

Keith Jacklin and the Popemobile - 1982

Expres

Prestige pair for the Pope

THE Pope has never had a better vehicle to ride in, says Ogle's managing director Tom Karen, as the two Popemobiles were unveiled in Letchworth.

The two Range Rovers, adapted and designed by the firm in Birds Hill, Letchworth, were rolled out to a barrage of television and press coverage, after three hectic months of work.

Though artists' impressions of the



vehicles were revealed in March, the actual two Popemobiles themselves, undergoing a sea change at Ogle's workshops, were kept under wraps until they were ready to leave for tests at a Leyland test track.

Ogle have taken off the back of the Range Rovers, put in glazed viewing turrets, with blue leather seats, armour plating and protective glass, and added running boards and grab handles for the security guards.

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● The prestige Popemobile project was one of the last jobs for project shop manager Keith Jacklin. He retires in the summer, and he posed with pride alongside the finished product.

Letchworth's Popemobile man

THE man who supervised the building of the two Ogle Popemobiles retired last week after 21 years with the Letchworth firm.

Keith Jacklin retired on his 65th birthday. As prototype manager he also worked on Ogle's own Mini sports cars and on the specially converted Aston Martin that was the first British entry in a Canadian Motor Show ten years ago.

Mr Jacklin, who lives with his wife Eileen in Rushden, near Royston, has seen one of the Popemobiles returned to Ogle, in Birds Hill, Letchworth, for a last check-up before being sent to

by Lisa Prager

Rome. It is in peak condition, despite its constant use during the Pope's visit to Britain, he said.

Mr Jacklin began his career with caravan builders and later coach builders before joining Ogle, to work on the 66 Ogle Mini sports GT cars.

He took over the transport model shop, building full-scale, detailed models of designs including the now well-known Reliant Robin three-wheeler, and the Scimitar GTS. He

helped build the Scimitar GTS prototype which was later bought by Prince Philip.

In 1970, the firm decided to take part in the Montreal Motor Show, and converted an Aston Martin car, putting in a low front and a completely glazed cockpit.

"When the car came back from Montreal, a local lady had seen it and decided she must have one, and so I built her one. That car is still around," said Mr Jacklin, who regards the car as his own special love.

Later Mr Jacklin started work on the whole range of Leyland T45 roadtrain lorries, incorporating

sleeping cabs for the drivers.

"The two jobs I enjoyed most were the Aston Martin and the Popemobiles, mostly because I had more input, more scope for my own ideas," said Mr Jacklin.

"I have always enjoyed the work here. It is interesting because it is seldom you are doing the same thing twice." Mr Jacklin hopes to keep close contact with the firm.

As for his retirement, he has no special plans yet. "I haven't any hobbies outside work, my hobby is the work. I would hate to lose the use of my hands, and I will be helping out where ever I can," he said.