

# Off-road lady

**Lora O'Brien came across an interesting Discovery, with an even more interesting owner on the school run recently. Enter Lynda McIlroy...**

**Y**ou are bored. Just another rainy Monday morning, dropping the kids to school before you head for work. Waiting at the gates, watching your little ones scamper safely inside, your head is abruptly turned by the vision that slides to a halt a few feet away.

A 1994 Discovery, 300 Tdi. Colour uncertain, due to the mud, caked and dripping in the downpour, running in rivulets over the Michelin XZL 235x85R16 MT tyres and with the wheel arches trimmed right back to accommodate those monsters!

No side steps, or even bumpers, for better off-

road clearance, and a quick check underneath reveals diff guards front and back, and a snug steering guard. It sports a roof rack from an old Series III that would hold as much camping gear as anyone could want. And a CB aerial. Seriously kitted out for serious off-road action, which it has obviously seen over the weekend. As the rain starts to wash this vision of Land Roverness cleaner, the multiple scratches and dents in the once pristine body tell their own tale; one of action and adventure. Parked there beside the shiny town 4x4s, it's showing them all how a Land Rover really should look.

## School run

The pre-school scramble inside the vehicle is done, and the door opens. Two boys are hustled out, followed by the driver. She grins as she notices your double-take on seeing her, and politely pretends not to notice the line of drool you've leaked out because of her Land Rover.

Lynda McIlroy is from Carrickfergus in County Down, Northern Ireland. She's been a member of the Northern Ireland Land Rover Club for about two years now. She is very much involved in the local scene; attending an event every fortnight, a monthly meeting, and at least four weekend camping events during the summer. She is the only lady driver about 90 percent of the time, though she reckons the lads in her club would love to see more lady drivers. Perhaps for reasons best left unsaid, in some cases!

Lynda's first Discovery met with an unfortunate end. A low-loader lorry pulled out into her lane, while she was overtaking. As he braked, the 30 tonne pile-driving machine he was carrying came off the truck bed and right onto her Disco. She was pushed across the road, into the oncoming traffic, narrowly



**Nasty. At least the passengers were all right!**



**What the Discovery was made for!**



missing a head-on with another truck.

### Sanity

When she got the current Disco, Lynda says she had a hard time driving anywhere. The interior was so similar to the first one that it just brought back horrific memories every time she climbed in. But she says of the vehicle, "she and I have conquered a lot together". With the painful passing of Lynda's mother after the suffering of Alzheimer's came the decision to create a life of her own.

She left her husband, but kept the Discovery. She was angry, too, that her driving confidence had been taken away from her. So, when she met up with an old friend from the club about three months later, who suggested she get involved again, she did - with her sons (then aged 12 and 2) right there with her. The addiction began, for her and for her boys, and now every dent and scratch in that Disco bears witness to the endless fun and achievement of a life with Land Rovers.

Much has changed since



Lynda getting away from it all, with her Disco, of course!

then, with the vehicle and with her. Originally there were side steps, bumpers, lovely bodywork, spotlessly clean interiors, and other

luxuries; such as door handles - quite different from its current look. The lady herself has learned much on the matter of off-

road driving, with the encouragement and coaching of her fellow club members, and is continually amazed by what her Disco can actually do.

Lynda has basic knowledge of what to do in a breakdown, but other than that does not maintain her own vehicle. For this, she is eternally grateful to many people. A whole club full of men who just shake their heads when she asks for help, but of course still do it. A lovely boyfriend, who gets well paid for his labour in bacon butties and roast dinners.

She also gives credit to two businesses in particular, 4x4 Store and BLRC, who have never let her down and have kept her driving even when money was tight going through her divorce. She says they all kept her off-roading through the bad times, which was entirely necessary, as off-roading was "my escape and my sanity. Yes, I said sanity.

"No matter what is going on in my personal life - especially through the divorce, losing Mum, and the court case after the accident - going out to an event is my escape. When I am out, I just forget it all and have pure fun, it's a total escape. The confidence I have gained in this very male orientated sport has led me to be stronger in my personal life, to deal with all I have had to face."

Lynda feels that the last two years have been nearly the best of her life, due to the off-roading. She hates driving cars and would forgive her Disco anything. Being so sure of what it can do, and the abuse it can take, adds to the safety factor.

In her own words, "I reckon I will still be driving some sort of old Land Rover when I am on my pension!" ■