

Members Story - Al Britcher

I guess my XJS Story began sometime in the late 70's when I went to the Adelaide Motor Show, which was an annual event at the Wayville show grounds.

Every car enthusiast in Adelaide looked forward to this event as it was an exciting period for the auto industry. New models of cars were coming out every year and the speed of technology meant there were new engines, styles and accessories hitting the scene all the time. Of course there was the highly competitive jousting between Holden, Ford and Chrysler, plus the ever-popular rivalry between the British and Japanese cars.

It was at one of these shows when my mates and I noticed the British and European cars such as Jaguar, Morris, BMW, Mercedes, Fiat, Citroen, Volvo etc and looked in awe at those on offer.

I do recall making comment about the Jaguar XJS looking so stylish but changed when we noticed the engine bay.....we all said that it looked like a rats nest and that who would ever want one of those with all that plumbing..... bloody nightmare. Fifty odd years on and who would have guessed that I would eventually own one.

I have always had a love for the two-door sporty looking cars, owning a BMW 1600-02 which I upgraded to 2 litre and 5 speed gear box out of an E21 and gave it some welly out at Mallala Race track; a BMW 633 CSi which was the last one sold in Australia in 1979 before they ceased Australian deliveries and resuming in 1986; and of course the XJS. BMWs are just fabulous road handling cars, which I regularly put to the test.

When I first drove the XJS, I was disappointed as it didn't immediately



Al Britcher, 1984 5.3 litre V12 XJ-S HE.

have the road holding manners that was used to, however over time I started to get the feel of the geometry and where to point the car when entering corners at speed. I felt the 633 was more direct and the XJ-S slightly understeered.

Anyway, I purchased the XJ-S on 18 Feb 2021 from a couple at Warradale for \$11,000, which I thought was good value considering what it was; straight panels, good paint, and pretty good interior.

That's where it ended....I went down to pick up the car and there was some issue starting it, then taking it down the road and the trans packed it in. We walked back to his house some 400 metres away and followed this steady stream of trans fluid on the road all the way back to find a circular patch 4 metres round out the front. What a flipping mess. I was wondering what I had gotten myself into.

Ironically, a fire brigade vehicle came down the road and noticed the mess, so they stopped, and spread some kitty litter over to absorb the fluid.

Needless to say, that I didn't drive my newly acquired pride and joy home but got it trucked to Geoff Mockford's workshop which was the beginning of my restoration adventure and further friendship with Geoff and the boys.

I drove it around for a year or so experiencing a number of issues with over-heating, brakes, general leakage of most fluids etc.

I decided it needed a paint job, so I set about to dismantle it in preparation for a closed-door painting. Whilst I was at it, I dismantled most of the parts down to the block and had them replaced or refurbished as necessary.

The a/c and the air pump were replaced with new a/c located where the air pump was and all gaskets were renewed together with a new radiator, electric fans, new alternator etc.

The car runs really well and looks great with the new paint work. The new hood lining and window tint are about the only major things done to the interior.

The seats are coming apart at the stitching which is disappointing and an expensive fix. I'm looking forward to driving it to Bathurst for the 2025 Nationals, - fingers crossed all goes well.

As I am struggling these days to get in and out of this beast, I think my sights might be aimed at either getting an XJC or XJ6 perhaps next year. More to follow on that exercise.

Al Britcher

Editor. Thank you Al. Don't sell the car after all the work you have done on it. You'll only end up regretting it later.