

# CORNISH WILDCATS SPOTTED

*Garry Stuart* heads to deepest Cornwall to see how the legendary Bowler Wildcats have developed since being taken over by QT.



Phillipe Bourquin's wildcat



It has been two years now since Dave Marsh's company QT Services of Liskeard, Cornwall took over the manufacturing rights of the legendary Bowler Wildcat. In 2008 Dave said that they were taking on a big challenge and that they would have to improve upon what was already considered a superbly designed and successful race car in the Rally Raid scene.

Dave Marsh has over 20 years experience as a driver in the UK trials and hill rally scene, and those that know him will attest that he is a tough, driven, no nonsense kind of guy who likes to achieve his goals. Drew Bowler will have taken these qualities into account when he agreed to sell his legendary Wildcat to QT, confident that its good name was in safe hands.

QT Services, established in 1996, has a great reputation for manufacturing a large range of parts and accessories that improve the performance of off-road vehicles for private and competitive use. All of the parts which QT design and manufacture have been tested under the rigours of national and international off road competitions and are, therefore, known as extremely durable. When Dave took over Wildcat production he knew it was a great product, but one which he would strive to improve upon.

The QT operation consists of a tight knit group of about a dozen people, all of whom are enthusiasts of the off road scene. All Wildcat chassis construction is undertaken at their Lee Mills industrial unit, just north of Plymouth, where Dave's brother Bill Marsh oversees all aspects of the chassis construction. Bill has a background in race car engineering, and the standard of work and accuracy that goes into each Wildcat chassis has to be seen to be believed. Each completed chassis takes two skilled engineers three and a half weeks work to complete, after which they are trucked over to the QT workshops in Liskeard, Cornwall, where all of the assembly process takes place.

Dave receives constant feedback from Wildcat race teams that QT now support worldwide. As an experienced racer himself, Dave instantly interprets and understands what team engineers are experiencing in the rigorous world of Rally Raid competition.

The QT workshop is a hive of activity, sometimes even well into the night



Construction of the chassis keeps a couple of guys busy for 3 weeks



Chassis and space-frame arrive as a complete unit



Not everyone wants aTD5



Even unfinished they look the business



Perfect design with everything 'just right'



Dave and the QT Team have taken a perfect vehicle and made it better



Gearbox being replaced in the 3rd place Wildcat



Any colour, even bling blue metallic!

Cross-country stunner



This feedback is used to identify weak spots or areas that can be improved, things which can only be highlighted under the duress of international off road competition.

One such demanding competition is the Pharaon's Rally in the western desert of Egypt. This is an 1800 mile endurance rally raid, and is as tough as they come. So when in the 2009 Rally last October Wildcats finished in the top three places, it made headline news in the world of off road sport.

This, more than anything demonstrated the superb reliability of the Wildcat race car, especially in the hands of some very professional race teams. Jerome Pelichet and co driver Eugenie Deare took 1st position, Roberto and Nicola Tonetti, 2nd. Dave Marsh was particularly delighted with the 3rd place finish by the Cantal team of Michel Visy and Phillippe Bourquin. Their Wildcat had been entirely constructed at the QT workshops and delivered to the team only six weeks prior to the Pharaon race.

This car is an example of the Wildcat 500 DKR, the flagship, top of the range rally raid specification. QT had fitted a Jaguar 4 litre V8 petrol engine in this Wildcat for the first time, and it is testament to its reliability that it ran the whole of the Pharaon without a hitch. The 285 bhp power unit has a flatter and wider torque curve which enhances its driveability. This car also ran a QT developed straight cut sequential 6 speed gearbox which was designed to perfectly match the power characteristics of the Jaguar engine, and it too performed superbly. A great engine and gearbox combination also has to have a good suspension setup in order to be effective, and to this end QT have fitted 60mm Donerre lithium fast rebound dampers with remote reservoirs, which delivered greater traction and control. At £2,500 for each corner of the Wildcat the Donerre setup represents an expensive but nonetheless top of the range solution for extreme terrain driving.

As luck would have it when LRW visited QT this February the Visy Cantal team Wildcat was sat in a corner of the workshop having been serviced thoroughly by the QT engineers, giving us an opportunity to "steal" it for a few pictures in the Cornish landscape before it headed off for more punishment on the African continent.

While the Michel Visy Wildcat represents the ultimate in desert racing spec, there was another Wildcat under construction at the workshop that was destined for a much easier life. This black and silver Wildcat is the 300 STR option offered by QT, a dual purpose road legal lifestyle option which will sport a few luxuries that the extreme desert racers are denied. The 300 STR will have extras such as air conditioning, comfy seats, an iPod dock and stereo hi-fi, and in this particular case a golf bag holder! The client – a businessman in Uganda fancied a bit of one upmanship in his golf club's car park it seems.

When it is finished, LRW have 'bagged' a road test before it is shipped to Uganda.

Somehow I think Dave prefers the deafening racket that emanates from a straight cut sequential gearbox than anything Radiohead has to offer in the sound stakes!

In between the 300 STR and 500 DKR Wildcat models, there is the 400 NSR designed for events such as the British Cross Country Championships and the French Tout Terrain Series. Clients can opt for different engine and suspension set ups depending upon their budgets and specific competition requirements.

Thanks to Dave Marsh and his QT Services team the world population of Wildcats continues to increase as well as evolve and existing Wildcat owners are assured of first class support wherever they are competing in the world. **LRW**

**Check out the new web site for QT Services on [www.QTservices.co.uk](http://www.QTservices.co.uk)**