

HAVE YOURSELF A GRAND DAY OUT

No Land Rover enthusiast's life is complete without a visit to the super-impressive Dunsfold Collection

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The Forest Rover is one of the most unusual Land Rovers in the world

We Land Rover fans are simple folk; we want to eat bacon butties for breakfast and look at great Land Rovers all day long. And there is no better place to do just that than at the Dunsfold Collection public open day. The first of these was held in September 2023 at the Dunsfold Museum building, which had only opened a few months before. Since then, they have had several of these public open days, and I was privileged to attend the most recent one, with more scheduled for 2025.

The Dunsfold Collection, a registered charity, officially began life in 1993.

However, those in the know will tell you it is a continuation of Brian Bashall's private collection, which started in 1968. Brian loved quirky and pre-production Land Rovers, and there is a large, lovely image and tribute to Brian on one of the collection's walls.

I always joke and say that when Land Rover needs to find out something about classic Land Rovers, then they phone Phil Bashall, Brian's son, and the man responsible for making his dad's dream of having the finest collection of Land Rovers open to the public a reality. When Phil finally put away the spanners and closed his successful Dunsfold Land Rovers

workshop, he shifted his focus to the extensive Dunsfold Collection, which was spread across the several barns in the area.

Land Rover enthusiasts have seen Dunsfold Collection Land Rovers at various events and shows in the past. I remember driving one of its Forward Controls in a parade at the Goodwood Revival event. I had to keep the accelerator as flat as possible to keep up with the other Land Rovers. I later discovered it was still in low range when I was driving it because that was how it was usually unloaded off the transporter. I ensured it was in high range for our lap around the circuit the following day.

Even the line-up in the visitor's car park was impressive



'I was blown away at how every inch of space was taken up by these special Land Rovers'

With the help of many volunteers and friends, Phil has tastefully converted Dunsfold Land Rover's premises into the Dunsfold Collection's new home. I had visited the workshop many times before and was excited to see the changes. As the collection consists of over 130 Land Rovers, it is impossible to house them here, so vehicle displays are rotated to ensure that people visiting for the second or third time are guaranteed to see something new.

After parking in a field of Land Rovers, we followed the smell of the bacon to the collection entrance. There, I was met by Gary Pusey, one of the collection's trustees and a man who has written informative magazine articles about many of the more interesting Land Rovers in the collection. It would've been rude not to consume a bacon butty, coffee, and a Dunsfold Collection cupcake before entering the collection housed in the old workshop and surrounding buildings.

Upon entering the main exhibit area, I was blown away at how every inch of space was taken up by these special Land Rovers. It was like walking into a treasure chest full of the most famous Land Rovers on the planet.

The 1966 Series IIB 110 Forward Control I had driven around the Goodwood Motor Circuit was there. Likewise, the famous yellow Bertam Mills Circus Series One and one of the beaten up but not defeated 1971 Range Rovers from the seemingly impossible Trans-America Expedition.

Phil took the unique Laird Centaur on a demo drive



The blue and red 1981 Stage 1 88in prototypes belonging to Phil and Gary attracted lots of attention. Both were in near-perfect condition, and Gary had driven the red one from his home just for the day so that all could see it.

One of my favourite displays was a very late lights-behind-the-grille 80in that had been stored in a farm barn for 40 years, not far away from here. The owner had kindly allowed it to be displayed until he decided what to do with it.

Phil and his team had made much effort to create a barn-like look and feel around the Series One. There was also a whiteboard in front of this exhibit, where visitors could pick one of three options for what to do with it. They were: leave it as is, restore but retain the patina or restore and paint it. I think restoration, and retaining the patina got the most votes on the day.

It was not only the Land Rovers that impressed me. There was a room full of model Land Rovers to stroll through and drool over. Land Rover bicycles hung from the ceiling, while display cabinets were full of memorabilia, including brochures, posters,

and trinkets. There was something for everyone; even the biggest Land Rover fans would learn something new from this impressive collection.

The day's highlight was when everyone went outside to see three of the rarest Land Rovers do a short drive around the car park. The selected three were the massive 1964 Forest Rover, the half-tank half-Land Rover 1983 Laird Centaur, and the large 1963 Prototype 30CWT 129in turbo diesel truck.

This 1981 Stage 1 88in prototype attracted lots of attention



The driving display was a lovely addition to an already extraordinary day. Like most classic Land Rover fans, Phil believes they should be driven and enjoyed. After a tiring day of catching up with old Land Rover friends and looking at the world's most magnificent collection of Land Rovers, I had to refuel with some lovely cake and tea before snaking my way through the leafy Surrey hills towards the M25 in a friend's Freelander 2. This was my first Dunsfold Collection Open Day, but it won't be my last. **CLR**



Which one would you like to take home?