

REDWING JOINS DUNSFOLD

When the National Brewery Heritage Trust needed to find a new home for its Land Rover fire appliances, it chose the Dunsfold Collection

LRM CLASSICS

I confess that I have a perpetual soft-spot for Land Rover fire trucks. I've written about a few in these pages over the years, and I know that LRM's Art Editor, Sam, likes a big red fire engine to brighten the pages of the magazine, so no apologies for writing about another one.

This is a 1963 Series IIA 109in Carmichael Redwing FT/2. The records at the BMIHT show that the base vehicle, painted red and with chassis number 25205794, was despatched to 'Carmichael, Butler, Wolverhampton' on 3 July 1963. This was a reference to Carmichael & Sons Ltd of Worcester, which completed its conversion work before delivering it to its new owner, referred to in the despatch notes as 'Butler'. It was registered 753 DDA in August 1963.

The vehicle now lives at Dunsfold, and how it came to be there is an interesting story in itself. Late last year, Dunsfold's Philip Bashall received an email from Laura Waters, the Collections Officer of the National Brewery Heritage Trust

Limited, a charity that is dedicated to protecting and preserving Britain's brewing heritage. This began life as the Bass Museum, which opened



1963 Redwing FT/2 served all its operational life at the Springfield Brewery in Wolverhampton



Bonnet-mounted hoses were standard on early Land Rover fire tenders



Super-rare Ajax ladder is not in great shape



Equipment storage in lockers either side of the rear tub and hose reel

in 1977 to celebrate the bicentenary of the founding of that company.

Following a change of ownership in 2003, the museum was renamed the Coors Visitor Centre, and when plans were announced to close the centre in 2008, a group of volunteers came together in support and examined options to keep it open. The group became the National Brewery Heritage Trust and was registered as a charity in July 2012. It was open to the public for ten years before the decision was taken to close the doors in 2022.

Laura explained that she was working with the National Brewery Heritage Trust and the Molson Coors Beverage Company to inventory and relocate the collections from the former National Brewery Centre, previously known as the Coors Visitors Centre, and before that the Bass Museum in Burton-upon-Trent, following its closure in 2022. It turned out that the site is going to be developed and repurposed by owner Molson Coors, and Laura had been tasked with finding a new home for certain items in the National Brewery Heritage Trust collection.

Among the things that needed to be rehoused were two Land Rover fire appliances, both of which had served their entire careers in breweries in Smethwick and Wolverhampton respectively. You might think the easiest and quickest solution would have been to put them both up for sale, and in one sense you would be right, but Laura and her Board of Trustees wanted to find a new homes that would continue to allow the vehicles to be preserved, displayed and enjoyed by the wider public.

The trustees of the National Brewery Heritage Trust had therefore decided to try to send the vehicles to two different museum collections, and Philip was very pleased to learn that they had concluded that the Dunsfold Collection would be the ideal home for one of them, if the museum wanted it, of course.

Dunsfold's board deliberated for a nanosecond



Pump mounted on rear crossmember with controls alongside



Redwing FT/2 was stored at Molson Coors in Burton-upon-Trent



Theresa Holden of Molson Coors hands over the trailer

and decided to request the 1963 Series IIA Redwing FT/2, registration 753 DDA, that had been allocated when new to the famous Mitchell's & Butler's Springfield Brewery in Wolverhampton, where it apparently served until around 1991 when the brewery closed. Included with it was a rare and interesting Sigmund trailer-mounted auxiliary pump which is believed to have served alongside the 109 at the brewery. Dunsfold's choice was approved by the trustees of the National Brewery Heritage Trust, and both the Series IIA and the Sigmund trailer were gifted to the Dunsfold Collection.

Laura and her colleague at Moors Colson, Theresa Holden, stressed the importance of prompt collection, and when Dunsfold volunteer Rick Watts said he would be in the Burton area on business fairly shortly, he was quickly persuaded to take a trailer with him, and that is how the Sigmund pump arrived at Dunsfold. Not long afterwards, Philip made a dedicated journey himself to collect the Series IIA, and it was reunited with its trailer at Dunsfold.

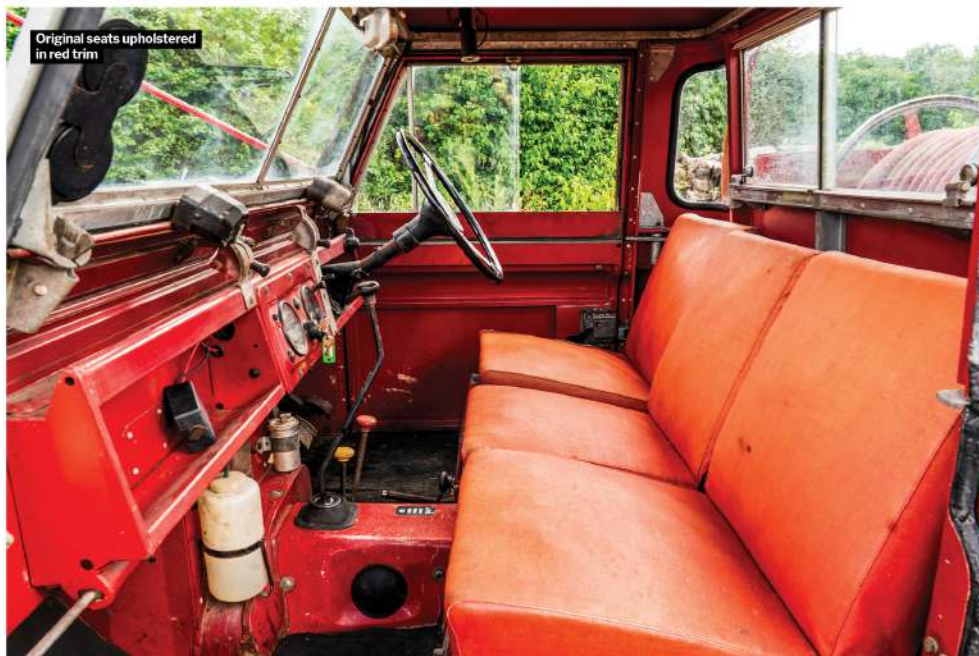
"It was obviously a non-runner, and I had to winch it onto the trailer," Philip tells me. "The drive down to Dunsfold was probably the fastest and longest journey the old girl has ever made. As is often the case with Land Rovers like this, its recorded mileage is negligible – it has just 4634 miles on the clock. That's the



Rear-facing bench seat allowed easy access to the hose reel



Redwing badge fitted at Carmichael's during the conversion work



Original seats upholstered in red trim



Main pump drive in and out connections



Two-tones and blue light were a standard upgrade when the FT/2 was in service



Redwing came with extensive equipment including this period resuscitator



Adjustable spotlight mounted on cab roof



Control panel confirms the vehicle was originally fitted with a Winkworth bell, now missing

equivalent of around 70 miles for each of the years it has been in existence.

"Once back at Dunsfold, the first thing we did was see if we could get it running. We checked everything over and had to reset the points and fit a battery, but with some fresh fuel and a tap or two on the carb top, it fired up and ran very sweetly. Amazingly, the clutch was free and the brakes worked as well.

"Assistant Curator Josh couldn't wait to get his hands on it and began by removing all the hoses, connectors, ladders and other kit, and cleaning everything. The bright red paint had faded and oxidised to a pale pink, but a day spent polishing it has brought the colour back perfectly.

"Overall, it is very original and unmolested and I asked our local expert retired fireman, Pete Edwards, to come and examine it and advise us on what's right and what's wrong, and what has been upgraded over the years as the rules have evolved. The main thing that's missing is the Winkworth chrome bell it would have had when it was new, which has been replaced with two-tones and a much later blue light. The original Ajax ladder is a very rare and hard to find item, and this one is not in great shape, but we will try to repair it at some point. For now, it's been given a coat of linseed oil and it's looking a lot better.

"We haven't yet tested the pump and we think it might be seized, but we are determined to get it working and it would be fun to display it in action at one of our museum open days. The pump and the Morris 8hp engine on the Sigmund trailer are both in working order, and we think it dates back to the early 1940s, when Sigmund had a government contract to manufacture fire pumps. The 109 has already proved to be a popular exhibit among the visitors to the Dunsfold Collection this year."



All hoses present on the Redwing and the trailer, although some repairs will be necessary before they can be used



Sigmund pump trailer powered by Morris 8hp engine probably dates from the early 1940s



Hose reels stored in lockers either side of the engine

The history of Carmichael's involvement in the design and construction of Land Rover and Range Rover-based fire appliances is interesting. The Rover Company had initially tried to promote a standard Land Rover fire appliance in the early days of Land Rover production, together with a mobile compressor vehicle and a mobile welder vehicle, all based on 80in Series I vehicles.

None achieved a great degree of sales success, and in the case of the fire appliance it became clear that part of the problem was that Rover wanted to produce a standard one-size-fits-all vehicle, while the assorted chief fire officers in the UK and overseas each had their own views regarding the specification of vehicles they wanted to procure, and who they wanted to procure them from. The reality was that Rover simply could not meet this wide range of demands in a cost-effective way.

This was one of the things that contributed



Trailer pump control panel

Looking magnificent with renovated paintwork gleaming in the sunshine



Heritage of Springfield

The Springfield Brewery opened in 1873 after William Butler and Company had outgrown its existing site at Priestfield in the southeast of Wolverhampton. Springfield had an abundance of water from natural springs, and the land had remained undeveloped because the ground was marshy. The company acquired a seven-acre site and built a new brewery with maltings, cooperage and stables.

Production started the following year. With the new brewery close to the canal and railway lines, the company began to trade outside the local area. The good communications also made the acquisition of public houses in other areas a viable proposition, especially when the Great Western Railway extended a siding into the site.

Between 1881 and 1883 a new brewing tower was constructed, enabling William Butler and Company to increase production from 400 to 1500 barrels a week. One of the beers brewed was named Springfield Bitter. Ironically, given that this story is all about the Springfield brewery fire appliance, in 2004 and 2005 arson attacks reduced the main brewery building to a blackened shell and destroyed much of the historic brewing equipment.

The old Springfield brewery site has since been redeveloped by the University of Wolverhampton and serves as the campus for the university's School of Architecture and Build Environment, which includes the National Brownfield Institute.

to the creation within the Rover Company in January 1957 of what was initially christened the Technical Sales Department, although the division was soon to be renamed Special Projects, which fell under the control of George Mackie.

Its job was to liaise with the large number of external manufacturers and specialists who wanted to use a Land Rover as the basis of a specialist vehicle of one kind or another.

Hitherto, the task of working with these specialists had been the responsibility of Rover's core engineering team, but the company's bosses had begun to realise that this was proving to be a significant task that was distracting the team from its main job, which was to develop the company's standard Land Rover vehicles, and to work with British and foreign governments on the development of approved specifications for military and para-military vehicles.

Special Projects would conduct assessments and tests on all conversions to standard Land Rover vehicles, to ensure that nothing in the conversion would be detrimental to the vehicle's operational performance. Once satisfied, Special Projects would issue what was known as a Special Projects Proprietary Approval, which meant that the converted vehicles could be sold through Land Rover approved dealers and would be covered by Land Rover's warranty scheme.

One of the earliest approved conversion schemes was actually put in place by Rover's



Sales Division, somewhat to the irritation of Special Projects boss George Mackie, when Carmichael & Sons Ltd was given an exclusive three-year contract to develop Rover-approved fire appliance conversions.

George Mackie wrote in 1981 that he 'thought this policy was a bad one - no reflection on Carmichael's - simply because fire officers tend to have their favourite manufacturers to whom they go for repeat business, and it is difficult to

persuade them to go somewhere else'. George's intention had been to approve three or four different manufacturers of fire appliances, and in due course his vision would be realised.

Astonishingly, Laura Waters contacted the Collection again in early June this year to say that despite her best efforts, the museum that accepted the other Land Rover from the National Brewery Heritage Trust had, despite numerous reminders and much chasing on Laura's part, failed to conclude the acceptance of the gift and collect the vehicle.

"Would Dunsfold be prepared to take it on?" she asked. The answer was an unequivocal yes, and that is a how a Land Rover Series III 109in Redwing FT/5 that had served at the Mitchell's & Butler's brewery at Smethwick in Birmingham, together with its pump trailer, will shortly be joining the Dunsfold Collection.

It's a development which means that in due course I may get to write about another big red Land Rover fire engine!