

# **A DS 21 FINDS A NEW HOME**

**Remember this car?**



**It was recently for sale on Trade me and found new owners in the South Island.**

# Our Memorable Introduction to D's

By Tim and Richard Jones

They say if you are a true car enthusiast, your mind is not shut to other brands; and so, with current possession of 6 Alfa Romeo's, 2 Fiat's, a Mercedes, and a BMW, and having always admired D's, my son and I started looking for one.

Our daily scrolling of Trademe soon uncovered an ID here in Christchurch and so a trip to view followed. Upon inspection, it was clear to see that the car was right on the point of no return, needing a ground up restoration, with 98% of the car in tatters. I felt with our current projects still ongoing, this one was just another that wouldn't be started for a couple of years (at least). Therefore our scanning of Trademe continued.

About a month later we came across a red and white '71 DS21 in Wellington.

This was to eventually become ours, bought sight unseen, rather brave for a D, but we figured possessing a current WOF with reasonable time until it ran out made it likely to be not too bad rust wise and reasonable mechanically. The price too, we thought, compared to the others (at the time asking around \$20k) was fair enough and so my son went up to collect and drive back.

After giving him a briefing on what to check before he began his intrepid journey, off he went. A phone call upon collection stated that the car was shabby, but hydraulics were perfect, along with a new water pump, leads and points, installed confidence he was likely to make it back to Christchurch. He drove it around Wellington for a day or so bringing it back from the Hutt on pickup and eventually onto the ferry.

I began to have a little doubt though when he rang from Blenheim saying he was back in the South Island, filling up with petrol and topping the water up and that it was quite rusty in colour-not a good sign.



**What were the chances? In line for the Inter Islander Ferry.**



**15km in to trip, checking tyre pressures, water, oil etc in Blenheim.**

It was about 2.30 in the afternoon, When I was in the garage finishing off sills on a Fiat 500 we are restoring, when my wife ran out telling me Timothy, my son, wanted to speak and it was with a mood of apprehension that I listened on the phone. “Dad I’m about 50k’s south of Blenheim and its stopped on me, there’s no water in the radiator and it’s real hot, can you come and pick us up?”

What’s a Dad to do? Luckily we have one car with a towbar, our BMW, but it’s only a 318i, fortunately manual, and NZ new with factory towbar, so with a little bit of “I

hope she’ll do it”, off I went to the service station and picked up a car trailer and set forth.

The trip up the coast was uneventful, it was when I found him that the fun began. By this time it was pitch black, you would struggle to see 10metres in front of you! Thank god for cell phones otherwise this would have been like trying to find a string of hay in a sack of needles!! This was where our first stroke of luck started, somehow the car managed to break down in one of only a few small cell phone coverage patches along the virtually uninhabited Kaikoura coast . However at the time we did not feel lucky.

Once found, the next fun task was to try and get the DS on to the car trailer, this sounds relatively straight forward, but oh no, to add to the complication we discovered that in my rush to leave, the car trailer I had hired had no winch on it, nor did I bring a portable one. Timothy had earlier, once the car had cooled down, filled it with water, from a nearby stream, so we tried to get the car running. Despite spark and fuel present, it was essentially a dead car. The next option was to try and push it on the trailer, something which would have been an absolute nightmare, firstly because of the weight of the car, secondly because it was pitch black, thirdly because the car was on loose shingle so you could get no grip, and finally due to the narrower track of the rear wheels, you could not line up the ramps to accommodate both front and back, rendering that option useless.

This is where our second stroke of good luck came to pass. Fortunately the cars battery was recently replaced, so by putting it in 1<sup>st</sup> gear we were able to inch the D up the trailer ramps on the starter motor, firstly so half the car was on, and then adjust the ramps for the rear wheels, (this took us at least 5 goes to try and centre it...).

Once on the trailer it outlined just how wide a DS actually is with little more than 1cm to spare on each side, and half a foot to spare at the back.

And so the long drive back to Christchurch commenced. This was where luck was certainly on our side. 1.8 litre BMW's, I'm sure, were not designed to tow two tonne of trailer and car, not to mention up steep hills and windy coastal roads..... it was a mentally draining affair with Timothy (driver) having to always think two steps ahead as to which gear and rev range to be in to tackle each little obstacle. A 250km trip, which would usually take between 2-3 hours, ending up taking over six, with an average speed of around 60kph, and down to 20km through the bends and hills. Fortunately, for the road using public, we only saw one vehicle the whole way.

After making it back in one piece, the next day was a day of exploration, both to discover what was wrong with the engine, and to see what the condition of the car was actually like. Plugs out, and a turn over of the engine with geysers of water coming out of the plug holes confirmed head gasket failure. Frustratingly further problem shooting unearthed that the temperature warning light was not connected, something which could have helped to minimise the damage of the drive the day before.

On a brighter note, a look around the car confirmed a structurally sound DS but in need of some outer panel rust repair and some minor repairs around the boot area, not to mention in need of a fresh coat of paint (a cut and polish in the meantime however made a world of difference).



**What a difference a cut and polish makes!!**



## **The car after a few hours of cleaning.**

Two weeks down the track and we have finished all the mechanicals on the car.

Work included re-skimming the head (the extreme temperatures had warped it a little), along with taking the time to give a valve grind, complete new gasket set, new thermostat, rebuild the carb and distributor, have a new radiator built with three row core, along with replacing the front brake pads, oil filter, air filter, and full oil change, upgrading to premium synthetic oil. Along with this we also made a timing indicator for ignition timing, and gave the car a full tune up which has restored the car to its former mechanical glory, and is now a reliable runner which starts first crank, even without choke, and pulls evenly from cold

On a more aesthetic note, the use of a steam cleaner, scrupulous degreasing, prep work, and painting, has made what used to be a ball of grease into a clean presentable engine and bay.



**Engine before,**



### **and after refurbishment**

My son has also started on the rust repairs and has completed the boot floor and right hand side area around the fuel filler where obviously a light rear end nudge had not been repaired well leaving not only rust but a rippled panel. At least now we have the piece of mind knowing that it has now been done right, with good metal, and has been properly treated and painted (with POR 15) to ensure it does not rust again.

However body repairs have been put on the back burner for the next 3 weeks until Timothy's university exams are finished for the year. After that point it will be straight back into it, having already bought the new Rio Red lacquer paint, along with primer and thinners.

In the meantime the car is being used as a daily runner around Christchurch, from which in our possession will transform from a shabby DS, to one of the tidy ones.



**Interior is very tidy, despite upholstery being slightly sun faded.**



**Boot floor and inner Sill after being replaced by new metal where needed.**



On a final note, It has certainly been a memorable introduction to D`s and eventful enough for us to remember for the rest of our lives as part of the family folklore. A special mention also must be made to the people who helped point us in the right direction as to where to buy parts etc.

*Great work Tim and Richard. Good to see another DS being saved.*