



You're never too young to start dreaming of owning your first Land Rover

DUNSFOLD DELIGHTS

The world-renowned Dunsfold Collection continues to go from strength to strength and deserves the support of Land Rover fans everywhere...



LAND Rover enthusiasts from as far afield as Australia and the USA flocked to the Dunsfold Collection's first Open Day of the year on 20 April. Tickets for the event went on sale at the beginning of December last year but had sold out by the middle of January. If you didn't manage to get one, you'll be pleased to know that another Open Day is being planned for 14 September this year.

A great deal has happened since the museum opened in June 2023, and there were plenty of new things to see, with some of the vehicles on show last year being rotated back into the Collection's storage facilities and replaced by others. Some of those on display at this year's Open Day were being given their first public airing for some considerable time.



Why is an elephant driving a Series I? The answer is in the story

LRM CLASSICS



Among the new exhibits that have appeared since the last Open Day in September 2023 is the prototype 1966 110in Air-portable Gun Tractor, one of three made before the project was discontinued when the British military decided it preferred the Forward Control. The Gun Tractor is commonly referred to as the 'Big Lightweight' because it bears a passing resemblance to the standard half-tonne Lightweight.

Also on display for the first time is the little known and one-of-a-kind BIRST Mobile Weapons Platform special forces vehicle, which is based on a One Ten donor. The fascinating story of the BIRST MWP appeared in last month's *Land Rover Monthly*.

The 86in Series I Solihull-built fire engine that spent its first 40 years at the ICI explosives factory in North Wales, which we featured in *LRM* earlier this year, is also now on display, as is the fascinating Bertram Mills Circus vehicle. Starting out as a Series I, it was heavily modified in the 1950s and designed to give the impression that the circus elephant, named Kam, was driving the car. It was apparently a very popular showpiece in the 1950s and '60s when the circus came to town.

The real driver would sit in the box-like structure at the rear and drive the vehicle from there using extended controls and gear linkage from a Rover P3 car. To make room for the driver it was converted to left-hand drive to allow his feet to miss the rear diff and propshaft. Kam had a centrally-placed steering wheel which it would grip with its trunk. The suspension was upgraded by fitting double coil springs and the chassis was extended to make it possible for Kam to climb aboard.

It was in a very derelict state when the Collection discovered it, but most of the running gear and body lower frames were rescued when it was restored. Collection founder and general manager Philip Bashall's



Traditional signs are in keeping but also vital, because sat nav won't get you to the Dunsfold Collection



At a Dunsfold Open Day the visitors' car park is always interesting



Trustee Richard Beddall gave a fascinating talk on the 1971 Hillrallies



Perfect for a mid-resto tea break and helps fund the Collection's work

first effort to acquire a display elephant model for it ended in tears, when the one he bought online turned out to be cast in concrete. A smaller and rather more cheerful-looking pachyderm made from fibreglass was eventually found.

Visitors at the Open Day were able to view the driving compartment from the access door in the rear panel, fortunately without having to put on the rubber coat and wide-brimmed hat that the circus driver had to wear back in the day, to protect him from the continual flow of, erm, fluid from Kam, who was seated directly above him.

Another rarity now on display is the Rolls-Royce-engined 81-inch military ceremonial vehicle, one of two 81s that were converted into parade machines. It was initially preserved at the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley in Yorkshire's East Riding, but after the museum closed down in 2003 it was handed over to the REME Museum, before eventually finding its way to the Dunsfold Collection.

All the Collection's Series Is were on display ahead of a private tour of the museum by members of the Land Rover Series One Club later in April, as part of their Southern Spring Rally. The LRSOC tour will be the 20th such private tour since the Dunsfold Collection opened its doors last June, and many more are in the diary for the rest of the year.

It's easy to see why they are proving so popular, because the museum will do its best to ensure that particular vehicles are on display to suit specific interests. For example, in the case of the LRSOC, the request was for all the Collection's Series Is to be on display, and for Philip to give a series of brief presentations on the stories behind each of them.

The other advantage of a private tour is that if visitors want it, Philip will be happy to provide a personal guided walk around the exhibits, sharing fascinating stories and anecdotes on both the vehicles on display as well as the vast array of Land Rover memorabilia.

Private tours have been hosted for several clubs including the CVC Register, Loughborough Land



Tim Slessor of First Overland fame was a surprise visitor, seen here chatting to Philip Bashall



Barry Doughty, left, drove the Collection's 101 on the 1975 West-East Sahara expedition

Rover Club, and the Land Rover Life group. And proving once again that old Land Rovers are of interest to almost everyone, private tours have also been hosted for the Transport Trust, the Vale of Rheidol Railway, and the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts' Club.

There have also been a number of tours celebrating birthdays, including a 30th and a 50th, but perhaps the most spectacular was enthusiast Jameson's 10th, when he flew over with his mum, dad and sister from Seattle, Washington for a birthday treat. Jameson's knowledge of and enthusiasm for Land Rovers was impressive. The museum has also hosted a teetotal stag party and a group who had just completed a weekend of local greenlaning with Surrey 4x4 Tours & Training.

From a Land Rover history perspective, the most interesting private tour so far was a large group of past and present Land Rover employees, arranged by Graham Archer. Between them, they had been involved in pretty much every new model, from development to launch and beyond, from the late 1960s to the present day, including many of the vehicles in the museum Collection. It was fascinating to listen to their stories, which added a behind-the-scenes perspective to many iconic vehicles.

Another way to visit the museum is by coming along to one of the 'An Evening With...' events, which were introduced just before Christmas. The first of these starred Alex Bescoby of Last Overland fame, and a sell-out audience of 40 guests arrived at around 6.00pm for tea, coffee, homemade sausage rolls and cakes. Guests had free run of the Collection before settling down to listen to Alex, who presented a hugely entertaining talk on the expedition and the heartwarming inspiration that led to it, illustrated with photographs and videos. Alex also had his book, *Last Overland*, for sale and most of the visitors took the opportunity to obtain a signed and personalised copy.

The second event was dedicated to the Camel Trophy and presented by Bob and Joe Ives and (LRM



contributor) Nick Dimbleby, and provided a fascinating compilation of historical perspectives, personal experiences and stunning photography. As every Land Rover enthusiast knows, Bob and Joe won the Camel event outright in 1989 and were also awarded the Royal Automobile Club's prestigious Segrave Trophy. They also still own the One Ten they drove to victory, and they brought it along on the night.

Renowned automotive photographer Nick has been a Camel Trophy fan for most of his life and has participated in quite a few as event photographer. He is also the creator of what must be one of the great Covid lockdown projects, his magnificent book entitled *Camel Trophy: The Definitive History*. Guests were able to secure a personalised copy of the book and have it signed by Nick, Bob and Joe.

The Collection announces these evening events on its social media channels and website, and the two held so far have sold out very quickly. Only 40 tickets are available for each event due to both space limitations in

Fantastic photo opportunities abound at Dunsfold





the museum building and car parking constraints. Philip hopes that 'An Evening With...' will become a regular part of the Dunsfold Collection calendar, and further events for 2024 are already in the pipeline. The next event is currently being finalised and will probably have been announced by the time you read these words.

It was also interesting to see how much has been done in the museum's archive since last year, and there are now two archive rooms on site. The first of these was created in 2022 from what used to be the office at Dunsfold DLR before the business was closed when Philip retired, and this is now used to store the museum's collection of brochures, press releases, photographs, books and magazines, all of which are in the process of being sorted and filed by teams of volunteers.

The second archive room was created very recently and will be used to store the extensive collection of vehicle handbooks, operating manuals, parts catalogues,

The Open Day's talks were gripping and entertaining

and other non-customer-facing material such as dealer service bulletins and so on. This also includes what Philip believes to be one of the largest collections of military Land Rover documents in existence. While the huge task of filing and, in due course, cataloguing and scanning everything continues, the archive rooms are not open to the public.

One unexpected benefit of the opening of the museum is that Philip has been approached by quite a few people who believe the Dunsfold Collection is the perfect home for their own Land Rover memorabilia and documents, and the museum now has a large number of display cabinets dedicated to some of the items and materials that have been donated.

Most notable among the donated archive material has been a huge collection from Roger Crathorne, which he assembled throughout his long career with Land Rover. Other donations to the archive have come from ex-Land Rover engineer Graham Archer, and from Neil Randle.

Everyone involved in running the Collection gives their time for free, and as well as the trustees of the charity there is also a growing band of volunteers covering all aspects of the operation, whether it be providing hospitality and marshalling during events, vehicle preparation, site maintenance, or working on the archive project. Event catering at the Open Day was masterminded by Jan and John Richardson, with all proceeds going to the Collection.

If you'd like to give up some of your time to help in any way, please contact the Collection, or consider becoming a Friend of the Collection or a Wall of Fame Supporter. More information can be found on the Collection website dunsfoldcollection.co.uk.

Tickets will be available on the website very soon for the 14 September Open Day, and please keep an eye on the Instagram and Facebook channels regarding upcoming 'An Evening With...' events.



Souvenir window stickers proved very popular