

# National Rally/AGM 2015 in Hamilton

BY Rob Jones



*(Above: This record collection of club member's P76's numbers 23, along with 3 others on display in the Classics Museum and one that arrived after the photo was taken. This gave us a total of 27 Leyland's available for inspection. The 27 cars covered 13 factory colours and two others.*

*The most popular colour on the day was BA with 5, P and CW with 3 each, OF, ON, AEB, FB, B as B, all with 2 and 1 each of CB, DR, SO and PMAG. Rosso Fire and Persian Sand were the often seen non factory colours in attendance.*

*Sadly our 28th car and 14th colour, a N E V8 failed to make it to the meeting but the intrepid driver got himself and his passengers through in a hired Nissan! Only two members were AWOL, one in another N E V8 and as the other was from the UK we couldn't reasonably expect his car to be here!)*

**I was told** that I had to write up the National Rally and AGM as I'm the editor and I'm there, so I interpret that as you asked for it, so here it is. Our trip, our weekend and our return.

We got off to a great start by leaving about fifteen minutes before our agreed departure time on Thursday March 12. Needless to say, the P76 had been serviced, checked, loaded but not washed. Wash day, March 11 proved to be very wet!

The car ran like a dream all the way to Kimbolton where the crew needed a lunch break at one of our compulsory stops. Well fed, we departed to a tinkling sound which grew to annoy! Investigations found one of our unobtainium wheel bands had fallen off. Never before had this one even rattled! A brief retracing of our steps failed to find it so on we went, deciding against visiting Apiti where we had considered buying the historic Post Office some years earlier. Nice pub across the road too.

Not much further on we got a call from Ron Butler advising Eric Connor was having problems in his N E V8, to be followed by a call from Eric. He was north of Hunterville as I recall. Astonishingly, Eric had no idea where we were and didn't take up our offer to meet him on SH1 which as it turns out was a sound decision. We take an alternative route north from Masterton that gets us to SH1 just north of Mangaweka, very scenic, quiet roads, great café's and not too many revenue gatherers either.

But some rain. I'm so glad I adjusted the sweep of the wipers as part of our trip preparation.

Powering up the Mangaweka Gorge in the Deluxe 6 we were passed by some other cars but no matter, Taupo was where we were headed now, to visit my grandson Blake and onto the comfort of Brian and Sandra's rest house. What a child, when asked where he'd like to go to dinner, I expected another damn Macca's meal but no, he took us to a very nice Indian eatery.

Arriving just up the road from Blake's house at Brian and Sandra's we off loaded our bags into our room (we always stay with them, known them for years) and proceeded to check out the MG collection as you do. Nice ZA and ZB, very worn but loved original B roadster and oh, the body of the A not long back from Collett's in its blood red finish. This will be a stunner when finally put back together. Been years so far so no rush! Beer o'clock.

This house was effectively designed and built around their antique furniture collection and is stunning, but practical and has 5 car garaging. Sad for the Mondeo and Hilux.

Everyone was off somewhere in the morning, so we headed to town for a look around and breakfast. This is where we met the first of the other Leyland's as described earlier. We agreed to meet up the hill later after some shopping was completed. At this point Sonya and I hadn't seen or heard from Ron again and lo and behold he and the Francis's turn on top of the hill to. Much talk of Eric and his travel woes, swotting of midges and photo taking before we set off in a loose convoy heading to Hamilton. I seem to recall some weren't sure of the correct direction but as an ex local I sorted them out. Thank you to the man who took the photos.



*(Above: L to R Paul and Barbara Faulkner, Ken McKenzie and Roy and Paula Buchanan in their BA cars, Ron Butler FB, Brian and Colleen Francis CW and Sonya and Rob Jones AEB atop the Taupo Radio Station hill.)*

Caused a stir in Tokoroa where we squeezed into a small layby attracting several onlookers and photographers. When we arrived in Hamilton, we hit the supermarket for supplies of wine and beer and cheese and nuts and all those things essential for a good weekend despite it all being catered anyway! What a sight, there were P76's literally going in all directions on the crossroads and then a queue at the entrance of the motel. Cleverly I parked in one of several readily available parks beside the driveway, and then it started. Trying to check in with a bunch of other P people who we hadn't seen in a long time, everyone greeting each other and trying to tell the receptionist who they were at the same time. She did a great job all weekend that lady.

Room allocated, car park located, fridge filled and the meet and greet continued apace before settling into an enjoyable dinner on site and into the night.



Saturday dawned to the cats being herded into position for a completely new event for us. We had an observation run (done before in Masterton) but this time with a twist, a Poker Run. And Edward told me we were leading it as we had some experience, so everyone had to line up behind us and leave at minute intervals. Peter Venning and co, start your engines.

(Above: Peter Venning)

First mistake was the 4th or 5th car went past the first turn, then the lead car missed a big left turn, I swear the sign was stolen, however, we soon corrected ourselves, thank you dear, by short cutting through a factory grounds and back out onto the correct road. Miles went by and we got our first poker card, which we learnt should have been our second?! But we were on track and further along I saw Andrew behind me. Interesting says I, he was about 6th out the gate. It's not a race says Sonya as I trundle along at 80k's.



This was new country for both of us but we found our way to the beautiful lunch venue where I had been instructed, along with Andrew to park up the first cars to arrive in the scenic array you will soon see. And two P76's were there ahead of us. How is that?

We had arrived at Rodney Macdonald's estate where we were to be hosted for lunch in a grand style before being able to check out his extensive car collection. Flashest damn Nissan huts I've ever seen! Next we see the Nissan hut, a small part of

the patio at Rodney's and everyman's dream driveway, well part of the looping drive in to Rodney's place.





*(Above: The photo above shows the first thirteen P76s to make it to Rodney's front lawn. I'm not going to try and identify who's who as I change my mind each time I look! Paul did a far better job of joining the cars together than I did last year, you can't see the join and there are no extra cars and apparently Rodney's TV aerial is gone too! Thankfully no-one backed up too far and fell over the bank. It was fun watching other cars still to arrive drive right on by the turn, or the gate, such was our vantage point. The view!)*

Rodney's hospitality was exemplary, the venue was amazing if you took the time to look at how the huge garage became a big garage and a rumpus room with the concertina doors closed. The view, the gardens and the car collection both in and outside the displays were marvellous. Wrecked Land Rover sculptures are fascinating, and I've never seen so many Austin Allegro's before. Look back at the car photo and you will notice Stag, XJ6, Mk2, Pathfinder, Dodge, Austin 3L, Conquest, P5? and many others obscured by perspective and people. Many Van Den Plas variants to seen, along with Daimler V8, TK Bedford and a vintage Chevrolet truck. Memorabilia and models and parts and art and all carpeted too!

Thank you Rodney.

From here we had to continue our observation run which went well until we struck road works at Temple View, and what a view. This was when we meet the traffic control man and his camera showing us photos of Gordon Lennox's car and marvelling at the convoy of P76's behind us and forgetting to let us go through on time and then holding us for a minute so he could climb the nearby bank and video us passing through. The same bank several members had used to photograph the same scene.

And so we arrived at the Classics Museum to be exactly positioned by Paul and Philip and then me once my car was parked, allowing Paul to go way up on top of the building to take the cover photo. I'd been before but for those that hadn't a treat lay in store.

This exercise took a while as you'd expect with owners coming and going from their cars and the public doing the same. Gentle persuasion cleared the car park long enough for Paul to do his job. Many adjourned to the Rock n Roll Café for pre meeting drinks, and then it was into the meeting. A record of which is included here so no need to dwell further on that.

From meeting to dinner and drinks, still outside in the late afternoon sunshine, well drinks anyway. Tables had been specified for seating, so you knew who you were to share with, meals had been pre ordered months in advance with your registration so had you forgotten a surprise was in store. Sonya and I happily got reacquainted with Gordon and Jan Gruebner.

A beautiful meal was enjoyed by all and between the main and dessert Mike and Edward ran the prize giving. A list of winners appears with the minutes, some photos will follow later.

The taxi vans were running back and forth from the Classic Museum to our motel and from memory it was Roy and Paula's room where most congregated upon their return and more refreshments were consumed but soon enough it was time for us aging members to go to bed.

It's not like the old days is it Mike and Ed and Gordon and Ron and others.



Thank you Edward for arranging the Classic Museum as the venue. It was brilliant, what more can I say, and I'm sure others have said the same to you in person. And thanks to the staff and owner of the Classics Museum for making us so welcome and finishing off a great day.



*(Left: It isn't just about cars. There are some lovely alternative exhibits in the museum as well.)*

While not wanting to cram them in the colour opportunity is not cheap, we get to see the cars that were numbers 24, 25 and 26 in the collection, given we started counting outside. For some weeks the Classics Museum had a great Leyland display open to the public with some special cars. Lance's ON Force 7V of course and Steve's RF Leyland. How do you specify a model designation for this car? Keeping them company was President Mike's "toy" CW E V8, the one that once sported a supercharger and is still probably one of the lowest mileage examples we have in NZ. Its designated toy

as it's not entirely standard but looks really nice. Mike was driving his brother's CW S V8 while his car was on display, the ex Merv Cox car. Annette had her own DR S V8 to get around in.



*(Above: One of the museum exhibits that isn't a Leyland. A beautiful Auburn!)*

These three cars presented our club in a wonderful light being so well displayed along with signs, our flag and Mike even had a 44 gallon drum in his boot, nicely painted in Gulf colours. The 27th car was that of Tim Burrows who arrived after the photo shoot but in time for the meeting and sadly we don't have it to show here.



*(Left: There was an unofficial requirement to dress in period costume for the meeting and dinner. This was taken to heart by several of the Southern Group who excelled themselves. Ken McKenzie, Roy and Paula Buchanan and Paul and Barbara Faulkner went all out and the Faulkner's won the prize for best costumes, but you deserve to see them all so here they are.)*

Now we move onto a selection of award winners.



*(Left: Debbie and Andrew Larsen, winners of the Observation Run receive their prize from Mike King while Elvis looks on.)*

*(Right: As winners of the first ever Poker Run it is only fair the navigator collects the prize, so Sonya got a Cosio bag and other goodies from Mike.)*



*(Left: Winning the Dale Rawlings Memorial Trophy for People's Choice absolutely floored Brent Reid. Here he is receiving his P76 on a pole trophy from Mike. Look for his car on the web site.)*

*(Right: The past President's Piston Broke Trophy was a no contest this time round. Edward and I took but a minute to award it to Eric Connor for the troubles he suffered on his way to Hamilton. He persevered and got through with his passengers, but what we didn't know was that he would only get back as far as Blenheim before his car again failed and it took another couple of weeks for him to collect it, finally fixed as he went off to the National Rally in Adelaide with Ron and Mike. Rumour has it that it goes so well he may have got a ticket on the way home! That alone has brought members the trophy before this year. Not many of us would have gone as far as Eric did to get through. A thoroughly deserved winner of our longest standing trophy, well done Eric and Leslie and Leslie's mum.)*



And now, back to our story. We had a car boot sale to start the day on Sunday, Central group did very well and Rob came away with more 6 cyl parts! Several members were now sporting club polo shirts that weren't before and our stock of Z86's is all gone too.

As always food figures in these events so it was off to The Cave café for breakfast (I confess I've lost my notes so this by memory) which saw us all parking in the Pak N Save carpark. It was a tight squeeze in there but the food was good and the décor interesting. After breakfast we had a choice of visiting some gardens or taking a country tour to Raglan behind Edward and Annette in his gangster black Chrysler 300. To be fair both of his 300's have proven to be very comfortable and able cars. Sonya and I were chauffeured out to dinner on Sunday night – very nice. I should point out that the Warren's were driving Edward's ON P76 over the weekend while he Chryslered everywhere.



Anyway, we opted for the country drive to Raglan as we'd never been there before and have enough gardening to do at home. It was a pleasant ramble through undulating country punctuated by a couple of road accident sites with one car still on its side with Police warning tape securing it! Saw some other classics heading our way too. We drove through part of the town to a lookout point above the rocky surf beach below. Sooner than me, I like sandy landings! Sonya took an exploratory look among the rocks on the cliff face and found a crayfish in a partly hidden high tide pool, it's still there.

On the way in I heard a funny chuffing sound and blamed a passing Subaru but as we followed John Rossen into the carpark it was obviously his beautifully restored OF P76.

Up goes the bonnet, engine surrounded by many to finally determine a loose spark plug, luckily still hanging in there just. It took some fiddling and adjusting of fittings to get at it and put it right but once done all was well. Debriefing can be seen below, as can the car.

Also notice John's event 'T' shirt, the Classics Museum shirt with the P76 boot badge on the front. Nice shirt with a little extra on it for us. You will notice them in other photos I'm sure. Very nice job on the car too John and helpers!

From here it was the call of lunch in Raglan that saw us parking up all over the main street along with numerous other classics and motorcycles. Obviously, a place to visit for lunch. We soon found a café of sufficient size to take most of us and we enjoyed yet another great meal and drinks, coffee, milk shakes etc. No booze.

When in a new town one must explore the shops and there is a grand array of crafty arty places here, and of course surf shops. A pretty little town on the water's edge but a busy spot as well. Time to return to Hamilton, as I recall over a slightly different route some of the way back. When you go coastal in NZ you invariably have to traverse a mountain range (or big hill) to get to the beach. On the way out the revenue gatherers had set up a booze stop right atop said big hill in the middle of nowhere! Must have looked funny all the Leyland's pulling in behind the Chrysler once Ed had passed his test! We passed without arrest or incident.

Back at the motel it was time to say goodbyes to yet more members, some having left earlier, but then some stay on later as well, and that's how we got to go in the Chrysler when Sonya and I, Andrew and Debbie, Eric and Leslie and



Ed and Ken (I hope that's right) all went to dinner at the Cock and Bull. A hint, it opened in 1742! But it keeps getting better.

We, and the country were being hit by a storm of huge proportions so Sonya and I decided over lunch in Cambridge (terrible place to stop and eat in) we would turn left out of Taupo and head to Napier. Our rationale being there was already one broken P76 on SH1 and less places to stay and opportunity for rescue out there than heading towards my hometown and family and a myriad of accommodation. Really weren't worried about the car, it ran like a train the whole time. So to the Marine Parade we went and sought a flash spa unit out of the rain, with sea views in which to relax and watch the huge waves pound the shore, and wonder how my little home village of Haumoana was getting on. Some important business mobile calls ensued before we could even get into our room but hey, we were far from home and going nowhere.

Paul's choice of restaurant the last time the club was in Napier was brilliant, so we headed there for our Thai dinner which was exquisite. Thank you Paul, Onekawa is still great.

Back to the Spa and a wine and a good sleep before heading to Haumoana in the morning. What a mess, we went up to the river mouth driving over a stone strewn road and the odd Ngaio branch to see the beach wrecked and the river inside the mouth like I'd never seen before. Debris everywhere, flooding inside the road – saltwater! On our way out we were being photographed by a woman and thought we 'd be famous in the local paper but she was a resident taking in the mess and said she saw this cool car coming through the stones and branches and had to get the shot. I hadn't thought of that!

We continued to the outer area of Haumoana away from the village to find all sorts of debris and devastation along the beachfront. Digger's pushing beach shingle out of a couple of sections, at least one or two homes breached by the sea, smashed windows and the like in many homes. Further on to the Clifton Camp the road was closed so we took a short walk until we got a short shift from a digger driver cleaning up what was left of the road.

It was time to head for home and be thankful that we didn't get hit by the storm too hard in our travels, but Sonya wasn't overly keen on some of the weather we saw on the Napier Taupo Road. Having driven thousands of miles over this road in the past I knew we hadn't seen the worst (it wasn't snowing, and trees weren't falling over) but it was bad enough. Again, I said how pleased I was to have adjusted the sweep of the wipers.

No, the car didn't leak and yes it was thoroughly washed once we got home.

Edward and Annette and the team as a whole did a brilliant job that was enjoyed by everyone, even long-suffering Eric. Thank you one and all for a truly brilliant weekend.

I don't think we can top that, so I've suggested to Andrew we go camping up the mountain or something like that to be completely different for 2016.

### **Highlights**

For me it was again meeting so many new faces, Barbara, Brent, Rodney, Wally, Tim, getting to know several members better than before, seeing a few new and some long-gone cars again, meeting the Firth family in full. Man, you should have seen them pack their people mover. Origami! Dinner with the Gruebner's.

Doing the observation run and winning the poker run. These activities are great even if some get hopelessly lost, they are fun and give members a chance to look and learn a little of their surroundings as they go along.

Rodney Macdonald's hospitality, car collection and photo opportunities. All great.

Actually, getting through Cambridge on a Friday afternoon. There is a steep hill of short length going into the town. It took more than 30 minutes to get through Cambridge with a gruelling series of hill starts, say about 5 from a complete stop in less than 100 yards! Hell, on manual cars like mine and Ron's. A beautiful little town with a bad piece of road and very noisy as we found lunching there later on.

People's reaction to a P76, let alone 15 or more in a row. Do you wave to passing BMC and FoHoVal of similar vintage when you're travelling? It's happening here in the Wairarapa, home to 100's of classics of all sorts. Nice to be noticed.

*(Below: All the way from Hanmer Springs, the BA D V8 of Paul and Barbara Faulkner.)*

