

The restoration of the 1917 Hupmobile

In last month's article by Derek Stuart-Findlay on the Robinson/Labia collection, there's a gap in the history of the 1917 Hupmobile, originally owned by Sir Joseph Robinson. This article by Chris Jewitt records further information about its restoration.

IT'S not known to whom the Hup was entrusted after 'liberation' but it was soon sold to Mark Edwards, a founder member of the Veteran Car Club in Natal. Owing to its height, the car could not be accommodated in a regular garage, so a lean-to structure was created to house it.

Some work was carried out over the years and it's believed that Jimmy Pirie replaced the roof at

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Next morning, Jack Holmes returned with Cynthia and daughter Jacinth to take up the threads of the night before, and after tea the convoy re-assembled and set off on the return trip to Cape Town. Here no incidents were recorded along the way; tea was taken again at Faure and members returned to their homes happy perhaps in the knowledge that not only had the outing been a success but that they (or some of them) had helped materially towards putting the Houw Hoek Inn on a sound financial footing.

We look forward to more outings of this sort.'

It's incredible to reflect that although the original 1903 Reliability Trial to Houwhoek was repeated only three times, the Crankhandle Club, starting in 1956, has celebrated these pioneering events each year for well over six decades. These rallies have clearly continued to contribute to the sound financial footing of the Houw Hoek Inn, which remains to this day a popular stop-over and wedding venue. To the disappointment of the regulars in the pub, however, the bell hanging from the ceiling has been taken down after room three lost its status as the honeymoon suite and was converted to a storeroom.

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some stage. Sometime later, Mark relocated to a complex with little garaging space, and negotiated a storage space next to my workshop. I offered to restore the Hup, but Mark was adamant that he wanted to restore it himself.

In 2007, the complex where the Hup was stored was sold, and Mark approached me; he'd decided to sell the car as he was concentrating on restoring his 1914 FN. As a result, a deal was struck and the Hup's restoration began in earnest in my workshop in New Germany, Natal.

The car was completely stripped, chassis sand blasted, etc, and its condition was found to be surprisingly good complete and unmolested. The coach-built body was the biggest fear, but it wasn't too bad; very little structural wood



Loading after taking possession.

frame required replacing. The body had been skinned in a 1/4" veneer, which had rotted in places, and was replaced by 6mm marine ply.

The engine showed little signs of wear. The biggest problem was to replace an inlet valve. This valve had obviously stood open over many years and condensation had eroded a groove in the valve seat

which was too deep to machine out. A specialist engineering shop undertook to make a valve. Various tests were done to determine the correct steel alloy to use. A perfectly fitting valve was produced and installed. I seem to recall that a new set of rings sourced from Cords was fitted. After assembly, the motor was fired up with no difficulty, but after replacing it into the chassis, some difficulty was experienced getting the multi-plate clutch to disengage. Research suggested a brake within the gearbox operated by the clutch may be the problem. With help from the late Ron Korte we fitted a new brake lining compatible with running in oil. Unfortunately this didn't entirely solve the problem. Once first gear had been selected the gearbox (although a reverse shift pattern) worked very easily.

The brake system operated only on the back wheels, with contracting handbrake bands and expanding foot brake shoes both acting on the same drum. In the wet with the 3.50 section tyres, I imagine the retarding effect would have been close to nil!

Mark Edwards fortunately took many photographs, particularly of the interior, which enabled my upholsterer to replicate the interior with its velour seats and brocaded trim even as far as embossing the fleur-de-lys on the door panels.

On completion, the car was offered for sale and eventually ended up in the Lamprecht collection near George - the best possible outcome, as storage was always an issue with its height.



Mark Edwards with the Hup in Chris Jewitt's workshop.



As it looked prior to restoration.



Engine on test stand.



Engine refitted.



Chauffeur's cabin. Open at the sides; no windows or screens.



Body repaired and under primer.



Sir Joseph's cabin. No draughts! Showing folding jumpseat.



The 1917 Hupmobile Model N on display at Cars in the Park in 2008.

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