

PROTOTYPE MOY EMERGES

An unexpected meeting with owner Phil Smith at Dunsfold led to the rediscovery of the Moy Conveyor prototype

LRM CLASSICS

IN THE September 2026 issue of *LRM*, I shared my research into the Series II 109in Moy Conveyor that is preserved in full working order at the Dunsfold Collection. During my investigation I discovered that a short-wheelbase version of the Conveyor had apparently undergone military trials in the late 1950s or early 1960s, but I had no idea whether or not it had survived. Until, that is, I met its current owner, Phil Smith, when he came along to the Dunsfold Spring Open Day in April.

Phil is a lifelong Land Rover enthusiast and nowadays is a specialist dealer in early and rare Land Rover parts. Phil brought with him to Dunsfold an amazing photo album depicting the 80in his grandfather had bought from Peter Moy in 1986, and these old photos showed the Series I carrying a conveyor system similar to the one installed on Dunsfold's 109.

In the midst of a busy Dunsfold Open Day and because I was on gate duty, there was hardly time



The 80in Moy prototype and the unique 109 Moy Conveyor reunited at Dunsfold



Exactly as Phil acquired it, with magnificent patina



The Series after Ridley Larwood acquired it, 1986



Ridley behind the wheel with a young Phil Smith in the far right passenger seat, 1988

to take in what Phil was showing me. My first thought was that it must surely be the prototype of Peter Moy's mobile conveyor concept, and that it might well be the short-wheelbase military trials vehicle registered with the service number 14 BT 66 that Wally Dugan, one-time curator of the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley, had told me about during my research into the 109.

I asked Phil if I could see his 80 and the original documents that came with it, and we agreed to meet at Dunsfold in May. For his part, Philip Bashall would ensure that for our meeting the Dunsfold 109 would be extricated from the museum so that both vehicles could be reunited for the first time since the early 1980s and photographed together.

Getting the 109 out turned into a major undertaking, because it was parked inside the museum against a wall at the back of the building, meaning that most of the vehicles on display had to be moved to allow the 109 out. It goes without saying that given the importance of the reunion of what we currently believe are the only two surviving Moy Conveyor Land Rovers, Philip and assistant curator Josh pulled out all the stops to make sure the 109 in was where it needed to be on the day.

In the September 2026 issue I wrote at length about Peter Charles Duffield Moy, the inventor of the Moy Conveyor, and the various patents he obtained in the UK, the USA, and Canada, and how he eventually managed to sell several SII 88-inch Conveyors to British European Airways and the British Overseas Airways Corporation, the two British flag carriers at the time.

There's no need to repeat that part of the Moy story here, so instead let's begin with the early history of the 1953 80in, chassis number 36102284, that would eventually become the



Phil plans to keep the 80 exactly as it was when he acquired it

first prototype Moy Conveyor.

Phil told me that his maternal grandfather, a Norfolk arable farmer named Ridley George Larwood, had bought it in 1986, and in fact there is a sales receipt dated 15 May that year from Peter Moy in the vehicle's history file, confirming that Peter had sold it to Ridley for £1370. Peter had advertised the vehicle for sale in the October 1985 edition of the Land Rover Series One Club newsletter (it wasn't called *Legend* back then) and was asking for offers over £1500 although he was obviously prepared to accept Ridley's offer.

The engine had been 'recently overhauled' and the description referred to an 'unusual history' and a 'hydraulic centre PTO complete with Dowty pump'. When Ridley acquired it, the 80 had only covered 67,000 miles from new, which averages out at just over 2000 miles per year for each of its then 32 years. Ridley had managed to secure an exceptional Series I with a unique and fascinating history, and in due course would ensure that it would survive and remain in his family for the next 40 years.

Rover production records show the construction of chassis 36102284 began on 29 December 1952 and it came off the production line on New Year's Day, 1 January 1953, for delivery to main dealer Mann Egerton in Norwich. It was registered OAH 963 on 12 January 1953.

Phil has the original buff logbook which reveals the first owner was Miles Charles Baker who lived at Scoulton Hall in Norfolk, where he farmed a large holding of over 640 acres. Mr Baker kept the vehicle until 1958 when he returned it to Mann Egerton, quite probably in part-exchange

“THE KEY QUESTION REMAINS: WHEN WAS THE PROTOTYPE CONVEYOR SYSTEM INSTALLED?”

Despite the patina, the 80's tidy



for a new Series II.

Peter Moy bought the Series I from Mann Egerton on 2 July 1958 with just over 58,000 miles on the clock and immediately commissioned the dealership to carry out an end-to-end examination of the vehicle, together with a full service and rebuild of the original engine, during which new piston rings and big-end shells were fitted.

The work included the stripping, cleaning and reassembly of the carburettor. The brakes were also dismantled, cleaned and reassembled, and various cosmetic items were attended to, such as the repainting of the battery carrier, all indicative of Moy's desire to ensure the vehicle worked as it should and also looked tidy and well cared for.

In March 1959 a new steering box and column were fitted, and in August 1959 the Series I was back at Mann Egerton in Bury St Edmunds, although by then the garage seems to have adopted the Botwoods name, one of the many identities within the sizeable Mann Egerton empire. The brakes were once again dismantled, checked and reassembled, and a new camshaft and followers were fitted, together with checks on the ignition system and tuning of the engine to cure a persistent misfire.

It is interesting to note that in August 1959 Botwoods also refitted the number plates front and rear, using new bolts and securing the plates with easily removable wingnuts, and we'll come back to the possible significance of this rather odd modification shortly.

Meanwhile, the key question remains: when was the prototype Moy Conveyor system actually





Wingnuts fitted in 1959 to allow easy removal of the number plates



There are plenty of signs of the Moy elevator installation...



...including the remains of the support brackets welded to the rear crossmember

installed on the 80in Series I? The only information we have comes from the notes that Peter Moy made in 1984, when he wrote 'before the prototype conveyor equipment was fitted in late 1958, the suspension had to be considerably stiffened, and the number of leaves in the springs was increased to ten on the front and eleven on the rear'.

So, as work was being completed on the base vehicle at Mann Egerton and Botwoods between the summer of 1958 and August 1959, in late 1958 the conveyor and its hydraulic control systems, together with various bodywork modifications, were installed and tested. We know that Moy's partner on the creation of the 109 Conveyor was a company called Precision Engineering Products (Suffolk) Ltd, and it is reasonable to assume the company would have had a hand in the creation of the 80-inch prototype as well.

The period black and white photographs given to Ridley Larwood by Peter Moy appear to have been part of Peter's patent application and show the Series I with the prototype conveyor system in place, mounted in the loadspace area with the main hydraulic ram mounted between the front seats. The hydraulic controls are mounted in the tub behind the space usually occupied by the centre seat.

In the resting position, the front of the conveyor is supported by a frame bolted to the chassis outriggers, and the windscreen frame and glass are cut down to allow the conveyor to drop into position when the windscreen is up and the spare wheel is in position on the bonnet. At the rear, the conveyor rests on a second frame which appears to have been welded onto the rear chassis crossmember.

In some of the photographs a third articulated



Peter Moy's photographs submitted as part of his patent application for the Moy Elevator



The elevator extended, above, and stowed

section of conveyor is mounted on the rear, which in the extended position stretches out behind the vehicle to create a level loading platform. This third section retracts by articulating up and over the other sections of the conveyor. It all sounds fairly complicated, but careful examination of the photographs makes everything relatively simple to understand.

And we now have proof that OAH 963, Peter Moy's 80, is indeed the vehicle that took part in the military trials that ex-Beverley curator Wally Dugan had mentioned to me during my conversations with him about the 109. John Mastrangelo is probably the leading authority on British military Land Rovers, and he has confirmed that chassis 36102284 underwent trials with the Ministry of Supply as OAH 963 before being sent to the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) for further trials, during which it carried the service number 14 BT 66.

Sadly, there is no formal confirmation of when the trials took place, but one possible indication is the fitting by Wootons in August 1959 of the bolts and wingnuts to secure the number plates. These nuts would have made it very easy to remove the plates without damage and replace them with the military service plates that were required to be carried by a British military vehicle in Germany. Our best guess is that the military trials took place in the second half of 1959 or early in 1960. The rusted wingnuts remain on the vehicle to this day.

Notes made by Peter in July 1965 further support this theory, declaring that the 80 had last



Windscreen was cut to allow the elevator to be stowed



Elevator hydraulic controls



Original tax disc expired in December 1953

run under its own power on 10 August 1961. The old-style logbook also shows that the last tax disc had expired at the end of December 1959.

No orders for the Moy Conveyor from the military were forthcoming, and it is a great shame that the official reports of these various trials seem to have been lost. Wally Dugan told me that during his conversations with Peter Moy, there had been references to concerns about the 80's stability when fitted with the high-mounted conveyor equipment.

By the early 1980s it would seem that Peter Moy still owned both the 80-inch prototype conveyor and the Series II 109 example. The latter found a home at the newly opened Museum of Army Transport at Beverley, with its conveyor system still installed and fully functional, and in the September issue of LRM I recounted its subsequent story, culminating with its arrival at the Dunsfold Collection in 2009.

A rather different fate awaited the 80-inch prototype, however, because Peter recorded in his notes that 'when the vehicle was recommissioned for daily road use in January 1984, the suspension had to be modified back to standard'. This means the conveyor equipment



Front view showing maximum elevation...



...and stowed



was presumably removed at this time, and what happened to it is unknown. It would be interesting to know if it has survived, safely tucked away in a shed somewhere.

Peter's notes summarise the work done as part of the recommissioning, some of it supported by invoices. For example, after a total loss of coolant and the engine boiling dry in January 1984, a major engine overhaul was carried out in September that year by A. Whitmore & Co of Melton Constable, 'engineers to the motor trade', which included a crankshaft regrind, honing the cylinder bores, new piston rings, new main bearings and valve guides, and a new timing chain. The cylinder head was also refaced; altogether, a thorough overhaul.

Phil Smith was just seven years old when he first became aware of the Series I. "It was in 1988 and I remember 'discovering' it on Grandad Ridley's farm in Norfolk," he tells me when we meet at Dunsfold. "I asked him what the old car was, and he told me it was his Land Rover.

"Grandad arranged for me to stay on the farm for a few days in the school holidays to work on it with him. I remember him getting it out of the barn and getting me to give it a clean and pump up the tyres. Then we got it going and went for a drive around the farm. It really was the beginning of my lifelong love of Land Rovers.

"Afterwards, it went back into the barn. Every time I visited Grandad, I would check up on the Land Rover. I don't believe Grandad Ridley ever drove it on the road during all his years of

"WE GOT IT GOING AND IT REALLY WAS THE START OF MY LIFELONG LOVE OF LAND ROVERS"

Phil Smith, right, and his father Mike at Dunsfold



ownership, and when he passed away in 2007 it remained in the family until it finally came to me in April 2010. And this year it's celebrating 40 years since Ridley bought it from Peter Moy back in 1986."

Phil's father, Mike, has come with him on the trip to Dunsfold, and recalls that his then seven-year old son was so excited by the Land Rover that soon after they returned home, he and his wife ended up buying a copy of what was then a fairly new magazine called *Land Rover Owner* for their son. Needless to say, Phil still has this October 1988 issue.

"I've done nothing to the bodywork, and I am determined to preserve it exactly as it is," says Phil. "The hood sticks had disappeared over the years, together with the canvas tilt, and I managed to find an original tilt that matched the overall patina of the 80 very well, together with a set of period Avon tyres.

"I have the original seat bases, but they were in bad shape, so I have recently replaced them, although the seat backs are the originals. The engine has proved to be excellent following the rebuild back in the 1980s, although I have had to replace the exhaust. There were also some problems with the fuel pump, but these were eventually traced to a blocked fuel filter.

"I use it fairly sparingly, to be honest, but it has had a few outings to some local classic car shows. My eight-year old son, Daniel, is starting to like it, and I'm hoping that in due course he will become its enthusiastic custodian for the next 40 years".