

History of 3½ litre Jaguar S.S.100 number #39102



Tony and his beloved S.S.100 (39102) taken April 1961. Tony's car was one of only three S.S. Jaguar 100's sold new in Australia through Standard Cars, but others were privately imported from 1937 and that has never ceased to happen. Photo credit by News Ltd/Newspix.

Thereafter, there was a change of movement. In 2007 (when the last American register was published), there were listed (of both 2½ and 3½ litre S.S.100's and S.S.90's) 62 cars in America, 55 in the UK, 26 in Germany, 25 in Switzerland, 14 in Australia, 7 in Holland, 6 in Japan, 5 in each of France and Belgium, 3 in Portugal, 2 in each of Austria, Denmark, Mexico, South Africa and Spain and one (1) in each of Argentina, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Hong Kong, Ireland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden.

Primarily, the cars were identified by chassis number. My car bears chassis number 39102 (which I shall refer to as 'number 102'). The first 3½ litre S.S.100 (number 39101) was delivered to Prince Michael of Romania in 1938 and, reportedly, was resold in 2010 for \$1.04 million (currency unknown).

Number 102

By letter of June 7, 1961, Jaguar Cars Ltd informed me that number 102 left the factory on February 15, 1939 and was

handed to a London firm of exporters for Australia. The car was painted "lavender grey with red trimming, and had a lavender grey hood." In 1962, purely by chance, I learned that number 102 was first owned by Dr Walter Pye, a medical practitioner in Scone, NSW (of whom more later). The new price was £445 (English Pounds).

In 1958, students at the University of Adelaide were permitted to park their vehicles on the University campus. There number 102 joined the 1936 2½ litre S.S.100 which Digby Thomas had purchased in September 1957 from Wake Industries. His car had previously been owned by Barry Millikan. Digby was then the longest current owner of an S.S.100 in Australia (14 weeks longer than my ownership of number 102). Both Barry and Digby unfortunately died some years ago, Digby in 2014 aged 78.

In 1959, our two cars were joined, on the University Hill (alongside the engineering faculty building) by the

1936 2½ litre S.S.100 then purchased by Geoff Inglis who, together with Michael and Digby, was also studying mechanical engineering. In 1961, Geoff sold his car to John Bradman (the son of Sir Donald), Digby went overseas and I plodded on with my legal studies.

In 1962, after completing those studies, I decided to drive number 102 to the eastern States (from Melbourne to Brisbane) for the purpose of locating any other S.S.100's in Australia. In that venture I was successful in finding a further seven cars. There were others that I could not locate.

Details of the identity, whereabouts, description and ownership (past and present) of the S.S.100 cars which are (or have been) in Australasia have now been carefully collated in the handsome book entitled *'The forerunners of Jaguar in Australasia and SE Asia'* written by John Clucas and Terry McGrath and published in 2004, after many years of research, interviews and hard work. That book has become 'the bible' for

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most things relating to those cars. (In 2007, John Clucas purchased the 2½ litre S.S.100 previously owned by Geoff Inglis and John Bradman, which had been in storage for 40 years. The car has since been restored and is still in Victoria).

As at 2012 there were 14 in Australia - eight 3½ litre (2 in each of Victoria, NSW and SA, and one (1) in each of Queensland and Western Australia) and six 2½ litre (2 in each of Victoria and NSW, and one (1) in each of SA and Tas).

Of general interest, there were only three S.S.100's imported into Australia. Other than 102, the first S.S.100 imported into Australia was the 2½ litre of Keith Taylor of Adelaide in 1937, which he raced at a Lobethal Hillclimb and at Sellick's Beach. The second competition car was the 3½ litre of Keith Thallon, who entered it in the 1949 Australian GP at Leyburn, Queensland.

Replica S.S.100's are now almost as plentiful in Australia as genuine cars. As at 2012 there were 11 replicas in Australia, four (4) of which were built in SA by Ray Finch (including those now owned by Rob Thompson and Tess McGrath). Frank Bett built his replica many years ago and Robby Nicholls' replica was built in the UK.

Continuing the history of number 102, when in Sydney in 1962, I visited Bryson Industries, the Jaguar agents, and purchased pre-war parts still available and relevant to S.S.100's. While waiting in their workshop, I was approached by a man who, in admiring number 102, remarked that he had previously owned a 3½ litre S.S.100. There followed an earnest conversation, which eventually established that he, Dr Walter Pye, had been the first owner of number 102 after it had arrived in Australia in April 1939.

Dr Pye and I continued to correspond until his death in 1994 at the age of 88. He gave me two early photographs of the car and presented me with the four blackwood blocks upon which number 102 had reposed for five years during the War.

For number 102, Dr Pye had paid £750. When NSW car registration number "S.S.100" became available, he purchased it for the car. He, also, had preferred over-sized rear tyres, which gave a lower gearing. Top speed, he recalled as being "just over 100 mph".

When he sold the car in 1948, the odometer read about 9,500 miles. (Now it reads about 90,500 miles). When over his way again, Dr Pye invited me to call in and see his 1915 "T" Model Ford and his 1912 Rolls Royce Silver Ghost. (Unfortunately, I was not over that way again before he died).



*The rarity of this photograph should not be underestimated. At the time, all were owners of S.S.100's.
L-R: Tony Bishop with his car, Noel Roscrow, Ian Cummins and Digby Thomas.*

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During my ownership of number 102, the car has been most reliable. Twice it has been driven to the eastern States. The longest journey was to Brisbane in 1962. Between 1963 and 1966, the car was in storage while I was overseas. For the first 35 years, I personally maintained the car, which included replacing third gear (in 1961), the timing-chain (in 1962) and the main pinion bearing (in 1967).

In 1993/94, the engine was rebuilt by David Griffin of Car Craft Services, the car was repainted by Ray Finch and the upholstery refurbished by David Stewart. I then purchased the registration number SA 861, which had been in my family since 1910, when my great grandmother became the 23rd female registered owner of a motor vehicle (a Star). About ten years ago, the 'weeping' petrol tank was replaced by one made of stainless steel.

I purchased number 102 on 6 January 1958, joined the Jaguar Drivers Club

of SA not long after it was established in 1973, and am still a proud member together with my wife Fiona.

In 1975, number 102 was joined by a 1967 4.2 litre E-Type automatic (2+2) which has since shared the garage with number 102. Both cars are fully registered and are our only means of transport.

Tony & Fiona Bishop

Owners of number 102

1. Dr Walter Pye: NSW - 1939 to 1948 (9 yrs)
2. Tony Fagan: NSW - 1948 to 1951 (3 yrs)
3. Len Allen: NSW - 1951 to 1952 (1 yr)
4. Wes Jones: NSW - 1952 to 1954 (2 yrs)
5. Eric Sarles: NSW - 1954 to 1955 (1 yr)
6. John Wollaston: SA - 1955 to 1957 (2 yrs)
7. Valentine Pomeroy: SA - 1957 to 1958 (4 months)
8. Tony Bishop, SA - 1958 to present (63 yrs)

SPECIFICATIONS OF NUMBER 102

Chassis number: 39102

Engine number: M1079E

Body number: 5033

No. of cylinders: 6 (with O/H valves)

Diameter of cylinders: 82mm

Stroke: 110mm

Capacity: 3485.5cc

RAC rating: 25.01hp (brake hp - 125)

Oil capacity: 20 pints

Gearbox: 2 pints

Rear axle: 3½ pints

Water capacity: 3½ gallons

Petrol capacity: 17 gallons

Weight (on road): 23 cwt

Approximate maximum speeds

◇ First gear: 32 mph

◇ Second gear: 55 mph

◇ Third gear: 90 mph

◇ Top gear: 105 mph

Braking distance - 30 mph to stop: 30ft

Axle ratio in top gear: 3.8 to 1

