

CLASSIC DRIVER

[Down Under diaries - Memories of an Australian Land Rover](#)

Lead

For decades, this Land Rover served as a trusty workhorse on a family farm in Australia. One of the most original Series 1s in existence, the 'Old Green Girl' is now back on UK soil. We took it to London for a spot of sight-seeing...

"If I were going to buy a Land Rover, I'd want it to last 60 years - and that's just what this car has done," says Richard Burton, the son of this 86" Series 1's original owner, F. B. Burton, whose sign-written name can still be found on the front wing. It was delivered in CKD (Completely Knocked Down) form to Grenville Motors' Sydney assembly plant in 1955, and subsequently sold to Burton Senior. A farmer from Jindabyne in New South Wales, he soon put the car to good use on the family farm.

A loyal workhorse



"We used to do everything in the Old Green Girl," says Burton, who treasures fond childhood memories of the car. "We used to go rabbiting, or on fishing trips down to Lake Jindabyne. There always used to be a .22 rifle stowed across the front window, in case Dad saw a rabbit or something." Sure enough, a .22 bullet is still mounted in a clip on the dash, although the rifle has since been removed to keep the local London constabulary happy.

"It had virtually no heating," recalls Richard, "so in the winter you'd simply put on another layer of clothing and away you went. My sister and I would climb in the back with the dogs, while my younger brother would sit up front between Mum and Dad. Occasionally in the winter you'd have three feet of snowfall, and the little old Land Rover would just push the snow with its bumper bar at the front - the thing never stopped." The very car that had ferried each of the children home from the hospital immediately after they were born also served as the car in which they all learned to drive. "We had to use cushions to help us reach the pedals."

Welcome home



Its first and foremost role might have been as a loyal workhorse, but there was no denying that the Land Rover had become an integral part of the family. "Dad passed away almost eight years ago now, but I recently said to Mum, 'Remember the Old Green Girl? She's in England, and she's well looked after.' Mum burst into tears, because when she and Dad were newly married, it was their only form of transport." Richard thought the story would be perfect PR fodder for Land Rover, though his letters to the company suggesting the idea seemingly fell on deaf ears.

A family affair



Over two decades, a handful of owners and some 11,000 air miles later, we're poring over the car's astonishingly original bodywork right here in London. It's worlds away from the sunshine and blistering heat of Australia, yet the Landy is just as adept at trundling around town as it is across dusty fields - it even serves its current owner as a car in which to run the odd errand around Chelsea (and, fittingly, for the family summer holiday in Norfolk).

We've appropriately brought along a 2015 [Defender Heritage Edition](#), which is exactly 60 years the Series 1's junior. Despite this, the similarities are clear to see - in the rake of the windcreens and the slope of the roofs, for example. Save for an engine rebuild and, much to the frustration of its current owner, a mismatching rear wheel, the Series 1 is utterly original, and completely rust-free. This is testament to both how well it was always looked after, and the dry Australian climate. It wears its age with pride.

Writing history



Whether you're writing the modern history of one of [the 'new' Series 1s that Land Rover will offer for sale](#) or taking up the tale of a car such as this one, it won't take you long to realise that a Land Rover is so much more than just a car. That's why Richard was so reluctant to part ways with it. "We loved the thing," he says. "When Mum and Dad sold the farm, I wanted to keep the Land Rover. 'Why do you wanna keep that bloody old thing?' was his response." We can't wait to hear how his mother will react when she sees photos of the 'Old Green Girl' outside The Royal Albert Hall, and patrolling the perimeter of Hyde Park. The well-travelled always have a story to tell.

Photos: Amy Shore for Classic Driver © 2016

Gallery

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