



My Buggy

by Roger Webb

I need to dedicate this article to Lesley my long suffering wife without whose patience and understanding this build project would not have been possible, I am sure many wives would have cried enough.

For those who do not know me, my name is Roger and I am a confirmed 'Petrol Head' and have been since at the age of nine when I exchanged my weekly subscription to the Beano and Tiger for Motorsport and Hot Rod! Seriously I grew up on a farm in Devon and was always tinkering with or making something and became fascinated by sports and racing cars etc. Although I studied electrical & mechanical engineering I wound up working in IT. But, as always cars and petrol fumes called and as a hobby I ended up building and rebuilding sports and competition cars and ultimately competing in 4X4's with the AWDC in the UK.

I came to work in Riyadh in early 1994 and was immediately enthralled with the wide open spaces which are freely available to us for our investigation. After a series of standard-ish 4x4's and building my expedition Range Rover I decided to build a 4X4 based on a Range Rover and using a kit from the UK. The process involved the selection of the kit, there were only three to choose from at the time (autumn 2003) Of the alternate choices I deemed



one to be very difficult to get registered here and the other had an agent in Abu Dhabi who proved singularly un-cooperative in that they would only supply a complete kit containing a lot of parts I did not require, and being fibreglass they only had blue and I wanted yellow and at double the price of the UK manufacturer. I chose the 'Traka' from a company by the name of NCF from County Durham. Anyway after some long distance discussions I arranged to visit them in the far reaches of the North of England (we still live in south devon), and had a test drive of their demonstrator, it was just the ticket. Having ordered the kit and paid the deposit we started the process of arranging the shipping and crating of the kit only to find the manufacturer had no experience of export and I ended up paying VAT not only on the kit but the crating and shipping as well. We live and learn don't we.

The crate was shipped via Newcastle and I tracked its progress on the internet. Foolish me I assumed that because the ship docked at Jeddah that my crate would be offloaded and shipped by road to Riyadh. Not a hope, the crate went on to sunny Jebel Ali from where it was shipped as deck cargo to Khobar. After a nice soaking in salty sea water (really good for unpainted steel) it eventually was shipped by road to the 'Dry Port' in Riyadh where I had to personally supervise customs clearance while the shipping agent looked on (another case of not my job) while counting his money, more mysterious fees not included in my door to door price. The next and most hilarious episode involved the moving of the crate from the dry port to my villa on Al Yamama compound. Now the crate was 10 cubic metres and weighed in at a round 1.1 tons. The shipping agent provided a flatbed truck, a 40 foot articulated one, which I politely explained would not be able to gain access to my compound and they would need a Dyna sized flatbed truck. Believe it or not there were none to be had so they used a Dyna with sides and had to bend the side of the truck around the crate with a fork lift truck much to the consternation of the driver. I set off after making sure they would have enough manpower to off load this at the villa (Mafi Mushkilla) was I believe the term used! The convoy arrived at the villa and the shipping agent produced two Afghani labourers and attempted to unload the crate. After 2 hours they gave up and the crate was still on the truck. The truck driver who had otherwise been involved in inspecting the insides of his eyelids had a brainwave. "Lets tie a rope around the crate and the other end to one of the concrete supports for the carport", and wait for it he just drove the truck away!!!! As I waved them off the compound I thought 'only in Saudi Arabia'.

The original idea was to build the Traka as a demonstrator with a view to selling a limited number of completed vehicles; however my good friend and