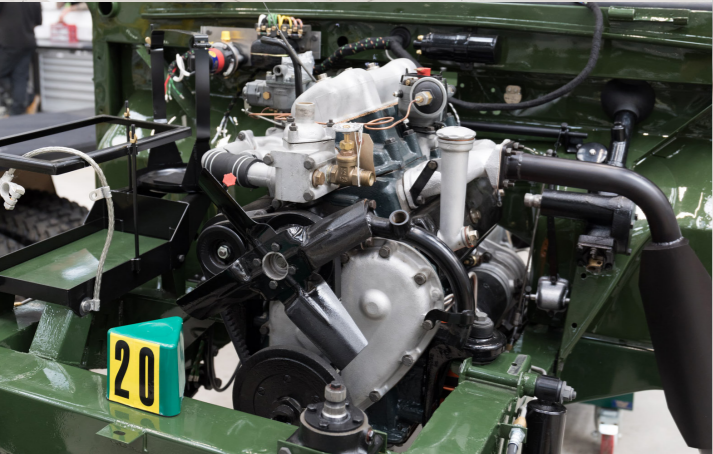


STORY NATHANIEL HANDY
PHOTOGRAPHY PETER GUENZEL



Or indeed as big a dream
as you like; Land Rover
Classic Works is where
it can come to life.
Director Tim Hannig gives
ONELIFE a guided tour

D R E A M A L I T T L E D R E A M



“My uncle had a first-generation Land Rover Discovery,” remembers Tim Hannig, Director of Land Rover Classic. “We would go to visit him in Denmark. His was a messy hunter’s car, but I remember him unlocking the big side-opening back door and I’d climb in and sit sideways on the bench seat in the back. I was eight years old and it was just ultra-cool.”

Everyone has got a Land Rover story, all of them contributing to a history that is now 70 years old and spans every continent (and even a few tracts of ocean – remember the first-ever crossing of the Bering Strait by a land vehicle in 2008?).

Now, the Land Rover story has a home in a new 14,000m², purpose-built, £7 million facility in the British Midlands. Classic Works is a full sales, servicing and restoration facility – the largest of its kind in the world. A showroom greets visitors at the threshold, backed by huge glass doors revealing 54 workshop bays with dedicated strip-down, remanufacturing and assembly zones. Behind all this, like the secret at the back of the wardrobe, lies the Classic Collection – a warehouse full of over 500 vehicles.

“Classic Works has almost taken the role of a museum without being a museum,” explains Hannig. “On a tour, you will learn a lot about where the company comes from, but you’re in an active working environment. It’s living history.”

IN PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Why invest so much in a facility that is focused on out-of-production vehicles? For Hannig, there are two elements. “One is to celebrate the history of the brand and let people experience it,” he explains. With a history as rich as Land Rover, there’s no shortage of things to celebrate. But it’s the second element that has made Classic Works a reality. “This has to be a sustainable undertaking,” says Hannig. It turns out that the restoration of old Land Rovers causes a lot of excitement.

“When we did the recreation of the 1948 Series I production line in 2015, the response was huge,” remembers Greg King, Classic Works Chief Engineer. “When I first looked at this it was just a study to see what was possible. I don’t think we understood quite how successful it was going to be.” King is, by his own admission, “Land Rover through and through.” He fell for them as a child growing up on a south Devon farm, and joined the company as a 16-year-old apprentice. The opportunity to be part of a project like this was his ultimate challenge.

“We’ve got all the original drawings going back to the 1940s,” King explains. Such know-how means that Land Rover can deliver restoration projects to a level that is unrivalled. But blueprints are nothing without the expertise to bring them to life. And in a sector as specialised as classic cars, Hannig believes having the

“A CLASSIC IS AN EMOTIONAL AFFAIR AND WE NEED TO RESPECT THAT”

right people is critical. Two years ago, some 35 employees worked out of a corner of the Solihull plant. Today, 140 specialists fill the bays of the dedicated Classic Works facility.

“Customers trust us with their vehicles. A classic car is an emotional affair,”

he insists. “We need to give the vehicle that same level of respect.” The hands-on nature of the work means that quality control can’t be built in as it is on factory production lines. “We cannot robot-check if the wheel nuts are fixed to the right torque,” Hannig admits. “Every car is different. That’s why we have to have people who are not only capable and highly skilled, but also motivated to do the best job, every day.”

IN PURSUIT OF THE HORIZON

The existing restoration industry is often small-scale. The creation of Classic Works could be seen as detrimental to it, but Hannig believes that by operating at the top end, they can bring benefits. “There is a positive momentum created by Classic Works,” he explains. “There are gaps in our parts catalogues and we are determined to improve it. Last year, we implemented 150 new parts. We need the enthusiasts to work with us on that.”

By pooling knowledge, the industry can identify the most needed components. “We then have the ability to invest, which is good for everybody,” says Hannig. “And we are generating knowledge by working on the cars, allowing us to tool up new spare parts available to anyone. The person who restores at home in his garage deserves a good spare part as much as anyone else.”

Classic Works is the first Land Rover retail outlet – classic or new – anywhere. Until now, the company has been a manufacturer and wholesaler. By inviting the public not only to a shop window, but right onto the workshop floor, they are breaking new territory. In doing so, they are connecting with customers like never before.

“Tours of the site have been full since we started,” says Felix Welch, General Manager at Classic Works. “These cars are very close to being works of art, and they’re attracting people who are relatively new to the world of classic cars, as well as firm fans. Last Sunday, we had a Land Rover Breakfast Club and 52 50th Anniversary Defenders showed up – the biggest such gathering ever.”

Classic Works now has its sights set even further afield. A second facility is already open in Essen, Germany, and planning for a North American centre is underway. “We will provide a service where there is a demand for it,” says Hannig, adding with a wry smile: “Land Rover didn’t stop at the borders of the UK. In fact, it went a long way beyond.” →

From cosmetic to powertrain, Classic Works is fully equipped to restore Land Rover vehicles of any age back to perfection. Bottom right: General Manager Felix Welch



H O W T H E D E F E N D E R
G O T I T S S T R I P E S

Chief Engineer Greg King reveals the story of the most powerful
and dynamic Defender ever built – the Defender Works V8

2018 is a big year for 70th anniversaries. It marks the jubilee of the first Grand Prix at Silverstone, the London Olympic Games, and the first Land Rover vehicle. They all reflect the boom in enterprise that characterised the post-War years in Britain.

Perhaps no vehicle embodies the possibilities of the age quite like the Land Rover Defender – the nameplate that is a continuation of the original Series I and II vehicles that, in many cases quite literally, mapped the modern world. When production ceased in 2016, it felt like the end of an era. Classic Works – and the anniversary year – presented Land Rover with the perfect opportunity for the ultimate send-off.

“The Land Rover Defender Works V8 is the most fantastic celebration of what Defender is,” says Classic Works Chief Engineer, Greg King. “It shows how important the Defender is to Land Rover. You can’t fail to get out of the vehicle with a massive smile.” He should know. King led the engineering team that set out to create a vehicle that, while unmistakably a Defender, has a breadth of capability and dynamic ability like no other.

The Works V8 is a fully rebuilt and refinished Defender sourced between 2012 and 2016 model year, re-engineered with a 5 litre, naturally aspirated V8 engine developing 405PS. The immense power is complemented by an eight-speed automatic transmission, heavy-duty front and rear differentials, and an automatic torque balancing sensor differential.

“Unlike any other Defender conversion on the market, the Works V8 is fully integrated, with all the electronic aids such as traction control and stability control systems,” says King. “No one else has the know-how to be able to do that. The other difference is that the Works V8 conversion has been tested to Land Rover standards.” One test, for instance, involved driving two prototypes from Classic Works to Western Sahara, with trailers, for hot weather testing in up to 52 °C. The result is a Defender that can hold its own, both on the road and off it.

Normally, nameplates don’t pass to Classic Works until they have been out of production for ten years. For example, they’ve just gained the Freelander. So why did they get the Defender so soon? “Simply, because the Defender is an instant classic,” says Tim Hannig, Director of Classic Works.

All 150 limited edition vehicles were sold within nine days of the first press release. Luckily, there is some consolation if you are not one of the lucky 150: off the back of the Works V8, a number of Defender accessories and upgrades will become available.

The Works V8 has also helped to define the role of Classic Works for the future. As Hannig puts it: “It’s the ultimately refined Defender, while still being very much a Defender. It shows how we are in the business of fulfilling dreams.” □

Top left: Greg King, who led the project. With its powerful engine and suite of modern technology, the Works V8 is the ultimate performance Defender

FIND OUT MORE
To book your own tour of Classic Works, please search *Land Rover Classic Works*

