

# Frank Napoli (Broken Hill) XJ6 Series III

## New member article: Frank Napoli

Grace space pace. It was when I heard these words as a teenager that the penny dropped. These three words summed up Jaguar cars to a tee, and so began a lifelong admiration of a marque that I previously only viewed as a curiosity.

### The Beginning

Being an avid reader of all things to do with cars I always knew that the Series 3 XJ6 was the best saloon car in the world at the time. So, when I came across a Modern Motor magazine article titled 'Manual Labour of Love' the die was cast. I had to have a Series 3 XJ6 5-speed.

On one of my trips to Adelaide in 1987 to visit family at Christmas, I was just casually admiring the Jaguars at Prestige Car Sales in Walkerville when I was approached by a salesman. I asked him did he ever see any 5 speed manuals come up for sale. I wasn't really in the market as I had not long started a new job after a long injury lay off from work.

Surprisingly, he replied I think Solitaire have got one for sale now. A quick phone call confirmed this. It was a 1982 model in Tudor White. I made an appointment

to view and take it for a test drive which led to signing on the dotted line.

### Fatal Attraction

I took delivery of the Jaguar in January 1988 with 74,500 km on the clock. I am led to believe the car was originally delivered new by Dave Potter Motors on Brighton Road. That was, and still is, the most money I've ever spent on a used car, but it was a rare manual - I had to have it.

In hindsight I was naive and rushed into it, so I could not foresee the issues that followed. If I had done my homework and went into this better prepared, with a clear plan, then perhaps I wouldn't have bought that particular car and bided my time and waited until the right car came along.

But I was blinded by the allure of this car and did not notice the poor paint quality. I did not notice the rust and I certainly wasn't prepared for the copious amounts of oil this car consumed. This car was, after all, built by British Leyland.

At its worst, I calculated oil consumption at 1 litre per 100km at highway speeds, yes you read that correctly, 1 litre of oil every 100km. It became a standing

joke at work that when I went on a trip I would pull into the servo and ask the attendant (remember those) to check the fuel and top up the oil and that it would cost me more for oil than petrol. At some stage I tried running Mobil 1 synthetic oil and on long trips it actually did cost more for oil than fuel.

In 1990, I had a bare metal respray done. The paint crazing was especially severe on the horizontal surfaces of the panels. This was done by the local Ford dealer who had just installed a paint oven. They had a spray painter with a good reputation, and the job didn't disappoint.

### The Need for a Reliable Car

Around that time, I bought a second car, a Datsun 240K, in the false belief that preserving the Jag would prolong it. The Datsun had an inline OHC 6-cylinder engine, 5 speed gearbox and independent rear suspension, so it was probably more Jag-like than I had realised. It even had a fake wood dash but it was certainly more reliable than the Jaguar.

### French Polishing

I had been getting a bit of work done at Classic Restorations in St Marys dealing with a guy called **Walter Pischler**, or Wally as he liked to be called. Wally was right into French polishing and had some exquisite samples on display, one in particular was a beautiful Jaguar dashboard fascia. He pointed out the intricacies in the grain and rich colour compared to my dash that had all the character of a weathered floorboard.

Wally was always suggesting that I should get my car's fascia replaced with a restored one as it was showing signs of deterioration. This was to have been done on an exchange basis, where he would remove my fascia and replace it with a restored one. (Mine would be restored and used in the next car that needed a new fascia).

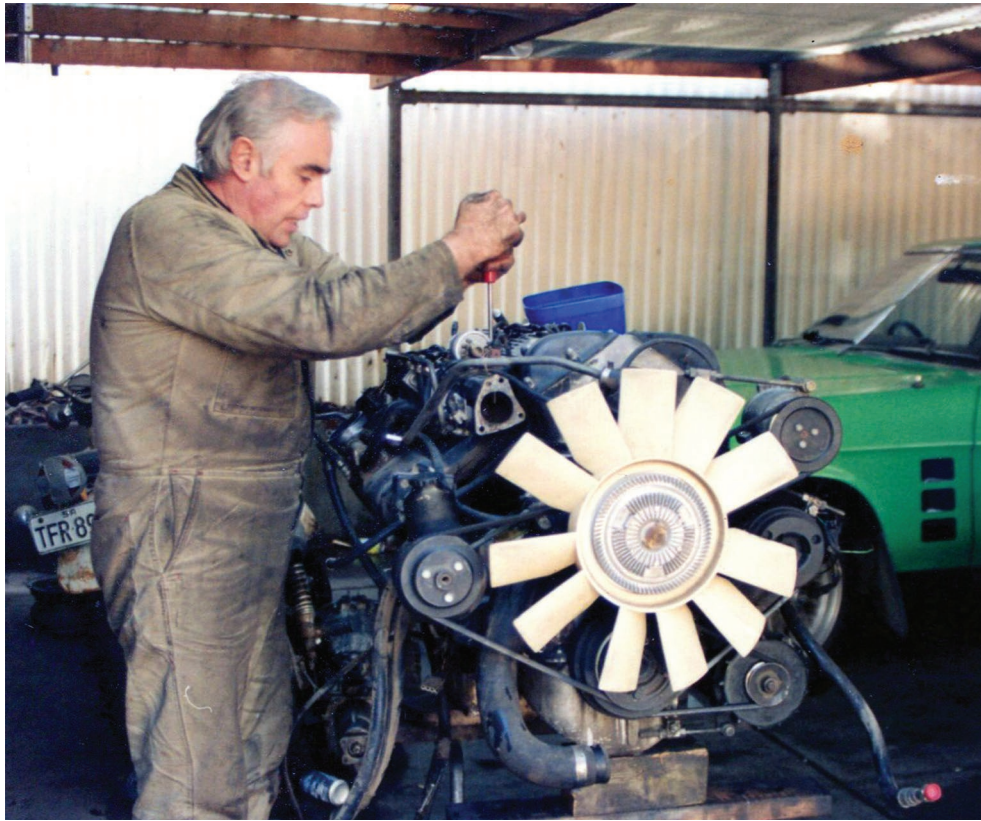
I was not keen on this because a Jaguar's fascia is unique like a fingerprint and I did not want to part with my car's unique 'floorboard'. One day, out of the blue, Wally offered me the beautiful fascia he had on display. I can't remember why but I think he was moving or the business was moving or something like that. I said I would have that fascia fitted but on



*Frank taking delivery of his Jaguar XJ6 in 1988. [Based on the rego plates, there may have been a Bryson Industries connection (triple numerical number plate)].*



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*The late Reuben Tebbett. Frank's mechanic and long term friend.*

the condition that I retained my original fascia, not an exchange. He agreed, so I now have a fascia full of character fitted to my car but I still have my car's 'fingerprint' in my possession.

## Engine Woes

Driving back home in the Jag in 1991, after a trip to Orange, I pulled out to pass a car, put my foot down and nothing happened except a realisation that surgery was required on the engine.

Where do you start that process? I was completely over the high service costs being charged by dealers. Surely, I wasn't staring down the barrel of an engine rebuild by a Jaguar dealer.

Wally suggested I look up a man named **Reuben Tebbett**.

## A Future Friend to The Rescue

I met Reuben at his home in Flagstaff Hill where his garage was his workshop. I was impressed by the man, by his knowledge and by his honesty. I'm proud to say that Reuben and I became good friends.

Reuben not only rebuilt my Jaguar's engine in 1991, but he restored my faith in the brand. Over the following years Reuben gradually sorted all the issues with my Jaguar and provided me with

the reliable car that I was expecting when I first bought it. He even tracked down and fitted a brand-new manual gearbox when the original started making expensive noises. The last service Reuben performed on the car was in May 1996.

*A big thank you to the aforementioned British Leyland, a full bare metal respray, a complete engine rebuild and a brand new gearbox, all before 125,000 km on the clock, and I still haven't won the war on rust.*

## A Good Story

On a lighter note, both my children were born in Mildura, which is 300km from Broken Hill. One claim I wanted to be able to make is that the Jag brought them all the way home from hospital, which it eventually did.

I'm sure that one day they will say with pride, that the first car they ever rode in was Dad's Jag.

## As the Years Roll On

In the years since I bought the Datsun 240K, the Jag had gone from my daily drive, to my part time drive, to almost forgotten. In 1997 I eventually let the registration run out, it is simply too expensive in New South Wales to have multiple cars registered in the one household.

In hindsight, having a Jag sitting idle was not a good idea, as they deteriorate so quickly without regular use. By the time I realised this, it was too late to put the call out to Reuben to do his magic again, as he had sadly passed away.

Reuben, was a knight in shining armour, a true defender of the faith, in a realm created by William Lyons and preserved by the people that love his cars.

I did register the car again in 1998 for a couple of years, but then let it lapse again in 2000, before registering it again from 2002 to 2005.

Come 2011, and with a bit more time on my hands, I wanted to fire the old girl up again and get her registered, but I also knew it had developed welsh plug leak and a heavy rear engine seal weep.

## Where do I turn to for help?

It was well known in Broken Hill that a guy called **Paul Zammitt** was a bit of a Jaguar whisperer. Paul's son Martin had been servicing my car since 1999, but an engine out job was probably beyond the scope of his Bridgestone dealership.

So, keeping it in the family, I arranged for Paul to pull out the engine and fix the leaks, and it was a job done well.

Paul has just turned 86 and is another champion for the Jaguar cause. The Jag was back on the road but I had to rely on guesswork for fuel levels. Surely the fuel gauge floats would free up over time. Yeah right.

## 30th Birthday

Registration lasted for another year, but in that year my Jaguar turned 30 years old. I joined a car club in 2012 and transferred to historic plates. Historic registration has the huge benefit of lower registration and insurance costs, especially in New South Wales.

However, the only historic car club in Broken Hill did not operate with a log book system, even though they had the opportunity to do so.

I could never reconcile the fact that I had to contact somebody in the club and ask them for permission to drive my car that I have owned for going on 25 years.

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*Photo of Paul Zammitt with Frank's XK engine. Fortunately Frank managed to find another champion of the Jaguar cause..*

I was a member of that club for 5½ years, but with a faulty fuel gauge, club runs were always undertaken with fingers crossed and 20 litres of fuel in the boot.

A group of like-minded individuals who also craved the logbook system started a new motoring club, and so I am now a member of the Silver City Historic Motoring Club. This club has a register of not only cars but trailers, trucks and motorcycles. Great for the Vmax and CBX, but that's another story.

Trying to resurrect the reliability of my Jaguar over the last few years has been a labour of love (ironically, just like the title of that magazine article I read nearly 40 years ago) New fuel senders and changeover switch sorted out the blank look on the fuel gauge.

I am now at the stage where I can finally trust the old girl to go touring again and get me back home of course.

So, I'm up for a bit of adventure behind the wheel. I have just returned from a trip to Mildura to visit my daughter. It's amazing how much confidence you can get with a working fuel gauge.

JDCSA

I still have family and friends in Adelaide and what better way to meet some like-minded people than by joining the

Jaguar Drivers Club of South Australia. Just in time for South Australia to close their borders due to the Coronavirus.

I am looking forward to finally getting down to Adelaide again, for everything the city offers, especially watching the Roosters and Crows. So that's my story,

I know in the scheme of things, a white XJ6 Series III is an unremarkable car, even though it's the epitome of the classic Jaguar shape, with the classic XK engine, but it's mine and it is part of the family.

I guess the Series III XJ6 was a bit of a transitional car for Jaguar, with its William Lyons DNA and design input from Pininfarina, it gave a nod to the future direction of the marque. In other words, as a Jaguar you could tell where it came from, and at the same time see where it was heading.

Regards  
Frank Napoli  
Broken Hill

*Editor- great story Frank. I very much enjoyed reading it, as I am sure other members will. Please make yourself known when you are next in Adelaide.*

*We all have a story to tell, so just like Frank, please send me some words and a photo or two. Cheers - Graham.*



*Frank's lovely Old English White, 5-speed manual Series 3 XJ6.*