

Introduction

– the purpose of this book



Following its predecessor – the Reliant Scimitar GT – the arrival of the Scimitar GTE (Gran Turismo Estate) heralded the world's first sporting estate car, capturing a niche in the market and within no time at all finding success with celebrities of the day, and indeed the Royal household. With its sporting prowess and ability to carry large amounts of luggage, the Scimitar GTE was, as Reliant cleverly once depicted it, like strapping a cart to a racehorse.

These days Scimitars are still in abundance, largely thanks to their rust-free fibreglass bodies, although, as classic cars go, the GTE remains completely undervalued – perhaps because of the company's association with three-wheeled economy vehicles like the infamous Reliant Robin. It is also often forgotten that the GTE brought many world firsts to the automotive arena; its body shape alone, with its rising waistline towards the rear, has been emulated by almost every other car manufacturer, as were many of its other features. For example, the GTE was also the first car to be fitted with a rear screen wiper.



When unveiled in 1968, the Scimitar GTE (SE5) introduced the world to the first sporting estate car.



The larger Scimitar GTE SE6 series, whilst still sporty, has more interior space and a more refined drive, so better suited for touring as a result.

SE6/SE6a

The SE6 series are larger cars with a total redesign inside and out, and whilst they are still powerful, they feel more relaxed behind the wheel. When new, the SE6 suffered with questionable handling, and Reliant quickly addressed this with the prompt introduction of the SE6a. However, by now most SE6 models will have had the handling issues fixed, and so price-wise there isn't really much between them. Most SE6 vehicles are also well equipped, with many SE6/SE6a cars having features like electric windows, alloy wheels and front fog lamps.

SE6b

With the SE6b, the engine was replaced with a smaller 2.8-litre engine, and despite a few mechanical tweaks, it doesn't quite have the torque of its 3.0-litre forebears. Along with the change in engine, Reliant attempted to give the car more of an 'executive' feel, adding additional comfort and more extras as standard. Due to its rarity – and, indeed, later models having a galvanised chassis – the SE6b can command a higher price tag than a SE6/SE6a in equal condition.

SE8b

Breaking away from the GTE body, the convertible GTC/SE8b was manufactured in low volume with just 442 cars being built. Given this rarity, even a fairly tatty GTC will fetch a much higher price than a tidy GTE. Buyers should also proceed with caution if a GTC is very tatty, though, as parts like the hood alone will cost a small fortune to repair/replace. Hardtops are also very expensive and so a GTC with a hardtop will bump up the price even more.

Middlebridge

With just 79 vehicles being built, the Middlebridge-built Scimitar GTE can carry the highest price tag of them all, and even rough cars can sell at a premium. They rarely



Due to their low production volume, and indeed the amount still remaining in existence, prices for the convertible Scimitar GTC can trump those for the GTE.



Built in limited numbers, the value of the Middlebridge GTE tends to be higher than that of Reliant-built GTEs.

Test drive

Check electrics and that all lamps illuminate. If all appears to be okay, ask for a brief test drive to help determine if everything is reasonably sound. Standing clear of the car, ask the owner to start it so you can listen out for any irregular engine noises, and also check the exhaust pipes for smoke. Let the engine warm up and, if any minor sounds like ticking tappets or mild piston slap are present, the sound should fade away as the car reaches its ideal temperature.

Only if you're fully insured to do so, take the car for a test drive. Scimitar GTEs are attentive and should respond eagerly to the accelerator, whilst changing gear smoothly and braking efficiently. Check whether the Scimitar drives in a straight line or pulls to one side. The SE5 series should feel firm and sporty, whilst the SE6 onwards should also have plenty of power, although feel more refined and comfortable.

It is also reported that, should there be any fuel leaks in a Scimitar, there is a noticeable smell of petrol at 55mph (88km/h) to 65mph (105km/h) with both front windows wound down to about 2in (4cm). If this speed is legally obtainable, check for any fumes, exercising extreme caution if they are present.

If you come across any issues like misfiring, gear change problems, clutch slip, strange engine noises, vibrations, or the car just does not feel as powerful as it should, then ask questions. Most minor mechanical issues can be fixed relatively easily, although be mindful that some can cost more than others. Generally, though, most mechanical issues are less of a concern than those relating to the body and interior.



The filler cap at the rear can leak where it goes through the body connecting to the tank. Exercise extreme caution if any fuel smells are present.

Identity

During production of the Scimitar GTE the unique numbering/vehicle identity number has changed several times. With the introduction of the SE5 in 1968 all vehicles were simply identified by a six-figure chassis number (for example the first one being 450001).

This numbering system continued to be used on SE5a models up until 1972. It was then changed for a seven-character string that always started with 93x (for example the first one being 93x1001).

In 1975, with the arrival of the SE6, a new numbering system was introduced that helped to provide more information about the specification of the vehicle itself. This was a 12-character numbering system and was made up of the following components:

1975-1979 ID example: 6 A 11 181 01234

First character (6 A 11 181 01234): Year

5 = 1975	B = 1981
6 = 1976	C = 1982
7 = 1977	D = 1983
8 = 1978	E = 1984
9 = 1979	F = 1985
A = 1980	G = 1986

Second character (6 A 11 181 01234): Month

A = January	G = July
B = February	H = August
C = March	J = September
D = April	K = October
E = May	L = November
F = June	M = December

Third & fourth characters (6 A 11 181 01234): Paint code

11 = Olympic Blue	44 = April Yellow No 2
12 = Festival Red	45 = Royal Red
13 = Parrot Blue	46 = Ivory Beige
14 = Riviera Brown	47 = Sierra Tan
15 = Yellow Ochre	48 = Lincoln Green
16 = Sierra Tan	49 = Caspian Blue
18 = Mexico Brown	50 = Dolphin Grey
19 = Capricorn Blue	51 = Russet Red*
20 = Mineral Blue	52 = Greengage Yellow
21 = Florida Green	53 = Quartz Green
22 = Tangerine	54 = Mulberry
23 = Sahara Red	55 = Carmen
31 = Bajan Blue	56 = Champagne
32 = Haze Blue	57 = Silver Birch
33 = Willow Green	58 = Trafalgar Blue
40 = Celtic Brown	59 = Eldorado
41 = Cygnet Grey	60 = Buckskin
42 = Alaska Blue	61 = Aztec Blue
43 = Arctic / Everest White	62 = White Rose