

DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



Out and About

After supporting the Land Rover Legends, Philip enjoys time out with Friends of the Series One



The Collection's 1956 86-inch is no stranger to trips abroad

IT'S BEEN a busy few months for the Collection, preparing vehicles for several major 70th anniversary events. At the end of May we were part of the all-new Land Rover Legends show at Bicester Heritage, and we had 13 vehicles to load onto the three covered articulated lorries that the organisers kindly arranged. Nothing's ever simple, though, and to fit all the vehicles in I had to drop the tyre pressures on two of the bigger cars, which meant taking extra care with the loading. Rolling a tyre off a rim would not have been helpful.

Once the last truck was ready, I set off with the final Land Rover on a trailer and then had to deal with the unloading and

the final preparation and cleaning of the vehicles ready for the show weekend. We really couldn't manage these events without the generous help of our dedicated team of volunteers, and I'm always really grateful for their support.

The show was very different from the other major Land Rover events, and the old RAF Bicester Aerodrome is a stunning location. It was a rare treat to be able to display our vehicles indoors as well, and the huge hangar also meant that the various parades and the discussion sessions relating to the four 'Star Cars' on display could also be held inside.

I was really pleased that the show organisers chose our record-breaking

Beaver Bullet Range Rover as one of these 'Star Cars'. This car has always been one of my Collection favourites, but since the full story of the record-breaking attempt appeared in LRM I now see the car in a new light. Four members of the 1986 Bullet team attended the show over the weekend and were interviewed by celebrity petrolhead Mark Evans about their experiences. A Land Rover really comes to life when you have the stories from the people that have been involved with it, owned it, and done things with it, over the years.

The sun shone and there was a great turnout from the national clubs, and everyone I spoke to thought it was a superb event that should go from strength to strength. The good news is that it will be repeated next year, and the Collection has already been invited to support it again.

With Legends out of the way, though, and the next major event in the Collection calendar not scheduled until the middle of July, I decided to have some me time! And the timing was perfect, because one of my favourite Land Rover jaunts was scheduled for early June.

Known as the 'Friends of the Series One', it's a privately-organised, low-key event that's arranged by a different person every year. This year was the rally's 20th



The Bastogne Barracks honours the Battle of the Bulge



Phil was in high demand at the Legends event



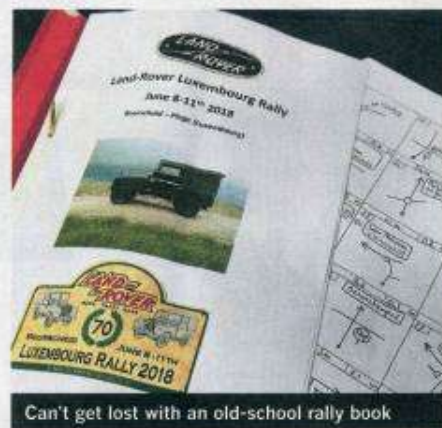
Phil's three passions in one picture



The Centre Steer replica always attracts attention



The Houben family drove three beauties to the Luxembourg gathering



Can't get lost with an old-school rally book

anniversary and the well-known Houben family from the Netherlands had kindly set it all up.

The rally base this year was to be the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, so I planned a gentle trip across using the Calais ferry and an initial overnight stop at Ghent. I've done this event many times and in the past have tended to use our 1954 107-inch, but since last year I've taken the 1956 two-and-a-quarter 86-inch. It's a very interesting and popular vehicle, and having restored it from the ground up I do feel very attached to it. But once we'd researched its history and met the wife and son of its late long-term owner, I saw it in a whole new light. There's no doubt that great history, amazing stories and wonderful period photos change the way you see a car!

Several other regulars came from the UK and we met some from Belgium and the Netherlands on the way. It total we had 18 vehicles and around 50 people this year. The emphasis is on good

company, relaxed driving and convivial evenings. The only vaguely competitive element is the evening quiz, which always raises a few laughs with its tongue-in-cheek questions based on the goings-on of the rally... Best you don't ask, really!

This year we had four participants who have attended every single one of the 20 events, which is quite something. I've been racking my brains trying to remember how many I've done, and I think it's 18 in total.

Overall, I drove 1000 miles at this year's event, which included the meanderings around Luxembourg, but these local runs-out were never really more than 70 miles a day and there were plenty of sightseeing stops and leisurely coffee breaks. Thankfully, the Station Wagon behaved itself after the repairs I had to make last year, when I traced a persistent problem to a faulty Chinese-made regulator that was trashing the coil and the electronic ignition system.

One of the highlights for me was our

visit to Bastogne Barracks, which is a museum dedicated to the Second World War and in particular to the Battle of the Bulge. They have an extremely impressive display of armoured vehicles, and as the one-time owner of several of these I'm always happy to look at tanks!

Next year, the rally will probably be located in the Cotswolds so one of the Brits will take on the detailed planning. The rally base will be convenient for our continental friends, which means it will be more or less on my doorstep, and that means it won't feel quite as exotic and exciting as it does when it kicks-off with the Channel crossing, but I'm still planning to attend.

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.