

The front adjustable anti-roll bar also gave Richard cause for concern, as the design and manufacture was inherently weak, and whilst more than adequate for a prototype, for the longer term we would have to re-model the bar to give it more inherent strength. Another concern was that the bar is of quite a short, stocky design and connects to the top wishbone. In an ideal world we would have preferred a deeper anti-roll-bar with much more leverage connected to the much stronger bottom wishbone. To achieve all this we would have to relocate the radiator and dramatically re-engineer the front of the car. Wishing to keep the prototype as original as possible, we decided to settle for subtly re-designing the front anti-roll bar to give it the extra strength it required, whilst also re-designing the drop links to accommodate this new improved bar. So several mock-ups would have to be fabricated from tubular steel and when the final design was agreed upon, we would then take it to the machine shop to be manufactured from one solid piece. This one solid piece would then be taken back to RT Racing to be drilled, over to the tempering house to be hardened, and then off to the powder coaters to be finished. We then had to fabricate a pair of drop links to connect the bar to the wishbone. Richard also informed me that I would have to take the shell over to Sheffield to allow for dry-fits over the chassis, just to make sure that the new bar would not be fouling any bodywork. The whole process was going to take us a number of weeks and for the first time my eyes started wandering over the calendar. The clock was starting to tick.



A couple of weeks later I arranged to visit Dom at TVR Power to discuss the parts we needed to re-build the 5.0ltr Holden lump. Jason, who is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the rebuild, now having completely stripped the unit, confirmed that it was most certainly a 1987 Commodore VL, which was rather alarming as I had most certainly identified it as a 1988 Commodore VN. Examining the internals and making note of both the casting and part numbers available, we came to the conclusion that it was probably an odd specification VL engine ... with perhaps just a few VN parts in it, or as Dom happily christened it, "A bitsa". So how on earth do we sort out the parts list for this one? For the second time my eyes started wandering across the calendar, and the clock appeared to be ticking just that little bit faster.

Over the next few weeks I ordered yet more Holden engine books from down under and posted several long-winded threads on the Australian V8 forums. The forums pretty much confirmed that the engine was a 1987 Commodore VL, but the reference books still didn't appear to sit happily with the idea. More time passed and just as I was starting to run out of ideas I received an email from Ken Garner, the Chairman of the UK Holden Register. Ken had passed on the engine's details to some of his connections in Australia and they had managed to pin down the specification.



I also received copy of an email from Warwick Bryce, the Holden engineer who originally came over to the factory in 1987 to set the engine up for PW. His email reads:

*"What a blast, that is my old engine! I went over to TVR about 1987 and helped put it in the car. I probably have some photos. It was Peter Wheelers (TVR boss until about a year ago) personal car for many years. They were using the Rover V8 and wanted more grunt so were interested in the Holden engine, however we (the Holden Engine Company) were too slow to get into production and in the meantime someone stretched the Rover to 4.6ltr so they stuck with that. The engine is a prototype VL Group A, hence the sand cast rocker covers."*

This finite information suddenly fills in all the gaps and explains why we were struggling so badly. Not only do we have a prototype TVR car, but we also have a high performance prototype Holden engine too, one of the first fuel injected Holden V8s ever built. Further digging has uncovered that the unit is a prototype Walkinshaw VL Group A Bathurst racing engine and was one of a limited run of just 500 specially assembled units. We now have the connections to trace all the parts we need and after an amount of double and triple checking, can finally piece our shopping list together and put Dom and Jason to work.

So the good news is that we now have the chassis back, complete with modified anti-roll bar and the bodywork is well underway. The engine shopping list is now looking a reality and we're finally back on track. The bad news is that all the messing about has delayed us by a good three months and it looks like we could be struggling to get the old girl finished by the summer.

Despite all the setbacks, it's always tremendous fun and a privilege to be working on the White Elephant and after all, it would be awfully rude to rush an old lady now wouldn't it.

I wonder what she'll come up with next.

Howard Bryan

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