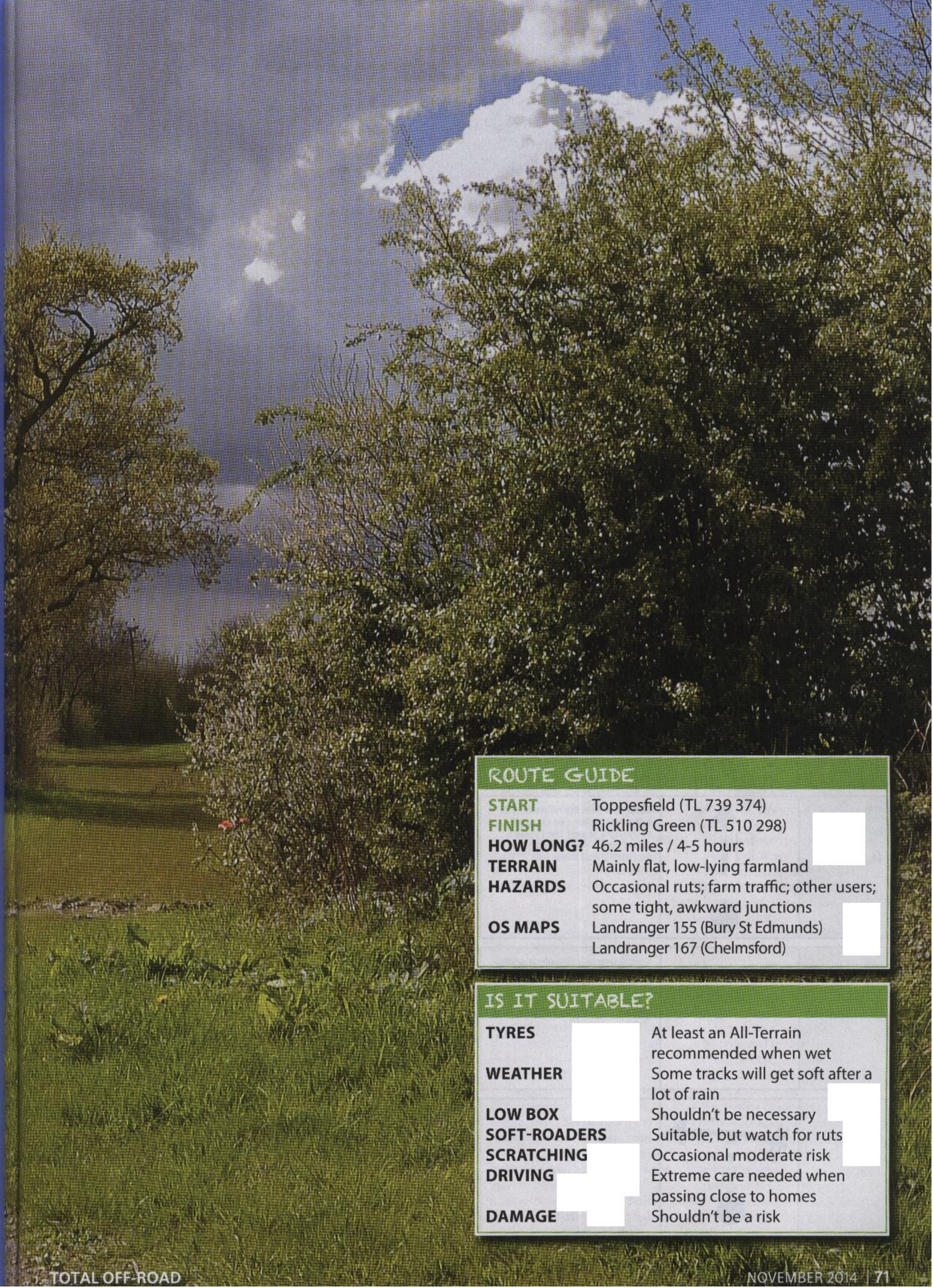


NORTH-WEST ESSEX

Quiet field roads between picture-postcard villages

Essex has a reputation like no other county, but the ridiculous TV-show image of peroxide and fake tan is a million miles from reality once you get away from London. Up in the north, it's as rural as anywhere else, with rangy arable farms creating a gentle landscape that's sprinkled with beautifully kept villages. Many of the lanes in this roadbook pass close to people's homes, so keep your speed right down, always be on the lookout for kids and animals, and don't drive it after dark.





ROUTE GUIDE

START	Toppesfield (TL 739 374)	
FINISH	Rickling Green (TL 510 298)	
HOW LONG?	46.2 miles / 4-5 hours	
TERRAIN	Mainly flat, low-lying farmland	
HAZARDS	Occasional ruts; farm traffic; other users; some tight, awkward junctions	
OS MAPS	Landranger 155 (Bury St Edmunds) Landranger 167 (Chelmsford)	

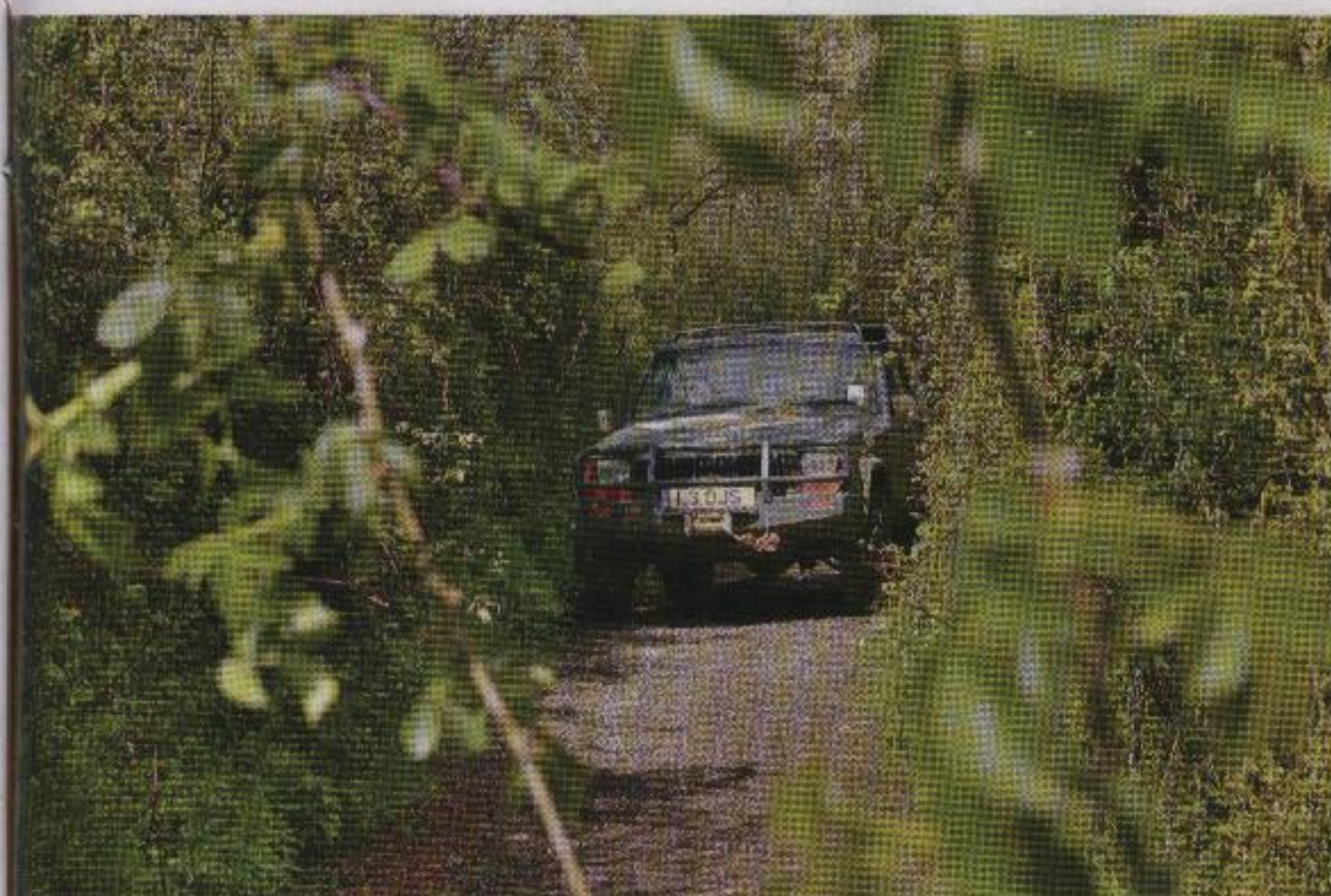
IS IT SUITABLE?

TYRES		At least an All-Terrain recommended when wet
WEATHER		Some tracks will get soft after a lot of rain
LOW BOX		Shouldn't be necessary
SOFT-ROADERS		Suitable, but watch for ruts
SCRATCHING		Occasional moderate risk
DRIVING		Extreme care needed when passing close to homes
DAMAGE		Shouldn't be a risk



1 0.0		TL 739 374 Start in Toppesfield, outside the Green Man on Church Lane. Zero your trip with the pub on your left and set off heading east-north-east	6 2.25		
2 0.15		The road becomes gravel after the last house	7 3.7		TL 726 355 MALLOWS LANE
3 0.5		Dead slow past the house on the left, which is very close indeed to the right of way. The byway is ahead on the right – there's also a footpath ahead to the left	8 4.35		
4 1.0		Keep it slow as you emerge on to a firmer, wider track, and watch out for kids and animals	9 4.7		
5 1.1			10 6.55		ZERO TRIP Wetherfield Blackmore End

11 0.6		TL 739 325 NEW BARNES
12 0.8		
13 1.35		
14 1.45		
15 1.8		Caution at the end of the gravel track as you approach the junction ahead. It's uneven enough to whack either of your bumpers if you're going too fast
16 1.85		



USING OUR ROADBOOKS

Total Off-Road's unique roadbooks guide you through the British countryside on a mixture of surfaced and unsurfaced roads. The tracks we use are public rights of way, either Byways Open to All Traffic or Unclassified County Roads, all of them commonly referred to as green lanes.

NAVIGATION

We've deliberately made it as easy as possible to follow the route, using a mixture of instructions, tulip diagrams and grid references. We normally only include junctions at which you have to make a turning or don't have right of way, so just stay on the main road or take the most straight-ahead option unless we tell you otherwise.

If you're unfamiliar with six-figure grid references, you'll find a guide to using them on the legend of any OS map. Our aim is for you to be able to do the route without maps, but we do recommend having them.

SAFETY

The symbols on the first page of the roadbook advise you of how suitable it is for your vehicle. These are just guidelines, however. We'll warn you of any hazards or difficult sections, but the nature of any green lane can change quickly. Wet weather can make a huge difference to the conditions underfoot, and what's wide open in winter can be tightly enclosed and scratchy in summer. The responsibility is yours!

Our roadbooks are designed to be safe to drive in a solo vehicle, and are largely suitable for standard 4x4s on road tyres. We do recommend travelling in tandem wherever possible, however. The risk of getting stuck can be greater than it appears – and if you break down, having help at hand can make the difference between it being inconvenient and downright dangerous.

RESPONSIBILITY

Irresponsible driving is a massive problem on green lanes. In particular, you must always stay on the right of way. Never drive off it to play on the verges or surrounding land, even if you can see that someone else has; doing so is illegal and can be tremendously damaging, both to the land and to 4x4 drivers' reputation.

The fact that you can see where it's happened shows how much harm it does. It's no excuse to say you're just following where another driver has already been. Most green laners have taken to videoing anyone they see behaving like this and passing the evidence to the police, which shows how much anger there is towards the criminal element.

Elsewhere, simple common sense and courtesy should be your watchword. The do-and-don't list below should always be in your mind, but keep your speed down, be ready to pull over for others and make it your aim to show the world that 4x4 drivers aren't the hooligans they think we are.

ANTIS

Anti-4x4 bigotry does exist, but it's less common than you'd think. By and large, it's limited to organisations who just want to get the countryside all to themselves.

These organisations are beyond being reasoned with, but it's rare to encounter real hostility even from their rank-and-file members. If you're friendly towards the people with whom you share the countryside, the vast majority will respond in kind. There are always bad apples, but no more so than anywhere else.

Likewise, most local residents will accept your presence if you're driving sensibly. What suspicion you do encounter is likely to be from people worried that you're there to steal from them, so be ready to offer a word of reassurance. Once satisfied that you're not after their quad bikes, their mood will lighten.

It only takes one vandal to tarnish a person's view of all 4x4 drivers, and once the damage is done it tends to be permanent. But if enough of us resolve to be ambassadors, it might make a difference to the way we're perceived by society in general.

DO'S & DON'TS

- Keep your speed right down
- Pull over to let walkers, bikers and horse riders pass
- Don't travel in large convoys: split into smaller groups to avoid hassling others
- Leave gates as you found them
- Don't drop litter
- Don't go back to drive the fun bits, such as mud or fords, again
- Scrupulously obey all closure and voluntary restraint notices
- Don't cause a noise nuisance, particularly after dark
- Ensure you have a right to be there. We research the routes on our roadbooks very carefully, but the status of any route can change without notice
- Be prepared to turn back if the route is blocked, even illegally
- If you find an illegal obstruction, notify the local authority
- If someone challenges you, be firm but polite. Stay calm and don't get into a slagging match
- Stick absolutely scrupulously to the right of way
- You have as much of a right to be there as everyone else. Which of course means they have as much right as you



21 3.95		
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22 4.3		TL 737 303
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17 2.7		TL 722 316
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23 4.55		Caution – visibility to the right is absolutely rubbish
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18 3.25		
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24 4.85		
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19 3.3		Take the track on the right just before the derelict building
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25 5.15		TL 737 303 Looks familiar...?
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20 3.6		Turn right at the blue waymarkers
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26 5.75		
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27 6.1		If there's actually any water in this ford when you drive it, you'll be doing better than us
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28 6.55		ZERO TRIP
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29 0.35		<div> Shalford Green 1 Great Saling 3 </div>
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30 2.6		<div> Gt Saling </div>
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31 2.65		<div> Stebbing </div>
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32 3.65		TL 686 250 This track is quite hard to spot – it's just after the end of the hedge line on the right. Take care as you follow it – there are big ditches to each side and not much room for error
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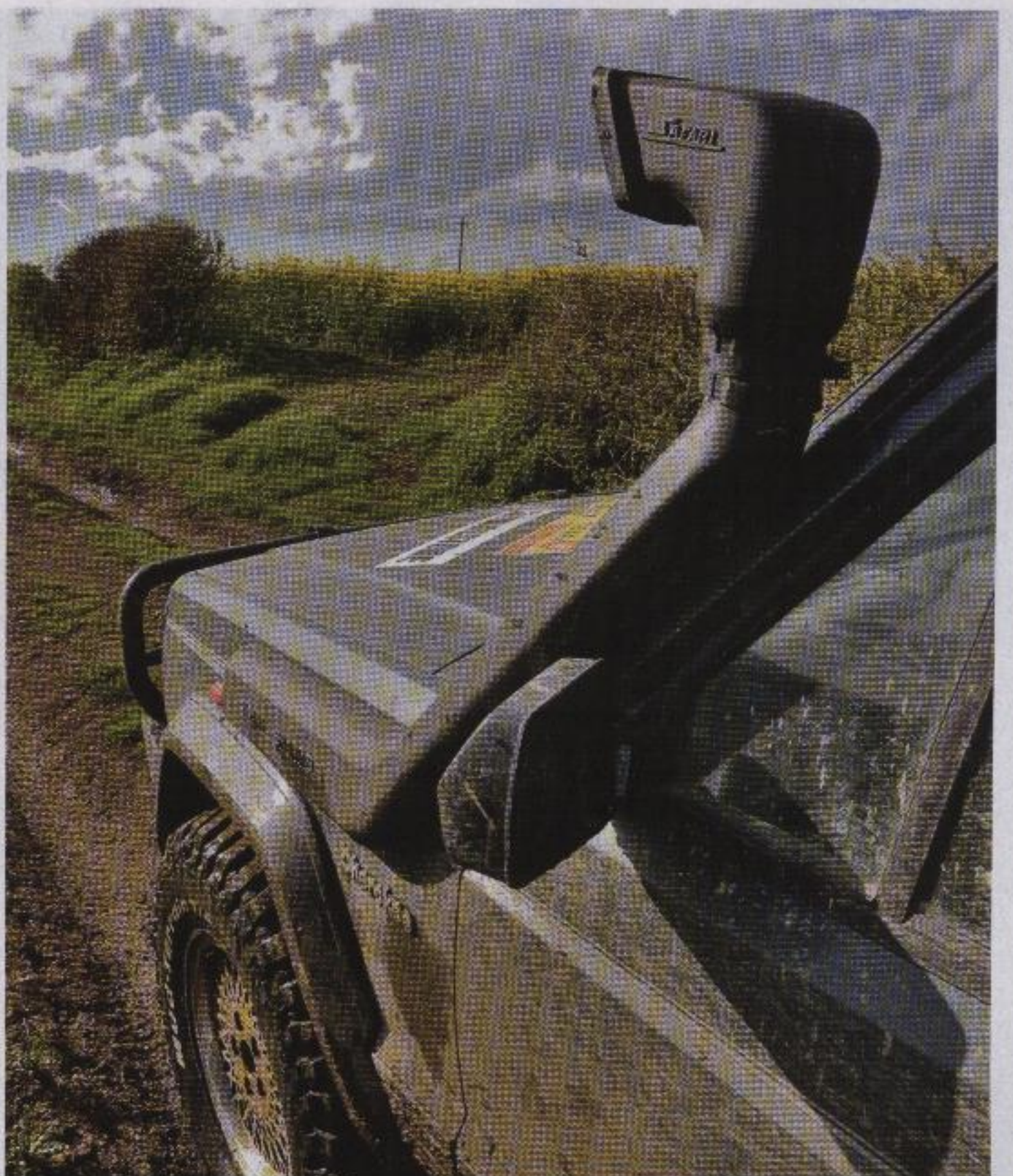
33 4.2		
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34 4.8		
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35 5.0		TL 686 266 Another one that's hard to spot – you've got a good landmark, though, as it's right opposite the church, just after the white house on the right. The track can be rutted in places, so choose your line with care
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36 5.6		
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37 5.85		
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41 9.25		
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42 9.35		
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38 7.3		TL 682 291 This is a nice, wide track, but it gets rutted and can be tricky in places
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43 9.5		ZERO TRIP
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39 8.25		
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44 0.3		TL 677 263
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40 9.1		Don't cut the corner – it's somebody's lawn. There's a parking space opposite as you emerge, and if there's a car in it you're likely to need a couple of shunts to get round
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45 0.65		
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46 0.7			54 4.05		Caution as you emerge – it's a major road and visibility to the right could be better
47 1.15			55 5.15		Saffron Walden Thaxted B184
48 1.7			56 8.0		Duton Hill 1
49 1.75		This is very soon after step 48 – the reading on your trip might not have changed at all	57 8.5		Stanbrook Thaxted
50 1.9		Gt Bardfield Gt Dunmow	58 8.95		TL 599 276 Tilty Hill (only)
51 2.05		B1057 Gt Dunmow 3 Thaxted 8½	59 9.1		Stay right past the farm buildings, but don't follow the track through the hedge signed for Tingates Cottage
52 2.85		TL 645 244 The track is immediately before the hedge line on the right	60 10.0		
53 3.3			61 10.3		

62 12.0		TL 570 277 Turn right on the road signed as a byway, which also has a 'no lorries' sign
63 12.15		
64 13.3		ZERO TRIP
65 0.35		TL 564 299
66 1.2		
67 1.85		
68 2.9		
69 3.0		
70 3.45		TL 557 325
71 3.95		Dead slow as you turn – apart from the fact that it's right next to a house, it's narrow, there's a steep step down and if you go too far to the right you'll fall into a big drain
72 4.85		
73 4.9		TL 536 329
74 5.2		There's a 'footpath only' sign, but it only refers to the track on the right
75 5.9		
76 6.1		
77 7.0		Caution – this is a busy high street S. Walden B1383

78 6.25		
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82 8.35		
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79 6.95		TL 511 336 The turning is immediately after you've gone under the motorway. It's very tight and hard to spot – you need to be slowing down and indicating before you get to the bridge
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83 8.75		
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80 7.35		
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84 8.85		
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81 7.65		Follow the track ahead between the trees
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85 10.2		
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86 10.3		Arrive at the Cricketers Arms in Rickling Green for the end of the route
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