

Dutton Chassis numbers

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There is a lot of confusion of the numbers of each Dutton model produced since Dutton did not keep the old records. Often it is quoted that 3000 Phaetons and a similar number of Sierras were produced, however I do not agree with these thinking less were actually built.

After plenty of research into this subject, ie. Mark Young and myself (Piers) going through the club records (a very lengthy task which is still not completely finished - one day we spent 7 hours doing a bit of it, since due to the Data Protection Act only current members details are kept on computer and all previous members details are in paper form), we have come up with some information which may or may not be of interest.

The main reason for this is to try to tie up the Dutton chassis numbers with models and series and date of manufacture. This will then give us a better idea of how many of each model and series were built. This explains why several of you have notes on your membership/renewal forms from Mark if you have not completed the details on your chassis number, and for some time I have been asking for dates of manufacture.

So far we have information (chassis and registration nos) on 2390 Duttons and the highest chassis number is 6335 so that means only about 38% of them, and of these only 2007 (32%) have Dutton chassis numbers and so far we have only found out when 24 were made. So a long way to go and if you've any information on when your kit was made/delivered, not build or registered, then please let either Mark or myself know, thanks.

This article is based on these numbers, trying to ignore glaring inaccuracies (probably where members have misread the chassis number where it is heavily painted over) and also on other information on numbers produced per month etc which are from various old kit car related magazine articles.

I have always understood that Duttons were given sequential numbers with a prefix to denote the model, and this certainly proves to be true. Another story is that Dutton missed out chassis numbers and started new models at round numbers, and there seems to be some evidence to support this.

The original Dutton, 30 years ago in 1969 was called the Mantis and has recently been restored. This restoration did not return it to a Dutton but the donor vehicle, a Lotus 11. Then came a few P1's of which I know of one chassis number 002, whether this was the second Dutton and first P1 or the second P1 I don't know.

Then in October 71 came the first B Type (BT010). During '72 about 1 car a week was built, with 36 cars in 6 weeks in early '73 then dropping to about 5 a week before the introduction of VAT reduced this to 3 a week. These values seem to add up to the other statement that up until '74 about 250 B Types were built, and the chassis numbers go up to 197.

The B Plus demonstrator was given chassis number X205, and there are a few B Plus's in the 100s and 200s but the majority, with prefixes B or B+, are between 300 and 663.

Malaga B+s have a prefix and a suffix in their chassis numbers, eg. M311B, and those recorded fall between 311 and 659, and there is one example of the rare B+ Malaga in the mid 600s. Malagas, with the prefix M, also fall in the same range, 490 to 665. Also in this range are the Canteras with the prefix C, falling between 462 and 505. These show that in one range of chassis numbers there can be several different models but each car has a individual number and the model is shown by a prefix and in some instances also by a suffix.

Taking the production figures I have for numbers produced per week in different years and multiplying these up we can arrive at the following totals.

Year	per week	Weeks	Total	TOTAL PRODUCTION
72	1	52	52	52
Early 73	6	6	36	88
73	5	20	100	188
After VAT	3	24	72	260
Early 74	0	20	0	260
Summer 74	1	10	10	270
Second half	1.5	20	30	300
75	1	50	50	350
Early 76	1	25	25	375
Summer 76	4	25	100	475
Early 77	4	25	100	575
Summer 77	5	25	125	700

These are probably not too far out until about '75 and then they seem to be a bit high since chassis number 10 was in Oct 71, 205 in July 73, 487 and 565 in October 77, and 582 in December 77. This is probably due to the fact that production levels would drop after the summer and less cars would be produced during the winter months which is not shown in the above figures.

Then in 1977 comes the Phaeton with the prefix P, the first example being 701 (is this a case of jumping to the nearest round hundred for a new model?) In the 700s are two cars with the prefix BP and I can only assume that these were B+ Phaetons, being built with panels left from the previous model. With Phaetons being produced between '82 and '89 their chassis numbers continue up to 6277. As for where the splits between series fall this is not easy to tell since there is a lot of confusion between the different models and many have been recorded incorrectly. The ranges I have found out are:

Series 1	701	-	2363
Series 2	762	-	4434
Series 3	1717	-	5835
Series 4	5540	-	6227

As these figures show there is far too much overlap for these to be in any way accurate. Of these I know that the Dutton Phaeton Series 4 demonstrator, which later after a bonnet swap became the B Plus Series 2 demonstrator, and then reverted to a Phaeton S4 was chassis number 5700 (note it ends in 00).

The next Dutton model was the Sierra and production started in early '80, and as with the Phaetons this model had a long production life until '89 with three series of the model. These series also cover a range of different body styles including drophead, pick up and chassis cab. The ranges of chassis numbers I have found out are:

Series 1	1360	-	4040
Series 2	3244	-	5766
Series 3	5185	-	6251

Again much confusion over the series but there is documented proof (a letter from Tim Dutton) that 6251 was the last Sierra Drophead leaving the factory in Sept '89.

The Melos was the next model introduced in 1981 again with a long production life until '89, and a couple of series but I have not tried to split these up as it's even more difficult. For the Melos the chassis numbers range between 2327 and 6321.

Other models all with a much smaller production life and hence lower production figures were the Rico and Rico Shuttle: From the records the club has their chassis numbers fell in the following range 5058 - 6109. Legerra: 6008 - 6335, Beneto: 6207 - 6279, and the B Plus Series 2: 6051 - 6066.

To be continued if you provide us with more information,

Piers Plumridge (Dutton Torque Editor)