

Wayne's Guide to Offroad Preparation

Taken from a Nooze article

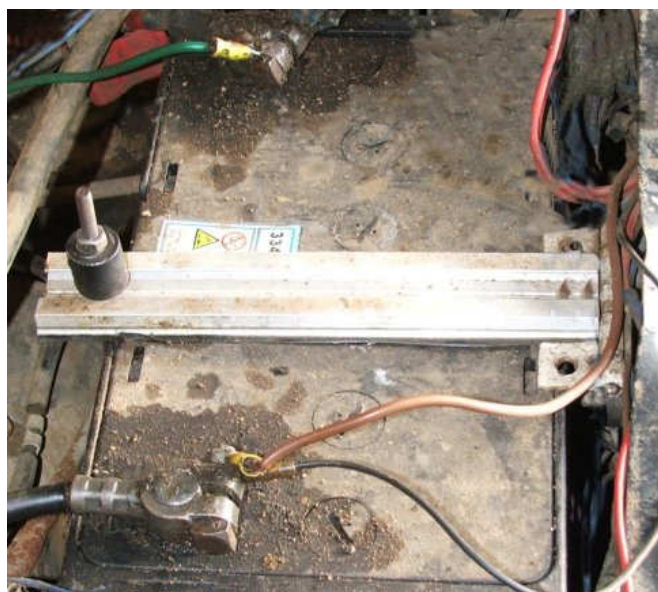
Wayne Peck, our Chief Scrutineer was speaking to me at one of our driving days. He was unhappy at having to turn away three vehicles that had either no recovery points, or were too dangerous to be driven around the site (and yet they were driven there!).

So Wayne thought that a short summary of basic preparation might avoid this happening again. It's a difficult subject to broach without sounding patronising or as though one is 'laying the law down' so we hope you will take this in the spirit it is intended.

Wayne's First Law

First off is something that should be on your daily checklist:

Wayne spotted a battery lying on its side with no clamp in sight! Now come on people you shouldn't be waiting for the MOT to come around for the inspector to do your basic checks for you; you know it makes sense. In Wayne's own words, "If you do roll the motor, the bonnet acts as a huge frying pan with fuel and oil laying in it. A loose battery may hit the bonnet, spark and Woosh! You're in deep trouble". So while Land Rover provide a nice sturdy clamp, this doesn't always hold the battery sufficiently whereas a simple metal strap with a couple of holes drilled each end to take bolts will solve that problem (available at the Club Shop)



While you are under the bonnet, look around the engine bay. Any leaks, especially from fuel or brake lines obviously need sorting immediately; sometimes it's as simple as tightening a hose clip or pipe union. I bet you take the time to spray some waterproofing around the wires on your petrol motor so you don't look a Charlie in the first puddle you come to, so take the time to look properly for the other stuff while the bonnet is up.

Staying beneath the bonnet, check the security of the steering box on Series motors along with the drag link if you can see it, and on coilers have a wiggle of the intermediate steering shaft looking for excessive room in the UJ's at each end because the Scrutineer will do.

Likewise have a look underneath the vehicle at the steering joints/track rod ends. We've seen vehicles driven to the site, with the track rod ends so badly worn they were refused entry to the courses and you have to wonder how they made it to the site! Likewise the drop-arm ball joint if badly worn can actually come apart!



Add another check to your list while you're at it: The handbrake. This must be able to hold the vehicle on our scrutineering slope, that's why it's there (the handbrake and the slope)! It's a major fail point and is quite easily adjusted.

Wayne's Second Law

The dangers within:

That spare wheel you never bothered to bolt down in the boot, the wheel brace that has been sliding around for weeks, even the box containing your recovery kit must be bolted/strapped down securely. Failing that, take it all out in the car park **after** you have scrutineered but **before** you go out onto the courses.

Literally anything that is loose within the vehicle whilst you are off road can inflict a serious injury. You may laugh, but I even use one of the seatbelts to strap my flask of coffee down - it's not just in case it falls on the floor and breaks - although that is a life threatening scenario in itself as far as I am concerned. We've even had vehicles turn up with shovels, spades and even an uncovered machete lying on the floor between the seats. It's very easy to overlook things that are always there.



Before: Everything in here is loose and could easily injure or maim you!



After: All fastened down or removed, even the Hi-Lift is strapped.

Stow it all away securely or take it out. You know it makes sense!

Which finally brings us to:

Wayne's Third Law

Recovery Points.

Now while it might be quite ok to drive the White Course at anytime of year - it's been proved time and time again that while the Black Course has its usual impassable obstructions for some, so too can the normally mild Yellow Course! The dip beyond the tabletop proving too much even for Grizzly Claws at times and as for the bomb-hole...

The point I am making here is that if you go onto the course and get stuck, with no recovery points just how do you expect anyone to get you out? Proper recovery points, I'm sure you appreciate, are imperative. Don't be fooled into thinking those little egg-shaped plates with a big hole in are any good for recovery because they're not! They were designed to lash the vehicle to a transporter and that's all. Much the same applies to the later front 'towing eye' fitted to Discovery and Range Rover: towed by an AA patrol, or winched onto a truck maybe ok, but stick a kinetic recovery rope onto that same towing eye, and it'll probably be ripped from the chassis at Mach 2. To quote the RR Owners Manual, "*The vehicle tow connection should be used only in normal road conditions and 'snatch' recovery should be avoided*". What you should be investing in is, a pair of 'Jate rings' (available from the club shop), which must be attached to the chassis with **high tensile bolts**. These can be fitted to front or rear and allow the use of a bridle (a short rope which spreads the loading down both chassis rails).



Series/Defenders can use 'D-rings' (which attach above the bumper using the bumper bolts) but you can get undue loading on the fixing bolts because the point

of pull is above the chassis. Ball/pin hitches bolted straight through the bumper, in line with the chassis rails work well but do remember to put a spreader plate behind each hitch or you stand the risk of pulling the bolts through the bumper (don't forget the condition of the dumb-irons as that's what the bumper is bolted to). A standard tow-hitch will suffice for the rear but don't underestimate the forces applied to recovery points, I've seen a rear tow-hitch come off the back of a Series during a kinetic recovery, and the rear crossmember was still attached to it! Likewise, I watched a towrope with shackle and part of a bulbar still attached, go sailing over the top of the motor doing the pulling! Welded recovery points are not ideal either; they should be bolted as well. Most bull bars have unsuitable points as they are well below the line of the chassis meaning that the when recovering, the bull bar is being levered upwards: the stresses involved cause the bolts to shear especially non-high tensile ones, which we have seen being used and not forgetting the jokers who think using studding is ok! In fact most bull bar manufacturers do not even approve their bars for use as attachment points for a kinetic type recovery at all!

One other deserved mention is the use of webbing strops for recovery. Most are **not** designed for pulling motors out of mud, but for holding loads onto vehicles or lifting. Use only the proper rated gear!

If you are unsure what you need, pop along to the site on any driving day and ask any of the guys who drive the course. They'll love to tell you how to spend your hard earned.

So to recap:

- Battery bolted down
- No fuel leaks
- Steering box and linkage security
- Parking Brake efficiency
- Secure gear inside the cabin or take it out
- Front recovery points should be approved i.e., Jate Ring, winch bumper etc. Bull bars do not usually have suitable recovery points (if in doubt please ask)!
- Condition of chassis where recovery points are mounted (inc tow bar)
- All non-winch recovery should be with a bridle: Marshals will normally supervise all recovery.

Finally have fun and stay safe.