

# DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



Philip has been trying to buy this vehicle for years – now he owns it



A week before the Series One Club's celebration in Anglesey, Philip gets himself some new wheels

## Impulse buy

**T**HE ONE downside to this year being Land Rover's 70th anniversary is that there are just so many events going on. So I was almost relieved when an appointment to bring one of the Dunsfold Collection's Freelanders up to Solihull, for the Land Rover Fest that was being held throughout the town in late June, was cancelled at short notice. It meant I could go to the Series One Club's annual rally at Red Wharf Bay, and I could take my latest purchase – a really original and beautifully-preserved 80 inch.

It has long been my dream vehicle. I'd known about it for 11 years and I'd always told the owner that I would like to buy it, should he ever decide to sell. Then, at the recent Land Rover Legends show at Bicester Heritage – yet another event – he came up to me and said, "do you remember TFO? Well, I'm making some changes and I've decided it's time to let it go. Are you still interested in it?"

Without hesitation, I bought it sight-unseen. It cost me a lot of money but it is a truly stunning 1952 80 inch, with original paint. It was registered new on July 3, 1952, as JAM 377 by Burridges Motors in Chippenham to a Mr W Pike, who kept it until 1989. The next owner had it until 1996; it had another change of hands in '97 and one more in '98. One of those later keepers nicked the original number, which is why it's now TFO 252. Then the guy I bought it from acquired it in 2003. JAM 377 was last seen on a Range Rover Classic at the Sodbury Sort-Out. If the owner happens to be reading this, I would love to buy it back.

I had to pick up the 80 inch from Bristol, so a week before the Series One Club rally I took the van and trailer over there. Then I drove around the corner to Minehead, where the All-Wheel Drive Club was holding its 50th Anniversary party (yes, another event) that had been organised by Richard Beddall. I unloaded

it before the evening do, had a few beers, slept in the van and came back on the Sunday. So, literally from the day I picked it up, the 80 inch was being shown. Incidentally, the factory registration LUE 599 on my trailer, pictured top right, came off a 1952 80 inch that my dad used to own. Sadly, the one time he launched the boat that it's towing in the black-and-white photo, salt got into the chassis and I ended up scrapping it 30 years later.

During the week following my trip to the West Country I tidied-up a few of the non-original features that TFO had acquired down the years. I ripped off the horrible aftermarket flashers that were bolted under the front bumper and rear crossmember – I've always hated those – and combined the flashers into the front sidelights and rear lights. It did have trafficators as built, but the last owner took them off, and I'm hoping I may yet be able to reinstate them. I put a new-old-stock period coil on it, and a wing mirror.





Works reg LUE 599 on Philip's trailer used to be on his dad's 1952 80 inch



Just as we like to find 'em - TFO's engine bay



This 80-inch at Anglesey was from Belgium

## “Andrew and I both had the same idea: why don't we take TFO on the road run?”

In my store room was a genuine, new-old-stock 80 inch hood from the 1960s, which I'd been saving for an occasion just like this. The mice have had a go at it, and it has the odd stain, but that made it spot-on for a survivor vehicle like this.

Yes, TFO has had a few less-than-perfect repairs in its time. The bulkhead has been patched, but the repairs have aged-down now and I can't do much about them without affecting the patina of the vehicle. I think the first owner – who used it on a farm – must have been a bee-keeper, because the rear tub shows nothing more than a few scuff-marks to the floor, as though someone has been moving boxes in and out. Certainly the interior is in remarkable condition, and you could eat your dinner off the seat-boxes and inner panels. The only black mark is that an overdrive has been fitted.

Now, don't get me wrong – I've got nothing against overdrives, and I wouldn't like to make a long trip without one, but

you don't need to be moving them in and out all the time. Leave the overdrive in for normal motoring, and only take it out when you're off-roading or in the mountains. If you conceal the operating lever beneath the PTO access panel in the seatbox, you don't have to cut an ugly hole in the transmission tunnel.

I didn't have time to drive TFO before putting it on a trailer and taking it straight up to Anglesey, a place I've never been to before, where I parked it on the stall that I was sharing with Andrew Bullas of Windmill Land Rovers to sell a few bits and pieces. Andrew and I looked at each other, and both had the same idea: TFO is taxed, it's MoT-exempt (don't get me started on that dreadful idea), so why don't we take it on the road run?

Accordingly, we drove TFO to the beach at Red Wharf Bay, where it formed part of the amazing drawing on the sand that was made up of hundreds of Series Is. We did maybe 40 miles in it, which is

more than it's done in a long time, and it was a cracking little drive – probably done it the world of good! The vehicle has never been apart (other than the front wings being taken off for the bulkhead repairs) and it has its original engine, gearbox and axles, so the oil seals are tired, but it all still works.

In a year packed with great events, the Series One Club rally was a highlight. Johan Rutgeerts' early 80 inch (above) stood out for its superb restoration, but at the other end of the spectrum TFO 252 did me proud by taking the award for Most Original Vehicle! That was the perfect end to a great weekend.

**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](http://dunsfoldcollection.co.uk) to find out more.

