



MAJOR'S MEMORIAL TRIAL

Best put to the test

Breaking with braking tradition gets mud flying at the Major's WORDS AND PHOTOS: RUSS BROWN

The Major's Memorial Trial, the big event in the Midland Rover Owners' Club's calendar, put the country's top ALRC (Association of Land Rover Clubs) trials competitors to the test at Eastnor Castle in September. And it lived up to its own description as 'a competition to test the driving skill of the best CCVT [cross-country vehicle trial] drivers in the country'. The organisers also warn that it's 'not recommended for the inexperienced' – and that's true as well!

Eastnor Castle owner Major Ben Hervey-Bathurst instigated the event more than 40 years ago, laying down the gauntlet to the then Rover Owners' Association clubs to send the best of their

best drivers to see how well they could drive the sections that he had set out on the Eastnor estate. The MROC has continued this tradition of excellence, and in 1997 the event was named in honour of the late Major.

The Major's is held over a weekend with 10 sections each day, half in Clenchers Mill Wood and the rest in Hospital Wood, with groups swapping locations on alternate days. Teams of three drivers from each club have to drive notorious obstacles such as Gearbox Hill and Nine Ropes just to get to the competitive sections.

Due to wet weather on the Friday, sections were modified and the use of handbrakes was allowed to help make the turns. This wasn't universally

well received: some thought it favoured those with viscous-coupled transfer boxes, who'd be able to make tighter turns.

On Saturday, one section was cancelled because a descent was deemed too dangerous for vehicles with lesser engine braking capability. This decision also ruffled a few feathers, but most competitors accepted it was a good safety call.

'The organisers of the Major's Trial warn that the event isn't recommended for the inexperienced'

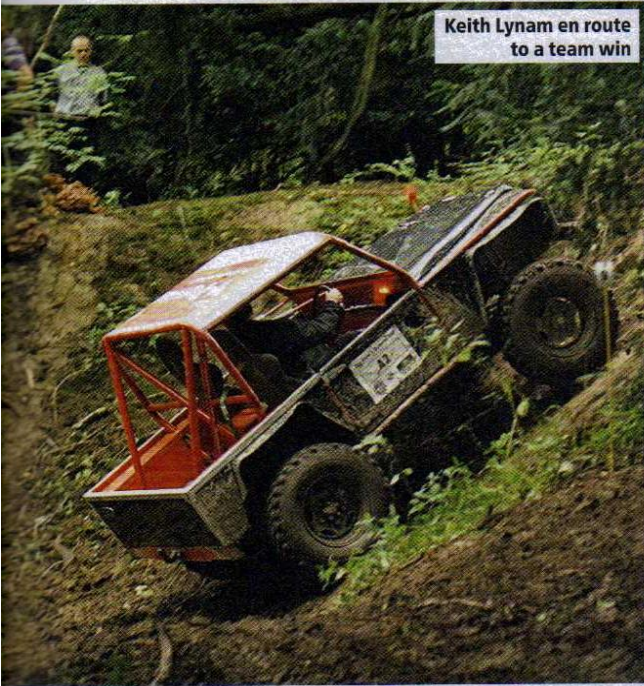
The standard of driving was outstanding. Overall winners, presented with the coveted Rose Bowl trophy by current castle owner James Hervey-Bathurst (see guest column, page 111), were the Lincs Land Rover Club Team 1 trio of Keith Lynam, Jon Evison and Tom Stubbins. Jon said: 'We couldn't have been more surprised. We were on our way home when we got the call to turn around for the presentation!'

The standard class shield went to Staffs & Shrops LRC Team 4: Mick Dobbs, Bob Whetton and Tom Harris. **LRO**

● See mroc.co.uk for more information about the club and the Major's event.

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Keith Lynam en route to a team win



'What was that about handbrakes...?'

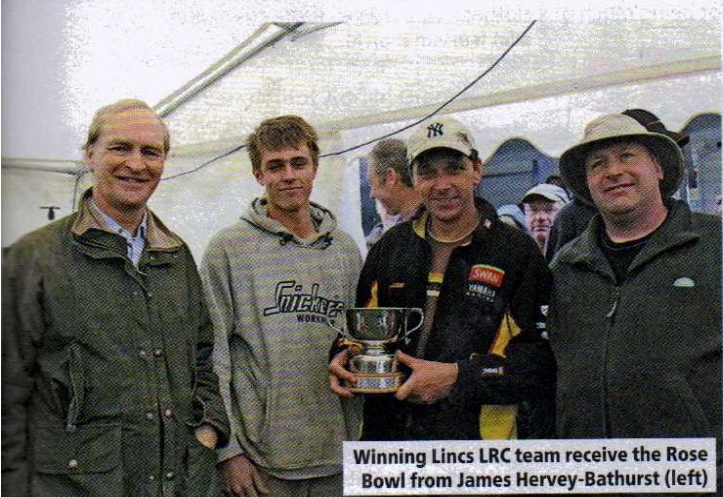
'We were on our way home when we got the call to go back for the presentation' – Jon Evison



Phil Hillman's V8 shrugs off a cross-axle



'Next time, let me choose the hoodies'



Winning Lincs LRC team receive the Rose Bowl from James Hervey-Bathurst (left)



On target: Simon Cope proves his accuracy