



DEVILISH DUALITIES

As the boys believe they have conquered the mechanical side of things, thoughts turn to life on the road and testing the capabilities of their 110

ORIGINALLY OUR plan dictated that we should now be on the road to Hel. Some people have suggested that we should stick to our planned departure date regardless of setbacks because otherwise there is a risk we will never actually get going, and less preparation is likely to add more 'memorable moments' to the trip.

In truth, this is all relative and while there is a strong point for getting going asap, if we broke down in Dover we wouldn't look too clever. The point we are getting at is that we have delayed our departure in order to allow us more time to prepare for

by **Tom Picton and Carl James**

the next 11 months on the road.

We are very aware that delaying could be the step on a slippery slope to never actually leaving; rest assured that won't happen here.

We haven't worked 9am - 9pm preparing for the last three months and spending £4,000 each for nothing. In order to be 100 percent confident of making the date we want to get a few more key pieces of kit and then the ferry will be booked.

Roughly speaking the plan is to leave by early December and we know that, worst case scenario, we have to be gone by Christmas as

no Christmas dinners have been booked for us with respective families.

Despite the slightly downbeat note above, the month has been hugely productive. Lots of major mechanical work has been completed and we are now putting miles on the Landy and getting to know it pretty well as a result.

This is the first real spell we have had with the car running and it is difficult to identify the difference between the effects of the changes we have made and things which are 'just Land Rover'.

right tool for the job

Help this month came from the very nice chaps at Draper tools who furnished us with nigh on the entirety of their Expert tool range.

Tools are something that don't get much press. In truth no job is possible without the correct tools and quality tools make the job so much easier.

It's no coincidence the number of rounded bolts has drastically fallen in the last two weeks. We are quickly understanding why seasoned mechanics spend out for high quality tools and we are absolutely thrilled to be supported by such an enthusiastic company as Draper.

So what have we been using all these new tools for you may ask?

Well the new Allisport intercooler has been plumbed in and, coupled with the overhauled turbo, the car feels a fair bit nippier.

New silicone hoses have been fitted to the turbo and cooling system which will help maintain power in the heat and be less prone to delamination than the original hoses - thanks go to Charlie at Twisted Performance for ensuring we got the correct bits in a short space of time.

As the pictures show, underneath the wheel arches it is rather like a traffic light party with the lovely new Koni shocks in red, Britpart heavy

'just because we were given it', because many sleepless nights have me fully aware that in the Sahara and Kalahari it will potentially be our lives on the line if bits break.

It's fair to say that in ten month's time if a piece of kit has been to Hel and back with us, it is because it's a bloody good product.

As mentioned in a previous article, we have been hunting down the backlash in our transmission to make driving a more pleasurable experience and not simply a guessing-game of when it would

The question remains as to whether we can live with the sizeable amount of free-play in the steering wheel or perhaps to look at a replacement steering box.

duty springs in yellow, Polybushes in orange, Big Red overhauled callipers in gold and EBC 'Yellow Stuff' pads. While this may attract some inquisitive African animals at camp, the plus side is that Tom now knows which part is which.

As a general rule, all of the parts we have fitted are there because we believe them to be the best.

While we are completing the trip on a budget, many companies have kindly supplied us with items of kit enabling us to use good equipment. Rest assured we won't be running any old rubbish

next feel like a bomb had exploded in the vicinity of the back axle.

The first port of call was to fit new GKN UJ's all round as the old ones had a fair amount of play in them which won't have been helping the situation.

Seeking advice, we came across contradictory views from two extremely knowledgeable sources on the health of our rear axle and whether this was the main source of backlash in the drivetrain. One side proposed that the rear diff needed replacing, while the other maintained that the backlash was



Above: Traffic light party. Far below, clockwise from top: The car is starting to look the part; The 300Tdi is stripped and the front end re-gasketed all over; Beautiful Allisport gear. Super-light and make the Landy go faster - happy days.

an accumulative product of play in all aspects of the drive.

The cover was taken off and with the car on axle stands and a mixture of spinning the wheels and props, sure enough Graham from Graham Goodyer 4x4 in Amersham was proved correct with our crown wheel, pinion and planet gears in good health, but half shafts and drive flanges not so.

The guys at MM4x4 confirmed this was a characteristic of our vehicle to wear out flanges and half shafts so kindly supplied us with replacements all-round - if only the fronts were as easy to fit as the rears on a Defender.

Following suspension and bushes, work was done to replace the steering components. New balljoints, track rod ends and steering damper from Simmonites have further improved the ride quality.

While all this helped, the question remains as to whether we can live with the sizeable amount of freeplay in the steering wheel or perhaps to look at a replacement steering box or shimming the box?

Work on the cooling system



PART THREE
The boys enlist some expert help from some well-known Land Rover specialists

Below: Why bother with the extra weight of a winch when you have Carl to pull you out?

40 countries, 30,000 miles, 2 continents, 1 trip!



was also completed with a replacement radiator from specialists Aaron Radiators in south London. Sitting alongside the shiny intercooler it gives a very clean front view of the car, but more importantly thankfully the temperature gauge now barely registers while driving.

As well as becoming more mechanically savvy, we now have ourselves a large pile of expedition gear. One of the first bits of kit we fitted was the snorkel, kindly supplied by the off-road experts that are Challenger 4x4.

let's off-road

Specific for our expedition they ensured we had a snorkel with a 'mushroom top' which, while still sucking in sufficient air for the engine, is not forward facing and thus will not simply inhale the inevitable dust from the vehicle in front.

Further to the prep talk this month, we have a confession, one which is hard to forgive among Land Rover owners, but one which is easy to explain. We have not as yet taken our Landy seriously off-road.

The reasons for not putting the ol' bus through her paces is down to the vast number of mechanical machinations we have had to conquer in order to prepare for

Above left: Grinding: Brownchurch rack is modified for the 1.6m tent and land anchoring by an FIA Drag Racing legend, Dave Wilson.

Above right: Roof tent gets an airing.

Inset: We use Comma oil, full stop.

Below left: The LRE Defender takes some more abuse, under careful tutorage.

Below right: Carl is given some tips by the LRE instructor who has been there, done that and gone off-road in the T-shirt.



the trip. On top of this, until all the work was completed, we felt that a solid off-road bash would leave us with a broken vehicle and our plans in tatters.

So, a combination of not having a fully functioning Landy and not having the nerve to teach ourselves through attrition, we had to investigate a way in which we could learn quickly and thoroughly in a Defender, while not destroying our own car.

The answer is of course Land Rover Experience. We contacted the guys in charge and were booked in for two days at the LRE headquarters in Eastnor, Herefordshire. A grand old stone bothy awaits intrepid off-roaders in Eastnor, sitting in the shadow of Eastnor Castle.

The fleet of silver and orange Discos, Defenders, Sports and Specials is a sight to behold, a real 'kids in sweetshop' moment for us. Our instructor on day one, Chris, sorted us out with our brand new Defender and ran over the basics.

Mercifully, the safety talk was short and concise, covering the important information in good time and explaining the basics without making us feel like fools. Unfortunately, due to the nature of the centre being Land Rover's flagship, all of the Defenders they use are box fresh.

Our car for the day had covered slightly fewer miles than the bus at home (roughly 121,520 miles less actually), which was great, but the newer addition of TC (traction control/talent control) meant that we had to approach situations with the knowledge that our vehicle would handle them differently.

practice makes...

On a slightly techie side, the newer models of Defender also have a different gearbox ratio, meaning that our 1997 Defender's low-range first gear equates to a modern Defender's low-range third. Practically speaking, this means that descents in first for us will be a lot faster, so we will have to watch out.

This aside, day one was great. We took turns to practice hill ascents and descents, learning to use the gears and testing the potential of our vehicle to crawl up initially imposing slopes. A few practice hill climbs up 'gearbox hill' resulted in smiles all round, though Tom did try to roast the clutch at one point.

We also covered how to safely reverse downhill after an aborted climb and by the end of the day we had started to tackle some of the more challenging terrain.

Under Chris's watchful eye, we assessed entry and exit point in trails



before deciding whether or not to attempt to traverse them. Thankfully, the sign of those whom had gone before us proved invaluable; the sight of a Dixon-Bate carving a furrow down many a steep drop-in.

Besides Carl bottoming out the Salisbury at one point, day one ended well, with a few water traps and gaping potholes to navigate on the way home.

class is in session

Day two saw us team up with Nick, who stepped up the training a gear, as we purposefully went out looking to get stuck. This was in order to allow us the opportunity to practice digging and winching ourselves out.

Thanks to the our driving, it wasn't long before we were up to the sills in mud. With the winch safely deployed, we practiced the basics of one-man winching and one-man marshaling.

It's hard to describe the pleasure you get from burying a

Landy up to its arches in mud, in the full knowledge that you can get it out one way or another. It's even better knowing it's not your Landy that's now covered in clumps of Herefordshire.

Winching appears to be a whole new world, with angles of dangles, pulley ratios and drum speed all of crucial importance to winch effectively and safely. The guys at LRE did a fantastic job to run us through the basics in just one day.

An absolutely superb day out was capped off by taking a wander round Land Rover's car park to examine the sadly redundant G4 kit and the occasional Iceland-prepped Defender, hiding in the corner. As well as being the top dogs of off-road driving and recovery, all the staff at LRE were unbelievably friendly and welcoming. This really capped off an unbelievable two days for us, and we'll be back at some point that's for sure – it was that much fun.

We learnt a lot this month. Firstly,



Above: Part of the fleet at Eastnor Castle. Hidden in the corner, the sadly redundant G4 kit and an Icelandic spec Defender, a.k.a. Land Rover porn.

Below: I'm a real Land Rover owner now; Carl shows off his clean willies and even cleaner Defender. Next purchases include wax coat, pipe and Labrador.

we underestimated the amount of time it would take to prep a vehicle.

Secondly, we still have a lot to learn about what our vehicle is capable of, and how we can manage that ability.

Projects of this kind seem to endear people to want to help, which is brilliant. Finally, you have to draw the line somewhere. If we really wanted to, we could quite easily spend another six months preparing. Equally, if you have the funds, you can find ways to spend over £50,000 preparing a Land Rover, with endless gadgets, gizmos and gimmicks. Some additions and alterations are essential, some are just nice to have.

For us, the departure deadline is drawing near, and so is the overdraft limit. For the first time, the 'jobs done' list now outweighs the 'to do list' and the urge to get on the road is growing daily.

LRM

