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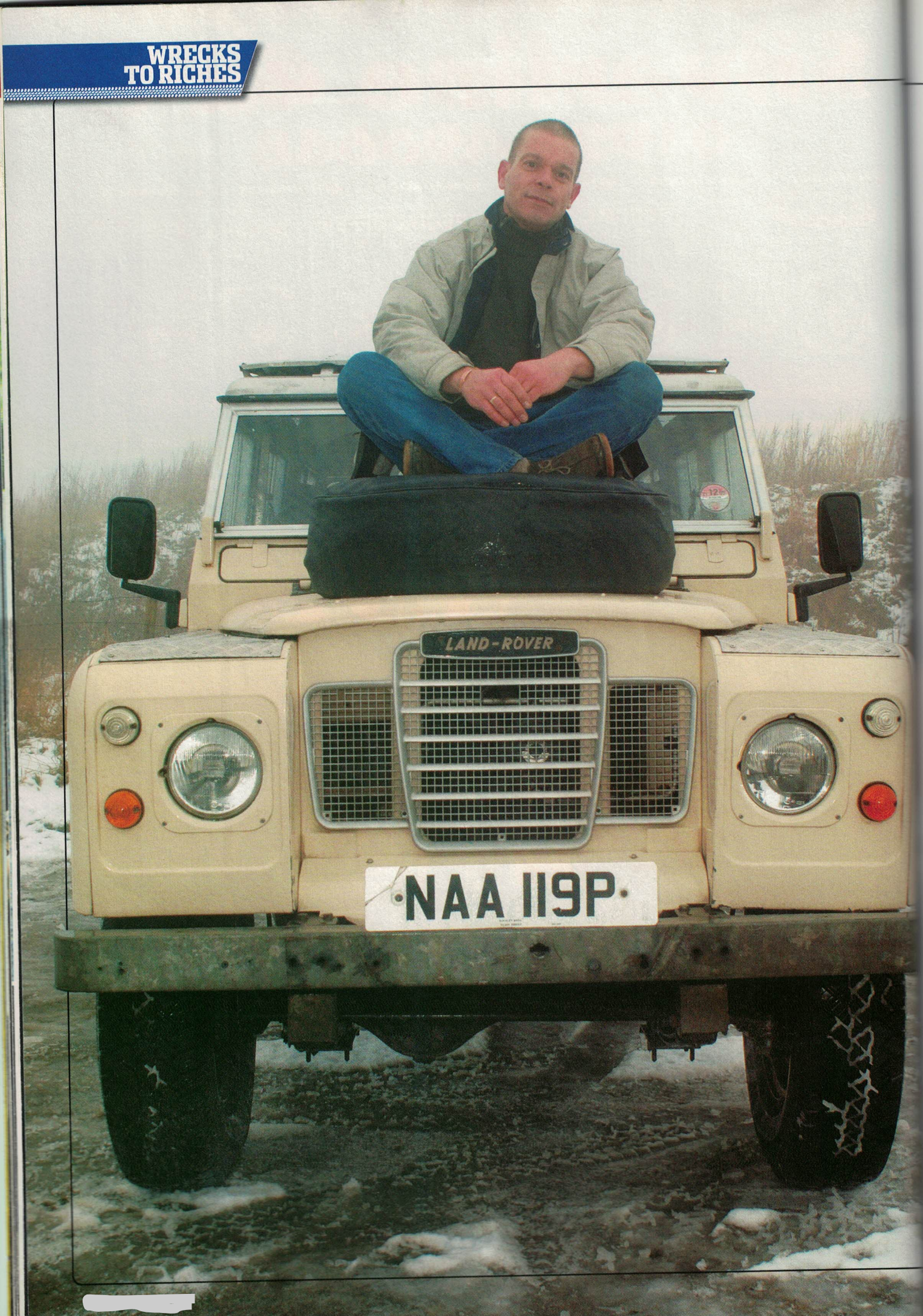

LAND-ROVER
NAA 119P

sitting pretty

This Series III station wagon is Mark Treanor's first-ever Land Rover, his first rebuild, and a first-rate result. Peter Galilee dashed over to see how he saved the beauty he got for free

Photos: Paula Solloway

The unmistakable sound of a Rover 2.25-litre diesel engine is all around us, but high up in the mist of a Lancashire winter landscape nothing is visible. Then something moves and a Land Rover is heading towards us – a Series III, it's a long-wheelbase Station Wagon. A kick of snow from the tyres and the white Land Rover disappears into the mist again – but there's just time to glimpse a big grin on the face of the driver. Mark Treanor is showing off his rebuild project. It's the first time he's built anything more complicated than a motorcycle. It's his first Land Rover, and this is the first time he's ever driven one off-road. So, what are his first impressions?

'Great, really good, better than I expected. You can drive a Land Rover anywhere, can't you?' That's something Mark's just finding out because the Series III is more used to the 65-mile round-trip daily commute to Manchester airport. 'And it's not embarrassing at motorway speeds. On the flat, I'm looking at 65-70mph.

A daily driver has to be reliable, and that meant a complete strip and rebuild. It would have been much easier to get a bank loan and buy a 110 – but Mark fell for the charm of a Series Land Rover. Another big plus was the purchase price.

'Nothing', laughs Mark. 'That's what it cost. I heard about it through a friend of a friend. We had three young children and we wanted a family vehicle – something that takes a lot of stuff in the back. We'd always liked the look of Land Rovers, without knowing too much about them. We wanted a 110, but they were out of our reach.

'This friend of mine knew I could do a bit of spanner work, so he suggested the Series III. I wouldn't have looked at something that had been left out in a field, but it had been kept under cover in a chicken shed for more than 10 years. The owner offered it to me gratis – on the understanding that I would put it back on the road and wouldn't break or scrap it. It was a runner, though not fit to drive on the road. And it was a diesel – I'd never owned a diesel, but I'd always wanted one. The simplicity appeals to me – no complicated electrics to go wrong.

Inside the gloom of the chicken shed it didn't look too bad, though I realised it would need a new chassis. I asked a close friend if I could use his garage for about six months, then borrowed a trailer and dragged the Land Rover from Swindon to its new home in Lancashire.'

In the harsh light of day it became clear that both front wings would need replacing and that the only good door was the one at the back. The bulkhead would need welding and the roof – creased in a multi-storey car park – wouldn't straighten out. The decision had already been taken to rebuild the diesel engine. With the chassis and much of the bodywork condemned, it was already a bigger project than Mark had anticipated. But that didn't put him off.

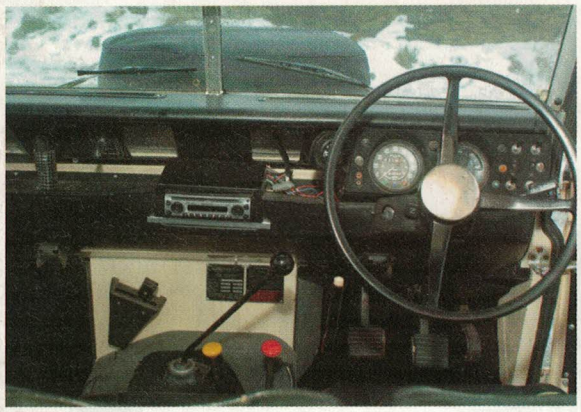


Manchester Police air observer Mark Treanor from Haslingden, Lancashire, flew into action when he was given this abandoned SIII

'I've always been into nuts and bolts, and I'd rebuilt a couple of motor cycles. With about three spanners, a lump hammer and an angle grinder, I stripped it down to nothing. I sold the scrap to a local dealer and took stock of what I had, and drew up the first of countless shopping lists.'

Mark's first bit of luck came right at the start, when he phoned Buckley Brothers and bought one of the last of a batch of ex-military chassis, re-imported from Cyprus. 'It was covered in green paint and some greasy stuff but, when blasted, it





Smart interior also benefits from a decent stereo

turned out to be in perfect condition. It was a standard pick-up chassis, but only needed mounting points for the rear tub welding on. I got it galvanised and, a week after purchasing it, the chassis was better than standard. Even better, it had only cost about £500.'

The military chassis has a different rear crossmember which meant that Mark had to fabricate mountings to support the rear of the fuel tank.

The station wagon's diesel engine was sent to a local specialist for comprehensive overhaul, though Mark opted to do some of the reassembly himself. Meanwhile, dealers around the North-West were chased for new and used parts. A lucky find was three Land Rovers at a local van breaker's yard that yielded an overdrive unit for just £80. But as parts costs mounted, it became clear that – except for the engine – it was going to be a DIY project.

'You need a workshop manual – that's essential,' says Mark. 'But that doesn't tell you everything. I had good advice from people on the LRO forum (www. lro.com) – there's really useful stuff on that.'

The bulkhead needed welding – top corners and top rail – but the footwells were in good nick.

Mark had no experience of spraying, but that didn't deter him. 'I got a lot of polythene and converted the rear of the garage into a spray booth of sorts, bought a compressor and taught myself. Preparation and filling isn't my favourite job – no matter how much you do, it never seems to be enough. I had original panels, new panels, and panels with different types of paint applied, but as a first timer I'm quite proud of the finish. After stripping the replacement roof down to bare metal I quite liked it, so that's how it has remained.'

With most of the parts either cleaned or new or repainted, reassembly should have been quick, but wasn't. 'My interest began to wane, and it was a chore to get on with the job. It took the best part of 18 months. Worst of all were the windows – that black sealing putty stuff gets everywhere. And all those fiddly little screws. It's a horrible job, I left that until last. But the guilt of depriving my mate of his garage – I'd had it for nearly two years by then – spurred me on.'

Ready for the road, but not roadworthy – Mark's Land Rover collected an MoT fail ticket – engine emissions. 'After playing with the timing, I took the injectors along to a diesel specialist. Although they were reconditioned units, not one was within limits and they had to be recalibrated. I was told it'd have been cheaper if I'd just brought them the old injectors in the first place.' But the recalibrated injectors worked their magic and the Series III was finally street legal. 'The best moment of the whole project was turning up outside the house and showing the kids. They knew it was nearly finished, but I hadn't told them.'

Engine running-in commenced, with the temperature of the engine measured in several places and the Kenlowe fan set exactly. After changing every part of the high-reading standard temperature system, the whole lot was junked and an aftermarket capillary system installed. 'A friend of mine has sports cars, and the first thing he does with a new one is fit a better temperature system – so I did the same.'

But things came to a grinding halt after just four weeks. Mark shakes his head. 'The engine threw its teddy in a major way – it made the most horrendous noise. First off, I thought it was the starter – same sort of screeching noise. But that noise was actually all the bits of engine scraping together. Later, we found that the oil pump had sheared off.

'I'd spent about £500 on this engine – to say I was miffed would be the understatement of the century. But I'd done some of the assembly myself, so there was nothing I could say. I'd had enough, so I towed it round to my local specialist – Graham Booth at Independent Land Rover Services in Waterfoot, Rossendale. He wasn't in at the time. I just left it there with a sign in the window saying FIX IT!'

Graham had followed the project with interest. 'Mark had been here

Not bad for less than £4000, eh?

Vehicle 1974 Series III 109-inch Station Wagon
Engine 4-cylinder 2286cc indirect-injection naturally-aspirated diesel, 62bhp @ 4000 rpm, 103 lb-ft @ 1800 rpm, 26 mpg.
Transmission Four forward speeds (all synchromesh) plus reverse, high/low range transfer box, selectable 4WD, freewheel hubs.
Seating Three front row, three second row, three on each bench seat at rear (not currently used).
Extras Overdrive, freewheel hubs, stainless exhaust, Kenlowe fan, soundproofing, stainless exterior fastenings.
The cost Sound insulation £120; chequerplate £50; engine machining and parts for first rebuild £500; second engine rebuild £750; reconditioned injectors £48; ex-WD chassis £300; shotblasting £80; galvanising £129; paint and bodywork consumables £250; stainless exhaust £169; secondhand roof and front wings £100; front and rear doors and seals £330; parabolic springs, Procomp shock absorbers, bushes £434; secondhand overdrive £80; secondhand Kenlowe fan £30; fan controls £36; miscellaneous & small parts £420

TOTAL PRICE £3826





asking questions, I gave him some advice and then I went up to have a look at what he was doing and point him in the right direction. He was working in what you could only call a wooden shack. I felt sorry for him – he was working in no kind of comfort: soil floor, no heating. But he was doing a good job. I get a lot of people coming here with Series stuff but most of them aren't interested in doing things properly. Mark wasn't like that. So when I saw what had happened with the engine I wanted to get it finished for him.'

In Graham's workshop the engine was hauled out and the damaged components went back to the engineering company for re-machining. And Graham was the right man to rebuild it – he works on modern Land Rovers every day, but hasn't forgotten his roots. 'You need to know and love that two-and-a-quarter engine. I've worked on thousands, right back to the original two-litre. Some people don't like them, but when they're done right they are a lovely engine'. Back in, the engine ran smooth and oil-tight. 'Graham couldn't have been more helpful,' praises Mark.

A big project like this would be enough to put off many people for ever, but not Mark. Now he's got the experience and the tools – and a newly-acquired large workshop just outside his back door – it's more a case of 'what's next'.

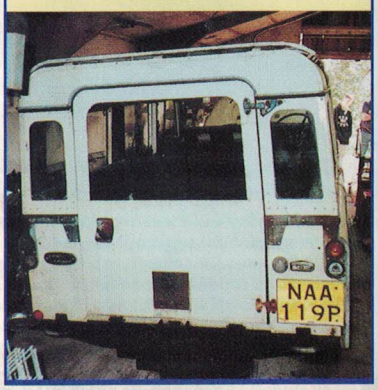
'I like to have something fairly basic, something on which I can do everything myself. Keep a few tools in the back and I'll be able to fix it myself if anything goes wrong.' So the next project will be another Series vehicle. 'Short-wheelbase this time, but with a Tdi engine. It'll be a sort of wolf in sheep's clothing.' LRO

Mark's top tips

- **'Start small – don't make something like this a first Land Rover project'**
- **'Spend plenty of time sourcing the things you need in advance and checking prices – I could have saved a lot of money if I'd done more of that'**
- **'Talk to people who've done it. Find somebody who'll give you info. You can learn a lot that way'**

With a little help...

Independent Land Rover Services Waterfoot (engine rebuild and advice) 01706 231313
Buckley Brothers Blackburn (chassis, parts) 01254 208042
Noise Killer Middleton (insulation) 0161 643 8070; www.noisekiller.co.uk
Pillar Wedge Heywood (galvanising) 01706 366191; www.wedge-galv.co.uk
J&E Engineering Crawshawbooth (engine machining and components) 01706 222662; www.j-and-e.co.uk
Steve Parker Land Rovers Rochdale (parts) 01706 854222 www.steve-parker.co.uk
Rossendale Sheet Metal (steel repair sections, chequerplate) 01706 214135
Alf Kyme Rossendale (van breakers) 01706 873953
Paddock (parts) 08454 584499 www.paddockspares.com
Simmonites (suspension parts) 01274 833351; www.simmonites.co.uk
LRO Forum (information and advice): www.lro.com





Even on road tyres, the Series III goes well off-road