

## *I Bought a New E-Type by John Johnson*



One Saturday in February 1969 I stopped at the showroom window of Bryson's in Adelaide to admire the stunningly beautiful gleaming white sports car on display.

All that weekend I thought about whether I should buy the car or proceed with my goal of buying a house with my savings.

By the following Wednesday morning my mind was made up. I would replace my VW beetle and start enjoying life having just completed my studies at Adelaide University. I then paid an unannounced visit to Bryson's, and spoke to the salesman. Later that afternoon, with great elation, I drove the magnificent white E-TYPE out of Bryson's as the proud owner. All the way home I noticed heads turning towards the car with gestures of approval.

The car became my new workhorse which was driven daily to my workplace, and after-hours, used for sheer driving pleasure.

### **To Sydney and Back**

Whilst the car was still being 'run-in', my girlfriend Helen (now my wife of 50 years) rang me from Sydney suggesting that I pick her up and then drive back to Adelaide over a couple of days.

Somewhere in the world there is an American who was at that time hitch-hiking across Australia. Having picked him up part way through my journey to Sydney, I invited him to drive the E-TYPE whilst I had a snooze for a couple of hours. I am sure he will remember the experience. After a 13½ hour drive I arrived in the Sydney CBD, met Helen and her mother and went to the Summit Restaurant for dinner.

On the way home to Adelaide Helen and I stayed overnight at Narrandera in Southern NSW after having had a look around Canberra. Early the next morning, we set off at high speed for Adelaide via Hay and Balranald. Somewhere along the road to Hay, a traffic cop waved me to a stop behind a semi-trailer that was receiving his attention. With the semi on its way again, the policeman checked my driving licence, cast an approving eye over the car and suggested that I might reach my destination if I slowed down. Precisely one hour after leaving Narrandera, we had still covered 98 miles (157 km) and a few minutes later we were driving along the main street of Hay.

I should point out that there was no speed limit on most country roads at that time and there were also far fewer



*The E-Type suffered a case of vandalism and a connection with a van. The rusty doors were replaced with brand new ones. (John sold the old doors to a car repair business and are probably now running around on another E-Type).*



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cars on the road. Generally, our cruising speed ranged between 100 mph and 125 mph (160–200 kph) when conditions permitted. In those days, the power, road holding and braking capabilities of the E-TYPE were well exercised.

## **Melbourne to Adelaide**

When the car was just one year old, I completed a memorable drive on my own from Brighton, seven miles (12km) south of Melbourne CBD to Adelaide.

Commencing my drive at 4am on a Saturday morning, I planned to set a time for the journey that I would unlikely achieve again. Apart from a very small section of freeway under construction north of Melbourne CBD, the roads were mainly single lane each way. The freeway system into Adelaide did not exist so the old Mt. Barker road exercised the good road holding of the car.

The total time taken to reach the Toll Gate at Glen Osmond from Brighton, Vic was 5 hours 55 minutes having covered a distance of 469 miles (750 km). The average speed for the whole journey was 79.3 mph (127 kph), even though the speed limit through each town was observed. The best point to point time and speed was from the end of the Melbourne speed limit to Taillem Bend, a distance of

377 miles (603 km) which was covered in 4 hours 23 minutes at an average speed of 86 mph (138 kph). I had to stop for fuel only once at about the halfway point.

This high-speed driving is now available only on the race track or in special closed-roads events. In the 1970's we drove the car hard, but well within its capabilities. It was most important to adhere to the service requirements and to pay particular attention to the condition of the VR-rated tyres which were required for speeds greater than 130 mph (210 kph).

## **11½ years of Ownership.**

However, there were disappointing times as one can see in the previous photographs. One shows what can happen when you park in the wrong place: in my case outside the Union Hall at Adelaide University.

The adjacent photo taken some years later shows a crushed nose from a collision and rusting doors. However, these matters were remedied with the appropriate expertise and a lightening of the wallet.

The final photo was taken in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens and shows a rejuvenated beauty having been fitted with a new windscreen, two new doors and a new top bonnet panel.

## **All Good Things Come to an End.**

In November 1980, just prior to leaving for an extended stay in the UK, Helen and I sold the car after 92,636 miles (148,218 km) of exhilarating driving.

Helen and I still enjoy the pleasure of having owned two Jaguars (the other was a Mark II 2.4 sedan) and understand the pride that present-day owners feel about their Jaguar treasures.

**Footnote:** I still possess the original purchase documents for the E-TYPE which show the following car details:

- ◇ Chassis number: IE 21980
- ◇ Engine number: JE 17973-9
- ◇ Cost: \$7,100 (discounted from \$7,602)

There seems to be some uncertainty about the chassis number recorded by Bryson's in 1969. If the present owner of the car with the same engine number can be found, I shall be pleased to forward the documents to him/her.

**John Johnson**

*Editor' - Our Club is actively seeking to find where the car is now and we will be writing a follow-up story regarding our efforts to locate the car (we've tracked it to an auction house in 2001). Ultimately, we hope that by publishing this article and sharing it on our website and social media we can find the current owner to enable John to pass on his historic records.*

