



Early photo of Les Hughes as most of us remember. Hair to go with the era, with a coffee in hand, on a cold foggy Victorian morning.

Editor - The following article was written in 2021 by Bruce McMahon for the magazine Retromotive. It is a succinct story about Les Hughes and provides background as to how the Jaguar Magazine came about. Photographs have been added to the story and provided by long time friend of Les, Heinz Schendzielorz.

Idle Torque

He could've been a detective that bloke Les Hughes. Sleuthing through follow-ups and referrals to dig out scraps of history, uncover fresh angles on interesting cars and owners, incidents and accidents. This bloke loves the hunt, the places it takes him and the people he meets.

Instead, the genial Mr Hughes, working out of a home office in sub-tropical Brisbane, Australia, is arguably the world's foremost authority on Jaguar motor cars. Albeit a long way from the climes of Coventry.

In 1976, the teenager and Mark I Jaguar owner was looking after a club magazine when Jack Bryson, famed Australian importer of the British cars, died. 'Bryson had saved Jaguar. Sir William Lyons rang and said "I'm going to the

wall" and Bryson stumped up for 200 cars, S-Types and Mark Xs. Cash money. And saved Jaguar,' says Les.

'But people were selling Mark V dropheads, claiming they were one of 50 made and all this sort of thing. I thought if I don't write all this stuff down, get it recorded, it's all going to turn into bullshit and go nowhere. So that's how I got going.'

And that's how he remains a sleuth and stickler for the company's history and how, since 1984, has published the Jaguar Magazine for lovers of the leaping cat across the globe. His was the world's first independent retail publication on the marque and the bi-monthly is now past its 200th edition. Still driven solo by Les, co-driven by wife Bronwen.

He'd headed to England to research his 1980 book — "Jaguar Under The Southern Cross" and with 'luck more than anything else it all fell into place'. Doors opened, his new mate Andrew Whyte introduced him to the likes of Lofty England and old mechanics from the 1950s. 'So, I just got swept up in it. Stayed for three years and then came back and started the magazine in 1984.'

Les had been an apprentice lithographic artist, hated the trade, but now appreciated it was a lucky start for him as a Jaguar enthusiast.

The first Jaguar was only 16 pages, but it worked and it grew, prompting Les to give up a snack bar business in inner-city Brisbane and go full-time with his magazine from a home office in the suburbs.

It's now 100 pages, six times a year with some 12,000 copies sold of each issue sold across the world. Les never wanted or made a fortune, but the magazine has afforded him a rich lifestyle.

'The thing I feel most privileged about is the people I've met. The senior Jaguar people. The fact that I went to Le Mans every year they ran the Silk Cut Jaguars.

Some five Jaguar tours that included America, as well. I met Briggs Cunningham through that and Bob Tullius.

'All sort of doors opened, that's what gives us the depth in the magazine. Lucky enough to meet them, photograph them, it gives the magazine some authority.'

Les Hughes (cont)

And Les is gobsmacked at the material that keeps on flowing. He thought there'd be enough yarns for maybe 20 magazines and he's now passed 200.

He admits that he's been desperate at times and owned a couple of machines other than Jaguars (with a soft spot for Isuzu Belletts).

Among proper British cars, there have been a Series 1 XJ-C, first spotted as a factory hack, and a long wheelbase V12 XJ. That XJ saloon and a V12 XJ-C starred on the company's stand at the 1973 London Motor Show. Les discovered them both in Australia.

His favourite? 'The one I'm driving right now, which is a 1997 six-cylinder XJ-R. I've owned it since 2003 and never owned a car this long. I don't want to sell it. I love it, simply adore it,' Les pauses. 'But I'd probably swap it now for a top line XF or something.'

He loves getting into any Jaguar where all feels familiar, feels like you're in a Jaguar and everything is in the right place. He does think exterior styling is a touch commonplace right now needs to

more individual while appreciating the restrictions of modern regulations.

But for Les there remains a tonne of history of this company, its cars and its owners to be recorded.

He's not long uncovered the original XK120, thought by many to have been scrapped but — converted to left-hand-drive by the factory for European high-

speed publicity runs in the late 1940s — found unrestored in the United States.

'That's the original show car from 1948. That's what gets me really excited, finding stuff like that. I'll work until the day I die; I love doing it,' says accidental magazine publisher Les Hughes.

Bruce McMahon -Retromotive



R-L Les Hughes, Ken Oakes and Gerald Kay who used to own the Yellow Money box, ie the Mark 1 now owned by the JCCV (Story on next page).



Photo taken on one of the many trips of the Victorian car club members to South Australia. That's Les in the foreground on his knees with Bill Walsh on the left, Geoff Petherbridge repairing the XK150, and his wife Maureen.