

DUNSFOLD DIARIES

With Philip Bashall



A week in the country

Philip has been away on his annual holiday - to a rather special field in Kent



War and Peace Revival attracted 50 Lightweights

MOST PEOPLE like to go abroad for their annual holiday, perhaps to lie on a beach and drink cocktails while reading a trashy novel. But every July you'll find me in the same place I've been going for decades: a caravan in a field in Kent.

It's not a particularly peaceful location, I'll admit. That's because I'm surrounded by literally thousands of military vehicles, and tens of thousands of military vehicle enthusiasts. Yes, the War and Peace Revival is my annual holiday. I go there to enjoy copious amounts of laughter, alcohol and banter - and more than a few Land Rovers, of course.

While there are military vehicles of every age, every type and from every corner of the globe at War and Peace, it would look distinctly thin without the huge Land Rover contingent that arrives every year. The Military Lightweight Club alone had 50 Lightweights take part, to

celebrate the model's 50th Anniversary, and one of their members won the award for Best Light Vehicle. Another that caught my eye was Barry Pocock's full-fat V8-powered SAS 110 (pictured on the right) - not least because it pulled up in front of my trade stand; I barely found time to walk the show this year.

Aside from four years at Folkestone Racecourse in 2013-2016, the War and Peace Revival has been held in Paddock Wood, Kent, for more than 30 years, and I've been going there since it started. After all, I've been on the military vehicle scene since 1968, so I know a lot of people! I spend at least a week there and it's a great opportunity to catch up with old friends, to sell some stuff and to promote the Dunsfold Collection.

The show has grown over the years from one field, to two, to five, to ten... It's a huge event, but I hardly saw any of it this year because I spent so much time talking to people on my stall. Having a

pitch at War and Peace is not so much about making money on parts, as far as I'm concerned - punters are always after a bargain at a show - and, likewise, I didn't buy anything super-rare this year, although I did pick up a cylinder head, a rare 4x2 Land Rover parts manual and a load of military-surplus Wolf headlights.

No, for me it's a social occasion more than anything else. People come over to ask me questions about military Land Rovers, and nine times out of ten I'm able to help, although I don't bring over any reference books.

What I do bring, though, is a couple of vehicles from the Collection. This year I chose our Wolf 90 piggyback and the 110 Wolf prototype. The 90, registered R56 ABY, is called a piggyback because it was modified so that two vehicles could be stacked on a pallet for air-drop. Ricardo did the work, which involved making the tops of the rear wings detachable so that another vehicle could be placed on top.



Russian truck undergoes repair at Philip's stall



Philip took 110 proto and 90 'piggyback' to W&P



When reassembled, the wing tops are secured with clasps and sliding bolts, and the seat belts and roll-cage with R-clips and over-centre pins, respectively. All very quick and easy.

Legend has it that this 90 was used by a base commander, and one night it was taken for a joyride by a squaddie and subsequently rolled. Needless to say, the base commander wasn't best pleased, and the vehicle was damaged just enough to make it an uneconomic repair. But an enthusiast saved it and restored it, and then a friend of the Collection bought it. It's a rare vehicle, being number 18 of only 25 that were converted.

The 110 prototype, M461 KAC, is also very rare, one of ten vehicles built for military trials and the only one to be fitted with a high-roof alloy hardtop. Later in life



Barry Pocock's serious-looking ex-SAS V8 110

it was used as a data collection vehicle and fitted with special axles with all kinds of sensors, which relayed the information from different driving conditions to a computer inside. The data was then downloaded to a test rig at the factory, so that prototype vehicles could be put through lots of simulated driving without ever having to go out on the road.

When Land Rover needed to do some testing in Eastern Europe in the early 2000s, it transferred those special axles to a white 110 Wolf – which is also in the Dunsfold Collection – because a NATO Green Land Rover might have looked a little provocative in certain territories. The white Wolf was even decked out with alloy wheels and side stripes to make it appear civilian, but we're restoring it to the way it was originally built.

Not surprisingly, 90s and 110s are the most common Land Rovers to be seen at War and Peace, although you do find the odd Series vehicle. In fact, I was able to help out the owner of a Series IIA who had someone reverse into his front wing

in a car park on the way to the show. I managed to find a green wing among my stock, brought it along and he fitted it there and then.

A lot of people dress up in military uniform for War and Peace, although my view is that you go to a dog show to look at the dogs, not the owners! But I guess it's all part of the pageantry. The difficulty comes in deciding where you draw the line. Dressing up as an ordinary WW2 German soldier may be acceptable, but what about as a member of the SS? I find that a bit near-the-knuckle. However, you have to admire the spirit of the Japanese guy who comes every year in WW2 uniform – whenever you meet him, he throws his hands up in mock-surrender!

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.