



Dunsfold Diaries

By Philip Bashall

FEELING CHARITABLE

It's a milestone month for Philip Bashall as the Dunsfold Collection achieves charitable status – and that's just as well, because he's been out buying more Range Rovers...

Photographs: The Dunsfold Collection

TO MISQUOTE 'JESSE' from the *Fast Show* TV series, this year I've mainly been buying P38A Range Rovers. Normally I'd acquire maybe three or four vehicles a year, but in 2014 I managed to end up with 15. I've just had to take on another storage shed purely for the Range Rovers.

I've always said that you should never buy a vehicle if you can't afford it or have nowhere to look after it properly, but of course I'm the worst offender. If I see something that needs saving, I have to have it, or at least pass it on to someone who will look after it. I'm always finding stuff on eBay or the classic car advert websites, and at the moment it seems to be interesting P38As.

For example, Julian Lamb of the CVC Register, which looks after the early factory-registered P38As, recently tipped me off about a very early example for sale down in Devon. The owner was about to part-ex it for a new Fiat for his wife, but someone had told him the significance of the CVC registration. It had been blinged up with big alloys, tinted glass and later lights, and I probably paid much more than I should have, but I had to save it. Turns out it is the oldest surviving pre-production P38A.

At the other end of the timescale, I found the very last P38A off the line being advertised on a classified ad website. It had covered just 20,000 miles from new and had lived in Marbella for many years, so it was in a lovely dry climate. I

had to act quickly to secure that one – and go to Spain to collect it – but it's immaculate. Yes, it was expensive, but it's a key vehicle that needed saving.

Buying vehicles is easy, however taking care of them is much more difficult. Which is why I'm absolutely delighted to announce that the Dunsfold Collection has just been awarded charitable status, and we're launching a fundraising appeal to erect a proper museum to house all our Land Rovers. Dr Ralf Speth, the chief executive of Jaguar Land Rover, whom I occasionally meet when Dunsfold lends vehicles for a JLR event, has given his blessing and says he's delighted by the news.

Turning Dunsfold into a charity is something I've aspired

to for a very long time but just never got around to – and I never would have without the support of the Collection's two other trustees, Gary Pusey and Richard Beddall. Thanks to Gary, we also have a superbly designed new website to go with our new charitable status, with photos and information about all the 130-plus vehicles in the Collection. It's well worth checking out.

“Knowing that the Collection has a secure future gives me great satisfaction”

Being a charity will bring us all kinds of benefits. It means that companies which donate to us get tax breaks, for example, which is a useful incentive. It also saves us a huge amount in business rates. Less tangibly, but very importantly, the 'feelgood' factor of giving to a charity will (I hope) encourage people to make a donation. And from a personal point of view, knowing that the Collection has a secure future gives my life a satisfying endpoint.

Storing all our vehicles has always been a major headache. At the moment the majority are kept under cover in eight sheds across three counties. A few, though – usually the bigger vehicles – have to live outside. Some cope better with that than others, but in an ideal world I'd never leave anything outside. Rubber components deteriorate because of the UV in sunlight, interiors become damp and panels corrode.

My dream, therefore, is for Dunsfold to have its own purpose-built museum building. Ideally it would be somewhere in the Dunsfold area, for the sake of retaining the name, but theoretically it could be anywhere. 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 – and a workshop and stores. Here, I can imagine youngsters being



THE LAST 2ND GENERATION RANGE ROVER



Clockwise from top: Philip has just repatriated the last-of-line P38A Range Rover (below); at present, important vehicles like this Pink Panther are stored in various sheds in different locations.



encouraged to have a go at working on a Land Rover, which would also help satisfy our on-going educational requirements and responsibilities.

There would be much, much more besides. Upstairs there might be a library, to house all the brochures and manuals currently stored in 25 filing cabinets here at Dunsfold. A conference room would be good, so that visiting car clubs could hold meetings – maybe with a bar attached! I've been to lots of similar places on the Continent during my trips with various Land Rover clubs and have often come away thinking 'If only we could do something like that.'

Then there's the collection of 2500 Land Rover models built up by the late John Parker and bequeathed to us. Plus our huge collection of Land Rover memorabilia – packaging, badges, promotional material – which hardly anyone has ever seen. The possibilities are endless.

Of course, all this will take money, which is why we're launching a fund-raising appeal – more details on the website. We'd also dearly like to hear from someone who has practical knowledge of how best to apply for National Lottery funding, or who feels they can help in any other way. We're a small team, and we're good at what we do, but that is something outside our experience – and we're never too proud to refuse offers of help.

Dunsfold Collection

THE DUNSFOLD COLLECTION is not open to the public but holds an Open Weekend every two years; the next one is on June 13-14, 2015. You can become a Friend of the Collection for an annual subscription of £35 (plus £10 to cover ALRC and MSA membership) and attend monthly get-togethers and social events such as Land Rover trials and gymkhanas. Visit www.dunsfoldcollection.co.uk to find out more.

