

Die Anfänge beim Jensen

32 years young and out to play with three Interceptors in my second week at JML. This was the photo shoot, over 3 days, for the first proper brochure, spent in the Savernake Estate near Marlborough, the 4,500 acre garden belonging to the Earls of Cardigan.

Very happy days.

Webasto

We did not fit sunroofs of any sort. Customers who chose them had them fitted by the makers, usually Webasto, after the car had been finished.

Rostschutz

The reason for the extra protection on cars sent to Australia was far more basic than one might think. All cars sent were containerised. The first one was shipped in our summer time and arrived as pristine as the day it left the factory.

The alarm was raised when cars packed and sent in our autumn, with high humidity levels, arrived with every part that could rust, such as nuts and bolts with the cadmium coating slightly chipped. The reason was that as the container passed through into the higher temperatures in southern hemisphere, the humid air within the sealed container created the perfect conditions for rust to develop. Our initial action was to pack the container with loads of dessicant, but even this was not enough and the wax coating was added and proved effective.

Vinyl Dach

Steve is dead right, and that is why Production loved them, as they did not have so much work on the roof panels to remove 'dings'! Standard on SPs and most USA cars from around and options elsewhere from about Sept 1971. Early versions were without seams and Kjell took some persuading to have them incorporated.

It might help to explain that, even in periods of strong demand and long lead times, many cars were built as stock cars for dealers against their annual allocation, agreed at the beginning of each contract year. As each chassis was laid down, the dealer against whose schedule the car was to be built, would be contacted for a full specification. If the car was being built against a specific customer order we probably already had the spec. Where a stock car 'in build' was sold by the dealer we often had to alter the spec to suit, subject to the car's progress down the line. Once painted, of course, the alterations possible were limited to interior and extras, but we could often swap with another dealer's stock car. However once a vinyl roof was on, it stayed on!

... For what it is worth... When we first started fitting vinyl roofs it quickly became clear that, in most cases, the best results colour wise were usually when the roof colour matched the interior, and, of course, toned

with the exterior. So, white car, black roof and interior looks better than black roof/beige or tan interior. I quite like the coach lines matching the roof colour.

Where black roofs are concerned you should be aware of the affect on the temperature of the interior of the car, because black absorbs heat. On a warm day, find a car with a black roof and light shade of body paint and feel the difference when you put your hand on the different colours.

Vertrieb, Produktionszeit

Certainly from 541 onwards Jensen sold through a dealer network, small though it was. Among these were Brooklands of Bond St, Michael Christie Motors in Haddenham, Rossleigh in Glasgow, and Coombs of Guildford. Some direct sales may have been made to directors of major suppliers, such as GKN, but in my time the nearest dealer received a commission to enable them to carry out any warranty work and was therefore credited with the sale.

Remembering how small the production numbers were, it is not surprising that cars left were invoiced out of sequence. This could be for any number of reasons including mechanical or body corrections, priority given to sold cars over dealer stock orders and sometimes Engineering Dept pulling a chassis out for inspection or modification.

How long did it take to build a car? Early Interceptor, and I mean Vignale, took 10 to 12 weeks in 1967 at a rate of about 3 per week. 541 production ran at about 1 per week, the R slightly more and the S significantly less. However, in those days the production space devoted to 541s was only about 25% of the total, if that, by the time Kelvin Way was in operation.

... The principle was that when cars were handed over to Sales Dept, the build cards and production/road test records went straight to the Service Dept. All correspondence, warranty claims etc were filed in each file. This applied to all cars produced with the exception of cars sent to the USA. Jensen Motors Inc handled warranty claims themselves and thus the records were kept there, as far as I remember. I will check with David Millard when next we are in touch; anything different I will advise.

... when I took the job of Export Sales Manager in 1968 I inherited two European distributors, appointed by Sincar who had been given the European rights by Vignale/Jensen, namely Behermoen Demoen in Brussels and France Motors in Paris. Neither of these ever ordered cars for stock, nor did any of the subsequent distributors I appointed. To enable me to go looking for new distributors I built stock cars at a rate of two per week and sold them as and when I found customers, either new distributors or export home delivery buyers. When the MK11 came in I had a small stock of MK1s left, and sold these at a discount to Edgar Schwyn in Switzerland.

This in part explains some of the gaps between production and sales, but there were other reasons why this occurred throughout the production of all cars at Kelvin Way. Chief among these was the occasional problem when a car was put back because of problems found during road tests. UK distributors were treated differently from export ones in that a schedule of cars was agreed with each of them at the beginning of the year and as these chassis were laid down the relevant dealer would be asked for a colour, trim and accessory

spec. Most cars would be pre-sold, particularly in the early days, but not all.

The picture referred to by Keith, p114 in his book is interesting because of the presence of a MK1 FF. This car was loaned to France Motors for the show in order to enable a third car to be displayed on the stand. By the way, that is me with my back to the camera, talking with the MD of Glass's Guide, as far as I can remember, who I had met for the first time. Remarkable coincidence, his wife played Bridge every week with my mother-in-law!

...In some European countries there were special import licences for low sales volume cars, usually in the form of exemption from full technical homologation; these countries included France and Belgium. In Spain there were restrictions on imports of all fully built-up cars to encourage local manufacture, only one of each model from each manufacturer could be imported. This is how the Jensen S came about in France and Spain and maybe Germany as well.

So this car, which Calver shows as originally exported from UK to Germany, may well be one of them. This would not explain the missing badge on the front grille nor would it necessarily be the reason for the identification plate shown in the engine bay. It would be interesting to know if there is a plate on the door aperture(s).

Unfortunately I cannot remember any details of this car, but I think we would have known about Vicky Leandros' ownership if that were true. It seems that the probability of US forces ownership is definitely not the case.

It would be a great help if Gerd Schaeffer, of GHS Motors Hamburg fame, could be traced as he would have a lot of useful information to give us.

...After I assumed the role of Export S M in January 1968 I always ran a left hooker as a demonstrator and would sell it on after a short while to one of the European agents. The agents in Belgium (Beherman), Netherlands (Smelt) and France (France Motors SA) all had Chrysler agencies and were ideal Jensen agents for this reason.

Richard Lester, Guy Salmon, Charles Follett

Reading through the car file brings back a lot of memories, as it was one of the first cars released from the factory after I joined the sales department on July 1st, 1967; although not directly involved with any of the correspondence I remember the car very well. In case the name Richard Lester is not familiar, the following link (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Lester) will tell you about one of the most successful and prominent film directors who worked in the UK at that time.

The car was sold to Lester by Guy Salmon Ltd from their Thames Ditton, Surrey, location. Charles Follett Ltd were the distributors for the London and Home Counties area, and Guy Salmon were dealers under them. Their service operation was at the other address. The 20% discount shown on the factory invoice to Charles Follett included a 2.5% extra discount on cars distributed to dealers.

When Guy himself retired his company was taken over by the Sytner group and today is a multi location operation with Jaguar and Land Rover franchises throughout the country. Guy's first car when he became a motor dealer was bought from my father's business in Walton-on-Thames.

... Folletts were certainly the top distributor, hardly surprising given their catchment area, certainly around 75 per year on average.

Second were Wilmslow Motors in Cheshire, again a very good catchment area, 40 cars per year average. However, we later discovered that for many years Wilmslow had been trading cars to non Jensen dealers out of their franchise area, a crime in those days. We were always anxious to increase the number of dealers, not only to improve sales representation but, and perhaps more importantly, to widen service coverage, and the best way of doing this was to pick up on garages who had potential customers in their area. One of the most notable successes was the link with Roger Clarke at Knaresborough.

By the way, when my colleague Mike Chambers took the first SP to show Roger, he asked for the bhp figure, and when told he said it was much like his Escort!

Peter Monteverdi, Edgar Schwyn

Indeed so, Peter Monteverdi was the importer for a little while, with the CV8. It is thought that this gave him the idea to build his own car with the same Chrysler power unit. I met Peter several times at the Geneva show, and he and Edgar were always on very good terms.

Edgar became the importer from the '69 Geneva show and became a very good friend of my family; we even had him playing cricket with the kids at home one summer visit! We stayed in contact after Jensen days, usually meeting up in Switzerland when we visited our son, often choosing a hotel in Morar for lunch.

Vertrieb Frankreich

France Motors were appointed by Sincar originally and I looked after them once Sincar had been dismissed in about March 1968. Despite other posts on this forum, France Motors did have Interceptors registered with the Dept des Mines, but possibly under a low volume arrangement. France Motors took 9 Mk1 Interceptors but only 2 Mk11s. I think they finished in 1971, due mainly to the illness of the proprietor, M Charles Ladouch, a truly wonderful character of whom, I have some very pleasant, and humorous, memories!

Presse-/Demonstrationswagen

NEA 7L was the show demo/press car and I am pretty sure the circuit pics are from the pre-show press test day. This was originally held at Goodward but moved to Silverstone in the 60s. Journos let loose on a circuit produced some hairy moments, notably L J K Setright stuffing a car (no, Jaguar!) into the only WW11 blockhouse on the circuit!

...The few cars registered by the factory were principally used as demonstration cars and from the factory and at motor shows, for use by the press conducting evaluation tests and by directors or very senior management. At any one time it would be unusual for more than two or three cars to be in use at any one time.

From the introduction of the later Interceptor and FF models, there were no cars allocated to directors etc, except for the one car allocated to Tony Good of Good Relations, which also served as an instant press car and for photo shoots. A new Interceptor and FF demo cars were put on the road at each Earls Court show and the cars exhibited on the stand were registered afterwards for the uses above. It was thought that even with relatively restricted public access, the ten day motor show use was equivalent to about 5000 miles use and so the cars were very rarely sold from the stand.

Dealers were expected as part of their contract to licence an Interceptor for demo purposes, but we provided FF demonstrations from the factory based car which was available on loan for the purpose. Factory demo cars were usually sold to dealers as normal second hand cars.

-EA Nummernschilder

As a general rule it is safe to assume that all Jensen cars bearing the -EA numbers would have been registered by JML for their own use as:

- Press and factory based demonstrators.
- MD's personal car.
- Tony Good's car, which was also the London based Press Car
- Prototypes.

After the J-H went into production the same applied, but there were Sales Reps cars (2) as well.

Earls Court show cars were almost always registered as demo and press cars after the show, as we reckoned that ten days of even a limited number of bums on seats equalled about 5K miles on them, that is the car seats, of course!

Registration numbers were often reserved through the kindness of the local authority in order to get 'tidy' numbers This is often the reason for numbers being out of sequence, as in this case with XEA 332 and 333 (one month apart approx). A better example is the HEA 1K to 10K series which were scheduled for release in 1971 but not used until well into 1972. Something to do with production saying that they would make cars in 1971!!

Dealer's cars were always registered in their own area unless they bought an ex factory car. Not all dealers actually ran licenced demo cars, a real problem for us to enforce what was a fundamental part of our agreement with them. However, we were usually happy to visit dealers and their customers for demo purposes, particularly in areas where we did not have a dealer as such visits often gave us an opportunity to appoint one.

We only ever sold new cars directly to our suppliers, such as GKN. Where we sold ex press/demo cars these

were always offered to our dealers first. In both cases where we sold cars direct, the dealer local to the customer always got a commission in order to encourage them to provide good service. Likewise, if an export home delivery car was to live in the UK for a while, the dealer received a commission for the same reason.

Scheibenwischer

OK, here goes.

Firstly, re-setting the arms on the spindles will allow for minor adjustment to the final arm/blade position when parked. Very interesting results are obtained if attempts are made to convert O/S park to N/S by doing this!

There is another adjustment on the wiper motor housing (at least on my S) whereby an external knurled knob allows for adjustment to the final position as well.

As far as I remember, all Interceptors should have been fitted with wiper motors that parked on the O/S, so this changed with left and right hand drive cars. Certainly, leafing through the current mag this is borne out by looking at the centrefold. Look closely at the screen on the grey Int convertible from Holland (centre pic, far end) where the wipers are clearly parked on the driver's side.

Now then, while all 541s had wipers parking on the O/S, this is clearly not the case with CV8s! In the same pic and others in the same mag a variety of positions can be found, goodness knows why.

However, rather than refer to 'another Jensen cock-up', which is silly, consider the result of a phone call from Lucas to say that, regrettably, they are unable to supply the correct wiper motor for a while and would an alternative be OK. If the answer were to be 'No', then no cars would be built until the correct part could be supplied. And, believe me, this was not an infrequent occurrence with several suppliers to JML, not just Lucas. Ask Alan Vincent when next you see him.

Of course the simple answer could be the fact that these were hand made cars and, like any tailor worth his salt, we asked the customer which side he dressed!

BTW, when in Rome last week I was impressed by being told of the wonders of the Pope's new Merc Conv. Prominent on the dash are two large buttons. One, when depressed, folds the hood in thirty seconds. If it comes on to rain, His Holiness presses the other button - and it stops raining!

Radios

By far the majority of UK cars were built with the Radiomobile Stereo 8. This was originally a Voxson product and used in 1968/70 until Smiths started making them under licence. By 1973 most US spec cars were shipped without radios because, if they were fitted in production, by the time they arrived in the US they had disappeared!

We could, of course, fit more or less any radio/stereo combination providing it was of the same size and speaker configuration as the Voxson/Radiomobile units.

The reason for choosing the Voxson unit was, of course, because it solved the problem of finding space for 8 Track units separate from the radios, a problem shared by RR and Aston, and we introduced Voxson to both.

When I was at the Geneva show in 1969, as thanks for introducing them to the UK, Voxson made me a present of an 8 track home unit which I brought back with me in 115/3139. Determined not to pay tax on this, I carefully put it in in the passenger's footwell, hidden under the carpet against the bulkhead. On leaving the ferry at Dover late at night, not surprisingly a bored Customs official volunteered me for the full going over! He turned out to be a very nice guy and a car buff and it would have been churlish of me to deny him the pleasure of a few moments sitting in the passenger seat, feet firmly placed on the carpeted Voxson unit. "Gosh, not much room in here for your legs, is there?" said he. I just smiled and we wished each other good-night.

Facel Vega, Chrysler Motoren

In 1959 while working at Connaught's I returned an HK500, which we had borrowed to show a customer, to HWM in Walton, This was a well used example, superbly appointed but down the Seven Hills Road at Weybridge I could feel the body flexing at the top of each hill! Tony Curtis had one, which probably led to his choice of a Jensen in later years.

My father-in-law ordered a Volvo engined Facellia when the right hand drive version was to be built, but sadly Facel went under before it could be delivered. Pretty little car and potentially good motoring after a disastrous start with their first engine.

Most will know that Jensen bought the remaining stock of Chrysler engines from Facel's receivers.