

Free hand

What happens when you give a Land Rover specialist an unspecified brief to build you a subtle but fully renovated 90? Simon Hodder finds out...





the company's owner Terry Hayward was happy to be given a free hand to come up with a vehicle that ticked all those boxes.

In some ways, having such a free hand is more difficult than working to a tight brief, and despite all his experience, I think Terry was quite relieved when the customer, William James, liked what he'd done! So just what did he do?

Chassis

For a start, the watchword was "Keep things simple, and keep things relatively standard". Having said that, some major changes were on the cards to the base vehicle, including a new engine, some suspension mods and brake upgrades.

The chassis was stripped, blasted and repaired as necessary, and ended up being as good as new. It was then carefully primed and painted in the same green that was destined for the body panels. Chassis are generally painted black, or left with the galvanising exposed, so colour coding the chassis with the body makes for a relatively unusual look. It works very well.

The axles were given the same treatment as the chassis, and the finished result is very pleasing. The axles' internals were all replaced with the same components found in the axles on Td5 models to cope with the added torque of the non-standard engine – more on that in a bit. In keeping with the overall aims of the owner, despite being upgraded, the axle internals are still standard Land Rover parts. The steering and suspension components – radius arms, rear axle A-frame and the like – were given the same treatment as the chassis: stripped and blasted, repaired, primed then repainted. This time they were all finished in silver, to give some contrast to the green chassis and bodywork. New SuperPro polyurethane bushes were used all round.

With the chassis taking shape, new brake pipes all round were laid into place, and the newly refurbished



suspension parts were added. Shocks and springs were all new, of course, and Terry opted for Terrafirma items here. These are silver coloured, and match up beautifully with all the other silver-coloured metal work on the underside. Brake discs were replaced with slotted and grooved ventilated discs at the front, while drums were retained at the rear.

Engine

Next in was the engine and transmission. A standard Land Rover R380 box was to be used, but this was mated to a Mitsubishi 2.8 diesel turbo.

Attention to detail is everything if you want to create something special. The combination of silver ironwork and green chassis is a nice touch

From a distance you might be forgiven for thinking that this 90 is a very nice example of an ex-MoD vehicle. You would be quite wrong, though. It just happens to look that way, the result of a customer asking Hayward 4x4 to build him a completely subtle, understated yet capable vehicle.

The 90 is to be used for towing a boat and taking part in shoots around Norfolk, as well as for general driving duties, so nothing outlandish or extreme was wanted, yet it had to be perfectly at home both on-road and off. However, it also had to be well built, and in effect a brand new vehicle. No problems there then, because that's something that Hayward 4x4 have been providing for customers for many years, and





Terry didn't set out to create a military-style vehicle, but it developed out of the need to create a really nice 90 that would simply blend in and not look special

Terry says that it's really simple to mate the two together. With the engine in place, the fully refurbished and painted bulkhead could go back in. All of a sudden a Defender began to emerge from the pile of parts!

Before the body panels were refitted, all the usual bits were fixed to the bulkhead – steering column, brake master cylinder,

pedal assemblies, wiring loom, and so on. At last the body could be built up. With the panels all pre-painted, and with new galvanised inner front wings, progress was swift at this point.

The finishing touches always make or break a project, at least as far as it is perceived by those not involved in the build, and you have to be careful not to

overdo the detailing – specially if the customer has asked for low-key!

The front end looks pretty standard, apart from a simple alloy steering guard. The rear end has some nice subtle touches. Military-style rear lights have been used, and these look so much more modern than the standard Defender light units they replace. The rear



That Mitsubishi engine

Mitsubishi's 2.8-litre (2835cc) 4M40 diesel engine was introduced to the UK in 1994 as one of the options for the second-generation Shogun model. It also powered a whole range of other Mitsubishi models, such as the Delica MPV and several light trucks and pick-ups. Typical tune is 123 bhp at 4000 rpm and 215 lb ft at 2000 rpm. It's a four-cylinder that's both turbocharged and intercooled.



Nothing went back onto the 90 unless it had been carefully prepared. The paint has been applied extremely well; it's better than on most brand-new models from a dealer!



On the move

The Mitsubishi engine sounds very different to the Land Rover Tdi, and it has a good amount of poke, too. This Defender is really quite lively. In this configuration, you can very clearly hear the turbo doing its work, but that's not a fault, just a characteristic.

The ride is firm without being harsh, and there's virtually no body roll when cornering. The heater actually works, which is always a plus in the middle of winter! As we made our way around the old

air base at Fakenham in Norfolk, traditional home to Hayward 4x4, it quickly became obvious that there were no rattles or squeaks being generated by the crumbling, bumpy roads, and the general noise levels inside the cab were actually a lot lower than I'd expected.

So, would William have been better off spending his money on a new Defender, rather than a restored older one? Absolutely not, in my opinion. This vehicle is a hand-crafted, made-to-order special, not a mass-produced factory product.

This one has none of the complexities of its modern brothers, and in the unlikely event that it develops any warranty-style problems in the coming years, there'll be no arguing and debating with unhelpful dealers and uncaring warranty companies; the owner simply has to have a chat with the man who built it and they'll be sorted.

One day, perhaps all cars will be built this way. ■



Hayward 4x4 have just moved to new premises. Their new contact details are:
Hayward 4x4, Hempton Road, Fakenham NR21 7LA.
Tel: 01328 853541
Mobile: 07747 024286
Web: www.hayward4x4.com