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The most money raised by a single team has been £5000. 'We'll beat that,' declared Chris

Readers' Land Rovers

Tales of your Land Rovers and how they've been modified and improved to suit your needs

Their name's Mud – and they're proud of it

Sometimes vehicles just aren't up to the jobs they're being used for. And sometimes that applies to Land Rovers. Graeme Elliott bought a three-door 1.8-litre Freelander for getting mountain bikes and friends to MTB

sites. When the head gasket on this failed (ironically, two days after the Watchdog report about the very same failures) he was given a Td4 as a courtesy car and never gave it back. The only problem was it was too nice to spoil by loading it full of filthy

mountain bikes, so the Freelander became history and Graeme bought the nine-seater Defender. With a dog guard fitted behind the rear seats, four mountain bikes can be secured inside and the Land Rover left locked up in the knowledge that the bikes are unlikely to go walkies. So, with the primary purpose for buying it completed, Graeme started to turn his attention to using the Land Rover off-road. He started to enter tyro and RTV trials with the Scottish

Off-road Club and Scottish Land Rover Owners' Club and then decided to look further afield. He had heard about the Macmillan 4x4 UK Challenge and decided, with his brother Chris, to enter the 2007 event under the name Team Mud. Now, being a charity event, getting sponsorship was the order of the day. Graeme and Chris looked through the amounts that previous competitors had raised and found the highest by a single team was about £5000. 'We'll beat that,' declared Chris – and set about raising the cash. Some of the money has been raised through straightforward sponsorship, with Rocket Fuel Vodka being the main sponsor, while other companies have donated goods or services to be sold in aid of the charity. These include two Land Rover holidays in the Alps with Alpine

Vehicle: 2000 Td5 Defender 110 County Station Wagon
Owner: Graeme Elliott, Edinburgh

Rovers, an ECU remap by Td5 Alive, CG seatbelt locks and a weekend's use of a sports car – more info on www.macmillan4x4.co.uk (or you can call Chris on 07734 181170). As we went to press, Team Mud had raised about £3600, so are well on their way. They now even have Team Mud buffs for sale – a snip at £11.99.

That's the sponsor, not what goes in the tank



The 110 has been heavily accessorised since Graeme bought it. He's fitted underside protection, a full-length roof rack, an A-bar and auxiliary lights, North American-spec rear lights, LED bulbs and lots of chequerplate. On the inside, creature comforts have been enhanced by an uprated stereo and better speakers. The rear load area is enclosed with guards over all of the windows and a dog guard – a boon, considering the value of the mountain bikes. The engine has received a couple of modifications in the form of an exhaust gas recirculation bypass and a K&N air filter, both of which seem to have improved the diesel's midrange performance. Plastered with stickers, the 110 is certainly easy to spot and stands out as being a useful bit of kit.



Room inside for four bikes...



...and even more on the roof



Team Mud even have their own range of buffs

If you can't beat 'em...

Keeping it in the family could be one way of describing it. Shortly after Chris's brother Graeme bought his 110 (see main story, left) Chris set out to get his own Defender. Unlike Graeme, though, Chris hadn't owned one previously, although he had always fancied one. Living in rural Northern Ireland, he encounters plenty of them on the road – and there's a wealth in the dealerships, too. So, it wasn't long before Chris had his own Defender – complete with several inches of mud coating the chassis. A bit of elbow grease and a while spent with a jet wash unearthed a decent and solid Land Rover underneath all that grime... and the 90 hard top was ready to start earning its keep. Chris was just about to move house at the time and the Defender was ideal for carting boxes around – without worrying about ruining its interior. But it's the jobs that normal cars can't do where the 90 excels. Chris's fiancée, Lynda, is a horse eventer so needs to get to the shows – and guess what gets the job of hauling the trailer around the winding roads? On top of this, Chris has been bitten by the off-roading bug. He's joined the Northern Ireland Land Rover Club and has competed in a few RTV trials and forest runs. The Land Rover was standard when he bought it but, like Graeme, he's

Vehicle: 1991 Defender 90
Owner: Chris Elliott, Northern Ireland

gradually enhancing it. High-level rear brake lights make sense on the road, while bucket seats and underside protection make sense off it. He also has plans to fit some mud tyres and add a winch (which may just have got him out of the bother he landed himself in in the big pic below). Chris drives a company car for much of the time, covering about 30,000 miles a year as he dashes from one appointment to another. He finds it great just to jump into the Defender and trundle around the coastal roads enjoying the beautiful scenery – of which there's no shortage in this lovely part of the world. The Defender also has a role in Team Mud's fundraising efforts: Chris is well-placed to get Irish-based sponsors on board as the guys go flat-out to beat that five-grand target.



Ulster high: trialling in Northern Ireland



Now you know why he's planning to get a winch



Santa's big red helper

Health and safety is always an issue when reaching high places, so what sturdier platform can there be than a Series Land Rover roof? Nigel eschewed the more traditional ladder in favour of the Land Rover for removing his Christmas decorations. When Nigel bought the ex-military 88-inch about 12 years ago, it still had some of the baggage of its army life attached, including infra-red-mode lighting and a plethora of military switches on the fascia. It also had

Vehicle: 1982 Series III petrol
Owner: Nigel Spencer, Rutland

the standard military leather swivel gaiters that had done such a good job of protecting the chrome ball, it still doesn't need replacing. Nigel also uses the Series III to move materials and machinery round the extensive parkland as part of his weekend hobby of helping to run the Stapleford Miniature Railway near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

It's downhill all the way from here



Mountain-biking Rob uses his Defender to get himself to some of the better trails around. Downhill mountain biking is a particular passion, and the Land Rover pays its way by delivering him safely to the start line, wherever that happens to be. It also makes the journey to and from the events very enjoyable.

Vehicle: 1993 200Tdi
Defender 90
Owner: Rob Gibb, Hull

The 90 is standard at the moment, but Rob will be kitting out the bonnet with chequerplate, creating a makeshift viewing platform for watching races when it's not his turn.

When one Disco V8 just ain't enough



Vehicle: Discovery 1 V8
Owner: Graham Seal, Essex

Never one to miss out on the chance of driving off-tarmac, Graham dragged his brother and father out for a bit of greenlaning while visiting family in Devon.

The Seals certainly like their big-petrol-engined Land Rovers: all three

Discos are 300-series V8s with Graham's (the front one) and his dad's (middle) having LPG conversions. They're otherwise pretty standard. Graham can't get enough V8 – he also has a 1989 110 on gas and a petrol Series II truck cab for trialling.

Discovery's in it for the long haul

Vehicle: 1996 300Tdi
Discovery XS
Owner: Robert Sibbald, Galashiels

Robert spent a quarter of a century using Land Rovers in the Army and then with Scottish Power, during which time he had to battle through blizzards to repair power lines. This experience made him realise how safe, hard-working and reliable the vehicles are and what ideal towcars they make. His Discovery XS certainly makes light work of pulling his 24-foot twin-axle caravan. With more than 150,000 miles on the clock and a new cylinder head and timing belt, the Discovery should see another 150,000-mile service.

