

National Rally/AGM

Wanganui 2016

BY Rob Jones



(Above: Fourteen Leyland P76's graced the car park of Bushy Park Homestead during the 2016 National Rally and AGM based in Wanganui. The parking exercise undertaken by Messer's Meyer, Tubman and Jones was something to behold with the limited access available to members to manoeuvre their cars in, and the colour groupings just had to right for the club's unofficial photographer, Paul Heath, to work his magic. As you can see here, a magic photo, a kaleidoscope of colour and an all-round spectacular display of Leyland P76 sedans. The colours represented are nine factory and one GM colour with red and blue to the fore. Photos were supplied to Bushy Park after the event.)

March 17 arrived dark, cold and teeming with rain. You can't really say it dawned!

Luckily, we had packed the car in readiness for these conditions the day before in a brief respite from the rain. So we hit the road bright and early, rugged up against the elements and prepared for a luke warm heater on the trip north and west. The car was purring along as usual and the wipers were managing the downpour. Again, so glad I reset them last year! We had discussed our little adventure and were thinking of heading up to Hunterville and across the Turakina Valley, a beautiful drive through to Wanganui and then back tracking a little to Bushy Park where we were to spend our first night away... Needless to say, the P76 had been serviced, checked, loaded but not washed. Wash day, March 11 proved to be very wet!

These thoughts stayed with us despite the bloody awful weather all the way until halfway through the Manawatu Gorge when the car shuddered/missed once and Sonya said "that's not good" And then a few more times. Bugger, we'd better stop at the first garage we come to in Ashhurst, Village and Valley Automotive (free plug, they are great). In the teeming rain we lifted the bonnet to get a horrible surprise, oil everywhere! Some dickhead (me) had put the oil filler cap in the plenum chamber and forgot to refit it after topping the oil, the good point being that I still had an oil filler cap and 99% of the oil. Do you know how much mess 1% can make! Meanwhile the two young mechanics determined the points had gapped their last. They had a courier arriving in an hour who could also bring the new points and condenser and they would steam clean the bonnet and engine bay as much as possible without drenching the car. We followed their suggestion of taking lunch at the Fusion Café just up the road (Cambridge Ave) and again, a plug for the café, it too was great, really, the food was beautiful and the café welcoming and warm. Drop in when you're next passing.

Having slowly eaten our fill we set about the few shops in central Ashhurst which didn't take long so returned for coffee, whereupon I was told I can walk down and collect the car in the rain and return to collect my navigator. The guys were just finishing setting up the points properly and precisely as I returned, then they took the P outside to clean her up. While they did this, I was admiring the unusual car I'd been parked next to, a 1927 Moon, made in Illinois USA. Possibly original or maybe repainted in about 1950, this was a delight to look over but somehow, I didn't get a photo. Must have been distracted.

The P returned to the garage dripping wet but cleaner than I'd ever seen it before, great job guys, so off I went to pay the bill whilst admiring the clever mechanical sculptures in the office area. I was concerned what the cost might be, queue jumping, getting in parts, cleaning and fitting the parts all came to \$98, unbelievable. Along with that garage in Honokiwi this place is where you should break down.

So we chickened out on the Hunterville leg of the journey now, being an hour or so behind schedule, the rain still pelting down, we were looking forward to visiting Bushy Park again. It had been a while. Cruising in the now very smooth P76 we raced off to the place where we started our honeymoon some 21 years earlier. An uneventful but still wet drive saw us arrive in plenty of time for a beautiful dinner in the bay window of the lounge so many of you are now familiar with. And a couple of bottles of wine, but not before one of those small world encounters you experience sometimes. We both admired the very old Bedford bus parked out front of the homestead and before I could off



load our bags I was in conversation with the driver who it turns out was an ex Traffic Officer and used to drive an AEB P76 V8 plain clothes patrol car in Auckland a FEW years back. He was amazed to see one parked next to his beautiful bus. Here is the bus a 1952 K model Bedford.

Having got past the Bedford, checking in and depositing our bags in our room (the same one) and putting our wine in the fridge we settled down in front of the fire to warm up and soak up the beauty of the room and its fittings.

We were joined by some ornithologists from Minnesota, a lovely couple who had definitely been places around New Zealand but we managed to add a couple of spots to their journey still to come. It really was too wet to go bush without the proper gear, so we wandered around the grounds and the wetland track in slightly clearing weather. We were astounded at the sculpture being exhibited within the grounds, and like many of you horrified at the asking prices of much of it. I could get a new motor and a paint job for the cost of those rusty drums welded together and they weren't even straight! The corrugated iron chickens were cute.



After a comfortable night's sleep and no early rising we breakfasted and walked a little more about the property before heading off in no rush to get there, arriving in Wanganui with sufficient supplies to fill the next fridge and bowls with nibbles.

Checked in we got reacquainted with old friends and the Larsen and Jones committee debated hard about what to do about dinner. While it was dry now the prospect of a BBQ looked pretty dim so bulk pizza in the "house bar" was the order of the day. This worked out great so while we waited for that people got to yakking and drinking and waiting for those delayed by various road and mechanical ailments for the arrival of the majority of Natcom so we could hold our own annual meeting and toast our successes – oops wasn't supposed to admit that!

Some good things come out of these meetings and sometimes the odd thing doesn't!

Soon enough we were done and into the Friday night food and refreshments in a friendly loud chaotic manner, we all had a ball and lots to eat. I'm sure our old mate Merv was in his element. Lots of other people appeared to be. And earlier it wasn't just us having a look at the cars either. We had a visitor ably photographed by Paul but not able to be caught by him..

Saturday did dawn, brisk but fine and so we wandered to Parnell's Café just up the road for breakfast. Very nice food and convivial surroundings well suited to us fine diners. We were to leave here and assemble at the Cosmopolitan Club car park to be joined by some of their classic car owning people. Don't know quite what happened to them but the public came in numbers. While everyone went to the markets, river walking, Tram Shed or the famous Duthie Elevator Ken McKenzie and I stayed with the cars and were run off our feet with enquiries about P76's. It was very gratifying and we were glad to find an unlocked car so we could open the bonnet and show off our famous V8 engine to the many onlookers. You know, I never really noticed that big mural on the wall next to us!



Onwards to Bushy Park and a determination to have a convoy, which we amazingly managed to achieve. Historically the P76 Club is useless at convoy driving! But that's another lesson! The photo below shows a catch up for the cars departing Wanganui (I'm sure) and includes all but the photographer's car, in this case Ron's with Loretta taking the shot.



(Left: Convoy leaving for Wanganui.)

by parking warden Philip Meyer, a kindly man far too softly spoken for such a job! After some considerable time and eventually with some assistance the cars were aligned, colour coded for Paul and everyone else to work their magic.

(Right: We have a lovely photo of Merv and Rose with Mike's new car, Merv's old car. Note the sashes on the windows. You have to get yours for the next show.)



First, put all the sun visors up and remove all humans from the vicinity of the shot – no you can't get your Woman's Weekly out of the boot, shift that wayward sculptor or painter, I don't care if he wants to sit 3 feet under the car, it will squash him, and shift his artwork too. It's bloody hard work and just when you thought it sorted some other unaware idiot wafts into shot oblivious of the 14 cars and 60 people trying to avoid getting into shot! But the results.

(Right: After all of that it was only fair to let Hugh get a photo of his lovely Wolseley 6/110 in front of the Leyland line up, or curve if you prefer.)



And the spectacular stained-glass window that greets you as you enter Bushy Park Homestead, built in 1906 this Edwardian 22 room Category 1 Heritage Building is now the centre piece of a 100-hectare predator free native bird sanctuary and nature preserve. It's a wonderfully tranquil place to visit and relax with superb catering, views and bird life.

After a very satisfying lunch, more photos and further exploration of the grounds and wonderment at the sculpture on display it was time to depart in small groups back through the predator proof gates, heading to Boyd's Auto

barn to view the collection and what a collection. Speaking for myself there was so much to see I probably missed half of it. Old vehicles in pristine condition, a seemingly endless array of diecast and tin plate models, memorabilia of every sort, signs, pumps, parts, tractors, caravans and lo and behold, in another shed the old Bedford from Bushy Park. I can't dwell on this for too many pages so hopefully one or two photos will suffice.



Departing Boyd's for Wanganui to prepare for the AGM, organise taxi vans to get to the Cossie Club, herd the cats, we finally all arrived in the right place for our annual meeting. By and large it went smoothly without any major drama, other than losing our President Mike, he is being replaced by Andrew Larsen which should be a seamless transition. All the information was contained in the AGM Minutes published in the last Penzed. And then we took the short trek to the riverboat SS Waimarie for our dinner cruise which had everyone abuzz at the prospect of a beautiful evening on this historic vessel. And they weren't wrong.

Depositing my briefcase and the Piston Broke Award in the boot of Peter Venning's P76 for safe keeping I boarded the Waimarie with similar expectations and was not to be disappointed. A very nice dinner was taken on the upper decks and in the saloon bar as evening drew in. We were accompanied for some of our trip by a microlight as he flew up and down the river, seemingly just above our heads. An informative commentary kept us up to date with local history and explanations of what we were seeing on the banks as we steamed serenely by. It was a lovely evening. Even Loretta managed to get down into the engine room to check out the power plant. No mean feat in her shoes and skirt!

(Right: Rose and Merv enjoying a wine while Linda appears to be trying out Merv's walking frame for size! What's up with that?)



Having returned to the dock it was time to depart for home, or the Cossie Club bar after making our appreciation felt to the captain and crew. We all thoroughly enjoyed the cruise, a wonderful experience hugely anticipated by several members especially some from down south. Of

course I had to scamper back to Peter's car to retrieve my briefcase and the cheque book to enable payment for our fun evening, otherwise I might still be there washing dishes!

And you know what, I never did collect that trophy, so it now resides at Peter and Michaela's place! Sonya was not displeased with my oversight, can't figure out why, it looked great on our mantelpiece the last time we had it!

After a quick beer sleep beckoned and soon enough it was time for a short walk to view the local architecture while Parnell's Café got ready for the breakfast onslaught. I say this as we were not the only ones partaking of their fine fare each morning. There are some fascinating brick structures, old school schools around the area of the motel and café. Did you notice Ed?

While everything so far had been of immense interest today's events were doubly so for me. I'd not seen the Rush Collection before, was looking forward to meeting old friends Colin and Sue, the new owners of Austin Mews and visiting the open day at the Steam Traction Society. A full day on anyone's calendar. I must be running out of space, but not words or pictures to describe today's events. For starters there was an observation trail to undertake. Love it.

Sonya deserted me to accompany Philip in the Saab, her first experience of left hand drive and in such a strange little car! John Warren ably assisted me with his navigation skills despite our not winning! We distributed members to allow as many cars to compete as possible and set off. It is always a funny sight when 4 or 5 unusual cars (yes, ours) pull up outside a residence to count and identify the plastic/wire/concrete bird ornaments on the front lawn!

Only to be replaced by another group a few minutes later. And so it goes. Signs, dates birds.

Such fun. But onwards we drove until our arrival at the Rush Collection. Our hosts were brilliant, warm greetings, directions, giving an informative briefing about the collection and detailed answers to questions during and after,

while morning tea was served to all, either within the extensive library of motor racing and motoring books or outside in the sunshine.

This is predominantly a race car collection but you'd be excused for not realising that when you spot the Morgan, Jaguar, Holden, Escort, one off NZ made cars the name of which eludes me now and several other exhibits including a Bedford breakdown truck and a fire engine. And I didn't mention another huge collection of mouth-watering

diecast and tin plate models, motor racing memorabilia from all round the world and across New Zealand and just masses of motoring history everywhere, even bicycles. Visit it to see it and believe it, but best (for me) was still to come out in the workshop. I have a weird fascination with FG model trucks be they Leyland, Morris, Austin or BMC. We have a Mr Whippy Austin FG in Masterton.

The Rushes are building a special beavertail race car transporter for their historic cars, well one at a time anyway, on a Morris FG cab and chassis with a bit more power being supplied by a Chev V8 as I recall – may be wrong but look at the photo below. Finished in metallic

gold with gold wheel bands to match, this truck will be a gem. I may go back and steal it!

Glorious race cars as expected, including a McLaren M22, apparently 1 of 4 to be built and only 3 were positively located at this time. About now the Rushes are visiting America to follow up a possible lead on the 4th car. We wish them success and a full container.

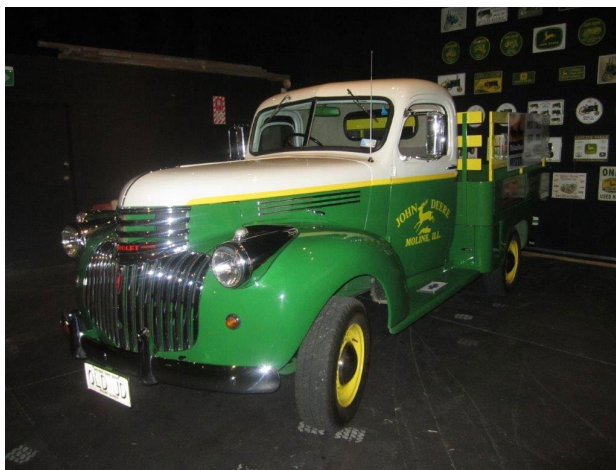


All too soon it was time to form another convoy and head into Fielding for a long anticipated visit to the new Coach House Museum where we would have a finger food lunch and prize presentation for the trail. I'd visited the old museum with my father some years earlier and rated it one of the best I'd seen anywhere and I knew the new museum to be bigger (not brighter), contain more exhibits and cover a wider range of interests and offer more facilities like conference rooms and a café. It was a pleasure to visit this museum.

(Below: This line of Leyland's includes some of our guest cars, Philip Meyer's Saab 96 and Hugh Mackenzie's Wolseley 6/110 to the fore and 13 Leyland's along the wall with them. This is taken in the car park of the Coach House Museum.)



Our light lunch was delicious, our prize giving hilarious and the viewing of the beautifully presented exhibits was enthralling. Dim lighting shows off the horse drawn vehicles to great effect, all with well-presented information placards telling you of their history, or even just what they are. The same goes for the renowned John Deere tractor collection, farm machinery and various other vehicles on display. Search Coach House Museum Fielding and find out a whole lot more. An S type Bedford follows. A 1946 Chevrolet, part of the John Deere collection and a Burford truck feature amongst the many rollers, scrapers, reapers and pavers to be seen around these vast halls. We will go again, maybe a repeat AGM weekend in 2019!



(Left: This lovely old 1929 Austin 12/4 Clifton tourer greeted arrivals at the Coach House Museum.)

(Below: This line of Leyland's was taken at the last venue, Austin Mews where the numbers had dwindled a little with ten in shot and a delightful old 1917 Model T Ford Roadster sneaking in. Aspirations maybe?)



The prize giving was difficult as there were so many great crews the results were finalised by ¼ points for spelling! The winners were Philip and Sonya, the mighty P76's being humbled by a three-cylinder 2 stroke Saab! Can't remember who came second but third went to our international team driven by Ron and navigated by Loretta Stoeger from South Australia.

While first prize was a model P76 Sonya generously gave to Philip (I do have that one) third prize was a stunning watermelon which has since graced the cover of the SA magazine with Ron and Loretta proudly holding the prize melon aloft. These little competitions add so much to the event. They should be encouraged.

From here a few people departed before we headed out of town a bit to Maewa Austin Mews and the Steam Traction Society's open day. The Leyland's lined up with a Model T at the Austin Mews can be seen on the cover. Colin and Sue Brown have recently taken over the collection established by her father Stuart Dykes, a legend in Austin circles around the globe and very active in Austining here in NZ. The stated aim of the collection is to "find and display all Austin productions". To this end they have an Austin tractor, a prototype A30, an Allegro station wagon (my mate Mark has one on the road here in Masterton) a Tasman and 18/22/30L model "land crabs" a London taxi, a 7 or two and any number of older models in all states of repair, the County series, a Champ 4WD, Mini, Maxi and in between, and others I can't recall precisely. There is also Austin derivatives manufactured overseas from places like India, and Iran! A group photo follows showing many models and Tina and Siegfried Stoeger, Loretta's parents' who also joined our little adventure, admiring some Aussie engineering, the Tasman.

It was great to catch up with the Brown's, but they were busy with so many of us there and overflow from the great event next door. Sue provided an endless afternoon tea of spectacular quantity and quality. The lounge was well used by those needing refreshment or just a place to sit. Sonya and I returned later on after the traction engine show to partake further and rest up before leaving for home. Here we met a man from Waiuku who also has a fascinating museum for us to visit one day. An interesting conversation developed before we left.

We had to make a move so gathered up a group of people who slowly meandered out of the Austin collection via the lined up P76's where a few more goodbyes were said and then we headed off down the track to the steam display. I can't express enough how wonderful this was. Even Sonya and Linda were enthralled at the vehicles on display, the sights, sounds and smells that go hand in hand with this hobby, not to mention the slightly grubby appearance of most of the operators, the trademark of a good keen steam man!

Paul and I met several really interesting guys with collections beyond just steam power, like a Leyland truck collection spanning decades of history. Also ran



into Rod Davenport of the Collectable Car Club mentioned previously. He was keen for me to drive a traction engine, but I had my best white P76 Club shirt on so gave it a miss this time. And Danie Lupp in his gorgeous Supercharged V8 S Type Jaguar. I know I have only one page left so here is what follows, and I'm thinking there will be more on this and the Austin's next time.

(Left: A 1905 model traction engine pulling an endless supply of people wanting a ride in the trailer behind. Didn't quite get onto that ride either but I have before and will again.)



(Left: Tawhiti Bush Railway Atkinson 6-ton steam wagon, just before it left to join the 10 or so machines running around the big paddock together. I have Matchbox models of these wagons. Just beautiful. I have models of the others shown too.)



(Above: As kids we used to say, "look at the steam roller". Well look, here is a real one from Taumarunui originally. Sporting a learner lady driver, no less.)

There was a steam organ, miniature ride on engines, a whole shed full of working miniature engines of all types, table top size, guys working on engines, or inside them, in the sheds, a future attraction maybe. It was just delightful, I can still smell it, feel it, and love it.

Additional Pictures:

(Right: Mike and Annette.)



(Left: Red Leyland's.)

(Right: The P76's showing off their sashes. This is similar to the opening photo but has the sashes in it which the other does not.)



(Above. The Red Truck is an International.



1934 Cadillac)



(Above. Red Leylands.



Austin Tasman)