



The History of the Central Area



Mike Cartney

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by Mike Cartney

With additional extracts from the SRE Newsletter,
and the whole Compiled and Edited by Anna Gunn

The Photography used in this History has mostly come from the work of one man, David Robb of Balfron, a member of the Central Area.

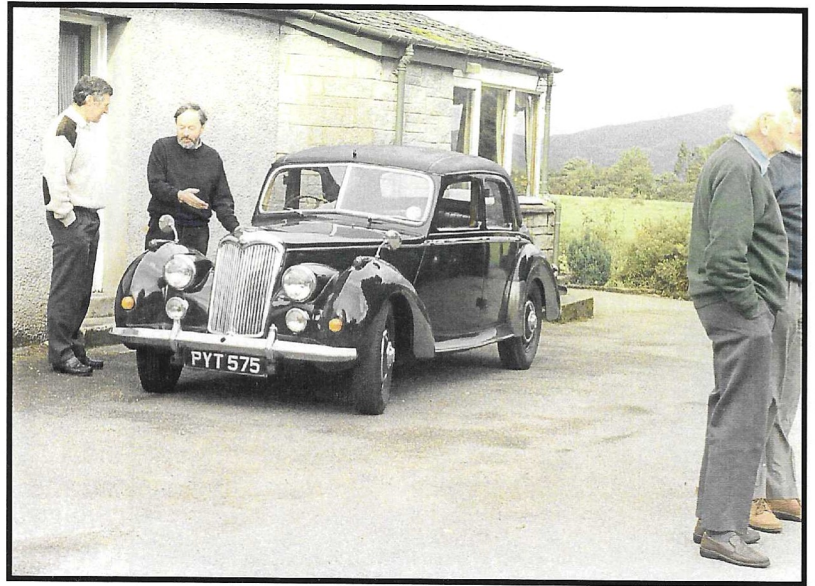
Like his cars, David's photo-work is impeccable, and it has been easy to find a high-class image from his archives for most needs in this history, and indeed for many of the needs of all of the other Histories in the suite of documents that forms *The History of Scottish Riley Enthusiasts*. The Editor acknowledges the value of his work with thanks.



The History of the Central Area

The Central Area of the Scottish Riley Enthusiasts came about in a rather informal way in April 1994.

Alastair MacKenzie, who had recently acquired a Riley RME and who lives in Stirling, approached Jim Dunbar for the names of some local members.



Jim duly placed a notice of Alastair's query in the Newsletter along with his telephone number and phoned round to see if there would be any interest in a local meeting.

Contact was soon made and the inaugural meeting was held that month in The Old Manor Hotel, Bridge of Allan, and in addition to Alastair MacKenzie, Mike Anderton, David Robb and Mike Cartney attended.

CENTRAL AREA MEETING? RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Last month I received a very interesting letter from Alastair MacKenzie who lives in Stirling, enquiring about the possibility of starting an SRE Meeting in the Stirling area.

We spoke about the possibilities and we agreed that one way forward was to use the Newsletter to publicise the idea, then request responses from members in the area.

My personal view is that the suggestion is great news for SRE. After all, the nearest meeting for Alastair is a round trip of 75 miles, a big consideration on a winters night.

Looking at the membership list, there are quite a number of SRE folk nearby.

So it's over to you - if you are interested or have a view on this issue please contact Alastair and give him your support.(N/Ed)

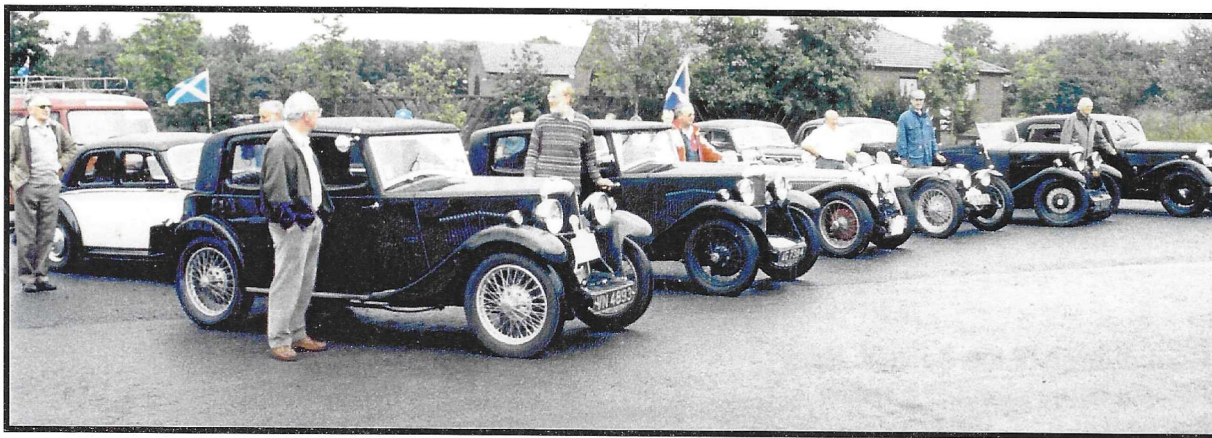
Alastair MacKenzie, 47 Springwood Ave, Stirling. Tel: 0786 474458

Thereafter, for several years on a more-or-less monthly basis, the above group continued to meet at The Old Manor.

The tradition, continued to this day, of not having a fixed date for the meetings, became established, with usually Alastair phoning round to agree a date. We were occasionally supplemented by Iain Campbell from Taynult who was in the throes of re-commissioning his Monaco, with David's assistance.

From time to time other SRE members would attend a group meeting, such as Jim Watson and Frank Cooper, but apart from the one-off guest visit, the Central group meetings have retained the same core membership.





The first event the Area was involved in was the 1996 Feeder Rally to Coventry to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Riley Cycle Company Ltd. The members organised the Sunday activities of the participants at the Stirling starting point. This was a Trossachs Tour ending at Loch Katrine for a trip on the steamer. Mike Cartney and Mike Anderton then joined the group for the week-long trip to Coventry.

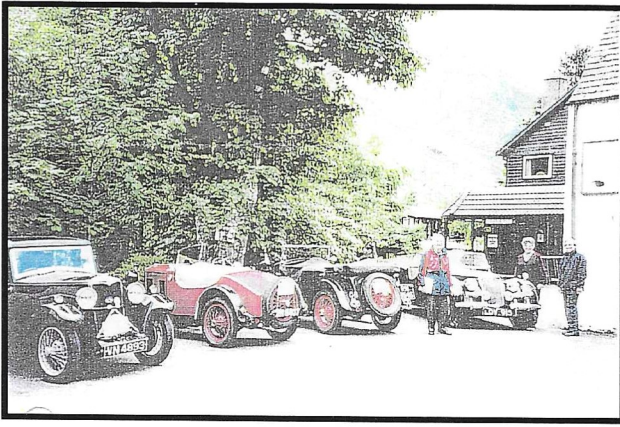
Two years later, the next Feeder Rally to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Riley Car was proposed by ARC. The Area was very active in organising the Scottish part of this event, and it was decided to start one group as far north as possible this time, at John O' Groat's in fact. Central Area members "recce'd" the entire route of the John O' Groat's to Gaydon feeder, with exception of the last section from Ironbridge to Gaydon, which task was kindly undertaken by Ian Stainburn, a local Register member. Stopovers were at John O' Groat's, Inverness, Balloch, Penrith, Whitchurch and Warwick. Mike Anderton's detailed report of the event is quoted verbatim below:

Report on Scottish Feeder Rally, July 1998 (from the SRE Newsletter)



Six cars made the line-up at John o' Groats on Monday morning. Three of the crews were probably feeling a little jaded, having been up half the night removing and replacing the engine of the '29 Tourer to fix a clutch problem. Five of the six were open cars, confirming the views of SRE majority that this was a venture solely for the totally mad! As the heavens opened and drenched everyone before morning coffee, this view was shared by the occupants of the sixth car, a modern heated saloon

Clutch problems were still dogging the Tourer at Inverness and the group mechanics were rapidly running out of grease-free clothes. Group bonding, however was making great strides!



The absence of the Tourer at the Glencoe lunch stop on Tuesday heralded further trouble, finally fixed with assistance from the RAC. Inverary, the afternoon tea break, was reached by everyone except a sick organiser (who headed for home to lie down in a darkened room) in good time for high tea. This would have been a prudent meal to take, cutting out the need for dinner at Balloch which seriously delayed the visit to Alexandria Motor Museum, carried out in the dark.

Miraculously, Wednesday morning saw a full complement of Rileys parked around the flowerbeds in Blythswood Sq.

Two more drove through the drizzle to meet us for lunch at Culzean, before the intrepid nine set out for Galloway.

At Penrith we met the 1.5 from Aberdeen and the Ingrams from Kelso, Washington. The Tourer, by this time, was footsore (puncture) and incontinent (lost back-axle oil).

The morning warm-up over the Kirkstone Pass was not alleviated by cooling rain (for once) and Windermere Steamboat Museum provided respite for some gently steaming radiators. Here we met Coopers from the Land of Oz, keen Riley owners, before pressing on to Kendal and Ingleton.

Road repairs in the Forest of Bowland caused delay - mainly to the contractors who lost a lorry in the ditch when courteously allowing the Tourer past. A quick dash along the M6 from Preston could not make the time to see the Boat Lift and regrettably, our Friends were left high and dry. Assistance rendered to the Gamecock clutch became an attempt at reparations - only partially successful, we fear.

A welcome visit by the Richardsons was a happy distraction from the rally organiser's cares. Faulty Towers transformed cupboards into bedrooms to accommodate all of the group who booked. This left some people elsewhere (those who booked much later.)

Friday morning coffee at Little Wenlock became an extended photo opportunity and Ironbridge an extended pub lunch. Ian Stainburn found us at Broseley.

Villa Fiore pastries were superb; some of us even had time to view the church. Monaco oil pressure zeroed as the gauge pipe fractured - no breakdown cover in sight. The Alpine and Tourer (highly experienced by this point and still on speaking terms with moronic Monaco Mikes) blocked the banjo bolt with washers and confiscated the fractured pipe for repair.



to run into Alasdair Gunn in the registration queue. Anna and he had spent the week as part of the East Anglian Feeder Rally organised by the Cresswells.

Later that morning I spent a fascinating hour or so listening to Barbara Farquhar reviewing the sporting machinery lined up opposite the Spares Marquee. She really is a rich source of



The oil pipe fracture delayed us on Friday afternoon and it was around 7:30 p.m. before we reached Gaydon, and later still the Marriott in Leamington. The car park was full of Rileys of all ages, shapes and sizes, photographed early on Saturday morning before breakfast.

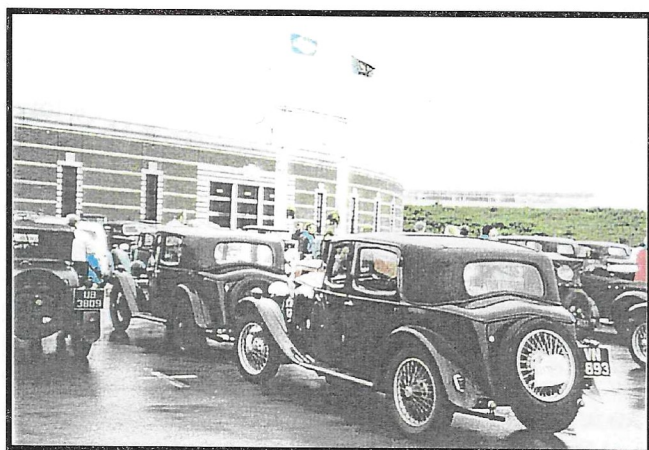
Later that morning I spent a fascinating hour or so, arriving back at the Motor Heritage Centre at a leisurely 10:00 am. We were surprised to see that Registration had not started in spite of a large number of cars already gathered in the park.

Mike Cartney and I were even more surprised

knowledge and entertaining anecdote on the history of these cars. Her stamina is also impressive for one with such extensive personal experience of the Riley saga during this century.

Lunchtime Mike and I were inveigled into gate-crashing the Evans' very civilised al fresco lunch, where we plotted how to show due recognition to the Stammers marathon efforts in keeping their '29 9hp. Tourer mobile for almost 2,000 miles since leaving home. Finally it was agreed that the Register Distance Award trophy would be presented at the Centenary Dinner that evening.

Early afternoon I had a go at quad biking, bade farewell to the Morels who had a continental holiday to look forward to, and then explored the museum and indoor attractions as the weather seemed to deteriorate. The dinner was as impressive an occasion as befitted the BMW Chairman's welcome announcement for the future of the Riley marque. Applause for the achievement of the Felloni brothers in bringing their Brooklands in second in the retro Mille Miglia this year after an



outright win last year was well deserved, and Alan Teeder made an amusing impromptu job of highlighting the trials and tribulations of John Stammers' Tourer marathon.

Sunday morning was grey and blustery and it was amazing to see once again the parking area fill up so quickly with Rileys of all types. This on the morning after the night before and also the day of the British Grand Prix! This event didn't surpass the 1996 total of over 600 cars but probably made entrants totalling about 500, which to my mind is pretty good.

Main business of the morning was the track demonstration of racing cars, notable sports

cars and rare historic vehicles. Alan Lomas was in the sports car demonstration in his pretty little '35 Imp and he was supported by Tom Richardson in his very original MPH. The trip to the track was by bus and no cameras were allowed. This was a pity but Rover Group security concerns were paramount (perhaps a new Riley mock-up was already around for testing!)

Barbara Farquhar mounted on the back of an open Land-Rover provided the commentary as the cars drove past—some at speed and some (the more antique examples) at a more leisurely pace, but cheered enthusiastically by the crowd!

Security arrangements gave a faintly 'cloak and dagger' air to the trip out to the track. The viewing point on what was once the middle of an old airfield runway was bleak, and the weather did its best to blow us all away - even

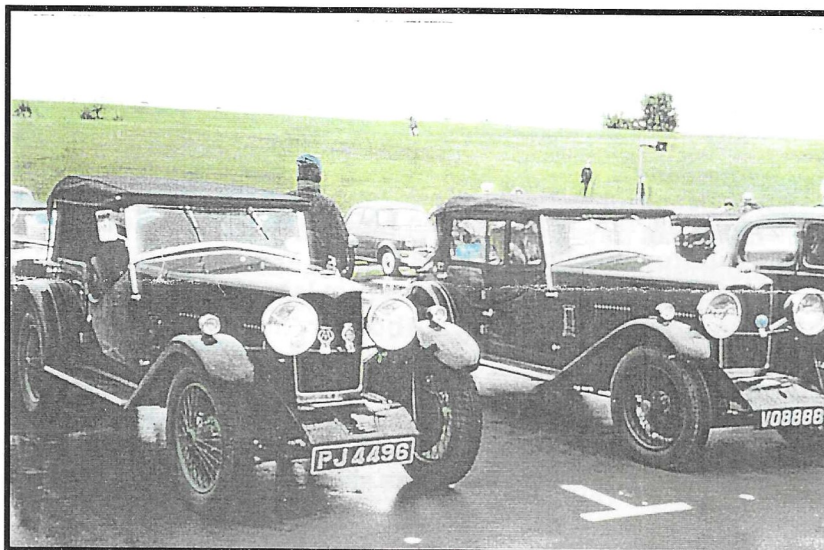
Mrs Farquhar's strident tones, amplified by loud-speaker, could only be clearly heard downwind! Nevertheless, this was a unique demonstration of Riley genius and potency developed over the years that, for me, formed the highlight of the day. I would hazard the guess that the 650 others who filled the buses and took up all the available tickets would agree. My family were allocated an early time to view and when we returned to the rally park the roar of racing Rileys, ERAs and the Brooke Special could still be heard, but tantalisingly could not be seen over the embankment.

After lunch the little gathering of available Scottish Feeder Rallyists (the Morels had left for France and Alan Lomas was still burning rubber on the test track!) in the Concours area gave us all a chance to reminisce on the weeks events and congratulate ourselves for actually arriving. Mike Cartney and I put embarrassment aside and luxuriated in the pleasure of being presented with pewter beer mugs for our part in creating the obstacles and tortuous route that in the end failed to prevent anyone from reaching Gaydon and taking part in the Centenary Weekend! This presentation was a very well-kept secret organised by Gwyn and Jan Evans. They had probably done most to ensure that the mad Monaco Mikes failed in their dastardly plot to wreck the plans of innocent and trusting Riley Owners through a cunning combination of mechanical metal fatigue, mental stress and sleep deprivation! !

By this time the wind was dying away and being replaced by more serious rain which rather curtailed my intended scrutiny of the assembled Rileys and I headed for the indoor offerings of the Motor Heritage Centre. That was where we met Doug Thurston, down on holiday in the Kenilworth area. In truth, I expect the poor weather had a silver lining for the MHC who must have had improved takings from the shop, cafe and bars that afternoon as many stayed to watch the Grand Prix at Silverstone on TV. The downside was that the usual outdoor afternoon activities of judging and prize giving suffered, and by 4 p.m. many of the cars and participants were away.

A quiet evening gave us time to reflect upon the weekend and prepare for the long journey home.

Monday morning saw a lot of activity in the hotel car-park with some interesting cars being loaded onto trailers or piggy back onto lorries.



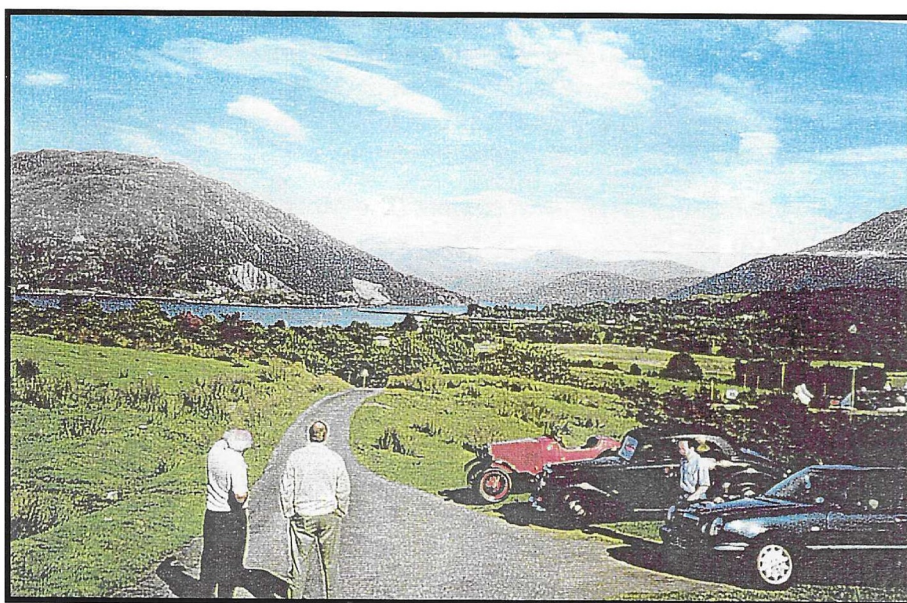
The Monaco was giving me some concern as a result of a persistent water seepage from the bottom of the header tank. Keeping an eye on the water temperature, and stopping often to check and top up if required, were measures that got us back home around 8:30 p.m. At the Gretna Services we met the Cartneys, whose car always runs with the regularity of the proverbial sewing machine.

My son, Ian, who took the RME back the previous evening found he had clocked 1,021 miles round trip from my house to the Glasgow joining point and Gaydon. My own mileage in the Monaco, with a joining point at Inverness (not John O' Groats because Ian was graduating that day), turned out to be 1,323 miles, which is about six months average motoring in my Riley!

The Motor Heritage Centre and ARC put together a fine collection of activities and entertainments for a memorable family motoring weekend. Co-operation between these organisations can only be beneficial for both and for all Riley enthusiasts, wherever they are. A greater Scottish involvement in future years should not be difficult to aim for or to achieve.

Mike Anderton

In September 1998, an Autumn run was organised to Taynuilt, to call on member Iain Campbell. Two cars were used, Alastair's RM and Mike Cartney's special. This run was so successful that it was decided to organise a proper weekend event for the autumn of 1999.



It was decided to open this to all comers, but to keep the organisation as informal as possible. The organisation involved several reconnaissance runs. In February 99 the run was made in David's RMB and a later run in May we used Mike Anderton's RME.

The September weekend itself started on the Friday, with everyone gathering at the hotel. Alastair collected Victor Riley at Glasgow Airport and they arrived very late but happy in the RME. We were also happy to have visitors from the south who had taken part in the previous Centenary Feeder Rally.

The next day we had a scenic run to Easdale Island - the last bit by ferry - followed by a free afternoon at various local attractions. On the Sunday we foregathered at the Cruachan Power Station for a visit and morning coffee before a run up the private road to the dam. After that we followed a circuitous route to Crianlarich for a farewell cup of tea in the station cafe.



The Report on the Easdale and Cruachan trip, September 1999: (from the SRE Newsletter)

CENTRAL AREA *(Last Thursday. usually! The Doune Arms, Doune)*

Mike Cartney

When committed to an expedition, it is probably a mistake to consult the weather forecast, since much needless anxiety will undoubtedly result. So it was with the Taynuilt weekend, for which gales, heavy rain, thunder and lightning, etc., were confidently predicted by the weathermen, but largely failed to appear, unlike the 21 determined souls in 9 Rileys who made up the weekend party.

The gathering of the group on the Friday followed the time-honoured inverse rule that the shorter the journey, the later the arrival. The exception to that was Victor, who, after an afternoon meeting in the Midlands, had caught a flight from Birmingham to Glasgow, was collected by Alastair MacKenzie at the airport and driven to Taynuilt. After his midnight arrival, Saturday's leisurely 10.30 start was no doubt welcome.

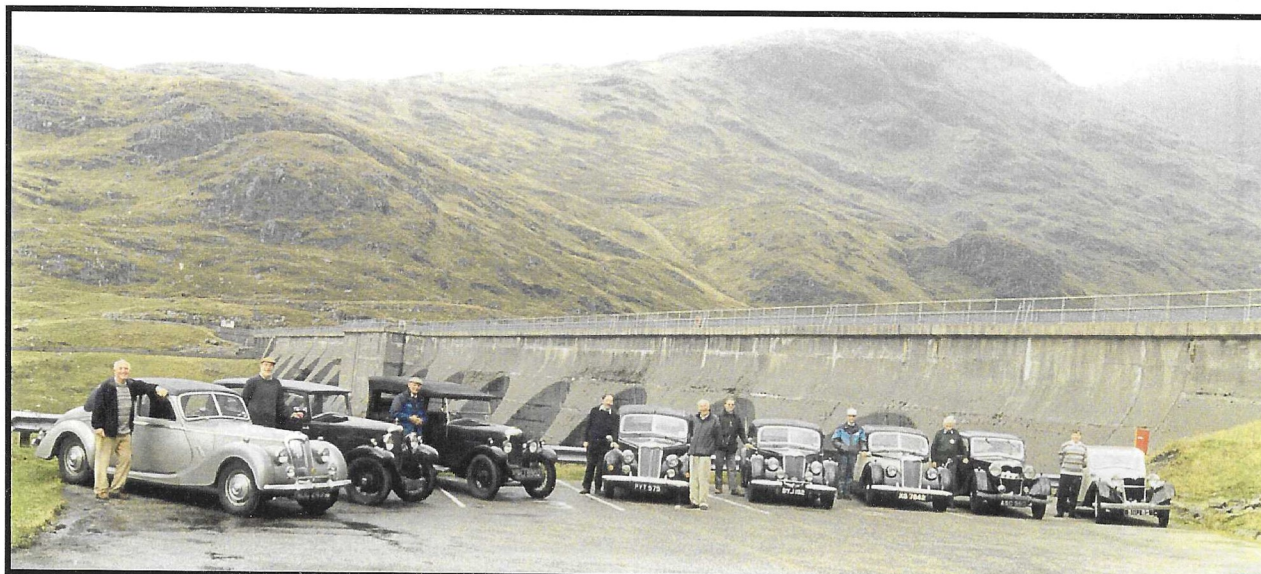
A quiet trundle through Glen Lonan brought us down to the coast and the road out to Seil Island and Easdale. Easdale Island itself is reached by a passenger ferry -there are no cars on the island. Just the place to take members of a car club.

Despite its diminutive size, there is much to see on this former slate-quarrying island, including a charming small museum and an attractive pub. This to some extent made up for the cancellation, due to the forecast high winds, of the afternoon cruise on Loch Etive, but people did find something else to do, visiting gardens and salmon smokeries, touring Oban or finding the longest and most obscure single track road back to Taynuilt.



Back at the Polfearn Hotel, we found that they had rejigged the dining room for us, making up one long table so that we could all eat our evening meal together. This made for a very convivial atmosphere, particularly enjoyable for me because it was my birthday, a fact I had completely forgotten (I think it's called selective amnesia), until a cake was brought in and they all sang "Happy Birthday to You"

Sunday's action started at the Cruachan power station visitor centre, where we assembled before our run up the private road to the dam. This road was the contractor's haul road when the dam was built, and now, with a proper surface, is the access for the Scottish Power maintenance engineers. It winds its way diagonally up the hillside for a couple of miles to around 1300 feet, and there are spectacular views, both from the dam and from the road lower down.





The original plan for the afternoon was to go steam launching on Loch Awe, but this had to be abandoned owing to a mechanical derangement in the steam engine. An alternative plan was hurriedly put together over lunch back at the visitor centre, but a run to Crianlarich via Glen Orchy was hardly in the same league. However, a stop to view the Falls of Orchy was some compensation, the falls being at their thunderous best, thanks to heavy overnight rain in the hills. After a final get-together over a cup of tea at the Station Tea Rooms in Crianlarich, the party dispersed -the workers heading for home in time for the Monday, the more leisured classes back to the Polfearn.



We hope all those who made the journey to Taynuilt enjoyed themselves, despite the changes of plan, and feel that their effort, in some cases considerable, was worthwhile. It is certainly appreciated by us. All in all, we

are reasonably happy with the way things went, have learned some valuable lessons, and have already tentatively discussed next year's plans in the light of these. Watch this space! MC

The Easdale - Cruachan event was so successful that another autumn event was planned for 2000 - the **Mull Weekend**. Because Mull is relatively inaccessible, only one recce trip was made, in May, by Alastair and Mike Cartney. Absolutely everything - hotels, routes, mileages, activities, fuel etc. had to be done on this one trip. We can be excused for using a modern! Due to lack of large hotels in Tobermory, we were based in several locations, but managed to get together in the evenings.



Again, we were honoured by the presence of Victor Riley and other Riley Register members from the south who seemed to enjoy the challenge of these marathon runs in their old Rileys.

On the Saturday, a circular tour of the island was made with a stopover at Iona. This involved a very long but extremely spectacular drive.

On the Sunday, a short run and morning coffee was followed by a steam train ride from Craignure to Torosay Castle, where the gardens and house were visited. After that it was back on the ferry for the long run home.

The Report on the Mull trip, September 2000: (from the SRE Newsletter)

"Boatman, Do Not Tarry"

by Jim Dunbar

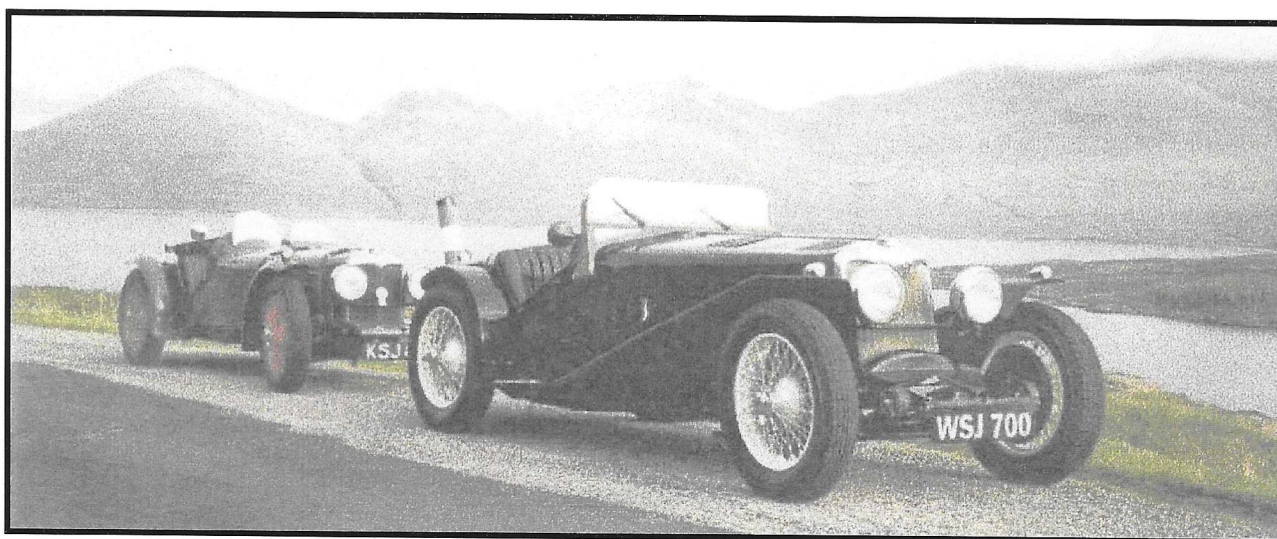
I left Carnoustie on Friday afternoon and got caught in about eight heavy but short-lived showers as I drove across country. The wind was very strong and blustery which made driving a bit more arduous. Nevertheless, it was a superb run down Glen Coe to the Corran, then the Lochaline Ferry over to Mull. I found a lovely quiet campsite within walking distance of Tobermory and set up camp.

Iain left his home in Letham at 4:00am and arrived in Corran in time for the first Saturday morning crossing, and onwards to arrive at 10:00 in Tobermory ready for the drive to Iona. He had a wonderful dry drive on virtually deserted roads!

Iain and I decided to follow the minor road right round the West side and head round the North to complete the circuit; a long drive but well worth it, as the landscape is stunning. Mind you, the weather was very good which transforms some of these dark glens and eerie rugged cliff faces!

Iain pitched his tent, then we went for a fish supper which was devoured with great enthusiasm - followed by a couple of pints with the rest of the Riley company in the Tobermory Hotel. A quick march up the hill for a mile and a half and we were back at the campsite.

After an early rise to drop camp, pack the cars and top-up fuel, we were ready for the drive home. We parted from the others at the Fishnish ferry and dawdled along in the sunshine towards the Corran ferry, stopping to take some photographs and marvel at the landscape.



Once on the 'mainland' and the busy major roads, we covered the miles rapidly through Glen Coe, on through Crianlarich, Crieff, Perth, and back into Angus and home just as the sun was setting and it was beginning to get quite cool, the trip meter turning 500+ miles - a great feeling of achievement. The weather had been great and both the Rileys ran very well. Phew!

Thanks to Mike Cartney and the Central Area for organising an excellent and most enjoyable motoring weekend!

And finally

During 2000 it became usual for the summer evening meetings of the Central Area to take place at a variety of pubs in the area, giving the opportunity for a run. We visit such loci as Gargunnock, Thornhill, and Doune (where we currently also meet in the winter, the Old Manor no longer being a hotel). We look forward to carrying on this tradition for many years.



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This Volume is one of a uniform suite of six Club Histories published by Scottish Riley Enthusiasts. The History of Scottish Riley Enthusiasts is an overview of the development of the Club until 2000. The others cover the period from their beginnings till 2000, and these are related from the perspective of one of the Club's local Areas.

The other Volumes in the suite are entitled:

The History of Scottish Riley Enthusiasts	by Anna Gunn
The History of the South-West Area	by Bob Miller
The History of the North-East Area	by Anna Gunn
The History of the Tayside Area	by Eric Stewart
The History of the South-East Area	by Frank Hutson

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