



**P6 ROVER OWNERS CLUB**



# Star Car

## The P6 Rover Estate

*The first of what I hope will be many features where we visit and interview the owner of a car. There are a number of interesting, unique and rare cars known to the Club and if we can track them down we should have a good basis for an interesting series of articles.*

As the first of the series we are starting with the P6 Estate and consequently the week before the National Rally at Duxford, found me at the house of Bill Webb. Bill is the owner of an immaculate 3500S Estate finished in Tobacco Leaf brown with a black box pleat leather interior. He is also the Club's South East London Regional Organiser and has a wealth of information on Estates.

Bill first got into P6's 15 years ago whilst looking for a Rover P5. Many P5s he viewed had the usual rust problem worries that meant they could prove to be too much of an undertaking to purchase and keep running. However, whilst looking he came across a very nice Lunar Grey P6 which was a 'one previous owner' 2200TC. The ability to remove all the body panels with relative ease swayed the decision and he purchased the car.

The V8 'bug' bit shortly afterwards and Bill got interested in the Estate variant after attending some car shows and talking to Allen Meyers who owned a nice example of the Estate.

In stepping up the search for a suitable car, and at the very next show Bill attended, Uxbridge 1995, a rough looking Estate car was for sale. However, any impulse buying was quickly rejected as those in the know warned Bill off the car and in Bill's own words "it looked like it had been painted with a cat's tail".

Eventually a suitable car turned up in a 1996 edition of P6 News, advertised as good condition, 49k miles from new but located in Truro in Cornwall, quite some distance from Bill's house in Kent. Not to be put off, and one train journey down to Cornwall later, Bill was met by the owner at the station, took it for a test drive and promptly bought the car. The car was in good condition and appeared to have been laid up for possibly 10 years or so in its recent history explained the low mileage. This car was sold through H.R. Owen and still has their metal plate on the front slam panel. It's first owners were a firm of stationers and it is likely this car was converted from new. The journey back to Kent proved eventful as the low mileage 3500S Estate broke down 12 times!

Not being familiar with V8's, Bill did not know it was suffering from 'vapour lock' and stopping and checking some of the obvious items like coil and leads was allowing it to cool down enough so it would restart again.

Despite the eventful journey home Bill was very pleased with his purchase and following changing the radiator the problem never recurred. A Kenlowe fan is also fitted. Over the next few years Bill began a program of improvements to get the car up to the excellent standard it is today.

Some of the items undertaken were:

Rebuild of all suspension and brakes, cleaned and painted underneath, new De Dion elbows and bottom links. The entire car was resprayed about 9-10 years ago in 2 pack Tobacco Leaf brown. Apart from a new off side rear door skin and some work on the tailgate all panels are original.

This particular car has won multiple prizes over the years and fittingly won 'Car of the Show' at the National Rally, Duxford.

The only problems Bill has experienced with the car were loss of all gears when trying to park one night in a car park. The bushes on top of the gearbox failed so the selector was over-riding gear selection.

However, with some careful movements of the gear lever Bill was able to get the car back into gear, however, a full gearbox rebuild was undertaken. The only other issue was the pinion extension shaft on the front of the differential snapped and so had to be replaced.

Fortunately Bill being a true enthusiast did not mind taking his car boot apart to allow me to get some photographs of how the conversion was done. It is truly amazing how much of the original base unit still remains underneath and hopefully the photographs will allow you to see some of these areas where the new frame and structure has been joined to the original base unit.

### THE CONVERSION COMPANY

FLM Panelcraft, a Battersea based coachbuilder, put together the original prototype. This car was registered 'JCY 907D' and is believed to be still in existence today in Belgium.

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**NUMBER BUILT** Approximately 160 cars were built and a number of differences are known to exist between cars over the time period they were built.

At a guess it is thought that 90-100 are still in existence, with 25-30 on the road with a current MOT. Most of the conversions were done to V8 Automatics but it is known that 8 manual V8's and 8 four-cylinder cars were converted. As well as the cars that remain in the UK, there are cars in Australia, 2 in America and a number in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

### THE CONVERSION

Cars undergoing the conversion would be stripped of panels at the backend and then boot channels and quarter panels cut away. You may notice on some of the photographs the use of pot rivets as well as bolts holding the rear body on to the base unit. An interesting point to note here is that apparently FLM used to keep and re-use the bootlids, superfluous once converted, by fitting them to damaged Police cars.

A whole new extended and raised roof section is used which bolts in at the front as a P6 roof would conventionally but is welded at the back. The metal framework, which can be seen in the photograph overleaf, shows how much of the original structure is left and how everything is put together. You will notice that the rear wings are exactly the same as on standard cars. The battery is also still located in its box in the usual place.

The petrol tank is replaced with a purpose built 15-gallon alloy tank lying flat and sited where the existing boot floor would be. The spare wheel bolts to the top of the tank and also lies flat

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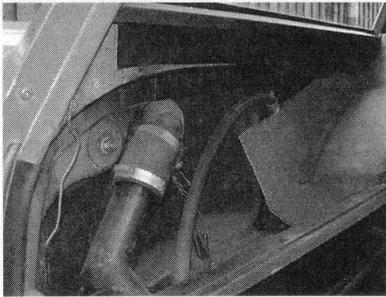


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allowing a false floor to be created above on the metal framework. The petrol tank filler is sited in the side of the near side rear wing and re-uses both the standard filler cap and lock arrangement. Therefore, if you were restoring one of these cars you would have to cut holes in a new wing to replicate this arrangement. Apparently, filling one of these cars with petrol is harder than filling a conventional P6. A slow and drawn out process as there are 2 fairly tight bends in the filler neck to tank pipes.



The false floor is made from 3 pieces of half-inch plywood sections covered with carpet. One for the floor over the spare wheel and tank and one for each side to cover the inner wings hiding the battery and petrol pipes. With all the panels fitted it looks really neat inside and another bonus on top of the increased boot capacity is the amount of room there is around the spare wheel. There is certainly enough room for the wheel jack, tool boxes, spare parts and any other sundry items to be kept out of sight. There is a t-bar clipped to the near side inner panel that is used to lift out the boot floor panel.



In addition to the standard P6 interior light there is an additional one just inside the tailgate. These were sourced from Jaguar. There is also a purpose made rubber mat that fits over the carpeted area of the boot floor.

As mentioned before there were differences between these cars over the conversion period and probably from the outside the most noticeable is the tailgate hinges. Early cars had them internally whereas later cars had them externally mounted. Also earlier cars only had one strut on the tailgate whereas later cars reverted to two. Some early cars had a badge on the tailgate 'Estoura' and marketing literature also referred to the conversion as the 'Estourer'. Later examples also had a rear wash wipe arrangement using a stainless steel wiper arm and washer jet. There was a separate washer fluid bottle sited under the false boot floor. The chrome door mirrors were a compulsory fitting and differ from the standard ones although they are still a nice slim stalked type design.



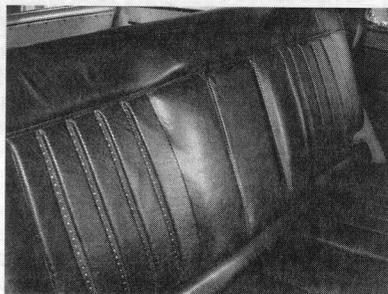
The quarter panels are reduced in the conversion to allow a decent sized side window and if you look along the top of the wing you will see an extra 'filler' panel that is body coloured and fills the gap between the rear side windows and the original wing. The rear side windows and the rear screen window are all bonded into the surrounding bodywork and it is not unknown that if the tailgate slams down, usually due to weakened hydraulic struts, the glass will pop out. The original rear screen glass contains a heated screen element and nobody, despite extensive

research, has managed to identify where FLM sourced this from i.e. most parts would be sourced from other cars rather than being 'one-offs' but the rear screen remains a mystery.

Consequently, there are cars running about with Perspex instead of glass fitted as getting new glass especially the tailgate glass is impossible and the cost of getting a screen made would be extremely expensive. The actual tailgate consists of an aluminium skin over a metal frame so you can get reactions and paint faults because of this. A useful tip is to use VW Variant rear hydraulic struts on the tailgate as they fit perfectly and are still obtainable.

The side and rear window have an alloy finisher round the edge of the glass on the outside and neatly trimmed with black finishing pieces on the inside.

The rear seats use the standard seat base squabs with a custom made one-piece backrest incorporating a centre armrest. There is an additional separate piece incorporated at the base of the back seat to allow the whole seat back rest section to fold flat onto the base squabs. The rear seat back is fully carpeted and the headlining is a one-piece continuation of the original. The stainless steel external roof strips have a covering piece over the join where the old roof ends and use a straight piece of an identical strip on the new section.



**Shown below the price list and optional extra list.**

Model	Basic Price		Purchase Tax		Total Car Conversion		Purchase Tax		Total Price			
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	£	s. d.	Estate	Conversion		
2000 S.C. (Leather)	1,188.	0. 0	356.	2. 6	1,514.	2. 6	680.	0. 0	203.	4. 0	2,397.	6. 6
2000 S.C. (Ambla)	1,147.	0. 0	352.	15. 3	1,499.	15. 3	680.	0. 0	203.	4. 0	2,382.	19. 3
2000 T.C.	1,223.	0. 0	375.	19. 9	1,598.	19. 9	680.	0. 0	203.	4. 0	2,482.	3. 9
2000 Auto	1,248.	0. 0	283.	12. 6	1,631.	12. 6	680.	0. 0	203.	4. 0	2,514.	16. 6
3500	1,450.	0. 0	445.	6. 11	1,895.	6. 11	680.	0. 0	203.	4. 0	2,778.	10. 11

**Optional Extras (fitted by either the coachbuilder or distributor) included:**

	£	s. d.	
Black Fabric Roof	19	19	Fitted
Coenen Metal Sun Roof	99	0 0	Fitted
Dog Grill (Removeable)	15	0 0	Fitted
Roof Rack (Removeable)	20	0 0	Fitted
Wing Mirrors (Compulsory) from	3	15 0	Fitted
Electrically Operated Windows	60	0 0	Each Fitted
Reflective Type Number Plates	4	0 0	Pair Fitted
Lap and Diagonal Seat Belts (Compulsory)	10	10 0	Pair Fitted

The price list used was dated October 1969 so I tried to find approximate prices for a near competitor and also for an alternative as a benchmark. The best I could come up with, despite extensive research, was that a Triumph 2000 Estate was about the same price as a Rover 2000 TC, so £1600 approx, and for something like a Ford Cortina Mk2 Estate you would have paid £1350 approx.

Therefore, for anyone converting a P6 this would have been an expensive car in its day when compared to some of the other options available for a factory built estate car straight off the production line.

I will see if I can get the other pictures taken added on to the Club website as I took quite a few and some of the others may be of interest but tried to select the best ones for the magazine.

*Anyway I hope I have captured a few interesting points regarding this rare version of the P6 and you enjoyed the article and thanks to Bill for his time. Stay tuned for the next issue to see which car is in next!*

Steve Dent

