wire wheels were ordered from the factory. She's an oldie, but a goodie in all the right ways.

Further investigations revealed that the car arrived in Australia aboard the Townsville Star and was sold by Brysons on July 21, 1958, to Mrs VS Pratten from Pymble, NSW. Mrs Pratten lived in a stately home named 'Tynecool' built in 1939. I imagine Fox gracefully sweeping around the circular white gravel driveway to pull up at the grand entrance. What a life!

But what happened? Within two years Fox was given her marching orders to wind up at Geoghegan's Second-Hand Car Dealership at Burwood. I spoke to the family and they said that Ian was quite partial to Jaguars, and would often take a car off the lot on the weekend to drive.



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Perhaps he took Fox for a spin? I do not know all of Fox's history but the car did end up in Victoria participating in hill climbs. Bob Lamb brought the MK1 to Tasmania, and in 1992 it was put up for sale on the side of the road near Cygnet. A truck's tailgate had caught the rear end with minimal damage, but that didn't deter Kaye Shaw from buying it.

Our first drive as the proud owners was to Ross with the JCCT. We filled her up and away we went. All was fine, she ran like clockwork. On the way home we noticed that the fuel light had come on around Symmons Plains. We didn't think that she would be that thirsty. Perhaps the gauge was on the blink? It wasn't. When we turned into our street we noticed a long, dark line on the road that led to our garage door. There was another behind us. The car was leaking fuel and had been doing so all day. Andrew removed the bung on the tank to check how much fuel was left, and I kid you not, two drops came out. That was it. How we made it home is anyone's guess, but I believe someone who loved the car as much as I did helped us that day.

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Fox was used sparingly for the next two years as we bought back a 3.4 we used to own. We gave it new paint, new this, new that. Restoring a car can be draining and I'm not just talking about money.

2019 was a funny year. Something had to give and that something was Fox, who was listed with Shannons for the December auction. The boat was booked and we set off for Devonport. The car, as always, drove like a dream, and the doubts about selling kicked in.

"What are we thinking? Are we doing the right thing?"

We drove up onto the boat and the staff directed us to the front of the ship - poll position to get off. We knew we had made the wrong decision but it was too late. The Spirit was booked out for weeks so we couldn't bring her back home even if we wanted to.

The next morning our deck was called and we proceeded to our car, but Fox had other ideas. The key was turned and the ignition button was pushed - nothing. Not even a click. Fox was going nowhere. It was weird as no lights had been left on, there was nothing to explain our car's bad behaviour. Fox has always been a push of the



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button and she goes kind of car. Was she telling us that she didn't want to leave? There was no choice but to wait until the ship cleared and the staff jumped-started her. Negotiating the heavy Melbourne traffic, we made it to Shannons in Moorabbin and filled out the paperwork. It was too late to withdraw her from the auction, so an unrealistic reserve was put on in the hope that she would not sell. My plan worked, and all was in place to bring her home until a phone call caught me at a weak moment. They had someone interested, but the price was less than desirable. I wanted a new kitchen and after some thought, we accepted the offer. Fox was sold. I wanted to know where she had gone in case, in the future, I could repurchase her back. No names were supplied, only that the buyer was local. I had to let her go, regardless of the seller's remorse.

The kitchen was installed just before COVID-19 struck Tasmania, but was it a fair exchange? I thought it was for a little while, but I missed her. I knew it had been a mistake to sell her, and I never wanted to go on the Spirit of Tasmania again because it reminded me of the one who got away – again.

We ended up selling the grey MK1 and started looking at buying a MK2. While attending Jags 'N' Snags at the NAMT in Launceston a 1959 2.4 Cotswold Blue MK2 with a grey interior caught my eye. The owner was a fellow club member, and we made an offer. We bought it, partly because it reminded me of Fox.

The story, however, does not end here. I was looking at cars for sale in November 2022 when I found Fox at a dealership in Melbourne. They had bought her at the



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auction and she had been in their warehouse the whole time. I called and discussed the purchase and a deal was struck. Fox was coming home.

It was like we had never sold her. Everything was the same, down to her reliability. We decided to fit new front springs and a larger sway bar and refresh all the front bushes. I have a box of new body rubbers that we fit as required, and we also fitted a new boot mat, a new rear plinth and the rust cut from the three doors. When the panel beater repainted them they came back darker, which isn't ideal but to be truthful she needs a respray. Her motor requires a refresh too. New carpet and door cards would then make her super ship-shape. Being the owners of two classic cars means there's always something for us to do in the garage!

Now for some fun facts. Fox graced the front page of the Examiner earlier this year to promote Ladies Day at the NAMT which was pretty special. She has also been on a boat six times, including her voyage to Australia. Five of those were crossing the Bass Strait, so she is a seasoned traveller. Rest assured, the only future boat trips she will be going on will be with us.

