

Our vehicles

Smug? Moi? Well, just a wee bit

The Disco has become a dual-fuel Land Rover, much to Rob's delight



1994 DISCOVERY V8i automatic

Engine: 3.9 V8i dual-fuel

Mileage: 83,906

Fuel consumption: 14mpg (see text)

Smgugness is an attribute I don't have a lot of time for, I must admit. That's why I go out of my way to look just as hacked off as everybody else at the filling station while I cram as much 56p-per-litre fuel as I can into the Discovery.

Yes, indeed – with petrol now £1.07 a litre, it would seem that my conversion to LPG has come at a very good time.

Having this major job carried out has been on my mind for some time. The Disco's not my daily driver but, even so, I can't pretend that the stupid fuel consumption and the even more stupid price of unleaded wasn't a barrier to my using it more often. The initial outlay of the conversion was a concern, of course – but I reasoned that the sooner I had it done, the sooner it would start on the road towards paying for itself.

I'd also be contributing much less CO2 to the atmosphere – and I'd have a Discovery with added value if the time came to sell it on.

My homework began in the classified ad pages of this very magazine and led me to make contact with Wain's Classic Rebuilds in North Norfolk – a family owned company with a long track record in doing conversions (as well as undertaking LPG installation checks and issuing certificates on all makes of vehicle). And, not to be overlooked, Wain's is within decent travelling distance from chez moi.

I spoke to proprietor Mark Wain about my preferences. I didn't want any bulky cylinders in the back, because the huge luggage space and seven-seat capability are both important to me. Nor was I very keen on underslung tanks, because the Disco's an occasional greenlaner and may yet find itself faced with challenging departure angles on an off-road site.

'What I suggest, then,' said Mark, 'is replacing your existing petrol tank with an 80-litre autogas tank, and slotting in a 35-litre auxiliary petrol tank.'

That sounded ideal – no loss of cargo or passenger space, nowt to worry about on the ground clearance front and a decent range on LPG. The reduced range of the petrol tank would be an issue only on a long trip to remote areas devoid of autogas pumps. Even then, filling stations would need to be spaced 100 miles or more apart for it to be a problem – not very likely.

The set-up Mark suggested as being the most suitable for a Discovery 1 is a lambda-loop system, which uses separate lambda sensors, a pair of emulators, a vaporiser and a mixer. This is fuelled by a state-of-the-art four-hole gas tank and a top-quality stainless steel petrol tank that Mark boasts 'will outlast you and me, never mind your Discovery'.

One of the advantages of the lambda system is that, as soon as you've started the engine on petrol, it will flick over on to gas straight away – so your fuel savings and lower harmful emissions kick in on even the shortest trip round town.

Neat installation: main LPG tank and auxiliary petrol tank tucked well out of the way and Waxoyl'd against the elements.



The whole shebang, from back to front. Long cylinder shows how extra capacity could be added to the system



Mark checks the lie of the land before starting work



It will flick on to gas straight away,

I'd heard everything I needed to know and booked in the Discovery for its conversion at a cost of £2100.

I could have had it done slightly cheaper elsewhere, but I was swayed by Mark's promise that Wain's uses only the best-quality components and won't let a customer have the vehicle back until it's been tested. Not only that, but I'd have a thoroughly nice Range Rover Classic – converted, of course – to play around in for a week while the Disco was being seen to.

When I went back to collect mine, I was given the full

30-bob tour (no preferential treatment for LRO – everybody gets the same) of what had been done. This includes being escorted to a nearby autogas pump so that Mark is happy that you're happy with the procedure of filling up with LPG.

It's a handy tutorial to get you started but, really, it's easy and most pumps offer near-identical operation: unscrew the filler cap, attach the nozzle and twist its collar a quarter clockwise, then push down on the lever to get a secure attachment.

At the pump, push the big button on the side until full (or

PRODUCT ON TEST INVERTER

No more getting caught short by digital camera or laptop batteries running low in the field. The Sealey 300w unit works off either the 12v socket or direct from the vehicle battery, and a warning bleep guards against running down the latter. Great to keep under the seat for when needed. **Sealey P1300, RRP £50** (but shop around).

Rob McCabe

He took that snowy pic on Easter Sunday, seconds before being whacked by a huge snowball. The eight-year-old culprit is making a good recovery



LPG filler sits diametrically opposite socket for towing electrics



All there: no loss of luggage or passenger space



Spot the difference: the non-stainless one was removed from another installation and it's, er, rusty



Thorough guided tour of what's been done



so fuel savings and lower harmful emissions kick in on the shortest trips

until the display shows what you want to pay). There's no danger of overfilling – the pump will cut out automatically. Pull the lever back open, twist the collar anti-clockwise (this is where you get the perfectly normal *wboooosh!*) and replace the nozzle in the pump. Then go and pay for your near-half-price fuel.

So, what's it like living with an LPG Land Rover? It's great. An unexpected side effect is that mine starts, idles and runs more smoothly than it ever did before, so I'm enjoying driving it more.

When I fire it up, the blinking light on the facia-mounted

switch tells me it's on petrol. Before moving off, I blip the throttle past 1600rpm; when the revs come down past that mark, the system automatically switches on to autogas and the blinking light becomes solid.

A four-light fuel gauge gives some idea of how much gas is in the tank, but I much prefer Mark's suggestion of zeroing the trip at every fill-up and then reckoning on about 170 miles before you'll experience the slight sluggishness that sets in when the gas level is very low. Then, just flick the switch on to petrol until you can fill up again.

Better still, pre-empt it and fill up before that happens. In the part of Cambridgeshire where I live, there's little compromise involved in seeking out an LPG pump. And a visit to www.go-autogas.com confirms that the same applies nearly everywhere on the UK mainland. There are currently 1200-plus outlets.

My average consumption on LPG so far is 14mpg – which is probably bang on the money. Litre for litre, slightly-less-efficient LPG will take you about 80 per cent of the distance that petrol will; so, my return tallies with about 18mpg on

unleaded. That's still a big thirst, but less of an issue at £2.54 a gallon compared to £4.76 or so for petrol.

Once I've covered 1000 miles or so, it's back to Wain's for a free first service, just to make sure everything has bedded in properly and is working as it should. I'll report on how that pans out in a future issue.

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● **Contact Wain's Classic Rebuilds:** www.wains-classic-rebuilds.co.uk (new website under development); 07799 472798; fax/answerphone 01603 872851