

DUNSFOLD DIARIES

WITH PHILIP BASHALL



“Ah, Bicester!”

As the Land Rover Legends show approaches, Philip is busy prepping vehicles

THIS YEAR marks only the second running of the Land Rover Legends show at Bicester Heritage, but it's already become one of my favourite events. Regular readers will know that I like my military vehicles, and one of the reasons I love Bicester Heritage is because it's a beautifully-restored former RAF airbase. What's more, because it was founded during World War One, the old 1920s and '30s buildings are now surrounded by mature trees, which make it so much more pleasant than the bleak showgrounds that usually host Land Rover events.

Normally the Dunsfold Collection would be staging its traditional biennial Open Day in 2019, but what began as 'Philip's birthday party in his back yard' with just a

couple of dozen vehicles had become so unwieldy that I'm more than happy for the Collection to be supporting 'Legends' on the weekend of May 25-26. Instead of getting 150-plus vehicles out, we're whittling the choice down to a carefully-chosen selection of just 15, which will make my life so much easier in terms of preparation – I'm not getting any younger!

The Dunsfold Collection is therefore supporting four significant gatherings of vehicles. They include a celebration of the 100in prototypes (whose story I outlined in LRM's February issue) and also a veritable squadron of ex-SAS Land Rovers, probably the biggest number of SAS vehicles ever in one place at the same time – and that includes the base at Hereford, which wouldn't have had many all on station at once. We're hoping to get two Series Is, 18 Series IIAs and six II0s

together, thanks to the efforts of the Pink Panther Group and some of my military contacts. Which seems an appropriate moment to acknowledge the huge amount of unpaid work that a lot of enthusiasts are doing to make Legends happen – not least by the Stage Two Register, which is co-ordinating the get-together of 100ins.

I drove BAC 779T, our 100in V8 truck cab, up to Bicester to publicise the Collection a few weeks ago, where it was on display (above) with Gary Pusey's 1970 Range Rover Velar and Richard Beddall's pre-production Discovery 3. BAC 779T has recently been put back to its original left-hand drive, and the trip to Bicester was its first long journey in many a year. All I did to prepare it was give it a quick look over on the morning of the day before, and then fit electronic ignition in the afternoon (I always use Pertronix kits),



Philip has been busy repairing the wheelarch extensions on this four-door 100in prototype



Dunsfold's two 'Pink Panthers' will be joining an unprecedented line-up of ex-SAS Land Rovers

after which it went like a bird – or maybe a gannet would be more accurate, from the amount of fuel it drinks!

Of course, this year also marks the 30th anniversary of the Discovery and the 25th anniversary of the P38A Range Rover. Dunsfold is very fortunate to have the oldest and the youngest examples of both these models, and all four vehicles will be on display at Land Rover Legends. Our prototype P38A, which is the oldest survivor, normally starts first time however long it's been left, but this year it gave me some grief – as did our two SAS 110s – and, inevitably, the problems were due to the poor quality of modern fuel.

Both the 110s would start, but then wouldn't run cleanly, and taking the float chamber apart revealed a right mess, as you can see in the picture above. Under a white crystalline deposit was a layer of

brown varnish covering everything, including the needle valves. The P38A, meanwhile, would only fire on Easy Start, and then die. In this case it was the fuel pump that was gummed-up.

To change the fuel pump I had to drop the tank, which did at least reveal some interesting markings on the top: a date of 23 July 1993, more than 14 months ahead of the P38A's launch in late September 1994, and the identifier 'No.4'. But I've learned my lesson, and I'm going to be adding Miller's Tank Safe additive from now on when putting vehicles away.

Aside from these mechanical troubles, I've also been tidying up a few cosmetics. Undercover Covers is making a new custom hood for our four-door 100in crew cab, LGH 512T, to suit the correct 'Swiss-spec' tall windscreen it's now been fitted with, and I'm busy modifying some



Prototype P38A Range Rover tank is dated 1993



SAS 110s both had carbs gummed up by bad fuel



Canvas disguise for P38A is a unique survivor

wheelarch flares to replace the damaged ones on our four-door 100in hard top, EVC 12T – you can see in the photo, above left, how perished they've become.

Fingers crossed, everything is now good to go, and I'm looking forward to a fabulous show. Besides the superb variety of vehicles, there'll also be interviews by TV celeb and Land Rover enthusiast Mark Evans with many key people who worked on or were associated with them back in the day. Might that include any tough-looking characters from Hereford? We'll have to wait and see!

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 see more.