



PINK ON PATROL PANTHERS

Alan Bucknell reports from the Land Rover Legends Show, Bicester Heritage
Photos courtesy Nick Dimbleby

Interestingly Pink Panther 10 FG 67 was fitted with the original sand tyres with the side walls painted in pink just as they would have been whilst in service.





ABOVE: The sight of twenty-two ex-SAS Land Rovers all in the same place was absolutely stunning and attracted a lot of attention from Land Rover enthusiasts.

BELOW: The Dutch Pink Panther 10 FG 67 is sandwiched between the Series 1 and two variants of the 110 DPV to create a time line of SAS Land Rover development.

by Alan Bucknell

Whilst the Bicester Heritage event diary purely called the show 'Land Rover Legends' that proved to be an immense understatement as this show, which was held on 25th - 26th May 2019, featured the biggest ever collection of specialist fighting vehicles, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the SAS Long Range Desert Group Land Rover, otherwise known as the Pink Panther or 'Pinkie'.

This once in a lifetime show owes everything to Sue Cummings who, earlier in the year, started on a long and interesting journey to gather all the surviving Pink Panthers together to attend the show. This involved contacting all the current owners, including famous names in the Land Rover world such as Phil Bashall, The Dunsfold Collection, Roger Jones and Barry Pocock as well many, many others both in the UK and across the globe.

The last time a group of Pinkies was gathered together was in 1990 when seven lined up at Southsea MVT Show, but the Bicester display would far surpass that with twenty-two vehicles getting together, the largest gathering of Pink Panthers ever to take place in the world!

So on this never to be forgotten weekend the Bicester Heritage Centre witnessed the amazing sight of Pink Panthers arriving from around the globe, including two vehicles that had travelled



The owners of these fantastic Land Rovers gather for a photo to mark this very special occasion.





ABOVE RIGHT: 10 FG 67 came all the way from the Netherlands to enjoy this very special event at the Land Rover Legends Show, Bicester Heritage.

ABOVE LEFT: The French tricolor flag on the back of 10 FG 35 gives away the fact that the owner brought it to the event all the way from France.

BELOW: The shade of Pink varied enormously depending on when and who painted the vehicles, but they were in fact originally delivered from the manufacturers, Marshalls of Cambridge, in the then standard British Army Deep Bronze Green.



extraordinary distances to be part of the show, including one that had travelled from France, though a second vehicle made the journey from France only for the trailer it was on to be impounded by VOSA so 10 FG 93 did not make it all the way to the show. The owners of 10 FG 56 made the journey all the way from America, though not the vehicle itself, so a picture of 56 was proudly displayed as part of the line-up.

Collections from this country, such as that owned by Barry Pocock, and many other privately-owned vehicles enhanced the spectacular line-up, said to be the largest ever seen since their in-service days. There was also a surprise visit from a Senior Officer of 22 SAS, who came to see the Pink Panther and a DPV, both of which had been largely hidden from sight in the Regimental Barracks in Hereford, adding greatly to the interest and provenance of the line-up. One of the DPVs present was the very one this Officer had served with in the Second Gulf War and he was very touched that 'his' vehicle was being looked after in the way that it was. On viewing the overall display, he also realised that the colour of the Pink Panther, which had come from the Regiment, needed consideration and confirmed that this would be rectified on its return to Hereford!

How do you fit so many ex-SAS Land Rovers in one photo? Simple, with a VERY wide angle lens!



The line-up was further enhanced by two SAS Series 1s, a replica of a unit-made Pink Panther and a good line up of SOVs and WMKs.

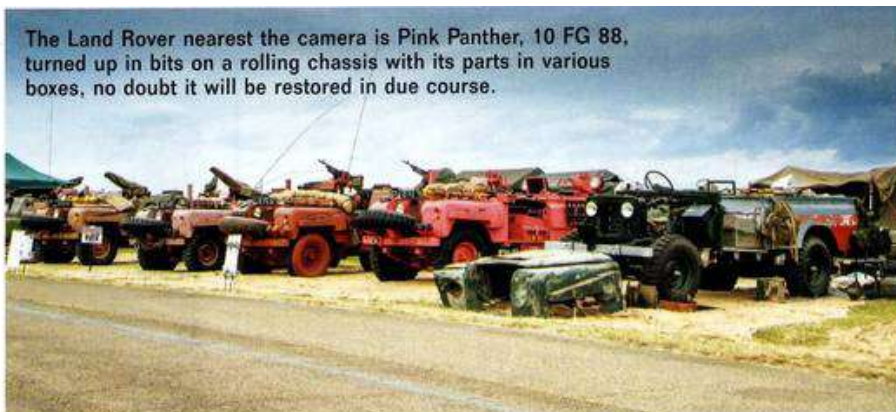
One Pink Panther, 10 FG 88, turned up mostly in bits on a rolling chassis with its parts in various boxes, prompting discussions about how the vehicle had been found, how it could be restored and where the numerous parts could be sourced.

Visitors to the show were treated to two events where Mark Evans (a British veterinary surgeon turned television presenter), led a session which included recollections from Roger Jones MBE and myself, who had owned 10 FG 57 for twenty-four years, before passing it onto Sue Cummings, its present owner. The sessions were very well received with the audience hearing about the design and history of the vehicles and how they were used in various combat situations - what stories this fine line up of vehicles could tell if they could only talk!

Of course we must not forget the brave men who served in these vehicles that we now look after. While there are fewer of them to tell their stories as the years advance, the vehicles are at least a lasting reminder of their courage and the debt that we owe to them all. It is unlikely that the world will ever see a display like this again, to see a Pink Panther at a show is always of interest, and to see two or more is very unusual, but to see all these vehicles together in one line-up was extremely moving and humbling to everyone involved and is something that will never be forgotten. In addition to the Pink Panthers there were many other ex-military Land Rovers on display at the Show including a Swiss Army 100 inch, a well turned out Pulse ambulance, and a Carawagon Tactical Command Post complete with an EOD Wheelbarrow.

A special thank you to Nick Dimbleby for allowing us to use his photos for the article, to Gary Pusey of the Dunsfold Collection for facilitating the use of the images, and of course Sue Cummings for getting the idea off the ground in the first place.

The Land Rover nearest the camera is Pink Panther, 10 FG 88, turned up in bits on a rolling chassis with its parts in various boxes, no doubt it will be restored in due course.



HISTORY

The heavily armed wartime Jeeps used by the SAS in North Africa and Europe were replaced in the post-war years by the 'Land Rover'. The Series I Land Rover was the first type to be used, with vehicles modified by the FVRDE under the guidance of the SAS, with additional modifications at a unit level. The Land Rovers were the familiar open top, heavily armed, well-equipped vehicles ideally suited to the long-range desert patrol requirements of the SAS formerly performed by the Jeep.

When Land Rover replaced the Series I with the Series II and subsequently the IIA in the 1960's, a new batch of vehicles was purchased to create a new patrol. Initially, like the Series I before it, these vehicles were produced by the FVRDE and the units themselves, but a contract was awarded to Marshall's of Cambridge in 1968 to build 72 purpose-built patrol vehicles based on the 109-inch Series IIA Land Rover that incorporated features and modifications specifically requested by the SAS. These new vehicles were significantly better than earlier vehicles, featuring long-range fuel tanks, additional stowage capacity for fuel and water cans, two GPMG machine guns (plus personal weapons), and a host of mechanical improvements to increase durability in the hostile terrains these vehicles were expected to operate.

The new vehicles were delivered from the factory in Deep Bronze Green, but vehicles operating in the desert were subsequently painted pink, with the story behind the colour choice of colour becoming part of Pink Panther folklore, and ranged from it being based on the pink glow observed in the desert at dusk when most raids took place, to the colour of an aircraft wreck spotted in the desert that had been burnished by the sand, but one thing is for sure, the paint did not come ready mixed. Having spoken with former servicemen I can reveal that the pink was achieved by mixing red oxide primer and matt white paint with a touch of black thrown in for good measure, all of which were commonly available colours direct from the stores. As a result of no definitive mix ratio, the actual colours would vary enormously depending on who was doing the painting, and explains why there are so many variations on the shade of pink seen on the vehicles whilst in service.

The Series IIA Land Rover was soon referred to as the 'Pink Panther' after acquiring the nickname from the Peter Sellers movie of the time, and went on to give sterling service with the SAS throughout the sixties, seventies and even into the 80's, before being replaced by the new coil-sprung 110 hi-capacity Land Rover Desert Patrol Vehicle.



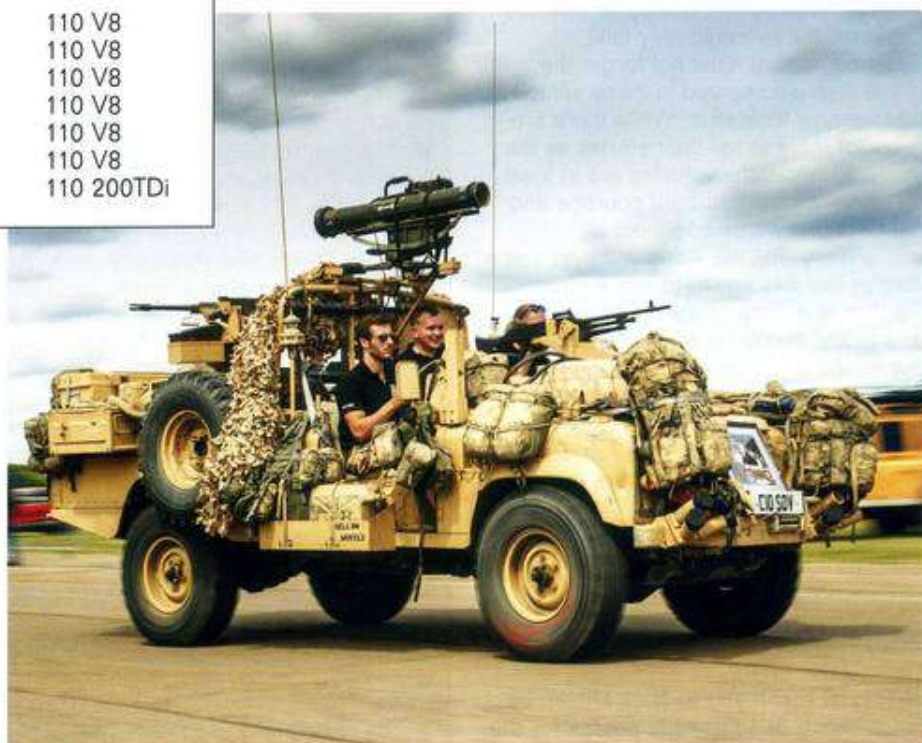
PARTICIPANTS

43 BR 70	UK	86"
66 BS 14	Dunsfold Collection	88"
20 EL 77	UK Replica unit modified	
10 FG 31	UK	2a
10 FG 34	UK	2a
10 FG 35	FRANCE	2a
10 FG 45	Dunsfold Collection	2a
10 FG 51	UK	2a
10 FG 56	USA	2a
10 FG 57	UK	2a
10 FG 67	NETHERLANDS	2a
10 FG 76	UK	2a
10 FG 88	UK	2a
10 FG 93	FRANCE	2a
10 FG 94	UK	2a
10 FG 97	UK	2a
24 KD 33	UK	110 V8
24 KD 38	Dunsfold Collection	110 V8
24 KD 48	UK	110 V8
24 KD 49	Dunsfold Collection	110 V8
24 KD 50	UK	110 V8
24 KD 53	UK	110 V8
78 KK 58	UK	110 200TDi

TOP RIGHT: Phil Bashall of the Dunsfold Collection can be seen here at the steering wheel of one of the 110 Desert Patrol Vehicles with Sue Cummings beside him in the gunner's position.

RIGHT: One of Barry Pocock's 110 DPVs, as used by the SAS during the Gulf War. It is armed with the Milan missile system atop the roll cage just as it would have been on the famous 'Scud Busting' missions during first Gulf War.

BELOW: The successor to the Series Ila Pink Panther Land Rover was the 110 Desert Patrol Vehicle or DPV and a selection of different survivors are shown here along with an SOV (Special Operations Vehicle) on the end, which was developed for American special forces.





ABOVE: What a sight! Pink Panthers as far as the eye can see! A truly rare and once in a lifetime event for Land Rover lovers.

LEFT: Head on view of the Series IIA Pink Panther showing the forward mounted spare wheel mounted on the front bumper.



DUNSFOLD COLLECTION

The Dunsfold Collection of Land Rovers is a registered charity dedicated to the preservation of Land Rover history and started life in 1993, as a progression of a private collection started in 1968 by Land Rover owner and enthusiast Brian Bashall who realised that his love of strange prototype and pre-production Land Rovers was of interest to others and is continued today by one of his sons, Philip. The vehicle that started it all was a 1962 ex-military 109-inch APGP wader. Since then the collection has grown larger and larger and now numbers almost 150 vehicles. For details check out the website at: www.dunsfoldcollection.co.uk