



RoverNews

Natal Rover Owners' Association

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Greetings folks

Apologies – late again! It has been a busy and stressful time, as Clyde underwent an ankle replacement operation in May and was not allowed to walk on it for two weeks. He was then in a moon boot for another four weeks. But we are slowly getting back to normal (such as it is!!)

Many thanks to John Booth for his article on the restoration of his Ford Escort. A fantastic job, as always.

Please note the date of our next club outing: **Saturday 2nd August**. Details will be sent out on email shortly.

There are a couple of other car events on the KZN calendar, for anyone who may be interested. *See Pg 22*.

I shall be away for a couple of weeks at the end of August. I'm going to visit my daughter and granddaughter in Antibes, on the French Riviera. They moved to France two years ago and I promised to visit once they had settled. I have booked Clyde into a care home for the time that I'm away, so I know he will be looked after.

Until our next get together, keep warm and please keep the photos and updates coming in for others to appreciate.

Regards,

Rose



*Rover P2, introduced in 1937.
Available with 10, 12, 16 & 20hp engines.
Price new £320*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 2 August:

Lunch at Wynnifred's Café, Camperdown.
Details on email in due course.

Saturday 25 October:

Visit to Classic Motorcycle Club of Natal's
Vintage Motorcycle Exhibition. *(See flyer on
Pg 21)*

SICK BAY – We continue to think of Mervyn who is still undergoing treatment

NEW MEMBER

Welcome to **Mike Taylor & Cheryle**. We look forward to meeting up with them when they move back to KZN.

FOR SALE / WANTED / SOLD

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Visit to Windmills Restaurant & Brahman Hills Gardens

Saturday 3rd May

A small group of loyal supporters met up at the Nottingham Road venue for a meal and visit to the gardens. Clyde & I were once again given a lift there by Niel & Eileen Rasmussen. Many thanks to them! Also in the group were John & Dawn Booth, Mervyn & Rosemary Payne, John Wheaton and guest Chris Cardwell.

We all took our seats at Windmills restaurant and ordered from an extensive light meal menu. Then much chatter ensued before and during the meal, as always.

After lunch we proceeded through the rear doors of the restaurant into the gardens. (No payment if you've eaten at the restaurant, otherwise R90 pp) What magnificent gardens! We enjoyed strolling through various sections, all beautifully laid out and neatly trimmed. Apparently, although the plan for a garden was conceptualized before, the main construction and layout took place during the Covid lockdown, which helped to keep their restaurant and hospitality staff employed.

Some of our group took a long walk along meandering pathways whilst Clyde & I sat on a bench under a shady pergola enjoying the view. Soon enough it was time to make our various ways back home.

I can heartily recommend a visit to this beautiful venue. For those interested in a more extensive description and professional photos, please take a look at their website:

<https://www.brahmanhills.co.za/gardens>



*Seated around the table, from left to right:
Mervyn (with his back to us), Rosemary, Niel, Eileen, John Wheaton, Clyde, Rose, John Booth, Chris Cardwell
Missing is Dawn, who was taking the photo*



Left to right: Chris, Dawn, John, Mervyn, Clyde, Niel, Eileen, Rose, Rosemary, John



Midlands Motor Show

Sunday 15th June

This was a new event for the KZN Midlands, held on Stockowners Farm just outside Howick. Unfortunately Clyde & I weren't able to attend as he was still recovering from his ankle operation, but from all accounts it was a very successful show and well supported. I believe there were around 140 cars and bikes on show and a cheque for R20000 was donated to Umngeni SPCA.

The only representative from our Rover Club was Chris Wilson with his SD vanden Plas (*see photo below*). John & Dawn Booth dropped in for a while to see what was going on, having been to the aloe gardens in Bishopstowe earlier in the day.

The organizers were very happy with the day and have promised to repeat it next year. So maybe our club can put on a better show then! Many of the exhibitors prefer this type of event rather than the Pietermaritzburg Cars in the Park, which has become too crowded, commercialized and packed with more modern cars than classics.

For anyone interested to see more about the show, this is a video on Facebook, showing all the activity: <https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1GMdkE9EbK/>



Chris in blue shirt, nearest driver-side door

Some photos from the event



1904 Cadillac



1936 Ford V8 Roadster



1922 BSA



1914 Buick B25 Tourer



1920 Ford Model A



1931 Chev 5 window Coupe

1973 Ford Escort

John Booth

When I did my national service in the South African Air force I had a Ford Escort MK1 two door. Great car and like a lot of things in life, we regret selling. Anyway I decided to look for another one. No easy task. They are like hens teeth. Most have already been exported overseas and sell for up to sixty thousand pounds depending if it has had any racing pedigree. I have seen a few being sold in 5 minutes from the ad appearing. The 2 doors are the most sought after and can sell for 5 times the value of a 4 door. Yet back in the day the 4 doors were more expensive.

I heard about this one in Cape Town and got a friend of mine to go and have a look at it. It had belonged to an old lady and this is evident by the number of dents inflicted on the car probably by gate posts which would leapt in the way. After being dented over the years granny could no longer drive so the car was parked off and last ran in 1998. I negotiated with the grandson who had no interest in the car and bought it for the princely sum of R27500.



The car arriving on the low bed



Note the dents



.... And more dents. The rear side panel had a 50mm deep dent that was filled with body filler rather than taking out the petrol tank and knocking the dent out.



The original engine was a 1300. I am not into originality so I am putting in a 1600 GT engine with twin weber carb.



My friend Roger had some hen's false teeth original 14 inch mags which I went to the tyre shop and got the widest tyres I could fit.



*Under the back seat was a small bag were these coins. I put them back under the seat.
So where the car goes the coins go.*



*Sorry... we need sound, the louder the better, so I fitted some Sony 6*9 450 watt speakers linked to a Sanyo radio tape deck to give me that analogue amplified sound... The beauty is that it blasts good old Led Zepplin to the neighbourhood and back.*



I took it down to bare metal and did the best to de-dent granny's dents



Some Etch Primer showed more dents



A bit of welding required mainly in the boot and floor



Some more body filler in the dents I could not get out.



Put on 3 litres of white 2k paint then flatted down only to discover more dents but perseverance.



Slowly coming right



More flattening but body panels were coming right



Going for a racing paint job with stickers



Fitting back the seats, the glass spot lights and other bits and pieces.



The finished product

Lots of work. The 1600GT engine coupled to the 1300 gearbox goes like a rocket, added to the 14" wheels giving a bigger rolling circumference. Big difference to the 12" skinny wheels. I am looking forward to showing it off at car shows. You just don't see a 2 door escort on the road or at a car show. The car was already the star attraction as I had a call from the local primary school. One of the teachers was retiring after 35 years and they asked if I could do a few laps of honour with her waving goodbye to the pupils. She requested 'This is my Life' by Bryan Adams blaring out of the 450 watt speakers. When she got in the car I said to her I am tone deaf through working with machinery so whack up the volume as loud as you want... so she did.

So overall a pleasing result. Look out for it at the next local car show.

* * * * *

*Thanks again to Geoff Arthur for another of his articles published in Take Five magazine,
and to Martin Robins for sending it on to us*



Geoff's Jottings

I was present on the Autumn Trade Day of the 1998 Motor Show at the NEC; it was a very important year where the new Jaguar S Type and Rover 75 were launched.

Both cars had been eagerly awaited and both were known to be somewhat retro in styling yet despite that, BBC Top Gear gave them a massive thumbs up. Jeremy Clarkson managed to contain his usual dismissal of anything out of a British car factory and said of the Rover 75 "it looks fabulous" and "is the star of the show". He much preferred it to the new Jag, and I agreed with him, which is an unusual event in itself. The car certainly looked impressive and well-made as it turned out to be, in fact it is generally thought of as the best made car to wear a Rover badge since the P5.

I was standing next to a Rover Group dealer manager who engaged in conversation and was keen to hear my thoughts on the car and I expressed my wish that it succeeded but as a potential customer, I was concerned about the looking backwards rather than forwards element to its appearance. He wanted to know what I drove and I explained my day to day transport was a first-generation Rover 827 Vitesse Fastback that was overdue for replacement and that my passion was my Rover 3½ Litre Coupe. He said that the P5 was one of their inspirations for the future but the days when Rover could do anything as outrageous as put a V8 in a car were long gone. Yet actually it transpired that he was wrong.

The Rover dealers who were attending the launch were rather less enthusiastic than might have been hoped, many that I heard talking being concerned the car would not attract younger and business buyers, although most motoring journalists generally rather liked it. I had been on the mailing list from Rover Group and had received a load of pre-launch publicity materials about the 75 so its appearance was not a surprise. Its build quality probably was though - I would say it was up there with VW.

The public launch was a day or so later and I was asked to take my Arden Green P5B Coupe along to my local main dealer in Farnham and this is where my initial reservations were confirmed. The car went down well and they took many orders, but not from anybody under 60 years of age and most of those buyers already had a Rover 600 or 800, so no conquest sales and I think that is how it turned out in general.

Richard Woolley as lead designer of the 75 was adamant that the car was not intended to be retro, just recapture the traditional quality look and feel that Rover had lost with the SD1 onwards but that car and the Rover 2000 (P6) had been radical, not retro.

Being launched alongside the Jaguar S Type, which was unashamedly retro, probably spoiled any chance that the 75 could avoid that label.

There is a fine line between being respectful to the past heritage of a brand and overdoing it to the point you put people off and unfortunately, I was not prepared to buy what was otherwise a very fine car if it had a pipe and slippers element to it. I think some gentle toning down of the retro aspects of the 75 would have removed that impediment to buying one and this did happen later on in the MG Rover phase, especially with the MG branded cars.

In 1998, having rejected the Rover 75, I turned to another manufacturer of high-quality cars and one with a great heritage, namely Volvo and their V70 and C70 cars did everything I wanted and later versions still do.

The picture of my C70 T5 GT is one of many of their models that I have owned and shows a design that managed to be slightly retro but also bang up to date in 1998.



Much as Rover had British designer Richard Woolley, Volvo had British designer Peter Horbury, who revolutionised the whole look of their cars, emphasising Swedishness and quality but getting rid of the old-style boxy image that was holding them back from younger buyers.

Had Rover launched the 75 Estate (named a Tourer for some inexplicable reason) at the same time as the Saloon, I think it might have swayed me as it looked just that bit better balanced, but Volvo won the day.



It is sad to remember that this April magazine marks 20 years since the demise of the MG Rover Group in 2005 following its failure to forge a path as an independent manufacturer.

When BMW sold Rover to Phoenix Venture Holdings in 2000, they took the R30 and everything to do with it with them, leaving Rover having to start from scratch again. It is thought that the R30 formed much of the design of the BMW 1 Series when it first came to the market in 2004 but MG Rover had to start again and they were working on a new car code named RDX60, styled by Peter Stevens and with the help of TWR, a British company that had been heavily involved in designing and building the Volvo C70 and in the relatively short time of 30 months from concept to production.



Having invested around £460 million in the RDX60 project it all went wrong when TWR went out of business in 2003 and that killed off both the new car and any realistic future for MG Rover. Considering what they started with in 2000, Phoenix got off to a good start by producing MG versions of the existing Rover 25, 45 & 75 cars and improved their desirability greatly. They also decided to bring back the V8 by buying in a 4.6 Litre Ford Mustang engine and redesigning the 75 monocoque to become rear wheel drive.

This engine gave a relatively modest 260 Brake Horse Power and 410 Newton metres of torque delivered via a 5-speed automatic gearbox. Compare that to a P5B with its 160 BHP and 210 Nm delivered via a 3-speed auto gearbox, so a substantial increase but not outrageously so.

A friend who managed an MG Rover workshop drove one of the new 75 V8s from Hampshire to Longbridge and reported back that it was lively and interesting but the gear ratios had not been specifically set up for the Rover due to cost constraints and this was noticeable when driving it, as was its prodigious thirst.

The MG version was called the ZT 260 and was only produced as a five-speed manual and with styling changes that made the whole car less retro and more interesting.

I did toy with buying a late Rover 75 V8 but changes to the VED rates managed to scupper that idea and having a modern car that struggled to do 20 MPG was an issue. To put that in context, my 2015 Volvo XC70 also produces 260 BHP and has 78 Nm more torque than the 75 V8 yet returns a steady 35 MPG and can do much more on a long run so there is no comparison and 600 miles between fill-ups is very convenient and allows me to make fun of EV drivers.



I forgive my P5B for having a bit of a thirst, although that has been greatly improved by all my engine mods and fitting a ZF 4-speed auto. The car actually managed 23 MPG coming back from a national rally a while ago but is returning around 18 on average.

As it is Zero rated for VED at the time of writing, the overall cost is very acceptable with an average of 1,500 miles per annum consuming around 75 gallons of 99 octane petrol at an overall cost of £500. Just the annual VED on a late 75 V8 is £750 before you start pouring fuel into it. I am very happy to celebrate the last variant of a Rover car and I have met many people who have run the non V8 versions of the 75 and speak very highly of it.

I love the bonkers idea of fitting a Mustang V8 into it and I am very respectful of those enthusiasts who gain amusement from collecting and driving them but, just as it was in 1998, I doubt I will ever own one as my P5B does everything I want from a V8.

Geoff Arthur

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 The final 10 cars pay R250 per car; proceeds to Midlands Hospice.

our Event page on www.amberglades.co.za for more information. 033 307 0900 | events@amberglades.co.za

The club's banking details:

Account name: Natal Rover Owners' Association
 Bank: Capitec
Savings Account
 Account No: 2337539616

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