

# THE COURIER

THE MONTHLY MAGAZINE FROM THE TRIUMPH SPORTS SIX CLUB

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## PHOTO WINNER

Another Photo of the Month award, plus some great runners up too!



THE  
TRIUMPH  
SPORTS SIX  
CLUB



ALL TRIUMPH DAY AT SHUTTLEWORTH

OLD-SCHOOL TIN CAN EXHAUST REPAIR

FROM A SPITFIRE TO A HURRICANE





Back in August I travelled up to HQ at Lubenham for the national weekend. I used my 1971 Herald 13/60 Convertible. Yes, I know, as Specials Register Secretary I should have taken my Moss Malvern kit. I admit it, I wimped out. The prospect of a 3½ hour drive loaded up with camping gear in a car with no option of putting the roof up (I removed the soft top completely many years ago as it was falling to bits) didn't appeal.

For those of you not there, it was a very good weekend. I was very pleased that two members did attend with their kit cars, both Vincent Hurricanes. The champagne car, 491 AED, is one I know quite well. It belongs to Ann Dyson, a real stalwart of the TSSC. Ann and her great looking Hurricane have been participating in club events up and down the country for many years. I've featured Ann's car in my register reports more than once, most recently in May 2017.

The other Hurricane, steely grey GLL 856J,

is a car I don't remember seeing before, so I decided I needed to find out more and get it in the mag. I door-stepped the owner, or whatever the equivalent of door-stepping is when the person you want to talk to is living in a tent. The owner is Toby Cowper, and I didn't have to twist his arm much – actually not at all – to get him to agree to being interviewed.

Before I get to some detail about Toby's car, here's a brief re-visit of the history of the Hurricane marque. (I say re-visit, as I've written about Hurricane cars several times over the years.) The Hurricane is almost unique amongst 'our' kit cars in that it is designed to fit onto an unmodified Spitfire or GT6 chassis. The idea to entirely replace the Spitfire or GT6 body with a fully fibreglass alternative was a joint one by two brothers, Martin and Robert Vincent. They turned their idea into reality, working out of some barns on a farm near Henley on Thames.

Introduced to the marketplace 1982 as

the Vincent Hurricane, this quality kit found a fair number of eager buyers. I have seen many examples over the years, and all have looked excellent. The finished car retains such luxuries as wind up windows and a proper hood from the donor Spitfire, and even has a boot. Due mainly to the accomplished fibreglass moulding the Hurricane has never been cheap to buy, but the finished car has a truly production look and feel to it.

In 1995 production of the Hurricane body was taken up by a company called Caburn Engineering. One of the proprietors is Dave Hitchings; I have communicated with Dave several times, and we met in person in May 2019 at our South of England Meet. Soon after that meeting Dave sent me this email:

*'Hi Trevor, it was good to meet you at the SEM recently, and to have a chat about Hurricanes. As I said, we have not produced any Hurricane kits for about three years, but continue to provide advice and sometimes*







parts for owners. The demand for the Hurricane kit has fallen due to the fact that there are less donor cars around now and most owners tend to restore them rather than convert them. The value of restored Spitfires and GT6s is quite high, and many people are keen to follow this trend. We are still able to produce a Hurricane kit for anyone who is still interested in constructing a rust-free car.'

Back to GLL 856J now, Toby Cowper is an active TSSC member and an enthusiastic member of the Cambridge local area. Toby's profession is a senior manager in the NHS. He built the Hurricane in 2007, which I'm pretty sure makes it the youngest Hurricane I've ever come across. He bought the body from Caburn Engineering, telling me he had to phone Dave Hitchings and persuade him to mould a Hurricane body.

The donor car was a Spitfire 1500, a car that had been owned by Toby for some time. He was emotionally attached to the car and restored it once. When the dreaded tin worm reappeared, Toby couldn't bear to part with the car and made the decision to convert it to the Hurricane, on which a rusty body would no longer be a prospect.

Toby requested that the body be gel-coated in black. This meant that any stone chip wouldn't show as much because Toby was always intending to paint it black. It was

resprayed into its current dark grey following an accident about 10 years ago on the Nurburgring circuit. The car was being driven by a friend when it came into contact with the Armco – ouch!

The Hurricane body is a pretty heavy fibreglass lay-up, but the car still ends up a bit lighter than a Spitfire. Toby recalls that the complete Hurricane body can be lifted fairly easily by two people. This change of weight means some alterations are needed to the donor Spitfire's suspension. At the rear the Spitfire spring is used, but with a spacer under the spring to give the required attitude. The front shocks are adjustable, so can be wound down to the ride height you want.

The Hurricane uses a Spitfire windscreen, attached to the bulkhead which is all fibreglass. The door shells are also fibreglass, and the Spitfire window mechanism and door glass

are retained. Toby's choice of wheels are Revolutions, a choice I approve of – in my opinion they strike a good balance between classic and modern looks, Revolution wheels having been first made in 1967.

For the first five or six years as a Hurricane, Toby ran with the Spitfire 1500 engine, but when this died he decided to look for a slightly more powerful option. He considered the Triumph straight-six, but thought it would be too heavy for the Vincent. A friend of his had converted a Spitfire to use the Ford Zetec SE 1600cc engine, and Toby used this knowledge to do the same. He is pleased with the performance improvement achieved; the engine can rev to 8000rpm and puts out close to 160 horsepower. Toby had previously changed the gearbox in the original Spitfire to a Ford Type 9, which remains in the Hurricane. The new Ford engine did destroy the Spitfire diff, so the car now has a limited slip diff, 'just so it survives' as Toby explains.

To sort out the paperwork in 2007, Toby had to take the car on a trailer to the DVLA office in Peterborough. An inspector checked all the numbers and agreed to change the V5C to Vincent Hurricane, though DVLA would apparently have been happy to leave it as Spitfire.

Toby clearly loves driving his Hurricane. He has done several endurance events, including the Ten Counties Run organised by Club Triumph. He reckons he averages about 2500 miles per year. He told me he has broken down in some interesting places, including once in Italy where he got a little over enthusiastic and blew his Ford engine up. This led to a memorable trip home, involving a trip on a train with many migrants, to get from Italy into Germany to catch a flight. The car arrived home a few weeks later.

Nice one, Toby.

Trevor



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