

SOUTH DEVON

Take a deep breath...

Devon is famous for a lot of things, and this route takes in a couple of them. One is Stoke Gabriel, a wonderful little village overlooking the River Dart estuary, where the roadbook starts. The other is a green lane network that gets ferociously tight in places, and we arrived home relieved to have got away with just a broken window. That was the work of one particular track, and we've included notes on how to miss it out. Not that the rest of the roadbook is what you'd call benign, but nothing else in the area comes even close. Back at the start, it's the kind of car park that compels you to get out and explore. A sign asks you to park 'politely,' though, so don't just show up in a convoy and leave a load of manky old 4x4s littered everywhere. With the village being so tight, in this case you'd be best all to wait at the fuel station at Step 3 while your lead car heads into the village to get the trip meter going from scratch. But if you're on your own, don't be in too much of a rush to get going, because few if any roadbooks we've ever run have started off from such an enchanting spot

1 0.0		SX 847 569 Start in Stoke Gabriel, in the car park by the River Shack at the end of Mill Hill. The shack itself is a delight – well worth stopping in for a drink before you set off. Zero your trip next to the shack and set off back into the village to start the route.	5 1.2		SX 856 577 Shortly after a road called Broadpath on the right, turn left immediately after the building that's hard against the side of the road
2 0.15		<div>SCHOOL HILL</div>	6 1.35		
3 0.7		Fuel on the left. Note what we've said in the intro about holding vehicles here if there's more than a couple in your convoy	7 1.95		
4 0.95		<div>Waddeton Galampton</div> <div>1½ 2¾</div>	8 2.2		

OUR DISCO

The Discovery we used for setting out this roadbook was built in association with Extreme 4x4. The company supplied a variety of its products including longer-travel suspension, heavy-duty bumpers and underbody protection, as well as a winch and snorkel. For more info, go to www.extreme4x4.co.uk or call 01255 411411



IS IT SUITABLE?

TYRES	Mud-terrains recommended when wet
WEATHER	Avoid when very wet
LOW BOX	Necessary in places
SOFT-ROADERS	Barely suitable
SCRATCHING	Quite severe
DRIVING	Care and precision required
DAMAGE	Highly likely

ROUTE GUIDE

START	Stoke Gabriel (SX 847 569)
FINISH	Labrador Bay (SX 930 704)
DISTANCE	23.55 miles
TIME	5 hours
TERRAIN	Tight coastal valleys
HAZARDS	Scratching; panel damage; Roughly eroded descents; Dangerous road junctions
OS MAPS	Landranger 202 (Torbay and South Dartmoor) Explorer 110 (Torquay and Dawlish) Explorer OL20 (South Devon)

9
2.3

COOMBE HOUSE LANE

13
4.25

10
3.0

14
4.5

Caution – there's a deceptive side-slope with a drop-off into the brook on the right. Keep your speed right down

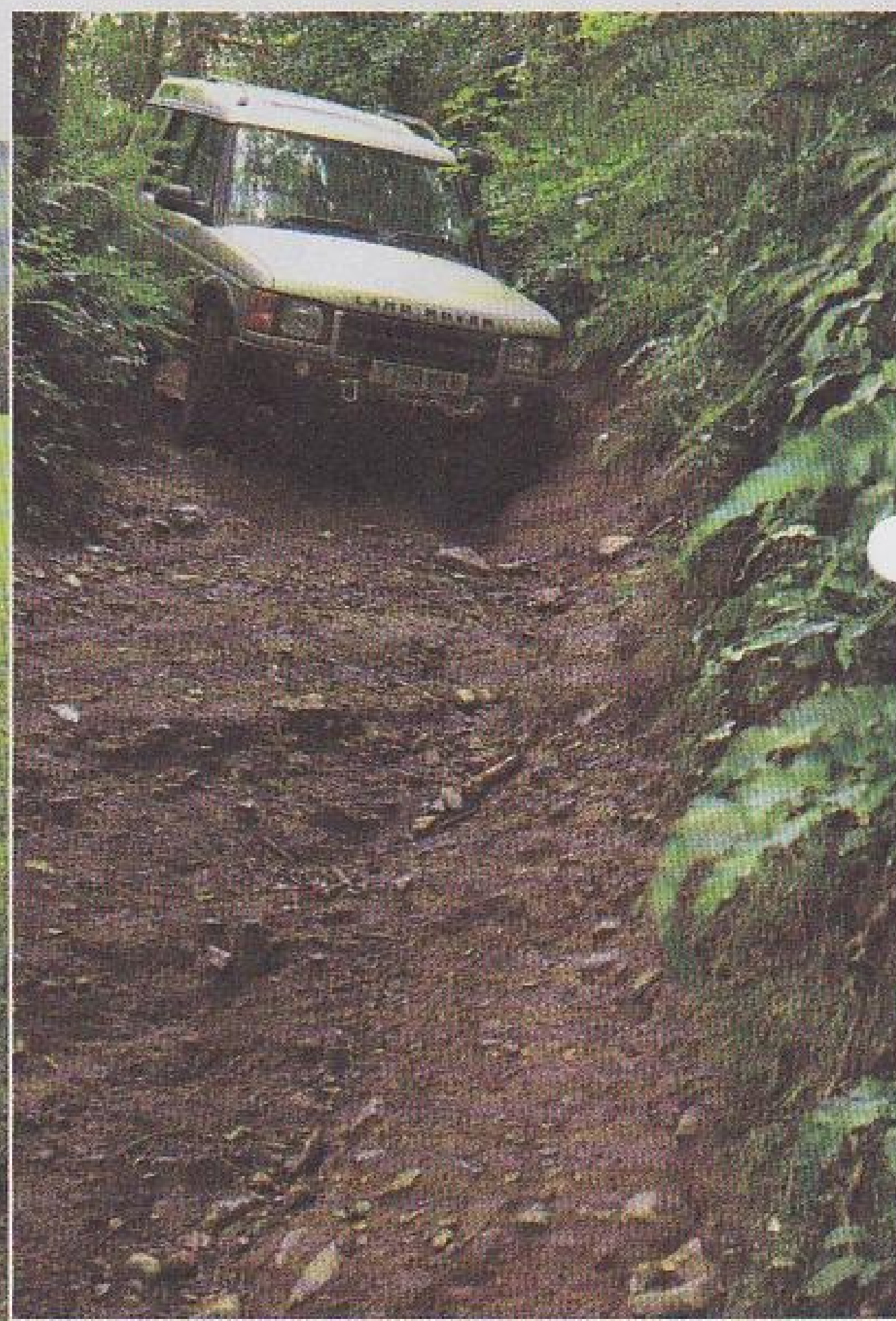
11
3.45

SX 839 590

15
5.1

12
3.6

16
5.3



The lanes on this route are endlessly varied, both in the nature of their surfaces and, particularly at certain times of year, how much T-Cut you'll need afterwards

17 5.5		
18 5.75		ZERO TRIP
19 0.35		SX 809 605 BOURTON LANE
20 0.65		
21 1.2		
22 1.4		
23 1.65		
24 1.75		

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.

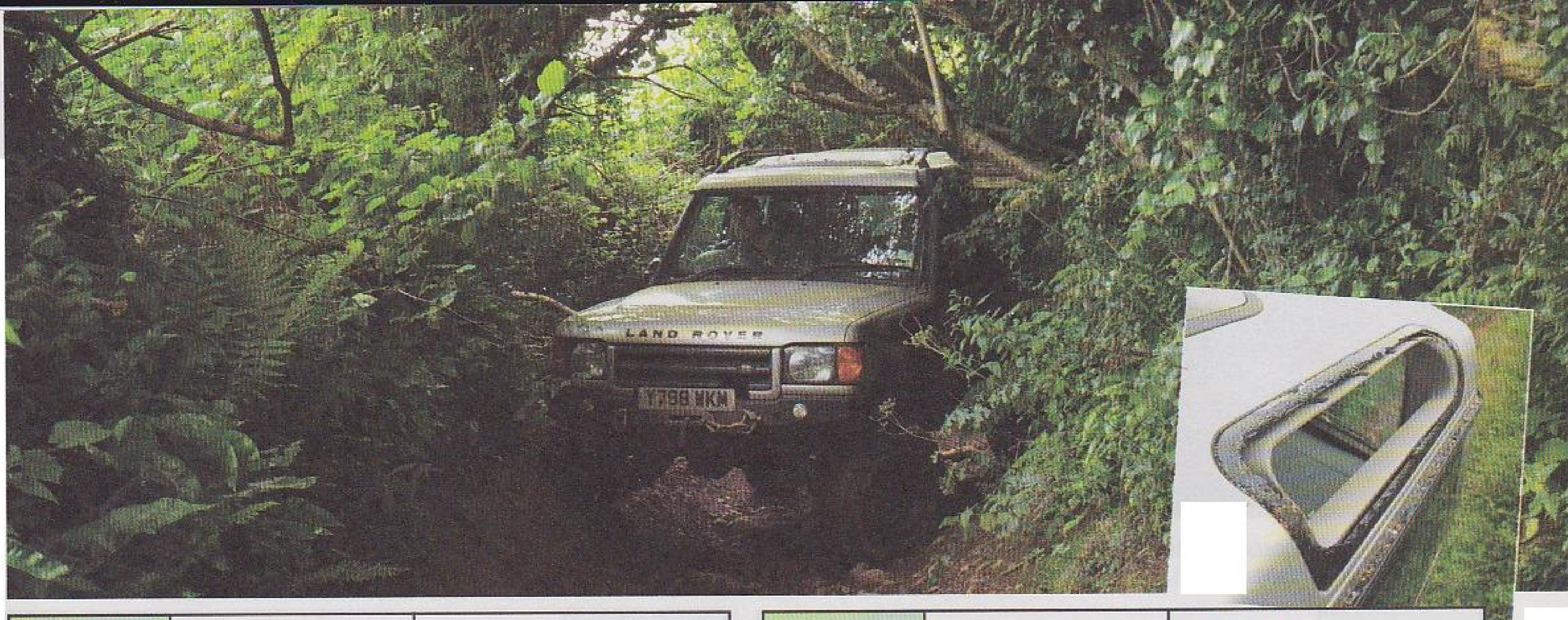
Likewise, most local residents will accept your presence if you're driving sensibly. What suspicion you do encounter is likely to be from people worried that you're there to steal from them, so be ready to offer a word of reassurance. Once satisfied that you're not after their quad bikes, their mood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

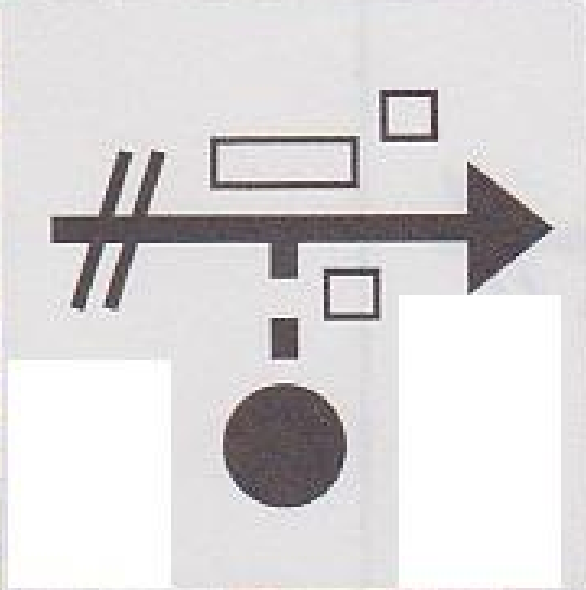
DO'S & DON'TS

- 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

25 2.0		As the main track swings left, carry on ahead on a grassier one
26 2.1		
27 2.2		
28 2.35		
29 3.15		<div> <div> Castle Marldon Torquay </div> <div> 1 2½ 9 </div> </div>
30 3.5		<div> <div> Berry Pomeroy Castle Afton </div> </div>
31 4.8		SX 840 628 Don't go too early – this is after Afton Farm and the big corrugated barn on the left
32 5.2		
33 5.55		
34 5.8		Caution over the main road and follow ahead for Uphempston
35 6.0		SX 825 632
36 6.15		
37 6.55		
38 6.75		SX 828 639
39 6.95		The surface goes from being road to track and back again several times over the next half a mile or so
40 7.55		SX 835 648 Extreme caution – this is a fast, busy road and there's terrible visibility to both sides as you emerge before immediately turning left again on the track

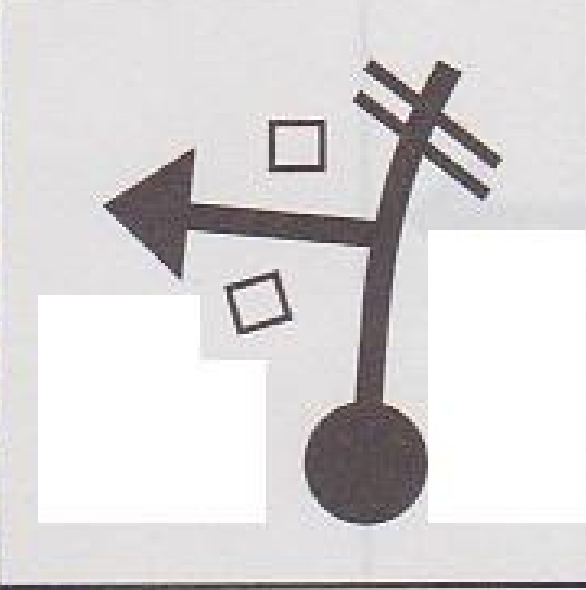


41
8.1



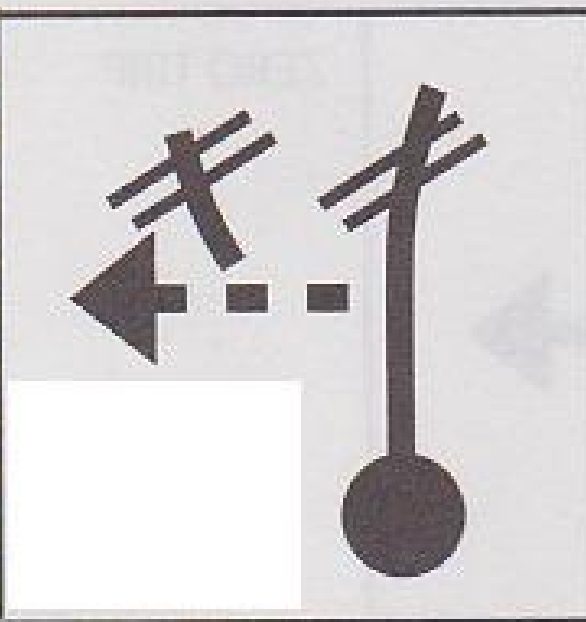
ZERO TRIP

46
0.8



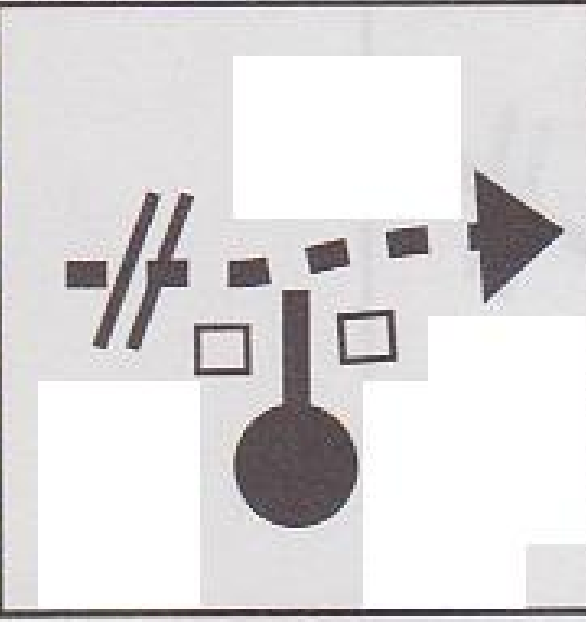
SX 871 666
Take the turning for Long Barn Holiday Cottages

42
0.3

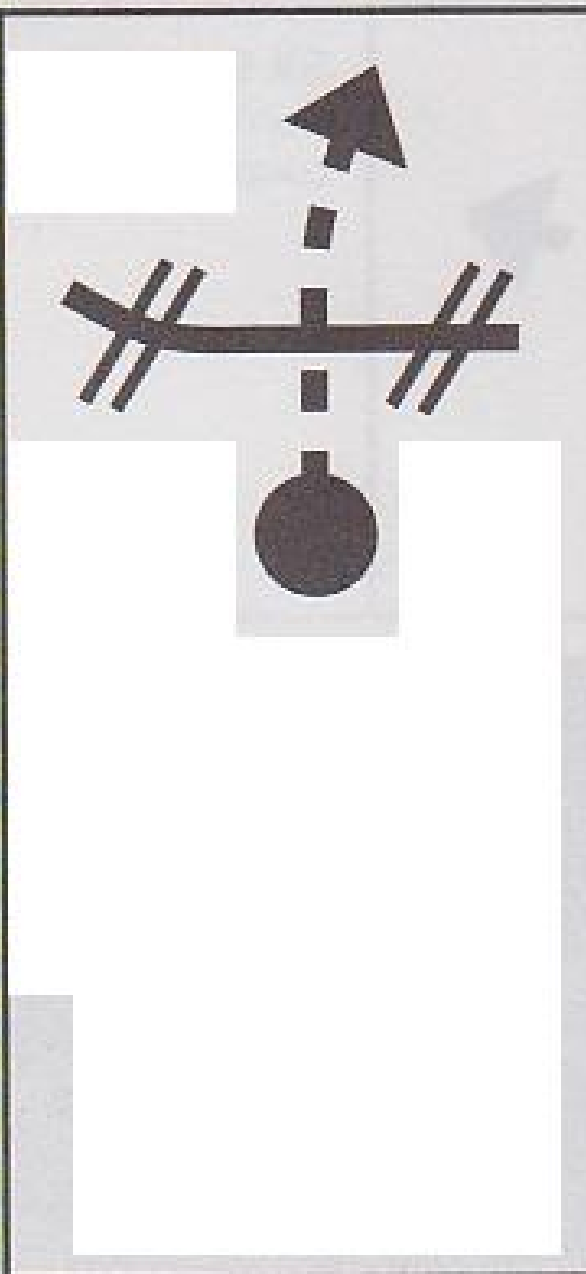


SX 844 647

47
0.8



43
1.05



Follow ahead over the small road and ahead on Windthorn Lane. Be warned that this lane gets very tight indeed – our Discovery got a broken window, and we avoided panel damage by fractions of an inch. To miss it out, turn left here then right at the T-junction for Compton and Marldon. Follow the road until you come to Compton Pool junction, with a track the right and a sign for North Whilborough to the left. This is step 45 (the track on the right is the one you would have come out of), so skip to there and zero your trip as you turn left.

And in case you missed it, here it is again: this track is VERY tight indeed and could do your vehicle a lot of damage. Go down here, and you're on your own. You have been warned!

48
1.5



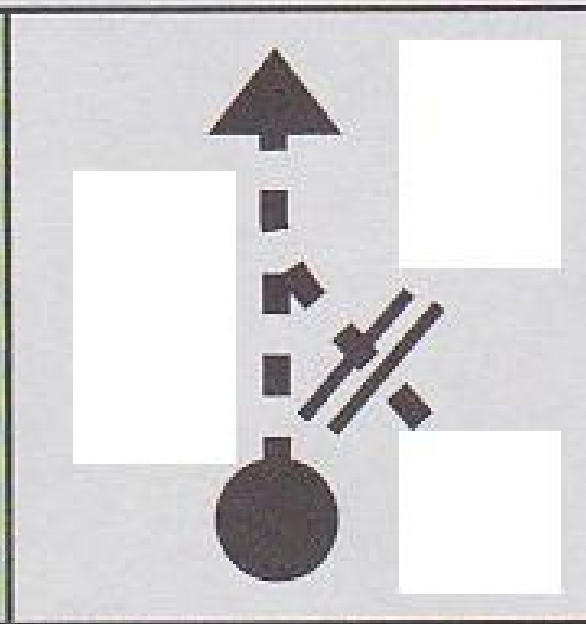
Step 43 (top): The warnings on this page aren't a joke: this lane is really, really tight, and we know because we drove back up the M5 with a gale blowing in through the hole where our nearside roof window used to be. If you're in a Defender, steer clear unless it has an exo cage

Step 42 (below): Betraying no sign at all of what's to come, the lane before this is just a nice, wide, easily driven track with extensive views of the surrounding countryside. It's also notable for two things you'll

remember about this part of Devon: its distinctively reddish brown mud, and the 'Unmetalled Road' signs for which the local authority deserves a medal

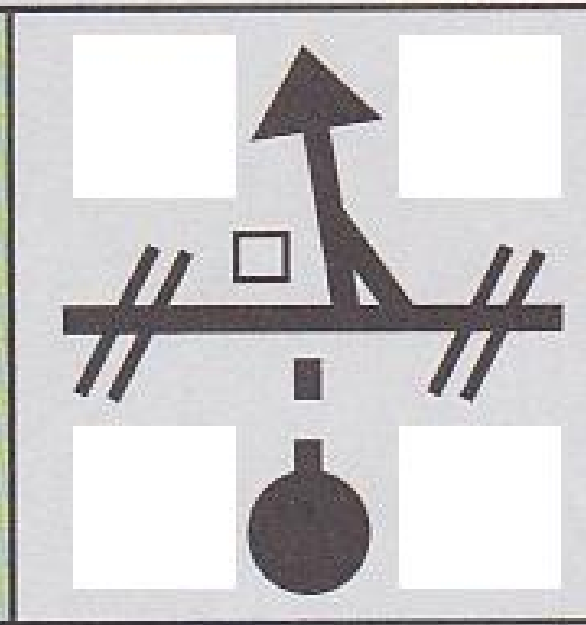


44
1.5



Join the bigger track

45
1.65



Carry on ahead for North Whilborough

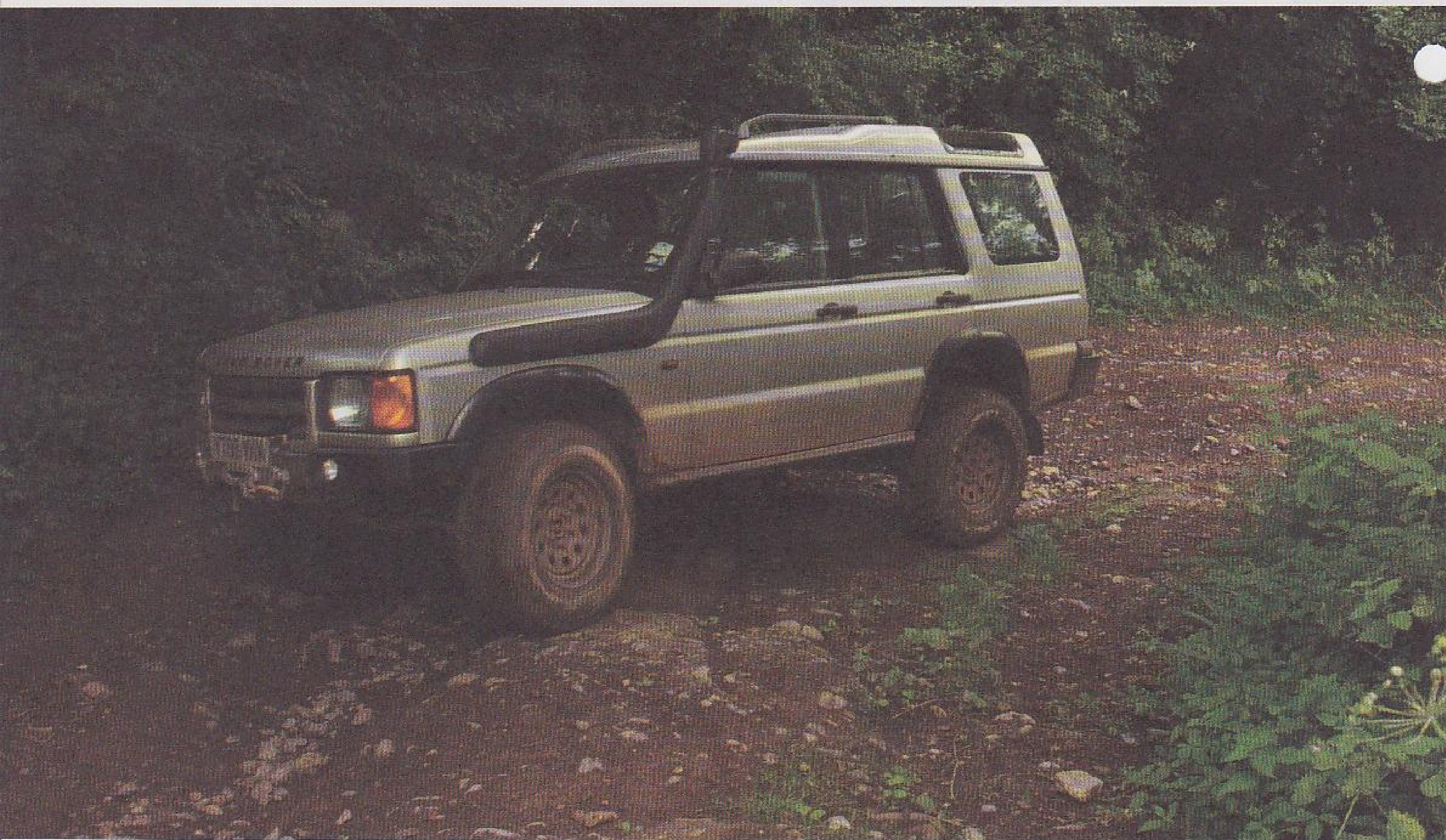
ZERO TRIP





Step 60: A rough descent on the previous track leads via a short road section into an equally uneven climb that'll put your traction to the test

52 2.05		
53 2.35		It's not clear which road has right of way
49 1.55		
54 3.95		BARTON HILL ROAD
50 1.7		
55 4.95		ZERO TRIP RIDGE ROAD
51 1.95		Kingskerswell >
56 5.25		SX 904 693 Don't go too early – it's just after a couple of houses on the right



57
5.45

As you drop down the hill, suddenly the surface gets very uneven indeed on the way round a corner

58
5.5

59
5.8

The turning is between a pair of sheds

60
5.85

SX 912 689
Very soon after step 59, follow the road through a farmyard/dump then turn left on the track up the hill

61
6.25

The track ahead is actually classed as a C-class road!

62
6.4

63
6.65

64
6.75

SX 916 703



65
6.8

66
7.55

67
7.75

68
8.05

Pull into the Labrador Bay car park on the right for the end of the route

Coming Up...

We've not been up north for a few months, but this one's going to be worth waiting for. Get ready for some cracking lanes and great scenery in the Yorkshire Dales