



Happy Birthday To An Icon

(Words And Pictures By Ian Culbert)



Sixty years ago British car company, Rover, unveiled a vehicle that was to become an icon and be respected the world over for its robust, go anywhere design. That vehicle was the Land Rover and sixty years later it is still a vehicle associated with country life and the farming community.

It is testament to the original concept that it is reported that 65% of all Land Rovers ever built are still in use. One reason for this is the number of Land Rover enthusiasts around the world who spend their spare time restoring and repairing these vehicles, usually using second-hand parts. Some might say this makes the Land Rover one of the most environmentally friendly vehicles on the road today when you consider the energy and resources required to build a modern vehicle with limited lifespan!

Just over 10 years ago a small group of Northern Ireland Land Rover enthusiasts got together and formed the Northern Ireland Land Rover Club. The initial aim of the Club was to "provide Land Rover owners with the opportunity to use their vehicles in an "off-road" environment, provide a Forum for discussion and provide members with information, advice and assistance on matters connected with motor sport and their vehicles."

From these humble beginnings the Club has gone from strength to strength and now has well over 100 members. The Club still fulfills the original aims of the founding fathers but in addition the Club now takes part in various static shows to provide an opportunity for members to display their vehicles, they have arranged various discounts for members through the Club's "Preferred Supplier Scheme", they arrange social events for members and their friends and families, and hold events in support of local charities.

As "green lanes" do not exist in Northern Ireland the Club has an arrangement the Forestry Service and private land owners to use their land. In return the Club is happy to

carry out repairs to the land and hold "clean up" days. A lot of this work in the past has included recovering abandoned vehicles from the Province's forests. The Club is always on the look out for new sites. This could be a gorse covered field, a disused quarry, a rocky hillside, a muddy bog or area of woodland. Everything will be considered and the rougher the land the better! The good news for land owners, in these days of tight margins, is the Club is prepared to pay for the use of suitable land. All events are covered by full MSA liability insurance.

For 60 years the Land Rover has been a common sight on farms throughout the Province and the Northern Ireland Land Rover Club are delighted to have been asked to attend the Ballymena Show to celebrate Land Rover's birthday with a display of vehicles. As well as displaying various models of Land Rover the Club members will also be providing information on the Club's nominated charity of the year, the Ireland Air Ambulance appeal.

Ian Culbert, Chairman of NILRC, says "By the nature of our hobby we spend time in some of the most remote and inaccessible areas of the Province and our members felt that the Ireland Air Ambulance appeal was something that we could get behind and offer our support". The Ireland Air Ambulance appeal is a charity funded entirely by donations and appeal staff will be on the NILRC stand to provide an insight into the work of this charity. Ian went on to say "the proposed air ambulance is something that will benefit the whole community and in particular those living and working in the more remote areas of the Province"

If you would like to find out more about the Northern Ireland Land Rover Club and celebrate this milestone in the life of a design icon please visit us at the Ballymena Show or have a look at the Club's website www.landover-club.com

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