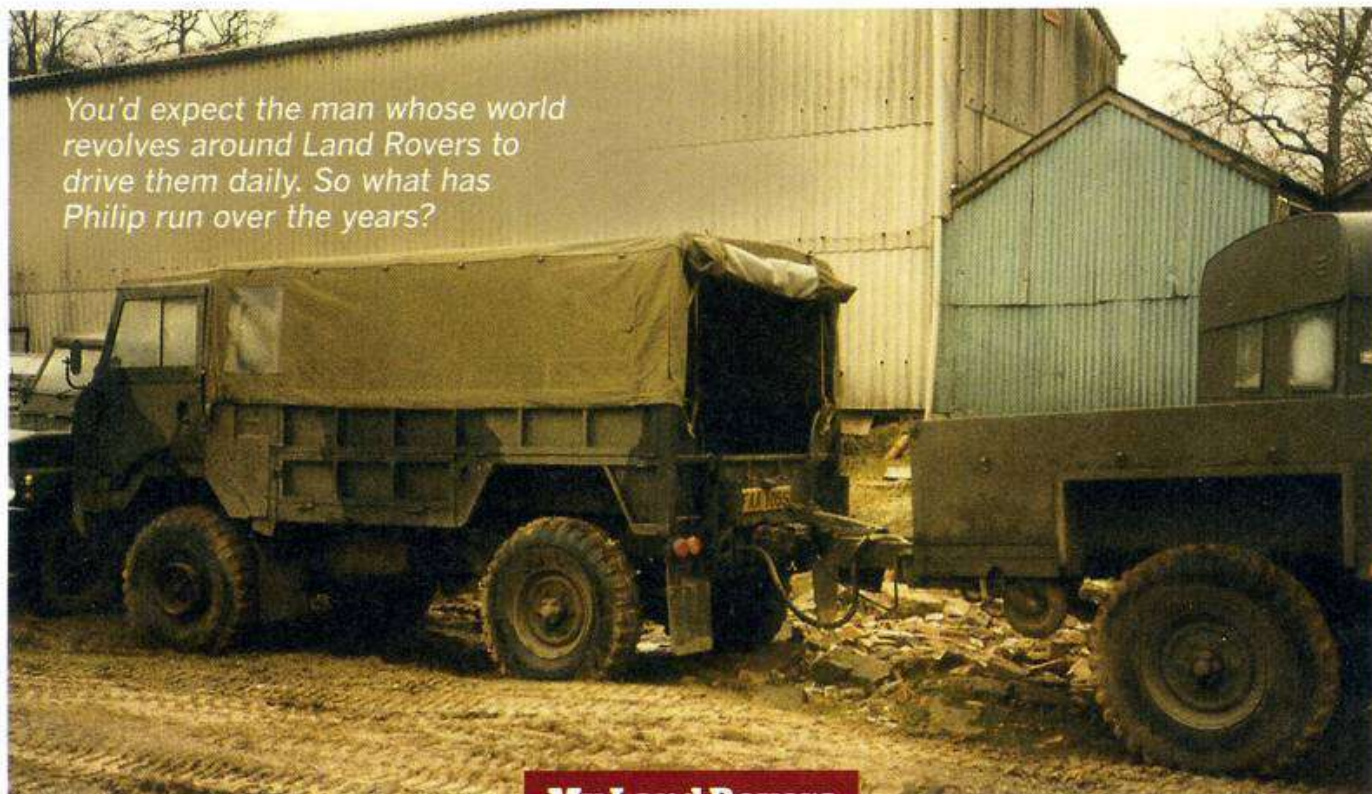


DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



You'd expect the man whose world revolves around Land Rovers to drive them daily. So what has Philip run over the years?



My Land Rovers

DAILY DRIVERS

With about 130 vehicles in the Dunsfold Collection, you might think I'd never be short of something to run around in. But, of course, these historic vehicles belong to the Collection, not me. While I will occasionally give one some gentle exercise to keep everything lubricated, there's no way I can use them for my own daily driving.

So I have to buy my own Land Rovers for everyday use. For the last few years I've been driving Discovery 4s. I just love them: they are perfect for towing – the Discovery 4 can legally pull 3500 kg – and you can sling an engine into that boxy rear load area. I'm worried what the Discovery 5 will turn out to be like. I do hope it won't end up looking like a Range Rover, Evoque or Discovery Sport. I'm sorry but, to me, the Discovery Sport is not a Discovery! And while this trend to

make vehicles lighter is undoubtedly good news for the environment, will it affect the new Discovery's towing capability?

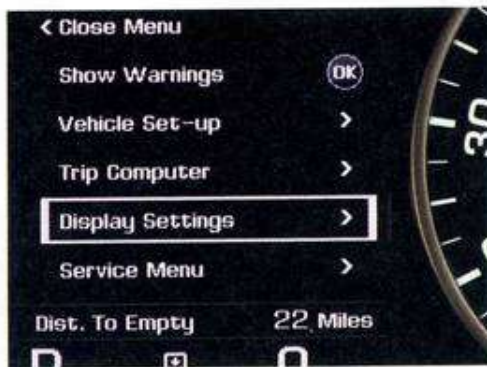
You may be surprised to hear that I never lay a finger on my Discovery 4; I just don't have the technology in the workshop. Would you believe that the 4 doesn't have an engine dipstick? To check the oil, you have to warm the engine, wait ten minutes for the oil to settle and then go through a menu display on the instrument panel to get a read-out. That idea's nothing new – Rovers of the 1940s had a combined petrol/oil level gauge on the dash, where the driver pressed a button to show the oil level – but at least they had a dipstick, too. The Discovery 4 doesn't have a dipstick and I hate that. If I'm setting off on a long drive to, say, Birmingham, I want to be able to quickly check the level before I leave. And ten minutes at a service station is barely

enough for a pee and a cup of coffee; take much longer and the oil will have gone cold again!

That said, my Discovery 3s and 4s have been perfect, and I rarely need to add any oil between yearly services. The service interval is 15,000 miles but in a year I'll typically cover 12,000-15,000, so that works out well. I replace my vehicles every three years and I'm about to trade in my current 4. Ideally I'd replace it with another one, because the best cars to buy are always the last of line: they're highly specced to get them sold and the earlier bugs have all been ironed out!

I've always liked Discoverys or Range Rovers as everyday cars and I've owned quite a few over the years. There was the early Discovery 2 Td5 automatic, for example, which I bought after I broke my ankle. I was loading a WW2 Diamond T truck onto a low-loader, and because it

Clockwise from facing page:
Philip used to commute to work near
Heathrow in this 101 with powered trailer;
Discovery 4 makes a great tow vehicle
...but you can only check the oil via the
dashboard display; Philip's old V8 SIIA



hadn't run for a while the easiest way to move it was to pipe diesel to the engine from a jerry can on the wing. As I drove the truck onto the low-loader I didn't notice fuel sloshing out of the can and onto the running board, so the moment I stepped out of the cab I slipped on the diesel and fell eight feet to the ground. Sod's law, there was a ratchet strap just where I landed...

That Td5 was unusual for me in being an automatic, but these days I much prefer an auto to a manual 'box. I've been running around in an early Freelander recently and it doesn't half seem like a chore having to shift the gears myself! The automatic Discovery replaced another Discovery 2 that was a V8 manual, an early company demonstrator registered S656 LJW. I do like to have vehicles with some factory history and I still regret trading in my 30th Anniversary P38A Range Rover, which I sold to buy a new Discovery. The 30th Anniversary was a lovely car, one from the press fleet.

Of course, I've not spent all my life swanning around in high-end luxury 4x4s. I passed my driving test in 1977 in a 1955 Series I 86, and that was my transport for college in the late 1970s when I was doing my City & Guilds. Back then it was deeply uncool to be seen driving an old Landy and I often had the mickey taken out of me by fellow students in their Minis and Escorts ("Why are you driving around in that old tractor?"). Apart from replacing the Station Wagon hard top with a truck cab, I left it standard; at least, it was standard until I put a Rover P5 straight-six engine in it... But we used to do that kind of thing back then.

I mentioned last month the Series II 109 with an Austin Champ engine that I had for a while. That was converted by a friend - but I have to take responsibility for the V8-powered Series IIA 88 [pictured top right], into which I also fitted a full-width walnut dash out of a Jaguar XJ6! I just liked the row of XJ6 rocker switches. That 88 also had Rostyle wheels and I thought it was the mutt's

nuts. PBM 22, where are you now?

Actually, I know where PBM 22 is - at least, the registration, if not the Land Rover. Someone on the Series One Club forum mentioned a very useful website, www.ukvehicle.com, which will tell you the current status of any registration. Typing in PBM 22 reveals that it's now on a white 2011 Volvo XC70. But what's really useful is that it also tells you the vehicle's previous registration - the Volvo was originally registered SJ61 UAT - and that's incredibly helpful if you spot something that could potentially be a factory vehicle and has had a cherished number put on it

"Hercules had been used in the Bond film The Living Daylights"

to disguise its age. That's very common with, for example, CVC-registered P38As. Dunsfold's 1994 police demonstrator, M774 CVC, was later registered TWV 440 and was therefore unknown to the CVC Register; only a chance call from a particularly switched-on scrappy saved it from being crushed.

Updating Range Rovers to make them look younger than they really are has been going on since at least the late 1970s, and I'm as guilty as anyone. Back in the day I owned a Masai Red 1971 three-door, EMH 970J, and of course the first thing I did was rip out those old-fashioned vinyl seats and vinyl floor coverings and put in fabric seats and carpet... As I say, that's what you did then. Incidentally, www.ukvehicle.com comes up with a message for EMH 970J that 'this registration may be available', which means that the vehicle almost

certainly no longer exists. I'm not surprised; it was pretty rank when I had it.

Before coming back into the family business at Dunsfold Land Rovers in 1987, I had a number of other jobs. The one I enjoyed most was working for Richard Beddall, who had a business near Heathrow dealing in military spares and Land Rovers. For a while I commuted from Cranleigh to Heathrow in a 101 with powered trailer - well, I'd usually leave the trailer at home, but occasionally I'd hook it up. The fuel consumption was horrendous, as you would expect, so towards the end of my time at Richard's I ran something more sensible... a 90 V8, nicknamed Hercules.

The reason for the name was that Hercules had been used in the Bond film *The Living Daylights*, where a Land Rover is seen driving into the back of a moving Hercules transport aircraft as it is taking off. The film makers bought three brand-new 90 V8s and disguised them as Russian-style jeeps by riveting on corrugated panels over the wings, and fitting a roll bar. The reason they wanted V8s was because they had to be capable of keeping up with the Hercules as it was taxiing down the runway.

Richard bought all three 90s after filming and I bought one of them from Richard. It had been used for a stunt that involved driving through a brick wall, so it had a broken front axle casing and a bent wing, but I fixed it up and ran it for quite a few years. The bodywork was full of holes so it didn't look very presentable, and I eventually camo'd it up and turned it into a military soft-top 90 lookalike on a Q registration. I think it's still around.

These are just a few of the many Land Rovers I've had over the years. I've had some cars, too - but I don't like them. Nothing suits me as well as a Land Rover.

■ DUNSFOLD COLLECTION is not yet open to the public, but is hoping to establish a permanent museum. You can help make that a reality by becoming a Friend of the Collection for an annual subscription of £35.