

Surprise, surprise! It is your battered old IIA, honest! When Andi Bull was in hospital undergoing a course of chemotherapy, his family, friends and some people he'd never even met pooled their resources to do something really special to cheer him up. Boy did it work! Simon Hodder takes up the story...

Community pimping



The late summer sun picks out all the detail on Andi's IIA. You can see how well the standard leaf springs are coping with the axle-twisting pot holes, too!

Sometimes you meet someone, and you immediately know they're the sort of person you're gonna get on with. Andi Bull is one of them. People who think that all youngsters wearing baseball caps, shades and baggy clothes must be about to mug an old lady or break into your house would maybe lose some of their prejudices if they took time out to talk to Andi.

One of the things that never fails to amaze me about the

Land Rover scene is its capacity to do good things, and to show that there are still pockets of real community out there. Andi's shiny black IIA is the embodiment of that community thinking.

Land Rover bug!

Andi had wanted a Land Rover for years, and he'd been looking around for something to tinker with to keep him occupied – he'd been undergoing a hefty course of treatment for a serious illness at the local hospital and had been told that he couldn't

even think about getting a regular job for the time being.

It just happened that his brother Chris spotted an old Series IIA on a garage forecourt in Lincolnshire when he stopped for fuel one day, and it seemed to tick all the right boxes, so Andi made his way up there, parted with £1300 and drove it back home to Northamptonshire. It drove really well, and he immediately knew he'd done the right thing.

It soon needed an MoT, always a nail biting time when you've bought an old car, but

as it happened, it only failed on a couple of very minor points. The previous owner had been a mechanic, and he'd obviously been a stickler for keeping up with the routine maintenance.

With a new MoT under his belt, Andi began enjoying the IIA, and during 2007 had his first taste of driving off-road at a few pay and play days, and on some local lanes. He'd well and truly caught the Land Rover bug.

Then his doctors told him he needed a bone marrow transplant, and all the Land

Rover fun and games stopped.

We won't dwell on the details here, but bone marrow transplants aren't the sort of thing that you get over very quickly. The doctors had to completely neutralise Andi's immune system for a start, and so he simply couldn't go anywhere, or do anything. He's a pragmatic, positive young man, but even so there were times when his spirits got really low. He'd talk with his brother Chris about what he was going to do with his Land Rover when he got better, and the idea of a

Top right: Man and machine! Andi with his almost complete IIA. There's still a winch to go on...



spirit-lifting surprise was born.

Andy really wanted to lose the dull RAF blue

paintwork and have something a lot more bling – you know, a bit more in keeping with a young bloke – with plenty of shiny details. In the end the idea was just to get it painted gloss black and let Andi finish things off, but as we all

know, doing up old Land Rovers tends to lead you in unforeseen directions. Things would be no different here, and the re-spray became a thorough overhaul.

The local evening paper got hold of the story, and ran a piece asking if there were any individuals or businesses that might be able to lend a hand. "A man called Gary Bullin of CB Car Clinic in Kettering offered to do the re-spray, and I've



The interior is colour-coded in black, red and chrome. Even the Mag-Lite torch matches the decor!

never had the opportunity to thank him properly," Andi told me. "He spent ages doing it, produced a really good finish and never wanted a penny for it, despite the fact that he didn't know me from Adam."

Not only did Gary do the paint job, he offered the use of his workshop for as long as was needed to complete the rebuild. Roddingham Land Rovers near Corby supported the project



Pimped, with pride!

with parts, help and encouragement, and Nene Valley off-road supplied a set of wheels and tyres. In fact, several local non-Land Rover firms got behind the project too, and this allowed a very thorough job to be done in double-quick time.

The reveal

The day Andi arrived home from hospital after his bone marrow transplant he went straight upstairs to bed, feeling really ill. He dad Bob came up to see him shortly afterwards and asked him to come downstairs because he had a little surprise for him.

"The room was full of people: friends, family, people from the paper," Andi told me. "I couldn't meet them directly because I still didn't have much of an immune system, so I had to talk to them through a

window! Then this Land Rover drove up the road with about 15 people hanging off it, and with my brother at the wheel. I honestly didn't believe it was my Landy at first, because I didn't believe so much could be achieved in just 3½ weeks.

"Apart from the re-spray, all the work was carried out not by professionals, but by a team of Land Rover enthusiasts in their spare time. I think that was quite an achievement."

He's right, too. Quite an achievement indeed. Not only did they fully refurbish the old IIA, they gave Andi the boost he needed to get him back on his feet again, with something really fun to look forward to.

Off-road

We took our pictures on the Roddingham Castle estate, near Corby: it was the first proper bit of off-roading that Andi had been able to do in the IIA since he started his recovery. Previously he'd been using it to ferry material and people around large camping fields during Scout trips – Andi's a really community minded person himself, and his other passion is for Scouting.

Throughout the shoot, the sun was picking out all the chrome and galvanised highlights, the engine was running perfectly, the suspension was proving really supple, and Andi was thoroughly enjoying himself. The efforts of all involved were worth it just for this, I thought at the time.

Personally, I'm glad that a pin and ball towing kit was



fitted to the rear cross member during the rebuild. I managed to get my Range Rover stuck as I crossed a perfectly flat grass field at the end of the shoot, and it enabled Andi to get me on the move again without any drama – once he'd stopped laughing at my misfortune, that is.

At least I was the only one there with a camera! ■

The rear hoop nearly got a coat of black paint, but Andi wanted it to stand out as an extra highlight, so the galvanising was left exposed