

LIFE BEGINS AT FORTY



WELCOME TO THE
PORT OF ECHUCA

Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Jaguar XJC

By Phil Evans & Phil Prior

The XJC story is widely known by now, and while the production was the lowest in numbers of any Jaguar model, the XJC has become an iconic, much desired and sought after Jaguar. Although built from 1975 to late 1977, it was not launched in Australia until 1976, and this launch took place at a Jaguar National Rally in Mildura, where the XJC and the XJS were unveiled to club members, media and the public alike.

It was early then in 2014, that a group of XJC owners decided we should hold a celebration to mark the anniversary of our lovely coupes. We, all members of our states Jaguar clubs are, Allen Williams and John Mann of Victoria, Phil Prior of South Australia and me, Phil Evans from New South Wales, began planning the event.

The Planning

We decided that the event would run along the lines of a National Rally, with a welcome party, a dinner and a display day. Echuca was chosen as an easier location than Mildura for all those travelling long distances. It is also blessed with many natural attributes and charms, and is a thriving centre with Moama just across the river. There were many restaurants and accommodation options in the area for us to select from to cater for those attending.

So Echuca it was, and we selected a rally headquarters at

The Port of Echuca Mercure Hotel. It seems tourism is the life blood of many Australian towns these days, Echuca is no different and is a busy place, and we must say that the local community, council, tourism and business folk were most helpful with the organisation of the event.

Muster memorabilia was produced in the form of a great grille badge (which also became the event logo); along with caps and polo shirts to provide a lasting memory of the event. A beautiful 36 page souvenir booklet was also printed, which features the coupes attending, and we're sure this will be treasured by all for many years. We may not see such a gathering again for some time.

From the outset, we received support that we could not have done without, from The Jaguar Magazine and all the Australian Jaguar clubs who publicised the event in magazines and on websites. Shannons were our major sponsor, and Andrew and Michelle of Temby Automotive, Eltham were marvellous in their support. Andrew and Michelle flew their Yak aerobatic plane to Echuca on the morning of the Sunday display day and made a couple of low level passes over us with a smoke trail billowing out the back!

Many owners and their coupes checked into The Mercure on the Friday and the carpark looked a great sight, with nearly 30 coupes being cleaned after their trips and being inspected by all and sundry. I think we were all in wonderland!

Coupes at the Mercure

Coupes came from each state, and we thank you all for your efforts and kilometres travelled. One was driven over from Western Australia, not without incident, but Juliette and Mark finally arrived on the Saturday morning, and had taken the 'adventure' in their stride and were very cheery and happy with it all. Great attitudes!

About 80 people gathered in the open on the hotel deck for the





This was a wonderful experience, cruising on the mighty Murray River, with all its sights and activities, and one of the highlights for many of us this weekend.

Back in The Mercure carpark, which always seemed to be a hive of coupe activity – there were cars being cleaned (again!), stories and tales swapped. We got busy setting up for the Saturday evening dinner – in a nice room at The Mercure into which Phil Prior carefully drove his Daimler Sovereign coupe. It looked magnificent and a very nice addition to the evening's atmosphere.

Again, 80 people enjoyed a plentiful buffet dinner, and the evening ran smoothly with the

Friday welcome party, a lovely evening and setting. Canapés were served and cold refreshments were enjoyed after a hot day.

We were extremely fortunate to have Howard and Sue Snow join us also. Both spent their working lives with Jaguar Cars, Coventry, and are now retired and resident in Australia. It was by great chance that they were on a touring holiday and would be in Echuca when the event was taking place.

Howard readily agreed to speak to our gathering about their Jaguar lives, and he well remembers the difficult development process the XJC went through before it was released to the public.

At about the time that the car was conceived, he was Personal Assistant to Lofty England during his period as Chairman of Jaguar following Sir William's retirement. His talk was very well received and much appreciated by all.

Saturday dawned fine and warm again and many availed themselves of the optional activities that were planned.



Some went to The National Holden Museum, and many took the chance for a lunch time cruise on the paddle steamer, "EMMYLOU".



assistance of a local identity, Ross Veale who was our MC. Ross is another example of a helpful local who would not take any payment for his time, but in return he asked that we might donate some money to Echuca Regional Health for their new hospital. Some excess funds were handed to the mayor and the hospital CEO at the Sunday display day awards.

We were once again fortunate to have another Jaguar identity, Bill Hemming and his wife Deb, join us for the Saturday dinner. Bill's career included working for Jaguar in Australia and Europe and he actually drove the launch XJS to Mildura in 1976 and drove the XJC back to Sydney. While he preferred the XJS at the time, he came to love the XJC and purchased a 4.2 model, fitted it with a V12 engine and towed his race cars with it.

Bill is still an active racer, and at one time owned Elfin Sports Cars and presently owns the Elfin Heritage Museum in Melbourne. A true character and his talk was very well received and appreciated by all. The weekend has seen him come to regret having sold his XJC!

The evening flew by and was over before we knew, but not before the presentation of some certificates to those who have been helpful to us and who made the evening the success it was.

I was presented with a lovely print of my XJC by my fellow hard working organisers, for which I will always be most appreciative. It was a wonderful gesture by them, thank you again.





organisers to check out the assembled coupes. Old and new friends mingled, chatted and inspected cars in a relaxed setting, with a coffee van close by and the local Lions club with their usual tasty fare.

Some impromptu, informal judging was planned and the following owners and their coupes received awards. This was a difficult task, as many of the cars were deserving of such recognition.

The categories and winners were:

Best Original - Ian Pringle (SA) - Jaguar XJ4.2C

Best Modified - Wayne Woonton (VIC) - Jaguar XJ5.3C

Best Presented - Lloyd Eldred (VIC) - Jaguar XJ5.3C

Most Desirable - Greg Lewis (WA) - Jaguar XJ4.2C

Our weekend concluded with expressions of thanks for many who contributed to the success of the weekend, the awarding of the trophies, and \$500 from surplus funds raised during the event was donated towards the new

XJC Display Day

Sunday morning dawned fine (the weather was great all weekend) and already clean Jaguars and Daimlers were being cleaned (again) in readiness for the display day. Everyone was very keen and coupes were lined up, and by this time, 32 were now present and drove in procession down the main street and back - a truly great sight, and then on to The Aquatic Reserve. This was a perfect location for our display, with lots of trees and atmosphere by the Murray, where the coupes were arranged in a semi-circle in the "bowl" with one XJC in the middle, flanked by two lovely XJS coupes, in order to recognise the 40th anniversary of that great Jaguar also.

We had anticipated having at least 36 coupes displayed on the Sunday, but for a variety of reasons this was not to be. To those who were not able to make it through illness, we hope all is well with you.

Another 60 odd Jaguars of all models came along and were parked up separately outside the XJC display, and we appreciate those who came from Victoria just for the day. A group from The Hunter club also made a tour of it to The Muster from Newcastle and we also appreciate their efforts in doing so.

It was a great day and a chance to relax a little and for us





Most Desirable



Best Modified



Best Original

local hospital. There were goodbyes to those leaving for home, but quite a few stayed on to unwind and relax after a hectic few days before heading for home on Monday. The feedback from everyone has been fantastic and rewarding, and those who don't normally attend Jaguar events were truly impressed.

Acknowledgement: We greatly appreciate the contribution provided by Robert Taylor, a local photographer who took over 400 photographs.

Rob's photos can be viewed and purchased here: <http://robpictures.zenfolio.com/p275361869>

Photos courtesy Phil Prior, Paul Tomlinson and John Mann



Best Presented

