

Sue Wants A Mark IX

Editor - In memory of Doug Harrison, we have reprinted the following article that appeared in Classic Marque, March 2014 called "Sue Wants a Mark IX".

The cry went out to the four corners of the country in early 1995. We even advertised but none was forthcoming. One day whilst out driving she saw one stopped at a intersection. "Follow that car" said Sue but it turned out to belong to Club Member Noel Courtin and he wasn't parting with his at that stage. We even bid sight unseen by phone for a car in Shannon's auction in Melbourne.

When the March 1995 issue of Australian Jaguar was delivered, the phone started ringing, "hey Doug, there's a Mk IX for sale in Queensland somewhere, it's advertised in Australian Jaguar". I still have kind memories of all the people who thought of us when they read the ad and took the trouble to make sure we read it. Several of the calls came from interstate.

I contacted the owner who lived in Bundaberg, 300 Km north of Brisbane and asked if he was going to the National Rally in Brisbane, he was. I asked if he would be taking the Mk IX so I could have friends check it out for me. No, he wasn't, it was too far to take his family in a car without seatbelts, but he would send photos to us.

They duly arrived, showing a very tidy car, nice wood, good carpets, etc., one shot in full wedding trim. With the photos a note saying that he had been



advised that the price he had been asking at our last phone conversation was far too little, but he would stand by it.

Eventually Sue and I decided we could take a week in July to go up and see the car and if we liked it, drive it back.

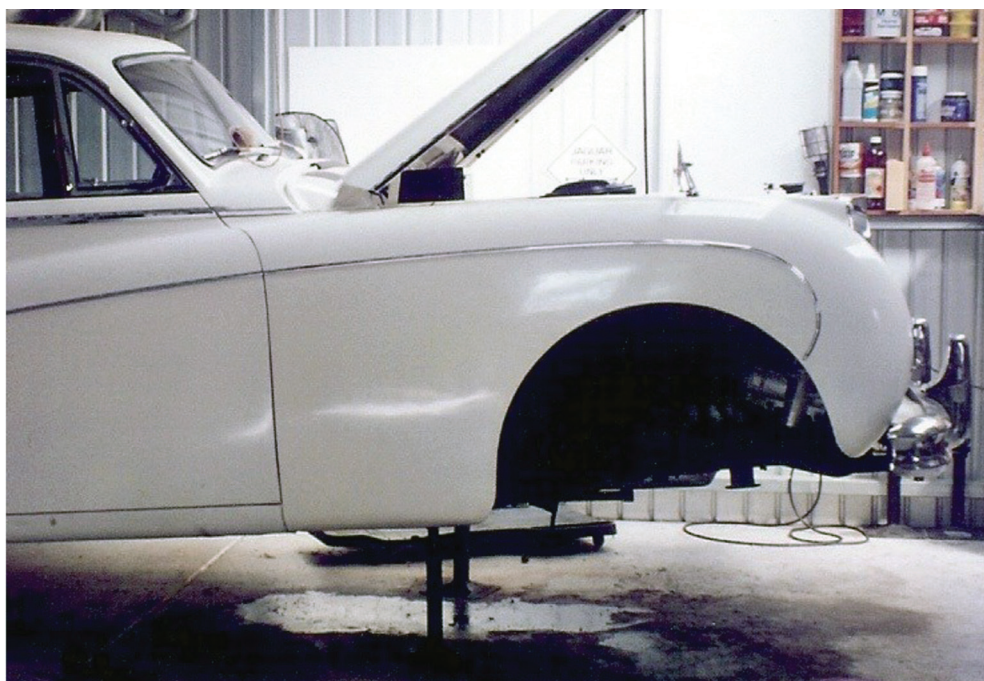
Friday, we caught the Red Eye to Brisbane via Sydney, giving Sue time to visit her firm's Brisbane office and while she was doing that, I explored the second-hand bookstores, (no luck).

In the afternoon we explored the South Bank Parklands, previously the site of the 1988 World Expo. This is a place well worth at least half a day going through the Tropical rainforest, the Butterfly house and the Maritime museum.

After a long day, a lot of it on our feet we were exhausted but I went to find a restaurant. I came back and told Sue that there was a great place only 760 paces away. I did not tell her that the last 600 were straight up! It was Alexanders Restaurant at the Metropolitan Motor Inn and I can recommend it for excellent food and efficient cheerful service.

Next morning, we caught the Spirit of Capricorn to Bundaberg and were met at the station by the Mk IX. John, the owner, drove us to the Botanical Gardens then let us have a look at the car, but seemed reluctant to let us have a test drive. He finally agreed when I offered to put petrol in the tank. Here's a funny bit, one of the first questions I had asked was, were both tanks and pumps OK, "yes" he said. When I pulled into the Service Station, left side to the pumps, he jumped out and dragged a nozzle across to the right-hand tank, "why?" I asked "habit" he said. We later found that you could not open the left tank flap. The right pump was not working so the left pump was connected to the right tank.

After the test drive we said we wanted to put it in for a RACQ inspection. He was somewhat reluctant to let us have the car and dropped us at our motel and said to give him a ring the next day when he had thought about it. We were a little stunned to say the least, we had travelled several thousand kilometres to see him and his car and we were not even invited in for a cuppa.



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Next, we rented a “roughy” and on Sunday headed off to Hervey Bay for a day on Fraser Island. That is must for anyone’s visit to Queensland, we only had a day there and barely scratched the surface of one small part of the island. Hiring a plane to pick you up off the beach and take a scenic flight can give you an idea of the continual reshaping of the island.

First thing Monday morning we booked the car in at the RACQ in Bundaberg, the first available appointment being noon Tuesday. We called John who after some hesitation agreed to let us have the car for the inspection.

The inspection showed that the car was not as fit for the drive back to Adelaide as John said it was. We had noticed that the car was prone to wander and it confirmed that the front suspension was in poor condition. It would have been an exhausting job keeping the car pointed straight over that distance, particularly on the NSW roads. Also, there was only one usable tank. Apart from that the car was basically in very good condition with woodwork, headlining, door trims, carpet and front seat re-done and only minor rust in one panel and the over-riders.

The RAA in Adelaide recommended a couple of car transporters, Finemores had a truck leaving Brisbane on Wednesday. We worked it out that the cost of transporting was about equal to fuel and accommodation and we had return airfares anyway, so the RACQ report did not affect us.

After the inspection we contacted John and made him an offer which he turned down, he wasn’t budging one cent from his asking price and he would accept cash only. (The original advert said “urgent sale - any reasonable offer accepted”).

For the last five days I had been walking around with my hand in my pocket clasping a \$14,000 wad of notes, it

was a relief to hand it over. Now we were offered a cuppa.

We then hit the road for the drive south even though it was late in the afternoon. Stopping for the night at a new motel at Childers, the owner admired the Jag but put plastic under it. He was German but he knew his Jaguars! I still think it was a bit of cheek.

Next day driving down to Brisbane we started to relax and consider we had done all right after all, she was purring along without fuss and we were comfortable, when all of a sudden, the temperature gauge which had been rock steady began to move, within seconds it had gone off the scale. I switched off and coasted into the verge thinking “oh bother oh dash”. We were three hours and about a hundred Ks from the truck’s deadline. I finally flagged down an obliging type who phoned the RACQ on his mobile phone, (in those days he was one of the few who had a mobile) luckily there was a depot only a few Ks down the road. The operator who came along appreciated that he was picking up a real lady and was very careful loading her onto his flatbed. The problem turned out to be very simple, there is an in-line filter in the top radiator hose, this had been blocked by loose shale caused by a recent flushing of the cooling system. A quick cleanout and we were on the road again.

No more dramas occurred and the Mk IX was put on the truck in time. That left us

a couple of days to look around Brisbane before our flight back to Adelaide.

I rebuilt the front suspension and on the advice of our well-respected Tech Sec of the time, (who no longer lives in SA) I used Nylothane instead of Metalastic, bad move. I was taking Professor Jim Randle (of Randle Handle fame) on a tour of the Barossa when he commented on the front suspension and how well the seat springs compensated. (a bit tongue in cheek I thought) I told him of my error then started to explain to him the benefits of Metalastic. Oh! the embarrassment, me explaining Jaguar suspension to Jim Randle. He took it well though.

The car is a November 1960 build, Old English White, with all original numbers. It had only one owner until 1989 and we have a fairly comprehensive history including most receipts for expenses since new. It had only 82,000 miles on the clock in 1995 and has still only 96,049 miles at time of writing 18½ years later. It is a real head turner and wherever we go we must be prepared to give time to talk to admirers even though some mistake it for a Bentley or a Rolls!

It is amazing that wherever you go, you meet people who had an Uncle who owned a MK VII, VIII or IX.

Doug Harrison
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