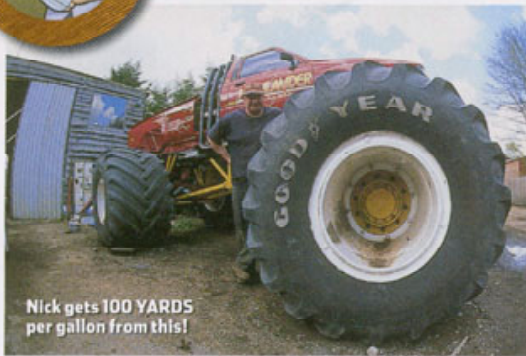




BRITISH ADVENTURE



Nick gets 100 YARDS per gallon from this!



RPI boss Chris is breaking these Range Rovers

scratches sustained during his drives through the woods and, at first glance, you'd never guess it was used off-road on a daily basis.

Land Rovers are also a favourite of his wife, Margaret, who drives a Freelander. Sadly, son Nick isn't yet following in his father's footsteps. Although he works alongside him in the family business, he drives Toyotas by day... and creates monster trucks

at night. His latest – all 6.5 tons of it – took eight years to build and sits high above 66-inch wheels, which are powered by an awesome 600bhp Chrysler V8. It's now a regular crowd pleaser, impressing thousands in show arenas across the country.

'It does 100 yards to the gallon,' admits Nick, 36. 'But I can make it fly over parked cars!'

'Ah, but I doubt if it could get to the places I go in the forest,' retorts Gordon, with a smile.

Getting more power

With the raucous roar of Nick's V8 monster still ringing in my ears, I head south again to the outskirts of Norwich to the Mecca for all V8 enthusiasts – RPI Engineering.

Not any old V8s, of course. Owner Chris Crane specialises in the venerable V8 Rover engine that reigned supreme from the very first Range Rover in 1970 until the advent of the latest model, launched in 2002.

Many Land Rover fans will tell you that the old, Buick-derived pushrod V8 is the most beautiful powerplant ever to sit behind a grille. But realistically it's far from perfect... which is where Chris comes in.

He started out in business 23 years ago, breaking Rover SD1 saloons for parts – especially those prized V8 engines. It was a profitable venture, but it wasn't enough for Chris's enquiring mind. He was determined to work out how to make this great engine even better.

And he did just that: opening up and polishing the inlet and exhaust ports, improving the valves... and camshafts... and exhaust systems... You name it, he found a way of making it better.

Eventually, those tweaks combined to squeeze an extra 35 per cent power out of the old engine – and Chris made a lot of friends among Range Rover owners, as well as Morgan and TVR enthusiasts with the same lusty V8 under their bonnets.

Today, he's as busy as ever, supplying engines and parts to enthusiasts all over the world. The only trouble is he can't get enough.

Manufacturers pump out so much mass-produced crap these days. The Lightweight V8 is different

'Holly' (right) is RPI's undisputed king of V8 tuning





New V8 engines are in short supply. Chris can't get enough to meet demand



The internet means RPI serves V8 enthusiasts worldwide - with the click of a mouse

'Before Christmas I had 120 engines in stock; now I'm down to 16. It has to be new engines - I don't touch old engines,' he says.

Not for performance tuning, anyway. But he does sell secondhand V8s, from the scores of Range Rovers (and a few first-generation Discos) now lined up at his Horsford premises. Some are rusty, others are high-mileage... what they all have in common is that they are a bit tired and ripe for breaking.

Yes, Chris has come full circle and is now returning to how he started in business in the first place - breaking cars. The internet has been his inspiration, with enthusiasts from across the globe logging on to snap up parts at bargain prices - and a genuinely honest service.

'This is breaking the modern way. If I supply a secondhand alternator and it packs up after six months, I'll replace it,' says Chris.

And it's not just engines, gearboxes and oily bits, either. Fancy plush leather upholstery for your Range Rover? Some vehicles have knackered engines and powertrains, but immaculate interiors. Others are bad inside but have good mechanicals.

Today, Chris employs 14 staff, including 'Holly'. The shy, bearded engine genius wouldn't tell us his real name but he's been building performance V8s on the premises for 20 years. The site is a hive of activity and supplies everything you could need for your V8, including top-of-the-range LPG systems that Chris says will not result in any power loss.

But why does he love V8s so much? 'Basically, the manufacturers pump out so much mass-produced crap these days - same design, same wind-tunnel. The lightweight V8 is different and if it had continued to be developed, it would still be going strong today. It's beautiful and it's got character,' smiles Chris.

And with an RPI-tuned version under the bonnet, your V8 Land

Now you get out and explore Norfolk

Morston
A great place for driving down over the marsh to the quayside on the creek

OS Landranger 133
Grid ref TG165265
Vegetation encroaches in places so take care if you want to avoid scratches

Buckinghamshire Arms
01263 732133
Stop here if you're a fan of traditional English home cooking

OS Landranger 134
Grid ref TG152282
Dry sandy soil means that this lane is suitable for year-round exploration

OS Landranger 134
Grid ref TG203212
Barely rutted surface means this is suitable for drivers of Freelanders

OS Landranger 134
Grid ref TG287246
Typical open farmland on rolling hills forming part of the River Bure valley

RPI Engineering
01603 891209
V8 specialists who will turn your motor into a fire-breather, if you want

OS Landranger 134
Grid ref TG461236
From Horsey corner take this track to the beautiful sand dunes on the coast

Greenlaning do's & don'ts

Only ever drive greenlanes that have known vehicle rights - after studying the relevant Ordnance Survey map. Check the definitive map at the local county council or get in touch with the local Land Rover club's Rights of Way officer or GLASS (Greenlane Association) representative. Some definitive maps are available online.

- Avoid badly rutted or sodden tracks. You'll only make them worse and provide ammunition for those who want to see us banned.
- Drive slowly (max 12mph). Pull over and stop if you encounter walkers or horses (and switch off your engine for the latter).

- Travel in groups of four vehicles or less.
- Don't damage trees or hedgerows, except for cutting back any overhanging branches that get in the way of the lane.
- Take recovery gear/spade in case you get stuck. Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged.
- Don't travel alone - you may get stranded.
- Open gates should be left open - and closed ones should be closed again after you've gone through.
- Take your litter home. Supervise dogs and children at all times, especially when you're near livestock.
- Avoid waterways unless you are certain that there is a public right of way.
- Avoid aggro with other lane users. Don't argue with them, but explain politely that you're there legally.