

FEBRUARY 19th 1983. CENTRAL TV, OVERLANDER LTD., AND THE NEW ONE TEN LAND ROVER

Land Rovers, driven by enthusiastic owners started converging on Eastnor Castle from all over England many hours before the event was due to start -some had travelled through the night -others had brought their caravans and tents.

Eastnor, near Ledbury, Herefordshire, is one of the places where Land Rover Ltd. test their many varieties of experimental and production vehicles -and this was the planned venue of about 300 Land Rovers for the Central TV documentary...with hints thrown out that the ONE TEN might be there .

Overlander Ltd excelled themselves in their publicity and arrangements in that some 700 Land Rovers of all ages were booked to arrive from 8am onwards-- in fact they were still streaming in at 12 noon. These vJere vehicles ranging from bog-standard Series 2' s and 3's, street machine V8 Lightweights manfully bearing up under massive paintjobs -the V8 Centaur half track was there -with a smattering of triple axle LWB's, a clutch of fire tenders, a throaty lot of roadworthy trials machines and some prettified christmas tree lookalikes laden with chrome and lights.

And, of course, many ordinary well-used and some restored Series 1's. ..about 200 of them in fact. Pre-production R29 was there, as well as 2 SO" Station Wagons and Brian Carvey's immaculate 80" + Brockhouse trailer full of contemporary milk churns - to say nothing of Ian Sparkes very smart Rolls B40 81" and an elegant Army Rolls 81" saluting Land Rover.

Needless to say, the vagaries of filming meant some long cold waits, for it was a frosty and foggy morning, but eventually we were all marshalled up to the top of a nice steep slope, and the helicopter prepared to take off with a film crew. The Land Rovers were lined up along a front which seemed to stretch away into the distance, and were 6 or 8 deep. All the drivers were told what the yellow and red gear knobs were for - and how to lock the free-heel hubs -YES! some of the drivers really didn't know!, and we were told to proceed when signalled at 5 -15 MPH in low ratio second...the first great row in unison, followed at 20 foot intervals by the rows behind. If we approached a tree (a minor hazard) we were to stop and follow on behind when the others had gone past. Oh, the innocence of the film world.

I'd happened to switch the radio on while waiting -not having a CB to listen in to the plans - and promptly found music of the sort beloved by film-makers...it was in fact the brisk bits of the March to the Scaffold from Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique (just the thing for the arrival of the 5th Cavalry in the nick of time.)...and suddenly the flags dropped, and we were off .

Now, it is rumoured that your average V8 Lightweight trials driver may only have one pedal - the loud one, on the far right - and anyway, he doesn't like anyone else inching ahead (did I say inching?), but the adrenalin surged and the orderly proceedings became a mad triumphant charge down this frosty slippery slope. I've never seen anything like it. Land Rovers for as far as the eye could see...on all sides...moving onward like a tidal wave - and the magnificent music swelled in our ears, and we felt like shouting for joy and satisfaction. If only we'd had a video camera and microphone.

That was the first take. It wasn't quite what the TV boys had planned, though they did film the 2 who sort of nose-dived into the ditch at the bottom.... I'm sorry, they were actually getting OUT of the ditch and a huge bottleneck formed at the base of the hill, so that those who could were advised to drive straight back up again...which sorted the men out from the boys with a lot of sliding, reversing and giving up. The combination of Series 1 and Range Rover tries couldn't be faulted, but there must have been some very red faces in that later Land Rover who gave up trying, and spun delightfully going down again .

The second time down we were told 2 MPH, so it was much more sedate, although there were some bent wings as people persisted in overriding the enging braking by using clutch and brake pedals -and by now the frost had gone from the surface making it near impossible to avoid other vehicles, no matter the experience of the driver. (However, I was very glad to be behind one 80" which seemed to accelerate briskly and diagonally downwards with all four wheels locked.) .