

NP 1198 - 1957 Rover 90

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February 2015

This vehicle was originally owned by the Orr family of the John Orr stores fame.

It was then auctioned by Cannon and Findlay when Mr Orr retired to the Cape. There were only 2 bidders: myself and Colin Smith who was the local Rover agent. I had a quick word with him and I stopped bidding, so he got the car for about R3000. The understanding was that I get 1st option on the car in the event he decided to sell. Knowing that he was a very honourable man I had no doubt that he would keep his word. Quite a few years later I prepared a 1951 Chrysler Windsor for a trip to Cape Town.

A few days before I was due to leave for CT I realised that the Chrysler was not ready for such a long trip, so I went to see Colin and a deal was struck at R9000. After a very successful trip with no problems I went to a Rover club meeting at the Polo Pony Hotel. I was told in no uncertain terms that I had ruined the price of Rovers for everybody by paying that much.

Being in the second hand car business I knew I could not have restored a cheaper Rover into that condition for that price. That marked the end of my time with the Rover Club for many years.

I registered the car on the 1/2/1989 and it still has the old grey log book.

I have been to many national rallies in the car: 2 to Cape Town, at least 5 to the Free State, and many to the Nelspruit and White River area. When I bought the car the mileage was about 20,000. It is now 52,000 miles.

Over the years the car had a persistent oil leak when it stood for a few days. I stripped the engine and found no trace of a broken rear main bearing seal. I put in new rings and bearings at that time.

I started it up and used for a few weeks then there was the oil again. I then stripped it again and could still not find the problem, so I assembled it again, this time with original rings, the chrome plated ones. While putting the oil sender unit back it broke! The problem was solved. It had a flaw, and would only leak when the engine was stationary, never under pressure. This happened when the oil return pipe from the head would empty onto the floor. The passage of the oil was such that it looked like it came from the rear main bearing.

Recently it has been repainted against my better judgement but Aisne thought it was a disgrace with so much red oxide under coat showing where the original paint had worn away. During the past year I have overhauled the gearbox. All that was needed were a few bearings. The gears were in wonderful condition. I also re-sleeved the brake cylinders at that time.

Last September I was going to the Free State when I decide to turn back at Nottingham Road because of it heating up slightly. I think the main cause was trying to out-run the Ferrari, but I will settle for the O ring in the radiator cap being soft.

Will I keep it into the future? I guess so. It may relocate to Johannesburg so I have an old car available when visiting my kids.

I have often compared it to the Bentley S1 of the same year. The design of the engine is the same, the interior is almost the same, the quality is on par and it's much easier to work on. They both have diabolical brakes and boosters and both master cylinders are under the car. The Rover's is relatively easy to remove; on the Bentley it's a major undertaking. The less said the better.

Overall I would say the Rover is the better car!!!!!!

Hope the RR and Bentley guys don't get too upset.

