

The Rally Man Can

RS Motorsport



This kit first appeared some 16-years ago under the KaRa banner, before moving onto to Mercury Motorsports and RS Automotive. After a few years on the back burner, ex-RAF man, Bill Watson, has acquired the EVO200 project and has big plans for the future...

The Ford RS200 is an iconic car. There weren't many originals made, and the Group B rally regulations that it was built around were finished pretty soon after it was launched (see separate panel), and so Ford's reputed £10 million pound development budget went down with them.

It didn't take the replicators long to get their teeth into it, however. The KaRa 430 emanated from Essex with

KaRa Sports Cars Ltd run by engineer, Richard Sellicks and design consultant, Peter Baisden, who had cut his teeth at racecar manufacturer Hawke Racing, in the seventies.

To keep Ford sweet they modified their car slightly, making it three inches longer, a little bit wider and altered the sills. Before long though, the partners went their separate ways, leaving Sellicks to carry on production under the Mercury Motorsport and Engineering banner, moving from

Southend-on-Sea to nearby Shoeburyness in the process.

Eventually, the project moved on to 'fast-Ford' nut Paul Horner and his RS Automotive company, who did a lot to keep the flag flying. A chap called Gary Campbell joined Paul in the late nineties and they started attending shows and promoting the project more actively. In total, 94 of the KaRa/Mercury/RS Automotive kits were sold, but the pressures of their main work took all of Paul and Gary's time

EVO200



Ex-RAF man, Bill Watson, is the driving force behind RS Motorsport.



leaving the car on the back burner.

It sadly dropped off the radar around 2001 and lay dormant, until late 2008. It was far too good to fade away, a fact recognised by Bill Watson who acquired the project in October last year. He had purchased a kit from Paul in 1998, and as a diehard Group B/RS 200 fanatic could see the potential the RS Automotive package possessed. So much so that he 'did a Victor Kiam' and bought the project.

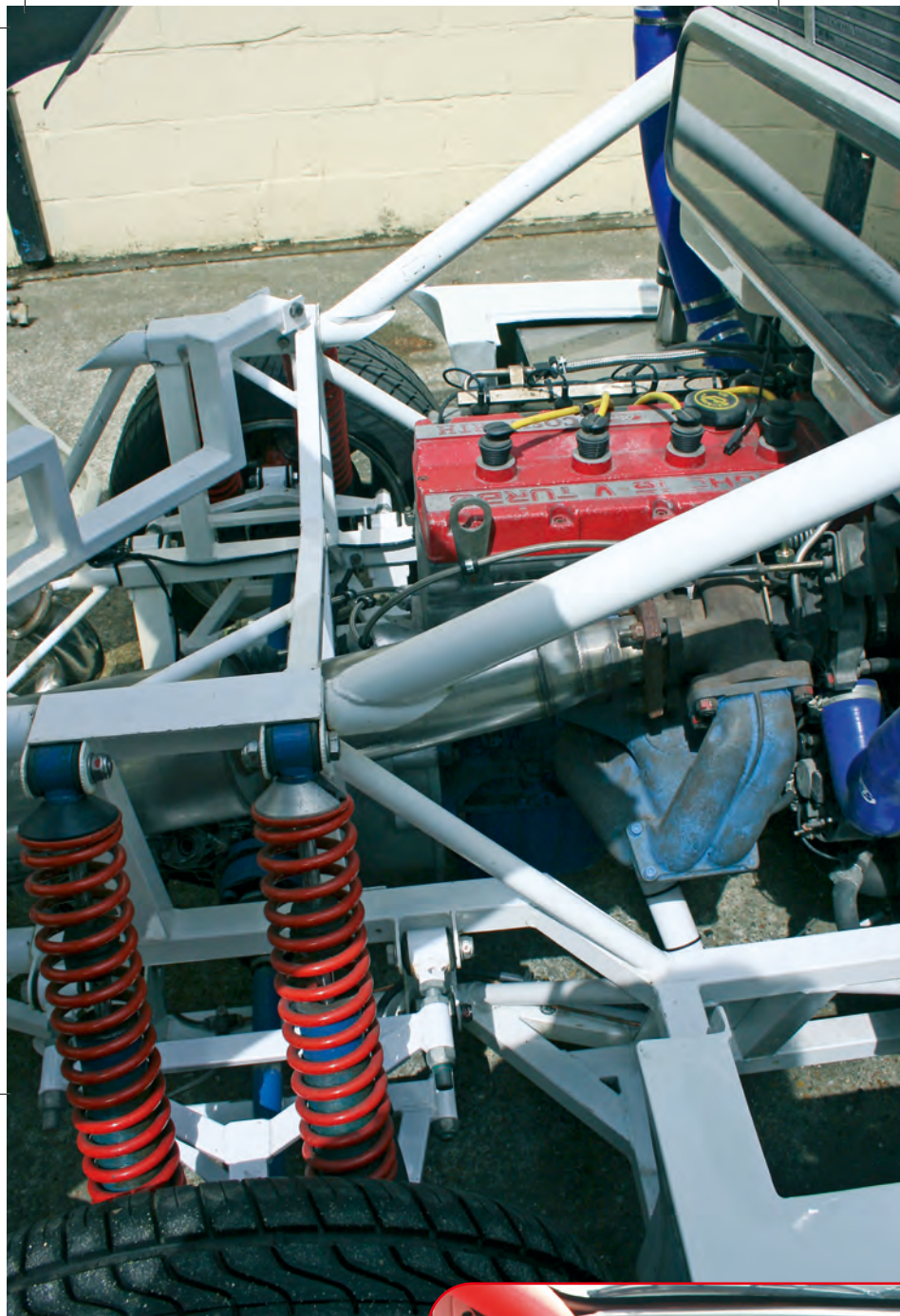
A word must be said for Paul Horner, before moving on. I drove a couple of cars he built for customers back in the early 'noughties' and they

were unbelievable. One in particular was a very memorable event. While working for *Kit-Car* magazine, the editor of the day, the late Peter Coxhead, my much-missed mate and I, arranged a Ford-based group test at a test-track in Surrey, for a Wednesday in June (remember the day of the week).

We all duly turn up (us, the photographer and invited manufacturers with cars) and began setting up 'camp' in an area of the paddock, after receiving our instructions from the man in the control tower (who had the most

comprehensive and largest collection of pornographic magazines I have ever seen) and before long the morning's peace was shattered by a beautiful blue RS200 replica 'whooshing and wastegate dumping' as it swept sideways into our pit area. Out clambered a stern looking Paul Horner, followed by his fellow occupant and owner of said car 'Big Clint' and by crikey he was huge! He had to literally un-ravel himself from the cockpit.

He was actually a lovely bloke, but as wide as he was tall and quite scary-looking, he marched up to me



Sturdy chassis and double coil over dampers at the rear house Bill's Ford Cosworth YB engine.



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Bill's demo car wears proper Speedline magnesium alloys.



Demo car interior is a close copy of the original RS200. All the Cosworth Sierra parts bolt straight in.

and in gravel-voiced disdain, pronounced: "We turned up 'ere yes'day, 'n' we ain't 'appy!"

It turned out that Paul had mis-heard the day I had quoted and arrived on Tuesday, the day before in error. To cap it all, they then got caught up in a three-hour tailback on the return leg to Essex, due to a lorry fire at Dartford Tunnel. The chap in the tower had told them that we were booked for Wednesday and off they had skulked: "It was a quiet journey 'ome" Paul later told me.

Anyway, Paul and Big Clint calmed down, and we got proceedings under way. The owner, a dab-hand wheelman, took me out in the car first so I could get a 'feel' for it. Blimey, 'a feel'? You could not have got a credit card between the cheeks of my backside for the whole ten minutes of lappery. I only opened my eyes twice, once to wave at the control tower man!

That car was powered by a chipped and boosted, Cosworth YB, with forged this and carbon that, and packed a mighty 500bhp wallop. Its acceleration was vivid, and is etched, nay rather branded, into my 'RS' er, I mean memory! It was as fast sideways as it was straight ahead, and what an incredible car.

Clint had started off by leaving 5000 miles-worth of sticky Yokohama behind him, then mashed the accelerator, followed a split second later by the turbo whirr catching up, and the most amazing wait for it, wait for it, wait for it, BANGGGGG, and off we went in delayed reaction but spiteful acceleration, with each slight lift of the throttle accompanied by the noisiest dump-valve I have ever heard. At one point he turned to me and said: "Fast innit? I've learnt to play tunes wiv da dump-valve, great fun at traffic lights it is."

My nervous laughter was seen as further reason to plant his size 14 spitefully onto the loud pedal, once more. This time though as a corner was approaching he'd yank the wheel



off centre, keep his foot planted, and then the rear would come round on demand to what seemed and felt like a crazy angle. We passed control tower at a 90-degree angle at 100mph on one lap, I recall.

Once I'd got over the terror of a large Essex doorman trying to scare me witless in his RS 200 replica I started to appreciate this incredible bit of OTT engineering. It felt as solid as a rock, thanks to the sturdy spaceframe chassis, while there wasn't a rattle or creak (except from me) to be felt.

When it was all over, I staggered out of that car, in a Bambi-like state, much to the amusement of everyone present. Even the po-faced seen-it-all-before marshals at said private track were impressed, although they did ask us to keep the speed down a bit.

"Ere ya go, you can 'ave a go, mate" chuckled Big Clint, throwing me the keys. I can't help but feel that he'd just paid me back for him turning up on the wrong day!

Even pussyfooting around, the car was astounding, electric on the straights, while sideways any time I fancied, an incredible experience that I've never forgotten.

Anyway, back to the present day, and Bill Watson, a Geordie, was in the RAF for many years, and when coming out of the services, got a succession of jobs taking him further and further south, ending up in the Kent seaside town of Margate, where he now runs a satellite installation company.

He's only recently finished his own car off, due to work taking him overseas for long periods, which coincides nicely with him taking the plunge as a *bona fide* kitcar manufacturer, as the car neatly now serves as his demonstrator. Bill is one of life's nice guys, and is an affable chap, who I'm sure will do a good job. The newly re-named EVO200, is based on Sierra Cosworth, which although not exactly abundant are still available, and the car replicates the Evolution version of the RS200, although Bill is

Bill's demo car is a good effort and one of the nicest examples of the breed I've thus far seen.

currently working on a new donor vehicle option. Watch this space. The Evo was the final incarnation with the intercooler 'ears' and Brian Hart-prepared 2.1-litre engine. The prize of the Cossie donor is the YB turbocharged engine and now is as good a time as any to talk about the Cosworth-powered Sierra and its engine.

The powerplant was the YB series, which was launched in 1986 and was actually the turbocharged version of the (1984) normally-aspirated YAA engine.

The first Sierra Cosworth was the classic three-door, which had the YBB engine producing 204bhp with a Garrett T34 turbo.

The RS500 version followed and that had a YBD Cossie engine producing 225bhp, in turn succeeded the Sierra Sapphire of 1988 and the 4x4 of 1990, which had the YBJ, while for the American market the YBG aka 'green top' engine, was fitted as standard.

An internet session will reveal whole rafts of companies tuning and/or supplying go-faster parts for the YB, which it responds well to. First step would be to change the activator to – (dash) 3 type and 'chip' the ECU, which should result in 270bhp all day long. To get to 320bhp you'll need a further updated chip and a 3-bar MAP sensor, which ups the boost to 19psi (1.3Bar).

Mid-400s are achievable by fitting a Group A, multi-shim type head gasket and ARP head bolts, while the T3 turbo will need binning as by now it'll have reached the limits of its usefulness. A T4 or T34 from the Escort Cossie will be ideal, as would a T34 hybrid accompanied by a bigger intercooler. A specially built T38 is also good news but pricey. Choose carefully and 460bhp is the result. Horsepower-hungry can see 540bhp if the engine is blueprinted and forged bottom end internals are. The potential is there as long as you always remember that there's always a fine line between drivability and turbo lag.



ORIGINAL Ford RS200

Ford built their RS200 purely for rallying to suit Group B regulations for which they needed to homologate 200 to gain entry.

Well-known designers, Tony Southgate and John Wheeler, each submitted their ideas for the car and the end result was an amalgamation of their two designs, although the chassis was all-Southgate.

Due to its inexperience with fibreglass, Ford contracted Reliant to build the cars for them. Ex-Ford employee, Ken Atwell of GT40 replica maker, KVA, made the fibreglass bodies initially.

Meanwhile, FF Developments came up with the incredibly complicated transmission that had three settings: fully rear wheel drive; 63:37 bias for multi-purpose use and 50:50, and it was all adjustable on the fly.

Power came from Cosworth BDT 1700cc units bored to 1804cc to comply with regulations although the FIA later allowed 2.1-litre capacities, which Brian Hart built for Ford. Although horsepower is only quoted at 250bhp, the Hart version had proper power of 550bhp in BDT-E guise. When Group B was canned, Ford had a £10 million budget potentially down the tubes, which is when they decided to re-build them as luxurious road cars. It took them five years to shift them all.

Just 144 RS200s were built with 92 of them in left-hand drive configuration made up of the following:

- 90 road cars
- 29 rally cars
- 24 Evolution specification (550bhp)
- 1 IMSA GTP



Evo 'bunny ears' are a £150 extra, but essential for that proper RS200 look, aren't they?

For more information contact:

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So, we've talked about the engine, but what about a suitable transaxle? Well, Bill's preferred choice is the Renault UN1, mated to a bellhousing conversion plate that he can supply. Other options are the usual suspects including Audi and Porsche G50.

The EVO200 chassis is a beefy spaceframe, and you'll find all the mounting points for Sierra Cosworth items, which simply unbolt from the donor and fit to the RS kit and you'll be using stuff such as braking system, steering parts and trim, while Bill reckons that the build is straightforward enough for a novice to take on confidently. You'll be using a massive amount of sundry parts from the donor vehicle and what you don't need you'll be able to sell on eBay, which will net you some dosh back.

It's a solid car with side impact protection and front and rear crumple zones, while still looking a million dollars, some 25 years after the original first saw the light of day. The design just hasn't dated at all.

The body kit and chassis package cost £4000 inc VAT each and Bill estimates that £15,000 could see a DIY job completed, while the quality of the GRP is such that it could be left in bare gelcoat – white of course! Bill's demo car looks great in the period-perfect, Speedline magnesium alloys (245x45 R16) while all other parts to build the car are available from RS Motorsport including luggage box (£150) battery cover (£46) intercooler 'bunny' ears (£75 each) and lamp pod (£275).

Bill is keen to stress that he can also supply all parts to existing owners and/or people still building their cars and spending a few hours

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Please note that as from today's date, Mercury Motorsport will be manufacturing the Kara 430, all work in progress will be finished by Mercury and in the future Mercury will exclusively build the Kara 430, located at our new address, with new telephone number as above. Mercury will be offering the kit in a more basic component form, for those

who wish to budget and build over a longer period with prices starting from as little as £2,900 plus VAT. This should make it easier for a good many people to have the car of their dreams! Mercury will also be supporting Gary Midwinter in his normally aspirated Cosworth 430 in the Motoring News and Demon Tweaks Challenge.

For further information please contact Pam on (0702) 299499

An original Mercury Motorsport & Engineering brochure from the mid-nineties.

with him I'm really confident that he is going to do well and is a real 'can do' sort of bloke who is passionate about the RS 200 and his new replica project. A returning hero? Yes, I really think so. In more ways than one.



Looks good to me.