

## A History of The Caravan Club Car Badge

### Introduction

The chrome and enamel Caravan Club car badge is arguably one of the most famous symbols of Caravan Club membership.

Generally manufactured from chromium with red and cream enamel, the badge bears the iconic Club logo of a circle containing two C's (an acronym for Caravan Club) and a horseshoe which reflects the pursuit's horse-drawn heritage and '... stands for good fortune in caravanning'.



**Figure 1:** An example of the traditional chromium and enamel Caravan Club car badge.

### The Caravan Club Horseshoe Logo

The very first Caravan Club logo was designed following the formation of the Club in 1907. A competition to design the logo was launched and the winning motif featured a V linked with two C's (see figure 2). This original logo was

used up until the 1930s when it was replaced by the horseshoe logo visible on the car badges.



Figure 2: A pennant featuring the first Caravan Club logo.

There is no written evidence in The Caravan Club Collection to confirm when the horseshoe logo first came into use. It is likely to have been soon after the Club founder J. Harris Stone passed the management of the Club to the owners of The Caravan and Trailer magazine (still going strong as The Caravan Magazine). As a result, Mit Harris and Bernard Dolman, the owners of the magazine, became the Directors and principal shareholders of the new company in 1935.

After this time it would appear that the Club was re-branded and re-launched, bearing the new circular logo with two C's in the centre of a horseshoe. Regular Club features and advertisements soon appeared in The Caravan and Trailer bearing this new branding. For the very first time, apart from the Club pennant, items of memorabilia were produced for members. It is highly likely that the first Club car badges appeared around this time.

## **The Caravan Club Car Badge**

The first written reference to The Caravan Club car badge appears in the Summer 1939 edition of Now You've Got a Caravan....., a publication distributed to new members. On joining, each member was 'issued a lapel

badge, car badge, pennant and transfer ... the car badge is in red and white enamel and chromium plate'. Although the initial badge was issued free of charge, any replacement was charged at 5 shillings.



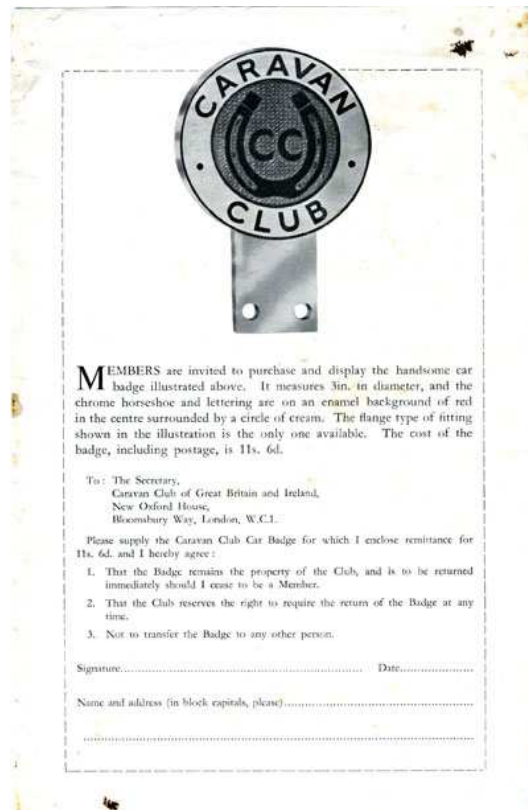
Figure 3: The first known image of The Caravan Club car badge.

It is not known who the manufacturers of these early badges were and production soon ceased at the outbreak World War II due to a shortage of materials. After the war, production of the badges of the same design continued.

Records from the Club's Collection show that in 1953 the bulk of badges was manufactured by Butlers of Birmingham at a cost of 10 shillings each. Butler was used widely as a manufacturer of metalware memorabilia by The Club and subsequently produced a variety of enamel badges, brooches, cufflinks and other novelties into the 1970s.

However, Butler was not the sole manufacturer of these car badges; on 3 October 1956 the Club received a delivery of badges manufactured by C.V. Ferguson's company. The Butler and Ferguson examples are identical in every way and it is impossible to determine which item is made by each manufacturer.

During a decade of booming membership numbers in the 1950s it would appear that car badges were no longer given away free of charge, but had to be purchased. New members were issued with an advert for the badge.



**Figure 4:** Advertisement for The Caravan Club car badge, circa 1957.

## Variations of The Caravan Club Car Badge

Aside from the common and traditional red and cream chromium and enamel badge, there have also been other rarer variations of the badge produced by The Club.

'Associate' badges were produced for non-members affiliated with The Club such as caravan hire companies and site owners. This badge is the same as the members' badge, apart from the central circle being coloured with blue enamel rather than red. These badges were not produced on the same scale as the membership badges and are consequently fairly rare today. Being blue in colour these 'Associate' badges are often wrongly mistaken as having been produced for the Scottish division of The Club.

Evidence suggests that these 'Associate' badges were produced from at least 1939 until the 1950s. The 1930s version are a pale 'sky' blue in colour, while the later versions adopt a darker 'royal' blue. It is not known at what date the tone of blue used on these badges changed.



**Figure 5:** An example of a 1930s Caravan Club 'Associate' badge with sky blue enamel. From the private collection of Mr R. Hodgkinson.

From the late 1940s, the rise in availability of low-cost plastics led to the production of plastic and perspex Club car badges which emulated the chrome version in design. The first evidence of the production of these plastic versions appears in the 1947 edition of *Now You've Got a Caravan.....* They continued to be manufactured into the 1950s and were considerably cheaper than their chromium counterparts, costing 2 shillings 8 pence.

These badges are extremely rare today, particularly those in good condition. This suggests that they had poor durability on the open road and were probably unpopular among members.

Car badges were also produced without the chrome attachment flange at the base of the circular motif. Instead, two holes are located at either side of the round enamel motif. As a consequence, the enamel around the attachment holes is often found to be damaged. Examples in good condition are fairly rare.



**Figure 6:** Memorabilia 'Sample Board' produced by The Caravan Club circa 1950s, in its pre-conservation state. From left to right: Caravan Club chromium and enamel car badge, 1953; Caravan Club plastic car badge, 1950; Caravan Club perspex car badge, 1950.



**Figure 7:** Circular Caravan Club car badge, date and manufacturer unknown.

At present, there is no evidence in the archive to suggest the dates of when this round example was manufactured.

## **When Did The Club End Production of the Car Badge?**

When searching the Club's archive, there is little evidence to suggest the production of enamel car badges after the 1950s.

However, following the Club's logo change to the red pennant in the 1960s, metal and enamel novelties bearing the old horseshoe logo continued to be manufactured into the 1970s. It could have been possible that the car badges remained in production also.

By the 1970s, new motoring safety legislation led to a change in the technology and design used in car manufacture. The availability of cars with grilles and chrome bumpers to which car badges were traditionally attached declined. Therefore, in this period the use of the Club car badge would have undoubtedly decreased and production halted (if it had not already done so by this point). Photographs stored in the Caravan Club's archive also show no evidence of these car badges in use on cars of the period.

Answering to the demands of new motor car design, a new version of The Club car badge, a square metal badge bearing the red pennant logo (often printed on a plastic-coated sticker) with fixings on the reverse, entered into production in the early 1980s.

## **Dating Your Car Badge**

Dating the car badges is an extreme challenge. Due to the fact that the general appearance of the badge remains identical throughout its production history, it is near impossible to date single items.

The Caravan Club's own collection contains numerous examples of these badges, but few can actually be dated without any supporting information of provenance.



**Figure 8:** Caravan Club car badges are displayed on the grilles of these London Centre outfits passing through Brighton, 1954.

## Can You Help?

Do you own a Caravan Club car badge? Was it purchased in the 1930s or after the 1950s? Does it have any unusual features such as imprints on the reverse? Your information can help us to determine the period of production of the badges.

If you have any further information regarding the history of the Club car badge, or any interesting examples we would like to hear from you. Please contact The Caravan Club Collection Officer via the Contact Us page on our website ([http://www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/contact\\_us](http://www.nationalmotormuseum.org.uk/contact_us)).