



Classic team: Mike Curry with his 1914 Humber 14-horsepower car, which took 13 years to restore. It is likely to be the oldest vehicle at Sunday's British Car Day.

Humber ticks over 100

By COLIN WILLIAMS

Mike Curry's 14-horsepower Humber will be 100 years old in December.

It's likely to be the oldest vehicle on display at Sunday's 28th Annual British Car Day at Trentham Memorial Park – and probably the one with the best story.

The car and Mr Curry, comparatively younger at just 70 years, have been a team since 1992 when he bought the Humber for a restoration project, which would result in the veteran car being off the road for another 13 years.

Today the car is one of only 11 "survivors" of an original production run of approximately 500.

Of those only five are still running – two in England, two in Australia and one in Upper Hutt, the understandably proud Mr Curry said.

Local since he was a six-year-old, and with a career as a Post Office electrician behind him, Mr Curry knows his car and is as proficient a historian as he is car restorer.

The Humber was originally imported to Invercargill by Edwin Hill, the original owner in 1915.

"It was dismantled in 1930 because the beaded edge tyres were no longer in production," Mr Curry said.

When Mr Curry, who has been with the British Car Club for 44 years, bought the Humber for his second car restoration project, he actually purchased a mess of parts and pieces ... with plenty absent.

"It was missing all the body and fittings, the mudguards, all the running board as well as the hood irons and bows.

"The rear axle had been cut up and modified and the body consisted solely of a bonnet," he recalls.

"It did also come with a 1914 14hp Humber instruction book, which did help to make up my mind about whether it was worth restoring."

He visited other owners and corresponded with those in England, picked the brains and enlisted the help of locals, and what was to be a 13-year project was underway.

Mr Curry also spent several days at the National Library searching vehicle magazines of his car's production year.

"I found some excellent details of what Humber were up to at the time," says the gentleman who is also the British Car Club's long-time archivist.

The restoration was based in the Currys' double garage "but a lot was done at Bristol Motors," he said.

Endless hours, weeks, months and years followed. Trial and error, success and more trial as the car was assiduously rebuilt.

In early 2005 the Humber was certified and licensed for the road.

Immediately the problems began, as the car was overheating – complicated issues that took over a year to remedy.

It seemed it would never be easy motoring, but equally, a resolute Mr Curry was never to be deterred. The problem was sorted and the car was back on the road.

That was 19,300km ago, with Mr Curry and his beloved born-again Humber out more often than the majority of vintage car owners.

A highlight was a trip to Invercargill, "over four days and at a maximum of 70kph." The journey south was to meet the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the Humber's first owners, and visit the farm where it first arrived in New Zealand.

Mike Curry and his 1914 Humber – it has been one special journey.

THE DETAILS

What: British Car Day

When: Sunday, February 9, 10am-3pm

Where: Trentham Memorial Park, Barton Rd entrance

Extras: Food and drink available and trade displays

Cost: Gold coin donation

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