

# green lanes

The magazine of the Green Lane Association

Summer 2023

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*Promoting inclusive countryside access for all*





Kensworth, Bedfordshire, Jordan Johnson



# Up front

And here it is... the summer edition of Green Lanes. Once again, thanks to all of you that have taken the time to contribute - it's certainly made a great issue, and it's been a pleasure to put it together for you.

It was very sad to hear of the demise of Land Rover Owner (LRO) Magazine, and quite a shock. I was, once again, fortunate to have been in a recent edition, and even more fortunate to be granted permission to use some of the photographs from the day's shoot in this issue (hence my truck on the cover... note we weren't speeding, just a slow exposure). So my heartfelt thanks goes out to Jordan Butters (photographer), LRO and most of all to Neil Watterson who has promoted sensible and responsible laning for many, many years. I wish him every success in his future endeavours.

I hope you all enjoy this issue and if so, perhaps it will encourage you to put pen to paper and submit an article for the next issue.

**Dale Wyatt**, Editor

Cover: **Jordan Butters**



**Steve Nelson**

**SUBMISSION DEADLINES:**  
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Summer issue: No later than 20 March



**Editor:** Dale Wyatt  
**Email:** editor@glass-uk.org  
Articles and submissions for future issues of this magazine should be sent to the editor on the email listed above.

Members and Affiliated Clubs who wish to have an event published in the magazine or on the website, please contact me on the above email address.

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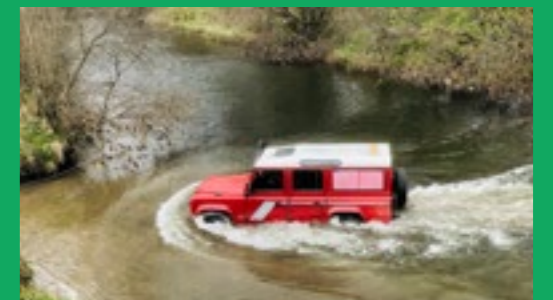


Taking my niece, Avah, for her first green laning experience up Deadman's Hill, North Yorkshire, Shaun Drabble.

## Green lane holidays in mid Wales

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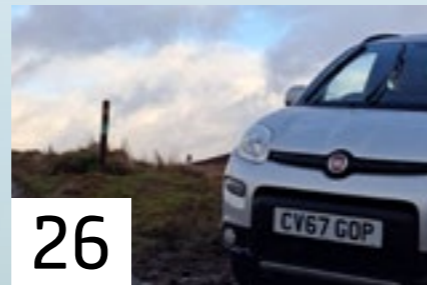
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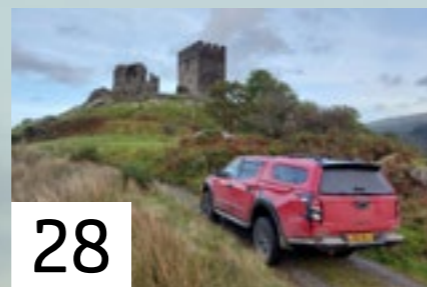
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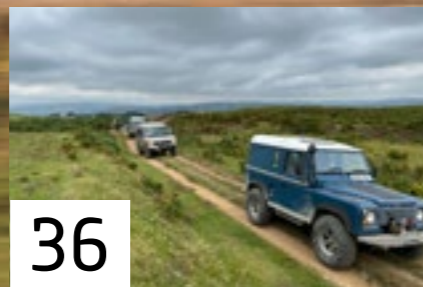
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# view from the chair

After the AGM in December the process of implementing new rules and structures began. Then sadly we heard of Matt's passing, our previous Chair, which came as a shock to us all. He will be greatly missed. At that time we paused our work load to reflect on, and morn his loss, and pay our respects.

With the Chair's position

vacant on the board, I was duly elected into this position by my fellow Directors at our February Director's meeting.

You will start to notice the many changes being made in the coming months. The executive committee has now been disbanded and has been replaced with a larger board of directors which is supported by a new management team. Further

changes include setting up a new dedicated legal team to cover the ever increasing legal action required to protect our rights.

More updates to TW2 are on the way and we are also looking at refreshing our website.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our magazine and that you all have a great summer.

**Rob Tongue**, Chair



# getting back to nature

**I was always an active, healthy person; my favourite thing was taking long walks; woodlands, beaches, fields - anywhere. As long as I was enjoying the countryside, I was happy. So when my mobility took a nose dive, so did my mental health.**

Words and pictures: Tamara Villette

Photography is my hobby, and with nature being my favourite subject, the two things went hand in hand. I could walk for hours. My husband, Colin, enjoys walking too and his hobby is radio controlled cars, in particular, 1:10 scale 4x4 crawler vehicles, and he would meet with friends and visit parks and the countryside. Whilst they tackled rocks, ranches and more with their miniature 4x4s, I could take photographs of the flora and fauna. Colin had always wanted a real 4x4 vehicle - he would always refer to them as 1:1! He'd mentioned green lanes, but I didn't know much about them, and at the time it didn't interest me much; we could walk in the countryside.

Several years ago, I started to experience issues with my lower back. Progressively, the condition worsened, to the point of needing surgery for relief. Unfortunately, this didn't last long, and my pain and mobility started to worsen again. I had courses of steroid injections into my spine, nerve blocking injections too, but these

didn't help. Things progressed and I ended up relying on a walking stick to aid my mobility.

I remember the last time I tried to go for a short walk with Colin at a local country park. After a few minutes, I was in too much pain. We had to go back to our car, which I was struggling to get in and out of, due to the low ride and seat positioning.

I remember breaking down in tears the moment we got back into the car. What would I do now? I had no way to get out and enjoy the outdoors which I loved so much, and in turn, I had nothing to photograph. My mental health took a huge hit. I struggled to find any positives in life, and I was mourning the loss of my mobility, and my independence too.

I stayed home when Colin went out with friends and their RC cars. I had no other hobbies that I enjoyed; others I had tried to pick up had been fruitless. I got bored of them easily, I just wanted to be able to go out and about.

One time, he had been out with

friends in early 2022, when he came home, and he told me that his friend Dan had gotten a new car, a Toyota RAV4, and that Dan had mentioned he had joined the Green Lane Association, and wanted to check out some nearby green lanes. He knew Colin had been interested, so he offered to take him out, and experience them too.

This gave Colin the bug to finally get himself a 4x4. Within weeks, in March, we were travelling from our home town in Kettering to Chelmsford to view a Landrover Discovery 2. Of course he bought it, and it gained the name of Dave the Disco, named in memory of Colin's late Dad, David.

We arranged to go out with Dan, and experience some of the green lanes. He had used TrailWise2 to find local lanes and check their current status. I had no idea what to expect, but as soon as we started travelling along the first lane, I realised I had found a new passion, and the most perfect way to enjoy the countryside without any



additional pain, and without being held back by my mobility issues.

We also joined GLASS, and continued to regularly visit green lanes. We would meet up with other 4x4 owners who enjoyed the hobby, each person having fitted CB radios into their cars so we could all communicate easily.

We began exploring new areas. Dan would create map routes that we could follow using Google maps. Each time we went, I would photograph landscapes, any animals and insects we saw, and also the cars! I love photographing the cars on the lanes, whether they are being driven along a flat track with beautiful fields beyond, tackling some slightly more challenging ground or driving through a ford.

I wanted to be able to join in with the driving side of things, but

I only held a provisional licence, and the policy on Dave would not allow for learner drivers.

We had talked a lot about getting rid of our car for something I could drive too, controlling the clutch caused discomfort, so we came to the decision to get rid of it and find an automatic.

We bought a blue, automatic, Suzuki Jimny, which I had dubbed Juni the Jimny. I started driving her with my L plates, and with Colin, his daughter Keely, or Dan by my side as my accompanying qualified driver, I got to drive on the green lanes and experience it from another point of view. I'm taking my test this year - so I'll finally be more mobile and independent again.

We have travelled on green lanes in Northamptonshire,

Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Thetford forest, Grantham, Worcestershire and more. My favourite place has been the Peak District - the scenery there is completely unrivalled, truly stunning, and we saw so much wildlife too.

So now, we sometimes use Dave, sometimes Juni, or both if someone can accompany me. I love being a passenger, or a driver. Either way I'm experiencing the countryside and nature - the outdoors is definitely my happy place.

I realised recently that we had been driving on green lanes for an entire year. We both have a hobby we can share and enjoy together, especially as Colin was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia and has been struggling to walk far himself - it makes him very

fatigued. The pain and discomfort it causes him has worsened too.

We have visited new places, seen new things, made new friends, and created stronger bonds with existing ones, all thanks to this new hobby.

Many people perhaps don't realise how important it is for everyone to have access to the countryside, and it's so great that disabled people like me, can continue to do so by accessing the green lanes. On days when I am feeling particularly low, it never fails to lift my spirits. The countryside really can do wonders for mental health.

If you'd told me in January 2022 that I'd be able to get back out and enjoy nature, I wouldn't have believed you. It seemed impossible to me, yet here I am.





# SPTA

Salisbury Plain Training Area - a vast area roughly the size of the Isle of Wight that is home to one of Europe's busiest military training zones. It's also criss-crossed with byways - but with this access comes responsibility.

Words: Neil Watterson and Dale Wyatt

Pictures: With kind permission of Jordan Butters and LRO

Very late in 2022, I receive an email from Neil Watterson, a laning buddy of mine and ex-Editor of Land Rover Owner International magazine (now sadly defunct), asking me if I would be interested in joining him on Salisbury Plain to do an article with the MoD and DIO (Defense Organisation Infrastructure) about how they manage public access on the Plain. After many years working alongside the MoD on things like the waymarking project, it seemed only logical to say yes!

Skip forward a month and I'm heading out in my truck on a freezing cold January morning

heading for Tilshead Camp, a place more than familiar to me. After receiving our passes we drive into camp and arrive at the briefing room where we meet with Warrant Officer 1, Les French (who I've met before), and Warrant Officer 2, Rob Chisnall, to get the lowdown on green laning on Salisbury Plain. We are also joined by Kirsty Williams (a familiar face) who is External Communications Officer. Les and Rob have decades of experience on the training area, know every accessible part of it, and have dealt with every kind of incident on it too. It's one of the busiest military training areas in Europe.

'We can have 40-plus units and thousands of troops - both UK and international - training at any one time,' he tells me. 'When you're out there, you may not see them. A unit could be just 30 guys, or it could be 1,500 troops.' And what civilians do and how they behave can impact the training. We discuss other user groups before moving onto our user group.

'Green laners? As a rule, we have no problems. They might get slightly embarrassed navigation-wise, because it can be quite difficult,' says Les, reassuringly. 'It's the illegal off-roaders who come here to play and have

no intention of abiding by the bylaws or even the Road Traffic Act. Some of the vehicles aren't even legal. They're anti-social, they're dangerous, and they're not respecting the military training. They're also not respecting the general public - people like dog walkers and cyclists. That's where the problem lies - and, of course, they give everyone a bad name. We have the Ministry of Defence Police who monitor the training area. They hold warrant cards and have the same powers as civilian police: they can confiscate vehicles, and they do. They can issue Section 59 notices (for driving off the road,

and other things) and fines, so they have a massive impact on anti-social behaviour.'

Rogue motorcyclists also cause problems. 'The two-wheel off-roaders can get into the trees and interfere with training. We had an incident where I received reports of an illegal off-road camp on the training area during armour training at night, and when I went out to see them they complained about the training keeping them awake,' says Les, incredulously. 'Social media doesn't help - but we're able to counteract that now by telling people that what they've seen isn't correct.

'The troops are there to hide and not be seen. They'll put trip flares up and do other stuff in the woodblocks, and the bike will just come whizzing through. The woodblocks are out of bounds to all, except where a right of way runs through it. By interrupting the training, they're ultimately stopping the troops from protecting the country, because that's what they're practising on Salisbury Plain.'

But while green laners aren't causing much hassle, there are other things we could do better - and one of them is to stick to the track.





'As well as byways open to all traffic, the public can use the military roads where they're signed permissive byway,' explains Les. 'Most of the stone roads - we call them candy-stripes - can also be driven by the public, so there are plenty of non-tarmac roads to drive on. The problems come when people stray from them.'

'One area just off a byway used to be a mortar range,' says Rob. 'We had to call in bomb disposal to destroy two mortar rounds we found not far off the byway.'

That's why there are signs everywhere saying that, if you should find something, don't touch it. But the main problem comes from people driving off the track, churning up the ground.'

'When we've caught people doing it, they'll often say something like, "You've got all these tracked vehicles - weighing 60-70 tonnes - driving everywhere, so why can't I go where they go in my Land Rover?" But when they're training, it's planned and it's managed,

and we have to work with Natural England and other people to check the legality so we're keeping the area good for the environment. We'll assess the areas and if somewhere gets chewed up, we keep the military vehicles away from it and send them somewhere else,' Rob continues. 'The farmers will flatten any grass that has been turned over when tracked vehicles turn. Unfortunately, some 4x4 owners will see where others have been before them and drive the same spot again and again, and the result is that the topsoil gets eroded and the surrounding area is damaged. Some areas are Sites of Special Scientific Interest and they are under threat from inappropriate 4x4 use.'

That isn't just a problem with people driving in a way that many of us would understand as being off-piste; it can be caused by driving to the side of the right of way to avoid an obstacle. 'If the obvious track isn't passable - troughs forming in the valley bottom is an issue - find another route. Use the permissive-

byway military roads to get around it, or bypass it on a public right of way. Don't make the obstacle worse; there's always a route around,' implores Les.

'We also cover Voluntary Restraints (VR) which most of us will be familiar with and are generally marked up clearly in TW2. Heeding VRs makes a lot of sense as it means more draconian measures won't be taken.'

At this point we decide to get out on the ground and look at some of the problem areas. As well as straying off-piste, another problem is people being where they shouldn't be, such as the military cross-country driving area. 'It's a dedicated area for troops to hone their skills, and we don't want to do that across the whole area because we'll damage it,' explains Les. 'There are enough signs saying that there's no access for civilian vehicles, but unfortunately it is attractive to illegal off-roaders.'

Being white and red and emblazoned with 'Training Safety',

the team's 4x4s are deliberately conspicuous, but they do have other tools to keep an eye on the area, including drones. 'We bought them to keep people safe and we use them to assist the police with missing persons and supporting the fire brigade. Or we'll use them in an area where it's difficult or dangerous for people to go into. We can put the speaker on and shout 'follow me to a safe area' - which we have done before.

'On the enforcement side, they're mainly for capturing evidence, like registration numbers. It's a deterrent - some of the two-wheel community don't like being filmed.' If you see a drone up, it's likely to be a Training Safety one because the area is a no-fly zone for drones; in fact, you're not even allowed to fly kites due to low-flying aircraft.'

There's a whole raft of bylaws described at every entrance to the training area, and one that catches my eye is about trading on it - so how does that apply to paid green laning groups?

'A paid event can travel along a public right of way. Obviously, we would like them to tell us they're going to do it so we can advise them.'

'There may be a large armoured exercise on and we'd advise not doing it then - both activities will infringe on each other.' If a paid group wants to travel along the permissive roads, they will need a licence, which they will need to pay for. So as individuals or an unpaid group you get better access, but don't risk getting stuck. 'There is no recovery. We won't recover you - we're not allowed to,' explains Rob.

There is a balance about numbers, though. LRO and the Green Lane Association say to keep numbers down to a handful, and the Salisbury Plain Training Area Green Lining Good Practice Guide says stick to four vehicles - or six for bikes. Yet one badly organised trip had a staggering 120 vehicles turn up at the meet point. If that had been split into 30 groups and everyone picked different routes, it wouldn't have

been so noticeable, but that is an awful lot of vehicles to have in one place. Anyway, green laning is more fun in smaller groups.

Instead, the sheer volume of vehicles caught the attention of the police and several of the people who turned up in unroadworthy vehicles were issued tickets - vehicles need to be just as legal to drive on the byways as they do to be on any other public road.

'When we go out and stop a group of 4x4s to chat, the minute we start talking we know whether they are good eggs or not,' says Les.

'Most green laners use GPS systems like OS Maps, but we'll often find groups with no maps at all, and no idea where they are allowed to be. We'll try to educate those people. We're happy for them to be here; we just want them to be where they should be, to keep them safe.'

Stick to the rules, be sensible and stay safe - and you'll be helping us green laners to retain our generally good reputation





# the Highland Raid

Scotland - a land of magnificent diversity - is as wild as it is amazing in its natural beauty, whether exploring the mountains, the incredible coastlines or the many historical points of interest. It's also right on our doorstep, but with different rules and laws, driving there, particularly off-tarmac, isn't as easy as you may think.

Words and pictures: Joe Sardo

In the main part this is because it's illegal to drive on anything but public tarmac there unless you have the landowner's permission of any land you plan to cross (*not entirely true, Scotland does have a few green lanes but they are few and far between, Editor*). So if you want to travel more than a few miles off road, this can get very tricky indeed. This, in part, is one of the reasons I set up Adventures 4x4 - to take the hassle out of organising such a trip.

After many years of hard work travelling from the South of England to the very top of Scotland time and time again by air for reconnaissance and meetings with landowners (a tricky task to say the least), it is now possible to explore this dramatic country 'overland' via our 'Highland Raid' - an awesome 5-day overland tour of the Scottish highlands both on and via off road tracks similar to the rest of the UK's green lanes.

By combining the many undulating single-lane ancient roads with the illusive and rarely used tracks that penetrate deep into the Highlands, a plethora of 'world-class' natural beauty is revealed offering a host of memorable adventures in superb, remote locations. Not to mention the opportunity of seeing herds of red deer, eagles, ospreys and falcons, puffins, seals, otters, and even whales and basking sharks if you're lucky. So whether you are a 4x4 nut, a nature aficionado or simply want to access these spectacular places to explore some hidden gems, it is all now feasible - and even better, it's only a day away!

The adventure typically starts with a rendezvous somewhere mid-way, such as Fort William, and sometimes takes in one of the Islands too - Mull is my favourite. We then weave up through the Cairngorms and the Black Ilse,

before heading on up to the very top of the mainland to take in the North Atlantic Ocean's awe-inspiring white sandy beaches and coastal cliffs. Along the way we travel along approximately half of the NC 500 - the 'better half' in my opinion - accessing a number of remote wild locations far from the roads and off the beaten track so to speak. Accommodation is a mix of wild camping - on beaches next to the river Spey or on the North Coast, or in Woodlands next to the river Beaully - with good campsites in between. All with picture-perfect views to wake up to.

Of course, stopping for attractions is a must too, be it a distillery, a castle or just to absorb the wonder and splendour of it all because after all, what's the rush? It truly is an amazing way to de-stress from normal life and recharge those much needed batteries. A tour for those looking for a real 'spirit of adventure'.





As well as undertaking an epic journey there's the opportunity to receive some hands-on training in correct and good techniques for taking a 4x4 overland while respecting the local landscape. Beginners and intermediate drivers are welcome as are groups made up of partners and families with trips being tailored to the needs of the group. However, if you are looking for a playground this is not it. Think of it more as experiencing the privilege of being in the 'Wilds of Scotland' where 'the adventure awaits'.

As I said before, Scotland adheres to a slightly different etiquette compared to our 'codes of conduct' here in England and Wales. That is to say that some of the private tracks are very rarely used, so a different discipline is used; groups can be up to 10 vehicles, using the tracks once a month to keep the routes useable given the harsh weather conditions. This is a major benefit here compared to busier routes in England and Wales where our code of conduct is appropriate and beneficial.

Some may feel this isn't right, however, over the many years of reconnaissance I have done, one of the key areas I've looked into is the environmental impact of

running tours over sacred land - the footprint, effects on wildlife and how the fauna recovers from groups like this. In short this is a kind of recognised approach that works well for all concerned - the same applies to wild camping.

Passing this knowledge on is an important part of my tours. Generally any litter, discarded equipment or disrespectful access and usage, is down to walkers and cyclists, and definitely not 4x4's as they generally have no access. Needless to say, we do our bit and clean it up or sort it out while we're there.

On a more personal note, it pleases me immensely to run these tours with like-minded people such as yourselves. I have been blessed with having had hundreds of amazing people join my tours over the many years I've been running them and what always stands out is 'you come as clients, you leave as friends'. Tours such as this - indeed, as with many well-organised tours - are where great friendships are often made. There's nothing like spending a few days on a magnificent adventure with a group of like-minded people, socialising around a campfire looking out at the Atlantic or up at the clear night sky to forge strong bonds.

Friendships that, in many cases, endure - I often see my groups visiting other destinations together with other good tour guides and this is always great to see.

So on that note, I look forward to welcoming you to the 'Highlands Raid' soon!

**Joe Sardo**  
Adventures4x4.co.uk

### Some frequently asked questions...

#### Is it possible to off road or green lane in Scotland?

Taking your car off road in Scotland is illegal and carries with it not only a very heavy fine but your car can be confiscated and you could gain a criminal record as it is classed as a criminal offence. So, the simple answer is a fat 'NO' unless you have permission from the landowner. Officially, if you take your car 25 metres from the road onto a track, field or shrubland etc it is classed as illegal off roading and if caught, there is little doubt that the authorities will prosecute. I have seen this many times in the 30 years of crisscrossing Scotland. This includes forestry tracks and, in some cases, private 'drove roads' even if they are clearly marked on an OS Map, so be warned!

#### But how about the 'right to roam'?

Well yes you can 'roam' anywhere in Scotland, even through private estates, but only if you are on foot and not in a motorised vehicle. That means that even for wild camping, if you find a spot you want to camp, as long as you don't access it with your car it's okay, but drive your car to the spot without permission, then this will be seen as illegal off roading.

#### Why do I call it the Highland 'Raid'?

Simply because when I gave up my career to follow my dreams and started Adventures 4x4, I was in France. A 'raid' is the French term for an adventure tour and I learned a spirit of conviviality on tours I have been on with French groups, which is so friendly and team spirited, that I wanted this to become part of my tours too. For many years I have run the 'Highland Raid' for French, Italian, Swiss, Spanish and Belgian groups - it has only been since lockdown that I decided to see if I could find the same kind of people with the same ethos and spirit of adventure here in the UK, and I am delighted to say I have!

#### Is the off roading difficult on the Highland Raid?

Hard, no. Challenging, yes, it can be! It's fair to say that each day is progressively harder and more diverse than the preceding one, giving participants a steady opportunity to test and learn. I grade the tracks one, two and three. One being easy with amazing views, two, the same but with some challenges and three, our last track, being technical but spectacularly beautiful, running along a shoreline. The routes are not overgrown and scratchy but as in all cases in our chosen hobby, wherever you go green laning, caution is to be exercised at all times to avoid danger or accidents.

#### Is it expensive?

The 5-day Highland Raid is £785 per car. Some might see this as expensive however this covers access permissions - whether it is access to drive on the estates or access to wild camp and they are not cheap. Scotland is a bit like Sicily, in respect that everyone knows each other no matter how far apart they are, and no sooner does one estate increase the fee's then all the others follow suit. Fees also cover organising and operating costs while physically on tour. In

my opinion however, it's worth every penny, just ask anyone who has been on this tour! The Scottish Highlands for me is a place unlike anywhere else in the world in terms of its landscape, history and mystical glory.

Ok, so now we know 'the what' 'the where' what we can and what we cant do, all that is required is to see if any of the dates work for you and book the tour.

#### When do tours run?

Tours run once a month from April to September. October and November are only possible by road as it is stalking season which is sacred in Scotland. Dates will be published early 2023 normally on social media and on the website [adventures4x4.co.uk](http://adventures4x4.co.uk) where you will also find plenty of photos, videos and the all-important terms and conditions.

#### How to book or find out more?

Visit our website [adventures4x4.co.uk](http://adventures4x4.co.uk) where you'll find contact details and link to our Facebook page, or simply email [info@adventures4x4.co.uk](mailto:info@adventures4x4.co.uk) quoting 'Highlands Raid' and mention that you are a GLASS member. We can't wait to welcome you!



# what's in a name?

With some green lanes, you can tell what they're going to be like just from their name. Stanage Edge was, well, an edge. The Gap went through a gap. The Ridgeway went along a ridge. But what's the story behind Deadman's Hill?

Words and pictures: Alan Kidd

## Deadman's Hill

As well as descriptive names, what these rights of way all had in common was that they were magnificent. The sort of trails that would attract you to go and spend a whole weekend in the area. Of course, something else they also have in common is that they've been closed, so there's a little less reason to visit these parts of the country now and a little more just to stay at home watching television instead, but that's a different story.

There are many lanes, some of them even still open, with names to conjure with. The Heddington Steps, for example, or indeed the Cam Steps. Both used to have, er, steps in them, at least until they were 'fixed.' High Lane. It's high.

Others are less apparent. Guard Pig Lane, for example. The mind boggles. Bomber Lane makes little sense until you learn the story. Bastard Lane, well you get the idea but that probably still doesn't prepare you for it. There's a Minges Lane in Essex, and try as we might we couldn't find any...

And then there's Deadman's Hill. There's some history behind that

name, too - but even once you know it, you might be forgiven for approaching it with a certain air of trepidation.

Deadman's is in North Yorkshire. It's a lane skirting the western flank of Dead Man's Hill itself, which doesn't sound any less worrying if you're on your way there, and you're a man.

What does the name suggest? If it's anything like Death Valley, for example, perhaps it might be wiser to skip a visit. Is the hill treacherous? Does it have freak weather? Is there a monster living on it?

Well, no. But it did once. Her name was Jenny Twigg. Along with her daughter Tib, she ran an inn in the hamlet of Lodge.

The exact date is lost in the mists of time, but this was in the middle of the 18th Century, in the years following the crushing of the Jacobite rebellion. In the aftermath of Culloden, the government in London adopted a policy of ethnic cleansing towards the Highland clans - the infamous Highland Clearances, which saw families by the thousand starved

into submission and forcibly repatriated to the colonies, simply for being Gaelic.

Desperate to escape these genocidal times, three drovers travelled south with a herd of Highland cattle bound for a market in West Yorkshire. Accompanied by a sheepdog, they paused at Lodge en route, making the acquaintance of Jenny and Tib... who they were to meet again a few nights later.

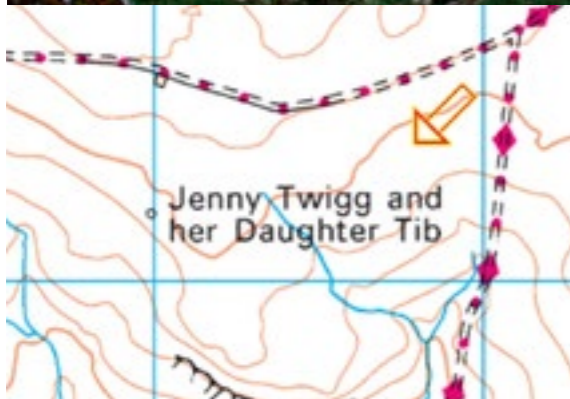
Having successfully sold their herd at market in Bradford, the three men set off north, retracing their steps. Now they were travelling without the cattle - but with the money they had taken in return.

Jenny and Tib had hatched a plot. Their guests were in a celebratory mood and that night, the two women plied them with ale until, blind drunk, they passed out unconscious. Then, one by one, their hosts plunged knives into their hearts before stripping them of their earnings. Bizarrely, they then beheaded the trio, burying their heads in one part of the hill and their bodies in another.

It must have felt like the perfect







crime. Three travellers, far from home, would never be missed. If ever the alarm was raised back in Scotland, it would be weeks and months hence - and finding their remains would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

But there was a flaw in their plan. The men's sheepdog wouldn't leave the scene. It refused to be captured, nor to be chased away; without a gun to hand, the murderesses could only resort to throwing stones, shouting and trying to ply the animal with poisoned food, but nothing would encourage it to leave.

The dog knew its masters were close by, and it dug and dug in the ground to try and find them. Eventually, a group of travellers

spotted it and went to see what it was up to. As it clawed at the ground, they joined in... finally unearthing the horrific sight of a shallow grave containing three severed heads.

After this, it's said that the three headless bodies were found near the top of what's now called Dead Man's Hill. They had been disposed of close to the junction of three tracks - one of which is now the green lane leading over the hill from Arkleside in the north to Middlesmoor in the south.

What happened after this is unclear. The most plausible story is that Jenny and Tib were taken to Pateley Bridge where they were tried, convicted and hanged. But no official records remain from the

time. And there's another story, too, which claims to explain what happened to them.

Bearing in mind that this was only a couple of generations after the barbaric reign of Matthew Hopkins, the self-style Witchfinder General, the story goes that the three drovers had in fact been victims of witchcraft. This was well into the Age of Enlightenment, and educated gentlemen in London or York would have scoffed at the idea, but as Jenny and Tib were being dragged in chains through Nidderdale they escaped - by turning themselves into pillars of rock.

And there they stand to this day, above a rock outcrop on the southern edge of High Ash Head



Moor. Look on the OS map and you'll see 'Jenny Twigg and her Daughter Tib', with no explanation of what it means, surrounded by a triangle of more green lanes a few miles east of Lofthouse.

It would be a bit pretentious to say we were heading for Deadman's Hill to investigate the tale of what happened there some 270 years ago. But we were heading there nonetheless, on a route starting in Settle. The town is best known for being at one end of a celebrated stretch of railway, but we see it as being a good place to fuel up before exploring the lanes.

There are some beauties up here. Gorbeck Road, Salter Fell, Pockstones Moor, all great rights of way which used to attract 4x4 drivers to the area where they'd spend money in local shops, pubs and so on. And here we are using the past tense again, because of course they've all been closed.

Happily, there are also plenty of trails which not even the most swivel-eyed of lane fascists have found an excuse to persecute. Deadman's Hill is one of them; we were going to work our way, loosely

going from west to east, to get to it.

The first trail of the day, starting just east of Helwith Bridge, is called Long Lane. Well, it's a lane. And it's long. As was the conversation we had with a woman walking her dogs and a farmer on his quad bike, both of whom managed to remain civil despite quite clearly wishing we weren't there. Either of them could have taken a diversion on to Ribble Way, about a hundred yards from where we met them, and they'd have got their wish, because this is yet another lane to have been closed - this one by the venomous NERC Act in 2006, because until that foul piece of legislation was brought in it was accessible to us as a Road Used as a Public Path.

The lane climbs gently, and at times not so gently, as you head north north-east towards the imposing peak of Pen-y-ghent. But then as you approach its northern end, it swings to the east around a landform that's common in this part of North Yorkshire. Look on the map and you'll see shake holes marked all over the place; Churn Milk Hole must be a good one to be worthy of having an actual name.

Shake holes are caused when the ground subsides into a cave beneath. Some have a cave entrance at their base, while in others a stream will disappear underground. Churn Milk Hole on the other hand is simply a huge, conical hole in the ground with sedimentary rock strata still exposed around its edges from when the ground fell away.

Continuing towards the end of the lane, we passed an impressively austere looking farmhouse, all walls and almost no windows, then found ourselves alongside an extraordinary roadside verge whose surface was formed like ocean ripples in a storm. The work of dozens of far smaller shake holes, the shape of it looked almost sinusoidal (*having the form of a sine curve. Editor*) in places. You'd struggle to walk over it, far less to drive.

A brief mile or so on Silverdale Road, which runs north-east from Stainforth to the head of Littondale, and we were back on to another trail. If the last one was Long Lane, this should have been called Forever Lane, because that's





how long it felt like we were on it for.

Actually, its given name is Dawson Close, which sounds like it might be the name of a soap opera but once you're up here any resemblance to Brookside is strictly coincidental. The whole way along, you're gazing to the north over a soaring valley cut down through millennia by Pen-y-Ghent Gill, a tributary of the River Skirfare which is normally little more than a babbling brook, but can turn by winter into an absolute force of nature.

As you pass through the area of Dawson Close itself, to your left there's a gaggle of earthen mounds which, some 5000 years ago, were an Iron Age settlement. They're dwarfed by the limestone pavement that sprawls beyond them, though this in turn seems small compared to the height you're at. We've said before that the first time you drive the aforementioned Cam Steps, particularly from the southern end, as you look out across the valley next to you, the view is almost reminiscent of that from the window of a low-flying aircraft. It's

a bit like that here, too, particularly as the valley to the north of the lane opens out towards Littondale; we watched cars and vans on the road next to the river, looking for all the world like models on a diorama (*a model representing a scene, Editor*).

As an aside, while it's hard not to be entranced by the vastness of the scene below you, turning to cast your eyes uphill is worth it too. Not least because the hillsides have names. The first one you pass is called In Sleets. The second is Out Sleets. The third... in one of the most unforgivable missed opportunities of all time, it's not called Shake It All About Sleets. I mean, honestly, what were they thinking? Nature even peppered the surface of the land with yet more shake holes, and still it ended up being called Cow Close. I ask you.

Beyond here, the track starts to drop down the flank of the hillside. It's not hanging-in-your-straps steep, but we were definitely going to do it in low range. As we picked our way down, we could see a family walking along the footpath

on the valley floor below us, which runs alongside the River Skirfare before meeting our track at New Bridge. They had further to go, but they still got to the junction before us.

Crossing New Bridge to regain the road, after what felt like days on the trail, we noticed the bed of the river. It's something to behold. This was late summer, with very little water flowing - leaving giant boulders and twisted slabs of rock on show, as if to illustrate the fearsome power of nature. You can only imagine the sort of floods it must have taken to bring some of these down the river; we made a mental note to come back here by winter and see how dramatic it looks when the river's in spate.

Turning left at the end of the lane would have taken us to the top of Littondale, where Horse Head Pass climbs steeply through a series of wide switchbacks on its way towards Langstrothdale. It's one of those trails you look at on the map and you just know how fantastic it's going to be. It's closed, of course.

Not to worry, the road along Littondale is no chore. It's wide

enough and quiet enough to be relaxing, as you pass through Litton itself, skirt one side of Arncliffe and, if you happen to blink, miss Hawkswick altogether. It ends at a T-junction with a bigger road at Skirfare Bridge, close to where the river of the same name converges with the Wharfe; this is about 10 miles upstream of The Strid, the infamous stretch of the Wharfe which is reputed to have claimed the life of everyone who has ever fallen into it.

Things are a lot less scary at Skirfare Bridge. There's a wide, flat area of grass next to the junction, where people park up to go for walks or have picnics. All very pleasant. As we drove past, we noticed some sort of posh classic roadster parked there with four teenagers sat in it living their best lives and taking selfies to prove it.

Now we were on to the B6160, which to start with felt like a motorway in comparison to the previous few hours. It's very much not one, though, winding gently through the austere landscape as it takes you through the postcard-worthy villages of Kettlewell, Starbotten and Buckden. We're here for the unsurfaced roads, of course, but even this liaison section is an absolute joy.

And yes of COURSE postcard-worthy is a word.

The liaison ended at the next trailhead, by which time we had already climbed steeply from the Wharfe valley and beyond the hamlet of Cray. Depending on who you ask, Gilbert Lane might also be called Stake Lane, but either way

it's a steady, steepish climb up on to Kidstones Fell which then levels out as you cross Stake Moss. Truth be told, going in this direction, the best of the scenery is behind you, but it's still wild and wide open in every direction you care to look.

Stake Moss is managed by the Yorkshire Peat Partnership under the Peatland Code. Shall we pretend to know what that is? Mainly, let's point out that this means it's been identified as a valuable upland peat habitat, which in turn means that the ground either side of the right of way is soft and wet.

Sadly, there's evidence here and there of the wrong kind of 4x4 driver taking that as an opportunity to trespass from the right of way and churn up the ground for laughs. And let's not be blind to that. We're from the pro-access side, of course, and as you'll already have noticed, we're not shy of criticising the anti-vehicle culture that's led to so many rights of way being closed.

There is an argument, and it's a complex one, that reserving some areas for people to cut loose in would help draw the sting of this issue. Now is not the time or place, but while it would seem to offer a lot of answers, we all know that the fanatical element among the antis would still want to see us all banned, because bigotry and compromise don't go together. But let's be honest, the criminal element among 4x4 drivers would still trespass, too. Just as the haters get off on smashing up other people's hobby, the criminals

get off on smashing up other people's land.

They are, of course, a tiny minority. As are the angry farmers and grumpy walkers, even if sometimes it feels like the world is against you. Up here on the moors, though, such worries are a million miles away. The space is wide open, the landscape goes on forever and for most of the time your only company is sheep.

To the north of the moss, the trail forks in two. Both routes eventually lead to Bainbridge, if you want them to. The one we took, which leads to a long descent with a magnificent vista laid out ahead of you, skirts the boggy peatland of Water Ling Pasture. During World War II, the Army used this area for tank driver training. At the fuel station in Bainbridge, an old chap told us the tale of how on one occasion, one of the giant metal beasts got stuck - and, after every effort to rescue it had failed. Top brass decided the best thing to do was simply decommission it where it stood, pump out whatever fluids they could and let it sink out of sight. Wonder how far underground it is by now?

Talking of things under the ground, we were still on our way towards Deadman's Lane. Following east now, which meant a few miles on the A684 (another welcome-to-the-motorway experience), we headed into the elegant old village of West Burton to take the aforementioned High Lane along the northern flank of West Witton Moor. This starts with a climb that's moderately steep but very







long, and the whole way we were plodding along behind a guy on a pushbike. At the top, he jumped off, turned and waved an apology and we ended up having a chat about how this is his favourite place in the world. He was able to name every peak on the horizon and every species of tree all around us.

Feeling very humble, we carried on east before picking up the road again at Witton Steeps and heading south. There's another closed lane off to one side and to the east is one of those classic we-can't-run-a-country trails that goes from one place to another but stops being a right of way when you get to a county border. But now we were on a mission. Through Melmerby, through Carlton, through Horsehouse, then finally the turning in Arkleside and there it was, heading steeply off up the moorside, Deadman's Hill.

Admittedly, the aura of mystique was punctured early on by meeting a young couple coming the other way in a Toyota Yaris. They can't have gone very far in though, because before long the trail becomes rougher and more extreme, chasing us back into low range as we picked our way along the ridge with Deadman's Hill itself looming above us to the left.

Then you crest the hill and as you start descending, the landscape ahead of you is very different to how it would have looked in the days when Jenny and Tib were up to their dastardly deeds. In 1890, Bradford Corporation was granted permission to build a series of reservoirs in the Nidd Valley, with work starting on the first of these, Hayden Carr, in 1894.

Ten years later, Angram Reservoir was put into construction just

upstream of Hayden Carr. A village was built to house the workforce, quarries were dug in the surrounding hillsides and an entire railway line was established to carry materials. This operated from 1907 to 1937, by which time a third reservoir, Scar House, had also been created. This was started in 1921 and completed in 1936, after which the railway was dismantled, the villages (once home to 1,250 people) were abandoned and the landscape was left looking much as it is today.

So why, then, are there only two reservoirs to be seen? Because even as Angram was nearing completion, Bradford Corporation realised that it and Hayden Carr between them wouldn't hold enough water to satisfy the city's needs. So Scar House Dam was built downstream of Hayden Carr - and as the water level rose following its completion, the first dam in the valley was submerged beneath it. Bit of a pricey lesson in the art of planning ahead, that one.

What's left of Angram village is still visible now, as are the scars left by the quarries and railway. Making our way down towards the flank of Scar House, though, just after the trail had swung to run alongside it, we cast our eyes left. Screened from the trail by a couple of trees, a cluster of low walls is what remains now of Lodge - where the Deadman's Hill murders took place.

It's a little reminder of how ancient some of these roads are. The one we were on would have forded the Nidd around the point where Scar House Dam now stands; instead, the right of way runs along the top of the dam before swinging right along an access road then almost immediately

striking out sharply left for what is, undoubtedly, the big finish. Deadman's Hill might have the headline name but In Moor Lane is an absolute eye-opener, starting with a breathtaking climb up a steep escarpment that takes you round switchbacks and between jagged outcrops until finally you're looking back over your shoulder at a tiny world below you and feeling very much on the top of it.

You could argue that this trail is at its best when taken in the other direction, so you can see the view in front of you. Whether you'd be looking at it, though, or just staring pop-eyed at the track ahead of your bonnet, is another matter. Either way, it's an absolute treat and the perfect climax for a day on the lanes.

The trail ends up in Middlesmoor, a little village that has something of a frontier feeling to it due to being accessed via what is, to most people, a lengthy dead-end. But we had one more port of call after this. Turning left in Lofthouse, we followed the road as it wound steeply up Trapping Hill before turning right on one last unsurfaced trail - one which turned into a triangle of three lanes on the bleak moorland of High Ash Head.

And there they were. Standing silently alongside each other, two towering rock stacks eroded by aeons of wind and rain... Jenny Twigg and her Daughter Tib. We kept a close eye as we drove past, but they didn't move. Perhaps one day the spell will be broken and the witches of Lodge will return to terrorise travellers in the these wild moors... but for now, you can still visit this part of Yorkshire and your greatest fear will be not wanting to go home.



## Who can stand in the way of boozy selfishness?

Words and pictures: Stuart Boreham

**It doesn't feel good - failing to stop the juggernaut of injustice is never a good sensation. Sure, nobody died or even broke a fingernail. In a world where good people are abused as the wicked thrive, losing a short green lane in a small county is of little more consequence than a passing mist.**

Despite this, after dozens of hours of meetings and words, and a thousand emails written and read, it's with a heavy heart I breath out and accept there's nothing more to be done, and that Wolvens Lane has gone (*terrible news to have lost this beautiful lane and incredibly sad that Surrey did not see this as an asset for all, Editor*).

Having cycled it in the '00s, I drove it in the '10s and finally saw it, by apparent sleight of hand, closed to vehicles in the '20s. 13th April 2023 as it happens.

I fell for the smooth words. "We want to keep the lanes open too!" they said - and in a behemoth council no doubt many of it's incumbents did genuinely sympathise with the cause of the green laners, exercising our right of way on a quiet weekend afternoon and doing no body harm.

Enter the army of the stupid, testosterone fuelled, ill begot, MOT bending thrill seekers. Who can stand in the way of their boozy selfishness? Who can penetrate the arrogant outer shell to their soft ignorance? Who can show them

their trail of decade long damage through eyes that look beyond brief amusement and see the harm?

Not me, for sure. In my face they'd laugh, perhaps spit or even kick, and loudly shout weak arguments in strong voices before spinning a bit more ancient soil skywards from asbo tyres. Laughing because even better than I, they know those who can enforce can't, or won't, or even can't be bothered. Numbers pared down to the bone by the authorities, voted in by the very public who now see anyone in a 4x4 as a curse, and loudly demand action. How dare we cross their purview.

Justice takes time, effort and thought, and a great deal of money - council sized quantities - that a small group of middle aged blokes who like to potter up lanes in Landies, can't match. We have to pick our battles, or perhaps pick which ones to lose quietly as opposed to loosing loudly and publicly, not going quietly and making them think twice, think that they'd better be careful.

I met a doctor once, a cancer specialist who, when I googled him

seemed to be a bit of a celebrity in his field, 'a good man', saving lives, working for a better future for his patients. Met him on a lane. He told me in an email that I should not underestimate how strongly he felt, how much he despised seeing half a dozen 4x4s going down the byway where he daily walked the dog. I reasoned with him. You deal with the terror of cancer - compared to that where's the harm in me driving a road? You'll see one truck a year, one a month if you are 'unlucky'. In 15 seconds we will be gone. Isn't your mouth-foaming persecution a little... odd? He never replied.

Once emotion gets a grip, reality has no chance.

I thought I'd won some of them over. The horsey lady in the meetings who when I joined hated us all but after a few chats begun to understand the difference - that we were not all tossers, that it wasn't all four legs good, four wheels bad.

Perhaps, I dreamt, that even those who sign the orders would begin to change if we could share a pint and a chat down the pub, and realise what the hobby meant to us, and how cheap and effective a couple of well publicised arrests would be compared to a closure.

But then the pub would close, they'd go back to their trench, look at the so hard to change system and get out the special pen, the one marked 'For TROs', and sign again with initial reluctance, then relish.





# Absolute Pandamonium

Words & pictures: Gabriel Beadle

It's slow, has about as much badge appeal as your grandad's Rover 75 and, for the price, you can purchase a significantly more acclaimed off-road toy than a little Fiat Panda 4x4. Perhaps a Land Rover Freelander may take your eye, or even a Mitsubishi L200. Both are sensible options to farmers or those with second cars, yet these alternatives lack the charm, uniqueness and fuel efficiency that make the little Panda such a compelling option in the 4WD market.

To my surprise, this silver oddity has gathered plenty of attention on the green lanes. On my first

visit to Strata Florida, I was greeted with looks of bemusement from a group of bikers travelling in the opposite direction. "You've got a set of balls on you mate" said one, with his friend insisting that I must realise "it gets much harder up there", lest I get stuck.

But, with careful use of the throttle, a good set of Ziarelli mud tyres (an absolute must) and an impressive bow wave or two, the mighty Panda pootled down the lane with ease. Groups in Land Rovers stopped me on occasion, just to chat about how I had gotten so far as a novice in a city car. Truth be told, the fantastic

4x4 system, traction control and chunky mud tyres had done the bulk of the work. Meanwhile, I sat relaxed in the cab listening to some Johnny Cash, which faded in and out with the burble and vibration from the peppy two-cylinder TwinAir. Even faced with Strata's infamous bomb hole I had faith that the Panda would at least get down it, facing only a minor chin scrape at the bottom.

Better still, at the end of the journey I averaged 35mpg! In fact, no water broke through the sills and I cruised in relative comfort at 70mph on the way home. By the time I got back to my local Tesco's



the rain had washed away any mud, making it look like Deirdre's run of the mill Fiat Panda. It is a perfectly unassuming city car that looks at place everywhere except in the environment that it excels in the most - off tarmac.

On the other hand, it is in the interest of fairness that I admit to getting stuck twice in the Panda. My first attempt at the Hearts of Wales Trail (W-E) was less successful than I had envisioned, getting stuck in the first muddy puddle at the end of the summer in 2021. Thankfully, I was rescued by a group of burley men who were (somewhat) happy to push me

out. The second time getting stuck happened in early 2022, when I attempted Water Break Its Neck on questionable summer tyres. Eventually the Panda was again freed by burley men, this time pushing me out with the bullbar of their Defender. I put these mishaps largely down to driver error. After all, what kind of gibbon would go green laning on crap summer tyres?

I digress, having completed the HoWT and WBIN with the correct tyres fitted, I have not gotten the Tonka toy stuck since.

Moreover, the Panda 4x4 is a great option for those who want

to dip their toes into green laning. Drive it carefully and you'll achieve 40mpg and have a car that is practical for city use. Alternatively, hoon it around Powys for the weekend and take it on some green lanes to reach the lower end of 30mpg, but realise you have a truly competent 4x4 on your hands. This remarkable nugget of Italian engineering unlocks the opportunity to explore the best of the British countryside and spend time connecting with friends and family in the outdoors: all without breaking the bank. Who can say no to a cuddly Panda after all?



Words & pictures: Johnney Johnson

# how now brown cow

I had always known there was an element of risk to green laning - it's part of the chase, the fun, the thrill. Yet I never expected cows to feature so costly in my vehicle prep and modifications...



**CAUTION**

**Cows with  
calves**

**can be aggressive**





My interest in green laning dates back when I was 18, with my only present that year being a few days 4WD training at the David Bowyer facility. Risks were discussed then; side slopes, failed hill climbs, Kinetic Energy Recovery Rope (KERR) correct usage, getting stuck etc.

Now, 25 years on with some money, time and a lot of reading in between, I am proud of my current wheels. Built for most situations, with a keen eye on potential damage mitigation/limitation.

- **Pin stripes** - 4 litres of lacquer applied by my local paint shop - not the best finish, but perfect for laning.
- **Angles** - being a pick-up truck the rear overhang is considerable - so an AFN HD rear bumper saw to that (parts supplied by PB Customs).
- **Rocks, steps and trees** Rocksliders and some 8mm bash plates have seen off trees, tree roots and rock steps in Wales.
- **Tyres** - tyre damage and punctures are almost inevitable at some point, with no exceptions here. Wales saw a new tyre off (side wall) and Norfolk flint shreds tyre treads.
- **Cows** - yes, you read right - a cow caused significant damage to my beloved truck. Over £10k worth!

#### How now brown cow?

Well there is a story. The brief version is this. While laning in Wales we came across a young cow stuck in a calf feeder to the side the track. Being good citizens, we stopped, concluded we couldn't help and went to tell the farmer. The cow clearly upset with this decision decided to free itself, using my truck. Of course, the half ton feeder hit the truck in several places, but the significant damage was caused by the half ton cow climbing into the open passenger door.

The insurance claim is still going through. Initiated with: "A cow has trashed my truck when she climbed inside it." Insurance company: "Can you stop calling this person a cow?" Me: "No, a cow." Insurance company: "I am going to terminate this call!" Me: "NO, a farm animal." Insurance company conversation stopped for several minutes due to laughter...

Initially, liability was found to be with me, as who would drive in a field full of cows and let one climb into their car? With the help of GLASS I have been able to provide evidence that I was on an unclassified road maintained by the local Council. This has somewhat changed liability discussions. The next hurdle is can the incident be described as an industrial accident

with liability passing to the farm? Time will tell.

#### Advice I can give:

- **Ensure your insurance covers you for green laning** - or any activity you undertake in your pride and joy! (Fixed value or agreed value insurances generally don't).
- **At all times drive on public rights of way** - if I had been 'off-piste' I would not have been insured. Instead criminal damage discussions would be taking place and liability would not be in question - it would all be against my bad!
- **Drive with people you trust** - we all got a bit adrenaline filled after the event as it could have been really very scary (at one point the cow knocked me over!). But we stayed level headed enough to stop, assess the situation and concluded that we should let the cow stay stuck in a half ton of metal move before we drive on past!
- **Be a GLASS member** - the evidence they have provided has allowed liability conversations to take place. Well worth the annual membership costs.
- **But most important - never get out of the car for an animal!!!**



# Old Boy overland

I've always enjoyed writing. Traditionally, it's always been online content for my business, but also the odd review for a magazine, harking back to distant and hazy memories in my 20s.

So naturally, when I saw an email from Dale, with the offer of a slot in 'Green Lanes', I jumped at the chance!

The only problem was, that I jumped in before I had any idea what to write about!

Thankfully, Facebook served its purpose, and I was inspired later that same day, by a gent on a local page, that was getting ribbed for his choice of vehicle.

Nothing new there... and let's face it, we've all cast a joke or two at a friend's expense for their choice in something! Be it the age-old rivalry between the big 4x4 brands, or something much more important, like if you prefer a coffee or tea, whilst out on the lanes!

The moment I read his post, and the ribbing he was getting for his 'terrible' choice of 4-wheel-drive, I knew instantly what I wanted to

write about - my underdog of a vehicle, and how I came to own him.

## I was late to the driving party

Having lived in central Manchester my whole life, and being a bit of a city kid, pretty much everything was ten minutes away on the bus. But as I approached my 30s, I'd seen everything there was to see within the M60 ring-road, and I wanted to explore further afield.

I got my driving license, and as I was working a good job at the time, I rushed straight to a dealership for something suitably shiny.

My older (and probably wiser) sister collared me verbally, clipped me around the ear for being a plonker, and said, "Chris... you'll

probably crash in your first 12 months of driving. Or if you don't, someone will wade a shopping trolley into you, the next time you're parked at the supermarket. Here, have my Peugeot 206 to learn with, instead."

Taken aback by her generosity (and also seeing that she was likely correct), I accepted, and was happy as a pig in muck.

I rallied that 206 around for the next year (29.9mph on the dot, promise gov'nor), until the rear suspension gave in on a rather aggressive pothole.

So, the time had come to (arguably) 'upgrade'. I walked into the local garage forecourt with a month's wages (which was bolstered by some parental

encouragement!) and walked out an hour later, with an O2 plate, manual, Freelander Td4.

I'd chosen it because I'd read good things about the BMW engine. Also, knowing little about Land Rovers at the time, the community aspect was important. The Freelander (aka 'Hippo') fanatics, seemed, for the most part pretty lovely - and if a Td4 was good enough for the chair of the local club, it was good enough for me.

I was willing to take the hit on it not being a 'proper' Land Rover, as at the time, I didn't really plan on doing *that* much green laning.

I'd been around my brother's VW T3 Syncros for years, and I knew that a Freelander couldn't keep up with something that had twin diff-

locks, plenty of armour, and crawler gears as standard. Or could it?

The Syncro is worth a mention whilst I'm here. There are few, if any, more-capable 4x4s from that era - and there are none that draw such hilarious and bemused looks from passers-by. To the untrained eye, it must look very peculiar, to see a 'camper' that looks like it should be on a beach, with a surfboard strapped to the roof, dragging a 'proper' Land Rover out of strife! But that's a whole other underdog story for another article!

Of course, after a few gentle lanes, the confidence began to build, and we started to drive increasingly difficult routes. Each excursion and challenge brought with it the insatiable need for

another modification. I put far more into 'Old Boy' (as he became affectionately known) than was reasonable, or than I'd ever get back, but I was having the time of my life.

A lift kit here... a CB radio there... a bit of under-chassis armour... you know the score.

Soon enough, I had all the gear, and *maybe* even an idea or two, to go alongside.

Looking back at my spending choices, some kit was useful, and some not-so-much.

If you're curious as to what modifications made the most difference, perhaps Dale will ask me back to discuss that another time. And I bet the answer would surprise you!





Six years later (before I knew it)... I'd conquered most of the named lanes. Strata, Corwen Carwash, Wayfarer... and even the like of (aherm)... 'The Barsteward'.

And my thoughts began to shift to more 'scenic' pursuits.

'Old Boy' got modified again, to more of a 'touring/overland' set-up, which saw me ranging yet further across the UK.

Taking multiple ferries, to the Outer Hebrides, was a big moment for me.

After years of relentlessly chasing 'tough tracks', it rekindled my love of just driving, for driving's sake (*nice one, Editor*).

No real adrenaline, no wheels spinning or black smoke clouds, and certainly no mud being flung. Just gently pootling down gravel tracks, with expansive skies and ever-ending-scenery... on islands that had more sheep than humans. And not even very many of either, truth be told!

There is something comforting in the gentle burble of an idling diesel engine, whilst out so remote. It was a life-line, and reminded me of how symbiotic the relationship with your vehicle has to be, when you're out remotely. You look after them, and they look after you. And together, that opens up a world of possibility.

I'm beginning to sound like a bit of a 'green-oval' romantic here, but honestly, that's how I saw it.

Upon my return, I did a few other far-flung trips. Iceland, was up there. As was the NC500. And by the time you read this, I'll have also done the Wild Atlantic Way, over on the Emerald Isle. But there is something that keeps drawing me back to my 'local lanes'.

That thrill of pushing through a track that hasn't been driven in years. The joy of checking the map, cross-checking on TW2, going for a walk... and then picking your moment - is equal to the big

excursions, in a way that still gets me excited to this day.

I've done a lane a week for the best part of six years, and I'm still uncovering absolute **gems**.

So, if I can do all that, in my 'baby' Land Rover... I severely doubt there is anything stopping **you** from exploring just as widely.

The big, named tracks, may get all the attention and traffic... and for good reason! But sometimes it's nice to give them a rest. There is a big wide world out there to explore, and thousands of lanes to uncover...and you don't need a YouTube-worthy £150k 'rig' to find and enjoy them.

I'll hopefully see you on the lanes sometime.

If you spot an O2-plate Hippo, in Oslo Blue, meandering down a beaten-up track... with the driver grinning like it's his first time out - that'll be me - so, give us a wave.

Stay safe, stay legal, and see you out there - Chris

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# the perils of modern technology

Words and pictures: Scott Pendry and Paul Woodward

I'd often heard stories of danger associated with Strata Florida, but finally chose to do it anyway. I can see how in wetter conditions some issues may arise, but in my case the weather couldn't have been much better preceding or during my visit.

In fact, this was just one of the many lanes driven as part of a three-day outing with two laning friends, both called Paul and both driving 90's. It was supposed to

be a three-friend adventure, but one (our Editor) wasn't able to make it unfortunately. I'd plotted three days-worth of routes using Memory Map and TW2 to verify their status and condition. All looked good, with just a couple of question marks on lanes with no detail or unclear status. These were clarified with support from Andrew, one of the Welsh GLASS reps.

We set off mid-September '22,

across the Prince of Wales bridge (will they now rename that?). Anyway, after perhaps the world's most confusing junction we turned off the M4 heading north towards Caerphilly and a lane crossing Mynydd Eglwysilan. This has a reputation for fly-tipping as it is easily accessible from the town. There was some evidence of this, but in general the lane running south to north was a very pleasant 2.7 miles, and a nice way to begin

our trek. It was on this stretch that one of the 90's lost a trailing arm bush, requiring a make-shift repair.

After this we had a little navigational challenge while trying to traverse a series of works and road closures around Merthyr Tydfil. Some distance later came 'Cantref Steps'. What a lovely, if challenging, lane this is! I didn't encounter what I would recognise as steps, but the lane is certainly full of interesting obstacles (*the*

*steps have been worn away. They were south of the river crossing. Editor*). Upon entering the lane, heading north to south, you drop down a fairly easy-going track towards the Afon Cynrig river. This is shallow and stony, but easy enough so far.

The exit from here though began as a rocky climb into a narrow overgrown (read 'difficult to see the ground') sideways leaning track. At one point my truck

pitched leftwards into a tree, and if I had alpine lights (previously broken and replaced by a metal plate) then I'd no longer have them! On entering the lane, Paul #2 said "this lane gets easier every time". I'd dread to think what it used to be like then (*quite tricky! Editor*)?!

Onward, and via two more byways including Mynydd Bach, we arrived at Halfway Forest. This is one of those that on the





OS map shows neither BOAT nor UCR status but is shown as such on TW2. This was a good fun route as it offered a series of different scenic opportunities; riverside, hill climb and open field near the top. Next, we stopped in Llandovery for the two 90's to top-up before tomorrow's journey. Lots of comments shared about the tiny fuel-tanks on those! Our last lane of the day involved about 1.4 million gates (it felt like it) travelling north to end our day at Llanerchindda Farm Guest House.

Day two was all about hitting Stata Florida. A change of lead vehicle (Paul #2 this time) and off we set. I normally lead but it was much more relaxing to just follow. There are a lot of fords on Strata Florida, some small streams crossing the track, others more

like rivers. Given the lack of rain throughout the summer though, many of these were just a trickle.

The majority of the surface is rocky and fairly easy to traverse. The water sections were still present, but shallow due to the low water conditions, it could be very different after heavy rain.

7.5 miles later, and about 1.5 hours, we exited near the village of Strata Florida, but not before thanking a pair of 110's who'd been coming the other way and had to reverse back a few hundred yards.

After this we might well have been on another planet! The landscape east of the village is a series of lakes and hillocks - stunning scenery.

Prior to the trip I'd contacted the Claerwen Valley authority to get clearance to drive 'the lost link'

which allowed us to travel west to east alongside the Claerwen Reservoir. This includes a number of narrow bridges crossing inlets, which I wish they'd made just a little wider! The main observation though, was the sheer lack of water built up in the reservoir. You could see the bottom including old pathways, bridges etc. Fascinating but also a reality-check on how our climate may be changing.

We found a nice spot on the lower Claerwen byway for lunch, then headed towards Rhayader. There was a little BOAT on the approach with no comments on TW2, so we took a look. It was narrow, clearly not driven recently, but opened into a field heading towards a property along a water gully. Really nice, just rather scratchy.

The following few lanes were good also, but not outstanding, then we swung round for our return to base. On a previous trip to the area, we'd looked at the Lrfon river crossing near LLangammarch Wells. On that occasion we'd turned back due to high flow, but this time it was much lower and achievable. This proved to be one of the best laning days I've ever done!

The final day was the homeward leg, incorporating a long west to east byway from Llandrindod Wells, and then a slight northward blip to take in 'Water Break Its Neck' (north to south). This was another that had been off limits last time we visited, but was open and in good condition this time. The lane itself has, in parts, a sandstone surface, not what I'd expected, and

I imagine this is why it often has closures due to erosion.

There was also no water to be seen or heard. If there is a waterfall nearby, it was at low flow on this visit (*it's way down low thru the trees. Would have to be quite fast flowing to be heard. Editor*). Our route home continued via 'Black Yatt', 'Doctor's Pool', and finally 'Giants Grave' (before hitting the A-roads). The remaining 90 miles home were a steady plod after a second patch-up on the aforementioned trailing arm bush repair.

Overall, I look back with fond memories of the three-day adventure with some of the best lanes I've ever driven, and certainly ones I'd go back to in the future (I may have to, read on). I also realised I'd made a schoolboy

error earlier in the trip. On day 2 I'd noticed a byway sign, and assumed they'd named it 'Clifford Byway'. Later that day, I saw another 'Clifford Byway' sign in a totally different place. Then the penny dropped... it isn't Clifford, it is 'Cliffordd' which must be Welsh for 'Byway'. Got it!

If you've got this far and are wondering why the title is 'The Perils of Modern Technology', the answer is that I like to record all my routes using an in-car dash camera. At some point before leaving home I'd cleaned the inside of the windscreen and managed to knock the camera lens out of level, so I'd recorded the whole trip as if looking upwards 30 degrees. I suppose the only answer is that I'll have to go back and drive them all again sometime.





Words and pictures: Matthew Dawson

# off-tarmac in the US of A

What began as a move in 2017 to the United States Pacific Northwest (aka PNW) for work, soon became the opportunity of a lifetime to explore a vast forested and mountainous wilderness by wheel and foot.

Before moving to Washington, we had done the research and already knew the US northwest would be an adventure. Where we lived just outside of Seattle was effectively an expansive forest covering most of west Washington, broken up only by roads, small towns and occasional fields. It's mostly second growth forest as over 90% of the old growth has been logged, but if you do come across old growth, they are enormous.

Within one to two hours drive we were in the Cascade mountain

range, within two to four hours you could visit one of the volcanos like Mt St Helens or Mt Rainier or pop over the border into Canada, and within four to five hours you're in the Olympic mountains, the coast, or a ferry ride to one of the Puget Sound islands. The various public services and volunteer groups that maintain the lands and the thousands of access roads and hiking paths, do an amazing job keeping them going. You get the idea. It's vast, scenic, and more important, accessible. Typically, if you can see it, you can go there with little restriction, including camping almost anywhere you want.

It's no surprise then that overlanding and off-road driving in general are very popular and part

of the culture. More so as Covid started to dissipate, and sales and range of off-roading vehicles grew hugely. As did the number of people going outdoors. Ford, Chevrolet, RAM, Jeep (both FCA) and more started shifting their marketing to off-roading and bringing out off-road centric models like the Ford Bronco. Anecdotally, the most popular vehicles seemed to be Jeep Wranglers/Gladiators and Toyota 4Runners/Tacomias.

Off-roading is popular in many states but particularly in Colorado, California, Alaska and other west coast states. It's also where many of the popular overland YouTubers and rental companies are. There's even several large Overland Expos across the US each year and increasingly prominent at SEMA,

one of the US's largest automotive trade shows. It's big business, which I tried to summarize in this article <https://bit.ly/3VVFLJ1>.

Realising how these vehicles could take me and the family to places we'd never experienced before it didn't take long to catch the bug. Before I knew it we had owned a couple of RAM Rebels. Think of the 400bhp 6L V8 Rebel as a "baby" to RAMs 700bhp 7L TRX (a conscious naming decision to one-up Fords Raptor). The Rebels were hugely capable, with 2/4HL gearboxes, lockers, decent ground clearance and front approach angle (not so much the rear as my dented bumper attests), Goodyear Wrangler tyres and either air suspension or Bilstein shocks (air was better). I typically ran in 4H

off-road and only had to engage the lockers a few times as they easily handled most conditions.

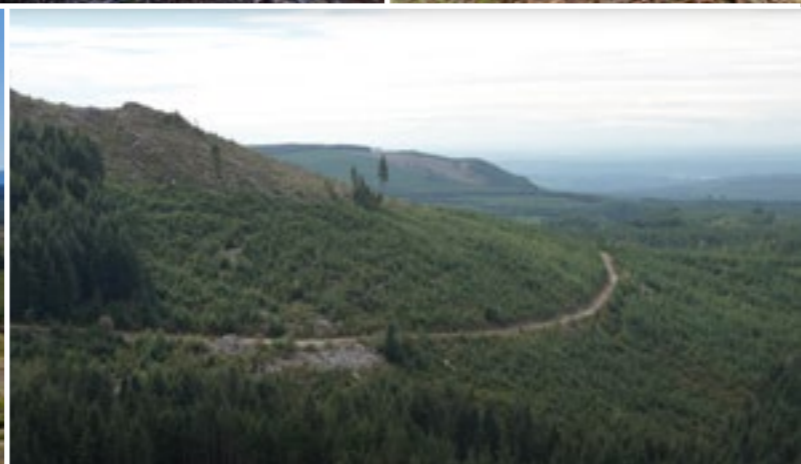
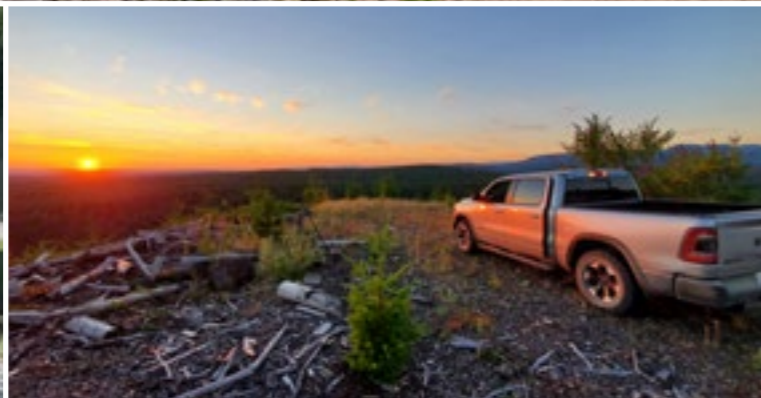
These vehicles took us on hundreds of miles of forest and mountain roads, including gravel, rocks, snow, fords/shallow river crossings, and even chain-sawing and towing numerous trees out of the road. In some places the logging roads reached the top of mountains, over 3,500ft above sea level. The latter is the only time I nearly got stuck, in two feet of snow but thankfully a small spade and recovery boards got me out. Lesson learnt, don't solo a snowy exploration.

One of the first things I did before exploring though was making sure the trucks had recovery gear including strapping my bike to the

bed for emergencies. The most used items turned out to be an axe, a tow rope for fallen trees, air compressor to air down/up and bear spray. I'd encountered several bears, a cougar and a couple of bobcats so its essential. The mapping app for me was GAIA GPS (leverages OpenStreetMap like Trailwise), but ONX Offroad and a few other apps had started to gain popularity too. My next investment would have been a GPS SPOT or Garmin device.

In terms of the off-road driving, there's too many trips to detail so it's probably best to try and paint a picture of a typical exploratory drive and I'll try not to wax poetic. I'd plot out a rough route on one of the hundreds of local forest/mountain roads in GAIA on Saturday night, gear up the truck the next morning,





drive 45 mins to a mountain road access point, navigate a mixture of fast 50mph gravel roads (you learn to 'drift control' quickly here) and slow twisty rocky roads for another 30 mins, pinstripe the paint exploring some overgrown off-shoot routes, all the time increasing your elevation. Maybe see a few deer on the way. Until finally the road opens up in front of you at 2,500ft to a view of the entire western Washington region (facing westward from the Cascades), with Seattle and its tower in the mid-ground, and the snowy Olympic mountain range as the backdrop beyond the Puget Sound. I park, grab my sandwich and coffee that's thankfully still warm, drop the tailgate and sit to take in the view in the utter silence besides the call of bald eagles.

There's something to be said for the sense of freedom, exploration and ability to carve an exhilarating path through the wilderness, and be able to stop at any point and 100% switch off from the world whilst taking in a view. It's this that kept drawing us and many others to the PNW outdoors.

Before we decided to move back to the UK for family reasons, we had begun researching starting an overland vehicle rental company. Through that I got to know some of the local YouTubers and rental companies on the west coast and can attest to them being an incredibly friendly and helpful group of folks, sharing the common interest and love of exploring. I can highly recommend an overlanding holiday there and encourage you

to do a search for rental companies like AlaskaOverlander.com and west coast YouTubers like TrailRecon.

Coming back to the UK, I immediately joined the Green Lane Association (for the brilliant TW2), and started reading the magazines and researching local roads. I'm excited to start getting back into driving off tarmac, and as many reading this will have gone through I'm torn between several vehicles and torturing myself on AutoTrader almost daily. Big or small, low or high budget, full 4x4 or active AWD, truck or SUV, old or new, and so on. Whichever I end up with through, I have nothing but thanks to the effort GLASS and similar organisations put in to keep the lanes accessible, and for TW2 to help discover them.



Joe Copley



With kind permission of Jordan Butters and LRO



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