

Bowyer's School of *off road*

Kelvin Kennedy describes Day Two of his visit to the Overlander driver training centre in Devon

DON'T tell the Editor, but my assignment to visit the Overlander Off-road Centre in Devon made a very pleasant mini-break. It's location in a holiday district with glorious countryside and all the usual amenities combined well with the good company and gentle pace of David Bowyer's training course.

On Day One of the course, which I described in the first part of this article, we were taken through the principles and practice of driving with plenty of opportunity to gain confidence in our own vehicles. The evening was free for us to return to the hotel or visit the local taverns and restaurants. Even the bright lights of Torquay would be easily reached on an evening out.

GETTING UNSTUCK

Whereas the first day was mainly concerned with ensuring that drivers knew how to tackle cross-country obstacles with safety and confidence, Day Two acknowledges that those who tackle anything worth tackling will occasionally get stuck. Most visitors to the centre opt for this extra morning of winching and recovery techniques. Indeed, all my course-mates had done so, and I feel it rounds-off the course nicely and allows the afternoon for a leisurely drive home.

Our day started at 9.30 in the classroom where our instructor, Keith Hart, had assembled many of the recovery aids needed by the well-equipped off-roader. He particularly mentioned the safety aspects of their use, because the forces at work could be released to cause injury, damage or death in untrained hands.

Even something as commonplace as towing was put in its proper place as an important safety item, because of the massive energies possible with moving vehicles. The off-roaders' favourite — the high-lift jack — was given due coverage; just as well because it was a new sight for some.

That other off-road motoring-must, the winch,



Range Rover to the rescue.

was discussed at length in various forms and with live example of mechanical drive, electrical and man-powered units on hand to make the words come to life.

ROVERS DON'T GET STUCK!

After coffee and biscuits, we were anxious to go out and see some of the techniques used on the land — and try them ourselves. David Bowyer and Keith Hart had set up one demonstration with the basic and reliable capstan winch hauling a Range Rover up a slope. The ease and controllability of such a set-up impressed everyone and we were each able to take a turn as winchman.

Now, as we all know, Rovers don't get stuck! But for the purpose of this report, let us suppose that we ventured out onto the training area with the express intention of miring one in the



Awaiting a helping hand.



Change-of-direction winch recovery.



Keith Hart (right), demonstrates the trusty

ad Motoring



PASSING OUT

The passing out ceremony at the Overlander school is the washing of the vehicles to make them road legal again. At least the numbers and lights are cleaned — because some scholars may wish to take home the real Devon mud on their vehicle's flanks as proof they really went that deep!

I certainly enjoyed both days in the country, and comparing notes with the others on the course it was a resounding thumbs up from all. And we each got a smart certificate to frame and put on the wall at home.

The basic driving course of one day costs £57.50, while the full course including winching and recovery described above costs £86.25. Both prices include VAT. Participants use their own vehicles and advance booking is essential. Overnight accommodation is available locally at extra cost.

For details, contact: David Bowyer at Overlander Ltd., East Foldhay, Zeal Monachorum, Cridton, Devon EX17 6DH. Tel: 036 33 666.

interests of science so we could learn how to extract it. This gave us a chance to see a new British vehicle-mounted winch in action, the Husky electric from F. W. Winches.

Fitted to the front of a Range Rover, it seemed, even on single line pull, to effortlessly recover the vehicle from the bog. To add interest, a second vehicle was brought up as an anchor and a change-of-direction pull was rigged again using the Husky. Each course member was encouraged to take a hand at rigging and acting as flagman and winchman.

By deliberately creating what can go wrong in off-roading, the course brings home the importance in controlled conditions of equipping oneself properly for off-roading and knowing how to properly use the gear when the call comes.



Capstan winch.



High-lift jack practice.



A pressure wash is essential before you go home.

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has successfully completed a course of instruction in Off Road Driving Techniques and related skills

Signed *David Bowyer*

Date 17th May 1987

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