

# DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



## High Cat-pacity

Philip is like the cat that got the cream, after finding a purr-fectly original early One Ten Hi-Cap Pick-Up in a Birmingham garden

**L**AND ROVER has offered some weird and wonderful options over the decades, but one of the most oddly named has to be part number RTC 9472, the cat guard. It's a circular, wire-framed construction that looks like something you might buy in a garden centre, and its purpose is... well, to put it bluntly, to prevent cats from being mangled in the engine fan of a Ninety or One Ten.

Not a very likely occurrence, you might have thought, but it was clearly a problem back in the early '80s. Land Rover's new flat-fronted style of front grille meant there was extra space between the radiator and the fan on the four-cylinder engines, which was bridged with a PVC shroud. It was soon discovered that an opportunist cat could step up on the front

axle and hop through the fan blades into the tunnel-like shroud, where the heat from a recently switched-off engine would keep it nice and warm – until the owner fired the vehicle up again and sucked it into the fan blades.

Mike Gould, former PR manager at Land Rover, remembers that hundreds of the cat guard kits were sold and, since each was presumably bought because a family pet, or a neighbour's, had already met a grisly end, it was a depressing statistic. Not being a cat-lover myself, I like to tell people that the kits were trialled on the Isle of Man, and that early experiments were unsuccessful.

This macabre train of thought was set in motion by the Dunsfold Collection's latest purchase. I was tipped off about a very early One Ten High Capacity Pick-Up – usually shortened simply to 'Hi-Cap' – that was languishing in a Birmingham garden. It had not been driven since 2011, when the fuel tank had sprung a leak, and it was now half-buried in a conifer hedge; but the registration number was a factory one, DHP 832Y, and the clincher was that the V5C showed a very low engine number, 11H00003. Yes, that's right: engine three of the series of 2.25-litre petrols that were fitted to coilers,

Having learned all this, I decided the Hi-Cap was worth taking a punt on and buying unseen. The owner had been a builder and bought the Landy in 1985 as a work truck, but he is now in failing health and his son was selling the vehicle on his behalf. The son is in his mid-30s and he produced for me a lovely pic of him, aged about four, standing beside the Hi-Cap with his dad soon after its purchase in 1985.

Fortunately, the father had looked after the vehicle quite well during its time as a builder's truck, and it has only covered 52,101 km – yes, kilometres, because it's left-hand drive. Curiously, the V5C records it as right-hand drive, and also lists the engine as 1598cc capacity, which it most definitely isn't! The engine is a regular



Circular frame is a cat guard for Ninety/One Tens





Proud owner and son pose in the mid-1980s



Hi-Cap looked quite presentable after a wash



Curiously, this vehicle was built with LHD



2.25-litre petrol engine is, sadly, not the original

11H-series 2.25 petrol with twin-choke Weber carb and cable throttle linkage, and I think the owner's son was rather disappointed to discover that he didn't have a rare prototype 1600 engine. I was certainly disappointed to find that the engine wasn't number three, as stated on the V5C, but a replacement which must have been fitted before the vehicle left Land Rover.

Nevertheless, I suspect that the Hi-Cap does have some history as a development vehicle with the company. It was built on 8 November 1982 yet wasn't registered until 14 January 1983. There's a sequence of holes in the front wheel arch eyebrows and the outer sills, which could well have been drilled for tie-wrapping cables and sensors used for data retrieval, and there's a metal casing behind the driver's seat that may have housed an electrical junction box. It's total speculation on my part, but I wonder if this could have been a Methods Build vehicle. The chassis number is certainly lower than those found on most of the CWK registration press launch One Tens.

Other distinguishing features that mark this out as an early One Ten are the roof of the truck cab, which lacks the usual swage line above each door top, the

silver-painted windscreen surround, the Limestone door tops and the selectable two-wheel drive transfer box. This was a short-lived option which allowed the vehicle to run in two-wheel drive for normal operation – presumably to offer better fuel economy and reduce tyre wear – until you moved the lever across to engage four-wheel drive.

Extracting the vehicle from its garden grave wasn't made easier by the brakes having seized on, but I was pleasantly surprised to find how un-messed with it was, once I'd dragged it clear of the conifers. Remarkably, it still wears its original Land Rover rear number plate, with period Land Rover and Range Rover logos! More importantly, the bulkhead is solid, although the chassis has rusted badly on the side that was hidden in the hedge and never had a chance to dry out. Overall, it looked a lot better once I'd got it home and pressure-washed the worst of the moss and algae off the paint.

An hour's tinkering soon had the engine running as sweet as a nut, too. The points had furred up, the starter relay was faulty,

and I had to run a fuel line straight from a jerrycan to the fuel pump because the petrol tank had rusted out – the reason why it had been parked up back in 2011, of course. Once I'd sorted those issues, and after I'd put some oil down the cylinder bores, topped up the sump and turned it over a few times, the motor fired straight up. Then, after bleeding the clutch, I was able to drive the Hi-Cap around the yard, although it will need the chassis repairing to make it road-legal.

While all 'proper' Land Rovers are by definition utility vehicles, the High Capacity Pick-Up has always been the most utilitarian of them all – it's a working vehicle, and for that reason has not been greatly loved in the past. But interest in them has now started to, er, pick up, and with growing numbers of Ninetys and One Tens being exported to the USA, I'm pleased to have been able to save this one for the Dunsfold Collection. I even managed to buy a brand new cat guard for it. You could say that this Hi-Cap is the purr-fect addition to our collection of early One Tens.

**THE DUNSFOLD Collection is not yet open to the public but is hoping to establish a permanent museum. You can help make that a reality by becoming a Friend of the Collection for an annual subscription of £35. Visit [dunsfoldcollection.co.uk](http://dunsfoldcollection.co.uk) to find out more.**