



Elephant

spotted in West Lancashire

After two years of researching the car, regular factory visitor and enthusiastic member of the West Lancs TVR Car Club, Howard Bryan has negotiated with Peter Wheeler the purchase of his famous Tasmin Holden prototype, the 'White Elephant'.

The car was used by Peter Wheeler as a rolling test bed for the Holden 5-litre V8 engine which TVR were considering using during the late eighties. The TVR development team took a 390SE chassis and modified it to take the large iron block engine and Borg Warner T5 gearbox. The 390 body shell was over-moulded with spray-on modelling foam and finished with a fibreglass skin.

The Holden engine was not adopted by TVR due to the superior power to weight ratio of the standard Rover unit, even though performance tests saw the car reach speeds of up to 180mph. The White Elephant was subsequently shelved, being utilised for a while at the Blackpool site and was later displayed in Birmingham TVR dealers Team Central showroom before being condemned to the TVR graveyard at the rear of the factory.

The car itself had stayed in reasonably good condition until the rear screen was taken for another project, which left the White Elephant open to the elements. With time moving on and now with a 2ft tree growing out of the boot, grass growing out of the carpet and the Kevlar bonnet lying 'wedged' underneath the car, Howard Bryan decided it was time to act: "For TVR enthusiasts and wedge fans in particular, the White Elephant is as good as it gets - a classic one-off TVR prototype which was commissioned and run by Peter Wheeler. To see the car sat motionless at the top of the yard was really quite sad, TVRs are built to be driven! So I decided to ring and speak to Peter to discuss the possibility of my renovating his old prototype and restoring it to its former glory."

With much discussion and many emails passing between the factory and Howard, Peter Wheeler finally decided that the White Elephant would be in safe hands and confirmed to Howard the car was his.

So now the work begins! Howard Bryan along with Tony Cole - collectively known as the West Lancs 'Wedge Twins' due to Howard's 400SE never being seen without Tony's restored 350i following in hot pursuit, now begin a planned 22 month ground up restoration of this important part of TVR's history.

After testing and running the engine, the interior and engine bay will be catalogued and stripped, the body will be lifted off - which could be interesting as the whole shell was over moulded and skinned whilst still actually attached to the