

**ANYONE OPENING** the Landy's back doors as we started our combined Shakedown Tour would have immediately realised our preparation schedule had slipped a little. With external stowage, spare tyre, jerry cans, snorkel, roll cage and tent fitted, the Landy looked good – it looked like it was expedition prepared, but inside everything was just shoved in. A closer inspection would reveal a lot of things that were in place but not actually connected, including the winch, a dashboard full of switches, and the secondary fuel and water tanks.

On our first weekend out we were able to give our new Howling Moon tent a rigorous testing at the Cherry Tree Caravan Park at Nawton. To say it rained that weekend is an understatement. The heavens opened for 24 hours from the moment we set-up camp and the torrential rain was relentless.

**Below**  
*Paul and Helen set up all the camping equipment at the Cherry Tree Caravan Park. All good practice for the months on the road.*

While our tent was waterproof from day one, the ground outside the entrance quickly turned to quagmire.

The following week we made our base at the Nostell Priory Caravan site. In true overlanding style, we checked out what the locals were eating, and ate well every night at the local carvery pub, where we could get a decent meal for two with drinks for under £10. Testing their hospitality, we managed to get enough free electricity to charge our laptops while taking advantage of 3G on the dongle and the warm facilities (the caravan site facilities being chilly to say the least). We strongly recommend the Cock and Crown at Crofton if you are ever in the Wakefield area.

Our schools tour meant visiting a different primary school each day, talking to the children in assembly about what we will be doing and why, and then spending time with the children introducing them to the Landy and our camp set-up. We got loads of practice at packing

up camp at the campsite every morning, and setting it all out again on arrival at each school.

**the kids are alright**  
All the kids were interested in what we were doing and loved watching the water filtration demonstration by Paul. The opportunity to get adults to talk about poo and stuff, under the guise of how to go to the toilet where there aren't any, went down a storm.

The children were trying to get their heads around the idea that we won't have a TV or Playstation ("won't you get bored"), was another matter. The "what if" questions were popular: what if you get a puncture and you've used up all your spare tyres and puncture repair kits?, what if you go blind and can't drive? (where did that one come from we wondered?), what if the engine breaks and you can't fix it?, what if you run out of diesel and there isn't any more and you can't get any and no-one will sell you any?, until eventually the only

# DEPARTURE DAY

**Before setting off, Paul and Helen find the time to complete some educational school visits**

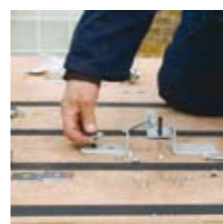
Words and Pictures by  
Paul and Helen Crittenden



**Right**  
*Paul answers some questions at Minster Primary School on the Schools tour.*

**Below**  
*A nifty spare tyre mounting on the roof rack was knocked up out of old BBQ fittings. Taking some time out with friends at the Invicta Land Rover Club.*

**Bottom**  
*(No pun intended) Paul demonstrates the toilet seat.*



answers left were we either died or had to be rescued.

A Landy pulling exercise was considered great fun, and appreciated by the teachers as a way of burning off a bit of energy, until one group of 30 or 40 youngsters managed to get the Landy moving and pulled it at least a metre. Horrified, we made extra sure it was always in gear after that.

**future mechanic**

Aged 11, one young man's eyes lit up as soon as he saw a Land Rover sitting in the playground when he arrived at school that morning. His first question, pointing to the General Grabber AT2s was, "are those all terrain tyres?", followed quickly by, "have you got extra suspension springs?" and peered delightedly at the heavy duty springs we'd had fitted by Foley's.

It was as much as Helen could do to stop him wriggling under the car for a full inspection, but he took great delight in pointing out where the brakes fit, explaining he has helped his dad change the brakes on their Land Rover at home. Pointing out the axles, winch and hi-lift jack to his friends, he went on to explain to his friend how the jack works, pausing only to say, "you won't learn if you don't listen" when his friend got distracted by something else. Now I wonder where he's heard that before? To

top it all, thoroughly eager to learn he was as proud and delighted with everything new he discovered. Some dad out there is doing a great job involving his kid in his hobby.

**the shrinking to-do list**

During the tour Paul continued to tick off jobs from the to-do list, including changing the original steel winch cable for the new DyneemaTM one, provided by David Bowyer at Goodwinch. The new cable wound out perfectly and rewound perfectly first time.

With the countdown to departure numbering just weeks, we were back home for some final work. Both succumbing to the dreaded 'man-flu' as soon as we got home meant nothing much got done for a week, ripping another huge hole in our planned schedule.

**clubbing together**

We had been delighted to accept the offer of joining the Invicta Land Rover Club in their Action Zone at the Kent County Fair, at the Hop Farm at Paddock Wood. After our experience of putting our roof tent up and down at least twice a day during the schools tour, we set ourselves a challenge to see how fast we could do it in the public arena each day. By the final day, we managed to put the tent up in less than three-and-a-half minutes and down again and stowed away →

*Pupils discover just how heavy the Landy is, as they try to pull it along – it was later left in gear after the kids managed to move it down the playground.*



in less than four minutes. Not bad on a weekend when the only really happy trader was the man selling wellingtons.

After our 'Official Launch' at the Hop Farm, it was to be only four weeks to our due leaving date, and the mountain of work on the Landy seemed taller than ever. Paul was still trying to get the business handed over so that it could run while we are away, and yet still needed to spend many hours completing tasks on the Landy.

Deciding that the departure date could slip no further lest we compromise our chances of being out of Far Eastern Russia and through Alaska before full-on winter conditions arrive, a priority list was drawn up, and less critical jobs relegated to the 'do it on the road' category.

Paul built an aluminium storage shelf over the water tank in the second row seating area, added compartment lids to the side lockers – dividing the storage into two, and wired up all the ancillary circuits. Paul also custom made the diesel filler neck for the auxiliary tank, fitting this in to the newly completed side locker. In went the fuse panels (one behind the dash, and one neatly tucked beneath the new rear storage shelf), the inverter, the water pump, eight waterproof 12v socket outlets from Mud 4x4, and the Eberspacher heater.

Fitting additional security in the form of some superbly designed stainless steel door hasps from Footloose 4x4, required some inventiveness. Accessing the interior of the door posts when bolting them into place proved a real struggle, and the delicate operation to prevent losing

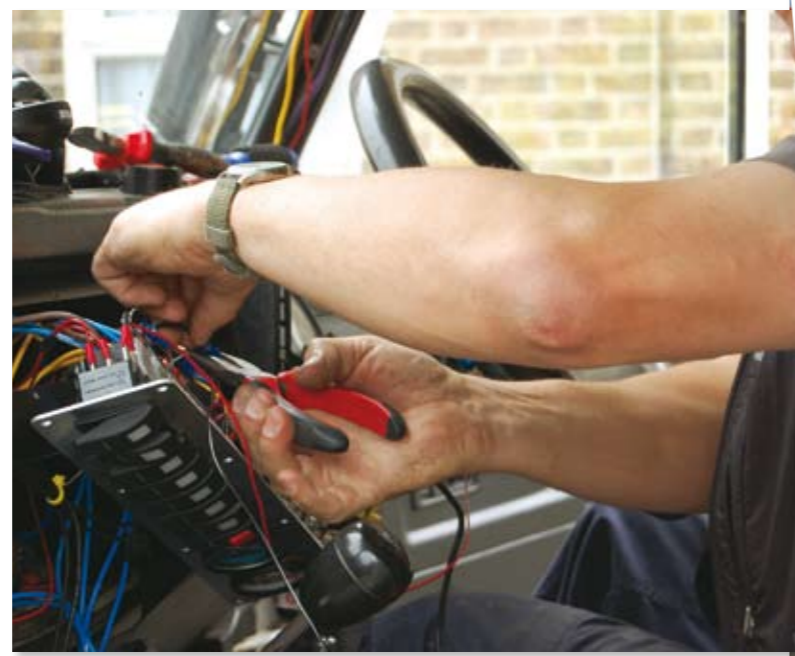
spanners, nuts and washers into the void of the chassis involved gaffer-taping the washers and nut to the spanner, while wielding a screwdriver at full arm stretch on the securing screw. This took patience and some dexterity, aided and abetted by the occasional swear word or two. Learning how this could be achieved cost the small price of a 10mm ring spanner, which now resides somewhere deep inside Landy's bodywork.

#### bolting on the goodies

With flights from the US operating again after the Volcano incident in Iceland, Car Builder Solutions were able to deliver the natty little push fit tank fitting that enabled the fuel transfer system to be completed and tested. The cab winch remote was wired up, as were the four 100watt Roo-Light spots that decorate the front of the roof rack.

Underneath, a new exhaust was fitted, and note taken of the condition of the four wheel bearings (OK), the swivel joint bearings (one OK the other iffy), and the drive flange wear (rear needs replacing – front not bad at all) – replacement spares for all of these were ordered pronto from Island 4x4, and consigned to the 'on the road' list.

Dave Marsh at QT Services was a star and very kindly supplied us with a pair of top notch diff guards, and promised to be a font of all Land Rover wisdom should we need it on the trip – a big 'Thank You' Dave – we will find that very comforting. After we had sought advice on hardness and suitability from Paul Marsh at Footloose 4x4, Polybush too were exceptionally helpful in supplying us with a set of their hugely durable blue bushes.



Unfortunately, both these items, along with the replacement of a power steering hose that looked a bit old, made it to the 'on the road' list too, on the basis that they were not essential on our romp through Europe towards the more challenging terrain beginning in Kazakhstan.

If anyone asked us at this stage of the preparation, what three tips we had for anyone thinking of preparing their own vehicle for overlanding on this scale, they would have to be:

1. Bulk-buy some high quality nuts, locknuts, bolts, washers and plate washers from an engineering company before starting your build – we didn't, and spent a fortune

We didn't need the weighbridge to find out what we already knew: we would be doing some more ditching

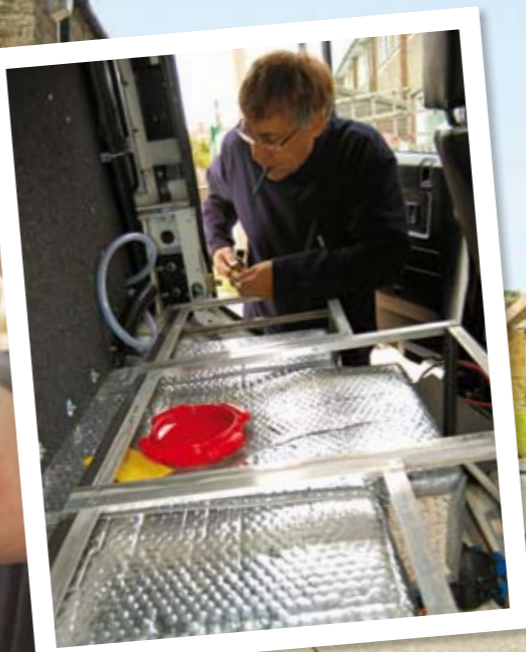
in B&Q and Wickes on fasteners of unknown quality and doubtful strength.

2. Plan your major structural changes and systems such as bulkheads, auxiliary fuel and water set ups, and auxiliary wiring looms together at the very start of your project, and execute them as one combined stage in the build – we decided to do each one as funds were available, and ended up with several re-works and minor mistakes which cost us time, money, and

patience with each other.

3. Land Rover spend a fortune on developing engineering solutions that will work well in most conditions, so don't overdo your mechanical modifications – parts will be far easier to find on the road if they are standard Land Rover parts. An example of this is shock absorbers – fitting standard HD Land Rover units and treating them as consumables at £20 each, makes more sense than fitting expensive aftermarket ones which have invariably been designed to work in specific markets or parts of the world, and are possibly untested in others.

With our window for departure



from the Russian Far East being squeezed tighter and tighter we took the plunge, let the house and booked the ferry tickets. Working eighteen hour days we cleared the house, prepared it for the new tenants, moved out and handed the keys over to the estate agents. They say pride comes before a fall. In this case our pride at having generally got rid of so much of our personal possessions while fundraising for our trip, was eclipsed when we finally got everything that was to go



**Main**  
*No turning back now as the house is let to new tenants.*

**Below left**  
*Building the framework for the second row luggage platform around the insulated water tank.*

into storage into one of Paul's mum's bedrooms. Instead of being in just one room in one person's house it's now spread around a bit more. We know there's stuff in there we could have got rid of, stuff we won't want when we get back, but somehow still seems important now. We get a bit philosophical at this point. How will our lives, our outlooks, and our priorities change as we undertake to live out of a Land Rover for the next eighteen months?

#### bon voyage

After some final sorting out of some paperwork and five hours sleep, and with four hours to boarding the ferry Paul began the final packing sequence. By some miracle (and with a little more ditching) it all went in. We didn't need to go to the weighbridge to find out what we already knew. We knew we would be doing some re-packing and some more ditching the other side of the Channel but for now we've made it to Port Ramsgate on time for a photo-shoot with the local press and some tearful family goodbyes.

As the clock struck 1.30pm we set sail on a calm grey day, looking forward to a relaxing four hour ferry trip, reading maps, planning routes, writing articles for **LRM** and contemplating how we're going to find the cooker, bedding and toiletry bags before the end of the day. Let the overlanding commence. **LRM**