

Fit a new hard-top headlining

Ben Field transforms the interior of his Series IIA

Many Series and Defender hard tops wear nothing but bare aluminium inside. That's fine for a temporary top, but you can make things a lot more comfortable by fitting a headlining.

A headlining cuts down on noise, stops condensation and looks a lot more attractive than the battered roof ribs found on many hard tops. The air gap created between the hard top and the metal of the roof is surprisingly effective at insulating the cab from road noise and rattles from the roof. You can improve things further with spray- or stick-on sound-deadening before the headlining goes in.

Insulation of a different kind stops that perennial problem for tin-topped Land Rovers, condensation dripping from the

roof. Again, the air gap between the lining and bare metal is at work, but this time it reduces the temperature change between outside and inside, so condensation doesn't form. Additional insulation can be added between headlining and bare metal to make the fight against condensation more effective and make the cab warmer.

Noise, condensation and the ubiquitous bare aluminium roof ribs were all problems on my Series IIA, so I decided to fit a LaSalle headlining kit. Here's how I did it.



The Expert Ben Field

Ben Field has been restoring Land Rovers for years. He's fitted fabric headlinings and a couple of the fiddly board-based linings found in Seventies saloons. He reckons excellent interior access makes Series and Defenders good for headlining newbies.

You'll need

- Kitchen cleaner and cloth
- Dust mask (if you're cutting)
- Self-tapping screws
- 20mm-long peeler rivets
- 14mm (outer diameter) washers
- 1-1.5-metre length of 50mm x 50mm wood
- Panel wipe
- White touch-up paint

Tools used

- Drill
- 4mm and two x 6mm drill bits
- Pozidriv screwdriver
- Spring clamps (x4)
- Light hammer

Safety advice

- Wear close-fitting gloves
- Wear a dust mask if you need to trim the headlining for Alpine lights or Tropical Roof vents

HOW LONG?
Allow at least half a day

HOW MUCH?
● Standard hard top headlining from £294 (lasalle-trim.co.uk)

HOW HARD?
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After failing the audition to join the Blue Man Group Ben sought solace in sorting the headlining



Bare ribs

1 This may look familiar – bare metal is a way of life for many hard-topped Land Rovers. But it looks ugly on a restored vehicle, particularly when the roof's been repaired with lashings of Tiger Seal. There's the condensation and noise to think about too.



Meet the kit

2 The LaSalle headlining kit has three sections for the 88in – front, rear and a finishing panel that goes over the back door. It's made from tough, flexible glassfibre. The front section (nearest camera) has pods to take speakers, and a central box for a CD/radio.



Tape up

3 The edges of the headlining components will leave marks on the paintwork, so make sure you wrap up any vulnerable interior surfaces – such as the wheelarch boxes – with card and tape before manhandling the headlining into the vehicle.



Fit and support rear

4 The rear section of the headlining goes in first. It is flexible enough to squeeze in through the rear door. Once inside, lift the headlining roughly into position and support with spring clamps like this. Note that the recessed section of the lining faces the front.



Line up with rib

5 Line up the recessed section of the rear lining with the roof rib like this. There will be a big gap at the rear door end now but don't worry about it – there's a separate finishing panel to go here later on.



Drill and screw

6 Once you're happy with the position of the rear section of the headlining, drill through all the holes in the panel with a 4mm bit. Insert self-tapping screws in the holes, to fix the section in place, and remove all the clamps.



Feed the front in

7 If you have high-back seats in the cab, fold them flat first. The front section of the headlining goes in through the back door, but you'll need both front doors open to give extra space for the panel to be turned and positioned.



Clamp in place

8 The rear-view mirror provides a handy rest for the headlining in the middle. At the sides, use a spring clamp positioned like this to provide support. Line up the holes on the back of the front lining with the recessed section of the rear lining.



Support and drill

9 A short length of 50mm x 50mm wood lifts the centre of the lining into the correct position for drilling. At the sides, you can lift and hold the lining off the spring clamps while you drill the holes. Drill all to 4mm and insert self-tappers.

How to



Plastic rivets

10 Once front/rear sections are in correct position, remove a screw at a time, drill out to 6mm (don't enlarge the pre-drilled holes in the lining) and slot in one of the plastic rivets from the kit. Drill (but don't fit) the last two plastic rivets on the rear sides for now.



Tap in place

11 Use a light hammer to tap the shaft of the rivet into the hole. Although strong when fitted, the rivets are easy to snap while in their pre-fitted state, so get yourself in a position where you can tap the shaft squarely on the end: wonky shots will not end well.



Clean and strip

12 The roof has no supporting rib for the forward-facing edge of the finishing panel to stop lining from flexing, so there's a foam rubber strip to stick to the roof. Clean roof 5cm either side of the rear section join with panel wipe and peel backing off the strip.



Stick strip up

13 Stick the strip to the roof so that it sits halfway across the join, like this. The strip is long enough to cover the area behind the holes on the headlining. There's a few centimetres either side, so side-to-side alignment isn't super critical.



Finishing panel

14 Tuck the finishing panel in place so that its recessed section sits above the rear section of the headlining. If you got carried away in step 10 and fitted plastic rivets right to the ends of the rear section, drill out the two rivets at the ends to give some wriggle room.



Rivet panel

15 Drill and plastic rivet the holes around the top of the door and along the roof lip either side to secure the lower part of the finishing panel. It's important that this section is made firm before moving on to the next step.



Align holes

16 Use the shank of a 6mm drill bit to align the holes of the finishing panel with those of the rear headlining section. Plastic rivets only work with something solid behind them, so use a 20mm-long peeler rivet with a 14mm diameter washer (inset).



Rivet up

17 Align and rivet the two outer holes using the peeler rivets. The rivets peel back on themselves (inset) and attach the finishing panel with the rear section of the headlining securely. A dab of white touch-up paint disguises the rivets head well.



Clean up and finish

18 You're bound to get finger marks all over the surface of the headlining after fitting. Regular kitchen cleaner will rapidly remove these. The finished job (inset) is a great improvement on how it looked before, both aesthetically and practically. **LRO**