

Your Land Rovers

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130 DEFENDER Td5 TIPPER

Rail-roaded

David Conroy's modified Defender 130 is rightly 'feared' by unwanted foliage besieging preserved railway lines up and down the country



Profile

NAME: David Conroy
VEHICLE: 130 Defender Td5 tipper
YEAR: 2003
LOCATION: Kent
FIRST LAND ROVER TRIP: Overland trip to Nepal in 1971
OTHER LAND ROVERS: 1963 SIA 109in (for Nepal), Range Rover Carmichael 6x4, Rapier 127

My chosen line of work is mobile garden maintenance, but on an epic scale. Using my modified Defender 130 and a lot of very specialist extra kit, I travel the length and breadth of the UK visiting preserved railway lines in need of lineside vegetation control. This can include tree-felling as well as simple spraying.

As you can see from the photos, my Defender is able to drive on the railway lines while towing a trailer carrying several thousand litres of water-based weed killer.

This is the third Land Rover I've had for this work. The first one was a Range Rover Carmichael 6x4, fitted with rail gear and two 1000-litre tanks and a Brazilian-made 2.8-litre Tdi instead of the original V8 petrol. It was stolen and burnt out in 2010. I replaced that with a Rapier 127.

Apart from fitting Harsco rail gear, I got the cab extended by 10in for improved legroom. To give more elbow room, I had the steering column and pedals moved inboard by three inches. I ditched the centre seat and replaced the two outer seats with a pair from a Mercedes.

Unfortunately, a hydraulic leak from the steering led to another fire, self-inflicted this time. However, I was able to salvage the Harsco rail gear and the big winch from the 127.

The current vehicle of choice is this Defender 130 crew cab. It's got Harsco rail gear which I manually engage – push ones have hydraulic power. The fact that it's a tipper is unimportant – it was the vehicle that was available at the right time, following the 127's destruction.

Since buying it, I've made several improvements and repairs, like cleaning,

priming, painting and Waxoyling the chassis. It needed repairs to the rear crossmember, naturally. I moved the spare wheel to the bonnet to free loadbed space, but fitted a sturdy handle to the front to help me lift the now very heavy bonnet.

The two little 'flagpoles' mark the front corners of the Harsco rail gear. I've added sections of tread-plate to the bumpers front and rear to give extra grip when climbing aboard and I've mounted special brackets under the bumpers to help locate the farm jack when lifting – a useful safety idea, I think.

The Defender is now 15 years old and has covered over 160k miles, yet it's always ready to go and is very reliable. Despite various break-ins at the yard, and the theft of doors, engine ECU and the raised air intake, the Defender battles on. It's ideal for the unusual job I do.



Rear bumper includes steps and drawbar



Serious volume of weed killer in tow



Mark Saville, eat your heart out



Tipper bed makes an ideal work platform



Harsco rail gear was salvaged from 127