

SPEAKING OF WINCHES

As our Project Jeep Wrangler draws to a conclusion, we're tackling the finishes touches and what better way to finish then with a visit to Goodwinch for something to fill the gap on that front bumper. This called for a visit to see David Bowyer, and a call to get some additional battery power
Words and photography: Matt Carson

Turn the clock back nearly 30 years and you'll find David Bowyer putting together what was the UK's first general magazine dedicated to all things four-wheel drive. Overlander 4x4 was a good idea then, and today that heritage is in the magazine you have in your hands today. David's publication was bought by specialist publisher Link House magazines, and re-named Off Road and 4 Wheel Driver, and David handed over the reins to a young, fresh-faced and even hirsute editor called Nigel Fryatt. Fast forward those thirty years, and the magazine is now named 4x4 magazine, it once again has the same editor, and David Bowyer remains in the 4x4 business, proving that he has staying power to add to what is now an enviable and serious level of experience. That experience is not in the writing about 4x4, because David is a 'doer', running both off-road driver training courses at his base at Credton, in Devon, and offering the wide range of off-road equipment now available through his company, Goodwinch. Top of that range are the

winches that David has been supplying to the 4x4 scene, which has cemented his reputation. If you want to talk winches, a conversation with David Bowyer is a must.

With a background like that, David was the obvious choice to find a suitable winch for our Project Wrangler. In making the decision to decide the specification you first have to consider the vehicle's weight, which for the Jeep Wrangler is about 1450kg, then the intended use you intend to put that vehicle and its winch. In our case, it's for occasional off-road recovery and greenlining, plus perhaps pulling the neighbours out of the ditch, should they get it all wrong this coming winter! These were the factors that we told David, to determine the required type of winch rating needed for our vehicle.

David was quick to recommend a TDS Goldfish 9.5 model, which has an impressive 9500lb rating - perfectly adequate for our Jeep (and, probably, for the majority of road-going 4x4s). Goodwinch also offer a 12000lb version for heavier 4x4s and vehicle recovery



Substantial Rugged Ridge XHD bumper comes predrilled for industry standard winch sizes



A small amount of trimming was needed to accommodate the brake housing



operators. David also has a couple of lighter 3000lb and 4000lb versions for ATVs.

The TDS range boasts features such as a high-speed 173:1 ratio, sealed solenoids, and a three-stage heavy-duty planetary gearbox. The winch drum rotates on special nylon bearings fitted to heavy-duty drum supports with 'V-ring' seals bearing against the drum flanges. This may be starting to sound a bit technical, but that's the attention to detail that goes into these winches and why if you are considering one, the conversation needs to be had and David will be only too happy to discuss the benefits of nylon bearings with you! The overall result is excellent water proofing, obviously vital and top-level build quality.

David also supplied us with the optional Dyneema Bowrope, which is clearly an improvement over wire rope. The rope is constructed of a 12-strand Polyethylene Fibre to a specification set by David and based on all those winching years. The benefits are numerous, but firstly you notice the weight, or rather lack of it. Its approx 10kg lighter than



Extra long lead, clear marking and LED's make operation a doddle

the equivalent wire variety, which is handy as the Jeep is starting to get a bit heavy with all the modifications we've added. It is also important when you fit a winch, to consider what the weight of the winch, right on the front of your vehicle – actually ahead of the front axle – will do to your vehicle's handling both on, and off the road. That extra weight could be detrimental to that handling, so some care should be taken. In out case, the rope is incredibly easy to use and generally move around and of course it won't kink or spike. It even floats, which in river crossing situations could be very important. Taking that into account, and we're sold.

The Goldfish models come in two styles, either the bridged model, where the solenoids sit over the drum or the standard model where the solenoids sit over the winch's motor. The difference is essentially aesthetic as performance is identical. The 9.5i bridge model got the nod for the TJ, as the hoop bar on the front bumper only just clears the solenoid pack on the 9.5c model and made it impossible to plug the control lead in. ►

Last month we fitted the beefy Rugged Ridge XHD bumper that comes predrilled for both the winch mount and aluminium hawse necessary for the Dyneema Bowrope. However, we had to trim the bumper slightly, by about one cm, to accommodate the winch properly. Not a big issue and easily accomplished in ten minutes with the grinder.

After taking time to securely bolt down the winch the rest of installation is very straightforward as the solenoids are integral. It's simply a case of routing the supplied power cables to the battery and wiring in the cut-off switch to the positive cable. Final job is to attach the Dyneema Bowrope to the drum and carefully wind on using a bit of resistance to keep the rope taut.

With our new found winching capabilities, we wanted a battery strong enough to handle the additional load. As the UK's largest authorised distributor of Optima batteries, 4Leaf Batteries got our call. Having used Optima batteries in the past in several of my own vehicles, I wouldn't actually want to use anything else. They seem to last forever and are able to recover from abuse that could damage lesser batteries. Trust me, they really are that good. The great thing about dealing with 4Leaf Batteries is that this is the only Optima Specialist in the UK, the only distributor handling solely Optima Batteries and the only Optima partner organisation that employs skilled Spiral Cell technicians. Clearly I'm going to get the best advice possible.

After a consultation on my battery needs, 4Leaf pointed me towards the red top 3.7 version, which will provide excellent high power starting for the 4-litre lump and plenty of reserve for occasional winching.



TDS installation is easy just run the power to the battery, solenoids are prewired. Inset: Superb Optima battery provides the muscle

Immediately, I could feel the extra power of the battery when starting the Jeep, the additional cranking power makes itself felt, and fires up the Jeep noticeably quicker. With the aforementioned positive previous experience with Optima products I've every confidence for the future.

It's well worth taking time to visit the

excellent websites of both Goodwinch and 4Leaf Batteries, or call for advice and product information. Both companies are leaders in their respective field and offer excellent customer service as well as value for money. And when you call David, don't forget to ask him about the time he was the main man behind this very magazine! **4x4**

Contacts:

Goodwinch Limited
www.goodwinch.com
01363 82666

4Leaf Batteries
www.4leafbatteries.com
01959 881330



This a piece of cake for the TJ, but the winch is there for when it gets tricky