

Lone Star's Long Lived Land Rover

With production spanning an incredible four decades, James Robertshaw tells the gripping story of Lone Star's Land Rover which not only tracks the ups and downs at Lone Star but also proves the legend; Old Land Rovers never die!



Introduction

Collectors of old toys will undoubtedly be aware of Lone Star and in particular its 1960s and 1970s Impy and Flyers cars which are now sought after models. Whilst these collectable ranges are well known it's easy to forget what a diverse mix of other toy vehicles Lone Star produced over the years including one gem in particular; the iconic British Land Rover. As this was one of Lone Star's earliest models let's start right at the beginning with the birth of Lone Star and its parent company DCMT.

Lone Star – The Beginnings

Die Casting Machine Tools (DCMT) was founded in 1939 and quickly became a prominent manufacturer of die-casting machinery. Following the war restrictions relating to the manufacture of metal toys were lifted giving way to a sudden ready market for die-cast toys. This resulted in several toy manufacturers quickly setting up to meet the demand from children deprived of new toys during the wartime years. DCMT were well placed to enter this vibrant market already having the machinery and manufacturing knowledge although they lacked any real experience in the marketing and distribution of toys. For this they turned to the established 'Crescent Toy Co.' which took care of the branding and distribution of DCMT's toys. By 1950 this arrangement had been terminated and DCMT took over the marketing and distributing of

its own toys. A new brand name was required and 'Slikka Toys' was initially used although following the popularity of DCMT's 'Lone Star' branded wild west guns and accessories the decision was made to adopt the 'Lone Star' name across their entire range of toys.

As the 1950's progressed DCMT continued to develop its popular core ranges of toy guns and accessories plus, with the takeover of Harvey Toy Company, expanded further with the introduction of the 'Harvey Series Unbreakable Figures'. It wasn't until 1956 that the first Lone Star branded toy vehicles were announced, a short-lived range of seven 'Road-Masters' cars. These were soon joined by a range of die-cast military vehicles which were designed to complement the popular Harvey Series plastic sol-

Amazingly this colourful line-up of Land Rovers spans four decades and sees Lone Star's Series I performing a variety of roles.

diers. This new 'Modern Army Series' had a strong American influence. DCMT had already established itself in America and rightly saw this as a potentially huge market which it infiltrated with some success over the coming years. The first Modern Army Series vehicles were an Armoured Car and a Jeep which were soon followed during 1957 and 1958 by a Bren Gun Carrier, DUKW, and a range of U.S. Dodge trucks copied from the rather basic American 'Pyro Plastics' model.

Fortunately Lone Star did not entirely neglect their home market and added one more model to the range; the iconic British Land Rover.



The Lone Star RAC model with a colourful selection of 1950's Series I Land Rovers from rivals Benbros and Morestone. All three manufactures may well be regarded as 'second tier' brands but the quality and finish of Lone Star's Land Rover is noticeably superior and certainly as good as the big three manufactures offerings.

The Series I Land Rover

It is no surprise that the distinctive Land Rover was a popular choice amongst British toy manufacturers. Established brands Matchbox and Dinky Toys, plus 'second tier' rivals Benbros, and Morestone all already had SWB Series I Land Rovers in their ranges. Even newcomers Corgi Toys was quick to add a LWB version of the Series I to their line-up. Land Rover's Series I first appeared in 1948 meaning Lone Star was rather late launching its version in 1958. So much so in fact that it was unfortunately instantly outdated when Land Rover launched its new Series II model during the same year. This ten year wait did at least give Lone Star plenty of scope when deciding what versions to model!

Lone Star's offering was based on a mid-1950s short wheel base Series I model and differed from the above rival SWB versions in that it featured the unusual 'truck cab' roof section more commonly found on LWB variants. Just like the real Land Rover this can be removed and is therefore often missing from play-worn examples. The windscreen and door tops were formed from a separate piece of folded tin as was the rear 'canvas' tilt although this was not fitted to all models. It is worth noting that the separate die-cast roof and tinplate tilt were not always painted at the same time as the rest of the model and I have several examples where the shade of paint used on these components does not quite match the rest of the Land Rover.



Above: The Land-Rover fitted with metal truck cab (available at extra cost), providing an all-enclosed, weather-proof driving compartment and leaving the rear section open for ease of loading or unloading.

An extract from Land Rover's 1954 brochure which illustrates the optional Truck Cab (shown in cream) describing it as; 'providing an all-enclosed weather proof driving compartment (available at extra cost)'.



Lone Star's impressive 'Thor Missile Set' complete with a working trailer mounted 'spring loading' missile launcher. Guaranteed to provide hours of fun!

Unsurprisingly, given the model's long production run, a number of small changes were made to the casting over the years. In the early 1960s the front bumper was strengthened by casting extra supports at each end much like Dinky had to do with its version. A cost-cutting measure occurred in 1963 when the casting was simplified to enable the axles to be attached without the need for a separate baseplate. This coincided with plastic replacing the solid rubber wheels. At 92mm in length and 39.5mm in width the Land Rover is approximately 1/39 scale and despite some artistic licence the basic design captures the look and feel of the real vehicle rather well!

Initially three different models were issued. I haven't actually seen the 1958 Lone Star trade catalogue (does a copy still survive?) but as all three appear in the 1959 issue with no mention of them being 'new' I think we can assume they first appeared during the previous year. Let's blast off with the exciting Modern Army Series missile set!

Land Rover Missile Set

Lone Star's Land Rover entered the Modern Army Series in style as 'M.F.U.6 – Thor Missile Set'. At the time this was by far the most impressive and expensive set in the range even having its own special display box packaging. The Land Rover was accompanied by a large four-wheel trailer fitted with a missile launcher and carrying a large plastic missile! This was of course the 'Rocket Age' and many toy manufacturers were quick to exploit this latest craze. Indeed Corgi Toys also produced a similar 'Land Rover and Thunderbird Missile Set' although its version was much more intricate being an accurate scale model of the real thing. Lone Star used a lot more creative licence; the real Thor Missile was 20 metres long and weighed 50 tonnes so was not really capable of being towed by a Land Rover!

Lone Star's set was unfortunately let down by the basic 4-wheel trailer which lacked a pivoting front axle. It was therefore dragged behind the Land Rover across bedroom carpets rather than being properly towed. However when it came to play value Lone Star definitely won the battle as, unlike the similarly priced Corgi Toys set, Lone Star's trailer had a working spring-loaded launcher meaning the missile could actually be fired skywards! A further feature which Lone Star seemed especially keen to point out in their trade catalogues was;



This impressive set has some real play value! Note the branding and artwork which well and truly focus on the 'rocket age' missile rather than the iconic Land Rover!

"The 6 inch two-colour plastic rocket has a safety rubber nose and comes apart for inserting secret messages."

M.F.U.6 was soon renamed with the more generic title; 'Rocket Missile Set' and in 1963 was renumbered '1261'. M.F.U. stood for Mobile Fighting Unit with sets 1-5 being the same four wheel trailers but fitted with a range of more basic military attachments and all towed by the ubiquitous army Jeep. These five less impressive and cheaper priced sets were, like the rest of the range, issued in standard picture boxes. Remarkably the Jeep ended up featuring in over a dozen different Modern Army Series sets and was available until 1968. In contrast the rocket missile set was sadly the Modern Army Series Land Rovers only pairing and last appeared

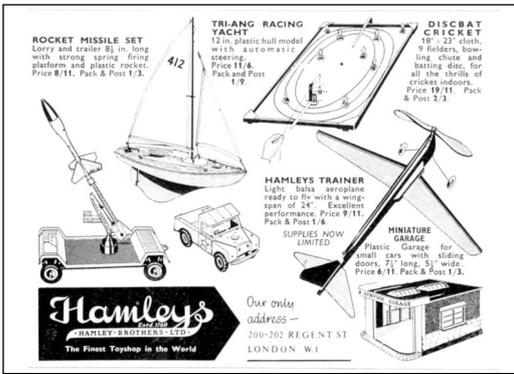
in the 1964 trade catalogue. These factors explain why play worn Lone Star army Jeeps are easily found at most toy fairs, but try finding the army Land Rover!

With the focus here on toy vehicles it's easy to forget that the Modern Army Series was a new side line away from Lone Star's core ranges of toy guns and the like. Perhaps this fact is

best illustrated (literally!) on this impressive set's presentation box where Lone Star's artist, obviously more accustomed to producing artwork for toy guns and rockets, chose to decorate the entire box lid with missiles! The rather neglected Land Rover only features as a small drawing on one side of the box!



This close-up shows the Land Rover and trailer which were only illustrated on one side of the box. The loaded missile looks ready for blast off!



This Hamleys advert dates from August 1960 and unlike the box artwork and trade catalogues shows the army Land Rover without the tilt suggesting that by now it had been dropped. It adds some real pedigree to this set knowing it was stocked by 'The finest toy shop in the world!'

Safari Land Rover

This second exciting set sees Lone Star's Land Rover heading off for an African safari adventure! The Land Rover's rugged off-road capabilities made it the perfect safari vehicle and it's often cited as being the first motor vehicle ever seen by many native Africans! Again this version slotted in nicely with Lone Star's existing range of plastic Harvey Series figures but this time they were exotic Zulu warriors rather than the more usual army soldiers!

The Safari Set was issued around the same time as the Missile Set, and also came in the same style of presentation box. This contained the Land Rover, big game hunter, two African native attendants, and a large lion and/or lioness. The two native attendants came from

The rare safari Land Rover complete with native Africans, big game hunter and lions!

the existing Harvey Series 'African Natives' set whilst the big game hunter is based on a figure from the 'Desert Troops' set and stems from a depressing time when African safari trips were more about hunting animals than admiring them. The very rare (or should that be endangered?) lion and lioness were only ever issued as part of this set and are therefore keenly 'hunted' by avid Harvey Series collectors!

The Safari Land Rover was the only version to have a spare wheel mounted on the bonnet, a lavish expense not extended to the other models! The paint job was a mustard colour not too



SAFARI SET

An action display set consisting of an all-metal die-cast safari truck with hand-painted polythene big game hunter, two African native attendants, and large-sized hand-painted polythene lion. Attractively boxed in a self-display all action full-colour carton.

This photo from the 1959 trade catalogue shows the Land Rover complete with a rear tilt. In the following year's catalogue the drawing had been altered to omit the tilt. Does an early version with tilt exist?

dissimilar to the shade later used on the vehicles from Lone Star's impressive 'War in the Desert' set. This can sometimes lead to confusion whereby the safari Land Rover is mistaken for a military desert issue which is unlikely to have ever been released.

This was the shortest lived of the

three initial Land Rover models having disappeared from the trade catalogue by 1962.

RAC Land Rover

The third Lone Star Land Rover was based on a theme closer to home appearing as a 'RAC Service Van'. This model was of course based on the short wheel base Land Rovers employed by the RAC at the time to rescue members, wherever they were stranded! This was an attractive model which gained a wire aerial and even a polythene RAC Patrolman driver! It was only slightly let down by Lone Star's 'truck top' and 'canvas' tilt combination. The real RAC versions tended to use Land Rover's 'hard top' option which had metal sides and a full length metal roof giving a van like appearance. At least with Lone Star using tin to represent the canvas tilt this difference isn't actually that noticeable!

The RAC Land Rover was soon joined by a stylish model of a RAC mobile office designed, of course, to be towed along behind the Land Rover. Such mobile offices were used to recruit new members and were seen at all manner of events across the country. Both models were sold separately but shared the same attractive picture box. This time the superb period artwork proudly shows off the Land Rover in no less than three different poses!

Not only was there a RAC driver but for a short time Lone Star also issued two





Although they were only ever sold individually, when displayed together the RAC Land Rover and Mobile Office really look the part. The Mobile Office is still relatively easy to find but the collectable Land Rover is much harder to track down.

different Harvey Series RAC patrol men, one saluting and the other directing traffic. The conflicting box artwork and trade catalogue entries suggest Lone Star couldn't quite decide what to do with this pair. They were probably deemed too expensive to simply add in with the die-cast models but yet not substantial enough to issue as a RAC set in their own right. The box suggests the figures initially came with the models whilst the 1960 trade catalogue has the figures listed separately as; 'R.A.C/2 Patrol Set' where they joined the Land Rover (R.A.C/1) and Mobile Office (R.A.C/3) under the rather optimistic title of 'R.A.C Series'. The box also stated that more RAC items were in preparation but as far as I am aware nothing further materialised.



Unlike the Missile Set the Land Rover featured prominently on the RAC Series box which displays some lovely period artwork. The captions suggest the Land Rover was available with or without the service patrol man and driver and the rear of the box states that further RAC items were in preparation. All typical Lone Star speculation and confusion!

By 1964 the aging RAC Land Rover and mobile office trailer had been renumbered 1254 and 1255 respectively and moved to Lone Star's home for misfits and odd-balls 'Speciality Lines' where in a final insult they joined 1264; a toy iron! The end was obviously nigh and these now sought after models were discontinued the following year.



Initially this impressive pair were part of a stand-alone 'RAC Series' but by 1964 they had been relegated to Lone Star's home for misfits and odd balls; 'Speciality Lines' where as a final insult they joined a toy iron!

An Office Mystery

Lone Star were certainly not yet done with their Land Rover casting but nor were they finished with the RAC Mobile Office as a later yellow 'Site Office' version exists. My example is the only one I have ever encountered and it isn't mentioned in any of the trade catalogues. Can a reader shed any light on this unusual model and in particular what was intended to tow it? It's exciting to think it could well be another different Land Rover set!

Mysteries and unanswered questions like this are all part of the excitement of collecting Lone Star toys! Looking back Lone Star never seemed fully committed to their toy vehicles, perhaps understandably as after all it was the toy gun ranges that made up the bulk of their sales. Consequently after initial investment models and ranges often lacked any structured development before being scrapped and replaced by something completely different. Thus uncatalogued and short-lived models such as this Site Office are not uncommon. Further examples of this include two Modern Army Series models which briefly featured in the 1960 trade price list but intriguingly were not illustrated in any of the trade catalogues!

Price List Pair

The two short-lived price list entries are; 'No.84; Land Rover' and 'No.85; R.A.F. Service Truck'. None of the other Modern Army Series models on the same price list carried such numerical references so where this numbering came from seems to be a typical Lone Star anomaly!

Land Rover No.84 was finished in standard military green with some models having a white U.S. army star transfer on both doors so in essence it is the same as the Land Rover used in the missile set. Fitment of the tinsplate tilt seems to be sporadic!



Little is known about this unusual 'Site Office' trailer which is from the same casting as the previous RAC Mobile Office. Was it also paired with a Land Rover?



Two short-lived Modern Army Series Land Rovers were 'No.85; R.A.F. Service Truck' and 'No.84; Land Rover' which only appeared in the 1960 trade price list and not in the trade catalogue. This 1960 price list featured no less than five different Land Rovers.

RAF Service Truck No.85 was finished in RAF blue and is an attractive model of the Series I Land Rovers used by the RAF although again it is unlikely that the RAF would have specified the 'truck top' option. If we are to give Lone Star the benefit of the doubt then the contrasting blue tinsplate tilt is an accurate representation of the shade of fabric which appeared on some RAF Land Rovers. Alternatively and more likely is that the blue tilt was simply sourced from the parts bin for the lighter blue coloured RAC Land Rover and deemed to be a close enough match! This is a very rare



This splendid RAF Land Rover is fitted with the more common one-piece canvas roof and tilt option. The canvas is a contrasting shade of blue just like the tinsplate tilt on Lone Star's RAF model. This is unlikely to have been a deliberate move by Lone Star which simply sourced the RAF tilt from the parts bin for the existing lighter blue RAC Land Rover!



Along with the Land Rover Lone Star also issued their Dodge truck in RAF colours. Both are rare uncatalogued models. If the Land Rover was listed as 'R.A.F. Service Truck' then what was the Dodge described as?

short-lived version and the example illustrated here is the only one I have ever seen!

It's worth noting that with this pair plus the Missile Set, Safari Set and RAC version, Lone Star started the 1960's offering an impressive choice of five different Land Rovers!

Roadmaster Land Rover

In a change of direction Lone Star's next range of toy vehicles was an attractive series of accurately modelled 1/50 scale cars launched in 1960 and named the 'Roadmaster Series.' The range initially consisted of four cars all based on American prototypes. It wasn't until two year later that a new range of commercial vehicles was announced, the similarly branded 'Roadmaster Lorries'. Sadly these were nothing like the quality of the cars, instead they are the simplest of castings without interiors or glazed windows although, in my opinion, they do pose a primitive charm. The 1962 trade catalogue described them as 'a completely new range' but in truth they were mainly just the old Modern Army Series castings now finished in civilian colour schemes.

Our Land Rover joined the 'Roadmaster Lorries' range as number 13 and unluckily it was once again paired with an unrealistic four wheel trailer. This trailer was smaller than the missile launcher version but again lacked a steerable front axle. Fortunately despite the simplicity of the models in this range the Land Rover retained its 'truck cab' roof along with the tinfoil windscreen and tilt. This is perhaps why there appears to be no budget left for it to tow anything more elaborate than this most basic of trail-



R.M.13 Land Rover and 4-wheeled Trailer

The 1962 trade catalogue picture for 'R.M.13 Land-Rover and 4-wheeled Trailer' which was part of the new 'Roadmaster Lorries' range.

ers which didn't even come with a load! In a further demonstration of penny pinching the plastic steering wheel which had featured on all previous models was now omitted with the casting altered to fill in the resulting hole! All the other 'Roadmaster Lorries' models utilised either the Jeep or U.S. Dodge truck castings.

In 1963 the range was renumbered with the Land Rover and trailer becoming 1284. The following year the new models which had been promised from the start finally arrived and included an Austin lorry, a fire engine and truly bizarrely, bearing in mind this was the 'Roadmaster Lorries' range, a Jaguar E-Type! This was a terrible model and perhaps best highlights Lone Star's quirkiness at its worst!



It was surprisingly difficult to find photos of a Series I Land Rover as modelled by Lone Star. The 'truck cab' roof was not a popular option on SWB models, the majority having canvas roofs or no roof at all. This red example matches the colour chosen by Lone Star for its Roadmasters model.



The 'Roadmaster Lorries' Land Rover looks resplendent in all over red vacuum packed on Lone Star's colourful backing card but what a let-down the unrealistic trailer is!

New Zealand Land Rovers

For a relatively small manufacturer Lone Star's ambitions to be a global brand were surprisingly successful. As well as establishing itself in America Lone Star exported toys across Europe and even as far as Japan, Australia and New Zealand. To penetrate the restrictive marketplace of New Zealand Lone Star paired up with local wholesalers Sargood Son & Ewan Ltd. It appears that the arrangement was for Lone Star to supply the models in component form thus avoiding New Zealand's restrictions and tariffs on the import of finished goods. As well as six of the Roadmaster Cars a selection of models from Lone Star's Roadmaster Lorries and Modern Army Series were part of this arrangement including the military Land Rover. The models were painted, assembled, and packaged locally in New Zealand and were marketed by Sargoods (along with some field guns from rival manufacturer Britains) under its 'Target Toys' banner. The Sargoods Land Rovers were finished in a unique dark brown-green colour quite different to Lone Star's standard shade of military green. The Land Rover was available individually or paired with Lone Star's Field Gun making an appealing set which was also exclusive to New Zealand. The packaging was very primitive being little more than a card base which along with the model was sealed in clear plastic. With no baseplate and plastic wheels these rare Sargoods Land Rovers are thought to date from the mid-1960s.



The New Zealand produced Land Rovers were finished in a unique shade of dark brown-green. The Land Rover was available individually or towing a gun.



The New Zealand packaging was very basic and frail so it's not surprising that very few original examples survive today. The paper label lists the eight Lone Star models under the 'Lone Star Transport Range'. Note the 'Land Rover With Gun' is number N160/4 and the 'Land Rover' is N160/5.



As mentioned earlier it appears not all of the Land Rover components were painted together at the same time. When it came to fulfilling the shipment destined for New Zealand Lone Star must have only had available stocks of pre-painted red tilts which would have to be over sprayed once in New Zealand. Traces of the original red paint can still be seen here on the inside of the above up-turned examples.

This mid/late 1960's catalogue from New Zealand wholesalers Sargoods shows two unique Lone Star military Land Rovers which, with other standard Lone Star toy vehicles and Britains field guns, were marketed under the 'Target Toys' name.





In 1969 the 'Roadmasters' range was given a make-over with 'brand new packaging and paintwork'. Sadly the new paintwork seems to have only been destined for the trailer with the Land Rover retaining its red finish. What a shame it's not the other way round!

Roadmaster Majors Land Rover

Returning to the 'Roadmaster Lorries' this range continued to plod along unchanged through the 1960's as Lone Star instead focused its attention on yet another completely different range of toy vehicles, the well-known and relatively successful Impy models which launched in 1966. By this time the 'Roadmaster Lorries' Land Rover was the only version left in Lone Star's home-market line-up. Finally in 1969 the trade catalogue announced; 'Brand new packaging and paintwork identify the 1969 range of Roadmaster Majors, each item is given added play value by the addition of colourful decals'. Hardly major innovations!

Happily the Land Rover and trailer set continued in the newly named 'Roadmaster Majors' range although now with the generic title; '1292; Builders Supply Truck and Trailer.' The Land Rover lost the now dated looking tinfoil tilt thus becoming a pick-up but to compensate received 'Builders Supply Company' stickers as well as regaining its plastic steering wheel! The trailer finally gained a load of three short lengths of wood. I'm sure many old Series I Land Rovers ended up as builder's work trucks so, ignoring the trailer, this was not a bad choice of model by Lone Star.

Amazingly the revamped 'Roadmaster Majors' lingered on for a further seven



Another Lone Star mystery! Did Lone Star consider replacing their basic 4 wheel trailer with this attractive Site Office as part of the Roadmasters Builders Supply Set? Do any readers have any information on this rare Site Office trailer?

years until 1976 by which time the range was looking very dated indeed! Undoubtedly this neglect was due to Lone Star instead focusing on its new 'low friction' Flyers cars quickly launched to compete with the hugely successful Hot Wheels models arriving from America. The only further changes to the Land Rover during this period were to the 'truck top' roof section which was sometimes finished in silver until around 1975 when it and the tinfoil windscreen section were replaced by a simplified one-piece die-cast unit. Surely an uneconomical final modification for a model that was about to be discontinued.

Despite some obvious exceptions, such as the fire engine, most models in this range were produced in more than one colour scheme over their long fourteen year production run. Disappointingly red seems to have been the only choice for the Land Rov-



Over the years Lone Star produced many attractive point-of-sale displays such as this colourful 'Roadmaster Majors' stand dating from the early-mid 1970s. Ready for selection is the Land Rover set along with the Jeep and Dodge truck. All 3 models can trace their origins back to Lone Star's 1950s Modern Army Series.

ROADMASTER MAJORS



All models in the Roadmaster Major Series offer great strength and play value in a convenient size. Each item is supplied individually blister packed in a strong "clear view" anti-static pack. The models are 25-cent metal and are supplied in boxes to an order. 3 dozen to an outer.

A. 1281 MILK TRUCK

Length 8 1/2" (215 mm)

B. 1282 FARM JEEP & TRAILER

Length 7" (178 mm)

C. 1283 SAND TRUCK

Length 6 1/2" (175 mm)

D. 1284 FLAT SIDED TRUCK

Length 8 1/2" (215 mm)

E. 1285 BULK CARRYING TRUCK

Length 8 1/2" (215 mm)

F. 1286 JAGUAR SPORTS CAR

Length 5 1/2" (140 mm)

G. 1287 TANKER

Length 5 1/2" (140 mm)

H. 1288 FARM TRACTOR

Based on both sets occasionally when short of one model.

H. 1292 BUILDERS SUPPLY TRUCK & TRAILER

Length 8 1/2" (215 mm)

J. 1293 BREAKDOWN TRUCK

Length 6 1/2" (165 mm)

K. 1294 LOW LOADER

Length 5 1/2" (140 mm)

L. 1295 TIMBER TRUCK

Length 6 1/2" (165 mm)

M. 1296 FIRE ENGINE

Length 6 1/2" (165 mm)

All dimensions are approximate.



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The final trade catalogue entry for the now very dated 'Roadmasters Majors' range was in 1976 as shown here. Whilst examining unboxed examples from this primitive range I've often had stallholders state that they date from the 1950s and then look at me in disbelief when I've said actually they're from the mid '70s!

er although I have heard of a metallic blue version. Surely there has to be a few other 'Friday afternoon' variations out there?

With the overdue deletion of the 'Roadmaster Majors' range in 1976 it looked like retirement had finally ar-

rived for this long serving Series I Land Rover which had continuously featured in Lone Star's line up in one guise or another since its introduction in 1958. Not surprisingly Matchbox, Corgi, and Dinky had all long since replaced their Series I Land Rovers with updated Series II versions, Dinky being the last to do so back in 1970! Surely Lone Star's ancient Series I had now reached the end of the road?

Tough Times

As the 1970s progressed the future was looking gloomy for British toy manufacturing. Cheap imported toys together with rising UK manufacturing costs and changes in consumer tastes resulted in a significant slowdown in sales. Dinky were the first to succumb in 1979 with Matchbox and Corgi following into receivership in 1982 and 1983 respectively. Lone Star to its credit managed to battle on through the late 1970's launching 'new' ranges with the minimum of investment. Several of the 1950s Modern Army Series models were again regurgitated (or cleverly re-worked, depending on your view point!) firstly as UN peace keeping vehicles and then as Army Strike Force toys with large unattractive plastic wheels. The Jeep featured in both ranges but the Land Rover escaped Lone Star's desperate recycling attempts.

Lone Star soldiered on into the 1980's and surprisingly even managed to launch some completely new toy vehicle ranges although these were generic vehicles which ultimately couldn't compete with the cheaper imports. Undoubtedly Lone Star's toy guns and accessories, licenced with popular themes such as James Bond, helped prop up the struggling vehicle ranges but sadly the receivers were finally called in during October 1983.

Wimpey Land Rover

A look through the final DCMT Lone Star 1983/4 trade catalogue shows a 'new' Roadbuilders range of construction vehicles although again these were just recycled models from the earlier 'Highway Constructors' range but now finished in Wimpey Construction colours. This range consisted of 10 basic models including 1501 a dumper truck with a selection of hand tools. With all the models offered at the same price point this set looked poor value for money when compared to the other larger models in the range. Consequently there must have been a last minute rethink as when set 1501 appeared in the shops the dumper truck had instead been joined by non-other than Lone Star's veteran Series I Land Rover!



Proving old Land Rovers never die! This photo sees Lone Star's 1958 Safari Land Rover alongside their 1983 Wimpey version. The quality of Lone Star's toys right from the start means both still look fresh today.



In 1983 and Lone Star's classic Series I Land Rover makes a surprise return! These short lived Wimpey construction toys were one of Lone Star's final ranges before the receivers were called in later the same year.

an interest in Lone Star focus on the realistic Impy and Flyers models, however the interesting story of this single Land Rover casting with its long history gives a much better flavour of the goings on at Lone Star from its heyday right through to its demise. With the exception of the long-running Builders Supply version in red all the Lone Star Land Rover models are difficult to find with mint boxed examples often commanding three figure sums. I've collected Lone Star toys for over 30 years and the Land Rovers have been some of the hardest models to track down. I've still yet to see a boxed example of the Safari Set, can any readers help?

This final offering was the same casting as the last 'Roadmaster Majors' version but finished in all-over yellow with Wimpey names printed on either side. I'm assuming this range was based on a licencing agreement with Wimpey who I doubt would have been entirely happy to see an ancient Land Rover depicted as part of their current fleet but hopefully they were not too offended to have such an iconic vehicle displaying their livery! Thanks to this surprise revival, production of the Lone Star Land Rover had now spanned an incredible twenty six years!

Summary

It's rather fitting that this model, one of Lone Star's first and longest running die-cast toy vehicles, made a brief reappearance right at the end albeit to sadly witness the company fall into receivership. However it wasn't all bad news as Lone Star quickly found a buyer, Wickie GMB of Germany, and production of the core ranges of guns and accessories continued at its Hertfordshire premises until 1986 when it was inevitably transferred to China.

Today most toy vehicle collectors with

There's no doubt the real Series I Land Rover is an iconic British vehicle, but perhaps now, with its long and interesting history spanning four decades, we should rightly acknowledge this Land Rover model as an iconic Lone Star toy.



With models and packaging spanning 4 decades there's certainly some variety here!

