



Elvis Payne and girlfriend Caroline Stokes at the Top Gear studios standing next to the Reliant Robin that was featured on the show. Left Elvis's rare Reliant Regal on the set of Helena Bonham Carter's latest film.

Films and Top Gear all in day's work for Reliant owner Elvis

By Paul Kemp
News Reporter

A RARE model of a Tamworth-built Reliant Regal has continued to earn work in films and television - by being selected for a movie starring Hollywood actress Helena Bonham Carter.

The 1961 Reliant Regal Mk VI, owned by Tamworth resident and car enthusiast Elvis Payne, is set to star in a film adaptation of the book "Toast".

The vehicle has already been used in the top ITV medical drama *The Royal*. The van was also been used in the upcoming film "Soul Boy" and also in British Forces TV advertising a new channel 3.

Owner Elvis told the *Herald* this week: "I love it to be honest. My Reliant has been used for TV in the past.

"For the film the agent involved

with getting cars on screen approached a friend of mine who put them in touch with me."

The film is being produced by the BBC and also stars Freddie Highmore. It tells the story of a man growing up in Wolverhampton in the 1960s.

"In the film my Reliant belongs to the gardener in one of the scenes and so it had to be re-sprayed in beige with writing on the sides, and made to look dirty."

The van is thought to be the only Reliant Regal Mk VI still on the road and is the last Reliant to use a 747cc side-valve engine and a wooden frame supporting the body. In total only 3,052 Mk VI vans were made between November 1960 and October 1962.

Elvis also revealed he had been involved with BBC Top Gear's recent feature about the iconic Reliant Robin brand.

"With Top Gear I helped the researchers with the information about three-wheelers and Reliant for the feature," he said.

"It was great fun being there and while the show depicts Reliants as rolling over every time you sneeze, you have to take into account the film was just a bit of fun, at the end of the day, in Top Gear style.

"It just plays on the three-

wheeler instability belief that has been around since the 1900s."

Elvis added: "In reality, it took them a few attempts to get the vehicle to roll over, though the final edited version doesn't show this.

"The Top Gear folks bought their own Reliant and others that are seen in the episode that get damaged were actually already write-offs."

Manufacturer was based in Tamworth

- The Reliant Robin was formerly manufactured by the Reliant Motor Company in Tamworth.
- The Robin was first manufactured in November 1973, a direct replacement for the Reliant Regal.
- The final original version of the

Robin rolled off the production line in 1981.

■ The Reliant Robin is sometimes affectionately called the "Plastic Pig" because of its distinctive shape.

■ The name is often misquoted as Robin Reliant.