



To Hel & Back

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and



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

PART TWO
Tom and Carl discover the reality of Land Rover preparation



HEL BECKONS

Tom and Carl struggle to complete a long list of jobs on the 110 just weeks before they set off on their 11-month journey to Die Hel

WITH EACH day that goes by, and the departure date rapidly approaching, so the anxiety increases that little bit more.

Each night it is becoming that little bit harder to switch off and get some sleep as issues such as visas, mechanics, relationships, finances, charity fundraising and route planning to name a few, hound the mind.

These issues didn't feature when we came up with the expedition, away in our rider's retreat in the French Alps almost a year ago.

However, it should be known that these issues are the reality of deciding to travel for 11 months

by
Tom Picton and Carl James

Above: Carl and Tom are sure they have bought a Good winch.

and take on a trip of this scale.

At the idea's conception, all you can think of is barrelling down dusty roads, climbing through dense forest to take in the next vista, fording white-water streams with your Indiana Jones style hat stuck at a jaunty angle and the sun glinting off the flanks of your mighty Defender.

In reality, it's bloody hard work. Let's be clear though, we're not complaining, but as we hope to be many 'ordinary people's' guinea pigs we want to make you aware that it is not a bed of roses.

Like many things in life, you must start from a solid base and getting on for two months on we think we

still have a reasonably solid bus. Issues have arisen, notably a misaligned alternator shredding fan belts and the clutch giving up but overall we're happy.

mechanically sound?

We hope the rust on the chassis is superficial and while the rear cross member has certainly seen better days, with no intention of towing anything en-route we've decided to leave it be.

The engine appears to be in good condition, doesn't smoke much and runs very smoothly – but if there is anyone out there who can advise on how better to check the health/

state/fitness of a 300Tdi without completely stripping it to the core then please drop us an email.

We introduced you to the trip in the last article and focussed in particular on electrical needs – an area regularly overlooked by overland travellers. The new enemies are as follows: heat, weight, ride quality, braking, reliability and last but not least, backlash.

A reliable and effective cooling system is essential for safe African travel. With the highest ever temperature in Libya recorded at 57°C this was one area that we felt just couldn't be left to chance.

As a result we have decided to start with a full hose set replacement and contacted Twisted Performance for a set of high quality turbo and radiator hoses.

withstanding the heat

While the new hoses undoubtedly look great, with tri-ply sidewalls they should also withstand the intense African heat and be less prone to breaking up. Note to reader – hoses on ex-farm vehicles are designed to disintegrate as soon as they are removed from the farm.

With the bus likely to come under stress and strain over tough ground in ambient temperatures exceeding

Top left: Carl slaves away fitting the clutch. Top right: Tom's delicate mechanical skills become evident during wheel bearing changes. Above: Whole new braking system; EBC discs and pads, coupled with Hel braided hoses will take care of stopping.

40°C, we wanted an extra weapon in our armoury. To this end we have fitted an additional two-speed Kenlowe fan which will kick in when the standard set-up can't cope, then up the cooling again if the temperature climbs another 5°C. Still to fit are new water pump, thermostat and radiator with the old ones to be taken as spares.

As anyone who has looked into a trip of this scale will know, a regular coolbox fridge will not cope with ambient temperatures over 30°C.

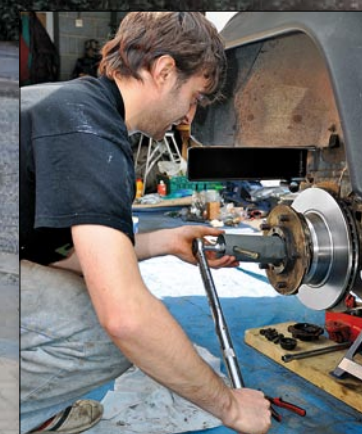
Therefore, we had to upgrade to a 45-litre 'Waeco fridge' which will be mounted in the back and ostensibly used to keep Tom's gin and tonics at optimum temperature.

The guys at Waeco were superb, giving us some great advice and support with one of the more expensive items on our kit list. Our thanks go to Alan, a real diamond geezer.

a little help from friends

Some welcome help with the project arrived in the form of friends and family, with Elliot, Christian and Rob arriving from north Wales, London and Utrecht respectively.

All parties split up in order to fit and finish the clutch





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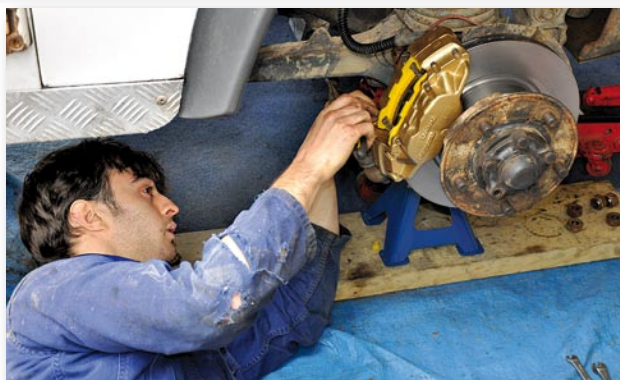
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overhaul, winch wiring, Kenlowe fan installation and snorkel mounting. After four hours Tom had successfully drilled four holes in the bodywork with the real man's powertool, the hand drill.

In the same time frame, Rob attempted to mount the fan using the bolts meant for the snorkel. After much sweating, swearing and supping of tea (supplied by the ever attentive Mrs James) the boys had the work done.

Mr James Snr then demonstrated the error of Tom's ways by drilling four more holes in the bodywork in roughly 60 seconds. Despite all this, even Premiership football managers couldn't have complained about the extra time taken for the work; the old bus is really starting to shape up now.

multiple considerations

In addition to heat, we know that we will face poor fuel on our route and we'd be mad not to prepare for this. Naturally a new fuel filter has been fitted, fuel lift pump replaced and fuel sedimenter fitted.

With all the ongoing work and additional kit, the old overlander's enemy, weight, was beginning to mount up.

The brakes had been squealing and felt lazy at best with the car unloaded so we decided to take no chances, fitting all

Top: The boys struck gold with Bigg Red Calipers.

Above: Halfshaft time. The search for the elusive backlash begins while the car is re-bushed.

Below: Tracmat for Tom. It may look like the inside of a Crunchie bar, but its much harder to chew.



YOU CAN FOLLOW TOM AND CARL'S EPIC JOURNEY AT WWW.TOHELANDBACK.ORG.UK AND IN FUTURE ISSUES OF LRM.

new high-spec EBC vented disc brakes and specialist 4x4 'Yellow Stuff' brake pads – don't worry that's a technical term which only engineers can understand.

To further help in the battle against perished lines, high quality braided brake lines, kindly provided by HEL Performance, were fitted in place of the rust-busted originals. As per usual for ex-farm Landys, this extraction resulted in a lot of rounded bolts and a lot of rough language on our part.

The boys at Hel were great, especially since we supplied them with the wrong measurements at least once. A bit of an embarrassing moment for us and a grovelling call to Hel followed. Thankfully, they sorted it pronto and shipped us replacements the next day.

The calipers were also due an overhaul so Bigg Red Calipers have stripped them and replaced all pistons and seals. Now comes the exciting moment when we realise which colour we have been sent;

gold is definitely the way forward. A huge thank you to the guys at Bigg Red, who turned round the calipers in three days, thus only leaving the Landy beached for the weekend.

Having just fitted a sparkling new master cylinder the only remaining part from the old braking system is the pedal itself.

The Landy's other rouge-ish characteristics have been coming to light recently. We know it's a big 4x4 and therefore the steering has rather 'boatish' qualities, however the tendency to gently wander into the opposite lane following the slightest bump in the road has necessitated the changing of track rod ends, ball joints, steering damper and fitting a lovely brand new set of bushes from Polybush.

With farm life once again taking its toll on everything rubber on our vehicle, we considered this an essential fix, rather than a luxury. We've gone for the Polybush expedition 'mixed' kit which uses different compounds in different

areas to ensure longevity of the bushes while still providing a comfortable ride.

We shall report back in one month as to whether they have indeed revolutionised our ride. Naturally another beauty of polyurethane bushes is the ease with which they can be changed once fitted so we can easily renew them on the road if at all necessary after six months.

Applying nearly ten tonnes of pressure to eject an original suspension bush in the middle of nowhere is not an option.

mechanical dark arts

Unfortunately this leaves us with what I class as two dark arts in car mechanics – the state of the turbo and the gearbox.

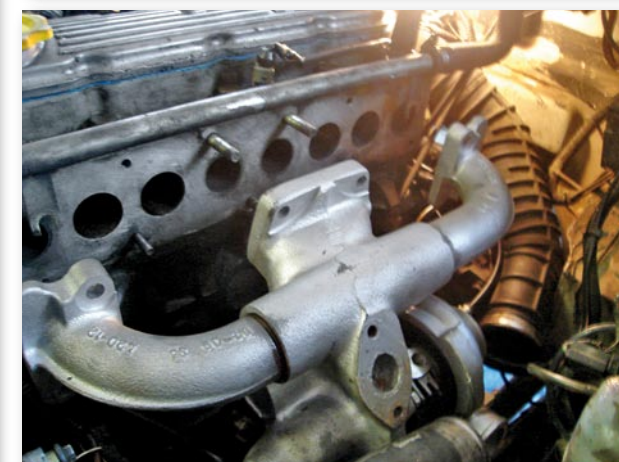
The turbo removal started off fine, apart from the discovery of missing bolts on the inlet manifold. The addition of heat to a tightly fitting gasket over the exhaust ensured that a long afternoon was spent attacking the gasket from

underneath with the torque wrench.

Finally, the turbo was freed and sent off to Turbocentre for a swift three-day turnaround. Seriously, we haven't seen a faster delivery come out of Yorkshire since Freddie Flintoff's last Ashes match. Very impressed with the service from Turbocentre, our thanks go to all the guys there.

As the picture evidence now shows, we have fitted the winch and bumper sourced from David Bowyer, who looked after us brilliantly and shipped off our equipment within the day. It all arrived and was connected with minimal fuss, but has not yet been tested on anything. Fingers crossed. It will also give us an excuse to try out our new X-Eng land anchor. This fearsome looking brute has so far only dug into Tom's leg, but will be employed to get us out of the sand and mud in Africa when no trees can be found.

The final bits to arrive this month were the new Tracmatts, in vivid



Left: Family and friends are roped in to do the real work while Tom experiments with stone-age technology. Top: The fearsome X-Eng land anchor.

yellow. Can't wait to try them out and report back on them in future; although we hopefully won't need to use them that often.

Also, our brand new intercooler arrived courtesy of Allisport. Essentially, the aluminium components and improved design on the intercooler and radiator can add up to a 20 percent increase in heat transfer over normal radiators and intercoolers, which should go some way to combating the heat. More news on the fitting and performance of this item next time.

dedicated to the last

So, it's been a month of grease, new gaskets, skinned knuckles, and finally we appear to be winning. Seriously, if there is ever any job you want to tackle on your Landy the message is simple, start small and go for it. If two young novices with a limited mechanical knowledge can fix parts without seriously braking it, anyone can.

Next time round we hope to have news and reviews to cover our time at Land Rover Experience Eastnor where we were kindly allowed to train, installation of our Allisport intercooler, wheel bearing and UJ changes, spring and shock overhauls plus lots more as the leaving date is now only weeks away.

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