



## Tom Colville

Worked with EO	from January 1978 to June 1980
Age on joining EO	25
Nationality	UK
Role at EO	L/D and on Gypsy Gay doing refit and then as skipper.
Expeditions/Brief Encounters etc. led or taken	1978 3x Asia KTM-LON-KTM-LON. 1979 London -Tunis (standing -in for Alan Dougal ) then spent 8 mths Malaysia & Thailand aboard Gypsy. 1980 Africa southbound Lon – Jbg..
Why did you want to work for EO?	I had the time, but wondered if I had the ability....
Occupation before joining EO	Gov. Scientist, Occasional Combined Cadet Force and adventure school instructor, Boat builder, HGV 1 Truck driver.
Occupation after leaving EO	Many years involved with National and International Road transport.
Now living in	Scotland

Then photo(s)	Now photo(s)
	

### Memories or anecdotes:

A few role-defining memories.

Towards the end of my “training trip” but now solo, spending one miserable evening sitting - almost waist deep - in an Austrian roadside gully, through a torrential thunderstorm, with the “Wombat’s” (DVH541H) gearbox half on my shoulder. Blistered fingers from working with a hand drill to remove broken ends of studs. The experience made more intense by listening to the happy sounds of most of the group having a party in a nearby bierkeller. The thought that two of them had flights to USA booked from London 48 hours later exercised my mind. . (Five of the seven studs that held the flywheel housing had sheared off the engine block.)

Puzzling what to do with 28 EM's for as long as it might take to fix the engine of the 6 wheeler GNM. A second breakdown within miles left it immobilised above a precipice on the approaches to the Banihal tunnel through to Kashmir. It sat there under guard by the group for the 8 days it took to fix it. The repair involved travel to Delhi to collect new parts flown out from London.

Driving from central Afghanistan for over an hour back down a very rough track, while a very vintage .303 rifle continued to wave around the cab and at me. This relic was held by a terrified conscript who understood no English. We had been turned back by local militia after failing to observe a police toll checkpoint.

Approaching Esfahan a day late, the afternoon after the tourist camping in the city had been comprehensively trashed by an anti-USA riot.

In southern Turkey, being able to drive down right onto the beach. Back then you could turn off the highway, almost anywhere. Where huge hotels and apartments now stand, we could camp overnight along the south coast. So long as the coastal defence guards were kept happy with produce of the BBQ and some cigarettes no one was worried.

Sailing north with only two of us aboard Gypsy, after the long refit. We were headed towards Penang from Teluk Anson. Late in the day we noticed we were being pursued by a hostile fishing boat at full throttle. It appeared to be full of potential trouble. With all sails set and newly rebuilt motor going flat out, Gypsy was just able to outpace them. Sudden tropical nightfall rescued us and we could alter course to lose them.

Coming across the veteran Bedford RL “Wombat” once again early in 1980. It was broken down in the Sahel in Niger. By then the old truck had been disposed of by EO to a privateer. Around a dozen people had been stranded for several days, miles out in the desert. Most of the wheel studs had sheared off one side of the rear axle. With a full crew of 21 on our truck we did not have much space for more than 2 or 3 of them plus jerry cans to the next well.

Being able to enter the Rhodes Matapos national park, south of Bulawayo, and see Rhodes' grave. We were probably the first (perhaps the only) Overland group to manage this in 1980 during a brief moment of national relief, following the settlement of that period of civil war. Through many years afterwards the Matapos area became unsafe for foreigners once again.

Feeling very much out of my depth in a large room. Over 200 hopefuls had gathered one evening in November 1977. To find myself among so many travellers: “been there done it already” bronzed Aussies and Kiwis, older overlanders from other companies, and not a few “hail well met” party types from all around the world - was quite a shock. The next shock came a few days later and was somewhat greater - a firm invitation to a selection weekend at Wren Park. The 200 had been reduced to around 15, then just 5 of us were taken on. Today, over 40 years later, 4 of us recruited at that December are still regularly in touch with each other.

Almost accidentally in 1979 heading off towards to Tunis I met Ellen. In decades since we have raised a happy family... A very special process indeed!

Thank you, Tony, for all of this.