

A Quiet Drive in the Country

By Eric West

On a lovely Saturday morning, the 9th November, about 20 cars met up at the usual Pak n Save rendezvous to drive to Dave Tomlinson's private car collection in Ngongotaha.

We left promptly at nine and after a quick trip via the Mangorewa Gorge we arrived at a rather unprepossessing looking building in Hall Street Ngongotaha, to find that it hid treasure inside! We also met numerous cars from Rotorua and the Waikato, so finished up with about 40 Jaguars in attendance.

We were met by Dave, who gave a short talk on his vehicles and the various engines and vagaries of his cars. In fact, his "cars" comprise no less than five Rolls-Royce cars of various types and vintages, and a Bentley Turbo R, plus two Mercedes Convertibles, a Jaguar XJ6 an XK V8 and a Triumph Toledo

Also present was a Citroen DS22 Pallas belonging to a mate, and a brand new, literally a day old, 5.0 litre Ford Mustang, his wife's new "Daily Driver", of which more later.

Dave was very happy to open all of the doors and bonnets of his cars, three Silver Shadows, a 1933 20/25 Town Car and a lovely Silver Cloud 1 Standard Steel Saloon, plus, of course, his Bentley, and we spent a happy time poring over Rolls Royce Straight 6s and V8s and the pinnacles of luxury from their respective eras.



I am, personally, a long-term fan of the Silver Cloud, so it was interesting to hear Dave's take on the Cloud braking system, which comprised a mechanical booster on the gearbox and hydraulic drum brakes on all four wheels. This system was not used by any other maker and, having owned a Cloud 3 for nine months in the 1980s, I can well understand why!

As an interesting aside, on the Cloud 3, should your chauffeur wish to service the spark plugs, he first raised the front wheels off the ground, removed the front wheels, unbolted (16 bolts) a panel on the inside guard and this gave him access to the plugs, then he put it all back together and did the same thing on the other side! The recommended interval between these services was, from memory, 5000 miles. They were not meant to be serviced by the home-mechanic! Rolls Royce workmanship is superb, but it sometimes seems to have more to do with the blacksmith rather than the technician.

Dave's wife put on a great morning tea with cakes she had made herself, which we all enjoyed, and that brings us back to the Mustang.

This is, of course, a complete contrast to the other cars in the collection and Dave and his wife had only taken delivery the day before.

Dave started it up and the noise was, to say the least, impressive!



From my experience, when a chap buys something like that for his wife it is usually preceded by an extensive stay in the Dog Box, so I couldn't help but ask. Her reply was quite succinct, "He bought another Rolls Royce"!

She recounted that she and Dave, having a business which manufactures headstones, had been invited to purchase a Rolls Royce Hearse from a company in Wellington.

They had looked at it and test-driven it, but she had gone off the idea when Dave had asked her to "lie in state" in the back, but to sit up and wave when they stopped at the lights!

Well played that Man!

After thanking and bidding farewell to Dave and his wife, we set off on a drive through the country around the Western side of Rotorua.



A very extensive set of 'pace notes' ran to a double sided sheet, but having no "navigatrix" to keep me on the straight and narrow, (all applications for the position will be considered), I resorted to my usual tactic, of following someone who looked like they knew where they were going, I would love to tell you where that was, but frankly, I haven't got a clue!

The road initially ran around the back of Mt Ngongotaha, and what I *can* tell you is that it is a road built with Jaguar driving in mind, twisting and winding, up and down hills and through wonderful bush and rural scenery, until we came out onto the Thermal Highway near Whakarewarewa. We then took the road towards Tokoroa before turning off to explore the area southwest of Rotorua, again passing through bush and farms on wonderful winding roads.

Eventually we turned into Tumunu Road and rejoined the Thermal Highway, turning back towards Rotorua.

After a little meander around the southern end of Rotorua, we arrived at the famous "Pig and Whistle" for lunch.

I think we were all agreed that this was a good choice, the food, (I had Fish and Chips), was excellent, the service was very good and what you got for what you paid was very reasonable.

I would recommend it if you haven't been.

All in all, a great run out, and thanks to those who organised it!

Eric

