



The History of the South~West Area



Robert B Miller

Anna R Gunn

The History of the South-West Area

by

Robert B Miller

Foreword:

This History was originated by Bob Miller, long-time Scottish Area Secretary of the Riley RM Club, and RM Club representative on the Committee of SRE. The text falls into three distinct parts, of which Bob's contribution is the middle one. The other two parts were compiled by me from the *R.Memoranda* and from material provided by Neil Ross (mainly the first part) and from the *SRE Newsletter* for the final part. The continuity of the writers' "fists" is further interrupted by the story itself, which deals with an Area that has at some times fallen into two independent sections. The whole was then edited by me.

Anna R Gunn

The History of the South-West Area

In order to record the history of the South-West Area of the SRE, it is necessary to go back to the first meetings of the Scottish Area of the Riley RM Club, held at the Silverburn Hotel, Newarthill, as that is where the SRE South West Area originated.

Neil Ross, who was the first Scottish Area Secretary, established an RM Club meeting in September **1971**, held on the first Monday of the month. Neil decided on Newarthill, because this was mid way between Edinburgh and Glasgow where the majority of Scottish members lived. From the beginning this meeting was regularly attended by a group of RM Club members.

Neil continued in the Scottish Secretary's post until **1974** when he became RM Club Chairman.

Bill Harris succeeded Neil as Scottish Area Secretary, and one of his first actions was to record in *R.Memoranda* his congratulations, on Neil's elevation to

"this honourable position".

Neil began writing his Chairman's Remarks in the *R.Memoranda* in **1975** and throughout the ten years of his chairmanship exhibited an intimate knowledge of RMs and an executive style that enabled him to survive in the position.

From the early days, the Scottish Area held a Scottish Weekend centred on the Philipburn Hotel, Selkirk. This event was attended by such RM Club luminaries as John Byron (Soc. Sec. South) and TA Crabbe (Hon Treasurer), not to mention the Chairman and the Scottish Area Sec. In fact as many members usually attended the event from the RM Club's North-East Area as from the Scottish Area.

Tom Crabbe wrote in an article in the August 1975 *R.Memoranda*, describing the weekend which had included a visit to Abbotsford, an enjoyable dinner dance and some driving tests. He summed up thus:

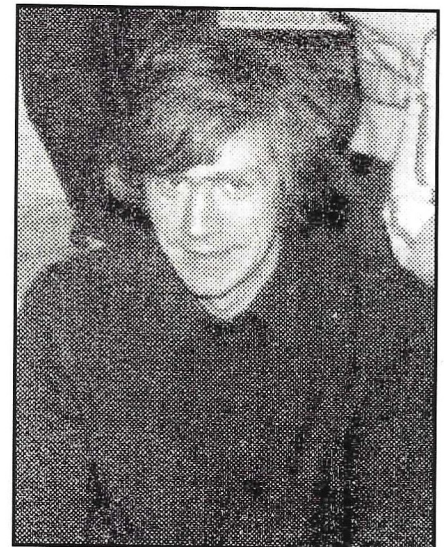
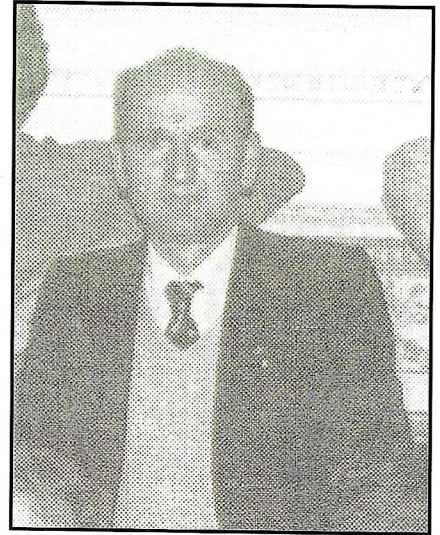
"Everyone seemed to be as pleased as ever, which says as much for the organisation again provided by Bill Harris, and his cheerful acceptance of our not taking any notice of it."

The **1976** Scottish Weekend included a visit to Mellerstain House as guests of the Border Vintage Auto Club Rally and Tom Crabbe again reported the event,

"as enjoyable as ever, thanks to the persistence and organisation by the McHarris."

In **1977** Bill Harris mentioned that the Scottish area meeting was regularly attended, and that someone called Eric Stewart was progressing with his "Body Transplant".

That same year, another Scottish RM Club member was writing to *R.Memoranda* telling of the starring role played by his Riley, LAW 731, in the BBC production of "A Leap in the Dark". This was Ranald Smith, of Inverness, who was enquiring about the possibility of a North-East of Scotland Area meeting. What a pity he had to wait another seven years for this!





In 1978, the group enjoyed an interesting visit to the workshops of the Glasgow Museum of Transport where:

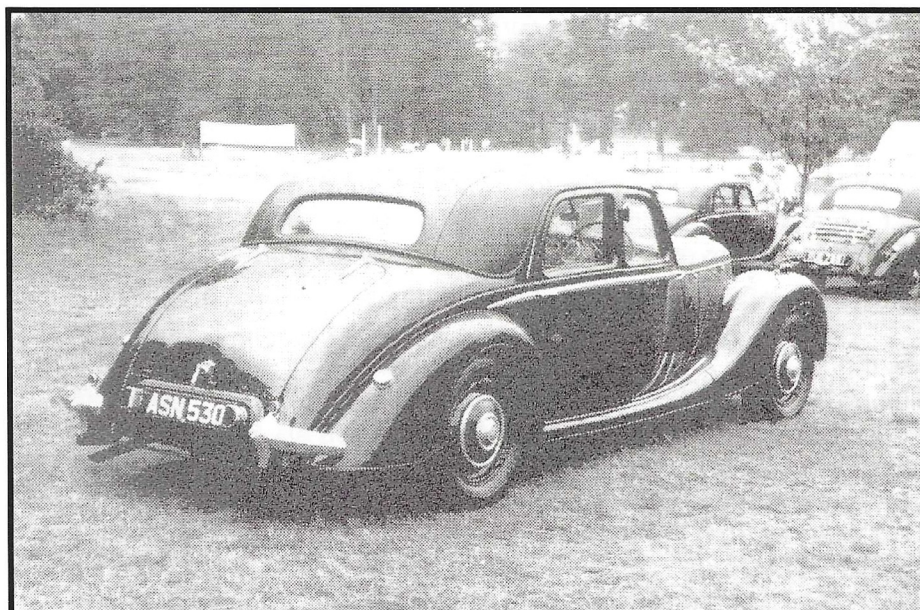
"19 people including wives, friends and children had a most interesting and enjoyable visit."

Tom Crabbe again reported on the Scottish Weekend, entitling his piece "*Ye Olde Original Riley Meet*" and mentioning the fact that dinner at the Philipburn was delayed by the arrival of David and Pamela Robb in ASN 530.

The event that year finished with a run over the Lammermuir hills and a visit to the Motor Museum at Myreton.

In September there was a visit to the Strathallan Air Museum.

In the November magazine Bill Harris congratulated David Robb on winning the Hundred Cup at the RM National held that year at Thoresbury Hall, Nottinghamshire while also recording the fact that Alasdair Gunn, a regular attender at the Silverburn, was moving to England.



In 1979 the group visited the Doune Car Museum and again held the annual weekend in the Borders, visiting Dryburgh Abbey and Mellerstain House.

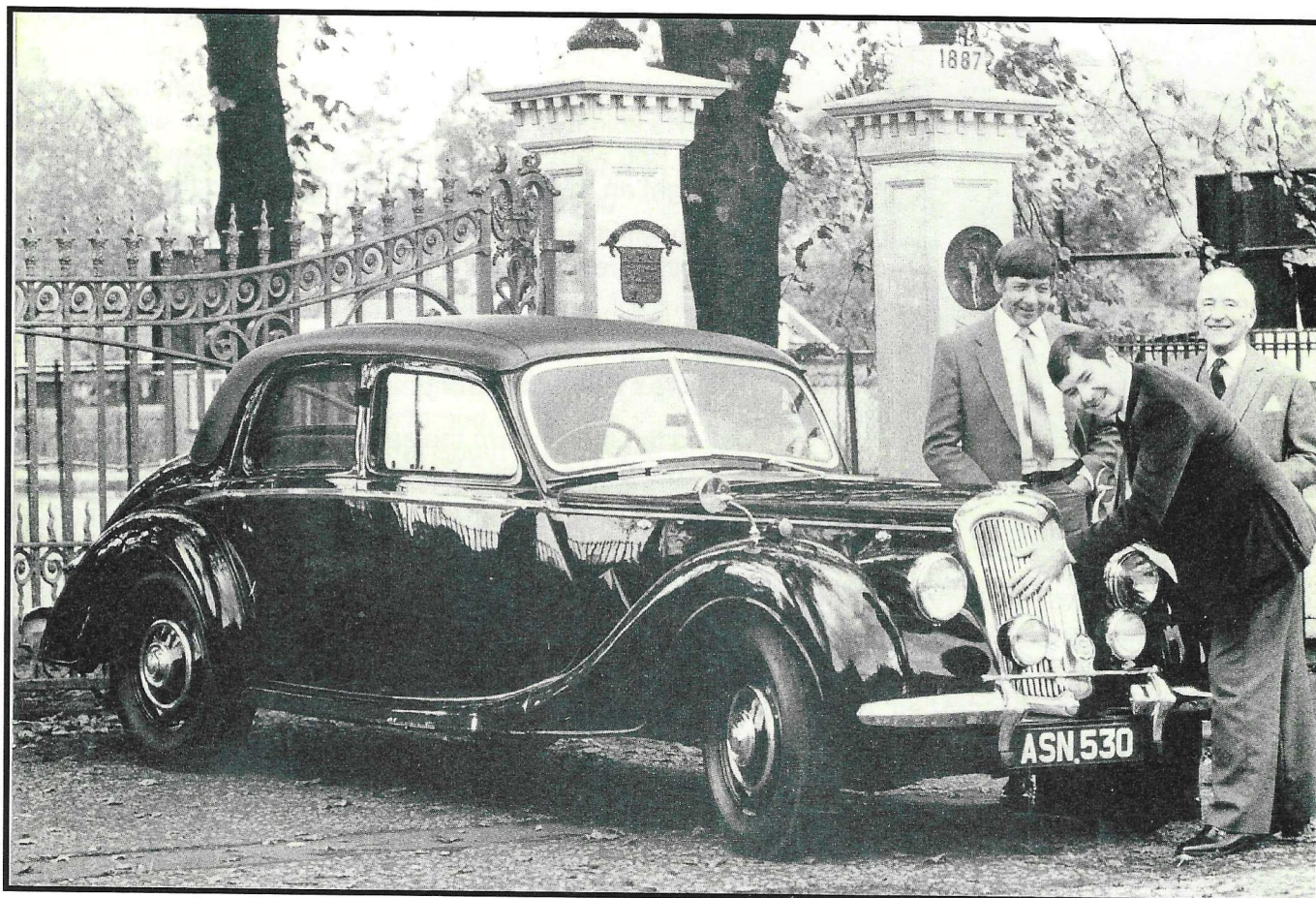
Tom Crabbe, ever the Scribe, described the event as:

"The right crowd, and no crowding.... a most pleasant weekend."

In 1980 it was Abbotsford and Mellerstain and Tom Crabbe produced his annual report on the event entitled "*Scottish Scratchings*". In July, the group paid another visit to the Strathallan Air Display. The December issue of *R.Memoranda* contained an article by Bob Miller entitled "*When the Bug Bites*", telling Bob's story of his life in Rileys.

1981 found the group enjoying a visit to the Rolls Royce factory at East Kilbride arranged by Archie Linton, a member of the group.

In 1982 the only thing recorded about the Scottish Area meeting was that it was well attended and that Bob Miller's Riley had: "unfortunately run a big end".

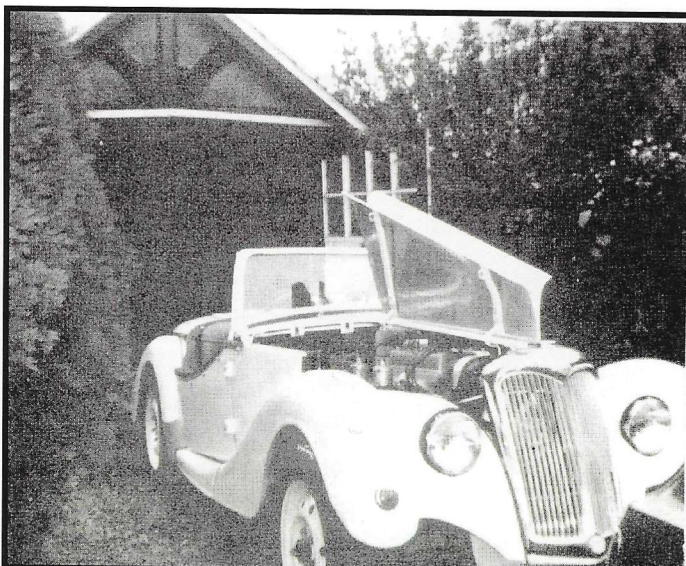
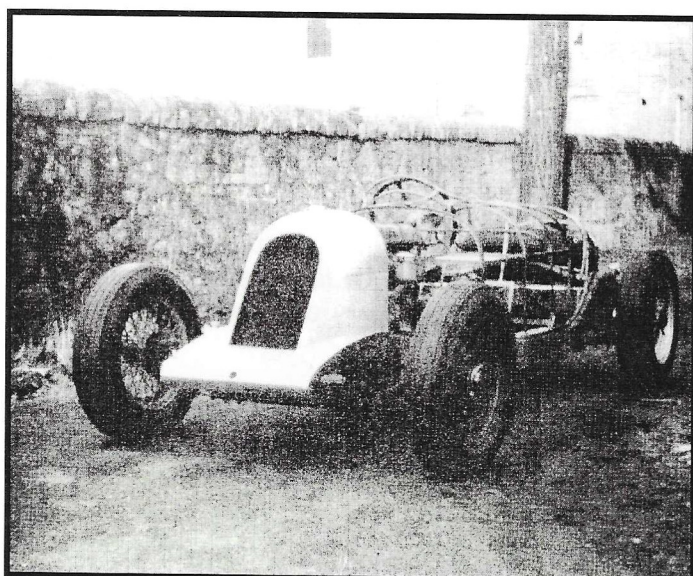


The January 1983 issue of *R.Memoranda* had a Scottish member decorating the front cover. This was David Robb with ASN 530 and the two previous owners of the car since new. The issue also contained an article entitled "35 Years Old" which told the story of ASN 530. How did David Robb come to own the car? In his own words,

"(I) pestered the hell out of Willie (the car's second owner) until he finally sold me the car."

In March, there was a visit to the Museum of Flight, East Fortune.

The April issue of the *R.Memoranda* contained another article by a Scot. This time it was Peter Graham whose article was entitled "*Scottish Specials*" and was accompanied by a couple of nice photographs, one of his own car and another of a friend's car, one Mr Ramsey of Stirling





1984 brought about a change of Scottish Area Secretary from Bill Harris, the second Scottish Area Secretary to Bob Miller.

Bob had been an early member of RM Club when he bought his first Riley, a 1½ RMA. He sold it in 1972 and bought a 2½ RMF which he sold in 1974. From then Bob was "in the wilderness", as he described it, until 1980 when he bought an RMA, NS 2434 and returned to the fold.

Bob introduced himself in the *R.Memoranda* in June 1984 while at the same time welcoming Fred Carss and his newly acquired Riley to the Newarthill meeting.

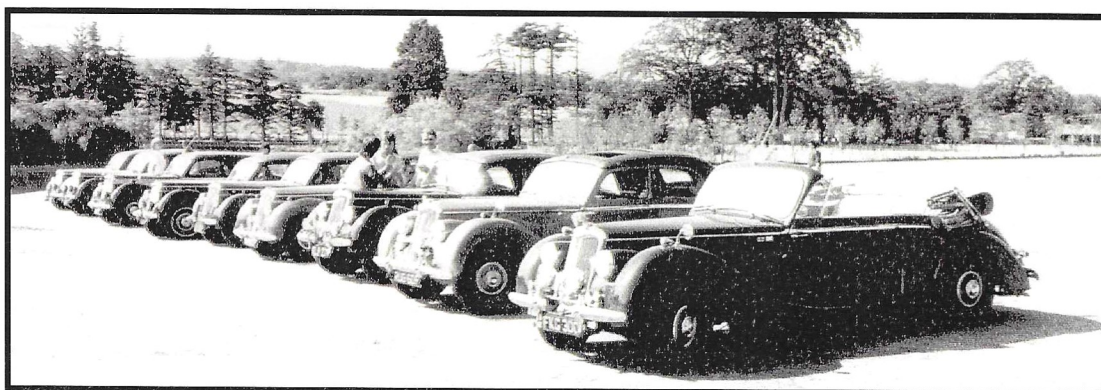
Note from the Editor. I have compiled this history to this point and now Bob takes over the story:

Members attending the meetings in the seventies and eighties were among others: Archie Linton, David Robb, Alasdair Gunn, Bob Miller, Ronnie Dickson, Dave McAuslan, Simon Hill, Jim Watson, Duncan Whyte, Ian Allan, Gordon McRobbie, Alistair Stalker, Fraser Rioch, Eric Stewart, Fred Carss, John McMillan, Bernie Walker, Kevin McGinlay, Bert James, Duncan McInnes and Peter Bryson, along

with the aforementioned Neil Ross and Bill Harris, many of whom are still SRE members.

There was a Club Stand at Glamis in 1984 with Fred Carss, John McMillan and Duncan Whyte in attendance with their cars, FFV 89, FST 848, FKG 565.

The first outing organised by Bob, that involved a number of members, was to Craigtoun Park, St, Andrews on 26th August 1984. This was a beautiful summer day noted as much for a plethora of wasps, as for the weather.



The following members and cars attended the first Craigtoun Park event:

Alistair Duncan	RMD	FKG.300
Jamie Young	RMA	SY.8610
Harry Patterson	RMB	RUG.605
Walter Simpson	1½ litre	JSR.627
Mr & Mrs Blair	1½ litre	SW.9823
Ranald Smith	RMB	PPC.414 (Distance Award)
Bernie Walker	1½ litre	MKH.240A (Formerly MTR.13)
Duncan Whyte	2½ Litre	FJG.565
Fred Carss	1½ litre	FFV.89
Kevin McGinlay	1½ litre	KLP.278
John Mc Millan	2½ Litre	FST.848
Bob Miller	RMA	NS.2434
David Robb	2½ Litre	ASN.530 (Best car on Show)

David Robb received a shield purchased by South West members and for his drive from Inverness, Ranald received a sheepskin Rug kindly donated by Fred Carss.

By January 1985 there were 76 RM Club members in Scotland. Also at this time it was noted that Doug Thurston was proposing to start a meeting in the Aberdeen area.

The Spring event in April 1985, the 28th to be precise, was to be a run to Crieff in Perthshire.

Due to the weather, (we had a snowstorm in the Sma' Glen) only three members turned up for this run. These three were all from the South West: Fred Carss, Peter Bryson and Bob Miller. They ended up at Crieff Hydro Hotel, sheltering from the weather! Never mind, Bob's daughter Heather enjoyed the Swimming Pool.

There was a second outing to Craigtoun Park, St Andrews on 25-8-85. There were fewer RM's than the previous year, due mainly to the inclement weather. Although breezy, there was only one slight shower of rain in the afternoon. Ten RMs in all attended with Simon Hill's 1½ Litre MTR 13 winning the distance award, with 210 miles from Stranraer. Duncan Whyte's 2½, FJG 565 won the Best Car Award, and he was presented with the Shield.

The October meeting in 1985 was noted for the attendance of 11 members and 3 RMs. Jim Hastings 1½ litre RPC 63, Simon Hill 1½ litre MTR 13, Bob Miller 1½ litre NS 2434. It was also noted that Alasdair Gunn had moved north and was looking for a house!

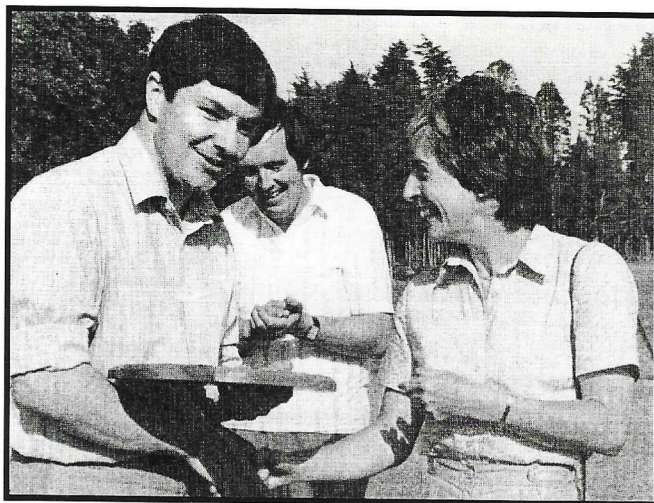
By January 1986 there were 90 RM Club members in Scotland.

A Scottish Weekend was organised by Duncan Whyte in Melrose on 3rd and 4th May 1986. Our base was the Waverley Castle Hotel. There was a run to Dryburgh Abbey on the Saturday afternoon followed by dinner in the evening. Alec Gatherer from Manchester, an RM Club member, showed a short film of the previous year's Dutch Weekend, and that was followed by a Quiz.

On Sunday morning there were Driving Tests organised by the Ladies present!

A visit to the local Motor Museum and then on to Floors Castle, home of the Duke of Roxburghe, where the cars were lined up at the rear of the castle.

Duncan had applied to the "Thoroughbred and Classic Car" magazine for a prize of a trophy and £100. This had been offered to clubs organising an event that year. We won the prize!





It was decided to present the T&CC Trophy for the Best RM present and quite fittingly Duncan's car FJG.565 won it. The Furthest Travelled Prize was won by John Kirby from Huddersfield in RM Roadster KOC 420.

Driving test results

1st Alec Gatherer. 2nd Bert James.

Duncan Whyte won the Quiz.

In all 11 RM Rileys attended the event.

On 24th August 1986 the group attended the Doune Classic Car Rally. There were 11 RM's in attendance on a lovely summer day:

Fred Carss, FFV 89. Peter Bryson, NKL 572;

Jim Hastings, RPC 63; Simon Hill, 2380 PK;

Kevin McGinlay, KLP 278; Jim Dunbar, GSV.209; Eric Stewart, BYJ.192; Duncan Whyte, FJG.565; Bernie Walker, MTR.13; Alistair Simpson, TPC 666; Bob Miller JWS 165.

The Best RM voted by the members present was FFV 89. And the distance Award was presented to Simon Hill. There was an Inter-club Gymkhana where the various Clubs competed against each other. Alistair, Eric and Fred represented the club, but were eliminated by the Morris Minors!

In January 1987 Bob Miller received a letter from Jim Dunbar enquiring about starting an RM Club meeting in the Tayside / North Fife Area. Then on May 2nd and 3rd, the Mallard Hotel at Gullane East Lothian was the venue for the 1987 weekend event. Approximately ten members spent an enjoyable Saturday evening watching two videos of the Bromley Pageant of Motoring and the Culzean Classic Car Show. This was followed by a quiz, compiled by Heather Miller, which was won by Neil and Cath Ross.

On the Sunday, with the arrival of some more members, the Rileys set out for the Myreton Motor Museum followed by a visit to East Fortune and the Aircraft Museum. After a Bar Lunch back at the Mallard, the final port of call was Lennoxlove Castle at Haddington where, after a tour of the Castle, there was the presentation of the prizes.

Members and cars present at Lennoxlove were: Jim Hastings, RPC 63; Bernie Walker, MTR13; Fred Carss, FFV 89; Eric Stewart, BYJ 192; Alistair Simpson, TPC 666; Simon Hill, 2380PK; Bob Miller JWS 165; John Douglas NVM 720; Alan Jones 468 DRF. Members in Moderns were Neil Ross, Ronnie Dickson, Ian Allen, and Doug Thurston. The car voted Best Present was JWS 165, and Simon Hill won the Distance Award for the second successive year, with 167 miles from Stranraer.

Again the club attended the Doune Classic Weekend in August 1987. This time there were not as many cars attending: Fred Carss, FFV 89; Patrick Whitty JDL 213; Eric Stewart, BYJ 192;

John Douglas NVM 720; Bob Miller JWS 165;

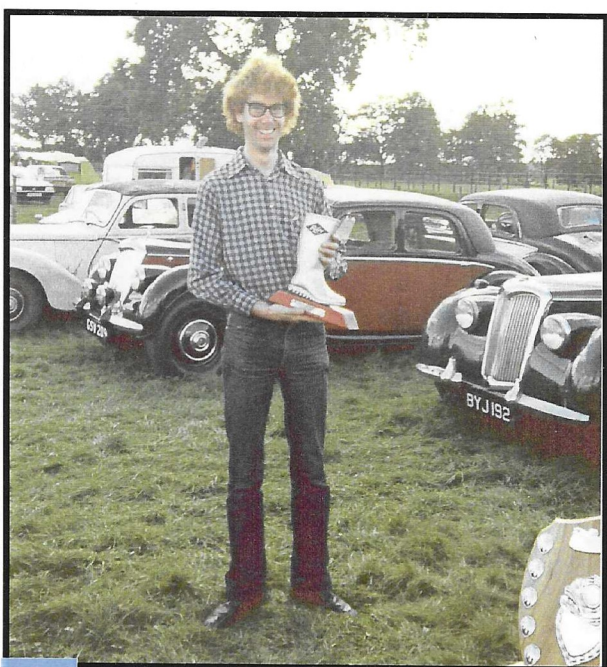
Duncan Whyte, FJG 565.

JWS 165 was voted the Best Car.

John Douglas won the Distance award.

A new trophy had been made and presented by Fred Carss; it was called the Mucky Boot Award and was presented to the owner of the car judged to have the muckiest boot. Patrick Whitty's JDL 213 was the first recipient.

Bob Miller had contacted Jim Dunbar and Doug Thurston about having a meeting later in 1987 to discuss the next year's outings and share ideas on how to make our club better. This took place at the Waverley Hotel, Perth in November. This meeting was the first between the three areas, Aberdeen, Tayside and the South-West. It was very profitable, and Jim Dunbar agreed to organise the first Joint outing to Stirling on 4th and 5th June 1988.

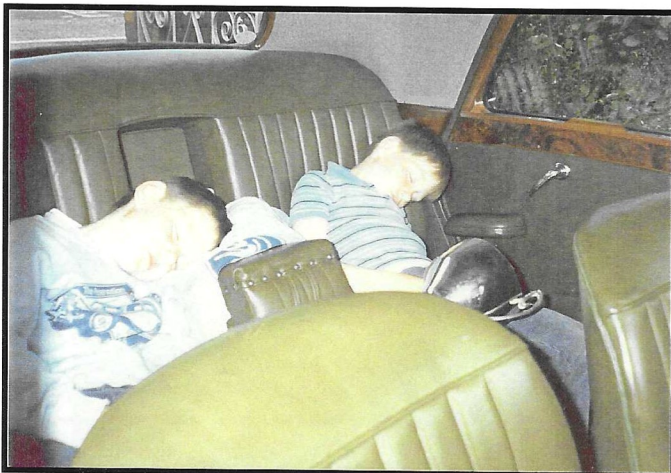
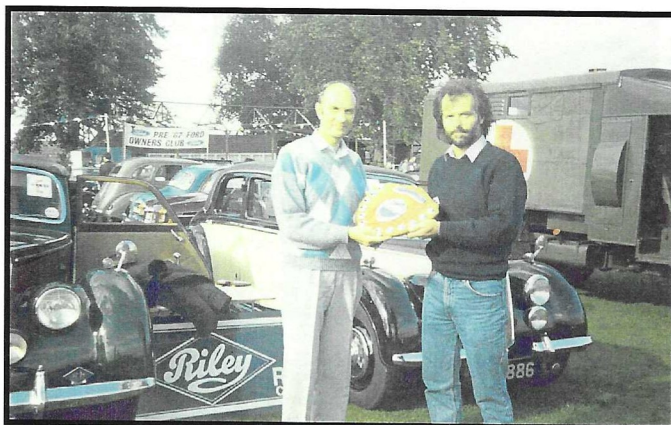


1988 was the first year we attended the Ingliston Classic Car Show at the Royal Highland Showground, Edinburgh.

Four cars attended on the RM Club Stand:-

- Lyndsay Walton, 1½ litre LYB 886,
- Andy Cramb, 1½ litre DSU 988
- Ian Binnie, 1½ litre MUS 576, and
- Bob Miller JWS 165.

Lyndsay Walton won the Best Car shield and Bob Miller won the Distance Award.



In June, members of the South-East Area attended the first of the joint area (Scottish National) weekends based at Stirling University. On the Sunday, Fred Carss won the T&CC Trophy for the Best RM, and the Carss boys slept most of the way home.

The **1989** Ingliston Show was on 7th May, 5 cars attended:-

Ian Binnie, MUS 576; Fred Carss, FFV 89; Alasdair Gunn, LOW 491; Bob Miller, JWS 165; and Keith Rhodes, LYB 886. Bob Miller won the Shield and also the Distance Award.

The Carss boys won the prize for spotting the "Other" Riley – a Dinky model.

Members once again attended the second National Rally held in Callander in early June. In fact the Saturday evening entertainment had been arranged by S-W members, Fred and Elspeth Carss. This was a deviously devised version of Trivial Pursuit.

On the 5th November we had our annual meeting at Perth to arrange dates for the 1990 outings. Eight attended:- Lachlan & Molly Gray, Eric & Margaret Stewart, Doug Thurston, Bob Miller, Jim Dunbar and Leslie Duncan, who presented Jim with the RM Club's "75th Anniversary Trophy" for all his hard work organising our rallies in the past years.





The Christmas dinner was a great success at the Silverburn in December. An excellent meal was enjoyed by those attending.

The story is once again taken up by the Editor:

In 1990 apart from organising a club stand at Ingliston Car Show, the South West Area was having a lean time with attendances at the Silverburn dwindling to an all-time low. Despite this, the South-West Area was represented at the third Scottish National Rally based at Kinfauns Castle, near Perth.

There was such a poor response to the Christmas Dinner that it was cancelled, and finally, and with obvious reluctance after a period of twenty years, it was decided to suspend the monthly meetings there.

However, it was not long before Bob was back in print in the March 1991

R.Memoranda reporting that the defunct Silverburn meeting was now the Fenwick Hotel meeting.

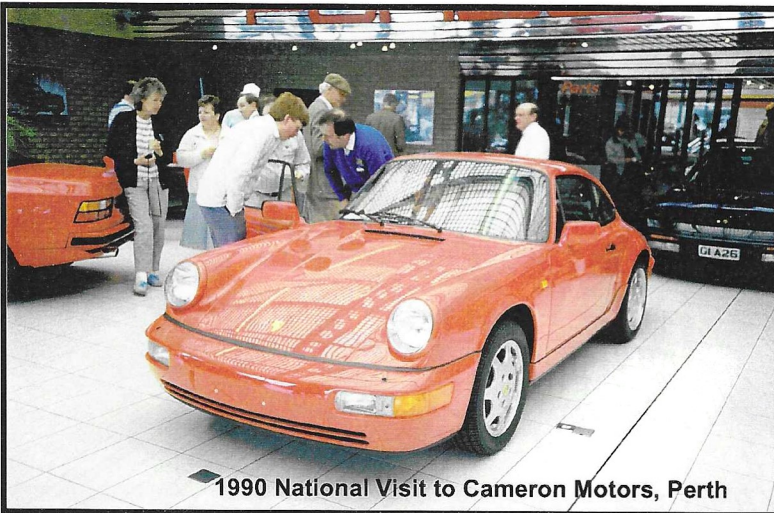
Bob's enthusiasm for the marque was again on display as he told of his latest acquisition, a '56 Pathfinder TSM 777.

The new venue for the meeting proved a success with six members attending the first meeting, seven at the second and even two Register members at the third. May found most of them attending the Scottish National Rally held at Arrochar that included a boat trip on Loch Lomond.

September 1991 brought the auspicious meeting at the Marine Hotel, Rosemarkie, when it was decided that SRE should be formed, and later in December the inaugural meeting was held at the Glencarse Hotel, near Perth, at which Bob was appointed to the Committee as RM Club Representative, being the Scottish Area Secretary of that organisation.

From this photo of the Committee winding up the Inaugural meeting, one might think that the burden of Office was already starting to show on the newly-elected Officers!

Throughout 1992, the early monthly meetings at the Fenwick Hotel continued with an average of six people attending. A notable new addition to the group was the Roadster bought from America, sight unseen, by Jim Watson from Airdrie.



1990 National Visit to Cameron Motors, Perth

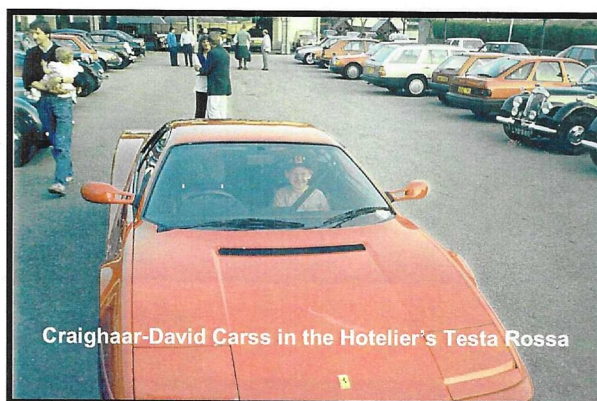


Gordon McAllan also received a first mention by Bob in *R.Memoranda*, as a Riley Register member with a Monaco.

The group mounted a club stand at the Scottish National Vintage and Classic Show at Ingliston in May, and later that same month, attended the Scottish National Riley Rally at the Craighaar Hotel, Stoneywood, near Aberdeen, where South-West member, Fred Carss, won the award for the Best RM. Son David's treat was however even more precious



Jim and Isobel Watson, in the aforementioned Roadster, made it up to the *Northern Weekend* at Rosemarkie in September as did Bob, along with vast quantities of RM Club Regalia.



Craighaar-David Carss in the Hotelier's Testa Rossa



1993 was a notable year for the group as it was their turn to host the SRE National Riley Rally. They had decided on Troon as the venue, with the South Beach Hotel as the base.

The Rally went smoothly and congratulations were recorded in the *SRE Newsletter* from Chairman Jim to Bob and Gordon and the rest of the team for "a great Scottish National Rally."



Awards at Culzean Country Park



Bus run stop at Nardini's of Largs

The meetings during the summer months continued, attended by the select band of Bob, Alistair Stalker, John Burgess and Hamish Cummings, however in August the group enjoyed an

"excellent bar-be-cue at John and Janet Burgess' farm which provided an excellent venue with his large barn very accommodating".

In November the group enjoyed a video night arranged by Bob, then topped this off with a Christmas Dinner at the Laigh Milton Mill, near Kilmarnock where ten members spent a "convivial evening".

Bob's final car act of the year was a sixteen hour journey to Wales on the 28 December to acquire a '69 Kestrel for his daughter. The lengths some people will go to make a girl happy! What a good Dad Bob Miller is!

At the beginning of **1994** Bob was noticeably absent from the *SRE Newsletter* but the reason became all too clear when it was reported in the May *Newsletter* that Bob had seemingly been spotted on TV after his football team had lost the semi-final match at Hampden! *(Well there is a kind of tenuous link with Rileys which allows the writer to include this story – when Bob attends his beloved football matches he does so with his friend Eddie Riley.)*

May found some of the group attending the 1994 Scottish National Rally, this year held in Kelso, where the attenders enjoyed the first civic reception to be held in their honour. One of the Runs visited the Jim Clark Memorial House in Duns, and Bob Miller won the Lynx Cup in the Gymkhana.



Bob took to print in the June edition of the *R.Memoranda* positively overjoyed by the advent of new members to the group. The June meeting had been attended by eleven members plus two visitors, both Healey owners. John Burgess' recent acquisition of a Sunbronze RMB was much admired. The same edition of *R.Memoranda* carried, as its cover picture, a photo of Alistair Stalker's RM GSV 831, taken outside Robert Burn's cottage in Alloway.



Also in June, Alistair held a deck chair party at his home in Maybole and some of the group attended the Culzean Castle Show where John Burgess won his class with his RMB DAG 217. In all, the Area managed to get five Rileys to the show.

To finish the year 1994 in style there was a rerun of the Christmas Dinner at Laigh Milton Mill where a good time was had by all.

Early in **1995**, the area was pleased to welcome back Fred and Elspeth Carss, long time members of the RM Club and SRE, to the area meetings.

Unfortunately Fred's business commitments had prevented him from attending the meetings, although Fred and Elspeth usually managed to get to the National Rallies. Bob was pleased to sell Fred his BMC Kestrel. Members of the group attended the Scottish National Rally at Dundee where South-West member, Fred Carss again won an award, this time the Stuart Richie Salver for the best Scottish car. The Area was well represented at the meal on the Saturday evening, which was held on board the Frigate *Unicorn*.



The area again had an "unofficial" club stand at Culzean Castle where once again five RMs, this time accompanied by a 1.5, presented a fine display. A photo of the event even made it into the *R.Memoranda* where the cars were referred to as a "veritable clan" of Rileys.



The Area was represented at the '95 North-East Weekend, held in Rosemarkie, where they took part in the Run to Ullapool, to top up the Atlantic Ocean with a litre of water from the North Sea.

In October at the SRE AGM Bob was awarded the Elizabeth Skelly Cup in recognition of his many years of service to Rileying in Scotland and in November the group was pleased to welcome Leslie Duncan, the RM Club Treasurer, to their meeting.

In **1996**, the South West Area started the year by celebrating a slightly late Christmas Dinner, this time held at the Fenwick Hotel and in January the group decided to split themselves in half.

Jim Watson, due to driving problems, was finding it hard to get over to the Fenwick Hotel in the winter months so he proposed to arrange a meeting in the Newhouse Hotel in North Lanark. He called this the Kilmarnock Extension and the first meeting took place on 10 Jan 1996.



The Fenwick meeting continued with slightly depleted numbers, February having four people and one Riley, Doug McKenzie's spatted RME, UTC 13.

The March meeting was attended by the Burgesses, Gordon McAllan and Bob and the meeting was given over to much conversation about the Burgesses recent purchase of a 1928 Bean Tourer.

In April, the Newhousers once again rejoined the Fenwickers, the better weather making the trip over Fenwick Moor a more attractive proposition.

In May, the group went off for a run to Largs in a convoy consisting of three RMs, a Triumph Herald Convertible, an Austin Ascot Cabriolet, a Morris Minor and a few moderns. (and Uncle Tom Cobley and all.....)

In the same month some members of the South-West Area took part in a run to New Lanark where each car took a deaf child and a helper from Glasgow to New Lanark and back to Glasgow.



In June, Bob was extolling the fact that there were ten folk at the meeting and perhaps the good things happening in the area was the necessary spur to start him working on the RME after it had lain dormant for a year. As the Editor of the *SRE Newsletter* remarked:

"I knew it wouldn't be long before the RM-itis would smite ... again!"

In July, Mario Padreschi and John Burgess were flying the club flag at the Eglinton Rally, and in August, the area again mounted a club stand at Culzean with five Rileys on display.

The meeting at Fenwick was still attracting ten members in October, when new member Bob Russell joined. He had bought the ex-Noel Stone RMA, LKV 791.

The November 1996 meeting touched on the subject of the upcoming National that the area would be hosting in 1998. However even that onerous task was not allowed to dampen the spirits of the members who attended the slightly late Christmas Dinner, which took place at the Fenwick Hotel on 13 January 1997. They did eat turkey and plum pudding but it is perhaps surprising that haggis and neeps did not feature on the menu in that month and in that locality.

Only three members were able to attend the meeting in February **1997**, Hamish Cummings, Gordon McAllan and Bob. Alistair Stalker had flu and even Bob was having trouble with his "Chaotic" nerve and worse still for John Burgess who had to have major surgery on his back, which he had injured in a riding accident.

This year Bob's Rileyng had to take second billing while Bob's first love, his football team, Kilmarnock, won the Scottish FA Cup in May, for the first time in 37 years. Bob even missed the SRE National Rally due to the football. Such love.....

Nevertheless the honour of the South-West Area was upheld by the Watsons, the Russells, the Burgesses and the Nicholsons who all attended the Aberdeen event based at the Marriott Hotel, Dyce.

In October, the area meeting was moved to the first Monday of the month to avoid clashing with another meeting that was being held at the Fenwick Hotel. After all there is hardly any time for social chit-chat when one has a National Rally to organise.

In **1998** the annual dinner was even later and so could hardly be called a Christmas affair at all. It was held at the beginning of February at the Struther Farm House Hotel in Dunlop where an excellent dinner was enjoyed by all eleven attendees.

The monthly meetings were mostly given over to finalising the details of the Strathaven Rally and applications were arriving from all over Britain, Northern Ireland and Eire. The organisers were slightly concerned by the slow take-up of people wishing to race round the Kames Sprint Circuit. However by May the group was pleased to announce that there was notice of fifty cars intending to attend the Rally.

The event, when it arrived, was a great success, even blessed with good weather.

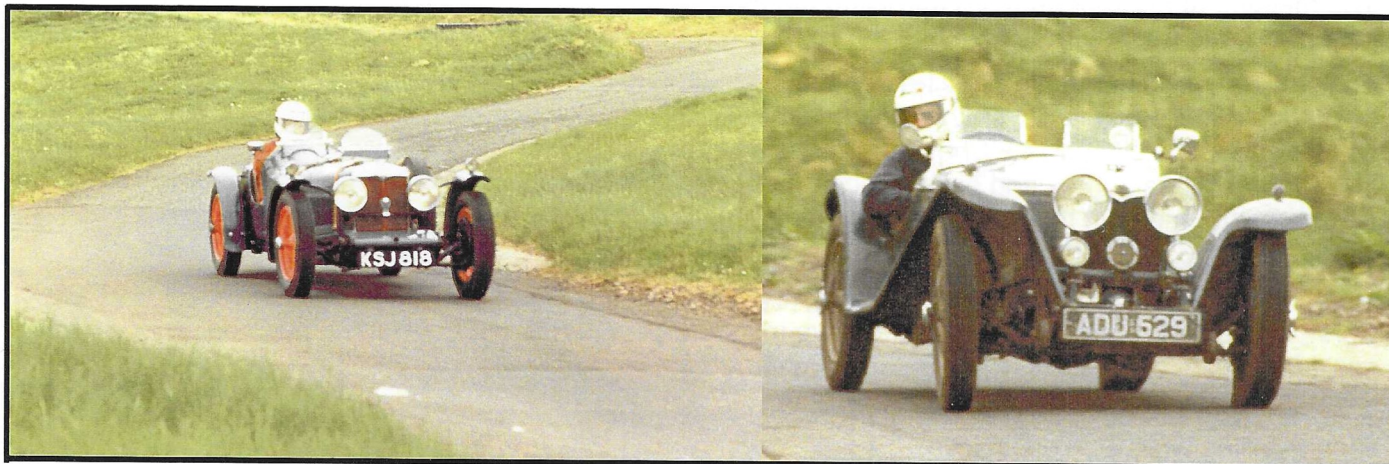
A report of the line up in the George Allan Park made it into the *Avondale Standard*, the local paper.

The visit to New Lanark and Wanlockhead proved interesting and enjoyable but the Kames Sprint Track finally attracted a lot of attention from the entrants.

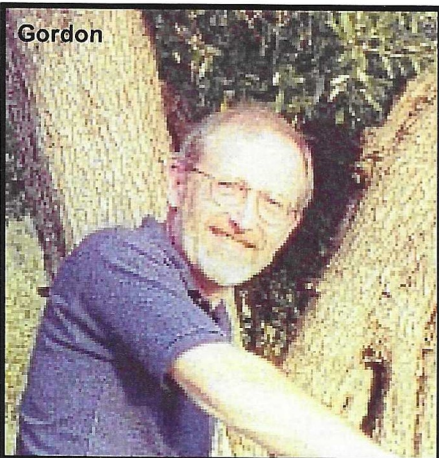
Dyce National—Castle Fraser



The visit to the Kames Sprint Track provided those drivers, who so sportingly obliged the organisers by throwing their precious vehicles round the track, with some really magic motoring experiences.



More of the fine field from the Strathaven Rally:



In August 1998, Duncan Whyte and Bob enjoyed an “excellent evening on our own” as others were still on holiday. The Culzean Castle Show that year again attracted Bob. This was the sixteenth time this event had been run and Bob had attended every one, even winning his class one year with “Jaws”.

The *Newsletter* in November included a report from Bob commending Gordon McAllan’s bravery in accepting the job of *Newsletter* Editor.

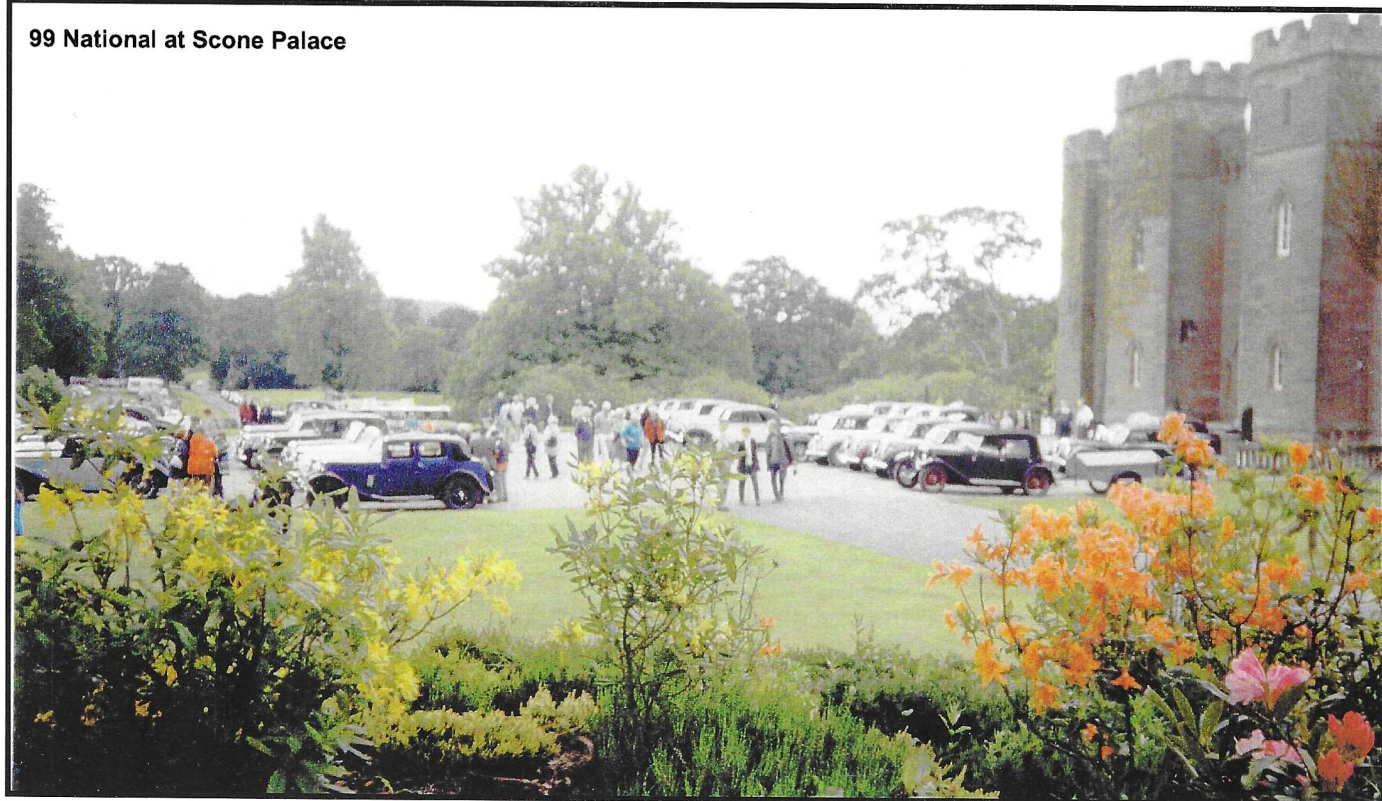
The December meeting included a Rover enthusiast who turned up on the wrong night but Duncan, Gordon and Bob still made him welcome, after all his car did start with an “R”. (*Thinks: would a Robin Reliant enthusiast be welcomed or would this be stretching things too far?*)

In January 1999, a happy band consisting of the Carsses, the McAllans, the Stalkers, the Whytes, Gerrard O’Hare and the Millers all celebrated the “Now-traditional January Christmas Dinner” at the Fenwick Hotel.

February found Gerrard, Gordon and Bob discussing RM woodwork, unleaded petrol and all, and the next meeting was much the same with Bob describing the meeting as “small but perfectly formed”. He had noticed a reference to former RM Club Chairman, Neil Ross, having attended a meeting in England, so Bob was urging the Edinburgh group to try to involve Neil in Scottish Riley affairs again.

The Scottish National Rally again attracted members of the South-West Area and Jack Nicholson won the Stuart Ritchie Salver for the Best Scottish Car with his 1936 Merlin.

99 National at Scone Palace



The attendances at Fenwick had never been of a very high number but the June meeting fell to an all time low when Bob seems to have spent the evening talking to himself. *One sometimes wonders....*

After mentioning Bob's perfect attendance at the Culzean Castle Show over the past sixteen years wouldn't you know, the very next year, there he was, or rather, was not. Bob was Rileyless so did not attend. However George McRoberts managed to uphold the honour of the Riley marque.

In August, the attendance at the meeting increased by 100% when Gordon kept Bob company and stopped him talking to himself. However the effect of spending too much time in hotels on his own was still obvious when Bob ended his report in the Newsletter with some strong words.

"I expect a full parade at our next get together or Questions Will Be Asked."

It is always asking for trouble when one issues proclamations like that, because when Gordon turned up for the September meeting there was no Bob! Neither could he find any other Riley folk so Gordon, who did not relish holding a meeting with himself, went home. But wouldn't you know it, somewhere else in the same hotel; Fred, Elspeth, Gerrard and Duncan were all happily enjoying a meeting of the South West Area enthusiasts, sans Bob, sans Gordon.

In his September report in the Newsletter Bob proposed that the Fenwick members should join up with the Newhouse members in an attempt to bolster both groups and having received no opposition to his suggestion the two groups re-amalgamated at Newhouse in November 1999.

Meanwhile what had been happening at the Newhouse Hotel meetings?

The first meeting at the Newhouse Hotel, North Lanark, was held on 10 January **1996**. Jim Watson called this meeting the "Kilmarnock Extension" and Jim and Isobel were joined by Andrew Simpson. Although it was a rather small gathering, they all enjoyed the meeting with Jim reporting in the Newsletter:

".... I do not ever remember talking as much in such a short time before.."



The reason for Jim starting the meeting at Newhouse was because of the difficulties he was experiencing when driving due to his back problems.

John Burgess was also suffering with back problems

(and just look at what happened to Jack Nicholson....)

Perhaps this Area should present prospective members with a Health Warning!

The new group met again in February and March before rejoining the Fenwickers in April, then after the summer, the group moved back to Newhouse in November when Jim and Isobel were joined by Fred and Elspeth Carss, Bob Miller and Ian Allan.

The *Newsletter* Editor had asked in the November issue if Isobel's Triumph Herald had been the car named as the runner-up in the "RM" Open Class at the Centenary Rally in 1996, and Jim was able to answer in the affirmative in the December edition. Jim also reported on the Strathclyde meeting where Bob Russell had joined the Watsons.

The group was obviously having problems with what to call the meeting. It had started off as the *Kilmarnock Extension* and then became the *West Centre (Strathclyde)* before finally settling on the *Strathclyde Area*. They were still awaiting the arrival of a Riley but perhaps with all the salt on the roads, at that time of year, the Riley owners were simply being prudent.

The January 1997 issue of the *Newsletter* contained a ditty penned by Jim on the theme of people attending the Newhouse meeting:

Let's see who was at the meeting 'besides' us.

There was Robert Russell to the far left

(With beer quaffing action deceptively deft)

And Isobel Watson to the far right

So far we all are enjoying the night.

In the middle was Ian Allan.

Next to me was David Aitchings

And dear old Gordon McRobbie.

(Exceedingly tall, with back to the wall,

Stood our village bobbie.)

Soon I will tell you a riddle, hey diddle diddle,

I'm Jim in the middle playing the fiddle.

And that was all the folk at the meeting

So I'm off home now to see what's for eating.

It certainly was a novel way of recording the members' names. More power to his elbow, say I, if not to his fiddle.

Jim added that: "Robbie Burns never wrote this. But at least I stay near to where he was born."

February was a quiet night enjoyed by only two, and March was much the same with more apologies than attenders, before it was time to return to the Fenwick Hotel for the summer months.

After the seasonal shift back to Fenwick, meetings resumed in October, back at the Newhouse Hotel. Although smallish numbers prevailed the meetings were proving enjoyable, and Jim was very busy organising interesting places to visit over the early months of the year, however the Newhouse & Fenwick group were once again reunited when celebrating their 1997 Christmas dinner at the Struther Farm House Hotel.

In 1998, Jim arranged a visit to an engine reconditioner for February, and for March, to a cabinet maker who worked in ash and oak. In April there was a change of Scribe for the Strathclyde area. The new incumbent was John Burgess, who reported on the group's run to Ratho. John and Janet, Jack and June Nicholson and Jim and Isobel Watson drove to Newmains through West Calder where they were joined by Edinburgh members, Frank Cooper and Frank and Betty Hutson, for lunch at the Bridge Inn, Ratho.

This year, the group continued at Newhouse for the summer season, with a select few gathering at the Hotel before adjourning to the Watson's house to enjoy the newly installed central Heating. (*Well, it is Scotland, after all!*)

The July meeting was attended by eight people and had two new vehicles to admire: Robert Russell's RM and Jack Nicholson's Merlin. Alexander Simpson made his first appearance at the meeting, so new things all round.

Some of the group helped out a local primary school in the Carluke Town Carnival, where the cars were admired and they received good coverage in the local press.

"John Burgess from Symington had a 1949 2.5 litre Riley saloon. The car is in original condition and has had only three owners. Jim Watson was there with a 1932 Hillman Minx, the oldest and only one of its kind still being driven. Jack Nicholson from Glenboig had a 1936 Riley Merlin which was used in the BBC series *"The Vital Spark"* and in STV's *"Dr Finlay"*

There was a select gathering again in July, with much talk about Jim's recently acquired Merlin (*the ex-Fergus McBride car*).

In August, talk centred on John Burgess' troubles with RM radiators, and this topic appeared again in the Strathclyde Area News even though John had not been able to attend the September meeting where Jim Hunter, Jim Watson and Ian Allan discussed Riley matters.

Jim Watson, ever the innovator, decided to experiment with meetings on Sunday afternoons hoping for:

"the benefit of daylight to travel in, freedom to go runs in good weather, and perhaps less interference with the strains of daily work."

The first afternoon meeting on 22 November 1998 allowed for a trip to the Summerlee Heritage Centre, the Industrial Museum in Coatbridge. Then on 20 December the group returned to the same Museum. A Merlin, an RMA, two RBMs and a "newer motor" took part, and new members, John Morgan and his son, were welcomed on this very enjoyable trip.



The Area held its first post-Christmas Lunch where 17 members and friends met at the New Lanark Hotel. John was able to report in the January **1999** Newsletter that:

"This Sunday thing seems to be working. Folk are keen to attend, especially during the gloom of winter, when an evening expedition may not fill one with enthusiasm."

(This comment makes one wonder if other groups might not have followed suit, or might even yet)

The bad weather in February meant that the proposed run to Ratho had to be put off till another time, however, the happy eightsome stayed put at Newhouse, and enjoyed a good lunch with accompanying good chat.

The March meeting had to be cancelled, no, not because of inclement weather, rather from the effects of it – 'flu had laid low both of the main organisers for this meeting, John and Janet Burgess. The April meeting was not reported, but it might have been a run to Ratho or to Alexandria or wherever!

In May, the Area meetings reverted to evenings, but due, perhaps, to the Bank Holiday, numbers were down. Nevertheless, as John wrote: "We had an enjoyable evening with warm sunshine and cool beer." Members also attended the National in Pitlochry later that month.



In June, John Morgan's RMB, the Burgess RMB, the Watson Herald and Bob Russell's modern, all went for a run, led by "Sherpa Watson through the wilds of North Lanarkshire", followed by chat and refreshments provided by the Watsons.

This was the end of season meeting for the Area when the members went off on summer adventures.

The Watsons, Burgesses and Morgans all went to the Cumbria Steam Gathering then the Morgans took their RM to North Wales and had an adventure that ended with them camping in the Kirby's field while the two Johns worked to repair the RMB. The repair proved only partially complete, as the Morgans needed the help of the Breakdown Assistance Service to return them home.

September found the Group once more ensconced at Newhouse and enjoying a "pleasant evening of relaxing chat"

Early in October, the meetings again became afternoon events where the Nicholsons, Watsons, and Burgesses were joined by Gordon McAllan and also Thomas Gough, all the way from Ballindalloch.

There was a discussion about Bob's suggested amalgamation of the Fenwick and Newhouse meetings, which was unanimously supported and then some of the group went for a drive to the foot of the Campsies and back to Carronbridge hotel for Tea.

In November 1999, the two meetings were re-united once again, this time under the Strathclyde banner, with John Burgess continuing as Area Scribe. The weather was not too good, so the run was postponed. There were nine people at the meeting, even though three Riley wives were absent due to ill health.

Smaller numbers attended the December meeting due to inclement weather.

In January **2000**, the group swelled to 25 for their splendid late Christmas lunch at the New Lanark Mill Hotel, though the organiser John Burgess and his wife Janet were absent. John's health problems unfortunately precluded their attendance. Lockhart Jackson and John Morgan brought their RMs to the party, and Duncan Whyte and his son came in the 9 Special. Gordon McAllan, the Newsletter Editor, expressed the thanks of the group attending to John Burgess for having arranged the "splendid friendly occasion", and sent their best wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

In February, the combined Areas met again, when the programme was: lunch at the Newhouse Hotel, then a drive to Ratho Bridge Inn and Canal Centre, followed by a walk along the Canal with refreshments at the Bridge Inn before heading home

The Autojumble at Biggar, followed by afternoon tea at the Burgess home, was only marred for John when the engine of his RMB seized on the way home from the March meeting. Eleven people took part in the event, and enjoyed diagnostic chat aimed to aid, or maybe just to confuse, John.

April brought the last of the Sunday afternoon meetings, when fourteen people attended in an assortment of vehicles: a Merlin, an RMB, a Herald, two Humbers and three moderns.

Jim Watson led this motley band from Newhouse to Lennoxton, Campsie Fells and Fintry to Carronbridge Hotel where there was a stop for refreshments. On again to Kilsyth then back home.

The first "Back at the Hotel" evening meeting in May was poorly attended, leading to discussion on changing the Meeting Night, so in June, the Meeting was moved to the third Wednesday, when 6 people attended, John Morgan being the only member "Properly Dressed" with his RMB.

This year's Scottish National Rally in Eddleston was well attended by members of the South-West Area. Amongst others were Bob Miller, Gordon McAllan, Jack Nicholson, Duncan Whyte, John Burgess and Gerrard O'Hare.

The Morgans and the Burgesses had recently returned from taking part in the Classic Car Show in Shetland, where they had enjoyed themselves greatly, viewing 150 cars, 130 motorbikes, 30 tractors and several buses and lorries.



The July meeting was graced by 9 people, and off they went for a run to Linlithgow Palace. On arriving there, they were met by local resident, and South-East Area member, Frank Cooper who was taking part in the *Linlithgow Scotch Hop* programme of Scottish Country dancing.

The final evening meeting of the season was spent in the Newhouse Hotel with the Watsons, the Burgesses and Gordon McAllan discussing ongoing Riley problems, among other things.



The first afternoon meeting of the year, although having the inauspicious number (13) of participants, proved to be a good start to the "winter touring programme". Again a motley assortment of vehicles participated, including a Merlin, a Herald, a Humber Sceptre, an MG Midget, a Bean and a modern. The route followed, all 55 miles of it, was from Newhouse to Dawyck Botanic Gardens, then on to Cornhill for afternoon tea.

In November, a happy group of six took off

"to find the familiar and favourite route up the face of the Campsie Fells and over to Carronbridge for the obligatory and welcome Tea stop."



The thing that strikes the Editor about this group, more than anything else, is their innate ability to find interesting places to visit and even more, their innate ability to find good food. The Editor had thought that Margaret Stewart, of the Tayside Area, held the Gold medal in that event. It seems she has healthy competition!

The final meeting of the year 2000 started with a pleasant lunch at the Newhouse Hotel with chat, followed by a trip to the Watson's home to view a video of the Shetland Classic Car Show, and to peruse copies of Veteran and Vintage magazines of the fifties and sixties. The final act of this Millennium year was - guess what? To enjoy even more of Isobel's refreshments. (See what I mean?)



The History of the South-West Area

by

Bob Miller

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 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
The History of the Central Area	by Mike Cartney

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