



Above: John Rayner's 1937 Packard 120C Convertible Coupe on the trailer heading for Katikati.

Below: The 120C pretty much stripped ready for restoration.

Ed... We have seen the car before it went to Katikati and know it will turn out to be another stunning Packard for the club.



# Ask the Man who Wants one – my quest for a classic Packard

I've always had a passion for cars – especially unusual, pristine cars.

I bought my first car at the age of 16. It was a 1931 Morris Minor, commonly called a Bullnose. It had been restored by an Air NZ engineer, and was a fabulous little car. Crash box, and accelerator in the middle. I often wonder where it is now.

Many years later, in 2004, I got a strong urge for a classic hobby car, and spent endless hours poring over classic car web sites. Eventually, I decided on a 1939 Lincoln Zephyr, which had been completely restored in the mid 80s. I had it shipped from Neosho, Missouri, and got a real thrill when it arrived here. It was a beautiful car, and my wife Dianne (since deceased) and I got a huge amount of pleasure from it. We belonged to the Early V8 Club, and they welcomed us even though we had a V12.

One of the mid-week trips I went on with the Club was to Henry and Connie's home in Birkenhead, where we all drooled over their wonderful Packards. I have a great photo of Henry bent over the front of the Lincoln, having a close examination.

After a couple of years, I thought I should have something a little bit faster and more modern. I spotted a 1964 Lincoln Continental convertible on eBay, and fell in love with it. Without a lot of consultation with my wife, I bought it at auction, and had it shipped to Auckland. I now had two classic Lincolns, and unfortunately, one had to go. I sold the LZ to a collector in Rangiora, and I discovered the other day that he had shipped it out of NZ a month later!

The 64 convertible was a very nice car, but was not a 100%er. It was simply not worth spending a lot to bring it up to #1 class, and I sold it a year ago. In my quest for a "perfect" classic, I bought a 67 Mini Cooper S that had been completely restored in Christchurch, and I still have it. A very sweet little car, and I think I'll keep it indefinitely.

My new partner (also named Dianne) and I went down to this year's Art Deco weekend, and I was keen to see if any cars were for sale. We both got dressed up, and I must say Dianne looked stunning as a flapper. She was stopped for a photo wherever we went, and after getting over her early embarrassment, had a marvellous time. I took several shots of her next to Packard convertibles, and they turned out to be great photos. I think the best one was Dianne besides Brian Taylor's 1937 115-C.

For someone who has never had any interest in cars, Dianne showed a great affection for the Art Deco Packards. I must say I was won over as well. So, starting from scratch with no knowledge of Packard models, I began my search for a mid to late 1930s convertible. Nothing available in NZ – I made a bid for Brian's, but he was singularly unresponsive! Many, many hours were then spent trawling through every web site I could find. Nothing popped up until early April, when I discovered a 1937 120-C convertible for sale from a dealer in San Carlos, California. It looked exactly what I was looking for, and I got very enthusiastic. According to the dealer, it had one family owner since new, and was completely original apart from a reconditioned motor and new hood in 2002.

I was given the name of a Kiwi living in California (Allan Jones) who does car inspections for prospective NZ buyers. He phoned me at 6am on an early-April Saturday morning to say "Yes, it looks pretty good, apart from a rusted floor pan in the boot, and some ragged upholstery. And, no pressure, but there are two buyers waiting to take it for a test drive." I thought about it for a few seconds, and then made an offer to the dealer. After just a couple of counter-offers, the car was mine!

I arranged transport and shipping through a local company, FPS, who do all the shipping of Beach Hop cars. It's a very simple process, and, to date, FPS have done very well. The Packard arrived in Auckland on Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, and yesterday, (Thursday 12<sup>th</sup>), I saw it for the first time. Up on a hoist at FPS's facility in Mangere, where it had just been steam-cleaned for the MAF inspection.

I want to bring the car up to as near as 100% as possible, without having to re-mortgage my home. My current plan is to transport it to a Certifier following the MAF OK, and get it complied and roadworthy. Then, I'll "shop around" for someone to carry out what restoration work is necessary – the major work, I believe, will be painting and upholstery. I already have several recommendations, but I would very much welcome advice from Packard Club members.

Hopefully, I'll be able to show it to local Club members shortly, and I'll do my best to keep up an ongoing record of restoration progress.

John Rayner.



**Re photos on opposite page.... See next page for latest update on John's restoration**

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Update as at 26 August 2011

.....John Rayner

I got North Shore Compliance Centre to carry out the compliance in May. They had the car for 3 weeks, but found there was very little to repair/replace. A brake hose, some odd nuts and bolts, and replacing a wire to the horn. They said the chassis and bodywork were in great shape – one of the best they'd seen for old cars coming from the US. I drove the car home, and was impressed by the smoothness and power of the straight 8.

I potted around with a general clean-up – there appeared to be a lot of rodent droppings in hard-to-get-to places, which I guess is understandable if the car had been just sitting for years. Malcolm and Terry came to have a look, and were extremely helpful in giving me contacts for getting parts and work done. Malcolm said I should spend a few months getting to know the car before embarking on a restoration, and I thought seriously about this advice. But, being a little impatient, I decided to firstly get confirmation that the mechanicals were OK, and then go ahead immediately with the restoration.

At the Cambridge lunch, I had briefly met Peter Le Gros, who, I was told, was the “Guru” on Packard motors. I tracked him down to his Rosebank Rd workshop, and yes, he said, he would be happy to have a look and listen. One Saturday morning, I took the car to Peter, and he carried out compression and vacuum tests. He found No. 5 cylinder was not working at all. An application of outboard 2-stroke oil into the cylinder, and the valve guide was freed up. Peter told me to put half an egg cup of the oil into every cylinder, then wait over-night, and start the motor up. I did this, and almost blacked out the neighbourhood with blue smoke! The motor did react well to the procedure, and I thought it was great advice. Well done, Peter, and thank you!

Following Malcolm's visit, I tracked down Trevor Gordon, who had prepared Malcolm's car for painting. Trevor came to my home to have a look, and said he'd be able to start around the beginning of August. I decided to visit his workshop in Katikati, and it was just as I had imagined – about 6 old cars in various states of repair, and old parts everywhere. Trevor showed me photos of the cars he had restored over the years, and I was very impressed. The visit gave me confidence that Trevor was my man, and he was able to do everything required except painting and upholstery.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August, I arranged for Rowe Motors of Tauranga to transport the car to Katikati. This was all very easy, and when it arrived at Trevor's place, Trevor took it for a test drive. Verdict: Motor performed well, no suspicious noises, brakes all good, suspension OK. “It could cruise at 60mph, no trouble”, said Trevor. I asked Trevor to take the body off the chassis, and get the chassis and body parts sand-blasted – then, basically allow him to do what he thought needed doing.

On Monday, 22<sup>nd</sup> August, I drove down to Katikati to see how the job was progressing. The Packard was sitting on the 4-poster hoist, and completely stripped of parts. Trevor had unbolted the body from the chassis, and when I asked how he would remove the body, he said “Simple – the body is raised on the hoist, and I then wheel out the chassis and motor”. Sandblasting will probably be done at Pukekohe. Trevor will load the chassis on to his trailer, and put the various body parts into his van. “Easy”, says Trevor!

Meantime, I am about to order a new wiring harness and all the rubber items needed. I'm going to order through Max Merritt in Franklin, Indiana. This is when the shockwaves kick in – I'd better get that second mortgage arranged pronto!

