

Critical Extravaganzas

The Volvo 740 Turbo Estate

"Warp factor nine" "Check" "We have blast off"

The dashboard lights flicked on in an amazing array. The onboard computer flashed messages about the fuel reserves and predicted time of arrival . . . and the stereo burst into beautiful sound. We truly were in orbit.

This was no ordinary car. In fact my children were sure that it was a starship.

Lex Brooklands had very kindly lent me their top of the range estate 740. With fuel injection and turbo it promised to be a very interesting weekend.

I picked up the car at 4.00pm and drove back to the BRI. Parking the car in the RTC car park I was highly impressed by the manoeuvrability considering its large size . . . and the porters and early leaving staff were impressed by the customised body shell, Ferrari wheels and built in spotlights judging by their admiring looks and comments.

Friday evening we were off to a gig at the Anchor Inn, Bleadon. As usual we were playing with the other members of the Doctor Jazz Quartet in aid of the Bristol MRI Scanner Fund. One of our perennial problems is the transportation of equipment . . . synthesiser, amplification, boom stands etc. Tonight was different. The equipment fitted into the car with ample room to spare. We were even able to take full drum kit and the drummer.

More admiring comments. (That's some set of wheels, won the pools, like your new car etc, etc.)

Saturday: off to Croydon (140 miles) to pick up the children and play at another charity fundraising event. Off like a rocket down the M4. Nought to 60 in 7.7 seconds was entirely believable as the acceleration crushed us back against our seats. The turbocharged 2.3 litre engine delivered 182bhp with amazing fuel economy for such a large car . . . around 32mpg.

The maximum speed is not given by Volvo but one customer had been clocked for speeding at 138mph!

Sunday: Many more admiring glances later and its the acid test . . . would my mother like the car? In the past she has turned up her nose at a variety of new cars and the only car in which she professed contentment when sitting in the back seat was a large Bentley.

Yes, it passed even this test. Not only was it smoooooth and comfortable but she felt completely safe as well. Nor was she immune from its good looks . . . she wanted me to order two!

Monday: The car is covered in frost but starts first time. I have to take it back, unfortunately, since I no longer wish to part with it.

I found the car very easy to drive despite having not previously driven a Volvo. The seats were fully adjustable including lumbar support and the controls well positioned. Extra fittings available through Lex Brooklands included anti-lock brakes, air conditioning, electric sunroof, bodykit, cruise control, trip computer and those amazing Ferrari wheels.

The price of the standard Volvo 740 Turbo estate is around £18,000 including car tax and VAT. But as for me . . . I'd take the optional extras. After all, what's another 3,000 or so for truly space age driving.

All in all this car is suitable for a doctor in many ways. Volvo have an admirable record for reliability and safety. The estate car is extremely spacious and with this model they have thrown off their staid image . . . it is a very presentable, no, let's be honest, enviable car.

"Beam me up, Scotty!"

Next Issue . . . I test drive an Audi, then it's back to Volvo for their new Sports Car. Watch this space!

Paul Goddard

An Evening with Beau Nash and Juliana Popjoy

The ghost of Juliana Popjoy has been reported as being seen in the large elegant upstairs drawing room, into which early arrivals are shown to have drinks before dinner. Popjoys restaurant now occupies the house of Beau Nash's mistress. They would both be suitably impressed with the style panache and excellence of the *faire* at one of the best restaurants in the west.

Beau Nash himself looks on from a large subtly lit portrait on the wall of the tastefully decorated downstairs dining room, kept at a comfortable temperature by the open fire in the grate.

Choose from the large set priced menu, any one of the many starters main courses and desserts all for an inclusive £18-50. We found choosing very difficult as everything on the menu is so tempting: Feuillete with hot ratatouille and Brie; smoked monkfish; rabbit and pigeon terrine; cauliflower soup, eventually I went for the timbale of chicken livers on a wood mushroom and herb jelly, served with a warm brioche. My wife enjoyed the mussels and artichoke gratin immensely, subtle and exciting.

To follow the decision was even more difficult—the fresh fish of the day, salmon and brill; beef fillet in pink peppercorn sauce; oxtail braised in red wine; roast Guinea fowl with garlic and bacon in a Port wine sauce. I settled for the Dutch loin of veal with tartlette of calves kidneys in a rosemary sauce, this was tender and succulent, artful and cooked to perfection. My partner decided on the duck breast basted with a lemon honey glaze in Marsala sauce it was also a masterpiece. All main dishes are served with a full selection of vegetables in season, gratin dauphinoise, and a large mixed salad. I think all restaurants should include the vegetables in the price of the meal and I admire Popjoys for its no hidden extras.

There is an extensive but sensibly priced wine list. This includes Australian, Californian, German, Italian as well as wines from France of course. The French house wine is very reasonable and is good value. The 1984 Mercurey that I chose was produced by Michel Juillot and was fresh, fruity, as a good Mercurey should be. Served at just the correct temperature by Mark Heather, the manager, who prides himself on having a very good cellar. The veal and duck were certainly complemented by the wine.

For dessert a special English cheese, in this case a perfectly ripe Shropshire blue, is usually one of the choices, and as it was my birthday I decided to share a portion with my wife, well we had to finish off the wine didn't we?

Now came the last difficult decision. Should it be the warm treacle and almond tart with *creme anglais*; poached pears in a *marquise* of pink Champagne, or the homemade sorbet or ice cream? I was forced to choose the *quenelles* of dark chocolate mousse on a coffee and hazelnut sauce—simply divine. The oatmeal meringue topped with mango mousse in a strawberry couli was crying out to be eaten so my wife obliged, I also had a taste—it was gorgeous.

After the meal again one is invited to the drawing room. The fire blazing in the hearth gives a very welcoming atmosphere. Coffee, *petit fours* and liqueurs are now served, and the remarkable *Eschaw* cognac is a must to round off a truly memorable experience. The menu is changed every 2 months and booking is essential, as arrival times are planned with care to enable the very helpful staff to attend properly to you.

If you are in Bath to miss the Popjoy experience is a tragedy. I for one can't wait for my next visit.

Popjoys restaurant
Sawclose
Bath.

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