

KINGSLEY CELEBRATES

LAND ROVER'S 70TH



There are plenty of stops to spread good Holgate Foundation-style cheer, and stops to fix Landies, on this commemorative KZN tour

Words & pictures **Steve Smith**



The dawn chorus: a rooster crows; some spurfowl squawk and screech. And, closer to the tents, a fan belt squeals and an asthmatic splutter eases into a slow, smooth-running thump.

I'm on an expedition organised by Kingsley Holgate to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Land Rover, and the convoy includes a number of Series Landies that date all the way back to 1949 – just a year after the first-ever Land Rover ventured off the production line and into the annals of history.

There's a morning ritual amongst Series owners, I've discovered. Half-an-hour or so before departure, they all check their cars' vital fluids, then start them up and let them idle a bit (usually with the bonnet still open,) just to get them up to running temperature. Then they all seem to gather at one vehicle at a time, peering into the engine bay and discussing either: a) How sweetly it's running; b) What is that strange noise; or c) What is the difference between this model and another. When that's done, the gathering turns into a mobile car-parts-swap meet:

"The V-belts for the 2-litre are getting hard to find."

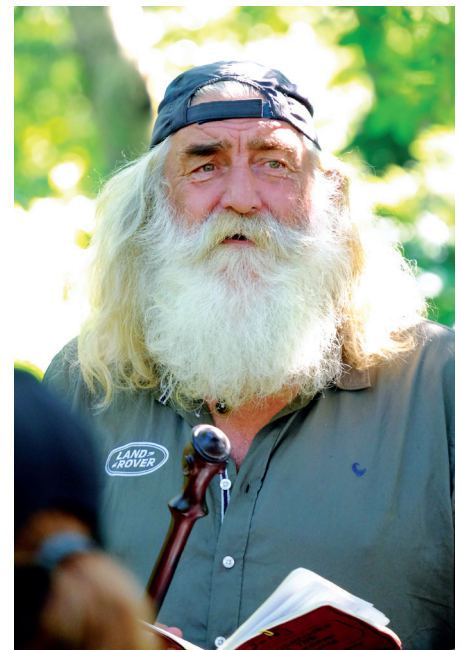
"Ja, but if you need one, let me know. I asked Paul and he had 18 in a box somewhere, so I bought all 18..."

The trip started at Stonehaven Castle in Shongweni, KwaZulu-Natal, which is the home of Bruce Leslie, the Holgate's expedition-fixer and aide par excellence. 70 Landies lined up in a huge '70' to honour the milestone.

However, that festive occasion was just the beginning. From there, a smaller group of Landies of all ages ventured forth into Zululand to celebrate the brand, and to get a bit of The Holgate Foundation's humanitarian work done at the same time.

The convoy's first stop was at the Albini Mission Clinic and Crèche in Shongweni, where the convoy disgorged all manner of humanitarian aid matter – including everything needed for an al fresco eye clinic. Mashozi's Rite to Sight campaign is one of the Holgate's humanitarian projects, started by (and named after) Kingsley's late wife, and gives eye tests and spectacles to poor-sighted members of rural communities.

At Albini, there were dozens of elderly people lined up, waiting for King and his crew's attention; and the smiles and genuine joy that a relatively inexpensive



Top King led the way in his 2018 Land Rover Discovery, a vehicle that he's already taken to Ras Xaafun in Somalia in the Extreme East Expedition. **Above** The perfect tour guide and historian, Kingsley regaled us with tales of his beloved Zululand and its past.



SERIES STALWARTS

A Land Rover Through the Ages Expedition would not be possible without old Series Landies, and the enthusiasts who nurse them along...

KENNETH JONES AND SUZIE Q

(And Phoenix the Alsatian)

How did you get into Landies?

Kenneth's interest in Landies started with *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, the cult film that starred a 1956, Series 1, 86-inch Land Rover, supported by various humans. "At that point in time, I decided that I just had to have a car like this. Then, later, when I was at school in Pietermaritzburg, I went to a market day when the Land Rover Club had some Series 1s going up impossible slopes. That just cemented the earlier resolution."

Your first Land Rover?

"I was working in the townships, and finally had the funds to buy my first Landy, a Series IIA called Kameel. It was a bottomless pit, but it got me into Land Rovers. It's also where my wife's dislike of Landies began..."

How many do you have now?

Six, including Scarlet, a 101 Forward Control ex-RAF ambulance, and a 1956 Series 1 86-inch, exactly like the coveted one from *The Gods Must Be Crazy*.

Which is your favourite?

Suzie Q: my 1949 Series 1, 80-inch that I'm driving now.

Can you tell us a bit about the Landy you're driving on this expedition?

I bought and collected this car from Kloof, and drove it home to Morningside in Durban. It took me 3 1/2 hours, because after every couple of kilometres it would cut out, and I would have to remove the sparkplugs, clean them and refit them, in order to carry on for a few more kilometres. But look at it now! It's been to Lesotho, on this expedition to Zululand, and up to Botswana, and it runs beautifully.



Above and below There's always a little preventative maintenance to be done in the morning. And to be fair, any vintage vehicles on a trip like this would need similar care. (No, it's not just a Landy thing!)



Inset Phoenix joins Kenneth Jones on many of his Land Rover adventures. **Bottom** Bruce Leslie in his hard-working Defender 130 TD5, carrying everything the expedition needs, kitchen sink included.



pair of spectacles can give was wonderful to see. As King says, "A pair of spectacles can literally change a life, allowing a person to make a living once more, by threading beads or fixing shoes again." One thing you pick up when travelling with the Holgates is that every one of their humanitarian efforts has begun naturally, from something that they have witnessed during the course of their travels. Rite to Site spectacles, the malaria nets, the life-giving LifeStraws, and their rhino art work – these are all part of their foundation because one or more of the expedition crew has been directly affected.

Over the next few days, Kingsley and Ross showed us historical highlights of their home, Zululand, as befitting an expedition with history at its core. The Ultimatum Tree on the banks of the mighty

Tugela River: such an innocuous spot where such a tumultuous time was set in motion. Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift, where a war was begun, lives lost and VCs won. And Fort Nongqayi in Eshowe, where local historian Roger Gaisford told us about the part played by this little town and fort in our country's past.

These were just little rewards for the team, punctuating the days of humanitarian work. Ikhwezi Welfare Organisation in Sundumbili, Mandeni, cares for mentally and physically disabled residents, and the entire Land Rover expedition participated in the delivery of wheelchairs and LifeStraw family units, as well as the Rite to Site and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes.

This ECD work is one of the newer



PIC: Dave Visagie



Above Perfectly fitting the expedition's theme, Kenneth Jones travels with an array of eccentric period pieces, each with a genuine use. **Below** Peter and Sue George in Gogo, their 1955 Series 1 that made the trip to South Africa in the late 1960s.



additions to the Holgate Foundation, and was the brainchild of Barrows, a major sponsor. Barrows prints ECD material on blank space in their print runs, and then distributes it with the help of the Holgate Foundation. It's an ingenious programme that should help significantly with the ECD problem in Africa.

A highlight for most of the expedition was the Ncemaneni Community Day, not far from Shakaland. Here, the expedition crew rolled out the Rhino Art programme, ECD work, Rite to Site and – the most fun – the traditional soccer game, after which the Man of the Match won a bicycle. All in aid of rhino conservation.

While this expedition took place in our own back yard, and not in the far-flung and dangerous places some of Kingsley's trips take him, it had a true expedition feel and was a reminder that there is always something to discover. While we wended our way through the Umhlatuze Valley with the Nkandla Forests in the distance, or while we camped in the awe-inspiring Babanango Valley, or made our way home through the Qudeni Forest, we could have been anywhere in Africa on a journey with a purpose – improving lives through adventure. ●



Top The Ncemaneni Community Day, where the expedition crew did Rite to Site, ECD work and Rhino art work, as well as the popular soccer game.
Middle Relaxing at Shakaland, with Landies the main subject of conversation.
Bottom A lightweight Landy, always a treat to see.



GRAHAM COOKE AND HIS 1959 SERIES 1 107-INCH

How did you get into Landies?

My grandfather was the head of museums in Southern Rhodesia. He dug out Great Zimbabwe, amongst others, and was sponsored by Land Rover. This led to the Schoolboy Exploration Society, where they took Series 1 vehicles on educational expeditions. My father got into Landies because of his father, and so did my brother; but I rebelled. I bought a Kombi, which burnt out, and I needed a new car, but my father said he wasn't lending me a cent unless I bought a Land Rover, and it had to be a Series 11. So I bought a Series 11A, and haven't looked back since – which proves that it actually pays to listen to your parents.

From there, it was buy and buy and buy...

How many do you have now?

When I needed parts for my first Landy, I soon realised that it was cheaper to buy old cars than parts, so a couple of hundred Landies have been through my hands. Now I probably have 100, and can actually drive about 13. Three are on this trip.

Which is your favourite?

Hard to say. My 107, which was my first Series 1; or Huff and Puff, which is a 1949 80-inch, and actually a bit older than Ken's. She was one of the first Landies to be imported to SA, chassis number 3653, and one of the first batch of 4500 Landies ever made. But I'd say that the Landy I'm driving at that moment is the one I love the most.

Tell us a bit about the Landy you're driving on this expedition.

I bought this Series 1 107 in 1993, and we've just shot a movie called Breathe with Andy Serkis and Richard Chamberlain, and a few of my Landies, including this one, were driven by them.

