



Sandstone's Classic Fords

Sandstone is best known for its 2ft narrow gauge railway but the heritage collection extends to other areas such as classic cars. In this article we will have a look at the collection of classic Ford cars and pick-up trucks.

Model T Ford.

The Model T Ford is an icon in the world automobile industry as it provided the first affordable motoring for America's middle class. Introduced in 1908 it was in production until 1927 with 16, 5 million examples sold. The Model T is often credited as the first mass produced car but the 1901 Oldsmobile precedes it, however Ford's production techniques added huge efficiency to the system. Although "any colour as long as it is black" is credited to Henry Ford for the Model T, cars up until 1913 came in a variety of colours, namely grey, green, blue and red until black was available in 1913. From then on all cars were black.

The car was fitted with a 2,9 litre four cylinder engine producing 20hp and a transmission system quite unlike anything used today with two speeds and reverse controlled by a lever and pedal system with a hand throttle. Braking was by a transmission brake only. First time drivers of a Model T today undergo a unique experience and special care is needed until the driver is experienced in the technique!

Sandstone has two examples, a 1915 pickup and a 1925 Coupe which is believed to have a special coach built body.



Model A Ford 1930

The Model A Ford was the successor to the Model T and was introduced in 1927 although sales officially are shown from 1928. The car was fitted with a 3, 3 litre four cylinder engine producing 40hp and a conventional 3 speed plus reverse transmission unlike the Model T. Also, unlike the Model T, the car was fitted with brakes on all four wheels. A number of body styles were offered including a Coupe of which Sandstone's example is one. This car was built at the Windsor, Ontario, factory of Ford Canada and was restored in the 70's for a dairy farmer in Ontario. The vehicle was acquired from Edwards Antique Automobiles in Canada together with a 1932 Model B pick up. Both vehicles arrived in South Africa in January 2016.



Model B Ford 1932

The Model B succeeded the Model A in 1932. Introduced at the same time was the Model 18 which featured Ford's first flathead V8 engine. Sandstone's Model B pick up features the uprated Model A four cylinder engine with 50hp. The Model B was subsequently discontinued in 1934 as America's love for V8 power left the four cylinder Model B with poor sales. The 1932 Model B however, despite its poor success, is much sought after as a collector's item, particularly for hot rod conversions. This car, unlike the Model A, was built in the Ford USA Detroit plant and acquired in Florida by its previous Canadian owner who restored it from the ground up as a retirement project. It was used very sparingly and was sold when the owner moved on to new projects.



Ford V8 Pick Up 1935.

From the same deceased estate where Sandstone acquired a Morris 10 this is another interesting and unique vehicle in the Sandstone collection. A Ford V8 bakkie (the South Africa colloquial name for a pick-up) dating from 1935. What makes it so special is its originality. It has never been re-built or painted, and looks as such a vehicle would have looked after, say, 15 or 20 years of hard work, plodding around the farm. In view of this, it was decided to keep it this way, making sure it starts and runs reliably, but leaving everything else as is.

From the 1950's, the old bakkie belonged to Dennis Petersen, of Frere near Estcourt in KZN, until his death in 1999. Dennis had a general and automotive engineering shop serving the local farming community, which was his father's before him. Dennis worked for his father as a young man, who was apparently a hard task master. He was unable to afford a vehicle, until one day he espied this Ford parked in a location, complete but standing unused. He purchased it for a very nominal amount, about 5 pounds! Once he started working on it he found the reason for it being laid aside was a rusty fuel tank. This was replaced, and the vehicle serviced; Dennis had transport! It became his main vehicle for over 30 years.

In the late '80s he was still using it to go into Estcourt on a regular basis. The starter would not turn the engine over by that stage, but this was no problem – Dennis would take a clothes peg out of the glove box to hold the choke out, insert a crankhandle and swing the old girl into life. Unfortunately the local cops took a dim view – probably Dennis' forthright character did nothing to sweeten them – and they would reach for their ticket books the moment the venerable Ford chugged into town. The mileometer, which still works, showed 3345 miles. Since it, in common with most vehicles of the time only records 5 digits one can only speculate how many times it has been “around the clock”.

Although it has been run occasionally since those days it has now had some mechanical attention with the brakes, radiator, electrical, fuel system needing repairs and head gaskets replaced. It has been left in original external condition.



Ford F100 V8 Pick Up 1950.

This old vehicle is somewhat of a celebrity in its own right at Sandstone having competed in the 2006 “African Odyssey” (Afriod) social car rally from Johannesburg to Nairobi, Kenya crossing the Equator next to Mt Kenya, north of Nairobi, as its final destination.

In many ways these early Ford trucks are icons in their own right. They conjure up visions of Route 66 and the good old days in the United States. They have very strong associations with farming and therefore it was appropriate to select this vehicle for the 5352 km adventure which it completed with flying colours driven by Wilfred Mole and his daughter, Tamara Webster.

It is a flathead V8 powered Ford fitted with the last of the 3-speed gearboxes which were phased out in late 1950. In all other respects it is a standard right-hand-drive truck assembled by the Ford Motor Company in Port Elizabeth from CKD kits imported from the United States. It was registered on 1 January 1950 as NE199 for Estcourt in KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Its condition was thought to be reasonable but inevitably upon further investigation a whole host of problems were revealed. Chris Wilson, who is well known as a vintage tractor specialist, took the project on hand and brought the truck up to its current standard.

The upgrade was significant in the sense that the entire gearbox was removed and stripped, and most of the gears were remade to specification. However, when the trials commenced there was a disintegration of a number of gears. Because of the short time available to repair the gear box again for the Rally a search of the Internet revealed that gears, shafts, bearings and gaskets were available ex stock in California. Through excellent support from our friends in the United States these parts arrived in a little over a week after they were ordered and the gearbox was duly commissioned with new components. This was all arranged by EMGEE Workshop in Randburg, who did an amazing job of stripping and rebuilding the gearbox in 24 hours!

There is a lesson here for South African preservationists - do not make something that you can order new from a specialist supplier somewhere around the world. The sheer level of sophistication of the classic car parts industry is something that needs to be taken into account.

Since 2006 the F100 has run without problems and is another photographic favourite.

