



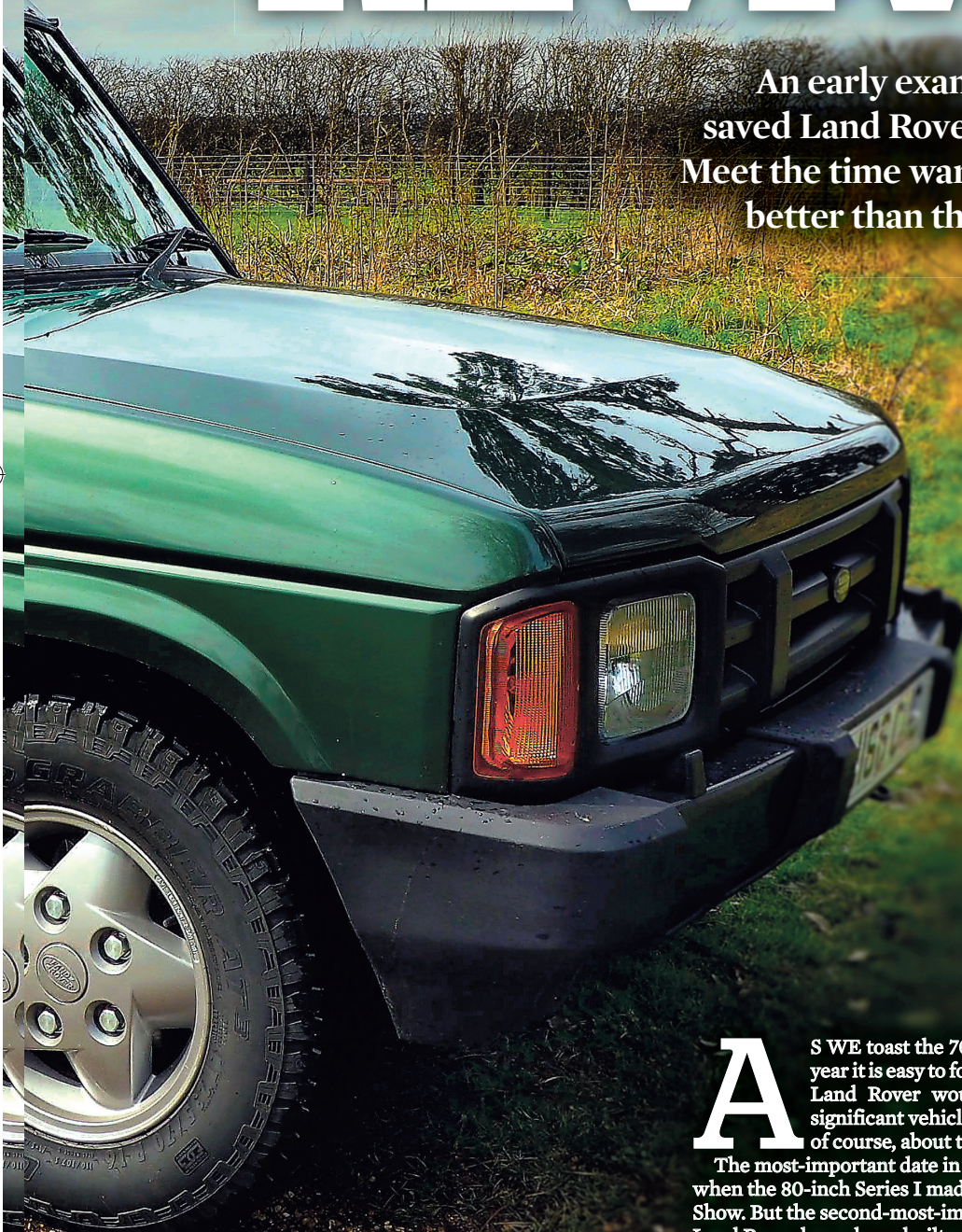
[Restored 1992 Discovery]





DISCO REVIVAL

An early example of the vehicle that saved Land Rover has itself been saved. Meet the time warp Discovery that looks better than the day it left the factory



AS WE toast the 70th birthday of our favourite vehicle this year it is easy to forget that the success story that is modern Land Rover wouldn't have happened but for another significant vehicle launch nearly 30 years ago. I'm talking, of course, about the Discovery.

The most-important date in Land Rover history was April 30, 1948, when the 80-inch Series I made its debut at the Amsterdam Motor Show. But the second-most-important was September 12, 1989. The Land Rover legend was built on solid foundations in 1948, but without the launch of the original Discovery at the Frankfurt Motor Show the company would probably have collapsed.

Story and Pictures: Dave Phillips





Interior of the early Discos (1989-1994) was created by Sir Terence Conran



The man behind the six-month restoration runs Hayward Revive

“Discovery went on to become Land Rover's top-selling model and best-selling 4x4 in Europe”

Back in the mid-1980s, Land Rover was in imminent danger of going the same way as companies like Austin, Morris, Wolseley, Hillman and Riley – just some of the once-proud British motor manufacturers that had either died or were in their death throes. Land Rover had just two products – the workhorse Ninety/One Ten and the top-end Range Rover – at a time when the best-selling 4x4s were Japanese SUVs aimed at the leisure market.

Land Rover knew it needed a new mid-range presence, but couldn't afford to design and build an all-new model from scratch. However, under the inspired leadership of MD Tony Gilroy it cobbled together a model based upon the chassis, axles, drivetrain and suspension of the Range Rover. To keep costs down, it used Morris Marina door handles, Maestro van rear lights and Sherpa van headlamps.

But nobody noticed these concessions, because the design and engineering of the bodywork and interior were inspired. Discovery went on to become not just Land Rover's top-selling model, but the best-selling 4x4 in Europe. It literally saved the company – and no wonder, because it was brilliant.

Those of us of a certain age remember the advent of the Discovery with fondness. It was distinctive and stood out from the crowd – and still does. Although the first-generation Disco went out of production 20 years ago, there are still plenty left on the road. I drive one myself as an everyday car but, like most surviving Discoverys, it is a careworn and shabby reminder of how beautiful those early models were.

Today, though, I am transported back in time as I gaze in wonder at an immaculate 1992 Discovery that looks even better than the day it left the factory. Its Carrigada Green metallic paintwork gleams in the weak sunshine and it looks totally at home in the stunning setting of the Earl of Leicester's Holkham Hall estate. It is a very lucky vehicle, because it was bought new by a wealthy owner who kept it totally original, then, when it got too rusty, kept it under cover in a barn for a few years. Finally, when he decided to restore it, he handed it over to a man at the top of his game.

Six months later, that man has finished his labour of love and is about to hand over the keys to its owner. But before that, he invited me across to see his latest masterpiece. That



Terry took it back to bare metal and removed the bodyshell from the chassis



man is Terry Hayward, who runs Hayward Revive near Fakenham, in North Norfolk.

As the name of his company suggests, Terry specialises in breathing new life into old Land Rovers – and when he was handed this Discovery project he was thrilled. That's because Terry is a genuine Land Rover enthusiast. He's got bronze-green blood coursing through his veins and he knows the significance of the original Discovery in saving the marque from extinction.

"When I took on this Discovery restoration, people didn't get it," says Terry. "They said if it had been a lovely old Range Rover Classic, they would have understood, but to them an old Disco was something to be either scrapped or turned into an off-roader."

"They don't understand the significance of early Discoverys. I have a soft spot for them because they saved the company. They are also much more usable than Range Rovers. They are as versatile as ever and people are finally beginning to see that. Prices are starting to rise and they will be very collectable soon – it's just a matter of time."

Talking of time, Terry recalls the moment he started work on this vehicle, six months ago: "The owner bought it new back in 1992. He called me and asked me to get it back on the road in the condition it was when he bought it. It had been sat in a barn for two or three years, but I connected up a new battery and it started first turn of the key."

"It was an honest vehicle. It hadn't been messed around, which is rare. It was all there, although some of the stuff that was still there wasn't in very good condition. Rust was the biggest problem – rotten sills, inner wings, boot floor – you name it. So I took it back to bare metal and removed the body shell from the chassis, the old-fashioned way."

"The bodywork was the hardest part of the job, and involved some work on the aluminium panels, too. But the quality and thickness of the old aluminium is so much better than the stuff you get today. It was a joy to work with. Just about all the steel was rusty, but it won't rust again. I injected wax inside every single cavity and then used another product that coats everything with a film to keep water out. It's called Owatrol and is used on North Sea oil platforms. It's made in France and it's brilliant. It sprays on clear, so you use it anywhere on the bodywork."



Availability of interior parts for early Discovery models is poor, especially trim



[Restored 1992 Discovery]



Care has been taken to keep everything as original as possible

Despite the fact it had only covered 64k, the V8 was rebuilt

Mechanically the vehicle was sound – as you’d expect from a car that had only covered 64,000 miles in its life – but the V8 petrol engine was rebuilt anyway, with new bearings and piston rings. The LT77 manual gearbox was in perfect order – no surprise from such a bulletproof unit.

The interior of the early Discoverys (1989 to 1994) was created by top 1980s designer Sir Terence Conran (of Habitat fame). For the first year it came in only one colour – Sonar Blue – but from 1990 onwards a second colour,

Bahama Beige, was available. The latter was the option chosen by this Discovery’s owner.

Despite such a limited choice of interior colour schemes, availability of parts is poor. “The biggest problem in vehicles of this age is replacing trim, internal and external,” says Terry. “There isn’t much old new stock left and most of it is unavailable. I spent so much time trying to get hold of silly little items like new door cards. Mostly it was a case of using cannibalised material from other scrapped Discoverys; stuff like window seals and door mechanisms however are really difficult to find, but I wanted to keep everything as original as possible.”

The very early Discoverys didn’t come with a cubby box, but had a removable picnic hamper (finished in the same material as the seats) between the front seats. Most owners of these vehicles soon fitted aftermarket cubby boxes and most of the picnic bags were lost, but remarkably this vehicle still had its original hamper, albeit a bit tatty. At the time of my visit, it was away at the trimmers, being repaired with recycled seat material.

Also original are the alloy wheels, which were immaculate and didn’t require much work to get them looking as-new.

The end result is a stunning vehicle that is testament to Terry’s art, as well as the foresight of the owner (who wishes to remain anonymous) in deciding to restore it. What was once an ordinary Discovery has become extraordinary.

HAYWARD REVIVE

Our thanks to Terry Hayward and his staff at Hayward Revive for allowing us access to this vehicle. For more information, go to haywardrevive.com. Hayward Revive, Unit 1, Creake Business Park, South Creake, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 9JB. Email: enquiries@haywardrevive.com. Tel: 01328 823882.

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