

Land Rover heaven: as well as rare and unique vehicles, there are vast displays of memorabilia, posters, engines and more

WELCOME TO DUNS FOLD

CLASSICS



LRM heads to the opening of the UK's first and only dedicated Land Rover museum. Martin Domoney reports

If you saw the jaw-dropping selection of motors that the Dunsfold Collection brought to our LRM Live event back in May, you'll understand how excited I was to get an invitation to the opening of the Dunsfold Museum – the UK's first and only dedicated Land Rover museum. This mammoth project has been a labour of love for Philip Bashall and the trustees, including LRM's own Gary Pusey, and has been years in the making. As a Gold supporter of the Dunsfold Collection, LRM was on the list for early access to the new facility to pore over all the carefully curated pieces of Land Rover history and, of course, take in the plethora of amazing Land Rovers on show.

Simply arriving at the museum is a treat in itself – the exhibits aren't just confined to the walls of the building, and I had to be forcibly removed from underneath the Forest Rover and pulled away from the darkly-tinted windows of the stretched limousine Range Rover P38 that stand guard outside so we could actually go in.

After saying hello to Gary in the courtyard and sipping a coffee in the sun, served out of a lovely Limestone Series III, we made our way through the doors and into the main museum. Wow! Talk about sensory overload – everywhere you look, there are Land Rovers, signs, event memorabilia, promotional material, branded collectibles, models and toys. It would take days to get around the museum and properly take in and fully appreciate each piece, and that's just on the main floor.



At one end, a staircase (playfully labelled with Hill Descent Control signs at the top and bottom of the steps) leads you to a raised platform on which the brightly liveried pre-production Freelander 1 and odd-looking Farmer's Friend concept ATV live, all surrounded by yet more beautifully-displayed Land Rover automobilia. At the other, a mezzanine floor has an old-school workshop set up beneath, with cutaway engines and other fascinating training materials stationed above.

The Land Rovers on the main floor range from the revered Centre Steer pre-production replica to an ultra-rare Linley Edition Range Rover, Darién Gap expedition vehicle, 50/50 Discovery 1, 109in Portuguese Load Carrier truck and loads more. Some are set back into their own coves, themed to showcase the vehicle in its natural habitat, and each has a detailed description board with tons of interesting info and history pertaining to each model. There are far too many to cover here – you'll have to come and visit for yourself.

There's yet more to look at in the areas around the main building too, with the curious dual-rear-wheeled New Zealand Defence Force Stage One, massive 35cwt prototype diesel truck and drop-side Llama Forward Control positioned on the

gravel outside. The size of these commercials is hard to get your head around in person, and it's well worth spending some extra time to admire them on your tour.

We caught up with Alisdair Cusick who was clearly wearing the right shoes, as he had also been allowed in for this special preview. He claimed not to be working and was simply there for pleasure, but I managed to pap him taking some photos of the displays on his phone; to be fair to him, it's impossible not to want to photograph the exhibits. We also rubbed shoulders with some other familiar Dunsfold supporters including Roger Crathorne (AKA Mr Land Rover), Nick Dimbleby, Mike Bishop and Greg King and Ian Arthur who we know from the REVS Restore project and plenty of others, all absolutely over the moon to be there and so glad to see Phil Bashall's vision for a dedicated Land Rover museum come to fruition after all the years of hard work and careful planning.

With the sun starting to dip in the sky the time came to depart; we wandered back through the hoards of stunning Land Rovers in awe of what the team here has created. The Dunsfold Museum isn't a case of 'if you're passing, pop in' – you simply must visit. No matter where you are in the world, I promise, if you love Land Rovers, you won't be disappointed.

ABOUT THE DUNSFOLD COLLECTION

THE Dunsfold Collection of Land Rovers, a registered charity dedicated to the preservation of Land Rover history, is the driving force behind this fantastic new museum.

The collection was started back in 1968 by the late Brian Bashall, who found his enthusiasm for strange prototype and pre-production Land Rovers was shared by others. At the time, Land Rover as a company was not interested in the wonderful vehicles that make up part of Britain's transport heritage – without Brian's foresight, many of the amazing vehicles that now make up part of the museum would have been lost forever.

Over time, the Collection has expanded past the weird and wonderful niche vehicles that founded it to include examples of almost every model made by Land Rover from 1947 to present, including limited editions, royal cars, military vehicles, record breakers and display models. The Collection is managed by founder Brian's son, Philip, who is an internationally-recognised expert on the Land Rover marque, and has over 130 Land Rover and Range Rover vehicles – a large selection of which are now proudly displayed on rotation in the new museum. The launch of the new museum is especially poignant as it not only marks 75 years of Land Rover, but 55 years since the first vehicle that started the collection was acquired.





Watch the video



YOUTUBE.COM/
LAND ROVER MONTHLY

Visitor Land Rovers were a unique display in their own right: 1954 Oxford & Cambridge Expedition Series I alongside pre-pro L03 which was displayed at the 1948 Amsterdam Motor Show



Museum is also home to the John Parker Collection of over 2000 model and toy Land Rovers; wooden rocking horse was manufactured by Betty Bashall Toys in the 1930s



Stretched limo P39A appeared in Bond film as M's staff car

HOW YOU CAN VISIT

THE first public Open Weekend at the museum will be on 23-24 September, with further public open days to be announced. Tickets are on sale now on the Collection website for £18, with children under the age of 13 free. Numbers are strictly limited and must be booked in advance; note that no tickets will be available on the gate.

The Collection will also be offering private, curated tours for clubs and other groups. Details on how to book can be found on the website.

To find out more, become a Trustee or Friend of the Collection and buy museum tickets, head to dunsmuseumcollection.co.uk.

Also, don't forget to check out the social media pages:

- [facebook.com/thedunsmuseumcollection](https://www.facebook.com/thedunsmuseumcollection)
- [@dunsmuseumcollection](https://www.instagram.com/dunsmuseumcollection)



LRM's Steve Miller, Martin Domoney and Alisdair Cusick suffering from Land Rover sensory overload



Wonderful Roadless Traction Forest Rover is one of only nine built; used on dam maintenance by the CEB