

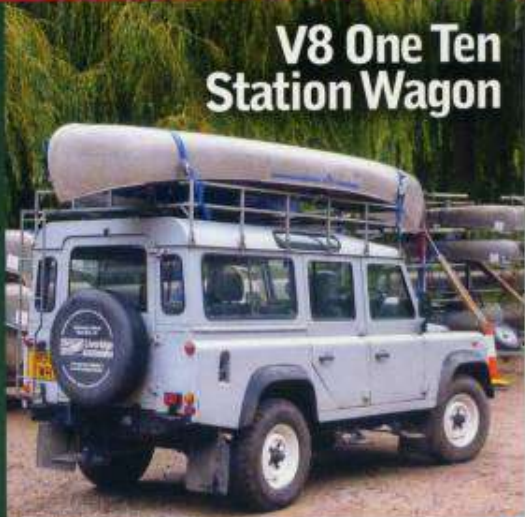
OVERLANDERS: Land Rovers for the great escape

CLASSIC LAND ROVER

100%
CLASSIC

ISSUE NO 59
£4.50

V8 One Ten
Station Wagon



THE WORLD'S BEST SELLING CLASSIC LAND ROVER MAGAZINE

www.classiclandrover.com **KEY**

ONE STEP BEYOND

Use your classic as a getaway car

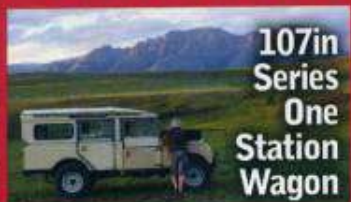
- Go to France
- Try canoeing
- Travel in South Africa
- Go greenlaning
- Drive to Portugal
- Australia's Snowy Mountains



CLASSIC
COILER

April 2018
£4.50

LAND ROVERS FOR THE GREAT ESCAPE



107in
Series
One
Station
Wagon



Series
IIA 109
camper
conversion



Series III Carawagon
Continental



Searle Safari
Sleeper





Emrys has a real soft spot for an early Ninety

If you dabble in Land Rover social media circles, you can't help but have seen the recent promotional video for the highly exclusive 70th Anniversary Defender. The narrative takes the gleaming red five-litre V8 powered Ninety from a dramatic snorting start in a barn on a high speed blast through the countryside passing a range of earlier vehicles. JLR publicity has created a beautiful genealogy narrative

from Series One to late production Defender with the drivers of the earlier vehicles sharing the customary wave.

Notably, one of the vehicles in the film is the 1984 B-registered Ninety featured here with its whisper-quiet 2,286cc petrol. It forms a poignant juxtaposition with the 70th Anniversary works vehicle; both are red, short wheelbase, coil-spring station wagons but represent the extremes. It takes

us from the earliest days, the smallest engine, steel wheels and farmer-chic styling to the most powerful factory-produced Defender, complemented by plush upholstery, exclusive works badges and eye-catching diamond-cut Sawtooth alloys. The vehicles also represent the highs and lows of the company's fortunes from struggling to stay afloat in the 1980s to being the UK's most successful motor manufacturer today.

Something old *Something new*

Emrys Kirby drives Dunsfold's early production Ninety and reflects on Land Rover's fortunes since the mid 1980s

WORDS **EMRYS KIRBY**
PICTURES **NICK DIMBLEBY/JLR**



A good early Ninety is a joy to drive but fast it is not!

B169 NEC is in the care of the Dunsfold Collection so it's therefore no surprise that we find it used in JLR publicity. It's totally original and exceptionally well preserved so it is the perfect representative of how the earliest Ninety station wagons looked, sounded and performed. I make no secret of the fact that I'm a big fan of early coil-spring vehicles and I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to get behind the wheel

'It is remarkably smooth to drive and the improved interior trim feels well put together'

at a press event last year. This vehicle is something of a time warp and immediately takes you back to the mid 1980s with swathes of brown carpet and beige checked trim. For me, it brings back memories of attending our local agricultural show in the Highlands and collecting brochures for the newly launched model - I would have been just ten years old but it obviously made a big impact on me.

Coil-spring Land Rovers arrived with the launch of the One Ten in March 1983, the Ninety model followed just over a year later, available to order in mid-1984. The development of Land Rover's new models was financed by significant government input which saw Land Rover Ltd emerge as a separate operation company under managing director Mike Hodgkinson. As well as creating the new models, the capital investment was also designed to streamline and update production processes across the company. This process included computerised robot chassis fabrication and significant improvements in engine building facilities. Even so, money was in short supply so a policy of 'minimal change' was adopted to control development costs and by the time the new model was launched, there was a need to further streamline the company.

Just as the company was in the process of launching the One Ten, Hodgkinson was replaced by Tony Gilroy, a quietly spoken but was a very strong character who had been a key player in sorting industrial relations in British Leyland in the 1970s. He had a track record of turning round the fortunes of Freight Rover and when he was appointed as the MD at Land Rover, he set about making some very tough decisions about the way the company was operating.

Coming in with a new set of eyes, Gilroy could see some of the issues that he believed had held the company back. He was interviewed in a promotional video made in February 1983 to coincide with the One Ten launch and appeared upbeat and positive; the new vehicle would compete with Japanese manufactures on its strength, durability and full vehicle lifetime costs. Privately though he was rather unimpressed with some of its design features.

He thought the 'minimal change' mantra and hanging on to old designs on a new

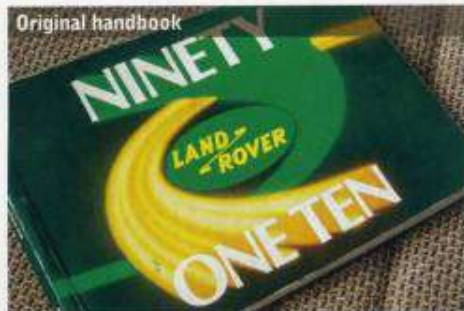
vehicle showed complacency. In particular he was unimpressed with the One Ten two-piece doors with sliding glass door tops and the overall quality control. He knew that Land Rover's old market share in the developing world was lost and the company had no real strategy to address the problem or take advantage of the growth in the leisure and personal transport 4x4 market. In contemporary interviews with senior sales staff, you got the sense that Gilroy had already had a word in their ears and marketing was becoming more important - there was a need to 'sell the vehicle, not just provide it to the customer'. Gilroy set about a programme of closing a variety of satellite operations and moved everything to Solihull as a self-contained site.

'It is the perfect representative of how the earliest Ninety station wagons looked, sounded and performed'



Fitted with the twin choke Weber, engine is good for 74bhp

Galvanised cappings make this Ninety look retro



Early vehicles had a fold-down screen option





When the Ninety was launched, the One Ten received a facelift with better doors and windows



Standard five-speed LT77 gearbox, knob is later type



New step design was approved for the One Ten



Better trim and side windows than the earlier One Ten



Note early dash top with no ashtray

It was therefore no surprise that when the Ninety was launched, it marked the first opportunity to improve and modernise the look of the utility Land Rover.

On B169 NEC we see the new one-piece doors with wind-up windows, new side panel windows with better sliding mechanisms and better moulded trim. Closing the doors gives a satisfying clunk, not a wobbly rattle. Gone is the dated yellowing Limestone; the new colour for wheels and roof tops was a brighter Ivory. Despite the better quality construction, B169 NEC is still powered by the venerable old 2,286cc petrol, an engine originally

designed in the mid 1950s, tested in Series Ones and available to the public in 1958 with the launch of the Series II. During the early coil-spring engineering process, new five-bearing crank versions of the engine were developed, creating a very durable unit. The new engine was initially fitted to the Series III from late 1980 and is recognisable by strengthening ribs cast into the terracotta painted block. In coil-spring applications like B169 NEC it was fitted with a twin-choke Weber 32/34 DMTL carburettor and a new cam profile giving reasonable but by no means exciting 74bhp.

While they lack any punch, these late

2,286cc petrol engines are super smooth and refined, even though the parent design was rather ancient. Following extensive testing in prototype coil-spring versions, a longer stroke variant arrived in mid-1985 giving a displacement of 2,495cc, matching that of the new diesel option which was available on the launch of the Ninety. Many in Land Rover circles are not aware that the earliest petrol Ninetys like this had the smaller engine capacity. Visually the engines are very similar just with differences in the rocker cover and checking the engine number is the best way to tell them apart; 2,286c engines have numbers

CLASSIC COILER

beginning 11H or 13H, 2,495cc have 17H numbers.

Getting behind the wheel of B169 NEC you get the sense that some of the quality issues that Gilroy raised had been addressed to a certain extent. It is remarkably smooth to drive and the improved interior trim feels well put together. It is the sort of vehicle that would look right at home towing a horsebox to a country show, and a vehicle that is subtle and smacks of old money. Infamously though there was a comment that the station wagon Land Rover could be considered a 'poor man's Range Rover', a comment that didn't go down well at the company.

Despite the new MD's reservations on the new vehicle models, the coil-spring utility Land Rover proved to be a mainstay of the company for another 30 years. Land Rover realised that it had to go further upmarket with the trim levels, especially as military

'The coil-spring utility Land Rover proved to be a mainstay of the company for another 30 years'

Note the Ivory white roof and wheels, not the old Limestone

sales dwindled. Alloy wheels, metallic paint and high quality trim became the norm in the mid to late 1990s. While the Defender as it became known in 1990 was never a high volume or particularly lucrative vehicle, it has always been the iconic Land Rover, a fact that is certainly not lost at the publicity department at JLR.

The company is now of course a great success story, based on the fact that the lucrative market is producing higher end leisure and personal transport models – just as Gilroy suggested.

The limited edition run-out Ninety in 2015-6 captured the imagination across the

whole motoring world, not just in enthusiast circles and the 70th Anniversary year is the perfect opportunity for the Classic Works to launch something special. Compare 400bhp of a snorting five-litre V8 with the 74bhp of this whisper-quiet 2,286cc and it shows just how far the company has come, based just on a simple red Ninety Station Wagon.

A coil spring Land Rover is certainly not a poor man's Range Rover – a new 70th Anniversary vehicle will set you back an eye-watering £150,000; despite the fact that is it rather archaic, the Defender is still the iconic heart and soul of the Land Rover brand. **CWA**

