

Obituary - Brian Bashall

Brian Bashall, founder of the Dunsford Collection and the All-Wheel Drive Club, died peacefully in hospital on November 20, aged 88.

Brian led an interesting life, in his youth his passion was for boats and motorcycles and then Land Rovers, followed by military vehicles, tractors and in the latter years Bentleys.

He never had one of anything, always multiples, so he bought a smallholding called Stock House to house his burgeoning collection of rusting military trucks awaiting restoration, as well as his numerous Land Rovers.

His passion for Land Rovers at this time had really taken hold and he left Comerfords of Thames Ditton, where he had been the workshop manager, and started buying, repairing and selling Land Rovers from Stock House.

Pressure from the neighbours, who complained about the army trucks in the field, led to Brian and his wife Pip buying a small garage and establishing Dunsfold Land Rovers in the idyllic village of Dunsfold on the Surrey/Sussex border.

Before long it was a thriving, if somewhat chaotic, centre full of Land Rovers, military vehicles of all sorts including a Buffalo Second World War amphib. The yard became more of a club than

a typical business and most of the customers became lifelong friends.

Brian spent his weekends trialing with the Southern Rover Owners Club; Dunsfold Land Rovers continued to thrive and additional buildings went up.

He founded the All Wheel Drive Club and from small beginnings it grew into the largest off-road club in Europe.

During this period the Land Rover collection was growing in numbers and was scattered around numerous barns in the area to keep them out of the weather. Brian's sons Christopher and Philip always worked at the business on and off, and when Chris went to the States to work in the mid-'80s, Philip joined the company permanently and took the collection by the scruff, restoring a lot of them single-handedly and actively seeking out more.

Biennial open weekends started and quickly grew into a very large event with Land Rover owners from all over the world attending the current shows. The collection has managed finally to obtain charitable status and currently has around 150 vehicles in it, mostly prototypes and 'funnies'.

Brian was awarded a Lifetime Achievement award by the Transport Trust for his dedication to Land Rovers and for creating the

collection. Most of these vehicles were destined to be crushed, if Brian had not stepped in and rescued them.

Brian took a back seat in the 1980s and handed the reins to Philip, settling into a much quieter life in the country with his second wife Joanna, who died of cancer in the late 1990s.

Brian tried his hand at some ploughing matches and won a couple of prizes. He also got heavily involved with owls; rescuing and breeding them and then pairing them up before placing them in the countryside.

Life was good as he settled into his latter years and was pleased to be presented with a granddaughter Sammy. On the death of Joanna, he decided to get back into mechanical things and started collecting vintage Bentleys.

Eventually old age and illness caught up with him, his mobility declined and he ended up wheelchair bound.

Brian will be remembered for his enthusiasm to involve lots of people in whatever he was doing. His home would always be full of people and there was always a crowd around. He managed to infect so many people with his passions, whether it was military vehicles, Land Rovers or off-roading. He was a kind and gentle soul who will be greatly missed.