

First O.D. Ingg's Memorial Rally 21 March 1998

By Norbert Drager

My 1303 VW Cabrio finally has come of age! We happily travelled together for 21 years from the snow clad Alps to sunny South Africa. For its birthday present I gave it a facelift to counteract the ravages that 150 000 km had thrown at its outer skin. Fortunately its inner organs are still in the best of health. And what better way to celebrate the occasion than to participate in the first O.D. Ingg's Memorial rally. This unique regularity trial is held in honour of the unforgettable classic automobile aficionado, who sadly passed away last year at the age of 88. "O.D." as he was affectionately known by everybody ran a funeral business in Grahamstown and must rate as one of the greatest collectors and restorers of old automobiles in Southern Africa. At one stage he owned 134 vintage and veteran cars, including such rarities as a 1908 Metallurgique Tourer and his favourite a white 1925 Rolls Royce Phantom 1 Tourer. He sold most of his collection mainly due to lack of space to overseas buyers in 1968.

This new event brings together the four East Cape clubs, namely Border Vintage Car Club, Grahamstown Motor Club, Eastern Province Veteran Car Club and Queenstown Automobile Club and will be organised by each club alternately. This year it was run superbly by the Grahamstown boys Karel Buchner and Neville Koch and their host of marshals.

For me to take part, I first had to find a navigator, as my wife and son were otherwise engaged. The word was put out and my luck was in: The maestro Trevor Hoole volunteered. We all met at Karel's house in Bushmans by the sea, where a welcome cuppa awaited us. The excellent turnout brought 29 entries to the starting line, my favourite being an immaculately restored 1937 Mercedes Benz 170.

At 11.01 the first car left on the 82 km morning section, which took us through Alexandria on to the Salem road and after a U-turn at the end of the tarmac back to Bushmans. When my turn came at 11.24, I was quite apprehensive of what to expect, driving for the first time with a "proper" navigator. I must admit that the array of stopwatches and tables initially had me worried, but what a revelation and pleasure to see (and hear) an expert like Trevor at work. I had no idea what possibilities exist to check your speed and times. I was totally relaxed and at times felt quite superfluous. Back at Karel's house we enjoyed a lovely lunch, prepared by his wife and helpers. The afternoon run (80 km) appeared to be quite straight forward: Kenton, Port Alfred, Grahamstown - but Karel and Neville had thrown in a few titbits, that even made Trevor sit up straight and compute furiously. We eventually managed to rectify the situation by me putting foot and passing the next control at double the prescribed speed.

During the rally Trevor told me that he was a 10 second man, i.e. trying to pass controls in that time limit. He was absolutely right, as we accumulated only 74 points from 12 marshals. I can therefore only conclude, that the lady navigator of the winning MG B must be a 5 second lady, as she and her husband ended up with a mere 50 penalty points. A nice couple in a beautiful MG Magnette came third. But now comes one for the book! Fourth place went to another husband and wife team, with the lady having badly impaired eyesight. They set out in their Borgward Isabella Coupe, to have a nice drive, disregarding rally tables and stopwatches, judging their speed purely by the various growls and howls emitted by engine, gearbox and diff. Now there you are, all you club members that feel you can't attend these events, due to lack of expertise and equipment. The plain Isabella beat cars with cockpits resembling those in Boeing 747s. It only shows that it can be done, but even if you end up way down the winners list, the nice outing and the camaraderie make it all worthwhile. My Cab performed splendidly and was greatly admired by everybody.

The eventful day ended with a nice party and the prize giving, which provided magnificent trophies, not only for the best drivers, but also for the well deserving navigators. Everybody present felt, that "O.D." would have been delighted with the quality of the organisation and the cars that took part.