

Nephew surprises uncle in emotional unveiling of his restored Vauxhall

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In 2008 at the age of 58, Geoff Charles' uncle, Bob Charles, retired through ill health after an accident which started a degenerative back disorder of the spine and left him in constant pain and on lots of medication.

Inspired by his uncle's bravery in the face of his serious spinal condition, in April 2017 Geoff Charles, surprised him by spending two years secretly restoring his beloved car back to its former glory, just like an episode of Car SOS.

Bob thought the vehicle was mouldering in an Essex garage having left it there 17 years ago when he moved to Ireland. After failing to get it back on the road in April 2015, when they found the Carlton had a badly corroded fuel tank, he conceded the car as a write-off.

Under false pretences, Geoff took his uncle to Charles Hurst Vauxhall showroom at Chimney Corner where he admired the car, not recognising at first that it was his.

As Bob looked closer, he realised that it was in fact his Vauxhall Carlton GSi 3000 24v! A fine vehicle capable of 145 mph which he had purchased for £28,000 back in 1991 when it was just 2 ½ years old.

"You're joking! Oh my goodness. I can't believe it. I don't know what to say." Bob says, visibly emotional as his friends and family join him to enjoy the moment.

Watch the full video to see his heart-warming reaction when he finally realises it's his car.
(<https://www.bowerretirement.co.uk/news/back-on-the-road>)

Once the restoration process was complete, Geoff Charles said, "The majority of the two years it took to restore was mainly due to sourcing parts. A few times I thought we had come to the end of the road but we persevered. Now, completely fully serviced with new plugs, leads, filters, fluids, and new battery, it starts and runs like clockwork. I can't wait to see his face!"

Geoff talks emotionally about his uncle; "Talking with Bob over the phone you would never know he has these conditions as he is always cheerful, positive and upbeat in his demeanour. And even though he finds general mobility difficult, his passion for his cars remains.

"He has done so much for me over the years, helping me with the family business, Bower Retirement, and also being a father figure and mentor to me. I wanted to repay him by restoring his cherished Carlton and give him the surprise of having it back to its former glory for him to drive"

The Restoration Process

The car has a manual gearbox and 110,000 miles on the clock, as it did when it came off the road in the year 2000. When Geoff started the restoration there was no serious corrosion, but the paint was badly weathered. There was also damage from where it had been stored in the garage.

Mechanically, it was in very good condition and the engine started first time after fifteen years of standing. Steve Detheridge, the owner of EG engineering started work on it. The cylinder head was skimmed; all valves re-seated and new hoses and belts were fitted. It was given new brake discs, pads, and brake pipes along with a new original exhaust system and original flat ended GSi tailpipe. The fuel tank was reconditioned; the fuel lines and the tyres were replaced. The wheels were refurbished, all the trim was reconditioned and it was given a new radiator and water pump.

The interior was spotless and everything worked from digital dash lights to the stereo. Once mechanically sound, the bodywork needed a complete strip and was taken back to metal before re-spraying.

Will Fulford, the owner of Fulford Body Repairs in Dedham, Essex, carried out the work to a high standard. Will suffers from Multiple Sclerosis (MS) but even from his wheelchair continues to manage his body shop with his technicians who all have an eye for perfection.

There was very little body rust, just a small amount on the arches and the roof. Will and his team took a few months to carefully restore the body and remove all body imperfections. The headlining and various body trim parts were replaced, along with the decals and finally it was ready to drive home, looking brand-new again.

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