

DUNSFOLD DIARIES

WITH PHILIP BASHALL



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.



It's goodbye from me

After penning 68 Dunsfold Diary entries, Philip is signing off - for the time being

A little over six years ago, former LRM editor Dave Phillips asked me if I'd consider writing a monthly column for this magazine. I wasn't sure about it at the time; how could I possibly find something to talk about every month? But I was persuaded that it would be good publicity for the Dunsfold Collection, and I thought it might be worth doing for a year or so, maybe two years, tops.

And now here we are, 68 columns later. When I wrote the first Dunsfold Diary, the Collection had not yet achieved charitable status — that happened in time for column number three — and it had about 130 vehicles; now we're up to 150. But I've

decided it's time to call it a day on the Diaries. The Dunsfold Collection will carry on, but I'm hanging up my workshop Biro.

It's been an eventful six years. In January 2016, I watched the last of the old-style Defenders come off the production line at Solihull, and as I write now the first of the new Defenders are on the road in the hands of JLR managers and engineers. How long will it be before new Land Rovers are all powered by electricity? I hope that my Range Rover's armchair seats will see me out — electric vehicles just don't float my boat.

The reason I agreed to put together Dunsfold Diaries in the first place, I freely admit, is in the hope that it would drum up some funding for the Collection. I'm convinced that people think that, because

I'm always buying vehicles, I'm made of money and the Collection doesn't need funding from elsewhere. Or they think we are bankrolled by JLR. But that couldn't be further from the truth.

Here's the reality of the situation. The Collection is made up of vehicles owned by the charitable trust but also a number that are on loan to us. Many of these loan vehicles have been offered to the Collection because their owners have no room to display or store them, and if the Collection didn't take them in there's every likelihood they'd be scrapped. Some of them, such as the camouflaged prototypes, cannot be sold to the public so the options for preserving these are very limited indeed. That's why we step in, because we think they are important parts of



The Dunsfold Collection often hires vehicles to JLR for media events such as the Goodwood Revival

Land Rover's rich and unique history and must be saved.

The trouble is, none of these vehicles come with what you might call a dowry. In other words, the costs of storage, insurance and maintenance for them, together with the ones that are actually owned by the charitable trust, have to be met by the Collection.

A number of other vehicles are loaned to the Collection by private owners, including the trustees, but all the costs of storage, insurance and maintenance for these vehicles are met in full by their owners. The reason why many of these privately owned vehicles are so important to the Collection is that they are the ones that are of interest to businesses who will hire them for things like film work. JLR also hires vehicles from the Collection from time to time, for press events and the like. These 'earners' are able to contribute to the costs of preserving the vehicles that are never going to earn money to cover their upkeep.

Besides hiring out its vehicles, the Collection also tries to raise money by inviting Land Rover enthusiasts to become Friends of the Collection and by inviting people to make donations. We also have our Wall of Fame on our website, which recognises people who make significant donations or take out lifetime Friends membership. That's why the support of individual Land Rover fans is so important.

However, I'm convinced that for the Collection to flourish, it needs a proper

museum to show people what we're all about and to attract visitors. As I wrote in LRM's February 2015 issue: "My 'fantasy museum' would contain diorama displays for key vehicles — imagine a Darien Gap Range Rover in a mocked-up section of jungle, or a Pink Panther SAS Land Rover under a camo net on a patch of desert..."

Such a museum could also serve as a venue for club events. I could envisage, say, the Series II Club hosting a meet, where historic Series IIs from the Collection were on display; where talks were given or practical workshops held on technical subjects, and drive-outs made into the surrounding countryside. And then there's our vast archive of Land Rover documents, photos, brochures and memorabilia. None of that is easily accessible to visitors at the moment.

One of the rewards of writing these Dunsfold Diaries has been the previously unseen photographs that have come out of the woodwork. Sometimes we are bequeathed collections when enthusiasts pass away, although of course documents and photos also cost money to store and look after. I believe that some museums have a policy now of not accepting bequests of material unless a financial legacy is part of the package, but how do you tell a grieving widow that she will have to pay thousands of pounds to have her late husband's collection taken care of? That just seems wrong to me.

You might be wondering why we don't pursue crowdfunding or a National Lottery



The beginning: young Philip (red coat) and family



...and a kind of end; 2016 on the old Defender line

grant instead. The problem here is that it's a chicken-and-egg situation: you need something that already exists on which to base your application — yet without having the money to get that established, you can't ask for more to develop it.

The second problem is that none of the trustees are professional fundraisers. LRM contributor Gary Pusey produces our Newsletter and runs our website, Richard Beddall (who has been involved with the Collection since the 1970s) is a well-respected figurehead, and I'm basically the spanner man. Is there a professional fundraiser out there who'd be willing to come onboard?

None of the trustees is paid by the Collection, of course, and we're lucky to have an incredibly loyal band of supporters. I know that in an emergency I can pick up the phone and rely on a core of volunteers to come over and lend a hand. Occasionally we'll get together a working party, maybe to pull all the vehicles out of a particular shed and give them a good wash and brush up.

In terms of numbers of vehicles, I don't think the Collection needs to expand much more now, although there's scope to fine-tune it. In the long term, its future is secure, because all my vehicles and property have been left to it in my will. When I die, the Collection gets the lot. Until then, however, it desperately needs money to keep it going. After all, we're not a bloomin' charity — even though we actually are!



At present, vehicles have to be stored in big sheds



Dunsfold does its best to get them out on display



Forest Rover is one of Dunsfold's star attractions