

Paul Cunnington

Worked with EO	from	June 1976	to	September 1978
Age on joining EO	22			
Nationality	British			
Role at EO	Leader/Driver			
Expeditions/Brief Encounters etc. led or taken	Asia - 4 and a bit Trips South America – 2 Trips			
Why did you want to work for EO?	Great chance to travel and a way out of Scotland after one long wet cold winter there!			
Occupation before joining EO	Meat pie Salesman etc etc.			
Occupation after leaving EO	Many, varied and sometimes not so illustrious jobs. Found myself here on the West Coast of Canada in 1986 and bought a truck. EO evidently gave me a love/hate relationship with trucks as I ended up owning a fleet of them and running a fair-sized company operating throughout Vancouver Island. Now retired and very much enjoying life.			
Now living in	Victoria BC Canada			

Then photo(s)	Now photo(s)
 <p>Roger Harding, Brian Scowcroft, Paul Cunnington October 1977</p>	 <p>Dennis Cornell, Paul Cunnington, Bruce Davidson Crow and Gate EO Mini Reunion - Nanaimo BC 2016</p>
	 <p>Jane Cunnington [Ex Punter], Paul Cunnington Peyto Lake Alberta 2016</p>
 <p>Paul Cunnington, Halford Hewitt June 1977</p>	

Memories or anecdotes

The tale below was written at my expense by the incomparable John Finch Davies. A great and funny piece of writing that speaks volumes as to how us new boys were regarded by the old timers in the game at that time. We tried hard but to say the least it was a steep learning curve!

A Story of Near Tragedy and Last Minute Rescue
From your correspondent J.F.D. in the heart of Afghanistan

The time: 05.00 hrs
The date: 5 June

The place: The green caravanserai, Band i Amir, Afghanistan

The situation: The old contemptible driver lying peacefully in his pit, savouring the only lie-in in three months.

Enter an unshaven, poncho clad figure, reminiscent of something out of a "Fistful of Dollars". Snatching my service revolver from under my pillow, I took swift aim between the eyes for a brain shot.

The wretch slumped to the floor with a piteous cry and I perceived it to be one of the "New Professional Drivers" - to wit, one Paul Cunnington. A new generation type, raised on a diet of telex, indigestible report forms and flown in spare parts.

Knowing that, in my state, I could not hope for a brain shot on such a small target, I lowered the gun.

In halting sentences, the wretch poured out his tale of woe. His great big, chromium plated, multi axled, multi wheeled, 66 grease pointed, stereo equipped, 460 powered, passion wagon had broken down.

This triumph of overlanding engineering genius was boiling it's tiny little head off on one of the minor hillocks between Band i Amir and Bamian. Stocks of marmalade and drinking chocolate were running low, the situation was desperate. Could he borrow my RL?

The sheer indescribable gall of it!

Knowing that seconds were vital and that DHV would never allow herself to be driven by one such as this, I sprang from bed, pausing only to pull on a few Afghan Govt. surplus rags.

Outside, the Wombat, DHV 541H, stood bathed in the cold light of dawn. Checked oil and water, kicked the tyres and ejected a few pax nesting in the back. Mounting the cab, a touch of a button and the old 330 burst into song.

A quick gulp of tea, oil and brake pressure OK, chocks away! The trusty old RL leaped forward. Acceleration forcing us back against the seats, she winged her way over the passes in top gear.

After fifteen minutes the scene of the disaster came into view, the KM in the middle of a gently sloping, flower-strewn plateau. Surprise! - closer inspection revealed a scene of blissful tranquility. A few pax grazing in a patch of cornflakes, a Halford* quietly charping* in the cab. All secure in the knowledge that a tried and proven RL was speeding to the rescue.

Stopping only for seconds, to load four pax/cleaners and their useless radiator from this overlanding dinosaur, the Wombat spun about and sped back to Band i Amir. By the riverside, the four quivering, fearful pax were commanded to roll up their trouser legs and jump in the river to clean the radiator.

Tearful protests were stifled by a cuff round the ear from the Paul and they leaped into the icy water.

In half an hour, the radiator shone like a new pin and light appeared through the matrix - the Paul was satisfied.

The Wombat flashed back into the hills. Open mouthed Afghans leapt for safety and Internationals took to the gutters as th "Orange Knight of the Road" four wheel drifted round hairpin bends.

Within minutes, the pestiferous crew were deposited by their six wheeled Taj mahal and garlands and tributes were heaped upon the old RL, before she turned back to the chaikanas and a well earned pint of Duckhams.

Later that day, as we trundled home towards the Jam Hotel, the place of near tragedy was passed again. The only sign of the stirring events - a few blobs of Araldite, a part chewed tin of Spam and some strips of pastel coloured loo paper waving gently in the breeze.

John Finch-Davies
Asia

*1 Halford Cunnington's Trainee Driver

*2 Charping Sleeping or lazing, from the Hindi "Charpoy" - bed.

