

Why a Rover car and why the Natal Rover Owners' Association?

April 2008 By Paul Deglon

I am 74 years of age and for many years was an avid motorcyclist and then collector of stationary engines. As motorcycles became increasingly difficult to ride and stationary engines became ever more difficult to manhandle, I needed an alternate hobby and preferably one in which my wife could participate. The answer seemed to be a classic car and one that had the support of a dedicated club or association. After looking at a number of options, I found what I was looking for in a **1959 Rover 100** and the Natal Rover Owners' Association.

Why a Rover? Sound engineering practice, unique and useful features and quality of finish abound in a Rover. A glance under the bonnet of my P4 reveals a six-cylinder engine; overhead inlet and side exhaust valves (a la Rolls Royce); an SU carburetor and an aluminium cylinder head. Other features such as servo assisted disc front brakes, a four-speed gearbox with overdrive unit, a separate chassis and numerous aluminium body components are less obvious. Leather upholstery, a walnut fascia, walnut window mouldings and quality fittings are features of the car's interior. Perhaps this is just the sort of car you would like to have bought in the 50's when you were an impecunious young man who had to settle instead for a Morris Minor or similar.

With all these features, one would think that a Rover must be expensive to buy and maintain, an important factor for most people these days. On both of these counts I was pleasantly surprised. Although they are relatively scarce, a P4, P5 or P6 in reasonable and complete condition can be bought for less than R15 000. The Natal Rover Owners' Association has a comprehensive selection of spare parts and they are more than willing to help club members with parts, advice and practical assistance.

What is it like to drive? I've had little experience of older cars and my memory of motoring in the 50's is limited, but I was impressed. Quoting from a road test of a 1959 model: "Altogether the Rover 100 is a car which, by reason of its good performance, good standard of fuel economy and, above all, its beautiful engineering and finish, will undoubtedly appeal to those who want a medium powered car of above average quality." I agree.

Why the Natal Rover Owners' Association? Some of the services offered have already been mentioned, but there is more. Trips to places of interest are held on a regular basis. Participation in shows, such as Cars in the Park, is encouraged. Regalia such as caps and shirts are available for sale and members are encouraged to wear these. A small but dedicated committee takes care of these matters. Founded in 1977 the association has a history and the annual subs are only R80.

No club or association is complete without a newsletter and members receive Rovernews on a regular basis. It is full of interesting snippets of news and technical information regarding club activities and Rover cars.

May I suggest that you join the Natal Rover Owners' Association and then buy a Rover. You should find this a rewarding experience.