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Billings and Wild Wales 2003
Peter Monk

Last spring and summer my job took me to the UK, so I bought a Land Rover. Now I'm the proud owner of a Series IIa 109 station wagon (perhaps that should be a IIc since it has a Series III chassis and a military engine). After some difficulty locating a reliable garage to fix the brakes I found myself with a working Land Rover that needed to be exercised. My daughter Catherine and I duly embarked on a prolonged safari to Wales. First we drove from London to the Billing Land Rover show. Unfortunately our trip took us past Silverstone where the F1 Grand Prix was underway, and so a short trip turned into a 3 hour crawl. Did I also mention that the 109 doesn't have an overdrive or a headlining? Also the first summer heat-wave was in full swing.

We arrived early enough at Billing to avoid the traffic (arrive before 9:00AM if you ever decide to go there), and spent a happy morning buying odds and ends. Most of the stalls feature new equipment, but it was neat to see all the accessories on display. The club stands were also worth a visit and this year the Camel Club stand really attracted our attention – the sunken Defender with an arm waving from the foaming water showed a lot of originality as you can tell from the first picture.

Figure 1: Camel Club Stand at Billings 2003

After a civilized lunch by the lake, we reluctantly climbed back into the 109 (it has military shackles so "climb" is correct) and departed for Aberdovey on the coast in mid-Wales. After 5 hours and 4 liters of oil we arrived at our B&B exhausted, cooked, deaf but fairly comfortable due to the new Exmoor seats (they are rather hard compared to the old elephant hides).

The Welsh countryside around Aberdovey and inland towards Machynlleth is very attractive with bleak rocky hills. Next morning, we met Vince Cobley of the LRO Adventure Club (with his striking 110 County Station Wagon) in the main car-park together with about 20 other vehicles (later we formed two groups). I was a bit nervous having never off-roaded in a 109 (particularly not this 109), and my nerves weren't helped by the fact that the only other Series vehicle was a rather serious looking SIII 88. Before starting Vince warned us of some trail features needing special care, reminded us of convoy discipline, and without further ado we set out. Our first crisis occurred in Aberdovey when we stopped on a very steep hill. A Disco pulled up close behind, and that fact, plus nerves plus an oiled hand brake and pathetic 2.25 lump made for an exciting white knuckle start! Fortunately this was the only true crisis of the day!



FIGURE 1: CAMEL CLUB STAND AT BILLINGS 2003

We immediately joined a green-lane with some fairly steep sections (but excellent surface) to the neighboring village where we started the first main trail. This was the best of the day, with rocks, ruts and water. Considerable care was needed not to modify the rear bodywork. As time went by I came to appreciate the 109. The SAT tires that had annoyed us so much the day before seemed much more purposeful on the green-lane and we easily trundled over sections that I wouldn't have attempted without peer pressure from the convoy. Unlike most off-roading I have done in the US there were very few stops or photo ops, just mile after mile of beautiful, savage countryside and the smell of EP90.

"This was the best of the day, with rocks, ruts and water."



Figure 2 Disco at the top of a slippery climb
All day my companion Catherine didn't have an easy time. With hubs locked the 109 has very bad vibrations from the front axle unless in 4WD. So every time we went from green lane to road, she had to jump out and unlock the hubs. Then on joining the green lane again, she was out again to lock them. This happened a lot.

Figure 3: Following the SIII



Figure 2 Disco at the top of a slippery climb

through rocks
By 11:00 we finished this trail and arrived at the historic town of Machynlleth. We then faced a 45 minute road drive south to forestry land just north of Aberystwth. This



Figure 3. Following the Sill through rocks

proved exciting because the 109 suddenly decided to pull hard to the left, and later to the right during braking – maybe due to water in the drums. I should have mentioned the rain had started mid-morning (and would not stop for another 10 days – the full time of our visit to Wales as it turned out).



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Figure 4: Rain on the forestry run

The second green lane was easier in general although we had our only difficulty of the afternoon when I had to take a second shot at a climb up a badly rutted section of the lane. Passing a number of mountain bikers we finally arrived at a forestry rest area for lunch at around 2:30.

Figure 5: Catherine, Vince Cobley and the 109

At this point Catherine and I decided to leave the convoy since they were to do another hour of laning in a direction taking them far away (by ordinary road) from our ultimate goal: my parent's house. So after a quick photo-op, we departed.



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The rest of the holiday included a trip to the local garage (which turned out to be the best place of all for repairs that I found in the UK), a visit to a local Land Rover guru with around 30 series vehicles in a field, meeting a Series 1 truck cab long wheelbase being used to provision a local microbrewery (now that is good taste) and a burst heater hose on the way home. All in all we had a great Land Rover adventure.

If you want to try a Wild Wales trip contact Vince Cobley at the LRO Adventure Club (see any issue of the magazine for details) or email roevents@aol.com. I found him very accommodating (he allowed us to join a two day outing at the start of the second day).

➤ Read on

tech tips

1995 - 2002 Range Rover 4.0 & 4.6

There is a message displayed on the instrument cluster that states the windows are not set. This will occur anytime the battery was disconnected. The windows will need to be reset. The procedure for resetting is, press the window switch to lower the window and continue holding for an additional 2 seconds after the window reaches the bottom, then raise the window all the way up and continue holding for an additional 2 seconds after the window reaches the top. This will need to be performed for each of the windows including the sunroof. The sunroof requires a 3rd motion after running it all the way back and then forward you must raise it to the tilt position and then close, remembering to hold the switch for 2 seconds at the end of each motion.

-Bob Jackson

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R.O.V.E.R.S. (ROVERS Club) is an incorporated Land Rover club (Series Land Rover, Range Rover, Defender, Discovery and Freelander) serving the Mid-Atlantic region (including Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware and New Jersey). Membership is open to all Land Rover enthusiasts. The club plans and participates in off-road events, picnic, rallies, car shows and shop days. We also publish a newsletter *The Fairlead* six times a year.