

DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



It's a busy few weeks for Philip as he prepares Dunsfold Collection vehicles for several events

It's Show Time!

TO SAY that things have been a little crazy over the last few weeks down at the Collection would be an understatement. No sooner had I got back from the big Land Rover 70th birthday bash in Cooma, Western Australia, than I was asked if I would lend some Dunsfold vehicles to JLR for its own 70th celebratory day. They requested 11 Land Rovers, all of which had to be road-legal so that they could be driven by journalists like LRM's Patrick Cruywagen on a convoy from Solihull to JLR Classic Works at Ryton.

Because I'd no idea of how experienced some of the journos would be, for these convoy vehicles I tried to pick examples that would be user-friendly. Among the earliest were our 1954 107-inch pick-up and 1956 SWB Station Wagon (above) as well as a couple of P38 Range Rovers, a Holland and Holland special edition and the last one that came off the line. I had to move several more P38s and I'm pleased to say they all worked.

JLR had also requested five vehicles for

static display, and I had three weeks to get them all ready. For the convoy vehicles, I started by draining off any old fuel and filling the tanks with fresh. As I've said before, modern fuel causes a lot of problems in vehicles that aren't driven every week. The bio content in today's diesel causes mushrooms to form in the tank – nasty bits of slime that block sediment filters and pumps.

I had this problem with our 1966 Series IIB Forward Control, production vehicle number one. It started and ran fine, but when it was being driven onto the transporter, the change of angle to the fuel tank meant that all the rubbish that had formed on the walls of the tank got swirled around in the fuel. Once it was on display at Classic Works, it refused to start again. Fortunately, because it was only needed as a static exhibit, that wasn't a problem. I would have happily drained the tank there and then but I wasn't allowed to – diesel is slippery stuff, so I guess there was a Health and Safety issue about getting it on the shiny tiled

floor at Classic Works.

I will definitely be looking into acquiring a big drum of special storage fuel to put into Collection vehicles. The irony is that we have some prototypes from the 1990s that still have original diesel in their tanks because they've done zero miles, and they will always start and run because they have proper fuel in them.

On the subject of getting vehicles started, someone asked me the other day whether I have trouble keeping track of all the different batteries that are needed for different types of Land Rover. My answer was, "no – a battery is a battery!" But there are a couple of instances where that's not true. You need to have batteries with the terminals in the right positions for a Freelander or a P38, because otherwise the cables won't reach. That reminds me, I must find a nice example of a very early Freelander for the Collection. We have a few, but none that is in tip-top condition, and it would be good to have one for ride-and-drive events.

Loading up each transporter to take the



Pre-pro Discovery, Darien Gap Range Rover and Forest Rover all loaded up for JLR's 70th



First outing for this police Range will be at Legends



'Green Wings', the 1976 prototype One Ten coiler, at Gaydon

vehicles to Solihull and Ryton took about an hour, because – as you can see from the picture at the top of this page – the Land Rovers have to be carefully positioned according to their relative sizes. And four lorries were needed to get them all up there! Fortunately, I can rely on the drivers to do the loading and unloading themselves, though I have to show the younger ones how a choke works on a petrol engine, or point out that with an old diesel you really do have to wait 30 seconds for the glow plugs to heat up or it won't start – today's generation just don't know how things used to be.

The good news is that every vehicle on the convoy run behaved itself, including the one that's done the least miles – the polished alloy 1998 Defender 90. It was built as an exhibition vehicle and it still has fewer than 300 kilometres on the clock, so it literally drives like a brand-new car. The alloy panels were lacquered to protect them and the lacquer is just starting to show signs of age, so I need to

decide what to do about that. Maybe I should embrace the modern world and have the whole thing shrink-wrapped in alloy-finish plastic film.

Once the JLR event was over, I had a fortnight's breathing space before the Gaydon Land Rover Show, held in front of the British Motor Museum. This was a much less stressful affair for me because it only involved taking up two vehicles. I towed up 'Green Wings', our 1976 prototype coil-sprung One Ten, behind 'Goldilocks', the 1998 Fifty 50 Challenge expedition Wolf 110. Goldilocks has a roof tent so it's very useful for camping in at shows, and I always sleep well up there – although negotiating the ladder is becoming a challenge in itself for my wobbly ankles and knees!

Next weekend, as I write, I'll be back at JLR Classic Works for a get-together by the Defender 50th Register, to mark 20 years since these vehicles were launched. The 50th Register are great supporters of the Dunsfold Collection and made a very generous financial donation towards the

upkeep of the polished alloy 90, so the least I can do is put her on a trailer and take her up there.

Then, of course, it's the Land Rover Legends show at Bicester Heritage on May 26-27. We're very excited about this new event because it promises to be a real showcase for the most historic and interesting Land Rovers, not to mention the most historic and interesting owners! There will be several Collection vehicles on show, and it will be the first outing for our latest acquisition – the ex-Cheshire Police L322 Range Rover, pictured above left, which is still complete with all its kit.

After Legends, I'll be left with just one problem – what to do with all the fuel that was put into the tanks for JLR's 70th.

THE 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. Visit dunsfoldcollection.co.uk to find out more.