



I SAT in the LRM Range Rover at the top of a long, steep hill in the middle of a German Forest and looked down to where editor Richard Howell-Thomas was waiting with his camera.

A marshal approached and I powered the left hand window down: "Slowly, you go very slowly," he said.

I nodded and thought, if you want slowly mate let's see what this baby does in first low. It was auto so I just took my feet off everything and set off.

Slowly, wasn't in it, as I passed Richard I even took my hands off the wheel (there were ruts) and mimed falling asleep. Heck, I

by  
Frank Elson

*The huge turnout didn't daunt the organisers who kept everything moving with a good natured smile.*



# 30 YEARS OF ROVERING

In the Berlin forests, trees echo to the roar of the V8 and the clatter of the Tdi – it's birthday time

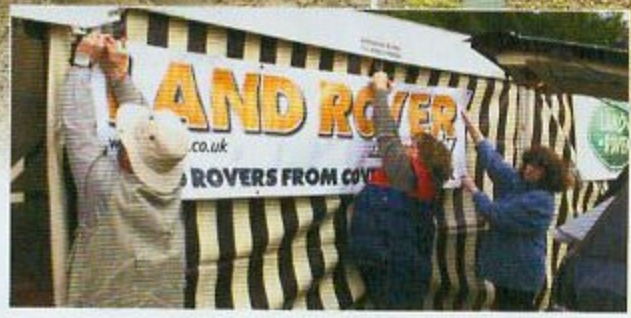
could have got out and walked down quicker.

We were having a play... er... evaluating the vehicle and the off-road course during our visit to the Deutscher Land Rover Club 30th Anniversary meeting. And we were having fun.

Apart from the off-roading and meeting people, going to a club event anywhere always holds that other gem, looking at Land Rovers and the things people do to them.

Dunno what I expected really in Germany – I have been before and I have come across German Land

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Rovers in other parts of the world – but, on our first morning, as we drove onto the rally ground and parked up almost my first sight was one of the nicest Land Rovers I have ever seen.

A white and red Ninety might not sound so brilliant, but Harald Seilkopf's vehicle was a real beauty. The pictures, to be published next month, will do a better job of it than I can, but trust me, this was a truly beautiful vehicle. All the detail was there and, as far as we could make out through the language barrier, it was all Harald's own work.

We – that is myself and the beloved Marjorie and Richard and Cathie Howell-Thomas – had to register, of course. At the registration tent we had a pleasant surprise, because Jochen Von Armin, the club newsletter editor and my contact, knew we were coming in one vehicle and had arranged for myself and Richard to register separately, so we each got a pretty aluminium rally plaque. That was a nice thought.

Standing there, in the rally field, I was in danger of spinning myself into the ground as I tried to get an eyeful of all the superbly turned out vehicles. This was the biggest event the club has had in its long history and you could see that members

had pulled out all the stops.

Because we were at Horstwalde which used to be in East Germany, the vast majority of members had travelled a long way as well, because most of them were from West Germany.

Some very nice officials found us a parking space (right by the beer tent, hmmm) and we relaxed and tried to get our bearings.

We were at one side of a four sided square containing just a few trade stands – I was looking for my old friend Thomas Rinkert who runs a Land Rover business in Germany but, although his company name was on a few signs as a sponsor, I didn't see him.

**old friends**

**LRM** is published just a handful of miles from Bury St Edmunds and, in the way of Land Rover things, we did meet up with another old friend, Alan Bishop from, yes, Bury St Edmunds. Alan was at Horstwalde with his wife Carol and their 130 camper as part of a little trip around Europe.

I first met Alan through Cliff Page who lives in Germany. Cliff and I met in Cologne a thousand years ago and have cemented a friendship through meetings at Land Rover shows and other places, so it was hardly a surprise when he

110, typically equipped in German style, tackles a downhill trial section as life goes on back at camp – the ubiquitous Tiffy Pearce-Smith leads his Venturers, left, and the field kitchen deals out the pork and beans, while the LRM team struggle with their knots. Would-be Land Rover owners, below, get to grips with an experimental paint job.

and his 'frau' Sabine turned up next.

Although many of our new German friends spoke English, it was useful having our own interpreters on hand.

Chatting, and looking at Land Rovers and trade stands is all very well of course, but Richard and I were getting a bit twitchy as we watched clean and pristine vehicles leaving the camping area only to return covered in sand and mud.

Yup, we went off-roading.

Out of the gate onto tarmac and just a few yards further up another turn into the entrance to the wood. Apparently this land has been a military vehicle and equipment testing ground from the days of the 1914-18 bit of bother, through the next big lot and had been taken over by the Russians during the Cold War. Today, therefore, it's a bit of an embarrassment to the government, but this is fine for off-roaders who can hire it. That explains, in fact, why the rally was taking place where it was.





▶ At the entrance we were given a numbered ticket to return when we left – it would actually be easy to lose someone out there, we're talking a lot of land.

What can I say about off-roading a brand new Range Rover? Not a lot actually as we're doing a separate article soon. Suffice it to say that it's a good job Richard and I were taking photographs otherwise we just might have come to blows: "I'll drive this bit." "No I'll drive." "No I will..." Get the picture?

#### ups and down

Up hill and down dale we followed the club members in all manner of Land Rovers on climbs and drops (like the one I started this piece with), plenty of rutted stuff although not a great deal of mud as the main ground material was sand, which drained quite well.

When it got dark and started to rain it was... er... time to get back as we're sort of alone. Oh, it's a tough job, but someone's got to do it.

Before that, however, sitting in a queue for one of the climbs I spotted a 101. Complete with roll cage it looked familiar. In *Six Stud* the magazine from the 101 Forward

*Andreas Pfau finds nothing to impede the progress of The Animal in the forests of Horstwalde. The Deutscher Club's trade stand area was made up of the usual and the downright unusual, and who can resist a freshly made crepe?*

Control Register, I am familiar with the writings of one Andreas Pfau, Deutscher Land Rover Club member and owner of 'The Animal' one of the most radically sorted 101s you could ever see – yes, there it was. I'm telling you, when it comes to Land Rovers it's a very small world.

In the beer tent that night (oh come on, where else?) there were no arguments about Cathie driving back to our hotel, (hee hee, German beer for me and Richard) with Sabine helping us out with the food ordering. Another nice touch here as the speeches were made in German and English. This wasn't just for us, as visitors were there from Italy, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, and English was the common language.

While the blokes stood around talking Land Rovers 'our' women, Cathie, Marjorie, Carol and Sabine got into a conversation with another lady. We naturally thought 'curtains' or similar, but found out later that it had been about this lady's husband's 'baby' a Series Land Rover he had rebuilt in Dresden. So, the next morning we went hunting on the campsite for 'baby'.



Now, just remember that Dresden used to be in the East, so getting parts for Land Rovers wasn't as easy as it might have been.

You will see the pictures of Holger Vogel's Series III Safari next month. Thirty five years ago this motor went to Australia as a new vehicle. It then went to South Africa and then to Berlin. About five years ago it had ended up in Dresden and was in a terrible state. Believe me, we've seen the photographs.

#### series III rebuild

Holger, a mechanic, bought it and started the rebuild. He's only just finished. Again through the language barrier, we managed to work out that he's had to rebuild and weld just about everything. Bash out body panels himself – you just don't order up new ones when you live in Dresden – and rebuild the 2.25 engine.

Calling a motor 'showroom condition' is a cliché but it wouldn't be hard to write that this motor is better than when it came out of the showroom.

More off-roading followed as we went up into the woods to watch the trials. Here I bumped into Joachim





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# IMPRESSIVE TEAM WORK

Despite an influx of unexpected guests, the Germans take it all in their stride

von Craunch who is the president of the Land Rovers of Switzerland club with his Ninety 'Lara Croft', so called by his kids 'cos he patches everything up with chequerplate.

Joachim showed me the damage to the front of his motor which he did at the Belgium Nationals; "I had a Swiss roll" he laughed.

More wandering the length and breadth of the campsite just ogling the machinery (the beloved Marjorie and I are in the market for another caravan, so that was interesting as well - pity she won't entertain an Eriba) and before we knew it, it was time to finish up and set out for home.

Eleven hours driving at a time, even in a Range Rover, takes it out of you a bit, so we are talking a pretty tired quartet.

However, the phrase goes 'tired but happy' and you can definitely say that. The people we met could not have been nicer. We saw some superb vehicles and we came away knowing that the international language of Land Rovers is alive and well, very safely in the hands of the Deutscher Land Rover Club.

Happy thirtieth birthday to them.

LRM

IT'S BEEN many years since I was in Germany - the last time should have been to the Frankfurt Motor Show in 2001, but Andy Egerton and I missed our early morning flight out. Fortuitously, as it happened, as the date was September 11. I had forgotten how friendly and welcoming the people are, and how much effort they put into making visitors feel welcome.

Our trip to the Deutscher Land Rover club was to be the first that any of us had made to what was once East Germany and a fascinating experience it proved to be. It's actually fifteen years since the reunification of the two Germanys and the Deutscher club had chosen national annual celebratory weekend to hold their birthday bash on the first weekend in October, some 30 miles south of Berlin.

by  
Richard  
Howell-Thomas

*The Horstwalde off-road test area provided an impressive array of off-road terrain which could catch out even well-prepared vehicles like the Camel Discovery. Neither the Freelander nor the two-door Feuerwehr (fire department) had any difficulty with a rocky ascent.*

The autobahns were choked with traffic and the journey through northern Europe took an excessively long time, but the effort was worth it. The club had chosen a beautiful and tranquil part of the country, but there was an ulterior motive behind that decision.

They'd set up camp in an open field opposite dense woodland, and it was amongst those trees that the real attraction lay. Hidden in the forest is what is now called an 'off-road, driver and integral safety research centre' - in other words an off-road proving ground - or, more importantly this weekend, some 1500 acres of woodland playground.

The Fahrbahn, Kraftfahrzeug und Verkehrs Versuchsanlage (FKV) at Horstwalde had thrown open the facility to the Deutsche club who had





laid out a series of trails through the forest to take in some testing, though entirely undamaging, terrain. Over the decades, this area has, as Paul Entwistle, Land Rover's PR man in Germany, told me been the proving and 'signing off' facility for all of Germany's military vehicles right up to the Eastern Bloc machines of the late twentieth century.

Today the facility has been converted into an industry testing area for safety and development testing by commercial and 4x4 manufacturers worldwide. So you can imagine how much fun it is to be let loose there for the weekend.

Pretty much every kind of terrain exists or has been created here, though drivers were excluded from some of the more fearsome aspects for safety reasons. In fact, the calm and somewhat understated atmosphere in the woods was remarkable.

Most off-road events have their share of yahoos, 'bigging it up' for their own amusement, but not here. Marshals and drivers alike worked together to get as many vehicles round the course as possible with a gentle maturity. It was impressive and a pleasure.

Given that almost double the number of Land Rovers turned up than had been registered, the organisers appeared to take the whole thing calmly, making changes to carefully worked out plans on a moment by moment

*The trial sections gave competitors more trouble than expected as the loose sand often provided no grip at all. Joachim von Craunch, President of the Swiss club, and his family avoided another "Swiss roll", in their much travelled 88.*



basis. The campsite grew out of all proportion, marshaling vehicles became a major headache, food and drink requirements doubled but the field kitchen continued to pump out the pork and potatoes and the beer kept flowing.

All this extra work led our club hosts to apologise for not spending more time with us, but heck, we were having a great time on our own. Fun walking round the campsite taking in the special way that Germans have of converting their Land Rovers, fun chatting with fellow enthusiasts from most parts of Europe, fun browsing the trade stands and fun putting our Range Rover round the woodland course.

The Range Rover's abilities, incidentally, were a major revelation to us all, so more of that next month. Suffice to say here that Land Rover's flagship proved to be outstanding in every way.

#### trials and tribulations

On Sunday those of a more competitive nature challenged one another to a mini-trial on the sandy soil. There was a good deal of 'shunting' and nobody seemed to be taking the notion of winning particularly seriously, which was very much in the spirit of what was, after all, a birthday party.

Later in the afternoon we all convoyed out into the woods again to try some different routes under the careful leadership of club marshals. But, as is the way with these things, our group took a wrong direction and had to turn round on the narrow track, which left the marshal as sweeper rather than leader - ho hum...

It really didn't matter of course, as we soon ran into another group on a cross track, with another just ahead and more behind. That said, Sunday afternoon saw the little LRM team put more off-road miles on the clock than any of us has done for a long time, so no complaints.

With plenty of food, passable beer (sorry, but it's not proper ale, is it?), excellent company, plenty of smiling faces and some unusual Land Rovers to gawp at, the weekend proved to be every bit as good as we had hoped. Land Rover gatherings are kind of the same all over the world, but each brings its own national flavour and the Deutscher Land Rover Club's 30th was a pleasure for its quiet efficiency, polite marshaling, beaming hospitality and unique setting in the woodlands of Berlin.

LRM

[www.deutscher-rover-club.de](http://www.deutscher-rover-club.de)  
[www.fkvv.de/english/english.html](http://www.fkvv.de/english/english.html)