

## MYWAY-6 . . . .

By Philip Prior

# The Story of my Restomod Jaguar XJC

### PART 1— Is it an Obsession?

#### My Love of The Jaguar XJC

The Jaguar XJC and its sister model the Daimler Sovereign Coupe are the rarest of all Jaguar models with a very short production life of 1975 - 1978. Yet for me and many others around the world it is one of the most beautiful cars ever produced by Jaguar.

Maybe this story began back in 2011 when I wanted to purchase a Jaguar XJC and ended up purchasing a DHC version. Of course Jaguar never produced a DHC in the XJC, although some were commissioned by third party companies such as Avon Stephens in the UK.

However my desire for an XJC in largely unmolested original configuration soon drove me to sell the DHC and purchase a Daimler Sovereign Coupe, the Daimler version of the XJC. I love this car and it remains with me as I write this article. The car is fully restored to largely original specifications. The fully refitted interior reveals some subtle variations such as embroidered inlays to the seats and door trims whilst mechanically it enjoys some modifications with a Series 3 head, triple SU carburetors a nice set of extractors and high torque starter. It is a lovely car to own and drive having enjoyed tours of Tasmania, the XJC Muster in Echuca and a tour of NSW with the unofficial Australian XJC group.

“You are never satisfied Prior” my wife said, as once again she caught me exploring the possibility of buying another car. This time I was exploring the possibility of building what I will call a “Restomod XJC”. I was inspired by a project underway in the UK by a company called Retropower. They were in the process of building a Jaguar XJC that to my way of thinking was just stunning. The project was called, “Jaguar XJC 430”. For those interested you can see the full build here:

<https://retropower.net/2019/02/04/jaguar-xjc430-ls3-powered-restomod/>

This retro build of this XJC would go far beyond anything I could dream of and the budget would be mind blowing. However visually it presented for me the inspiration and motivation to have a go—No doubt my last go, at a full rebuild of a classic car.

About this same time I became aware of a local Jaguar XJC, 4.2, MOD car tucked away in a shed south of Adelaide where it had been for some 14 years. It took me two more years before I finally got to purchase the car, drag it out of the shed and have it transported home. After a quick wash I had some idea of what I had purchased. I was not too disappointed.





# The Restoration Page (cont)

At this point in the story there is a little twist. One person's tragedy turns into an opportunity for me. A fellow XJC owner in NSW who had just completed some extensive mechanical upgrades on his XJC was unfortunately taken out by a very careless elderly gent doing a turn in front of him. I was fortunate to be able to purchase the damaged car with the aim of utilising much of the mechanical upgrades.

In particular the triple crabs, beautiful set of extractors, light weight flywheel, Supra 5 speed gear box and tail shaft to suit, high torque starter, etc. I now had two cars and the fun was about to start.

## Deciding on the Mods

It was always my intention to stay as true to "Jaguar" style wise as possible. Yet I wanted to see if I could do that yet improve on the styling and looks with a few subtle changes. Some changes are style changes, some upgrades, while others are mild mechanical and performance upgrades . . . But always with the original style in mind. Others will be the judge as to whether or not this has been achieved.

**"I like to tell myself that Sir William would have approved"**

## Customised Body panels and Lights

Using the UK Retropower photos as a base I did some photo shopping to test my ideas. I liked the front of that car but wanted to introduce a few changes to suit my own ideas.

I decided on a black mesh grill top and bottom with the top grill set into the bonnet in a similar fashion to the Series 1 cars, I have always preferred that style over the series 2 style. The concept of replacing the original park and indicator lights with the beehive style of the seventies as per the Retropower car was adopted, but I planned to use switchback LED globes where the white park lights switch to amber when the indicators are activated. I also chose to install the DRLs in the lower grill.

Wanting as an overall style to reduce clutter and achieve a very clean look, the upper and lower over riders on the front bumper typical of the Series 2 cars, would be removed. This photo opposite was my original mock-up of the front styling.

A similar mock-up of the rear of the car allowed me to test my ideas. Again simplicity and clean lines was always the object of the exercise. So, Series 3, one piece, tail lights, a Series 3 boot lid with slim line plinth, a modified, one piece Series 1 rear bumper and modernised badging, allowed me to achieve the clean mod look I was after. Again this image opposite is my original mock-up only.

I had seen a couple of examples where the rear wheel arches of the XJC had been modified to reflect the true round of the rear wheels rather than the more oval shape of the XJ series cars in general. This was to prove to be a more complicated exercise than first envisaged and must remain the subject of **PART 2** of this story. But the two photos below give an inkling as to the look I had in mind.





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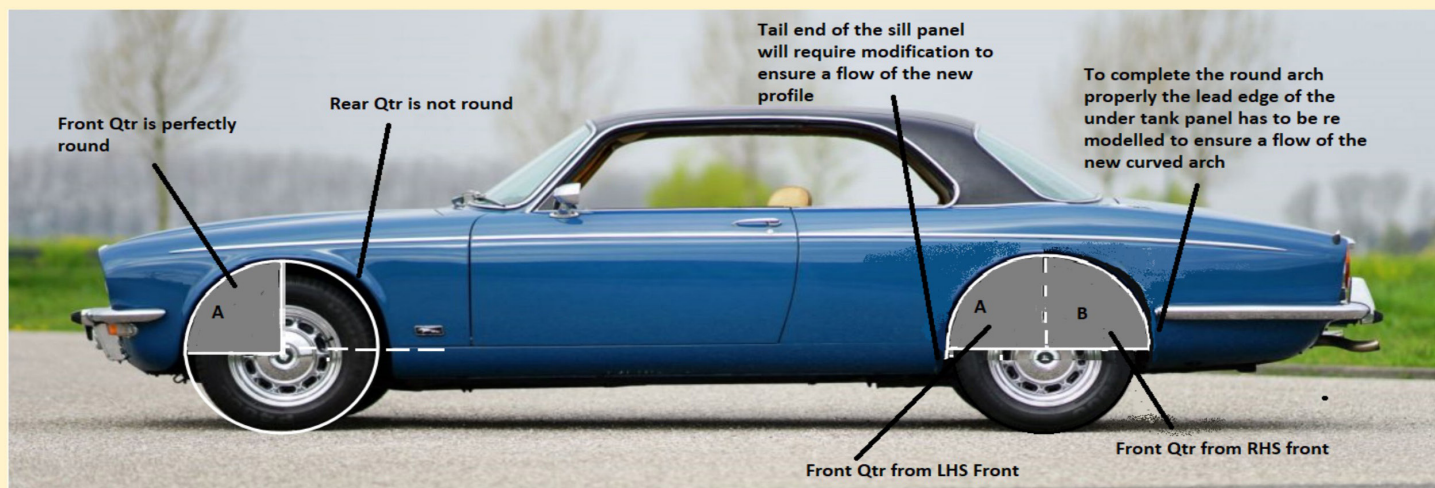
## PART 2— More Modification Ideas and Plans

### The Rear Wheel Arches

This was the major styling change to the XJC I planned. There were no practical reasons for this customisation of the rear wheel arches, it was purely a styling preference on my part. As mentioned in PART 1 of this story, I had seen the changes made by others on the XJC with I might add various success rates. In fact some were just wrong because of a failure to think through the outcome. The big mistake some made in looking for this change is to think that a front wheel arch could be simply cut and welded in place in the rear. In fact this was my first thought. However I soon discovered that the front wheel arches on the Series XJs is not round at all despite the appearance of being so. This is demonstrated with rather horrific results in this photo of an American XJC.



I did discover however that the front quarter (only) of the front wheel arch is in fact a true round. This would enable the use of four front quarters of front wheel arches to be welded in place to give a full / true round result at the rear as demonstrated in the photo below.



### The Interior Finnish and Modifications

Whilst in this planning stage of the build I had a number of things to consider in relation to the interior of the car. Once again I planned for more than just a restoration. I wanted the interior finish of the car to make a bold statement, be comfortable and include some up-upgrades in particular to some of the electrical switches and electrical components.

So I decided to switch to late model XJS seats and soon discovered they are like rocking horse poo to find but I got lucky and found a set of front seats in Queensland at a reasonable price. These would be fully recovered in leather with the pleating switched to vertical to match the original rear XJC seats style. I wanted to upgrade to a Series 3 console for appearance firstly and secondly I was keen to introduce

Series 3 window switches that were of a much better standard than the Series 2. Re-wiring these would prove interesting but the result would give a much better performance with the troublesome rear quarter windows

Retaining the genuine Jaguar appearance with a strong burl walnut timber finish was important. After some research I decided to use the Hydrographic process for finishing the main dash, console dash and ski slope and I wanted to add some additional timber panelling to the door cards. It was planned that the console and door cards would be re-coloured in a colour to match the seats (colour yet to be finalised) with contrasting black armrests and crash pads. I think I changed my mind 20 times at least on these colour combinations.



# The Restoration Page (cont)

## So Lets Just do this!

Enough talking, debating, planning and generally procrastinating, it is time to get stuck into what will be a big job. I know there will be many changes of direction along the way but lets make a start.

### The Strip Down Starts

Stripping down a car for a full rebuild is probably in many ways the easy part but it is definitely not the most enjoyable. The dirt, grease and surprises along the way can be taxing.

The aim is to strip it down as far as possible to save expense at the crash shop. First job remove the bonnet, doors, boot lid, bumpers, front guards, lights etc. Then get the engine and transmission out. All doable at home without much trouble. All the interior was also removed. This car had new leather seats prior to its lay up 14 years ago, in very good condition.

### The Tin Worm Had Been Active

The first issues were now starting to show up. "No rust" the previous owner said, pointing to just a few small external spots. The truth is, floors needed patch repairs in every quarter and so typical of the XJC, under the rear seats rust damage as a result of blocked drains below the rear quarter windows. New larger drains would solve this problem in future. Rust was lurking in the inner and outer sills, at the



base of the 'B' pillars and all the door rubber channels were completely rusted away and needed to be replaced. But what do you do . . . There is no turning back!



I was very fortunate to stumble across a guy cleaning out grandpa's shed and had a dozen or so genuine Jaguar Series 2 replacement panels for sale, mostly the ones I needed, including both sill panels. (And the price was right).

A big problem was found in this section of the chassis rail in the inner front guard where multiple layers of metal provide a lovely haven for the tin worm holes were even provided for the water to enter (Thanks Leyland, very clever).



### The Cowboys Had Been Busy

As is so often the case, old repairs began to surface. That is if you could call them repairs. The cowboys had been very busy. Whilst stripping paint on the rear quarter panels I discovered that the previous painter had decided to paint over the old pin stripes....Aaaagh! What would I find next?

It wasn't long before I realised the front guards over the headlights had also been butchered by the cowboys. Old repairs simple could not be repaired and the guards would need to be replaced completely. Both doors had dodgy repairs, overlapping repairs with loads of bog. So I decided to use the doors from the parts car. However these subsequently also revealed problems so very typical in the



XJC. Water leaking into the top sections of the doors where an internal second reinforcing rail creates a rust haven between the two layers of metal. The tops of the doors would need to be removed, internal repairs made and new top skins manufactured, not an easy nor cheap exercise.

At this point most of the big surprises had been discovered and we were starting to make significant headway on repairs and panel modifications.

At this point I wish to thank and acknowledge the professional work conducted by my Panel and Paint Shop:

**'Edwardstown Custom Body Repairs'**  
*Thanks to Mel Patterson, and his team.*



## The Body Modifications

### Rear Wheel Arches

As mentioned earlier this would involve using two forward quarter sections cut from front guards. These would be welded and metal finished in place to produce a true round wheel arch that followed the circumference of the rear tyres. But first it was necessary to mark and cut away the original wheel arch and inner guard.

A template was prepared using an old steel rim with a sheet metal rim painted to simulate the tyre and a circular sheet metal piece tack welded around it to provide a template for the shape and position of the final wheel arch. To achieve this the shock absorbers were released and the rear hub supported in the correct road height position. (Some estimation needed at this point).



The sections cut from two forward quarters of front guards were then trial fitted to the template.

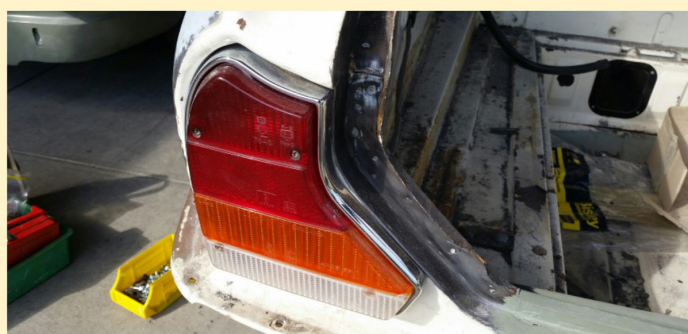
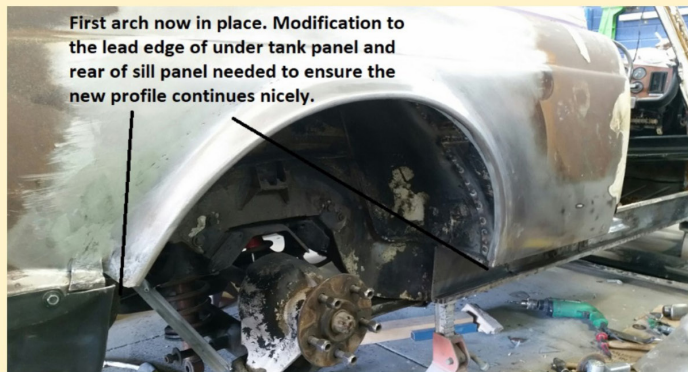
So far...all good. With the two pieces welded in place and metal finished to perfection. It then became evident that the lead edge of the under tank panel and the rear end of the sill panel would need to be reshaped so the new profile of the wheel arch would flow through to the bottom of both. With both sides completed the end result was very satisfying.

### Modifications to Lights

The other major panel modifications were, replacing the rear tail lights with Series 3 units and replacing the front indicators and park lights with the beehive style lights with switch back LED globes. As I was using Series 3 front guards to replace the old unusable original guards there was considerable metal work involved to get a complete metal finish. (No bog please)



First arch now in place. Modification to the lead edge of under tank panel and rear of sill panel needed to ensure the new profile continues nicely.



Fitting the Series 3 tail lights was a much simpler operation. In **PART 3 (Final Part)** of this series I will deal with the final paint and the fun part of putting it all back together.