

## My first Real Jaguar!! Roger Munns

Yes, I've owned many Jaguars over the years. My first was a SS100 by Dinky Toys and I currently have 30 or so in my model collection. Like many Jaguar Drivers' Club members, I've always had a fascination with cars, and rarely went anywhere without a model car in my hand during my younger childhood.

My real love for Jaguars began in my eighth year when I saw a magazine advertisement for the fabulous and futuristic (for the period), 1949 Jaguar XK120. This was the only car for me! I thought it's sensuous lines would capture my desire forever. Little did I dream that one day I would own one!

My interest in Jaguars has never dwindled; Ron Roycroft and Jack Tutton racing their 120's at Wigram took care of that. Sometime later I saw a 1953 British Racing Green XK120 Roadster on wires complete with 'C' type modifications, and about the same time Dame Ngaio Marsh's magnificent Black 120 Fixed Head Coupe. From my point of view, there was no other car so appealing.

Of course, around this time the 'C' Type Jaguar was capturing everyone's imagination. To see Jack Tutton's example 'in the flesh', confirmed all my anticipation of sheer beauty and style.

Soon the 'D' Type was on everyone's lips. Ron Gibbon's car confirming my anticipation of its aggressive and powerful styling. Then the 'E' type (the day I drove Ray Archibald's Metallic Silver FHC provides me with one of my fondest memories), the 3.8Mk11, the XK13, the XJR9 to 15, the XJ220, and the XK8. How could anyone not admire the incredible sporting heritage of Jaguar?

My first drive of a Jaguar happened when I was 18 years old. I had been trying to buy a car with my mega saving; Model 'A' Fords, Austin 7's, Morris 8's and the like in rather depilated states were in my budget. I did come across a Light Blue 1935 SS1 Airline Saloon in New Brighton (Christchurch), but I only had 50 Pounds to my name and the owner wanted 160. (Imagine if I had been able to acquire it and keep it! Oh well we can all dream I suppose!). Fortunately, my Father became rather concerned at my antics so offered to help me into a "more appropriate" vehicle. Good old Dad; I was off to see the owner of the SS Airline again, but the car had been sold. Next stop was the local car dealers; and what did I find? A magnificent White 1937 1½ Litre SS Drop-head, complete with red painted brake drums hiding behind the white painted wires wheels, and red upholstery; there was no question about it, this car would certainly 'pull' the chicks! THIS was the car for me, and the dealer confirmed my feelings; unfortunately my Father DID NOT!!! I finally wound up with a boring little 1953 Standard 8!!

It was to be another 39 years before I was to own my first Jaguar!!!!!!

Yes, the Standard 8 was a boring little car but it took me everywhere; into remote mountain valleys and through rivers to name a few places. It served me well and I only pranged it once; on the second day that I owned it!! I must say that I was quite disappointed to see it again some years later, forlorn and dilapidated in a paddock south of Timaru. We'd had a good relationship and the little car deserved better in my opinion!!

An Austin A90 Atlantic replaced the Standard. This must have been Austin's most under rated car. Heaps of torque, and quite good cornering for it's day, as demonstrated during an "enthusiastic" drive with Ian Dow's 3.8 MkII Jaguar between Waimate and Timaru following the 'Waimate 50' car race in 1962. The Jaguar had top end performance of course, but for cornering and acceleration out of the corners, there wasn't much between the two cars.

In 1963 my father purchased a brand new Jaguar 3.8 S. It was a beautiful car, finished in Golden Sand with Red upholstery and chromium wire wheels. He was very proud of this car and kept it in immaculate condition, until he replaced it with the newly launched Jaguar XJ6 in 1968; this time in Emerald Green with Tan upholstery; a spectacular car. Not long after this he took ill, so the car was only used occasionally. When he died nine years later it had only travelled 13 thousand miles! I would have liked to purchase it from his estate, but as I had a young family and a large mortgage at the time, it was 'out of the question'; someone bought themselves a very good car.

1964 was my year. Through my Aunt (who owned overseas funds) I imported a Red MGB Roadster (the first to be landed in the South Island), and I also met my wife to be. Was I in my element – you bet! After some tinkering with her (the MG), I raced and rallied it extensively over the next two years. In 1965 on the Aylesbury straight (near Ashburton) the car achieved a 16.8sec Standing Quarter Mile time, and a Flying Mile exit speed of 108 mph; 5<sup>th</sup> behind Ray Archibald's Metallic Silver 3.8 MkII (138mph I think), Ernie Sprague's Zephyr MkIII, a Daimler SP250, and my good friends MGA 1600 Mk2 (111mph). He has never let me forget the occasion!!! At least I bet him in the Standing Quarter!

In 1966 I married and the MG had to go. It was a miserable day when I said farewell to the car, but on the other hand a happy one, as I now had some money to start establishing our married life together. I'd had a lot of success with the MG and many fond memories, so in 1983 I traced the car with the hope of buy it back, but just missed out, as it had been exported to Brisbane six months earlier.

Jaguars were always in my memory and I enthusiastically watched the company progress as my family grew up.

In 1998 an advertisement for a Jaguar XK120 FHC located in the USA caught my eye, but discussions with the advertiser established that this was not the car for me. I described what I was looking for in a 120, and incredibly the advertiser stated that he had exactly the car I wanted, loaded on a trailer behind his vehicle! It was on the way to it's new New Zealand owner, and would I like to have a look at it.

You bet, and I was out of the office and on my way to see the car.

Yes, this WAS the car for me! There it was sitting in the driveway of its proud new owner; a beautiful 1953 Jaguar XK120 Special Equipment Fixed Head Coupe, but regrettably it was owned by another – Damn!!!

It was exactly what I wanted; complete and totally original except for the body paint work (currently a Light Metallic Green, which looked smart, but in the engine compartment, it's original colour – wait for it - British Racing Green; absolutely perfect!). In addition, it had the Biscuit coloured upholstery, a perfect combination.

The car was last registered in Hollywood in 1972, and had been stored there ever since. As a result, there were a few small dents in the front and rear bodywork, the chrome work showed minor pitting in a number of areas, the original wiring was pretty suspect, and the original upholstery was quite dilapidated; amazingly, the original Pirelli cross ply tyres remained inflated!

How could I own this magnificent car? Well of course, I couldn't, so I enquired with the advertiser if he could obtain a similar one for me. "Not much hope" he retorted, "unrestored cars in that condition are very rare" – Damn, Damn!! At least he agreed to keep an eye out for me.

So that was that - an enjoyable experience anyway.

About a month later, the advertiser rang me to advise that he had sold another XK120 to the owner, so that MY car was now available if I still wanted it. Wanted it, what an understatement! I was elated; 'over the Moon' some would say! The car was going to be mine – incredible.

The next week was a nervous one for me. Could it really be true, was I going to own this beautiful car. I gathered my finances together, paid the advertiser, and looked forward to the delivery of MY Jaguar. Then came the distressing telephone call – the deal had collapsed; I was totally mortified, but there was little I could do, the car was not to be mine.

Life went on (miserably) for the next three or four months. I considered two other 120 Fixed Heads, one dismantled in Reno Nevada, and one being restored in Wakefield (near Nelson), but neither of them attracted me.

Then one day, I received a telephone call to say MY car was available again. Could this really be true? Have I been given a second chance to acquire it? Another nervous week followed (was this another 'loose' deal?); then one morning, there she was on a trailer at the bottom of my driveway.

What an exciting moment, I couldn't wait to drive her.

Yes, you could drive this beautiful car, but only just. The motor ran smoothly enough, but it had a rather worrying knock so I was suspicious regarding the condition of the internals. The main problem with the car was that the brakes weren't working; apart from the hand brake that is. I 'ran' the Jaguar carefully around the local 'block' on a number of occasions over the next few months, using the hand brake to stop, as I

prepared for the car's restoration. One of the real benefits of this Jaguar was its originality. She had only been driven and then stored, so she hadn't been 'fiddled with', and apart her dilapidated state and body colour, was as she left Jaguar's Coventry factory.

On one of my 'around the block' jaunts the left rear of the car suddenly dropped. The next thing I saw was the rear wheel jumping the footpath and careering into a garden! Just as well I wasn't doing 100km/hr, I thought!! On inspection of the car I found the back half of the rear mudguard, and the end of the spline damaged, while on recovery of the wheel, all the inner spokes were found to be bent. Why hadn't I checked the knock-ons when I received the car? – What an idiot!! I discussed the incident with one of my friends a few days later and he stated that "knock-ons don't unwind, they windup. Check if they are on the right sides" Sure enough, they were incorrectly mounted. Someone must have removed the axles at some stage and replaced them on the wrong sides!!

In August 1999 I commenced the restoration. The plan was for a total strip down to the last nut and bolt and a rebuild to complete the car as originally supplied. That is, no modifications of the standard specifications (after all this was a Special Equipment model anyway), except the transfer from left to right hand drive, the addition of 2-inch Sand Cast SU carburettors and a little improvement to the 'breathing'. I was determined to use all the original parts; no 'modern' nuts, hose clips, etc. and no nickel plating of bolts that weren't treated in that manner originally. To replicate the matt black effect on many of the bolts, I cleaned them and rubbed them in Gun Metal Blue.

The strip down was completed without any problems. The chassis was in an excellent condition, complete in its original paint apart from a little surface rust in a couple of places, but there were two minor rust areas in the body; one behind the right hand shut panel (very common in a Fixed Head I believe), and one at the back left hand corner of the boot. I expected more to be revealed when the body was 'strip dipped' but was pleased to discover the rest of the body to be in perfect condition; not like a Ferrari Losso that was dipped at the same time!!!! While this was going on I purchased a new wiring loom, all new suspension and body rubbers, a new worm and cog kit to convert the steering box to right hand drive, and one or two items that needed replacing.

Once returned, the body was re-united with the chassis and sent to the bodybuilder to have the rust removed, the odd dent ('dint' if you come from south of the Waitaki River in South Canterbury!!) taken out, the firewall converted to right hand drive, and all the lead replaced.

At this point the first of a couple of key decisions had to be made. XK120's were built with aluminium bonnets, doors and boots, hand beaten over bucks, the latter two being attached to wooden frames. This meant that the doors never followed the line of the body perfectly and the door gaps varied somewhat. The issue was, should the doors be modified as practiced in most restorations or left in their original state. Being a stickler for originality, I choose the latter option.

Following this the body and the chassis were separated again, the body receiving a couple of coats of etch-primer, while the Chassis was sand blasted and painted.

The chassis re-build started in March 2001, while the motor was sent to be re-conditioned. On strip down my earlier suspicions were confirmed. The head was in good condition but the bottom end of the motor was in a poor state and required rebuilding. At this stage I 'modernised' a little by having some machining carried out so modern oil seals could be run at either end of the crankshaft. An inspection of the gearbox, differential and drive train confirmed these were in excellent condition and only required cleaning. The fuel tank was resealed internally and repainted, and the suspension and brakes repaired. As the chassis is set up for both left and right hand drive the conversion is a relatively simple matter, except for the steering box. The LTSA advised me that only five operators were authorised to do this work in Auckland, as it turned out I choose the wrong one!!!. The glove box conversation was also a little complex as it is covered in Burr Walnut veneer, so this task was given to a specialist.

Well, from the above I'm sure you agree that the restoration was progressing rather smoothly; but from this point a number problems arose!

I had asked the painter who had completed my two racing cars to paint the Jaguar. His workmanship was excellent and I wanted a top paint job done on the car. He agreed, but kept missing the numerous start dates that we agreed to. This went on for almost two years, before I finally came to the conclusion that he did not want the work. I wish he had 'come clean' earlier, but as it turned out, I was better off in the finish as my new painter made a simply superb job. One of the areas that created considerable discussion with my colleagues was the wire wheels. As this was an SE model it was built with them, but in reality, few 120's left the factory so equipped. The debate was; should they be painted body colour (as originally supplied), silver or chromed, many plugging for the latter. Of course, I went for the body colour for originally, and the more "classic" look this brings to the car.

Once I received the converted steering box (which cost a huge amount to convert for a relatively simple process, in my opinion), I cleaned the aluminium casing, painted the steering shaft and stored it in readiness for mounting when the body was reunited with the chassis. This day was to be a milestone in the restoration but turned out to be an absolute disaster!!!!

The day arrived; the beautifully painted body was to be reunited with the completed chassis. What an exciting day, and one that I had been looking forward to for a long time. A crew of the painters assembled, I positioned the steering shaft right through the firewall in readiness to draw it down into place when the body had been positioned; the body was lifted over the completed chassis, the back lowered first then the front, and there it was, perfectly in place; what a moment of sheer pleasure.

The body attaches to the chassis at twelve locating points, so I eagerly bolted these together, - perfect, and drew the steering box down to its locating mount. IT wouldn't fit!!!, what was wrong? On inspection I finally came to the conclusion that it had to be

drawn down the opposite side of one of the body mounting brackets. This was not a simple task as there was insufficient space for the steering box to pass between the body and the engine inlet manifold. There was only one answer, - removal of the inlet manifold. This completed, including the removal of most of the manifold studs, I again drew the steering box down to the mount. This was not a simple task either, as there was very little room and I inevitably damaged the paintwork on the steering shaft as I tried to manoeuvre it. Finally it was next to the mount, but it still wouldn't fit! How frustrating; what was wrong this time? I consulted the workshop manual and to my horror discovered that the steering box had been re-assembled for left hand positioning!!!! So much for our LSTA expert!!! There was no alternative, the body had to come off again.

The mounting bolts were released, the team re-assembled, I climbed into the front wheel well to guide the steering shaft and the lift began. Suddenly someone stated that body was jammed. The lift had been actioned the wrong way, the back before the front. As a result the firewall was tilted forward and touched the rev counter drive that extends from the right camshaft. This removed a line paint off the firewall finally jamming and denting the heater box! The firewall had to be repaired and repainted again.

Once the steering shaft was free from the body I took off with it to see gentleman who had worked on it. On my way my annoyance grew; was I going to give him a 'piece of my mind', you bet I was!! On my arrival I discovered that he had passed away about nine months earlier!!

The chrome plating proved to be a real issue. All of the steel and brass work was beautifully completed by the plater, and looked first class, but the replating of the die cast pieces turned out to be a disaster. The plater did advise me that he could not remove all traces of the pitting on the die cast items, but I assumed the chrome would be removed electronically, and not polished off. On return all the features had been totally removed and the items ruined!!! Fortunately the inner window winder handles, and front and rear quarter light catches are shared with a Mk VII Jaguar, while the outer door handles can be found on the right hand door of a Mk 1 Mini, so these were acquired and replated correctly by another platter. The inner door hands are unique to the 120 FHC so had to be sourced from England; at some cost I might add.

The radiator was in good condition, but I had it checked and flushed out anyway. Its location is very prominent in the front of the engine bay so it had to look impressive. Accordingly, I spent many hours straightening the honeycomb and removing the odd bent in the brass top and bottom of the radiator. Finally it was ready for painting. As the entire radiator is painted black I screwed a bolt into the drain plug mounting so it could be hung, painted it to perfection, hung it in my garage above my Alfa Romeo, and went off for five days holiday while the paint had time to cure. On my return I was horrified to find the radiator lying on the floor! How was I to know that solder gradually moves under pressure! The drain plug mounting had given away allowing the radiator to fall onto the boot of the Alfa, damaging both it and the radiator top. It then rolled off the boot onto the concrete floor damaging the bottom of the radiator. I had to start the repair process all over again. Well they say you learn from experience!!!!!!!

The wiring loom took some sorting out. It's comprised of fourteen sub looms, with the individual wires plugging together after travelling through various parts of the body and chassis. Fortunately I had taken an extensive range of photos of the car before disassembly with a particular focus on the loom, so with the help of a wiring diagram this was not a problem. The issue was that a number of differing wires were missing from a number of the looms, which meant that new wires had to be threaded through parts of the car, some of these being difficult to hide.

All in all, these issues delayed the restoration process.

Yes, you are right, this restoration has taken quite a while!

By October 2004 it was well advanced requiring only the attachment of the rear mudguards, the renewing of the upholstery and a few minor items to complete, so all seemed on target for the 2005 Concours d'Elegance.

The initial start up was a milestone of course, but it came with a surprise as well. As mentioned earlier, I fitted 2inch H8 Sand Cast carburettors to the car, in true Jaguar "C" Type fashion. This had necessitated a minor modification to the inlet manifold to open it to a 2inch diameter, which had been carried out during the engine rebuild. Now was the time to adjust the float bowl levels, remove the spark plugs and turn the motor over until the oil pressure built. This achieved, the plugs were replaced and 'the moment of truth' had arrived. Hardly had the starter been pressed (it couldn't have even turned a quarter of a revolution) and the engine burst into life, emitting a fantastically deep growl from the exhaust pipes so typical of the XK motor. All systems were fine, just under 50-lbs/inch oil pressure and 70 degrees temperature reading, perfect. What a moment; incredible!!

The mudguards were attached and the car was ready to be Low Volume certified, Vinned, Warranted, and Registered, a series of processes that she went through without any issue. At last she was ready for the road.

Thursday the 11<sup>th</sup> November was an exciting day. It was the first day My Jaguar left my garage under its own power. It was just a magic drive and I was thrilled just how well she ran, not that we went very far together mind you; about 2 miles to photograph her and return.

All that was now left to achieve was a few minor items and the replacement of the upholstery. This was to prove a little issue as I had delayed my upholsterer already on couple of occasions because of my 'trials and tribulations'. As Christmas was approaching he was naturally extremely busy, but believed he could complete the work in time for the February Concours. To assist the achievement of our target I offered to do the do the Vynide work, leaving the Heritage (Wilton) carpets, the English Broadloom Head lining, the Moquette, and the Leather work to my upholster. I must say that I think he wasn't too impressed with my workmanship, as I'm sure he re-did some of the Vynide work!!! At this point, another major decision had to be made. Was the leather work on the seats and transmission tunnel to be completed in the style that it had when the car left Jaguar's Browns Lane factory, or should it be completed in a modern fully stretched looking fashion? Obviously, with my desires

for originally, the former was chosen, so the seats were reupholstered around the original wooden frames using the original rubbers, webbing and Kapok.

Shortly after Christmas I visited my upholsterer. He was obviously 'bogged under' and well behind, but was confident of achieving the target, but it would be rushed. Rather than have this, I decided to forgo our target and focus on the forthcoming 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Jaguar XK140 Rally to be held in Tauranga in April, for the cars first outing.

The car was completed in April on the 22<sup>nd</sup> I headed off to Tauranga. As the car had only travel about 5 miles in all, and therefore completely untested, I decided to ask my wife to follow in our Supra; the last thing I wanted was to break down in the middle of the Hauraki Plains for example. This turn out to be an unnecessary precaution, as the car ran 'like a charm' during the entire trip; I was elated, I tell you, and the howl emitting from the exhaust from four thousand up was 'out of this world'!!!!!!!

In truth, there was one issue that I must tell about. While travelling along the Hauraki Plains I came across a Land Rover towing a trailer full of roading shingle. Unfortunately some of this was escaping from the trailer onto the road so I held well back, chose my moment to pass, pulled well over to the right hand side of the road, and 'floored' the Jaguar. Unbelievably, just as I approach the rear of the trailer it hit a bump in the road and a quantity of shingle fall off, bounced off the road, a quantity of which hit my car. I was devastated, why me?! Fortunately or unfortunately, three stone chips were evident on my arrival in Tauranga.

Well that's my story. Thank you for reading about my restoration, I hope you have enjoyed my experiences. The car has travelled just on 600 miles now and has run perfectly all the way. Now I have some work ahead, to try and return it to its ex workshop condition, as expected by the Concours Judges.