



ELWOODS RALLY

Malmö - Stockholm in a vintage car, during winter

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Sometimes you just need to do that crazy thing. Like buying an unknown vintage car 600 km from home and road trip it back with limited (more or less non-existing) heating and summer tires in winter conditions. One Sunday in the beginning of December 2017 I found my-self in Malmö looking at a 1962 Vauxhall Victor Estate.

In the internet ad the car had appeared drivable and in ok condition. The seller first needed to change the battery, and then fiddle with the carburettor to get the engine to fire and stay running. Then it was time for my test drive, and it went fine. Only some minor remarks, like the left blinker didn't work (which I fixed later). We negotiated an exchange of my modern comfortable Saab for the Vauxhall.



Relaxing at the petrol station just after the purchase.



The first mod - an USB charging port.

The next day I started with fixing the left blinker. The cure was to press the bulb and socket back into the rear light housing. Some purchases later I left Malmö just before noon. The plan was to take the main highway to Helsingborg and from there find the old country road towards Stockholm, called "Riksettan" or R1. The plan went belly-up sooner than later...



At the mall taking some photos.

The old loading ramp

In Helsingborg I first set out to find the old loading ramp for the Denmark ferries, where the old road started once upon a time. I had seen a photo of it, already disused, in an old issue of Nostalgia magazine where they tracked down the old road. Unfortunately I had no luck and I was somewhat pressed for time so the search for the R1 outside of the city begun.

I think I found the road outside Helsingborg and drove a bit on it, but then lost it a drove around in circles and finally admitted defeat and hit the current main highway instead. The rhythm on the highway was to fast for the Vauxhall, so I tried to once again find the old road. Since the sun now was down the cold started to creep in to the cabin and the heater didn't give any heat to speak of. I stopped and covered the radiator with a floor mat trying to captivate as much heat as possible. Almost immediately the first break-down came; the car overheated.

"Ok", I thought, "the cooling system is probably blocked since it overheats that easily." Gone was the floor mat and I put on some more layers of clothing; adding a blanket for the legs, Roadkill-style.

No more old road

Now I finally ditched the idea to drive the old road, for good, and took the main highway. In this way I carried on with all other cars, trucks and semis wooshing past me until I came to the

interchange near the village Skånes Fagerhult. There the second break-down came with the generator warning light coming on.

Two cases with tools were packed before the trip, but apparently I forgot the multimeter so troubleshooting was limited. The petrol station did neither have any multimeter nor any car batteries for sale, but I managed to get some tea and a biscuit. Consequently the hunt for batteries begun. I stop at every petrol station I came across (five in total); none of them did stock car batteries and it was too late for any car parts stores to be open. When the battery finally had enough I had driven 80 km since the warning light came on. Fortunately there was a motel where I had stopped, so I stayed the night.

Electricity saving

The morning after I found a helpful garage that loaned me a fresh battery and charged mine while I drove back to a car parts store and stocked up on batteries. When I got back to the garage my battery was charged and I now had three batteries in total to get the remaining 440 km back home. Thanks to Mekonomen in Lagan for the help.



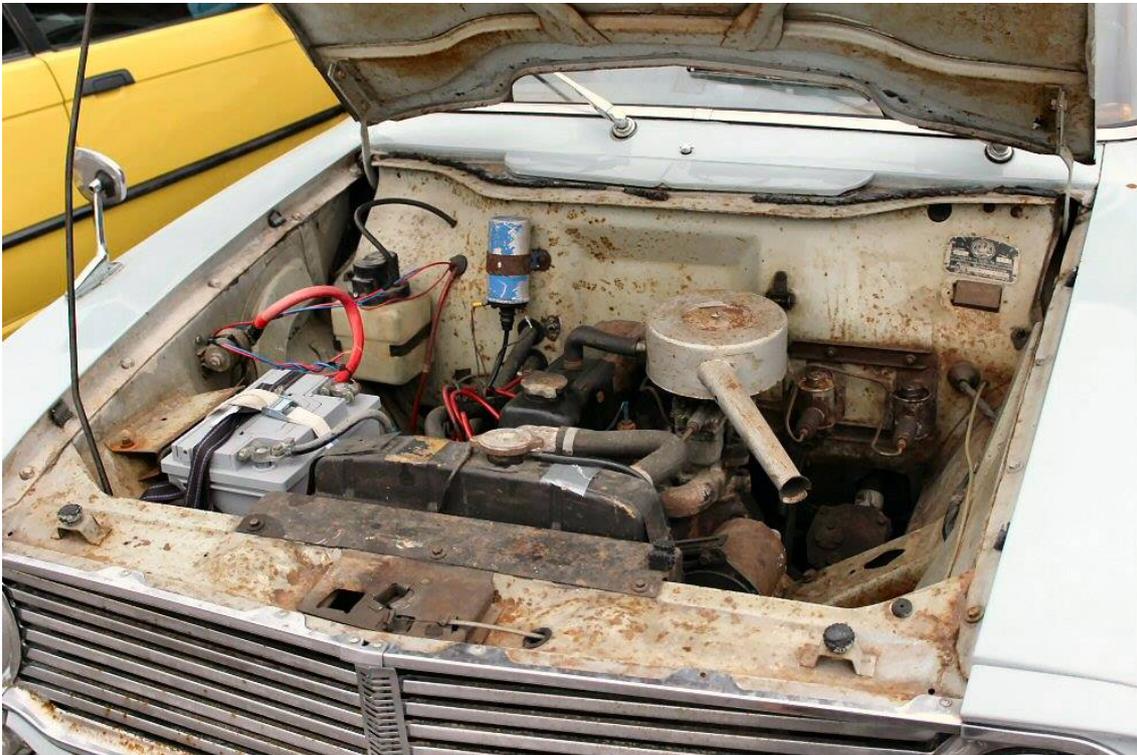
Battery-stock.

On with the heavy clothing and blanket. A more careful study of the map later I was away on the old road again. I used a minimum of electrical equipment trying to save the battery. Along the way I had to stop to wash the wind shield more often than with a modern car because the washer didn't work and the wipers weren't really up to the task of winter slush.

Lunch-time in Jönköping and from here I had an even better idea of how the old road was routed, since I've driven it several times before. All the way to Linköping every thing was fine, given the circumstances.

Rough running

The engine was running rough and it didn't really want to stay running at idle. First I had dinner, then I changed battery (around 200 km on one battery, with a non-charging generator). That didn't help the rough running and then I spotted that some of the fuel hoses were missing hose clamps. Of course I did not have any hose clamps with me (that's what you get for altering the track day packing) and neither did the petrol station. Cable ties to the rescue! Or so I thought, nothing did change, so I just carried on and manually assisting the engine with the gas pedal at junctions and roundabouts so it would stay running.



The engine bay.

Now I mixed the main highway and the old road and made some wrong turns along the way. In Nyköping I found a weighing bridge and with me and the luggage the car weighed 1250 kg. No wonder it's slow with 50 hp as new.

After filling up I drove on to the highway, but just after 100m, or so, the engine just died and didn't want to start again. After putting on a reflective vest and putting up the warning triangle I was about to call the tow truck, but I tried to start the engine once more first and it started so I could

drive of the highway. I did a loop in the outskirts of Nyköping and it seemed fine again. Just as I was about to leave the on-ramp the engine stalled again.

Can't get out of Nyköping

My feeling was that there was something wrong in the fuel delivery, so at the on-ramp I eliminated the extra fuel filter, with the cable tie hose clamps and tried to start the engine again. Still running rough, so I rigged the choke lever with a cable tie so it would stay in one position. Now the raised idle was smooth and I carefully backed up to the start of the on-ramp. At this time I had been in Nyköping for about two hours and it was close to midnight.

At the night-open hamburger restaurant I found something to eat and a person that offered to follow me the rest of the way, just because he didn't have anything better to do.

I found the old road again with help from the GPS and then it was plain sailing home, except for a second battery change on the way.

Aftermath

So, what have I learned? Next time I'll factor in one or even two extra days for such a long trip in an old and unknown car. I will not try to slim the track day packing in regards of tools, it works fine for old car trips too, just add imperial tools if necessary.

It's was a very fun adventure, I would do it again, without hesitation, for the next car purchase.

Julia, as the car is named, is now awaiting an alternator install, carburettor and fuel pump rebuild and some general service before she's back on the road again.



Vauxhall badge on the steering wheel.

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