

420G Restoration by Bob Charman

Editor: Journalist Paul Murrell worked with Bob to write the following story that appeared in "Australian Classic Car".

It doesn't take much to ignite the desire to restore an old car, and for Bob Charman and his wife Daphne, it was a television show-called "A Car is Reborn". You'd think she'd have known better. A few years earlier they had seen a Honda Goldwing motorcycle go past and Daphne commented that too would be "nice to do one day". As Bob said later, "You don't say that to an ex-motorcycle cop." The very next day he came home with a BMW motorcycle.

A Long-Held Ambition

Jaguar fans, they say, are born, not made, and so it is with the Charman's. Bob's Jaguar ownership started with an S-Type in the UK "I had it shipped to Australia," he recalls, "but the shipping company lost it". I replaced it with the insurance money and then we went to an XJ6 Series 1. That was around 1977, so the car wasn't very old."

But the 420G was waiting to seduce Bob. "A mate of mine in Broken Hill had a 420G and that was just a lovely old thing".

"I was driving down the road one day and saw a light blue 420G in a car yard. I looked at it, and it was just 'Mickey Mouse'. So, I had a 420G."

Despite his love for the car, a single



income, soaring petrol prices and two young children put pressure on the family finances, and so the Jag had to go.

"We sold it and bought a Toyota Corolla," says Bob. "In hindsight, it was the worst thing I ever did. I'm still trying to find that car. It was registered ROZ 222 (South Australia) and was still on the road until about five years ago, but I can't find it."

Bob's Broken Hill mate, Mick, came to the rescue. "He had a spare car that he had bought cheaply for spares. He did it up and re-upholstered it in vinyl and

gave it to his wife to drive. Then they separated and his wife sold it. He was furious. She sold it to some young kid. Mick finally bought it back and for 17 years it just sat in a shed owned by Paul Zammit, who has been restoring Jaguar motors forever. Of course, the beauty of it being in Broken Hill is that it didn't rust. It looked pretty good in the photos, but it needed a lot of work. It was straight and in very good nick. The only rust was a little bit in the left rear quarter panel behind the wheel arch."

Bob convinced Mick to sell him the tired 420G. He then had Paul Zammit refurbish the motor, and then drove the car back to Adelaide after giving it a quick clean up. Vacuuming out the boot filled four vacuum bags!

The Long Road Back

Bob's plan was always to bring the car back to Adelaide and have it fully restored. His inspiration was that television show and his experiences often replicated those of the show's star, Mark Evans. In fact, some of the decisions were influenced by decisions made on the show.

"Just like him, we went and found a car that we wanted to restore," says Bob. "The time was right; we had the money and we knew what we wanted."

Bob is full of praise for the people who reapplied the gleaming burgundy paint. "I went to at least SIX paint shops. I had



420G Restoration by Bob Charman (cont)

quotes of up to \$20,000 and estimates of as much as 12 months. Firstly, I would look at examples of their work, then I'd look at the person. If I didn't like the person, I'd go elsewhere. I finally booked the car into JMR Crash Repairs on Port Road, Cheltenham. All they do is restorations, no crash repairs. Owner John Reid told me It would take one month and it took just slightly less than that. Nothing was too much trouble. I would go in to have little things done that I had missed and he wouldn't even charge for them."

There is a lot of chrome on a 420G and it can be prohibitively expensive to have done. Bob found a gem in Ivor Benicke.

"He does all his work from a shed in Parkside and he was good. "One look at the depth and quality of the chroming and you have to agree. Even better, after Bob had quotes from elsewhere of up to \$1500, Ivor re-chromed the front bumper for \$300 and the rear for \$350.

Another craftsman is Allan Smith of Regency Road Kilkenny. He is responsible for the immaculate leather trim on the seats, as well as the headlining and dash top. A total of three high-quality hides were used to get a superb result.

The door trims were taken care of elsewhere. Bob had a shot at trimming them himself (once again inspired by his favourite TV show) but the result wasn't what he had hoped for. "They were good enough for a while, but not up to the standard I wanted".

"The impressions on the trims were a real problem. "Dash Originals" were the only people in Australia who could do it, but they had lost the die, so they wouldn't take it on. I thought about stitching it in, but that wouldn't have looked right.

"I e-mailed the Jaguar Drivers Club in the UK and with-in 10 minutes I had a reply. They told me an advertiser in their club magazine may be able to help. I e-mailed them and once they knew the colour, they got back to me within 20 minutes. "The price was around \$720 for all four doors, including the leather and backing cards. I paid them on a Monday and by Thursday they were here!"

When Bob brought the car back from Broken Hill, there was no woodwork for the back doors. He bought a complete car in the US for spares and used the woodwork from that. Mate Mick had stained the existing timber with a walnut stain, so Bob took the new woodwork to Garth Pennington who stained it to match. Bob says that he plans to have all the woodwork redone at a later date, but at around \$3500, this Job will have to wait.

Hot Grilled

In all, Bob bought three cars to provide spares and parts that were missing from his Broken Hill car. "All the seats came out of a donor car, because the frames were better," he says. "As for the grille - I saw one advertised on eBay in England. It was advertised as a 420 grille surround in excellent condition. I bid for it and

was thrilled to get it. It came over within a week, and was immaculate".

"When I went to reassemble it using flutes from another grille I had, they wouldn't fit. Then the penny dropped. The grille on the 420 looks exactly the same as the one on the 420G but is smaller! Luckily, I had 3 others so it came out all right. Do you know anyone who needs a grille for a 420?"

"I'll have to work out how to sell stuff on eBay, because I have got boxes of spares." However, bidding online isn't always successful. Bob has bid on two separate occasions for the little badge that sits on top of the grille but was outbid both times. "If you want something badly enough," he says, "put in a silly bid right at the end. Even if it's a \$16 part, bid something like \$100 to get it."

One of the great advantages of restoring the 420G is that almost everything is still available new from Jaguar. Before committing to the car, Bob went to the local Adelaide Jaguar dealer and chatted to the spare parts manager. "He told me there is nothing you can't buy new for a 420G. I was able to buy brand new rubbers, clips and all the fiddly bits."

The other advantage is that the 420G is almost identical to the earlier Mark X. Apart from the engine, the only obvious differences are the chrome strip along the sides, the clock in the centre of the dash and a chrome 'G' badge on the bootlid. Bob discovered that the left-hand front door was heavily repaired with filler, so he replaced it with a door from a Mark X.

Final Touches

There are only a few more details to attend to on the Charman's Jaguar. Ivor is going to tidy up the engine and a stainless-steel exhaust is yet to be fitted. Despite being so beautifully restored, the car will be well used. Bob and Daphne already have plans for a number of long trips with their beloved Jaguar club. "You can't have a car like this and not drive it," says Bob.

"These days a modern Jaguar could be a Toyota," concludes the proud owner. "But when we drive past in this, even little kids know it's a Jaguar."

Bob & Daphne Charman

