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SUMMER 2015

THE BEST-LOVED 4X4 BY FAR

A TRIBUTE TO JLR'S ICON
& THE DUNSFOLD COLLECTION



MILLER'S MOTORCYCLES

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MADE IN SLOUGH!

VIEWING THE TOWN THROUGH
AUTOMOTIVE EYES

THE BEST-LOVED 4X4 BY FAR

Suddenly, everybody's talking Land Rovers. The word is out that UK production of the world's most iconic 4x4 is finally to cease an amazing 68 years after Maurice Wilkes famously outlined his brainchild on the sands of Anglesey, and enthusiasts are snapping them up left right and centre before it's too late. New ones, old ones, concours examples and basket cases, they're all now of interest.

The Dunsfold Collection

One family that's well ahead of the game are the Dunsfold-based Bashalls, who already have some 130 Land Rover products at their disposal. The story dates back to the 1950s when the father of Brian Bashall's then girlfriend objected to her travelling pillion on his Vincent Black Shadow. His alternatives were a Jowett van or a Land Rover. He chose the latter and unwittingly kick-started a life-long passion with the products of Solihull – a disease he has selflessly passed on to his sons Philip and Chris.

Technical acumen runs in the family and Betty Bashall, Brian's mother, is certainly worth a google (www.thewebbery.co.uk). Prior to WWII she established a factory manufacturing quality wooden toys. In their day, Betty Bashall products rivalled those of Chad Valley and Triang – a reputation that led to her being requisitioned to produce parts for De Havilland Mosquito aircraft during the war. Post hostilities she designed and built her own motor yacht, which she sailed to her retirement in Majorca. **Read more >**



Dunsfold Collection – the famous Bertram Mills Circus Series 1, as 'driven' by Kam the elephant



Dunsfold Collection – Series IIA ceremonial vehicle seen here on duty at the Invictus Games



Dunsfold Collection – Series IIA Forest Rover by Roadless Traction of Hounslow



Brian was the Workshop Foreman of Comerfords motorcycle dealership in Thames Ditton, but his obsession with Land Rovers caused him to leave and set up Dunsfold Land Rovers Ltd in 1968. Now known as DLR, the company still operates from the self-same site, restoring and servicing Solihull products built between 1948 and 2000, and supplying enthusiasts the world over from its million-strong stock of original parts.

Along the way Brian began collecting examples of each type of Land Rover; not least rare prototypes and pre-production models. What's known as the Dunsfold Collection now numbers some 119 showable vehicles plus a further 10-12 duplicates or derelicts. Philip, who has now inherited responsibility for the DLR business and (together with his fellow trustees) the Collection, is the first to admit it's mighty unwieldy to manage for, as there's no proper home, the vehicles are currently strewn across three counties. However, there is light at the end of the tunnel, as the Collection was recently granted charitable status and the drive to raise sufficient funds to create a permanent museum is now on. Philip's ideal scenario would be a three acre site in Surrey, where all the Land Rov-

ers could be on permanent display, along with their equally wonderful gathering of 2,000 model Land Rovers and archive of engineering drawings, marketing and promotional material, handbooks etc. Access www.dunsfoldcollection.co.uk to see how you can become a 'Friend' of the Collection and/or make a donation towards its future.

OPEN WEEKEND

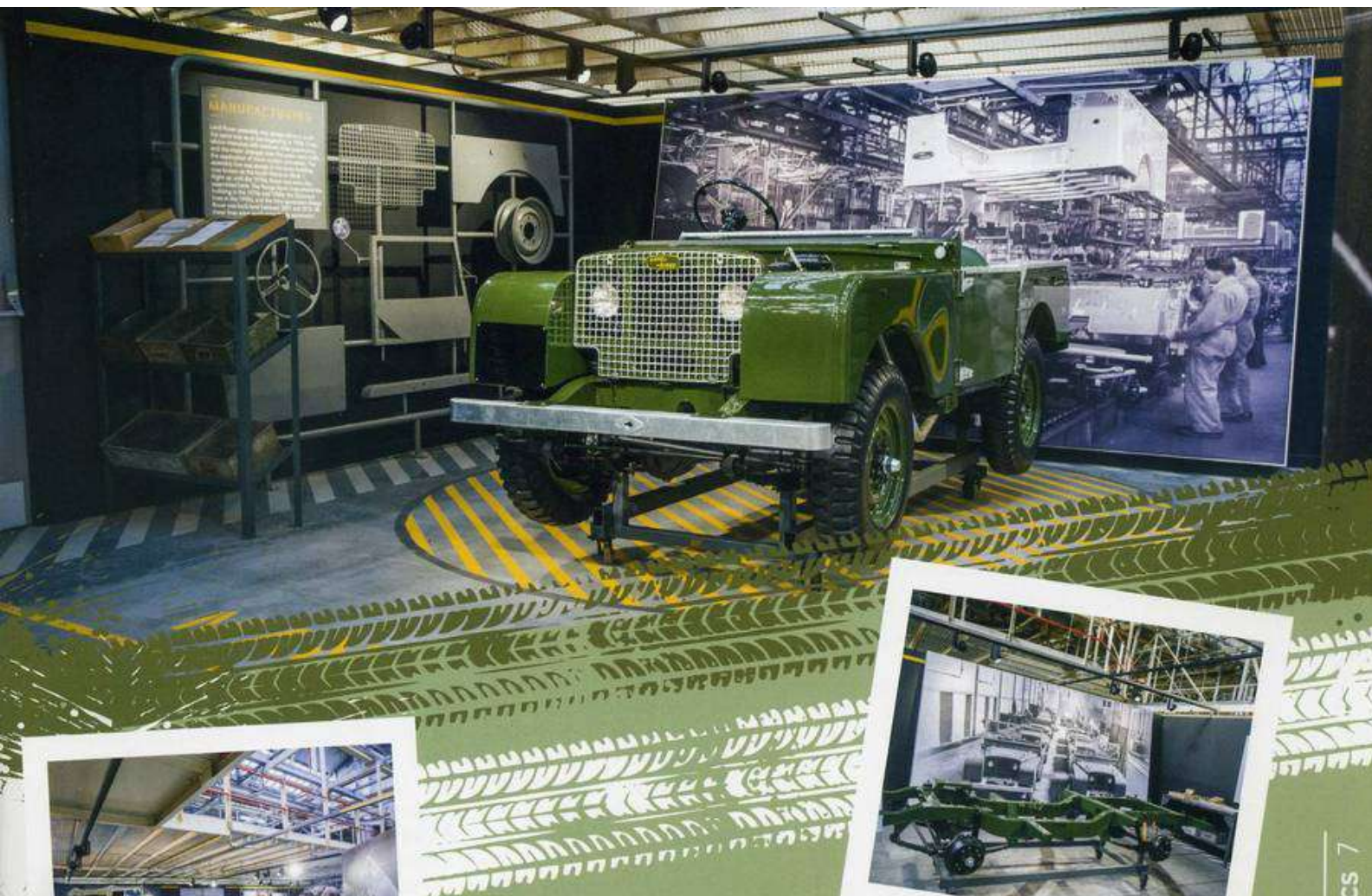
Those impatient to clap eyes on the Collection have a rare opportunity to view some 100 or so of the vehicles at the upcoming Open Weekend. A biennial event for serious Landie folk, it is being held on June 13/14 this year at the Sprinkbok Estate, GU6 8EX; just down the road from DLR. Among the many other interesting vehicles to see will be no less than 17 of the 20 pre-production Land Rovers in existence. There will also be club and trade stands, an autojumble, craft stalls, on-site catering/bar, camping facilities, and entertainment on the Saturday evening. For further details see www.dunsfoldcollection.co.uk. Some 3,000 to 4,000 enthusiasts are expected across the weekend.

KEY ROLE IN REPLICAS SERIES 1 PRODUCTION LINE

The knowledge amassed by Philip Bashall over the years made him the go-to man when Land Rover decided a recreation of the original 1948 production line would be the perfect way to mark the end of UK Defender production. The original conversation with 'Mr Land Rover' Roger Crathorne took place in the unlikely environs of an amphibious Discovery on the waters of Lake Geneva in March 2013. The decision was made to depict three key stages of the build progress, ie: chassis with axle attached; rolling chassis with engine and gearbox installed; and an almost complete vehicle with body in situ.

By Christmas 2013 there was still no go-ahead from Solihull, but Philip realised that orders for the four new bodies and chassis required would need placing imminently if the intended deadline was to be met. He took the gamble and funded the hardware out of his own pocket and it's just as well he did, as the official order didn't arrive un-

Top: the quality of restoration for which DLR is renowned. **Above left:** DLR's spares inventory runs into millions - here, yet more parts are arriving. **Above:** the Defender Celebration Line vehicles were constructed at DLR



VISITING THE DEFENDER CELEBRATION LINE

til August 2014! He and a mechanic then assembled the display items in five weeks flat. In a nice touch of authenticity, the body panels were painted on the current Defender line, in exactly the same place they would have been in 1948, while the skids on which the vehicles are displayed were made in the original toolroom. Said Philip: "The help and support we got from Land Rover employees was quite fantastic and, with everybody's assistance, the display co-ordinator Mike Bishop was able to amass a wealth of support material in the way of old photos, drawing boards, office chairs, galvanised parts bins, even asset plates – the metal tags that would have been attached to every item of equipment. The resulting display is really quite emotional."

The 1948 reconstruction line is appropriately housed slap in the middle of current Defender production, in one of the original Land Rover buildings. Nice touches include a clocking-on card for each visitor and everybody is invited to pocket a tilt hook as a keepsake – one of the two items common to Land Rovers all the way from 1948 to 2015; the other being a lateral strengthening bar for the rear body.

Your scribe would happily have paid £45 to see the celebration line alone, but Land Rover are more generous and dedicate three hours to the total tour that also encompasses each phase of making the current vehicle. Robots are few and far between, making this the enthusiast's last chance to witness UK vehicle manufacture as it used to be. Interestingly, none of the component parts are now manufactured

by Land Rover but purchased from independent suppliers such as GKN (chassis) and Dana (sub-assemblies). The total assembly time is around four hours per vehicle, of which some 125 are currently being completed every day – an increase of 56 percent over last year! Other fascinating factoids include: the biggest market for Defender is Germany; the tolerance on early Land Rover panels used to be ± 0.25 in, but is now 0.20mm; once built, each vehicle has to pass a rain test – a development that will bring a smile to anybody used to mopping up the drips from inside The Best-Loved 4x4 By Far!

Be sure to take this tour while you can – it could well be the best £45 you spend this year! See <https://shop.landrover.co.uk/driving-experiences/find-a-centre/solihull> for further details.

Top: the Defender Celebration Line is a wonderful mix of hardware, period photos and general Land Rover ephemera. **Above left:** visitors can experience 'driving' at angles of up to 30 deg. **Above right:** a replica chassis nestles in front of an evocative 1948 production line photo

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