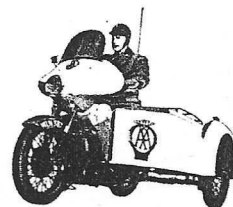


The AA and the Land Rover



IAN BARNARD looks at how the Automobile Association has made use of the Land Rover and at the many different models made over the years.

In this article, a long overdue second instalment, describing models in AA livery, we will take a look at how the Land Rover featured. I should begin by saying that I am no expert on the many versions of the real Land Rover and apologise for any errors. I am sure that those of you who know your stuff will be able to identify the various different types, but my aim is to show the broad range of model Land Rovers wearing the AA badge.

The AA patrol of the 1940s used the motor-cycle combination almost exclusively to bring assistance to members. In 1946, two Bedford trucks were put into service, to operate the London After Dark Rescue Squad. They relied on the telephone to get their

instructions but this was far from ideal. In 1949, these two vans were fitted with Marconi two-way radios. They operated by transmitting to a large 60ft mast, erected on top of the then AA HQ, at Leicester Square in Central London. This new radio network, as it was soon to become, was a huge leap forward, in providing service and making sure that members were certain of getting help when they needed it. The two Bedford trucks proved to be too large and were replaced in 1949 by examples of the new Land Rover.

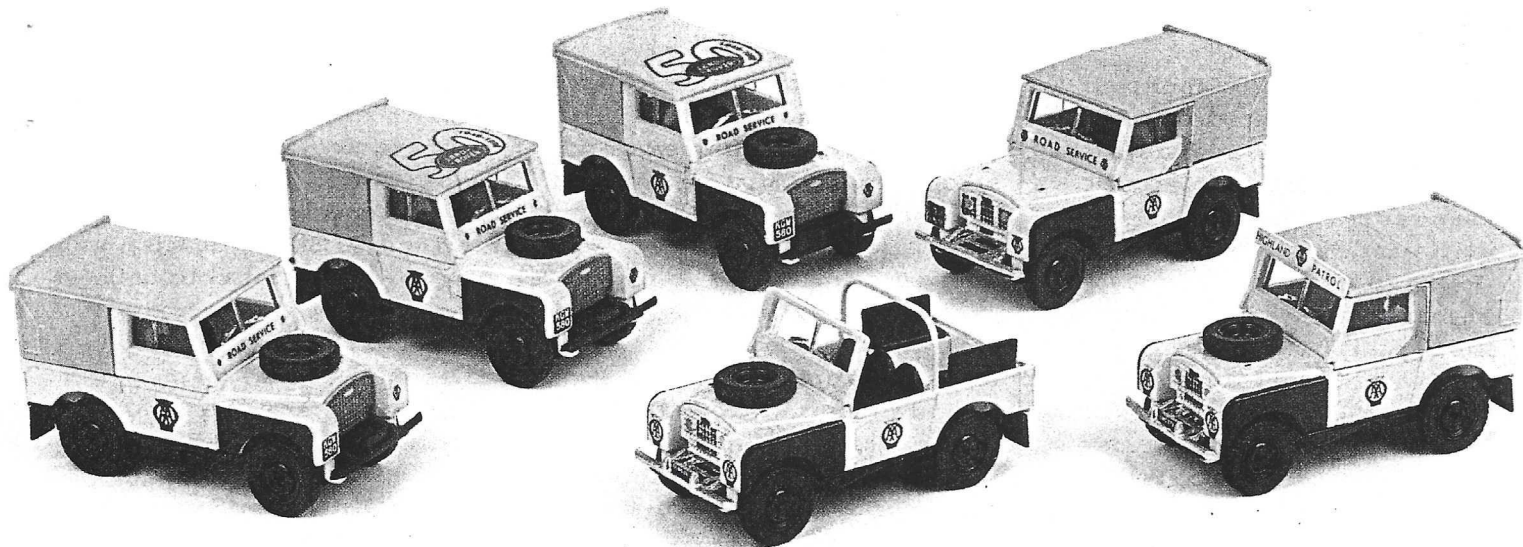
The Willys Jeep

Before getting to the Land Rovers, however, let's start by looking at models of an earlier workhorse,

the Willys Jeep. In 1948, the AA bought three of these trusty and versatile vehicles, re-conditioned, from the Army. They were used to tow the new mobile caravan offices, which had been introduced in 1947, as local bases for the provision of AA service. They lasted for just eighteen months before the Land Rover came into service with the AA. The vans were 1946 model Car Cruiser Touring Caravans, with modified interiors.

The first model of these is probably one of the rarest of all AA models. Tri-ang produced a number of Willys Jeeps in its Minic range, but I have only seen the AA version once and bought it straight away. I spotted it at the Sandown Toyfair in 1992 and have since only heard of one other example, offered to me but not seen.

My Minic Jeep is not 100% original. It has been repaired around the front bumper and carries a



The various versions of the Matchbox Dinky Land Rover mentioned in the text, with the original vehicle and the parade version below.



country, with the least number of changeovers, to safely complete the recovery. It was done this way because the AA used ordinary breakdown patrols and it was determined that they should not have to stay out overnight and should only drive up to the legally allowed hours of working.

Long distance recovery was quite rare in those days, with most garages using the trusty Harvey Frost crane on the back of a wrecker to recover cars. This was fine if the vehicle had been damaged in an accident, but was hopeless for a car that had only broken down. The AA started the Relay Service with a small fleet of Bedford J3 Beaver-tails and LWB Safari Land Rovers towing Weaver trailers. The Safaris were quite comfortable, but having only four-pot petrol engines, were sadly under-powered for the task in hand. You would often be in low range in order to negotiate fairly small hills if the car on the back was of any size.

The AA of the 1980s and '90s saw a mixture of LWB and SWB bodies, usually, but not always, with the van back fitted. There are still some Land Rovers in service today but the modern AA is finding other, more practical vehicles to use on the current fleet. It is quite possible that the Land Rover will disappear completely from the fleet during the next few years.

The Models

It is probably easiest to start with the largest models and move down the scale. This means looking first at the Eagle Collectibles 1/18 Series 3 109 hard top, issued in early 2000. At 25cm long this is quite an imposing model and nicely finished with the front wings correctly painted black, along with the roof. It was certainly not common for the AA to use the LWB and the livery should not have been the old winged



The Vitesse model, with the original and the corrected AA badges.

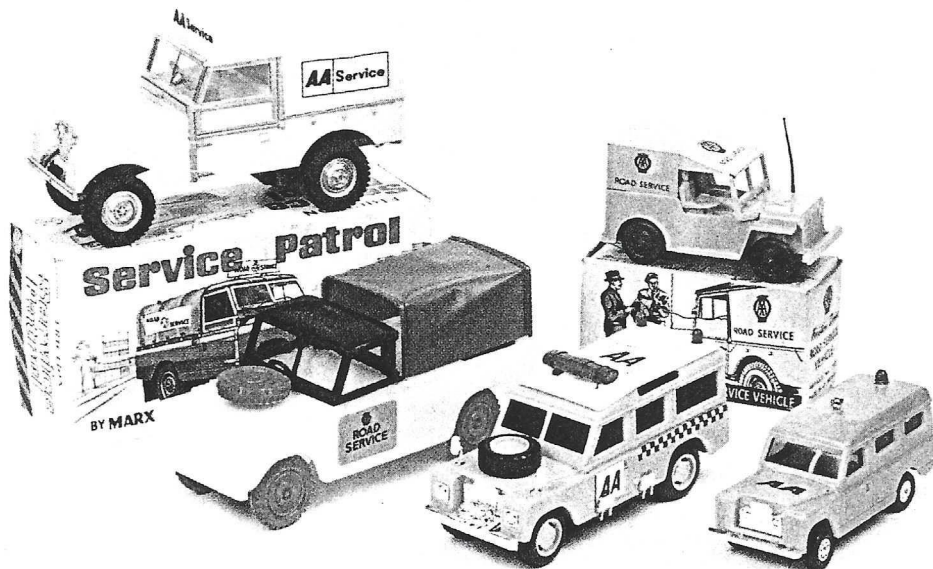


The refinished Matchbox Dinky 'Highland Patrol' compared with the real thing.

badge and 'Road Service'. This model has a 'K' registration from 1971-72 and the livery changed to the 'AA SERVICE' style in 1966, which was completed around 1969-70. The left-hand drive, of course, is also incorrect.

Of a similar size, but totally different in material and





An assortment of different plastic Land Rovers carrying AA insignia, as mentioned in the text.

different spare wheel to the four on the axles. The model has a folding windscreen and removable aerial and is around 1/24 in scale. A picture of this model can be seen on page 107 of The Minic Book by Peter Bartok.

Around 1989, Gerry Ford, of B Ford Models, produced a 1/43 version, importing a quantity of Solido model Jeeps as the base and applying the transfers in house. The model was certificated although I cannot remember the total number made. Although a Code 2 model, the transfers are correct to the original.

Moving to the slightly smaller scale of 1/48 brings a real gem of a model - well, a pair of models really - as they are not available separately. These models, crafted by Hart Models, and distributed through Brian

Salter's company, 'Transport of Delight', are not intended as toys, but are faithful reproductions of actual vehicles. Although not cheap, they are miniature works of art and represent the real thing extremely well.

The Jeep and caravan illustrate this perfectly, with even the registration, DJB 425, being correct. Each window of the caravan has the AA badge just as the original did. The caravan is even supplied with miniature screw jacks, so it can be displayed uncoupled from the Jeep. Hart have chosen to finish the roof of the caravan in white, mainly because it looks attractive, as the photos available of this type of caravan are mostly in

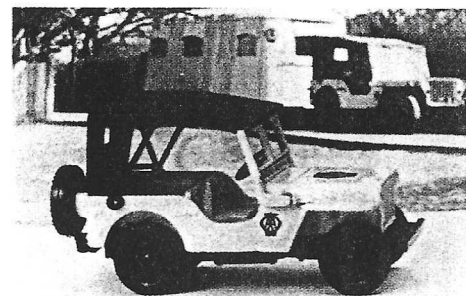
black and white. In the one colour plate I know of (In 'The Golden Milestone'), the roof could have been white but it was more likely to have been silver grey, the same as the roof of the AA Box of the day. It is probable that the roof of some vans would have been yellow, and later, even black, but I think it looks good as it is. Both Brian and Hart Models have a real passion for Land Rovers and will appear again as we cover their Land Rover models.

An odd little model from around the late 1950s or early '60s is a friction-drive plastic Jeep, obviously originally intended as an army Jeep as it has the

American Star and roundel moulded into the bonnet. I have no idea of the manufacturer but the box says Empire Made and it is No. 710. The tilt has been made in tinplate and has been lithographed extremely

nicely. It has a black aerial on the nearside front wing and, although the proportions are all wrong, it is still a nice piece.

Finally in this first section, I put forward one of my own creations based on the real thing, but never available in model form. The Mini-Moke is a Dinky casting, which has been refinished from photos of 459 HOL, a Moke tried out by the AA, as a potential patrol vehicle that might have replaced the motorbike and sidecar then widely used. In the early 1960s, it was clear that the AA needed to modernise, and



1948 AA JEEP MODEL

In November 1948 three re-conditioned ex-army Jeeps (later in AA livery) were obtained to tow the caravans used as mobile offices at events. The three Jeeps were in service for 18 months.

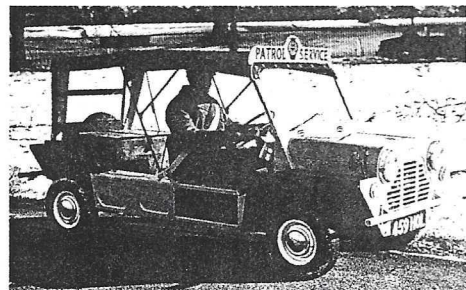
The Jeep model is shown here in front of an original photograph of one of those AA Jeeps towing a mobile office.

No. 30

The certificate for Gerry Ford's refinished Solido Jeep, seen at the bottom right.



The real Jeep and caravan, as modelled by Hart Models and seen below.

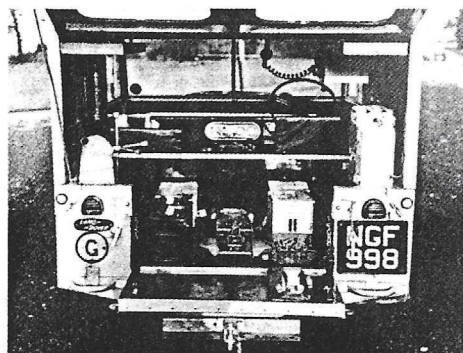


The AA experimented with a Mini-Moke. Ian has created a model of this vehicle by refinishing a Dinky Toy.

the Moke was one of a number of vehicles tried. However, it was not a success.



...the broad range of model Land Rovers wearing the AA badge



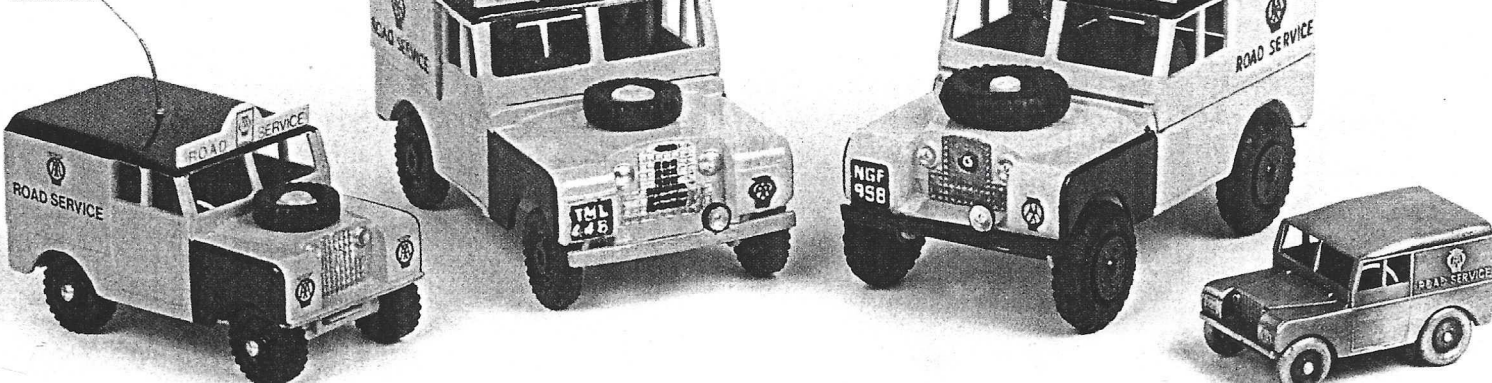
The Budgie model released in 1962 was different to the earlier Morestone example.

The Land Rover

In 1948, the Land Rover was launched to compete with the likes of the Willys Jeep and the English 'Jeep' - the Austin Champ. It was an instant success, welcomed in particular by the armed forces and the farming community. The AA was also quick to spot its potential and purchased their first examples in July 1949. Since then, most of the main versions produced over the years have seen service with the AA and it is probably true to say that Land Rovers have been in continuous service ever since.

The first vehicles used by the AA were Series 1 'rag-tops'. From a patrol's viewpoint this was a vast

The Benbros and Morestone Land Rovers refinished with the late John Parker's Highland Patrol transfers, with his copy of the middle sized version and the Menteith pewter copy of the smallest.



The largest models from Benbros and Morestone with their attractive boxes. The real vehicle on which the Morestone was based is seen on the left.



The three sizes of Benbros and Morestone AA Land Rovers are seen together.

improvement on his 'RSO' or Road Service Outfit (motor-cycle combination). No heater and plenty of draughts meant it was still a very cold drive and the patrol had to keep well wrapped-up. In 1953 the Highland Patrol Service was established, north of the Caledonian Canal. The four wheel drive came in very useful to keep moving during the winter.

The short wheelbase was the most popular version

in use with the AA and has been in service right up to the 1990s. However, in 1973, this changed, as the AA introduced a real first in the industry, the Relay Service. Prior to this point, the only option on offer, if the car could not be repaired, was a tow to the nearest AA approved garage. This was not much use if you lived hundreds of miles away. The Relay Service was designed to 'relay' the car and passengers across the

execution was a model made by Clifford in plastic. My guess would be that this was produced around the end of the 1950s or early '60s and obviously aimed at small children. With no pretence to be accurate, it remains one of my favourites and is as rare as hen's teeth these days.

The Marx model, number HK-6208, would more likely be from the late 1960s and loosely based on the early rag-top Land Rover. By the time the AA was using the 'AA Service' livery it had long moved away from soft-tops and this should have had a van back. The model is nice for all that, and I have yet to see another one. To add to the problems of the Land Rover collector, the box shows that there should be an RAC version out there somewhere as well...

I also have a rather awful LWB Safari Land Rover in around 1/28 scale, which has paper AA badges and chequer body lining. It is obviously used for other versions, as it carries a red light bar on the front roof, with twin red beacons on the rear. Nobody in England is allowed to use red beacons, and the AA have only ever been allowed to use amber.

We now come on to the first of the early diecasts made by two well-known firms, Morestone and Benbros. The products are remarkably similar, while being subtly different. Morestone made Land Rovers in three sizes while Benbros made just two. The larger Benbros Land Rover is really very nice. Around 1/32 scale, it has two opening front doors, with the rear doors opening correctly. The front bumper is separate, as is a very nicely made headboard. Two drivers sit inside. As you can see from the box, it should have had the roof and front outer wings painted black, but it usually comes in all over yellow. It might well be that some were finished with a black roof, but the wings were obviously too much trouble for what was just a toy. The aerial is a spring fitted over a small cast spigot. As with all models from these two makers, this model has to be handled with care as they can all suffer from metal fatigue.

Morestone's model in 1/32 scale is based entirely on a real vehicle. As you can see from the prototype photos, Morestone got it right in every detail. The rear doors are exactly as the original and they put in two drivers as shown in the picture. The sharp eyed among you will note that they even got the registration number right, NGF998. If they had made the wheels as nicely as the Benbros, it would have been nigh on perfect. Of course, they could not cast the badges and the words 'Road Service' under the screen, as this was produced in the mid-1950s, when casting

techniques were not as sophisticated as now. It is possible that the Benbros, reg no TML 448, represents a real vehicle but I have no evidence to support this. If anyone knows for sure, please write in.

Earlier, I mentioned the Highland Patrol Service, and I have both of these large Morestone and Benbros models re-finished in this livery. The late John Parker was a real enthusiast for the Land Rover, and he had produced all sorts of kits and spares for models. He used his contacts to produce a small number of photo-etched Highland Patrol and Road Service headboards. The detail was so good that he was able to include the word 'Radio' under the badge as on the original vehicle. The Morestone Highland Patrol model



was produced entirely by John. The author, using doors, bumper and headboard produced by John, built the Benbros model from one which needed a few spares. Both have been finished in the correct paint colours with both the wings and roof in black.

As Morestone became Budgie, they released a new model in 1962. The only possible criticism was the lack of black wings but this is easily forgiven. The tail-gate opened top and bottom, which is a bit of a problem, as it is hard enough finding the model, but even harder to get one with the doors intact. The sides and headboard use transfers for the livery and the reg no was YYU 384. It is now hard to find in good condition and commands a high price.

Around 1988, and in the same scale, ERTL produced a SWB version with windows in the sides, with reg no E335 HJL. I have never seen this version in real life, but experience has told me that there was

probably one on the AA fleet somewhere.

As we arrive around the 1/43 scale, we come first to the Morestone middle-sized model. Two main versions exist, the first having the badge and the words 'Road Service' cast onto the sides, reg no TLN 857; the second, reg no CLI 1812, using decals. Both versions usually come in yellow with a black roof, but I have the cast version with a yellow roof. The model shown correctly painted with black roof and wings and a headboard is a kit, produced once again by John Parker, based on the Morestone, but altered slightly to improve the model. The rear now has a window and light units. The author built it.

Vitesse in 1991 put their Land Rover model into AA livery. They chose to use exactly the same reg no as Morestone, NGF 998, but used a totally incorrect Series III Land Rover. The model had rear windows, which was not usual for the AA. Unusually it had the black wings but not the black roof. The main problem was that the badge was totally incorrect. It had been produced with the AA in a circle topped with a crown. They must have confused it with the Royal Automobile Association badge. The mistake was pointed out quite quickly and a second version was issued with the correct badge. The wrong one does not seem to command a premium over the correct one.

At about the same time, a model of the early soft-top Land Rover was produced in the Matchbox Dinky Collection. This was an exact copy of one owned by the AA and the reg no KGW 580 is correct. In Holland, this was one of the models overprinted on the roof with a design, in red or green, to celebrate 50 years of the Land Rover, by a firm called Treavalon.

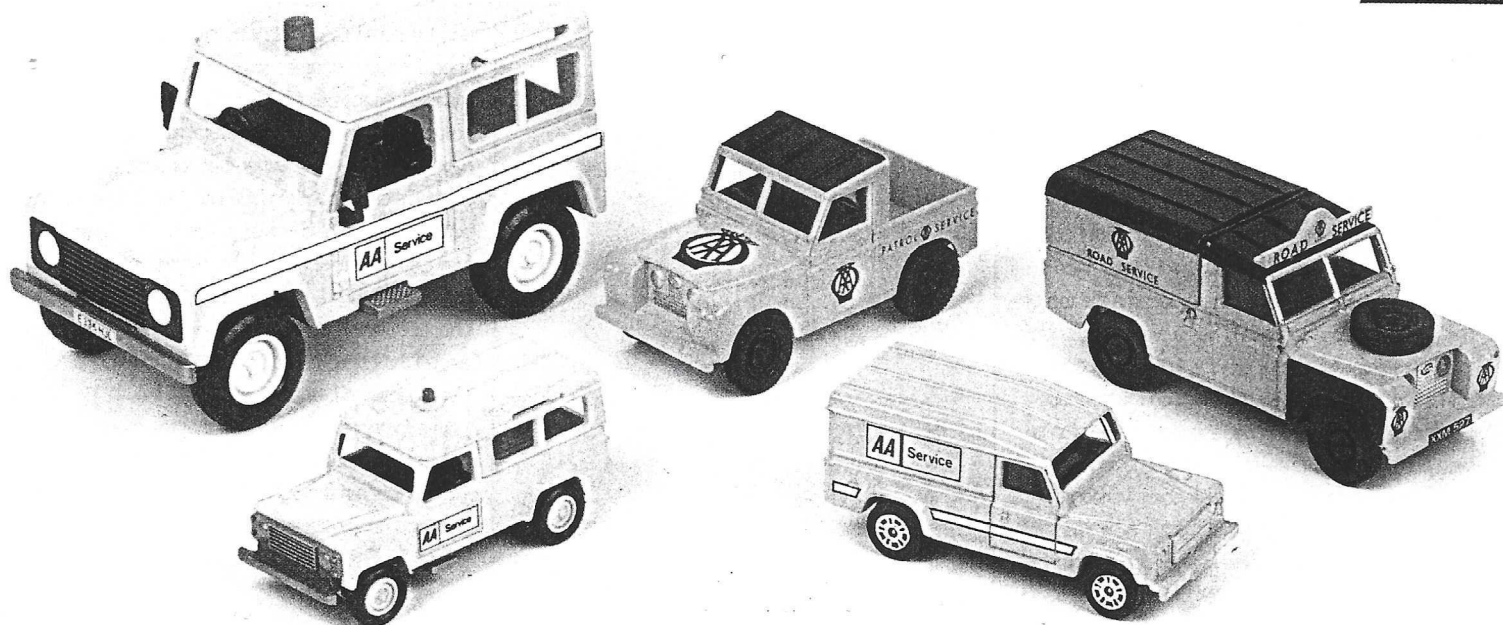
This model is very good for converting and I have made three alternative versions, a different Series 1 with the spare wheel removed from the bonnet, a Highland Patrol version and one with the doors and back removed with a handrail, as used by the Duke of Edinburgh, when he inspected contingents from every AA area, at a Grand Pageant of Motoring in London's Regents Park in 1955, the AA's 50th year.

In the late 1950s and '60s, there were a number of plastic Land Rovers made as very cheap toys with the most basic of stickers used for the livery. I have seen several and they now seem to attract rather steep prices. I have seen £40 plus on items which would have sold for a couple of old shillings (10p) and so have had to pass them by.

However, I did find the Safari Land Rover shown, with a paper AA badge and a blue lamp. Again, this is not prototypical but as it was not too dear it was

Hart Models has produced a range of excellent AA Land Rovers for 'Transport of Delight'.





Land Rovers in AA colours were released during the 1990s in different scales by Ertl (seen on the left) and Corgi, with varying degrees of authenticity.

added to the collection.

Corgi has not been mentioned so far, but they have made two AA Land Rovers that I know of in this scale. Both came out in 1998 but could not be more different. The better one was 07403, a LWB hard top, with the reg no XXM 527. I don't think the AA used this version, in this livery, but I suppose Corgi only had the LWB casting to work with. The other model, 61210, would have been better if a tilt had been added to the SWB version and Corgi had bothered to research the livery. Not for the first time did they get it wrong - the least said about this one the better.

We move down in scale slightly now, to the models produced by Hart models and sold under the 'Transport of Delight' name by Brian Salter. He is a delight to talk to and loves everything about the Land Rover, including driving one. The models are to a constant 1/48 scale and are truly miniature masterpieces. All are carefully researched and correct to the real vehicle right down to the numberplate. There really is no compromise, indeed Brian insists that everything must be right for the vehicle he has researched. The range of AA vehicles has grown to almost 20 different models, but I will confine myself to the Land Rovers for now.

The first model was of an 88" SWB reg no A848 TUU, from around 1983. These vehicles were used extensively by the AA, to patrol the motorways and were a regular sight on the M4 where I worked. The front bumpers were often fitted with large rubber

pads to allow cars to be pushed off the hard shoulder as well as pulled. It was not unheard of for a patrol to be doing both at the same time, if circumstances called for it. I should stress that this would never be allowed today. Being made of white metal these models are all fairly small runs and some of them, including this one, are no longer available.

Next out was a 90" van back, reg no G146 XJB, finished in the livery of AA Scotland, Highland Patrol. This was a first, as it was the first commercially produced model of a Highland Patrol. Brian got the



inspiration from a picture used on the AA Staff Christmas card of 1992. As you would expect of Brian, it is correct down to the registration number and the winch on the front bumper.

Two Land Rover Defenders, five-door with van backs, followed. The first in the AA Service livery, reg no C641 OJB, from around 1986, and the second, reg no L748 HRX, in the new Chequers livery, introduced in 1993 when the AA used the strap line 'To our members we are the Fourth Emergency Service'. As you can see from the pictures, these models are really superb and take pride of place in the collection.

Not yet in my collection but now available from Brian is the Defender with hardtop in 'AA Service'

livery from around 1990. Also in development is a Land Rover 'Easion'. This was a single-cab Land Rover with a body which could be lowered to the road for the casualty vehicle to be loaded. The Easion conversion was made, I believe, by the Ibbett Engineering Company of Kempston Hardwick, Bedford. To my knowledge only one of these interesting vehicles was built for the AA.

Continuing down the scale brings us to several models at 1/57 scale. In the model world this is somewhat different, as a choice of scale, but it is used by Trevor Power at Marque Models of Stechford, not far from Birmingham Airport. Trevor produces a large range of classic vehicles for sale as high-quality gifts. The models are almost always supplied mounted on a polished piece of wood, either singly or in multiples. They are made of silver-plated pewter and really do look good on the mantelpiece. Trevor has produced a series of six models under licence from the AA, four of which I shall describe in this piece.

The first is a Series one, reg no KLX 770. This was the first Land Rover bought by the AA and one of the first 1500 ever made. It is preserved in the AA Historic Vehicle Fleet. Next up is a Series III, reg no JYP 723W from around the early 1980s. The headboard on this model came into use by the AA towards the end of the 1970s and the white strip was added to the livery in 1980. The third model in the series is a Defender 110, reg no L748 HRX, in the chequers livery from about 1994. I would stress that the models shown in the photos were all made with a chassis, as a special favour to me, as I preferred them without the wooden base. This is not available normally, because of the extra work involved.

Smaller still, we come to the third offering from Corgi. I would estimate this to be to about 1/72 scale, a Defender hardtop in AA Service livery, with the reg no RGW 404, released around 1989. ERTL produced a similar model, except they used the window back, released slightly earlier in mid-1988.

At just about the end now, we come to the smallest



scale models from Morestone and Benbros. Once again these are very similar, but remain different. The scale must be around 1/72, with the Morestone being the crisper casting of the two.

The Morestone was model number 3 in the 'ESSO' series, issued around 1956. These models were packaged in red boxes, with the design of an ESSO petrol pump on the front. The end flap was made so that, when pulled up a little way, it became the top of the pump. The model usually has a black roof, but I have versions with yellow as well. The early models came with a spare wheel mounted on the bonnet, but the nearest I have come to finding this version is with just the spigot present, the wheel having long gone. They also differ from the Benbros version by the provision of a driver.

In 1994, I found a very nice pewter copy of this Morestone model, by Neil Malek of Kidderminster, under the name of Menteith. It is a nice crisp casting, which suits the plain polished treatment well.

The Benbros models were originally called the TV Series, sold in boxes made to represent a TV set. Later, the name was changed to Mighty Midget. I believe I am right in saying that the AA Land Rover, released as number 34, was only ever sold as the latter, introduced after the name changed. It is easy to see the differences from the Benbros model as it had rear windows, where the Morestone had none, was painted all over yellow, including the wheels, and had the legend 'BENBROS Quality MADE IN ENGLAND' cast on the base.

To round off this article I should mention just a few other models. Morestone produced one other medium-sized Land Rover of interest here. This was the same basic casting as the AA model, but painted all-over in red and with 'BREAKDOWN SERVICE UNIT' on the side. Above this was the wording 'RAC & AA APPROVED', which is what earns the model its place in my collection.

The Land Rover Discovery appears twice in AA livery and should also be included here. The first is by Marque Models in 1/57 scale, reg No J182 VDP. AA-liveried 'Discos' were widely travelled - one went to the Winter Olympics in 1992. About 20 entered AA service in 1992, being repainted in the chequer livery during 1993.

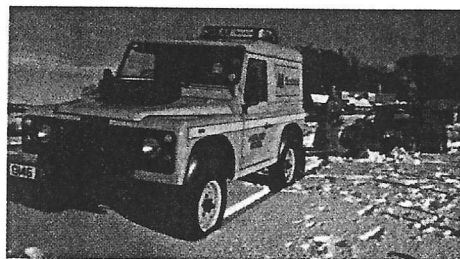
The second was produced by Hart Models for Transport of Delight and released around about 1992, reg no J634SMO. I am sure this is modelled on a real vehicle, which was based in the West Sussex area.



With all good wishes
for Christmas
and the New Year



One of the 'Transport of Delight' models was based on a vehicle seen on a Christmas card.



This version, in AA Service livery, is no longer available but a later version, in the chequer livery, has now been released.

Rather surprisingly, Corgi produced the only model of a Range Rover in AA livery, in 1/36 scale, around 1990. Issued as part of a set of three models, it is quite close to the original vehicle. The AA bought a few Range Rovers to use as tugs for the Relay Service. However, the correct logo used on all the ones I have seen would have been the Relay logo rather than the plain AA badge.

The real vehicle proved to be rather a handful for a lot of people, as the suspension gave the driver the feeling that the vehicle was wallowing when turning, particularly when towing a trailer. Although it was only a feeling, an inexperienced driver would over-correct and could easily get into a situation which often resulted in disaster. If the driver did not pull the combination straight, by accelerating, the usual outcome was to turn the whole lot over. AA drivers were no exception and the AA Range Rovers could

only be driven by patrols who had been put through a special training course.

That describes all the Land Rovers I have in my collection, but I know that several more exist, which I have yet to acquire. I remember, for example, that the Gamley's catalogue from the late 1950s illustrates a large scale AA Land Rover, which has a battery unit connected by a length of wire, allowing you to steer as it goes along. Someone, somewhere must have one, but I fear it would be very expensive. Next time we will look at some other vehicles modelled in AA Livery. Until then, happy hunting.

As a footnote, I am amazed that the model industry has never produced a model of the Austin Gypsy. This vehicle ran through the 1950s, '60s and into the '70s and carried at least three different AA liveries. Countless other companies used them too, yet we have never had a model produced. Ralph Horton, of Halesowen in the West Midlands, told me that he planned to produce a Gypsy but this was at least 10 years ago. Ralph is known for making fine models of Fire Service vehicles and the Gypsy could be modelled in both Fire and AA and would make a handsome model. Perhaps this will spur Ralph on to making the model a reality.



The Austin Gypsy - a great idea for a model...

My thanks are due to the following sources that helped with this article:

- Budgie Models by Robert Newson
- BENBROS TV Series and Mighty Midgets by Robert Newson
- The AA, A History of the Automobile Association 1905-1980
- The Golden Milestone-50 years of the AA by David Keir
- Brian Salter of Transport of Delight
- The Minic Book by Peter Bartok
- The Land Rover and the AA



The pewter models made by Marque Models are usually mounted on a plinth.