E. H. Row and Joseph Lowrey go

LLAND

PART TWO

The Concluding Episodes of a Journey into Wales in Rover's Latest All-purpose Vehicle

HIGH DIVIDEND.—Although photographs rarely do credit to gradient, this picture does convey something of the steepness of Dunlop's Dividend on its upper reaches. The foot of the hill is away in the valley to the left of the car.

IT speaks well for the comfort of the Land Rover that, despite the arduous motoring we had put in during the day, we were quite ready for an after-dinner trip with Mr. and Mrs. Editor, who had come down in their own car for Sunday's attack on Dunlop's Dividend, both having been among the least unsuccessful attackers when the hill first came to notice before the war. As there were now five of us and only three upholstered seats in the Land Rover, it was the saloon which nosed its way out of Llandovery in the cool of the evening and down A.40 toward Llandilo and then on to Careg Cennen Castle, near Trapp.

At any time the old stronghold of Careg Cennen is impressive, but towards the close of day, silhouetted on its 300-ft. crag against a flaming sky, the setting is pure Dracula. Coming to the surface again after groping by fading torchlight, half double, along a winding, rock-hewn passage leading downwards from the dungeons to a subterranenan well, the hollow sound of our footsteps broken only by the steady drip of water, one almost expected to see gigantic bats flitting and squealing through the gathering dusk. It was with quite a feeling of relief that we found ourselves once again in the well-lit bar of the Castle Hotel.

Sunday morning, like its predecessor, held promise of a glorious day, and soon after breakfast off we went, in convoy this time, with Christopher Jennings at the wheel of the Land Rover—" just to see how it handles."

Not far off our route to Brechfa, nearest village to the Dividend, lies Pumpsaint, site of one of the oldest gold mines in the British Isles, started by the Ancient Britons, continued by the Romans, who had quite a settlement in these parts, and worked spasmodically until quite recently. The scene is now quite deserted. Some of the shafts, at the entrances at least, are flooded, and only piles of excavated stone testify to past activity. We spent the best part of an hour prospecting among the lumps of quartz with which the place abounds, in hopes of finding one little bit containing yellow flecks as a souvenir, but the miners have been thorough, and we pressed on to Brechfa none the richer.

The news of our coming had been bruited abroad, and

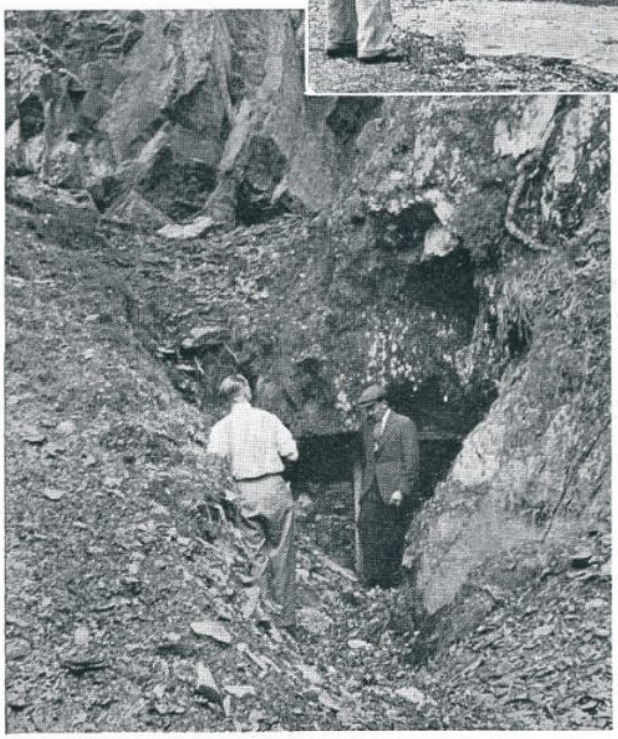
BROAD IN THE BEAM.—The way in which full advantage has been taken of the width of the Land Rover to seat three abreast is seen in these photographs taken at the start of the second day and along the narrow lanes to Pumpsaint.

July 21, 1948.

ROVING

ALL ABOARD.—With nine up and an average weight of ten stone apiece, the Land Rover stormed the Dividend in terrific style with everyone hanging on for dear life.

THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR' HILLS.—Exploring the gold mines at Pumpsaint. Picture on right is not a new sort of voodoo dance; merely the Feature Editor prospecting for gold by cracking a piece of quartz by the simplest possible method



quite a little group of spectators had gathered, Sunday or no Sunday, in the hope of seeing yet another car fall victim to their local incline. And what an incline it is! Starting in a dark and gloomy water-splash, followed by a short stretch of mud and leaves, it shoots crazily upwards in a series of acute hairpin bends, nearly 700 ft. in under half a mile. Generally the track is earth and loose stone, nowhere more than 10 ft. wide, and mostly narrower, with about 100 yds. of sheer grass, which includes a hairpin bend, on one of the steepest parts near the top.

It had been decided that Lowrey, as representative of technical staff, should have the honour of attempting the first ascent, and after a decent interval to allow the rest of us to reach various vantage points on foot, we heard the engine start down in the valley below, cut momentarily for the lower hairpins, and soon through the trees we caught flashes of sunlight from the screen as it came steadily upwards.

The problem of the Dividend is not only the gradient—which is ferocious enough, goodness knows !—but the acuteness of the bends, one in particular having an inner radius which cannot be greater than a couple of feet and, at the crucial point on the outer extremity, a remarkably solid stone wall, keeping back a large section of Wales. It was here that most of us were standing as Lowrey and the Rover came steadily into view : wide as he swung and hard as he locked over, the radius was too acute, and the Dividend's reputation of having never been climbed non-stop remained unbroken.

Following a couple of short reverses, a re-start was made easily. The steep grassy section might not have been there for all the notice the Rover took of it, and just to show its complete contempt, over the top it went in low top gear.

In the light of experience and upon further investigation,

it was considered that, by ploughing high up the outer bank at the beginning of the sharp hairpin—a thing which would be unfeasible with any ordinary car—it might be just possible to scrape around, so, with Row having a go this time, a further attempt was made. Like a little tank the Rover clawed its way up the bank, tilting sideways at an alarming angle, but, even by this means, there just wasn't room to get round in one sweep.

All this proved vastly intriguing to the onlookers, who had climbed this far, farming folk mostly, and naturally interested in a vehicle like the Land Rover.

It was Christopher Jennings who conceived the idea of giving them a practical taste of hill-climbing : a scheme which seemed to appeal tremendously, if one can judge by the alacrity with which five of them, plus a sheep-dog (with perhaps slightly less willingness), clambered into the back. Thus it was with nine up, hanging on to anything that afforded grip, with an average weight of about 10 stone apiece, that the Rover set off on its third climb, this time with the Editor at the wheel. On this occasion no attempt was made to take the hairpin non-stop, but rather to make the re-start under the heavy load. Except for the fact that low second, instead of low third was used for most of the climb, the vehicle might just as well have been empty—a most convincing demonstration which put the Rover well and truly on the map as far as at least five Welsh farmers are concerned. In fact, wherever we stopped with the Land Rover, it immediately became the centre of attraction—the more agricultural the country the greater the interest, and the farmers were not slow to appreciate the many practical points.

Genuinely All-purpose

What sort of car is the Land Rover? From our experience, it seems to be more or less the complete answer to the requirements of anyone who wants a genuinely utilitarian vehicle which can at the same time be used for serious everyday motoring, and the more one uses it, the more one realizes the vast amount of experience and forethought which have gone into the design.

From the very first acquaintance, it is obvious that the basic inspiration behind the design is that wartime maid-of-all-work, the Jeep. The outline is somewhat similar ; there is drive to all four wheels : an additional set of low auxiliary gear ratios is provided, and there is the same fundamental plainness which does not sustain damage from working overalls and muddy hobnail boots. From that point the Rover goes on.

By taking fullest possible advantage of every available inch of chassis space, there is really remarkable carrying capacity. As already mentioned, three people can sit comfortably across the front, each on an individual seat which is reasonably well upholstered, so that there is no undue fatigue or soreness after a longish journey over indifferent going. Added to this, the rear portion is a practical goods-carrying space with a let-down tailboard ; or it can be used by four additional passengers, albeit without a great deal of comfort. Doors are available for the front compartment, as also are very substantial side curtains, equipped with sliding Perspex panels. The model we had was fitted with an all-over tilt, providing excellent weather protection for the complete carrying space and, very practical for the type of work which the vehicle is most likely to be used, supported on a rigid but easily-removable tubular framework.

ANGLING FOR POSITION.—The sharpness of THE hairpin is well shown in this photograph taken on the way down after the nine-up ascent.

By using as a power unit the same engine as that in the Rover " 60 " passenger car, a good degree of economy has been achieved. On the road section of the trip, with prolonged spells of fairly hard driving, a rough check showed a petrol consumption of 28 m.p.g. Moreover, the unit is smooth and willing, and while it provides no sparkling road performance, nor is such to be expected with a vehicle of this type, it cruises comfortably at 50 miles an hour on the speedometer, and, provided fair use is made of the gearbox, surprisingly good point-to-point averages can be attained.

It is no easy matter to achieve suspension which will give an easy main-road ride under light loads, and still prove satisfactory over cross-country going and with maximum weight. Yet in the case of the Land Rover, a very fair mean has been arrived at with, as is only proper, a bias in favour of load-carrying and roadless running. On the journey into Wales all three conditions were encountered. Main-road going, while not comparable to that of a modern passenger car, was by no means uncomfortable ; across country there was far less jolting than one would expect, and with the heavy load aboard on the Dividend, there were no noticeable ill-effects.

Before setting out we felt a little perturbed regarding the apparent vulnerability of the petrol tank, which is carried beneath the driving seat, but experience showed that anxiety in this regard was entirely unwarranted. Points to which we gave unqualified approval were the very large filler, enabling petrol to be poured direct from the can without spilling, and the big detachable gauze filter with which the tank was equipped.

Other details which earned full marks were the ease and speed with which the power take-off pulley attachment can be fitted or removed and the fact that the whole of the chassis, including the bumpers, are specially treated to withstand rust.

To sum up : although we failed to achieve at least three of our objectives, in no instance could the blame be laid on the Land Rover. It is doubtful whether anything short of a tank would have negotiated the morass into which we got ourselves bogged ; our failure to climb the hill near Twin Sion Catti's cave was due partly to our not having carried out a preliminary reconnaissance and largely to lack of enterprise. So far as Dunlop's Dividend is concerned, even a London taxi, had it got up that far, would not have had sufficient lock for that one hairpin.

(We understand that since the above was written, Dunlop's Dividend has, at last, been climbed non-stop, by a specially designed, supercharged, trials car.)