

The Scottish Land Rover Owners Club

The First Thirty Years.

The Tinto Hotel Lanark 12th October 1958

"A meeting of several interested members of the Land Owners Club was held here today to discuss the formation of a Scottish Sector of the L.R.O.C."

This is the opening paragraph of the first hand-written minute book of what is now the Scottish Land Rover Owners Club Ltd.

The marque was barely ten years old, the Series II was just being announced, the 2 litre engine was the standard unit and the diesel engine, also 2 litre, had only been available for a few months. Petrol cost 3/10p (19p) and a new standard 88" Series I with canvas hood cost £ A heater was extra!

Incidentally, a long running battle to exempt Land Rovers from the Commercial Vehicle Speed Limit of 20mph had not that long before been won.

In those far off times off-roads were already rising to the challenge of competition. The Rover Company Ltd had already noted the pride many drivers took in their vehicles and had started the Land Rover Owners Club with a full time factory employed official and an office that for some years oversaw the arrangements for all competitions and even handled all subscriptions for members.

The local committee handled such details as rules allowing door tops to be removed, windscreens to be left up, hoods to remain on and unfair advantage gained by using non-standard tyres, and vehicles to be checked by a scrutineer. Any other modification to a vehicle could be referred to stewards.

The first Trial was held at Hill of Camstradden, Luss the farm owned by a committee member Mr D Christie and was televised by the BBC. The results are not known, but I believe that Mr Alex Joyce, a Rover Factory Demonstrator Driver who had come up especially for the occasion, won it. He declined to accept first prize preferring it to be awarded to the first Scottish driver.

A few weeks later on 15th and 16th November 1938 a Scottish Team headed South to compete in the National Rally. Not long afterwards the glossy printed "Land Rover Owners Club Review" magazine (organised and published with factory backing) was bemoaning the way Trophies were disappearing North of the border because "the Scots get too much practise". The real implication was that Scotland was so wild that a Land Rover was the only vehicle capable of getting about in the place. Incidentally Mitchell Stenhouse achieved second place in the National Trial and second place in the concours at the same event with the same Series I.

The factory interest and support for club activities was strong with Tim Harding, the General Secretary of L.R.O.C., coming north to attend Scottish AGM's and a meeting of the LROC being held at Falkirk.

The Club Shop commenced activities selling ties, cuff links, tie-pins, wallets and other items supplied via the Rover Factory and all embossed with LROC or Land rover insignia. However, as with all committees, things did not always go smoothly and the matter of the 'subsidy' paid out of membership fees back to the Scottish Sector to help with their administration was regularly discussed. A proposal was even made to seek greater autonomy and collect our own fees.

Our own committee, however, had occasional problems and extra payments to the RAC for late event permit applications had to be made. Indeed one Trial near Perth had to be rescheduled as a gymkhana when no permit was obtained in time. Another early setback was when one T E Blackadder resigned as secretary due to pressure of business. At least he did not give up the Club entirely, though few of those who know him from recent times will know that his father was also a member.

The cost of running the Club was always a problem and in 1962 it was minuted that they were "without funds", but the balance sheet was rewritten and the Club survived.

In spite of this the sense of adventure led members to survey Ben Nevis and in June an attempt was made to drive up the mountain with the dual objectives of getting to the top and improving on the time an Austin Gypsy had taken to do it. Unfortunately the expedition was both blown and washed off the mountain by the weather, but in the following year good weather ensured the success with the as yet unequalled (by any other 4 x 4 vehicle) ascent time of 8 hours 40 minutes.

Another reason for the dreaming up of this event was that someone had heard that the Ford Model T Owners Club were investigating the possibility of a repeat attempt.

Illness and committee changes caused minor problems and venues and dates were changed from time to time for all too familiar reasons, but the Club continued to prosper. The Scottish Club disagreed with the 'official' Trials scoring system and introduced their own, dropping the handicap points system based on different tyre types fitted to competitors vehicles. Other problems were that the Chesterfield event clashed with the Luss Trial and a request was made to change the date of the National Rally because it clashed with the Scottish Motor Show.

The wives of many members were now involved in making high class lunches which were sold to competitors at events to raise Club funds. So famous did these become that competitors from many of the English Clubs came North

for the food. Barn Dances were also organised to make the events into a weekend occasion.

At this time the first serious accident in the Scottish Club occurred when Joe Woodward dropped a front wheel of his Series II Diesel 88" canvas topped vehicle into a sheep rubbing while traversing across a steep hill face at the Hawick Trial. In the days before any roll bars or seat belts his tidy working vehicle rolled over 3 times and when it stopped (on its wheels) Joe found himself in the rear cargo area bruised and shaken.

The Land Rover was driven back to Hawick and re-bodied completely. Joe did not compete again but helped at many events afterwards. It was Joe who organised and donated the hand carved English Shield to the Club. This award was for best results in Scotland by and English Competitor and the trophy is currently being restored after being lost 'over the border' for nearly ten years.

1963 saw the start of the Club Championship with first winner being John Fleming from Melrose. He was awarded the Cup at the AGM. The membership had by this time risen to 98. The first Honorary Member was elected on 6th July 1964. Dick Sergeantson had been active on the committee since the start and had also been a member of the Ben Nevis Team.

One of those who had been brought along to sample the new sport at one of the Hawick events was a young gentleman from Berwickshire, he was a friend of Ian Scott Watson (once associated with Ecurie Ecosse) who had been active on the committee for some time. He drove with considerable verve and success though we have no record of whether he liked it enough to actually join the Club and come back for more. It is thus a pity that we cannot for certain claim to have had Jim Clark among our members, for he it was.

This was the era of working vehicles being used on Sundays for sport and trailered trials vehicles were unheard of. It was a feature of some Trials that an element of sightseeing was incorporated and this involved having a few sections on one farm or hilltop and some more on another farm several miles away, with the off Roman Fort of hill track to explore in between. The term Green Roding had not been invented bar 10 miles or so of cross country driving and a Trial with a huge picnic lunch laid on by the ladies was rather good value. The event would start at the nearest town or some suitable point and a convoy would move off at the allotted time (well alright they were usually a bit late but once they had set off stragglers had to find their own way – not easy)

1965 saw discussions on the possibilities of a sub-committee to cater for the North of the country though nothing had yet been finalised. Following a suggestion from head office the first Safety officer was appointed, Falkirk Lawyer Jim Burnett-White took on the role and held office for many years.

The elastic properties of nylon were discovered to be very useful for recovery until the open hook on the end of a 1" diameter rope unhooked itself from a stricken vehicle and proceeded straight through the middle of the station wagon rear door of the recovery vehicle. The spare wheel mounted behind the front seats stopped it. End of the first lesson.

The teams attending events down South had come up against a new problem – modified Land rovers. The Scottish Committee discussed the problem and then reminded head office that the Club Constitution forbade and such practises. (This obviously did not include one notable Scottish competitor who campaigned his farm workhorse – a battered 80" fitted with a Perkins P3 diesel which ran on paraffin, and this, as has been said in the days before any vehicles were trailed to events)

On Thursday 6th March 1966 the Committee acknowledged the gift of the Cameron Muir Trophy for Scottish Competitors at the National Rally, it was however awarded at the South of Scotland Trial that year as the National Rally was cancelled. Discussions were started between the various area clubs and the Rover company regarding the future organisation of the Club nationally. The first Club equipment was bought, a 50ft recovery rope, a loud hailer and a stop watch. Two events had to be cancelled due to an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease.

At the end of 1966 a meeting at Birmingham of all the areas and the Rover Club resulted in the formation of the Rover Owners Association with a new Constitution. From now on each area would be a separate Club affiliated to the Rover Owners Association and the RAC.

The Scottish members at that meeting had voted unsuccessfully against the change. On 21st January 1967 the Scottish Sector of the Land Rover Owners Club became The Scottish Land Rover Owners Club. Joe Woodward was appointed an Honorary Member. In future the National Rally would be organised by different area Clubs in turn. Jim Burnett-White was now Chairman. The committee had their problems with the South of Scotland event cancelled due to bad weather and the RAC regs for the Kilcreggan Trial were rejected as they were submitted too late. The new rules for the Scottish Club were agreed and sent for RAC approval on 26th June. The film of the Ben Nevis climb was finally edited and ready for showing in October.

After years of unsuccessfully trying to extract travelling expenses from the Rover Owners Association for those attending meetings at Birmingham, the motion to consider whether or not to continue membership of the ROA was discussed, but not voted on. The RAC confirmed registration of the SLROC in October 1967.

The 1968 Hawick Trial produced an incident which showed the more serious competitive approach taken by some from South of the Border. The gentleman concerned was taken aside and informed of the light hearted

camaraderie of the Scottish Club. He took the idea quickly and became one of our regular attendees.

Joe Woodward organised a run over the Corrieyairack Pass.

The ROA Annual General Meeting was held in Falkirk on 5th April 1969. The Scottish Club had to turn down the opportunity to hold the 1970 National Rally due to lack of a suitable site. At the request of the Royal Scottish Automobile Club one of our Club Badges was presented for display in their new Club Rooms in Glasgow.

Arrangements were made to try to have a new Range Rover demonstrated at the AGM at the end of 1970, dinner after the meeting would be 25/-

Founder Members

W H Campbell	Acting Chairman at start of meeting
J F Gibson	Treasurer
J S S Bruce	
M Guthrie	
A M Fleming	
R C Serfeantson	
G P Stewart	
W Gilmour	
A Brown	
T E Blackadder	Secretary
J Woodward	
J Webster	Chairman