



Part Six: Where The XJS Rusts and Why *(Previous instalments available by request)*



Rear Bumper Beam

I forgot to mention the rear bumper beam when talking about the chrome bumpers last month, so I'll add a few words before the main subject.

The rear bumper beam is a pressed steel flat 'U' shaped item running along the back of the car and secured to the bumper irons by bolts retained in the beam itself.

The beam is enveloped by a thick rubber moulding secured by spring clips. The rear fog lights are also fitted into apertures at each end of the pressing.

These beams rust! Water gets between the steel pressing and rubber moulding and works away until it has reduced the beam to a crumbly mess. If you put your hand behind the beam and feel around within the 'U' then you'll get a good idea of its condition. If you feel smooth paint without barnacles and no laminations of rusty steel then leave well alone, for the near future at least.



Rear Bumper

If the initial prognosis is not good then it might be wise to remove the beam and give it a once over. Although the beam does not support any of the chrome bumpers it's a lot easier if these 3 items are removed prior to getting the beam out.

As mentioned before, the beam is secured to the irons by four captive bolts retained in the beam itself. They have the same head as a coach bolt and are retained in a square hole in the beam. The nuts on the other side of the iron will almost certainly be well rusted to the captive bolts. As with the chrome bumpers, if you don't soak these nuts in penetrating oil for a couple of days anything more than gentle application will see the captive bolt turn in the thin beam and turn the square hole into a round one. You will then spend the rest of the day huffing and puffing and falling out with anyone who comes near you whilst trying to liberate the nut from the bolt, it really is that bad!



Bumper beam – new (left) and old (right)

Before you pull the beam free remember to disconnect the fog light wiring. Gently prise the spring clips holding the rubber to the beam and then pull the beam out of the rubber. Once out on its own it will become obvious whether the beam is salvageable or not.

A quick note on the front bumper beam, which is made of alloy, never rots or bends, and begs the question of why this material wasn't chosen for the rear.



Rear arches.

I don't need to tell you that rot here is very common, and not just on XJS's. This area suffers from both the obligatory gravel rash plus intimate double skinning where the inner arch slopes down to join the outer. If you look closely at a clean section of wheel arch lip you will see the spot welds where the inner and outer flanges come together. Rust develops where these flanges have not been sealed correctly. The flanges also create a little shelf at an acute angle to the inner arch for more nasty stuff to sit on and do its bit. Combine this with the unseen internal sections where the inner and outer arches get all cosy and the result is all too familiar.

If you keep the shelf and the remaining flanges clean and try to force penetrating oil or very thin grease between the two flanges then the arch stands a fighting chance. There is limited access to the internal sections and any rust preventative here tends to make the cabin smell.

If you run your fingers along the arch all you should feel are the clean lines of two spot welded flanges. If there are any bumps or slopes leading up to the inner arch then I'm afraid your car has already been got at by the phantom fillers.

Repairing these sections is fiddly and time consuming and Jaguar do not sell repair sections. (Complete rear wings occasionally come up on ebay). You are hampered by the close proximity of the rear hubs and its also worthwhile giving more than a passing thought to the petrol tank and fuel lines which don't sit far away.

Sometimes cars come along adorned with chrome wheel arch covers. I don't particularly like the look of them, and if you see a car fitted with these up for sale, it might be worth considering just what they are covering up.



One big hole!



New inner arch fitted



Repairs completed!

Rear (flying) Buttresses.



Some rot out, some don't, but given enough encouragement they generally will. The encouragement is in the form of a dirty unloved car exposed to the elements. This allows dirt and organic matter to build up at the base of the buttresses where they meet the boot lid and rear window apertures. There is also the previously mentioned theory of acidic fumes from the battery. Sometimes it's quite obvious that the metal has rotted from the inside out resulting in scabby holes half way up the buttress, far away from any time gathered detritus. Wherever your car chooses to rot, if its kept clean and dry, in and around the boot area (with all drain holes clear and free) then the buttresses should remain pretty well preserved.

Boot and Boot Lid

I've never really come across cars with badly corroded boot floors as they are pretty simple structures with no double skinning. The odd one or two have shown signs of distress around the spare wheel well which is the lowest point and probably gets the most paint disturbing flex. It's well worth taking out the spare wheel and carpet and having a good look round. Hopefully all it will take is a little attention to surface rust.



Boot plinth rust and boded repair

The boot lid and bolt on plinths are a different kettle of fish. The boot lid tends to go on its lower edges, where the outer skin folds over the inner framework. This can continue all around the underside of the lid. The test for rot follows the same pattern as before, check the internal seam all around the boot periphery, if it's not clean and well defined then it's either corroded or has been filled in one way or another.



Plinth rear



Plinth front

The boot lid plinths are hollow sections bolted to the top rear of the boot lid. They collect muck and moisture on their internal parts and just rot away with ease. The full extent of this is not apparent until the plinth is removed, but any blistering on the outer faces generally means trouble.

PDF compiled by: Xclusively Jaguar

Information and pictures provided by: Andrew Harvey

Andy offers a used parts service for older Jaguars, as well as light restoration work, welding and advice.

I can personally recommend his used parts service.

Andy's contact number is: 07940 998199
Andy's email address is: slogger@harvey2310.fsnet.co.uk

For further information, please contact Andrew Harvey on the above number or email.

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