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NEW LAGONDA
Inside Aston's supersaloon

AN INDEPENDENT ASTON MARTIN MAGAZINE

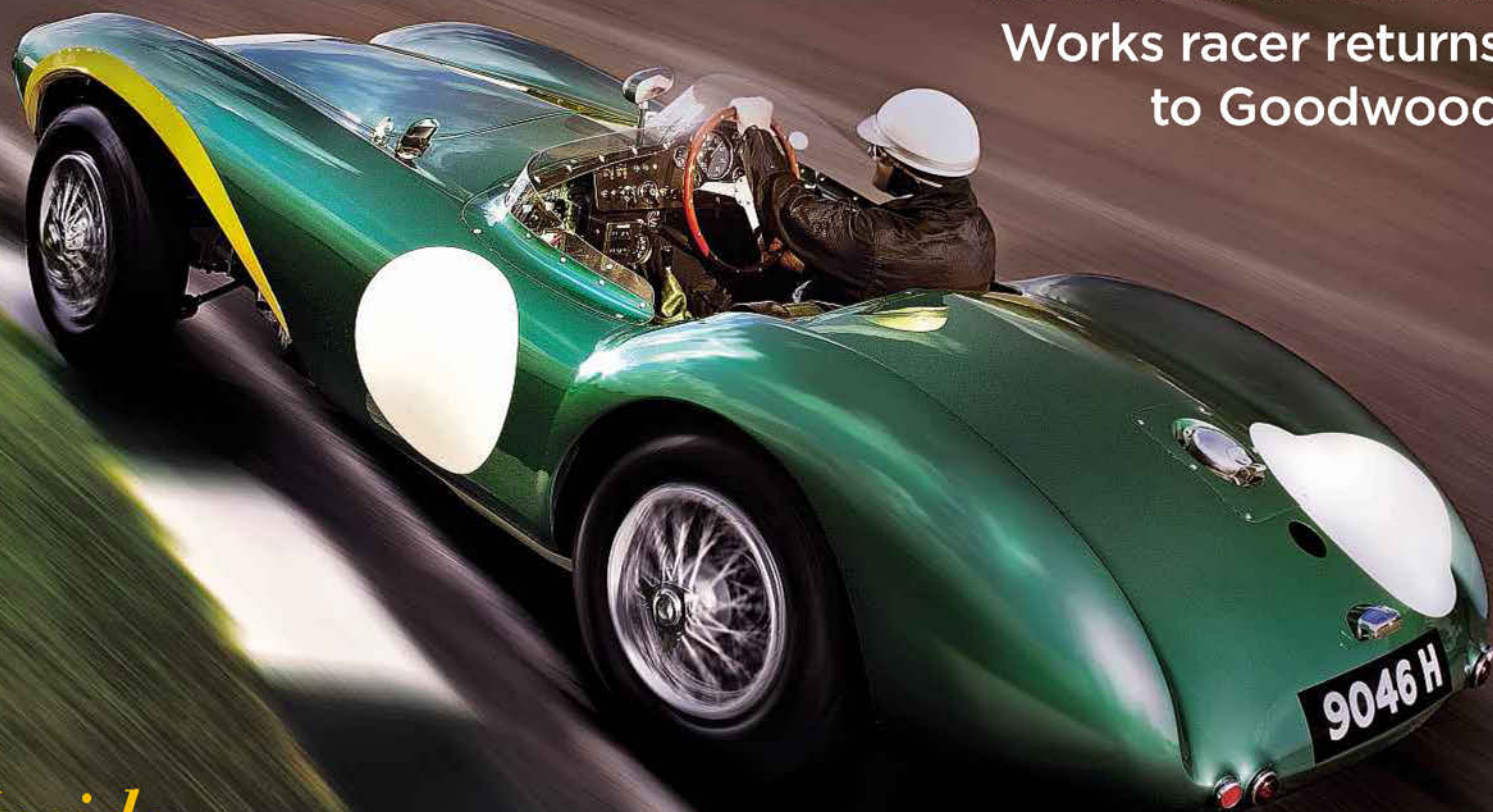
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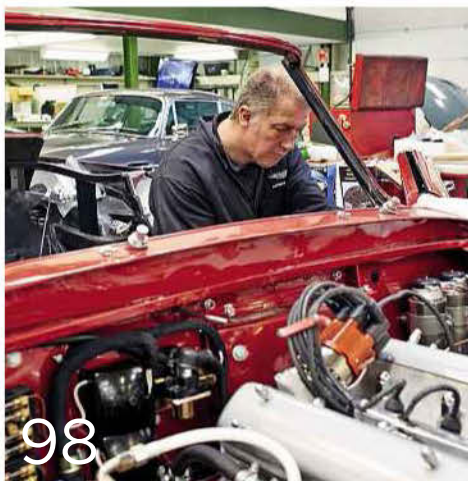
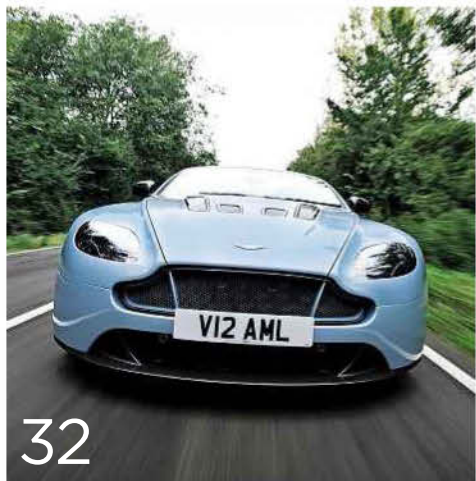
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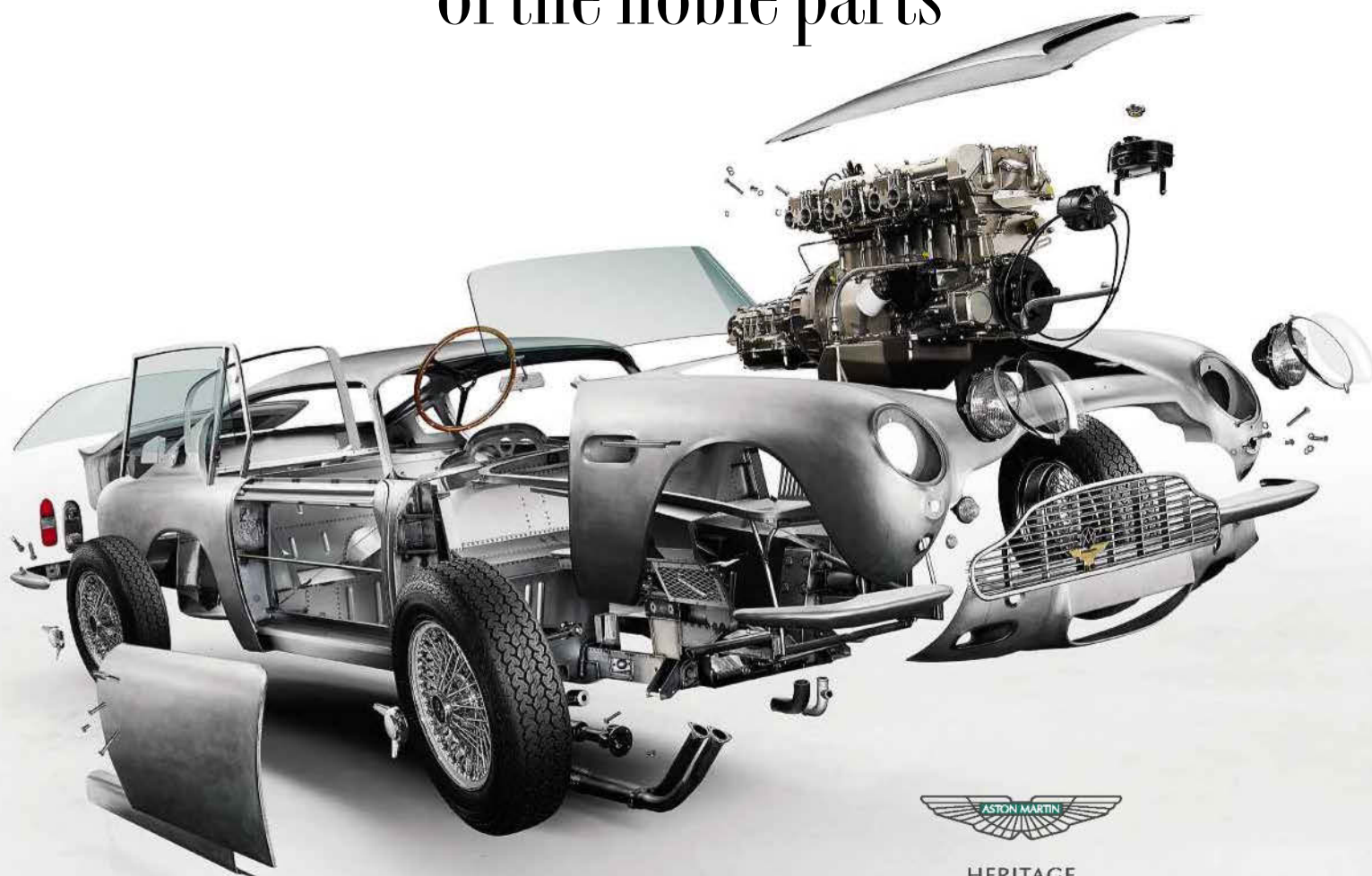
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Viewpoint

Why the arrival of a new CEO heralds an exciting future for Aston Martin



IT'S A MEASURE of Aston Martin's skill in attracting a succession of charismatic leaders that most of us could name a number of the company's former bosses without resorting to Google for the answer. If you're a true Aston enthusiast it's something you can do without thinking too hard, in much the same way we Brits can name a succession of monarchs or Prime Ministers.

It's a given, therefore, that if you've got a drop or two of petrol in your veins, names such as Dr Ulrich Bez, Bob Dover, Walter Hayes and Victor Gauntlett resonate. Likewise David Brown and Lionel Martin. Each has left an indelible mark on the company by creating cars that stand as lasting testament to their vision, determination and skill. Theirs are big boots to fill, which explains why the appointment of Andy Palmer as Aston's new Chief Executive Officer feels so momentous.

I wouldn't count myself as a car industry geek, yet Palmer's appointment – having been lured from one of the most senior management positions within Nissan – meant something to me. Hugely experienced, universally respected and an inveterate car guy, securing his services is a real coup for Aston Martin, for it speaks volumes about the products in the pipeline, and how fruitful the recently forged alliance with Mercedes-AMG promises to be.

Thanks to the efforts of the inimitable Dr Bez, the Gaydon era has been the catalyst for extraordinary change within Aston Martin, yet something tells me still greater and more exciting developments await. Palmer's appointment begins a fresh chapter in Aston Martin's history and I for one can't wait to see what the future holds, or to drive the new cars that will come to be regarded as Palmer's legacy.

Richard Meaden, editor

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Bulletin

News, analysis and events



AFTER MUCH SWIPING OF security cards, we're finally inside the main hub of what used to be the One-77 production facility at Gaydon. Those sinuous carbonfibre creatures have long since departed for their new homes and the white room with its immaculate, glossy light-grey flooring is still. Or at least it would be if it weren't for an impossibly long, square-shouldered saloon car lurking in the far corner, maybe 40ft away. It's surrounded by half-a-dozen people, finessing shut-lines, caressing trim and ensuring every last detail is perfect. This is the new Lagonda.

Tomorrow it will be shipped out to Dubai, where in a few days' time AML's new CEO, Dr Andy Palmer, will launch it into the Middle East market. He will also reveal its name – Taraf – which apparently translates roughly as 'success'. And he will drop broad hints that, despite earlier suggestions, it may now be sold in other markets, including the UK. But right now all that concerns the team is getting this car ready for its public debut.

This is also my first sight of the new car in the raw, and although the PR team and Marek Reichman – Aston's engaging,

considered and deeply passionate design director – would probably prefer the hubbub around the car to stop, I can't help thinking it's the perfect introduction. My guess is that this car, inspired by the William Towns-designed 1970s Lagonda, will forever be surrounded by a crowd. Later, Reichman will describe the Lagonda marque as a 'shared experience' and I think that's absolutely the nub of this car and its wild inspiration.

The speed of the Lagonda's development, just two years from inception to delivery, is a testament to



Taraf coming to UK?

THE LAGONDA TARAF HAS OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED IN THE MIDDLE EAST - BUT IT COULD BE SOLD IN OTHER MARKETS, INCLUDING THE UK. HERE'S THE FULL STORY

WORDS JETHRO BOVINGDON | PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN

Aston Martin's creativity and engineering agility, but re-imagining this marque has been a long road. 'The launch of the Lagonda SUV concept back in '09 was to really tell the world that Lagonda is part of our portfolio,' explains Reichman. 'It showed that we can use Lagonda to do things outside of the core of Aston Martin the sports car maker.' Launched at the Geneva show, the Lagonda SUV concept was controversial to say the least, but Reichman is adamant that it was an enlightening exercise. 'That car was a dividing piece, but what it told us was,

Above and right

New saloon is being marketed initially in the Middle East, where the previous Lagonda was a big sales hit. It wears an updated version of the Lagonda 'wings' badge





Clockwise from left
Taraf high-speed-testing in Oman;
design director Marek Reichman with
the styling 'clay'; and the new Lagonda
with its Towns-designed forebear



"hey, this brand is alive", people want to know, they want to hear, to criticise or to praise. For us that was great.' Few would have guessed it at the time, but the passionate reaction to the SUV created real belief in the rebirth of Lagonda.

Reichman is warming up now and his excitement about the project is plain to see. 'The next phase was to say, "OK, we know Lagonda means something," so what next?' The answer lay with the previous Lagonda and its continuing iconic status in the Middle East. 'The beating heart of Lagonda is really strong in the Middle East. Probably 70 per cent of the Williams Towns cars went there and we realised we had a marketplace eager for a product that's very different, very unusual and very bespoke. Hey presto... the project becomes alive.'

So now design and engineering knew they were to create a super-luxurious saloon – and take their inspiration from Towns' wedge. However, as Reichman is at pains to point out, it couldn't distract from the core of their current work – namely creating the DB9 and V8 Vantage replacements – and it had to make money.

To meet both criteria meant a small team and a clear vision were crucial. 'The Lagonda was generated through what we call our Special Projects,' Reichman begins. 'We call them the SAS of the engineering team. They are a crack squad of engineers, led by Dave King, who work very closely with design. So we work with one fully formed vision.'

That vision is effectively the framework of the project, starting with the vast 5396.5mm length, the 3189mm wheelbase and all the other critical measurements. Once these hard points are agreed they act as 'vision-checkers', says Reichman, and ensure that compromise doesn't creep into the project. 'We agree in that



vision – a package – early on and then get the company to buy into it, too. Once we've agreed the parameters as a team we have a high degree of confidence that it can work. From there it's about managing the programme to make sure we realise our ambitions completely.'

As expected, the Lagonda will get the 5.9-litre V12 and new eight-speed ZF automatic transaxle gearbox from the latest Rapide S. Charismatic, effortlessly powerful (c550bhp) but with the sharp bite of a thoroughbred sports car engine, the V12 should imbue the Lagonda with a unique mix of expensive refinement and a sense of endless, soaring performance. 'It's still an incredibly sporting car,' says Reichman. 'We call it a super-sports saloon and that beating heart is really important. So you feel you have all the space of an S-class but the feeling of driving is that you're still connected to the car and the road. We've had the cars testing out in Oman at 175mph and it feels like you're gliding along the road but still connected, involved.'

I'm keen to hear if Reichman felt constrained or inspired by the Towns car. Designers love freedom and I'd wondered if the presence of the old car might have

felt like a burden. That idea is shot down in seconds. 'Inspiration, absolutely,' he grins without hesitation. 'I remember when I first came to work here in '05. I was visiting Works and somebody was telling me, "this is the Bond car, over there is a DB4 GT Zagato..." and I was just, "wow, there's a Lagonda. Oh my god, just look at this thing." As a designer, I love that it challenged so many things and was completely unique. To have somebody say to use that feeling, that shape, as your inspiration is pretty incredible.'

So what does Lagonda mean to Reichman? 'It's all about dramatic proportion. And yes, the Towns car utilised unusual technology.' He wears a wry smile at this point. 'At the time that technology was groundbreaking. Unfortunately it didn't work! But for the new car there had to be an element of technology – reliable technology.' Rather than any wacky dashboard electronics, the decision was taken to make the tech innate in the very structure of the car by creating a full carbonfibre body. 'We took all the knowledge we had of carbonfibre,' he continues. 'The result is it's weight-neutral with an Aston Martin Rapide yet it's almost half a metre longer and fits four

'At 175mph it feels like you're gliding along the road but still connected, involved'

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people in extreme luxury. We learnt so much from Vanquish and the carbon chassis of One-77 – about bonding and structures – and that knowledge allows rigidity, light weight but also freedom in terms of radii, shapes and forms versus aluminium. So the technology is material in that respect and the drama that comes from the original car is proportion.'

The overall effect is little short of mesmerising. Marek walks me around the car and explains some of the little tricks employed to lighten the shape, points out the broad shoulder-line employed to create a sense of tension and sporting aggression, the unbroken lines that run from the vanes of the grille, through the LED light bar of the headlamps and all the way down the flanks of the car...

It's fascinating to get a sense of how every detail is meticulously woven into a cohesive whole. I want to nod wisely, but then I hear myself blurting out: 'Wow, it looks great.' But while I feel conscious of my relative design naivety, Marek seems happy enough. 'Right at the beginning I wanted that magic of "wow, I saw one of those Lagondas"'. The same reaction you've had today and that I had back at Works when I saw a Lagonda. It's a combination of something regal, sporting and – I hate to use this word, but... futuristic. One of the first thoughts was that the baddies in *The Matrix* need to be in this car. A satin black version of this? They're in there.'

That's my cue to slip inside and try to get a sense of what travelling in the new Lagonda might be like. The rear accommodation is beautifully wrought and – thank goodness – there's room to sprawl in complete comfort where in a Rapide you'd be bunched-up. From the driver's seat things are more familiar, with similar architecture to that of a Rapide S, but the views out over the long bonnet, and down the crisp flanks as you glance in the mirrors, are unique. This particular



'These cars will be so bespoke, there could be a price variance of £100,000'

Lagonda is relatively restrained, intricately quilted cream leather complementing the ebony centre facia beautifully. The expectation is that every Taraf will be completely individual, with solid gold badges, gold thread running through the headlining and endless other material choices all available to the wealthy few.

Aston Martin is yet to confirm the price or just how limited the Lagonda will be, but expect the initial production run for the Middle East to be between 100 and 200, and in terms of pricing, somewhere between the £400,000 of the Zagato and the £1.1m of the One-77. 'We haven't talked about it too much,' says Reichman, 'simply because these cars will be so bespoke that there could be a variance of perhaps £100,000 simply because of each customer's unique choices.'

And after the Middle East, well, other markets are now being evaluated. As Andy Palmer will tell the audience of VIP guests in Dubai: 'It is clear from the initial reaction to the car that interest from

around the world is extremely high and I can confirm today that we are also evaluating the opportunity to offer this Lagonda in other markets.'

So Lagonda is back and the foundation for a full relaunch of the marque has been laid. 'Lagonda will always be a bespoke proposition, but I'd expect less limited models in the near future,' Reichman tells me through a wide grin.

Such is the excitement around this car, it's no surprise it won't remain a one-off. 'This is history in the making for me,' says Reichman. 'To do a show car is one thing, to produce a real car is something else again. To see it on the road – that's a magical experience.'

Sadly I can't see inside the AML design studio but I get the impression things are moving pretty quickly in there. When will we see the next chapter in the Lagonda story? It certainly won't be another 25 years. Marek signs off with a hint bigger than his new saloon: 'Geneva should be interesting next year... see you there.'



Top and left
Reichman introduces his creation to VIP guests and prospects at the car's launch in Dubai. Taraf name could be for Middle East market only. Every interior will be bespoke; the important thing here is the spacious rear seating



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Meeting the new boss

ASTON MARTIN HAS A NEW CEO, BRITISH-BORN ANDY PALMER. ON HIS FIRST DAY IN THE JOB HE MET THE GAYDON WORKFORCE AND OUTLINED HIS VISION

WORDS NICK TROTT

PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN

TWELVE MONTHS AFTER former CEO Dr Ulrich Bez stood down, Aston Martin Lagonda has a new boss – 51-year-old British-born Dr Andrew ‘Andy’ Palmer.

Palmer joins from Nissan, where he juggled a dizzying number of roles, including chief planning officer, executive vice president and member of the executive committee of Nissan Motor Company, reporting directly to president and CEO Carlos Ghosn. Palmer was appointed Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in the 2014 New Year Honours for services to the British automotive industry.

As the new chief executive officer of Aston Martin Lagonda Ltd, Palmer assumes operational responsibility for all aspects of the business. He started his tenure by introducing himself to assembled staff at the Gaydon HQ and production facility. He described joining Aston Martin as ‘a decision of the head and the heart’ and promised to lead the marque forward into a new era of growth.

‘Being asked to lead Aston Martin, an iconic brand with tremendous global recognition and potential, was an opportunity impossible to refuse,’ he said. ‘Together we will create the next generation of Aston Martin products.’

British-born Palmer began his career in 1979 as a 16-year-old apprentice at Automotive Products Limited (UK). He

joined Austin Rover in 1986 and worked his way up to become transmissions chief engineer of Rover Group. For the past 13 years he has been based in Japan with Nissan, where many saw him as the successor to Carlos Ghosn. However, in an interview with *Automotive News* in late 2013, Ghosn announced that his replacement would be Japanese. ‘I want Nissan to be continued to be seen as a Japanese company,’ he explained. It is thought this revelation, combined with a long-held ambition to lead a car company and a desire to move back to the UK, was a deciding factor for Palmer.

Senior motoring industry insiders and commentators acknowledge Palmer as one of the sharpest minds in the business, leading many to suggest that Aston Martin has scored a bit of a coup – and not the other way around. While CEO of AML is a highly coveted job, Palmer would have needed firm assurances before agreeing to leave the high-volume, high-budget, big-spending Nissan. The recently announced collaboration with Daimler and AMG – in which electrical systems and engines will be shared between the brands – will have been a significant factor in his decision to move to Gaydon. Not only that, but Palmer has considerable experience with ‘alliances’, having worked closely on the Renault-Nissan project in recent years.



Left and above

Andy Palmer: relishing the challenges of taking Aston Martin into a new era. One of his first actions was to Tweet the photo of him with the Gaydon workforce. ‘Together we will create the next generation of Aston Martins,’ he told them

Palmer’s job will not be easy. Aston Martin is embarking on its biggest-ever investment programme over the next decade, but without new product it faces being left behind by rivals. With a complex ownership split (among Investindustrial, Investment Dar and Daimler), Palmer will need to juggle shareholder and customer demands. For instance, Aston Martin has publicly said an SUV is not part of the plan, but will that change?

A motorsport enthusiast, Palmer was instrumental in the rejuvenation of the Nismo brand – more good news for Aston Martin, although it is thought that Palmer will eschew expensive prototypes in favour of the current GT3 and GT4 road-car-based motorsport ventures.

Former CEO Dr Bez retains his role as non-executive chairman, while David Richards – former chairman of AML and boss of Prodrive – remains in charge of Aston Martin Racing but relinquishes his involvement with the road car operation.

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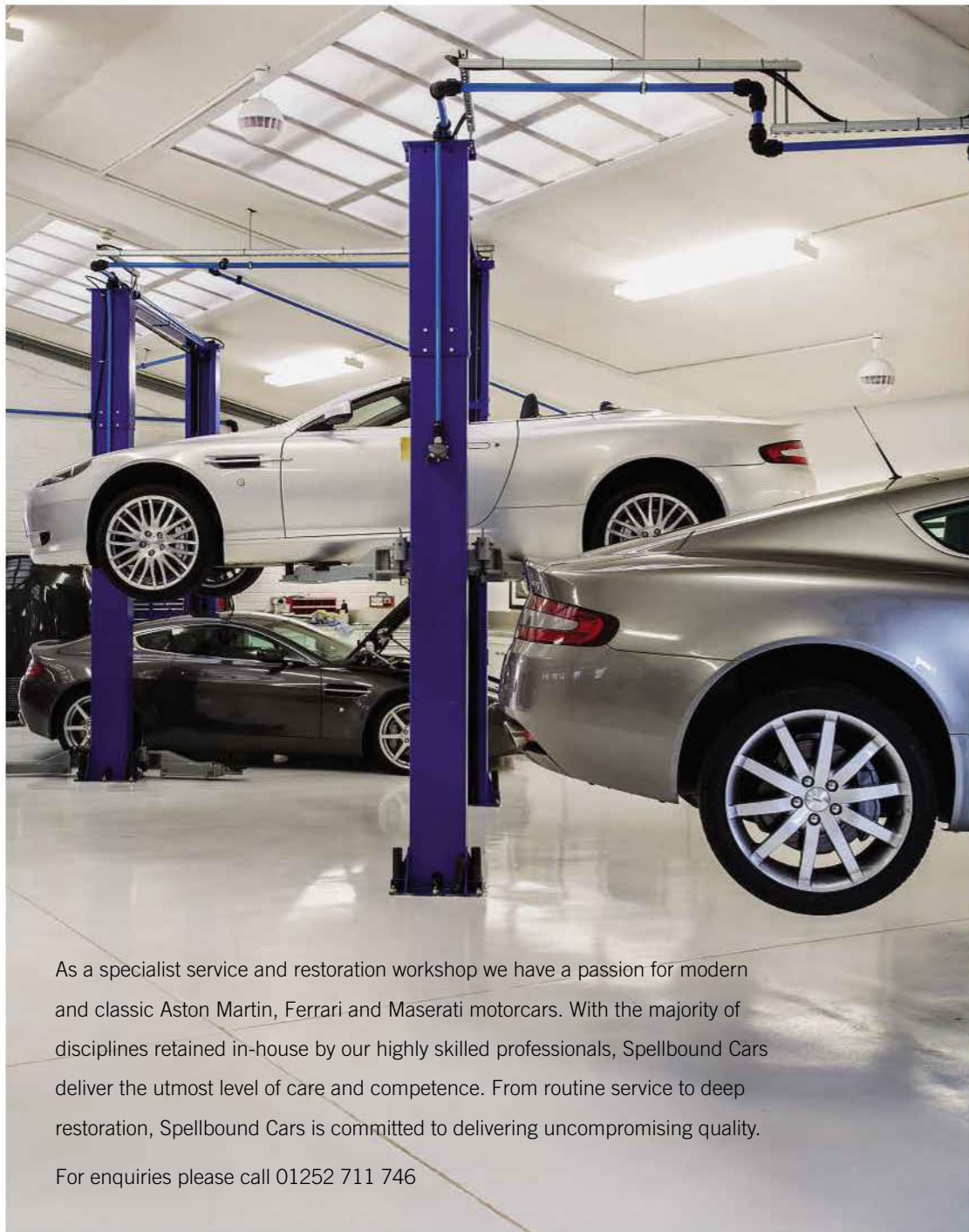
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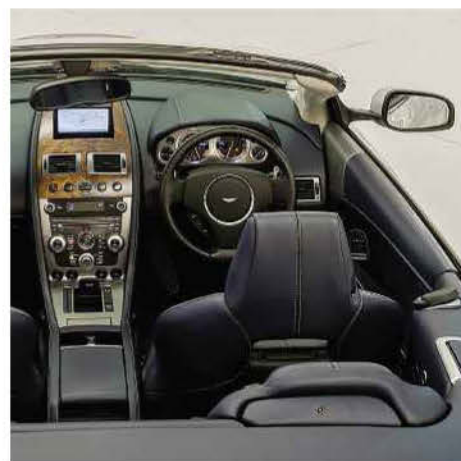
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Champions at the double

MIXED EMOTIONS AS ASTON MARTIN RACING CLINCHES THE TEAM AND DRIVER TITLES IN THE GTE AM CLASS, BUT PRO CARS STRUGGLE FOR CONSISTENCY

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY DREW GIBSON

THE SECOND HALF of the 2014 World Endurance Championship has been bittersweet for Aston Martin Racing, for while its GTE AM efforts have secured both the team and driver World Championship titles with two races left to run as we go to press, the GTE PRO entries have shown dazzling pace but failed to score consistent results.

After a long summer hiatus, the season resumed in September, when teams headed to Texas for the Six Hours of Austin. Strong qualifying performances

saw AMR GTE PRO and GTE AM entries secure front-row qualifying positions, with both the #97 car of Darren Turner and Stefan Mücke and the #95 car of Richie Stanaway and Kristian Poulsen narrowly missing out on respective class poles.

The race was defined by wild Texan weather, the heat and humidity of the afternoon ceding to torrential rain not long after the first pit stops and driver changes. Having taken the class lead on the first lap, Mücke had not long handed

the GTE to Turner before the heavens opened. Showing exemplary judgement and car control, Turner remained out on track on slick tyres, managing to maintain control while those around him floundered. The race was eventually red-flagged while the worst of the weather passed, then restarted a short while later.

The remainder of the race saw the #97 car engaged in a tooth-and-nail fight with both the factory Porsche and factory Ferrari, the Gulf-liveried Aston eventually crossing the line to take a thrilling GTE PRO win. In the GTE AM class, it was the #98 Aston that prevailed over the #95 car, the latter falling foul of already being in the pits as the race was red-flagged. In accordance with FIA WEC rules, the car then rejoined the race a lap down, and despite the crew's best efforts it was too great a disadvantage to overcome and take the win.

From Texas, the teams headed to Japan, for the Six Hours of Fuji. Qualifying saw the #99 AMR Vantage of the Craft-Bamboo Racing Team take an unexpected



Left and above

Contrasting weather conditions in Texas during the Six Hours of Austin. The #97 car of Turner and Mücke took a thrilling win in GTE PRO

Right and below
From Texas, the World Endurance Championship circus headed to the Far East for the Six Hours of Fuji (right) and the Six Hours of Shanghai (below) where the GTE AM squad was able to celebrate winning both the team and driver titles (bottom)



'The #99 car fought wheel-to-wheel with the quickest pair of Ferrari 458s for the duration of the race'

pole in the GTE PRO class, thanks to exceptional laps from Fernando Rees and Alex MacDowall just ahead of the #97 car of Turner and Mücke. In GTE AM, the #98 and #95 cars were at it again, the former grabbing pole in the hands of Pedro Lamy and Christoffer Nygaard.

The start of the race was unusually fraught, which unfortunately resulted in the #97 Aston of Turner and Mücke tangling with another car and sustaining damage that would require an 8min pit stop to repair, effectively putting the Aston out of class contention before the race had really begun.

Fortunately the #99 car of Rees, MacDowall and Darryl O'Young fared better, fighting wheel-to-wheel with the quickest pair of Ferrari 458s for the duration of the race and coming home for an eventual 3rd place finish. In GTE AM, the #95 and #98 cars resumed their season-long class battle, #95 taking the win in Japan to score its third victory of the year.

The WEC remained in the Far East for the next round of the championship, held in China for the Six Hours of Shanghai. The #97 Vantage appeared to have shaken off the bad luck encountered in Japan, bouncing back to find sufficient pace to take GTE PRO pole in qualifying. Things were looking very good in the race, too, with Turner and Mücke holding the class lead for five of the six hours. Heartbreakingly, an engine issue forced their retirement with less than one stint remaining.

Some consolation was provided by the continuing battle in GTE AM, with the

championship-leading #95 Vantage and chasing #98 car continuing to slug it out. As the chequered flag fell on another textbook race, it was the #98 car that took the spoils, narrowly from #95. It was enough to guarantee AMR the GTE AM driver and team titles, but it could still go to either car at this stage.

'To have clinched the GTE AM team and driver trophies with two rounds remaining is great news,' commented AMR team principal John Gaw. 'It's a two-horse race to the end now and, although the #95 is in the lead, the #98 is hot on its heels!'

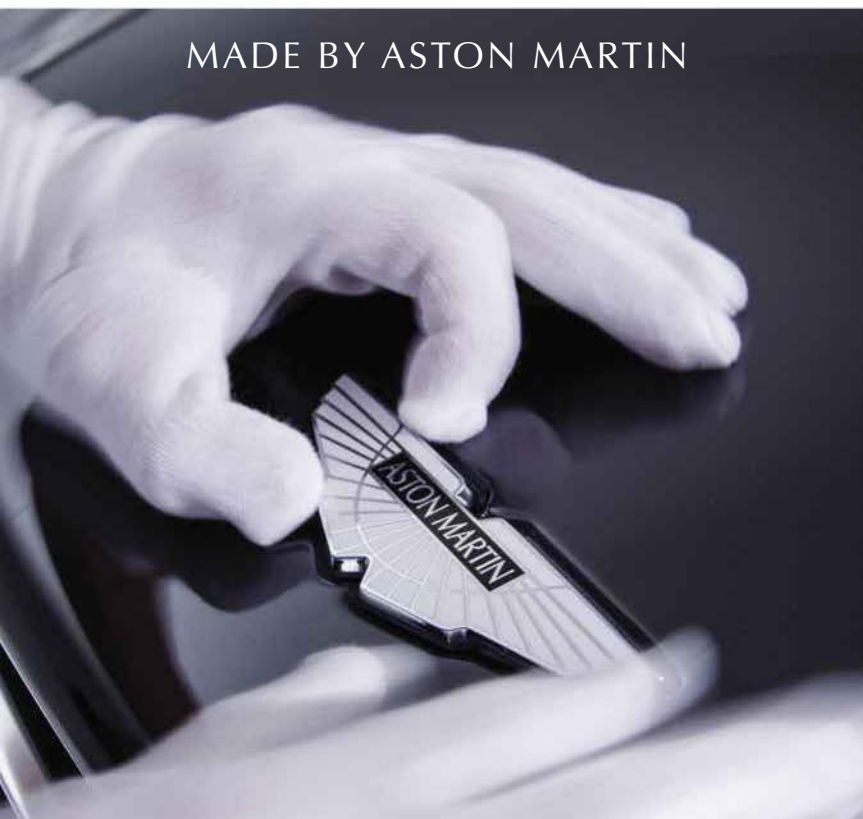
We close for press on the eve of the Six Hours of Bahrain, the penultimate round of the WEC. Two weeks later the WEC heads to Brazil for the season finale at the Six Hours of Sao Paulo. We'll report from those races, and look forward to what the 2015 season has in store, in the next issue.



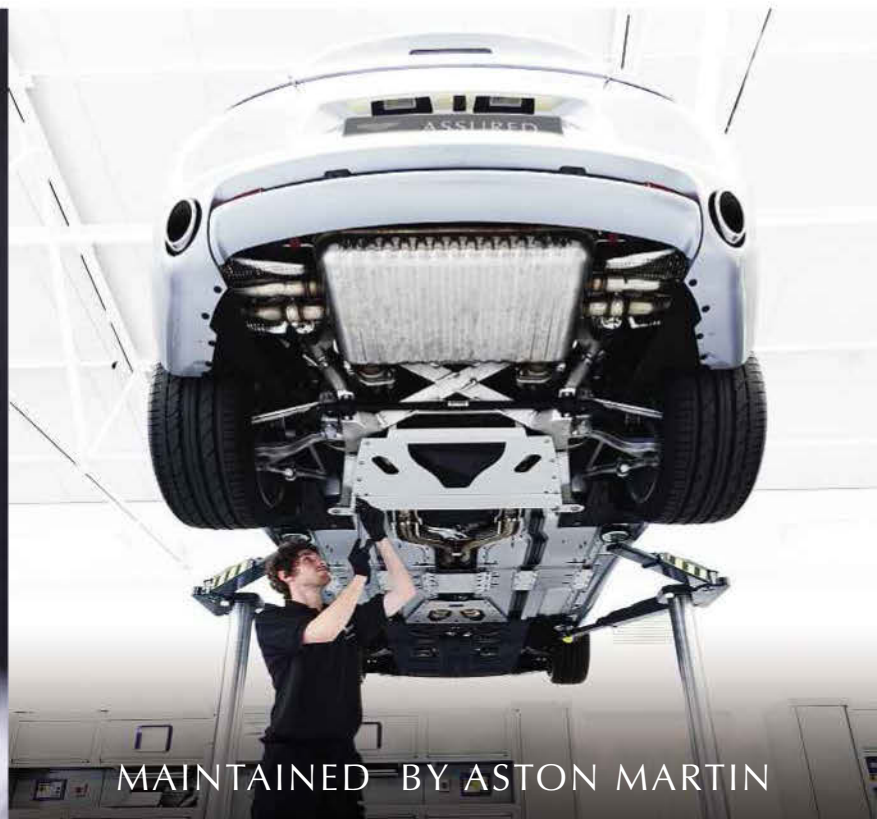


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Thrills at Snetterton, rebirth at Prescott

THE AMOC RACING SEASON REACHES ITS FINALE, WHILE AN 'OLD LADY' RETURNS TO HILLCLIMBING

WORDS: GILLIAN CARR, ANNE REED, MARY ANTCLIFF, PETER PRESTON-HOUGH
PHOTOGRAPHY: DAVE BRASSINGTON, NIGEL DOWDING, MARY ANTCLIFF

THE AMOC Racing year reached a crescendo at Snetterton in late September with the concluding meeting of the season. The Intermarque championship went down to the wire, with any one of four drivers able to win: Wayne Marrs (Ferrari 355), Stephen Atkinson (Porsche 968), Tim Mogridge (Ferrari 355) and Rob Hollyman (Porsche 964).

In fact it was Christopher Scragg (AM V8) who powered into the lead, ahead of Christopher Kemp's GT4, with Marrs third. After much close racing, Kemp handed over to professional driver Stuart Hall, who had a 30sec 'pro-driver' penalty. The V8, now in the hands of Boysie Thurtle, came out of the pitstop in the lead but was slowly reeled in by Hall in a fine climax. Marrs' had to call it a day after losing power and Hollyman also retired. In the final minutes, Hall caught Thurtle to take the win, with Simpson second and Brooks third. Sixth for Mogridge was enough to secure the 2014 AMOC Intermarque title, by one point from Atkinson.

Twenty-three cars lined up for the AMOC '50s Sports Car Race, Darren McWhirter (Lister Jaguar) leading from the off as Fred Wakeman (Cooper T38) bogged down with wheelspin. Tony

Ditheridge (Cooper Monaco) had a great dice with James Paterson's Lotus 11 until the Cooper dropped a valve, and there was a fine battle between Jaguar XK120 racers Chris Scholey and Chris Keith-Lucas. McWhirter took the flag 11 seconds clear of Wakeman, third going to Gordon McCulloch's Maserati 200S.

In the 'Equipe' GTS, John Yea (MGB) got the drop on pole man Pete Foster (TR4), but Foster eventually regained the lead and, with Yea glued to his bumper for the remainder of the race, took the victory by just 0.4sec. Further down the field, Hannah Reed made her track debut in the family Aston Martin DB2; her fine drive confirming that she has inherited her parents' skills and passion to compete.

The HRDC 'Allstars' saw Mike Whitaker (TVR Griffith) make a faultless drive to take victory, with Larry Tucker (MG) just pipping David Alston (Porsche) for 2nd.

In the HRDC 'Touring Greats' race, the Naismith/Perryman Austin A35 battled the Butterfield/Barclay Jaguar Mk1 before the Jaguar cracked under the pressure and ran wide at 'Agostini', demoting them from second to fourth, Naismith and Perryman winning from Matthew Moore (Austin A40) and Les Ely (Jaguar Mk1).

Clockwise from above left

Hannah Reed takes the flag after a fine debut drive; MkII found languishing in a garage, back in action at Prescott hillclimb, and Melling's DB4 is harried by Routledge's Ferrari 355 in the Intermarque race

The Innes Ireland Cup saw Robert Bremner (Cobra) dominate, though Patrick Blakeney-Edwards (Austin-Healey) made a storming drive to finish third behind Simon Orebi Gann's Morgan +4SS.

2014 SAW THE re-launch of the AMOC Speed Series after a five-year break. In August's Blyton sprint, Tom Whittaker won the Aston class in his rapid Vanquish, and in the final sprint at Curborough, fastest Aston was Mike Wadsworth in his spectacular DB4. After seven rounds, using a performance equalising system, winner of the Aston class was Keith Piper in his International, with David Humbert (DB2) second. The non-Aston class was won by Chris Quested in his Porsche.

Meanwhile Nigel Dowding returned an 'old lady' to hill racing. In 2012 the MkII was found languishing in a garage despite having a racing pedigree, with hillclimbs and circuit racing to her name in the UK, Singapore and Malaysia. Having returned to the road for her 80th birthday in June, she took to the Prescott hillclimb for October's Aston Bugatti challenge. Her times fell through the day and she didn't miss a beat, either on the hill or on the 160-mile round trip to enter the event.

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SUCCESSFUL AUTUMN CONCOURS LEADS AMOC'S END-OF-YEAR ROUND-UP

WORDS: MARK DONOGHUE, ANDREW FAWKES, BERND FISHER, JOHN SULLIVAN, PHILIP TURLE, GARY WIGZELL

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARK DONOGHUE, ANDREW FAWKES, BERND FISHER, FABRIENNE & PHILIPPE CUCHET

THERE COULDN'T have been a more quintessentially English venue for the club's Autumn Concours in early October than Sudeley Castle. Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Cotswold hills, the castle's manicured lawns were the perfect setting for 60 Aston Martins of all ages. Highlights of the weekend included a parade of 25 Vanquishes through the castle grounds and a special showcase for the fabulous Bertone Jet 2+2, which sat prominently in front of the castle.

The same October weekend, AMOC members were out in force in Horsham, West Sussex. Horsham Council had requested some Aston Martins to be displayed alongside the town's Vintage Fair. Area 16 and supporting neighbours provided 23 Astons, from a 1954 DB2/4 to a 2008 V8 Vantage N400, the spectacular line-up proving a huge hit.

Another popular event, the Thornfalcon Classic in Somerset, has grown from a small village meet in the late '90s to this year's display of over 1200 classic vehicles. There were 25 Astons on display, from a 1934 MkII to current models.

Organised tours are proving increasingly popular. In September, AMOC Devon & Cornwall organised a tour to Tuscany with 12 Astons, from seven different AMOC areas, joining an action-packed ten days. The cars ranged from a beautiful DB6

Volante through to the latest Gaydon models. Highlights included three days spent visiting the historic medieval cities of Tuscany, while the return journey took in the Mille Miglia Museum, some brilliant driving on the passes in the Alps, and a visit to the Schlumpf Museum, which now has a Lagonda on display.

The previous month, the AMOC tour to Versailles was another spectacular success, 48 members enjoying a stay at the historic Trianon Palace, a tour of the Palace of Versailles itself, and a visit to Monet's house and garden. The fine array of Astons included John Glyde's superb DB5 and Ian Griffiths' Vantage V600.

Staying in Paris, local AMOC members attended the first Chantilly Arts and Élégance on Sunday September 7 at the

Château de Chantilly. The line-up of Astons in the specially reserved parking area was almost as mouthwatering as the contents of the numerous picnic baskets: 1934 Mark 2, DB2 cabriolet, DB2/4, DB MkIII, three DB4s including a DB4GT, DB5, DB6, two DBS Vantages, DBS, AM Vantage, two AM V8s and a Lagonda! The event was such a success, a date has already been set for September 6, 2015.

There was also a good turnout for the Zoute Grand Prix in Belgium, with three classic V8s and a line-up of newer models. German members, meanwhile, held their annual meeting in Grassau, Bavaria. Eighty participants in 45 Astons enjoyed a full weekend, including an excursion into Austria for lunch with fellow members.

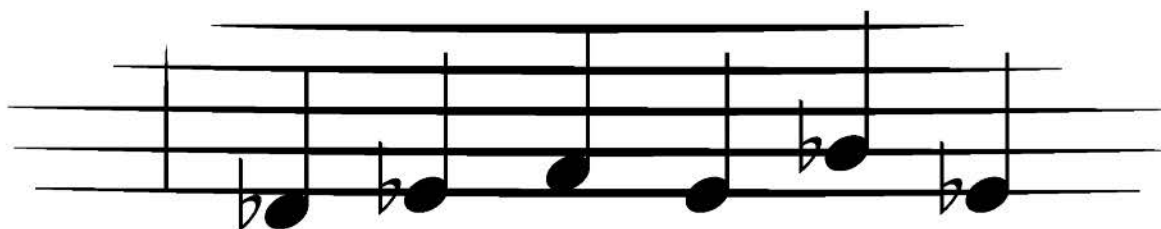
Rather further afield, the October concours in New South Wales, Australia, combined fantastic surroundings with 30 beautiful Astons, from Phil Westbrook's 1957 DB2/4 Mark III to Kevin Innes's DB9, with Westbrook and Warren Brown (DBS) cleaning up when it came to the awards!

For info about the Club, visit www.amoc.org



Clockwise from top left

'50s Astons and '70s Lagondas on the manicured lawns at Sudeley Castle; a tale of tails at the Château de Chantilly; informal fun in the sunshine at the Thornfalcon Classic, and German AMOC members enjoy some Austrian hospitality



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DB5 climbs further out of reach...

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WORDS CHRIS BIETZK

PHOTOGRAPHY ARTCURIAL, BONHAMS, SILVERSTONE AUCTIONS

TRADITIONALLY, BRITS have only ever crossed the Channel to start a war or to buy enormous quantities of wine (thirsty work, warmongering), but in recent years the many excellent auctions staged in Paris have provided an additional reason to visit France.

Artcurial held its seventh 'Automobiles sur les Champs' sale on November 2, once again offering an interesting assortment of high-quality cars from its HQ on the glamorous Champs Élysées – including a pair of lovely Astons. First to cross the block was a sympathetically restored 1958 DB2/4 MkIII Coupé, which sold right in the middle of its estimate range, making €184,760. That it went for the expected money was, frankly, unexpected, given the mileage (32,500), the number of owners (two), the condition (very good) and the fact that the market has woken up to the appeal of Aston's more 'antique' models.

The 1964 DB5 that followed a few lots later – a superbly maintained left-hand-drive example – was predictably the subject of more frenzied bidding, and eventually changed hands for €931,200, beating its estimate easily. Artcurial was at pains to point out that the car was still a bargain compared with many of its Italian and German contemporaries, and it's hard to argue. Even as the DB5 motors ever further out of the reach of the merely well-off, no other car – from Ferrari or

Maserati or Mercedes or anybody else – offers the same combination of style, performance and cachet for less.

That's why you won't find us moaning (much) about the number placed on the head of the '65 DB5 Convertible set to be offered by Bonhams in Paris on February 5. Chassis DB5/C/1920/L has been valued at a whopping €1,600,000-1,900,00, which is roughly three times what you'd have paid for a Convertible – of which just 23 were built – back in 2010.

There should be no shortage of interest even at that price; soft-tops of all kinds have performed well at auction in recent months. A 1970 DB6 MkII Volante sniffed a million pounds at the Salon Privé Sale (a Silverstone Auctions production) on September 4, and was ultimately hammered for £954,500. Included in the huge history file that accompanied the car was a letter from Aston Martin Works describing it as 'one of the very best MkII Volantes', an endorsement that no doubt spurred on some determined bidders.

More our cup of tea was the 1952 DB2 Drophead Coupé sold by RM in London on September 8, one of just 98 completed by the factory. With its Willie Watson-designed (under WO Bentley) 2.6-litre engine and influential styling, the DB2 is arguably the most fascinating of all David Brown cars, and this freshly restored example was well bought at £218,400.



Clockwise from bottom right

1964 DB5 was one of the stars of Artcurial's November sale; 1965 DB5 Convertible should cause even more excitement when it is offered in February; dusty DB5 made £33,350

The allure of less shiny cars has been strong, most notably in the case of a 1970 DBS sold by Silverstone Auctions straight out of the barn where it had spent the last 28 years. Somebody with a large reserve of elbow grease (or money) paid £33,350 to take home a complete car and almost three decades' worth of dirt – £10k more than expected. We can't fault the buyer, though: the romance of the barnfind is hard to resist. Harder to understand is the chap who paid £247,900 for a 1986 V8 Vantage Zagato at Bonhams' Goodwood Revival sale. Yes, it was essentially brand new, with delivery miles only, but to my eyes it still looks like a Nissan Bluebird. Perhaps enormous quantities of French wine were responsible...





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**1967 ASTON MARTIN DB6
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Your view

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The truth behind the 'Death Ray'

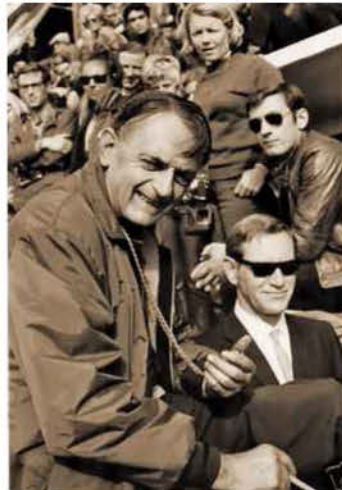
Firstly I must congratulate you on what is a superb magazine, and one whose arrival I always await with great anticipation.

However, in the 'Heroes' piece in issue 6, John Simister wrote what I felt was an unfair and unsubstantiated article on one of my heroes, namely John Wyer. While I was never lucky enough to have met JW, in 2011 I did organise a tribute to him, at the Hotel de France for the AMOC.

At that time I wrote to quite a few of JW's drivers and associates, inviting them to the event, and was simply overwhelmed by the response. Virtually every single person either came to the event or took the time and trouble to write back to me; clearly because of the respect that they held for him.

Derek Bell accepted my invite to be the patron of the event without a moment's hesitation. Harley Cluxton III returned to La Sarthe for the first time since the '80s, coming from Arizona just to pay tribute to a man who had clearly had a huge influence on his life. Brian Redman recorded an hilarious interview with himself, reminiscing about his times with JW and Aston Martin (you can see it on YouTube), and there were similar tributes from John Horsman and Eric Thompson.

Although JW was often known by his nickname of Death Ray, everyone I spoke to had a huge degree of affection for him.



Above, right and below

The other side of John Wyer...

'Heroes' piece evoked a strong reaction.

Below: Sir Stirling Moss and Derek Bell at a Wyer tribute (with AMOC members Conal Austin and Leonie Dawson)

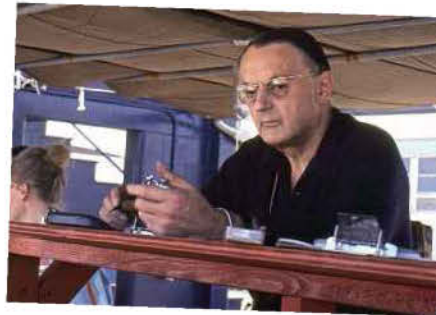
I was therefore shocked and saddened to read Mr Simister state that John's character traits were not likely to boost team morale, that opinion remains divided as to whether his teams' successes were because of or despite him, and that some would describe Wyer as psychologically damaged.

I made some further inquiries on JW's behalf. Brian Redman came back to me stating that he felt the above statements were 'damaging, inaccurate and unfair'. Brian, who of course drove for JW in '68 and '70, added that 'on at least one occasion I certainly deserved the famous Death Ray stare, but it didn't appear'.

JOHN WYER

HE WASN'T UNIVERSALLY LIKED, BUT JOHN WYER GOT RESULTS AS A TEAM MANAGER - INCLUDING ASTON MARTIN'S 1959 LE MANS WIN

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER PICTURE GENE BUSSIAN



HEROES JOHN WYER

A ny story about John Wyer seems to begin with a reference to his sobriquet, Death Ray. That was what seemed to emerge from the Aston Martin, and later Ford, Porsche and Mirage, team manager's eyes when something displeased him. It was not a trait likely to boost team morale, and opinion remains divided as to whether his teams' successes were because of him or despite him. Personalities tended to clash when he was around, with Wyer's will and temper usually prevailing. Back in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, his manner would simply have been termed rude by those on the receiving end of his displeasure. Today, with our time's greater empathy for personality failings, some would describe Wyer as psychologically damaged. The signs were certainly there, but a dry humour lurked under the surface, too. He sounds, then, not as promising a subject as one might hope for a feature entitled *Heroes*. Nevertheless, his record is an impressive one with four Le Mans wins and a string of other successes. The first came in 1959, when Roy Salvadori and Carroll Shelby brought their DBR1 home to victory. The second and third came in 1968 and 1969 with the self-same Ford GT40, driven by Pedro Rodriguez and Lucien Bianchi the first time; Jackie Ickx and Jackie Oliver the second. Ickx nudging over the line seconds ahead of Herrmann's Porsche 908. The fourth came in 1975 in JW Automotive's own Mirage M8, aka Gulf GR8, again driven by Jackie Ickx partnered this time with Derek Bell. That was a high note on which to end his racing days, but Wyer continued to advise the Mirage team's new owner, Harley Cluxton, for a while before moving to Arizona, where he died in 1989. He was born 80 years earlier in Kiddermister, Wiltshire, joined Sunbeam as an apprentice in 1927, moved to the Sales Carburator company as an engineer, and after the war joined Monaco Motors, which raced a pre-war Aston. In the team pit at Spa in 1948, Wyer met David Brown. Two years later he joined Aston Martin with the task of getting better racing results with the DB2 than the new car had managed so far. They soon came, with fifth and sixth overall at Le Mans in 1950 and a joint win in the Index of Performance. Aston needed a proper sports-racing car, though, and at the end of 1950 Robert Eberhart von Eberhorst, with the 1938 Auto Union V12 on his CV, arrived to create one. It took a while, and he and Wyer never quite agreed what form this new DB3 should take. Nor was it particularly successful, causing a new car - the DB3S - to take shape under Eberhorst's radar during 1953. Eberhorst and Aston never quite clicked, through little fault of the German, so he left to return to Auto Union.

Left
A stopwatch tells the full force of Wyer's famous Death Ray. Over the years, drivers, mechanics, journalists and many others felt its withering effect

He wasn't officially replaced until Wyer became technical director in July 1955 and general manager from 1956. Wyer still ran the racing activities, of course, and liked to do it in style despite his ingrained fervour for spending as little as possible. From 1953 right up to 1970 his team stayed at the Hotel de France for the Le Mans race weekend, preparing the cars there and driving them to the track. The 917s he ran on behalf of the Porsche factory were the last to do that road run, and a fine sight and sound they must have made.

From Astors to 917s is quite a leap. Ford and Gulf Oil were the links. Wyer left Aston in 1963, after the tentative return to racing with the DB4-based DP212, 214 and 215, to join Ford Advanced Vehicles at Slough. Ford wanted to beat Ferrari at Le Mans and set up FAV to do it. The story of how FAV's GT40s failed in the Le Mans bid, success coming in 1966 and 1967 with 7-litre cars built in the US, is well known; meanwhile John Wyer and Willment, the latter the owner of a Ford dealership and well versed in motorsport, took over FAV and renamed it JW Automotive Engineering.

JWAE's lightweight development of the GT40, with a narrower, more streamlined roof and early use of carbon fibre in the body panels, was raced in 1967 under Gulf sponsorship as the Mirage M1, resplendent in pale blue with an orange stripe and winning the Spa 1000km with Ickx and Dick Thompson driving. The two M1s were converted back to GT40 spec for 1968, and finally the UK end of the GT40 project scored its Le Mans victories - twice.

Mirages M2 and M3, with BRM engines, came to little but the 1970 deal for JWAE to run Porsche 917s on behalf of the factory ensured the Gulf colours would remain forever embedded in enthusiasts' minds. The 917s were fearfully fast, and scored well in 1971. After that, John Wyer gradually withdrew from the front line until retiring from motorsport in the year a Mirage finally won at Le Mans, 1975.

Clearly Wyer liked to be in control of his racing operations, and he managed them for 25 years. Not everyone who knew him was a Wyer fan, but for those who read about his exploits at the time, including this writer, 'here' sums it up pretty well. **Q**

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Maitland Cook often talks about his time working with JW in the late '60s and early '70s and always with a broad smile on his face. Maitland told me it was 'ridiculous' to suggest that JW was psychologically damaged, adding: 'If Wyer was damaged... then all of us with a will to win are also equally damaged.'

Maitland did find himself on the receiving end of the Death Ray 'on a number of occasions... and all fully deserved in hindsight!' He went on: 'Wyer was hardest on himself in his search for perfection, then on his beloved Tottie, and finally on the rest of us. He demanded very high standards of professional work, and led by example. He would not tolerate sloppiness in any form.

'He was shy in his personality, and Tottie always felt it was this

innate shyness that caused his brusque and sometimes rude conduct. However to those of us who knew him well, he was great company when the work was over and the race won!'

Others take a similar view. John Horsman told me that when he spoke to Arnold Perkins (development engineer at AML) a year or so ago, they agreed that being employed at Aston during the Wyer years were the happiest working days of their lives. John H also greatly enjoyed his time as MD of Gulf Research Racing Company, also with JW. 'The "Death Ray" stare was the subject of mirth more than terror,' John said, 'though one would not laugh when it had been given to you!'

'While he might have given certain drivers the rough edge of his tongue at times, there is no



Your view

doubt in my mind that all would have signed on again if they could go back in time and do it all again.

'It was, however, a failing of JW to occasionally be rude to people – his sister-in-law said he had “a degree in rudeness”. But the successes of AML and JWAE were all due to his leadership and the many difficult decisions he had to make.'

The article also includes a number of factual inaccuracies. The 1975 victory was not under the JW Automotive banner but that of the Gulf Research Racing Company with its Mirage GR8 and with John Horsman now as MD. JW's association with the Hotel de France didn't finish in 1970 but continued to 1975 with GRRC, and in fact he continued to stay there when advising Harley Cluxton's team. The Porsche 917s were not the last cars to do the road run from La Chartre, as John Horsman's book, *Racing in the Rain*, explains. And with regards to the 'two Mirage M1s', Horsman states there were in fact three: one was written off by Dr Dick Thompson at the 'Ring in 1967, one was converted back to a GT40 (with chassis no1074), and the third remained an M1 Mirage.

I really don't wish to upset Mr Simister, as I know that he is a respected journalist. However, I'm sure that if JW were still with us, he would certainly have found it very difficult to tolerate the factual inaccuracies, and so on this occasion he would have been subject to a Death Ray stare – and in my opinion deservedly so!

Dr David Wright, London

I never met JW, but he was indeed a hero to me in my youth. Nevertheless he had a certain reputation, and conversations I had with people connected to those who worked with Wyer brought a new interpretation to the famous outward manifestation of his personality. I thought it would add to the debate to mention this, which it certainly seems to have done, but I am relieved and pleased to hear that I might have overstated the case. As for the factual errors, I stand corrected – John Simister



Duck's tale: restoring a piece of Aston history

I am writing to you regarding a famous pre-war Aston Martin prototype, EML 132, nicknamed 'Donald Duck' – in the hope that the knowledgeable readers of *Vantage* might be able to help in its restoration.

During a recent visit to Munich, a good friend – and reader of your magazine – introduced me to the Hieber family, who run an Aston Martin restoration business, HMM Historischer Motorsport Hieber (you can read all about it at www.aston-martin-hmh.de).

They are currently in the process of restoring Donald Duck, which I understand was built in the late 1930s [forerunner to the Atom, EML 132, nicknamed Donald Duck for its rather unusual appearance, was an experimental car designed by Claude Hill to test new theories about chassis construction. It reputedly had very fine handling for its day – Ed].

I'm told the Hiebers purchased

the car in 1989 from an antiques dealer in Paderborn in northern Germany. He in turn had bought it from another antiques dealer in Germany who had brought it across from England.

The challenge that the team faces seems to be that very little is known about this prototype and they have been able to locate only a few pictures. This is hindering their careful restoration process, particularly as their ambition is to keep it as close to the original as possible.

The Aston Martin Heritage Trust kindly provided a copy of the car's original registration document and a couple of images from their archive. Another photograph was found by the Hiebers at the Beaulieu Autojumble some years ago.

But there is much more they need to find out about the car. For example they have almost no knowledge about the car's original interior.

Above

'Donald Duck' photographed in the late 1930s; how it was when it was purchased by the current custodians in 1989, and in its present state, undergoing a full restoration

They are also keen to know who owned the car in the 1950s and how it came to be in Germany. They know that it was bought for the princely sum of £75 in 1942 by Mr GH Tony Volks, who was the son of one of the founding members of the Lagonda Club. It seems Volks owned and drove the car until 1950, when it was sold on for £200 and the registration documents transferred to a Mr Leonard North in 1951. Thereafter the car seems to vanish until its reappearance in Germany.

If anyone has any information or photographs relating to this fascinating Aston, the Hiebers would be delighted to hear from them. Their email address is hieber@aston-martin-hmh.de

Tina Cruickshank, London SE1

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DRIVE | V12 VANTAGE S ROADSTER



WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON PARROTT

BLOWN

THE V12 VANTAGE S ROADSTER ISN'T JUST THE FASTEST CONVERTIBLE



AWAY

LE ASTON EVER; IT'S ONE OF THE GREATEST ASTONS OF ALL



WHEN IT COMES to great automotive rituals, sliding an Aston Martin's smooth lozenge-shaped 'key' into the dashboard and holding until the 5.9-litre V12 bursts into life is about as good as it gets. Never more so than when you're sitting in the driver's seat of the new V12 Vantage S Roadster.

As its name suggests, this is the soft-topped spin-off from the decidedly hardcore V12 Vantage S coupé. Powered by the same 565bhp 5.9-litre V12, it's a genuine 200mph machine (Aston Martin's official claim is 201), which makes it one of the fastest open-top cars money can buy and the fastest al fresco Aston ever. As with the coupé, it features the seven-speed Sportshift III transmission and the same multi-mode damping, driver aids and huge carbon-ceramic brake discs, while the carbonfibre splitter and hungry carbon-and-mesh radiator intake send a menacing message to the rear view mirrors of those in front.

Overall, the V12VSR looks fabulous, despite its age and familiarity. Indeed, when fitted with the optional thin-spoke lightweight alloys, the Vantage Roadster has never looked better. The story is much the same inside, where firm bucket seats set an unmistakably sporting tone. The infotainment system is really beginning to show its age, but the B&O hi-fi sounds great. If you're expecting Audi-style ergonomics, up-to-the-

minute satnav and intuitive controls, you'll be sorely disappointed. It's the downside to the Vantage's advancing years. But if you can cut it some slack it more than compensates in other, arguably more important areas (at least for a sports car), as I discover on a memorable day-trip to North Wales.

To provide a little context, the reason for heading to Snowdonia was an assignment for *Vantage's* sister magazine, *evo*, in which I was given the onerous task of comparing a Ferrari Enzo with its successor, the extraordinary LaFerrari hybrid hypercar. That's a good 500-mile round-trip from Meaden Towers, encompassing pretty much every kind of road, from confined country lanes to motorways and epic rollercoasters set against a majestic mountain backdrop. After a day like that, you might think the drive home in the Aston was something of an anti-climax, yet hand on heart nothing could be further from the truth.

What's particularly special about this V12 S Roadster, and what has always been central to the V12 Vantage concept from the beginning, is the combination of small-car agility and barrel-chested power. The magic of that potent cocktail is never more welcome than when you've spent a day threading two road-filling, ferociously valuable carbonfibre hypercars along roads lined with jagged stone walls. By contrast the

Opposite, going clockwise from top right

Drilled carbon-ceramic discs are standard on the V12 S - and hugely impressive; hood mechanism and body strengthening add 80kg to the kerbweight; V12 engine makes a mighty 565bhp; cockpit is pleasingly purposeful

V12VSR is a doddle to drive; narrow enough for there to be plenty of room to scribe smooth, languid lines through tricky tangles of tarmac, yet foursquare and sure-footed enough to impart a reassuring sense of poise and exploitability. To have so much performance on tap, and know you can readily deploy it where sense and visibility allow, is liberating and exhilarating in equal measure.

The engine is an absolute firebrand. Much sharper and more urgent than the earlier-spec unit in the original V12 Vantage and Vantage Roadster, it really does have formidable bite and a ferocious bark to match! The V12 S Roadster is some 80kg heavier than the coupé, but when driven in isolation you'd be hard-pressed to notice the difference. The closely stacked ratios of the seven-speed transmission always have you in the meat of the power and torque bands, so while there's much to relish in whipping the tacho needle round to the limiter, such is the low-down and mid-range performance (376lb ft from just 1000rpm!) that wringing it out much beyond 5500rpm is an indulgence rather than a requirement. At whatever revs and seemingly in



‘The engine is an absolute firebrand – much sharper and more urgent than the earlier-spec unit in the original V12 Vantage and Vantage Roadster’





‘Few cars bring such a complete sense of pleasure or stimulate such a powerful desire to just get in, drop the roof and drive’

whatever gear, this car feels seriously quick.

Unfortunately the Sportshift transmission isn't the best partner. Admittedly its shortcomings are more noticeable at lower speeds, when it stammers and feels generally slow-witted. At speed, with Sport mode engaged and your foot hard down, it comes to life, feeling acceptably sharp, if not exceptionally so. It's not a deal-breaker, but it's a shame that Aston seems to have a blind-spot when it comes to gearboxes, for the speed and manner in which a sports car changes gear are cornerstones of the driving experience.

The chassis is much more convincing, thanks to the three-stage switchable dampers, which offer Normal, Sport and Track settings. The V12VSR is an inherently firm-riding machine. Around town, Normal is the most pliant at low speeds, but once free from the 30mph speed limits you're most likely to select Sport, for it

V12 Vantage S Roadster

ENGINE V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 565bhp @ 6750rpm
MAX TORQUE 457lb ft @ 5750rpm **TRANSMISSION**
 Seven-speed automated manual, rear-wheel drive, lsd
SUSPENSION Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers and anti-roll bar front and rear **BRAKES** Vented carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS
WHEELS 9 x 19in front, 11 x 19in rear **TYRES** 255/35 x 19 fr, 335/30 x 19 rear, Pirelli P Zero Corsa **WEIGHT** 1745kg
POWER TO WEIGHT 329bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 3.9sec (claimed) **TOP SPEED** 201mph (claimed) **PRICE** £147,000

contains the V12VSR's mass more tightly without hurting the ride too much. True to its word, Track mode is too combative for all but the smoothest sections of tarmac. The stability control system can be completely disabled, but in truth you're unlikely to want – or need – to go any further than Track mode, which is more than relaxed enough to allow some sideslip and wheelspin. Certainly enough to require you to make corrective steering inputs – which is where the fun is, after all – but with the reassurance that there's something to catch you should your talent desert you mid-corner.

The brakes are mighty, and mighty feelsome (unusually so for ceramics), the power steering sweetly weighted and beautifully judged for rate of response and sense of connection, the mechanical limited-slip differential consistent in its reactions, and the handling balance nicely neutral with smooth throttle inputs but more than willing to be led by the tail if you have the confidence to play it on the throttle. Modern electronics or not, this is a pure and simple driver's car and all the better for it.

With an asking price of £147,000 the V12 Vantage S Roadster is a small car with a big ticket, but in the way it looks, feels and performs it's worth every penny, especially when you consider that to go any quicker you'd need to spend half as much again to buy a Ferrari 458 Spider or McLaren 650S Spider.

It's not often the sight of a test car departing down my driveway leaves me feeling genuinely bereft, but when the V12 S Roadster was collected I felt sad for days. You don't need to be a rabid fan of the marque to appreciate that all Astons have something special about them, but this car is The Real Deal. Handsome, charismatic, blisteringly quick and hugely capable, it excels at delivering the consummate sports car experience. The fact the soft-top adds so much, yet with such minuscule dynamic compromise over the coupé, is the icing on the cake.

Yes, you can pick holes in the infotainment system and gearshift. Both should be better. The uncompromisingly firm suspension set-up isn't for everyone, but few new cars and certainly no other current Aston bring such a complete sense of pleasure or stimulate such a powerful desire to just get in, drop the roof and drive. Right now it's the best car Aston Martin builds. To have one of these in your garage would be utter bliss. **V**



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This page and opposite
Prodrive boss and former
Aston Martin chairman Richards
with his beloved DB6 Volante –
in great demand for friends’
weddings (right) ever since
Prince Charles’s near-identical
car carried Prince William and
Kate down The Mall



THE LOVE AFFAIR

DAVID RICHARDS' DB6
VANTAGE VOLANTE IS
MUCH LOVED, AND NOT
JUST FOR WEDDINGS.
HERE THE PRODRIVE
BOSS TELLS US WHY IT
MEANS SO MUCH TO HIM

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN
PORTRAITS ANDY MORGAN

TO PARAPHRASE Shakespeare, some people are born Aston Martin enthusiasts and some have Aston Martin enthusiasm thrust upon them. For David Richards, world-class rally co-driver, founder of Prodrive and – until the end of 2013 – chairman of Aston Martin Lagonda, his pivotal role in the marque's winning return to Le Mans and successful transition from Ford ownership to independence is merely a reflection of his life-long passion for the brand.

Appropriately we meet Richards, 62, at Aston Martin Works in Newport Pagnell. Far from a stage-managed interview, we're piggy-backing a pre-arranged visit for him to discuss his DB6 Vantage Volante, which is due a little TLC after more than two decades of regular use since its ground-up restoration by Works shortly after Richards acquired the car in the late '80s.

You can't fake the feelings Richards clearly has for Aston Martin. Walking around the workshops, it's obvious his love for the cars and company is totally genuine. Knowledgeable,

inquisitive and boundlessly enthusiastic, he wears the expression of a child in a sweet shop.

And there's the Volante. Softly patinated, with a light dusting of stone chips and the odd scuff and graze, it has an authentic, noble aura: rare and precious, yet loved all the more by its owner because those blemishes have been accumulated over many unforgettable miles of regular use. This is David Richards' pride and joy.

'This car goes right back to the beginning of my love for Aston Martin,' he says. 'Like many people, I'd long harboured a desire to own one, but it was a while before I got to the point in my life when I thought I could finally afford to buy my first Aston Martin. When that moment came I went out looking for a DB6 Volante.'

'This would have been about 25 years ago. At that time Prodrive was really beginning to fly, thanks to our success running BMW's Touring Car efforts and the fledgling relationship with Subaru and its World Rally campaign. Unfortunately it was also the time when classic



‘At the back of the showroom was a mysterious car with a tarpaulin over it. I had a quick peek and quickly realised it was an Aston...’

car prices were really going crazy, so every time I looked and found a Volante it was still just beyond my reach. It got to the stage where I pretty much had a list of all the cars out there, and people would call me if they found any others that were coming to market. Despite all this it was proving pretty much impossible to find one at the right price, so I decided to give up on the notion of a Volante and bought a DB6 coupé instead. It wasn't in particularly good condition as I had the intention of restoring it properly with Works Service.

‘Around the time I was contemplating the restoration, I happened to be in London for a meeting at Shell's HQ. I remember it well, as I'd arrived early and decided to go for a walk along the South Bank of the Thames. There was a garage not too far from there, so I wandered in to have a look around. They had a few interesting cars in the showroom, but at the back was a mysterious car with a tarpaulin over it. Intrigued, I walked over and had a quick peek underneath. I quickly recognised it was an Aston Martin, so I pulled the cover back a bit further and found it was a DB6. Not quite believing my luck, I slipped the cover up a little bit more and saw it was a Volante.

‘Completely removing the cover revealed it had suffered a fairly major under-bonnet fire, so I made some enquiries with the people in the showroom to find out what the story was. They told me it was a bit of a sad tale, as they'd had the car sitting there for almost two years. It began with them taking the car on sale or return for a very significant sum of money. The proprietor had taken it out on a demonstration run with a prospective customer along the Kings Road when it suddenly had a carburettor fire. Fortuitously this took place right outside the Fire Station, so the firemen rushed out and managed to extinguish the fire before it really took hold, but the damage was still quite significant. The problem was the owner had cancelled his insurance and the dealership insurance wouldn't cover it, so there was a big debate between the two parties over where the liability lay and how it was going to get rebuilt.

‘I said to the guys at the dealership, “Why don't you give me the owner's details and see what I can do?”, so I made contact with him and after some to-ing and fro-ing eventually agreed on a price for me to buy the car. With that done I returned to the dealer to collect it. To be honest I wasn't quite sure what I'd bought, but when I



arrived to take it away the dealer asked me if I'd like the paperwork to go with it. Of course I said yes, not expecting him to return a short time later with two large boxes filled with every single receipt, from the original bill of sale through every job it had ever had done throughout its life – all at Aston Martin dealerships.

'Once I'd got the car I brought it here, to Newport Pagnell. I knew Victor [Gauntlett, then boss of Aston Martin] and a few other people at Works. They took a good look over the car and established it was a genuine matching-numbers Vantage Volante – one of a relative handful built. Victor gave me a quote for the complete restoration and the car was here for a year or more. I can't remember exactly: probably until I could afford to pay the bill!

'I used to visit quite often during the restoration, not just to see my car but to chat to Kingsley [Riding-Felce, long-standing manager of Works Service] to see how some of the other projects were going. It was at this time that Prodrive were doing a lot of engineering work with Aston on some of the special cars built for the Sultan of Brunei. There was some wild stuff happening here then.



Opposite page

The Volante when Richards discovered it – badly damaged by fire. 'To be honest I wasn't quite sure what I'd bought,' he told *Vantage*

This page

Full restoration took place at Aston Martin Works, or Works Service as it was known in the early '90s, when the finished car was ready for Richards to collect



'I was struggling to recall exactly when I took possession of the finished Volante, but thinking back, my son Harry is 21 in January and I know I had the car perhaps six months before his birthday. In fact I drove to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford to collect my wife Karen and Harry in the DB6. We'd already decided the first car he was going to ride in had to be an Aston Martin. To this day he still thinks it's his car. One day it will be of course...'

Perhaps because of that special journey, and Richards' subsequent connection to Aston Martin in his professional life, the DB6 is a real family member and gets used far more than you might imagine for such a rare and valuable car.

'We genuinely use it all the time. I've done so many miles in it, from events like the Ecurie Ecosse rally to following the Mille Miglia route. It gets used all summer long and I still regularly drive it to work. So long as there's not salt on the roads, I even drive it during the winter. Since Prince William and Katherine's wedding it's been in high demand among family and friends for wedding car duty. It's got to the stage where we have a full wedding kit, so we can dress it to look just like the royal wedding car.

'When I look back at the Astons I used to have and what they're worth now, I could weep, but still I've got no regrets. There was a time when I'd built quite a collection of cars, including some very special Astons: I had a DB4 GT, a



Above and below

Interior feels just nicely worn-in. Richards loves the fact the car is so useable - not just for classic car events, but just for popping to the pub on a summer's evening, too

Sanction II Zagato, even a DB3S, plus of course the DB6 Vantage Volante. The problem - if you can call it such - is there's only so much time to drive them all. We got to the stage where Karen and I decided to choose our favourite cars and sell the rest. She chose to keep our lovely Frazer Nash Le Mans Rep and I chose the DB6.

'Given the other Astons we owned, that might seem an unlikely choice, but I've learned over the years that certain cars unfailingly deliver. The DB3S is a fabulous machine, but it's a racing car not a road car, so the opportunities to truly enjoy it are rare. I love convertibles, as so often the drives you have in them are much more enjoyable and memorable. The DB6 is a comfortable car with genuine room for four adults, so it's a car you can share and enjoy with friends. It's the perfect car to jump in and drive to the local pub on a summer's evening.'

I hope Harry Richards is blessed with boundless patience, for from what I can see his father is still obviously besotted with his DB6. He may have relinquished chairmanship of AML, but his love for the brand - and one car in particular - remains as strong as ever. Clearly you can take the man out of Aston Martin, but you can't take Aston Martin out of the man. **V**



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BEST IN CLASS

THE SUBLIME DB3S DOMINATED THE 3-LITRE CLASS IN THE MID-1950s, WHEN
THIS CAR WAS DRIVEN BY MOSS, SALVADORI AND COLLINS AMONG OTHERS.
WE TAKE IT TO GOODWOOD, SCENE OF SOME OF ITS FINEST HOURS

WORDS STEPHEN ARCHER

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL



Opposite and above
Patrick Benjafield's iconic image shows Moss gunning DB3S/5 to victory in the sports car race at Goodwood, Easter 1956. Above: our man Archer prepares to drive a car he's worshipped since boyhood

I am biased, I have to declare that now, because when I first set eyes on a DB3S as a schoolboy some 50 years ago it was clearly not just a beautiful car but *the most beautiful post-war open two-seater sports car bar none*. No argument. I feel as strongly about that today as I did then. Time has not aged its looks one bit; rather the opposite. The DB3S comes from a time when cars could be effective *and* look good. Today, racing cars that spring only from digital 'pens' tend to look purposeful, but not pleasing, not the way the DB3S does.

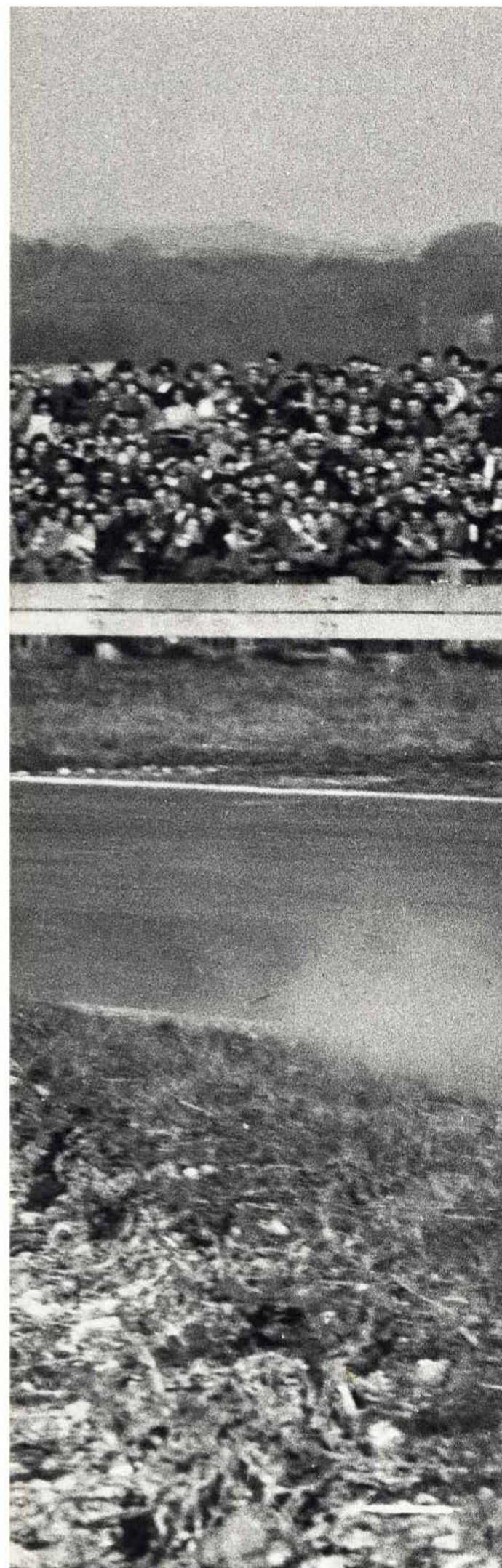
Best in class? If that sounds like a back-handed compliment, it is not. Frank Feeley, its English designer, was one of so many great talents at Aston Martin in that post-war period – others included Ted Cutting and Harold Beach – who never received the recognition they deserved. All should have been honoured by the Queen.

Feeley's original 1953 DB3S was pretty, but the higher-waisted, smoother-lined 1955 evolution was a masterpiece. Aesthetically stunning but with reason, not just good taste. The cutaway front arches are there to remove heat from the radiator and front brakes and very effectively so. The 'Cathedral arch' ridges that run the length of the wings and bonnet add strength to the body as well as accentuating its sensuous lines. The sublime grille opening – whose shape is evident in every subsequent Aston Martin to this day – cleverly divides and directs air to where it's needed.

Best in class? In the 3-litre class of the day, DB3Ss were nearly always the cars to beat – and on tracks with shorter straights than Le Mans they would often show the bigger-engined D-types and Ferraris a clean pair of heels, too. Not that their record at Le Mans was too shabby, finishing second overall in both 1955 and 1956.

The credit here belongs chiefly to Willie Watson, that fine engineer who, under engineering chief Robert Eberan von Eberhorst, worked wonders in turning the overweight, oversized and underpowered DB3 into the fantastically trim and effective DB3S that was to be competitive for a whole four seasons from 1953 to 1956.

It was von Eberhorst, lest we forget, who with a blank German cheque had designed the magnificent Auto Unions before the war, and he carried the trailing-link front suspension forward to the DB3 and DB3S. The S's cleverly







‘HEADING OUT ONTO THE
TRACK, ONE IS STRUCK BY
ITS COMPACTNESS AND,
AS THE SPEED RISES, BY
THE CONTROLLED
SUPPLENESS OF THE
CHASSIS’





packaged transverse torsion bars may seem archaic now, but it is an extremely effective arrangement and, by the way, beautifully engineered. The back end is controlled by a de Dion set-up, and for 1955 the team cars had Girling discs all round. The fitment of these discs led to the unique design of Borrani wheel with a third row of externally laced spokes, which in turn led to the additional lips on the front arches to pass the regulations stipulating that tyres had to be kept within the arches. The addition of those arch flares – painted yellow, red and blue to help with pit identification – served only to enhance the looks of the car.

Finally, best in class for the fact that this particular car, DB3S/5, is the only team DB3S still to have that perfect, definitive Feeley design. It was also blessed with Aston Martin team driver ‘royalty’: Reg Parnell, Peter Collins, Stirling Moss, Tony Brooks and Roy Salvadori all raced this car between 1954 and 1956. Salvadori actually owned it from 1956 – which caused some complications in the team. It is also the only DB3S to have been raced by Graham Hill, who drove it at Goodwood in 1957. And now it is back at the West Sussex circuit – and I’m about to drive it.

WHEN I ARRIVE, DB3S/5 is resting in one of the bays in the Goodwood paddock, for all the world like this is 1957 and it’s waiting for Hill or Salvadori to jump in and drive it. In fact it has just this year emerged from a three-year rebuild at Aston Martin Works (you can read all about the restoration on the following pages). I hadn’t realised Works rebuilt cars like the DB3S – indeed, I could hardly believe my eyes when three years ago I saw the bare DB3S/5 chassis on a jig where large parts of the frame were being repaired or replaced. Today the car looks about

perfect. There is more paint on it than it would have had back in the day – it is surprising how heavy paint is – and no oily finger marks from the ebb and flow of intense race prep and maintenance. But its enthusiast owner is not afraid to use it – this year the car completed the Mille Miglia retrospective – and it feels wonderfully alive as a result. It has been rebuilt to exact original specifications, the twin-plug DP101 engine giving 217bhp. As concessions to common sense, it has an ATL bag-tank inside the original, a Halda for road events, and seatbelts. Everything else is as original.

Approaching the car, one is struck by how small it is, with a petite, feline grace. The simplicity of the exterior conceals some sophisticated underpinnings. Not just the chassis, but also the David Brown gearbox, which was developed for the 1955 cars with innovative needle roller bearings. The engine is the ultimate development of the LB6 unit that Brown acquired when he bought Lagonda. This version has intricate, well-thought-through cooling for the twin-plug head, with water feeds along both sides. It has the ultra-rare sand-cast Webers and magnesium castings where practical. David Brown was very serious about success and invested well in the DB3S, as he did in most subsequent models.

Though it has a door, it could easily be stepped over to get in. The hide-covered seat is a period-style bucket with what appears to be marginally adequate support, though when you’re driving you find it is in fact totally adequate. Body roll is minimal and any lateral forces seem to be aimed more at the backside than the torso so ‘hanging on’ is easy. Ignition on, starter button pressed and 2.9 litres are immediately talking to your right ear – since that is where

Left and below

Freshly restored to the form in which it originally raced in the mid-’50s, DB3S/5 feels every bit as good as it looks. Racing version of the 2.9-litre LB6 straight-six engine featured two spark plugs per cylinder



DB3S/5

ENGINE In-line six-cylinder, 2922cc, twin overhead camshafts, triple Weber 45DCO carburettors

MAX POWER 217bhp @ 6000rpm **MAX TORQUE** n/a

TRANSMISSION Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, lsd

SUSPENSION Front: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, lever-arm dampers. Rear: live axle with de Dion tube located by central slide, trailing arms, torsion bars, telescopic dampers

STEERING Worm-and-roller

BRAKES Discs front and rear

WHEELS 6 x 16in wire spoke

TYRES 600 x 16 Dunlop Racing

WEIGHT 840kg (1850lb) dry

POWER/WEIGHT 263bhp/ton

0-60MPH 6.0sec (est)

TOP SPEED 150mph+

PRICE NEW n/a

CURRENT VALUE £6million+

Right

What the DB3S lacked in outright speed compared with the larger-engined Jaguars and Ferraris of the time, it made up for with a chassis that was wonderfully communicative and beautifully balanced

the exhaust exits – and through every other part of your body that is in contact with the car. From the moment you fire it up, this car communicates *everything*.

Heading out onto the track, one is struck again by its compactness and, as the speed rises, by the controlled suppleness of the chassis. Though body roll is minimal, suspension travel is much greater than on many modern road cars. So it soaks up undulations, without in any way feeling soggy. In fact it feels deliciously taut. Of course, one might expect that from a freshly rebuilt car, but I have driven a number of DB3Ss, including other team cars (one of which I was lucky enough to race), and with all of them you get this same feeling of togetherness and a sense that they are looking after you.

As you push harder, there are no surprises, no sudden moves or jinks under load. The steering, neither particularly heavy in the paddock nor over-light on the track, is just perfectly balanced, its responses precise, the feedback immense. I'd opted not to wear the harness, which I find can give a false sense of attachment, but then with the DB3S it feels like you're wearing the car itself.

It's just as well that the chassis is so benign because this is a very fast machine. The pull through the rev-range to 6000rpm is wonderfully strong, the six cylinders sounding even sweeter than the Spitfire that flew around during our time at Goodwood. The gearlever is perfectly placed, its action precise, the ratios nicely spaced. The brakes are like the suspension, not fierce but inspiring total confidence. Both going on and off the brakes the car remains composed, even when trail-braking towards an apex, using the crests of the front wings to help you place it. The fastest lap is, of course, the tidiest, but steering on the throttle is easy and not the mad scrabble that, say, a D-type can entail.

The combination of the gearing and the small, very clean frontal area means the top speed (around 150mph) cannot be reached at Goodwood and so one can enjoy the sensation of a car that continues to pull and pull. All the time, DB3S/5 was asking to be stretched. Indeed, after a spell at low speed for the camera, the engine coughed on acceleration, as if to say, 'please, not so slow'.

On the third lap, just as I passed the pits, the weather window that blessed us on a blustery early-autumn day suddenly seemed to get brighter. The sunlight was intense, Goodwood's grass seemed a luminescent green and the track acquired a silky sheen. The sun was glinting off the front wings, the engine was purring and, as Madgwick approached, the hairs on the back of my neck rose as I passed the very spot where Patrick Benjafield took the shot of Moss in this car on Easter Monday 1956.

As far as I'm aware, this was the first time that DB3S/5 had been around Goodwood for more than 50 years. To say that driving it here was a privilege is an understatement – at times it felt as though the car was taking me around, so very much at home did it feel. Special circuit, special day, and a very special car – truly the best in class. **V**



**'IT FELT AS THOUGH
THE CAR WAS TAKING
ME AROUND, SO AT
HOME DID IT FEEL
AT GOODWOOD'**







LABOUR OF LOVE

FEW ASTONS HAVE SUCH A RICH HISTORY AS DB3S/5. FOR THE CRAFTSMEN AT ASTON MARTIN WORKS, BEING COMMISSIONED TO CARRY OUT A TOTAL RESTORATION WAS A RARE PRIVILEGE

WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN WORKS/VARIOUS

Right and below

The car as it arrived at Works, superficially good (bottom), but rather less impressive underneath – chassis would require extensive rebuilding, while the damaged cylinder block would be replaced



WHEN DB3S/5 WAS DELIVERED to Aston Martin Works in September 1911, it was for a straightforward mechanical overhaul with a view to the owner entering it in the 2012 Mille Miglia. Or so everyone thought...

'When we took the body off and had a good look at it we found it was beyond that,' explains Nigel Woodward, manager of the Heritage workshop at Newport Pagnell. 'The chassis had a number of cracks and also some modifications which had weakened it...' These included where someone had cut out a piece of the cross-tubing in the rear of the chassis to allow the driver's seat to slide further back. Don't try that one at home.

'The bump-stops, we found, were just lumps of rubber held in place with insulation tape,' Nigel continues. 'One of the owner's friends commented to me that it did handle and steer rather strangely...'

It was agreed with the owner that Works would carry out a total restoration, with the revised target being the 2014 Mille Miglia. The owner, an enthusiast and collector based in Switzerland, was particularly keen to have it ready for the modern Mille – he'd entered three times since acquiring chassis no5 around ten years ago but had never managed to complete the event.

He was in good company, mind. Back in May 1955, Peter Collins was driving the same car flat-out in the original Mille Miglia when his race was ended abruptly as a con-rod bolt punched through the side of the engine block. That was but one episode in the remarkable story of this beautiful and historic Aston Martin.

To start at the very beginning (always a good place to start), 3S/5 was built in 1953 as a road car for none other than David Brown himself. Perhaps even more remarkably, it was originally dressed in experimental glassfibre bodywork – glassfibre then being seen as a cutting-edge material (much in the same way that carbonfibre is today).

Alas, as far as is known, the boss never got to enjoy his state-of-the-art sports car on the road. The heavy rate of attrition of the works racers, particularly in the 1954 Le Mans 24hrs, meant 3S/5 had to be pressed into service as a team car. So it was given the aluminium body of 3S/2, which had crashed out on the 1954 Mille Miglia, and brought up to full works specification. Its first outing

'It's the new Bellini'

'That's the most wonderful car I ever saw,' swoons April Smith, played by the lovely Janette Scott. 'The new Bellini...' smarms Raymond Delauney (Terry-Thomas), '...3.6.'

It's one of many delightful scenes in the classic 1960 British comedy, *School for Scoundrels*, in which the caddish Delauney competes for the affections of April with the well-meaning but ingenuous Henry Palfrey (the sublime Ian Carmichael).

The Bellini is, in fact, DB3S/5, wearing the Carrozzeria Touring bodywork that was fitted after its watery excursion in 1958 (see main text) but with the addition of a tail-fin – actually more of a hump – and, rather incongruously, a chromed rear

bumper, complete with over-riders, plus 'Bellini' badging on the wings.

Despite these appendages, it is still very clearly a DB3S and features in a number of scenes in the film, including the one on the right, where Palfrey (Carmichael) looks on aghast as Delauney works his rogueish charms on April. Palfrey's own steed is the fantastically awful Swiftmobile – actually an elaborately disguised vintage Bentley – which our hero is conned into buying by dubious car salesmen Dunstan and Dudley, 'The Winsome Welshmen', played by Dennis Price and Peter Jones.

School for Scoundrels is available on DVD at amazon.co.uk for a trifling £7.80. How absolutely splendid!





would be in the sports car race at Silverstone in July 1954, where it finished 2nd in the hands of Roy Salvadori.

So began a distinguished racing career, with numerous podium finishes, class wins and even outright wins, while the roster of drivers reads like a *Who's Who* of 1950s racing heroes. In addition to Salvadori and Collins, 3S/5 was also driven by Reg Parnell, Tony Brooks and Stirling Moss.

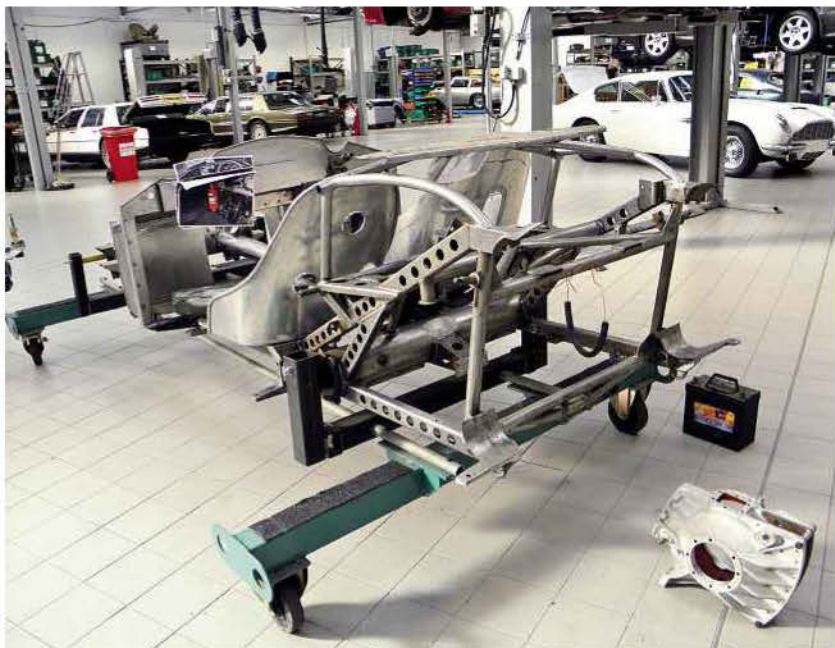
By the time it appeared at the British Grand Prix meeting at Aintree in July 1955 (a 3rd place for Parnell in the sports car race) it was sporting the latest Frank Feeley bodywork. In this form it went on to even greater success in 1956, Salvadori winning at Aintree, Moss winning on Easter Monday at Goodwood, Salvadori scoring another victory in the big sports car race at Silverstone in May, then a week later Reg Parnell finishing 2nd at Spa.

Other notable results included 5th overall for Collins and Brooks in the Nürburgring 1000kms. After it was sold to Tommy Atkins for the 1957 season, 3S/5 even gave an early taste of top-flight motorsport to a promising chap called Graham Hill, who finished 3rd at Brands Hatch.

It was then sold to privateer Dennis Barthel, who enjoyed no little success with it himself, but at this point the story of DB3S/5 takes a tragic turn. According to the excellent Chris Nixon tome, *The Aston Martin DB3S Sportscar* (Palawan Press), Barthel had the car prepared by Rob Walker's Pippbrook Garage, where it was fettled by mechanic Alan Overton. It appears Overton's girlfriend took up with Barthel and the seeds of tragedy were sown. Barthel offered Overton a drive in the Aston at the Gosport Speed Trials, where he set fastest time in class. But the



From the top
Salvadori shows the superior traction of the DB3S as he takes a flag-to-flag win at Aintree, April 1956, against no fewer than six D-type Jaguars; Salvadori on his way to a famous victory at Silverstone, May 1956, and Moss after winning at Goodwood, Easter Monday the same year

**Left, from the top**

Refurbished chassis takes shape on bespoke jig; hand-crafting the aluminium bodywork; original fuel tank conceals modern bag-tank. Triple Weber 45DCOE (right) were specially sand-cast



unhappy mechanic didn't live to collect his trophy – as he crossed the finishing line he kept his foot on the throttle and ended his life by driving straight into the sea.

Recovered from the Solent, the car was rebuilt with a new body that had been sitting in the Feltham works – with different front-end styling by Carrozzeria Touring – and re-registered PAP 625. It was in this form that DB3S/5 somehow found itself starring in the 1960 British film comedy, *School for Scoundrels* (see panel, page 56).

Through the '60s and '70s, DB3S/5 was owned (and raced) by a number of Aston enthusiasts before in 1981 it was bought by the late Bill Lake, who had the bodywork restored to its classic 1955 works specification and reunited the car with its old registration number, 9046 H.

In 1987 Lake sold to Erich Traber of Switzerland, a keen entrant to the modern Mille Miglia, following in the tracks of Peter Collins – a tradition that has been upheld by the current owner, a fellow Swiss, although for a variety of reasons the car had never been able to complete the event. Would 2014 be any different? There was more than a little professional pride at stake when the chaps at Newport Pagnell rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

STRIPPED BACK to its bare steel chassis, the extent of work that would be required was soon apparent. 'We retained a lot of the original chassis – as much as we could,' says Nigel Woodward. 'But we had to make two new main tubes, which meant building a bespoke jig for the chassis.'

'We also decided to produce a new body, a replica of the original factory racing body from 1955, on the basis that the body that was on it wasn't original anyway. So it was all hand-made in the body shop here at Newport Pagnell.'

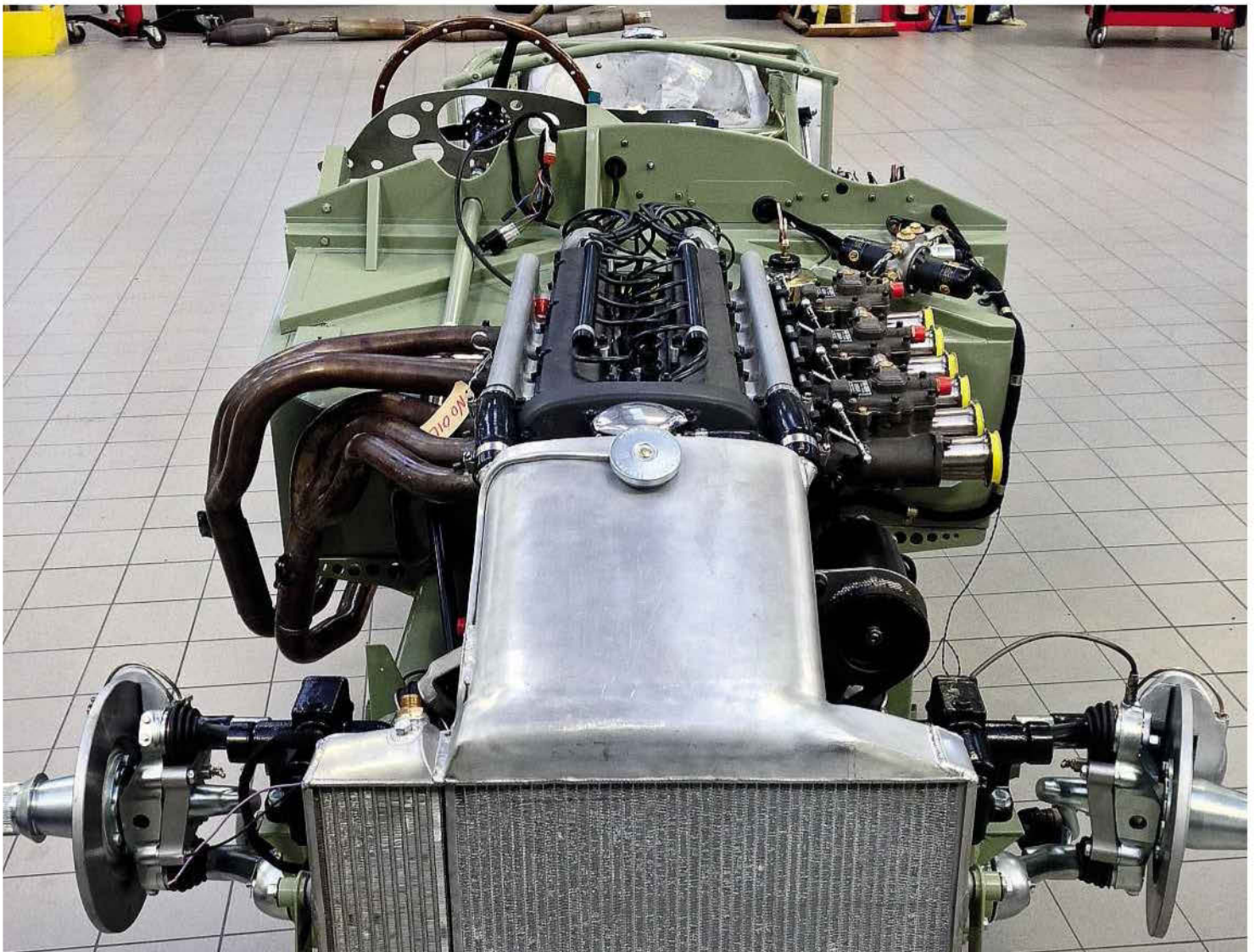
'There are no bucks or formers to work from for a car like this. We took dimensions off the body that arrived with the car, then used a lot of historic photos and came up with as close as humanly possible to the body that was on the car when it was used for racing by the factory.'

That included the two distinctive air intakes in the nose, the larger one feeding the Webers, the smaller one designed to help cool the driver's feet. 'There's a flap in the bulkhead that can be opened by what looks like a choke cable,' explains Dave Harrison, a Works veteran who did most of the mechanical build-up, 'though we also fitted ceramic insulation to the bulkhead to stop some of the heat-soak.'





**‘IT’S AS CLOSE AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO
WHEN IT WAS RACED BY THE FACTORY’**





Clockwise from above
Body gets its final coat of Aston Racing Green in the Works paint booths; steering gear and front and rear suspension components look so good after refurb it's a shame they're out of sight



As with the chassis, mechanically it was a case of retaining what could be retained without compromising performance or safety, and recreating any components that had been compromised by age or poor earlier repairs.

'We've kept the original gearbox and differential, and all the suspension is original,' says Woodward. 'We refurbished the wheels, though we had to find a new spare with the strange offset rim that these cars had to clear the disc brakes while keeping the same steering geometry.'

'The engine has had a lot of replacement parts, including a new cylinder block – the old one had a massive patch in the side where it's thought Collins put a con-rod through the crank case. We've kept the block of course. The carbs that were on the car weren't original, so a set of 45 Webers, as per the original works spec, were specially sand-cast.'

'We've kept the whole car as period-correct as we can, with a few minor alterations requested by the owner – trip meter, rally meter and remodelled seats to allow us to fit FIA-approved harnesses. We kept the original fuel tank, but with a bag-tank inside and an electronic fuel gauge.'

Returning the car to 1955 appearance obviously meant getting the paintwork right too. 'We did a lot of research to get the colours as accurate as we could, so the body is in Aston Martin Racing Green, as close as possible to the period colour from the 1955 and '56 seasons.'

One detail that may induce a nervous tick in the nerdier Aston fan is the Feltham chassis plate – the race cars usually only had a small, simple silver plate with the chassis number stamped on it. But 3S/5 arrived with the extra plate, and as Woodward says, 'it's not impossible this car would have had a Feltham plate because of its original intended role as a road car, so we've left it on'.

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SO, DID DB3S/5 make it the start line for the 2014 Mille Miglia? And, just as importantly, did it make it to the finish line? When we visited Works to chat to Woodward in early summer, the car, he revealed with a wink, was back for its 1000-mile service. It had indeed finished the event, and he was clearly chuffed to bits.

'It was a tight deadline, and we literally finished the car the day before it was shipped out to Switzerland, and from there the owner had it delivered down to Italy for the Mille Miglia the following week. A thousand miles around Italy, completely unsupported, and no major issues at all – the first time it has ever completed the event, whether as a frontline racing car in its early days or on the modern version. I think it's fair to say we were quite pleased!'

It's a bittersweet moment, though, because for the lads who have worked on DB3S/5 for three years – Woodward gives special mention to Dave Harrison, panel shop supervisor Charlie Briggs, lead painter Richard Griffiths and electrician Dave Dillow – a chapter is coming to an end.

Woodward himself clearly has immense affection for DB3S/5 – on the wall of his office is a lovely cutaway illustration of an identical DB3S from *The Eagle* comic, dated May 1956, with a particularly dapper-looking driver at the wheel. It could be Graham Hill, or possibly Terry-Thomas, or even *Vantage* test pilot Stephen Archer...

Or maybe Woodward himself. 'Every car we restore has a very thorough road test programme,' he says, 'and I did about 200 miles in the car myself on the road before it went out. That was a dream come true. With the possible exception of a DBR1, this is as historic as an Aston Martin gets. For an enthusiast like me it's been an absolute privilege to be involved with this project.' **V**



From the top

The proud Newport Pagnell team with the finished car, Nigel Woodward at far left; Feltham plate in keeping with original road car role; steel tonneau over the passenger seat refabricated as per original



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DRIVE | DB3S COUPÉ

ROAD RACER

WORDS PAUL CHUDECKI

PHOTOGRAPHY GUS GREGORY





DESIGNED FOR LE MANS BUT
THEN CIVILISED FOR THE ROAD,
THE COUPÉ VERSION OF THE
DB3S IS ONE OF THE RAREST OF
ALL ASTONS. JUST TWO EXIST
AND WE DRIVE ONE OF THEM

Below and right
Freshly rebuilt by RS Williams, DB3S/19's 2.9-litre 'VB6' straight-six with triple Weber 40DCOs has shown 211bhp at 5500rpm on the dyno. Coupé bodywork was designed to increase the DB3S's top speed



**‘MANY HOURS
IN THE VICKERS
AVIATION WIND
TUNNEL SHOWED
A SUPERIOR DRAG
CO-EFFICIENT TO
THE ROADSTER’S’**

Think Julie Christie, Kate Beckinsale or Rosamund Pike in their early screen roles and how they instantly stirred the senses. That’s the sort of reaction, I reckon, that the DB3S elicited when it made its debut. Add a little Audrey Hepburn, Charlotte Rampling and Saffron Burrows, apply the thought again and one has the Coupé, a classical English rose in every sense. But while there are many other beautiful women, the DB3S Coupé is almost peerless. Just three were ever built, and the fact that these achingly attractive Astons existed at all is, perhaps, surprising.

Although highly effective and successful in international racing, the DB3S, as with all competition Aston Martins of the 1950s, lacked ultimate outright speed against invariably larger-engined rivals. More often than not the deficit was offset by a combination of superior cornering ability and aerodynamic efficiency, but where it really took its toll was on longer straights such as Mulsanne at Le Mans; and winning the French 24-hour race was company boss David Brown’s main priority. The excellent Willie Watson-designed LB6 twin-cam had already been enlarged from 2580cc to its limit of 2922cc, and though more and more power would be eked from it until the decade’s end, producing ever more slippery bodies was always high on Aston’s racing agenda.

Frank Feeley, the Feltham works’ gifted body stylist who had penned the DB2 and the DB3 sports-racer, had first experimented with a closed racing body by fitting a pretty hardtop to the DB3 in 1953 in time for that year’s Le Mans; its effectiveness was never known as DB3/1’s differential failed, resulting in retirement after just ten laps; the hardtop was never used again, although its hatchback reappeared on the DB2/4 that October.

By then the lighter, faster and more compact DB3S had replaced the DB3 but the perennial problem remained. This time in the quest for more top speed Feeley produced a one-piece coupé body. To maximise the predicted increase in aero efficiency, two cars – the newly built DB3S/6 and DB3S/7 – were dispatched in spring 1954 to Brooklands, where many hours in the Vickers Aviation wind tunnel, with assistance from the company’s aerodynamicists, showed a superior drag co-efficient to the roadster’s.

The prolonged exercise scuppered race manager John Wyer’s plan to test-run both Astons in the Mille Miglia in early May and the Coupés made their debut at Silverstone’s BRDC meet just under a fortnight later. In closed form, however, the ‘3Ss handled less well and were markedly less stable. Although Roy Salvadori took DB3S/6 to 7th/1st in class and Graham Whitehead in DB3S/7 finished 12th/3rd, this fell well below expectations after the 192bhp DB3S’s dominant performance in 1953 – it won every race entered, bar Le Mans, in its debut season – and despite the Coupés sporting new 12-plug cylinder heads and an extra 43bhp.

At the 1954 Le Mans, the extent of the Coupés’ instability was manifest: both cars were alarmingly unstable at high speed, suffering rear-end lift and each crashing at virtually the same spot where they had been worryingly airborne over the hump into White House corner. Severely mangled, DB3S/6 and ‘7 were rebuilt with roadster bodies, the closed coachwork never being used again in competition by the works. In fact, the Vickers aerodynamicists had expressed concern about too much air getting beneath the Coupés but it wasn’t acted upon or, more probably, fully understood at that time.

None of this stood in the way of a production DB3S Coupé becoming available at the 1955 Earls Court Motor Show. By this time, Feeley had subtly redesigned the DB3S roadster with notably sleeker lines by smoothing out its contours and using a mesh rather than ‘egg-box’ grille, and a 180bhp (later 210bhp) production version of the car, only differing from that year’s works cars in having the single rather than twin-plug head, had gone on sale. The restyled car was undoubtedly Feeley’s ultimate masterpiece, a timeless beauty that remains universally acknowledged as one of the most stunning and elegant sports-racing cars of its era. The similarly smoothed Coupé – though retaining the original works cars’ rear wing ‘fins’ – was now fully trimmed, with a more upright







windscreen, a smaller fuel tank allowing a decent size luggage area behind the seats, and a 'boot' largely filled with the 28¾-gallon fuel tank and spare wheel. Just three were produced before all DB3S production ceased the following year. David Brown, who had wanted a special GT and instigated its build, received the first, chassis DB3S/120 (with sunroof); subsequent owners of '120 included Jean Bloxham (now Salmon) who also raced the car. DB3S/113 was supplied to the Hon Max Aitken, who soon had conventional rather than scalloped front wheelarches fitted, together with small rear wheel spats and chrome side-strips.

And then there was DB3S/119, the car you see here. Like its siblings, '119 was built in 1955, although it wasn't registered until August 24 the following year, four days before Mr RD Ropner became its first owner. It was painted in Battleship Grey with a red interior, the only optional extra listed being a set of Avon racing tyres and total cost was a then very considerable £3207 – £1116 more than the roadster – plus £1605 purchase tax. Subsequently '119 passed through several owners, including Keith Schellenberg, Nigel Dawes, who had it painted black with red wheels and grille, Jim Freeman, long-time AMOC USA chairman who briefly raced it in the early 1980s, and Victor Gauntlett, after whom Simon Draper became its penultimate keeper in mid-1991 (and removed its non-original roll-cage). With '113 having been re-bodied as a roadster in the early 2000s, the surviving two Coupés are even rarer and among the most sought-after of all road-going Astons ever built.

DB3S/119's current collector-owner bought the Aston, still with the original registration 3 HMY, from Simon in late 2009. A painstaking restoration over the next five years by DB3S/Aston specialist Rex J Woodgate included a newly fabricated body by ASR Motor Body Engineering – such was the shocking state under the skin of the (retained) original – painted in the correct Battleship Grey and re-trimmed in red

Above and left

Fins on the rear wings were carried over from the original works racers. Cockpit (left) is a snug fit but beautifully appointed: the production car was conceived with fast touring very much in mind

with contrasting grey headlining and sun visors. Finally, the engine and gearbox were rebuilt and refitted by RS Williams, prior to extensive road-testing and transportation to the owner's Alpine hideaway. Which is where we join it.

When seated snugly in the comfortable bucket seat behind the large wood-rimmed, alloy steering wheel, the immediate impression is of fantastic all-round forward

vision afforded by the large, coach-like wraparound windscreen, those lovely, high-sculpted Gothic-style front wings pointing the way ahead; rear vision through the large screen is almost on a par. Compact and cosy, with limited headroom for over six-footers in the narrow cockpit, the interior, unlike that of the more rudimentary racers, is beautifully trimmed in leather, including the front and rear pillars, with deep-pile carpeting covering the footwell and luggage area. The lovely sliding side-windows and quarter-lights look just right, as do the neat bracing struts between, the tiny passenger door lock, the pretty doorhandles inside and out and the stylish strakes that meet the headlamps on top of the front wings, all beautifully chromed and exuding traditional Aston Martin craftsmanship. Neatly laid-out switches and dials include matching 160mph speedometer and 6000rpm rev-counter, the latter arranged so that the important 5000-6000 segment – there is no redline to mark the 5600/5700 change-point – is in the uppermost line of vision.

Once warm, the freshly RSW-rebuilt engine pulls strongly from 2000rpm and will spin eagerly to 5500 and its 211bhp peak output, and beyond. Throttle response is instantaneous as the triple Webers snort air – *Autosport's* John Bolster recorded an impressive 0-60mph time of 6.6sec, a 0-100mph/standing-start quarter-mile of 14.4 seconds and a 140mph maximum in the 2200lb (238lb more than the roadster) Coupé – accompanied by a glorious snarl from the twin exhaust tail-pipes exiting just below the driver's door, ever-present through the side windows (which rattle in protest on severe bumps).

The perfectly placed short-throw lever for the DB S430 gearbox is satisfyingly light and precise in engagement. The lack of synchro' on the fairly high-g geared first of four ratios requires double-declutching to maintain pace on tight uphill Alpine hairpins; the upper three are sufficiently close to make best use of the 2.9-litre motor, and although the clutch is typically strong for a competition unit, with a short movement, its bite doesn't snatch, allowing smooth, fast changes. Below 2000rpm in too high a ratio the Webers will splutter on too much throttle before clearing their throats, at which point the otherwise very tractable six-cylinder takes on real urgency. The torque curve peaks at 222lb ft at 4500rpm, though over 210lb ft is on hand all the way from 3500rpm to 5000rpm.

The ride is surprisingly supple, particularly given the race rubber and suspension, but not in any way at the expense of roadholding. Having been fortunate to race DB3S/110 a few years ago, I find it just as I remember. Turn-in is precise, and feedback through the sensitive, high-g geared steering is excellent with every surface undulation felt, though the Dunlops, abetted by the Aston's relatively narrow track, tend to follow cambers. Grip levels are high and body-roll virtually non-existent as we power through the turns, threading our way up

and down the winding roads. Finally we reach an 11-mile stretch of smooth bitumen, almost tailor-made as a sprint course. Comprising modest straights between switchbacks and fast, sweeping 60-70mph bends, here all 211bhp can be fully exploited. Using just second and third gears provides wonderfully punchy acceleration, while the Coupé drifts elegantly through the turns with gently progressive oversteer instantly corrected by the responsive steering.

Indeed, roadholding and handling are as beautifully balanced as the contours of the DB3S's coachwork, the de Dion rear end being of especial benefit on these Alpine roads with their changing surfaces. Although perfectly effective, the large Alfin ventilated drum brakes (later production DB3S roadsters had discs) are initially lacking a little in feel, needing a hard push on the pedal to pull up quickly when travelling at speed. Once the newish pads are fully bedded-in, however, confidence in them improves and they prove well up to the job – as long as one remembers that ultimately they are drums.

One could happily drive the DB3S Coupé every day and any distance, such is its usability, comfort and strong performance, all allied to complete docility. Unquestionably one of the rarest of all Aston Martins, it is as seductive to drive as it is to gaze upon. **V**



DB3S Coupé

ENGINE In-line six-cylinder, 2922cc, twin overhead camshafts, triple Weber 40DCO carburettors
MAX POWER 211bhp @ 5500rpm **MAX TORQUE** 222lb ft @ 4500rpm **TRANSMISSION** Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, 1st
SUSPENSION Front: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, lever-arm dampers. Rear: live axle, de Dion tube located by central
slide, trailing arms, torsion bars, lever-arm dampers **STEERING** Worm-and-roller **BRAKES** Vented drums front and rear
WHEELS 6 x 16in wire-spoke front and rear **WEIGHT** 998kg (2200lb) **POWER TO WEIGHT** 225bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 6.6sec
TOP SPEED 140mph **PRICE NEW** £4810 in 1955 (c£115,000 in today's money) **CURRENT VALUE** £5-6million (est)

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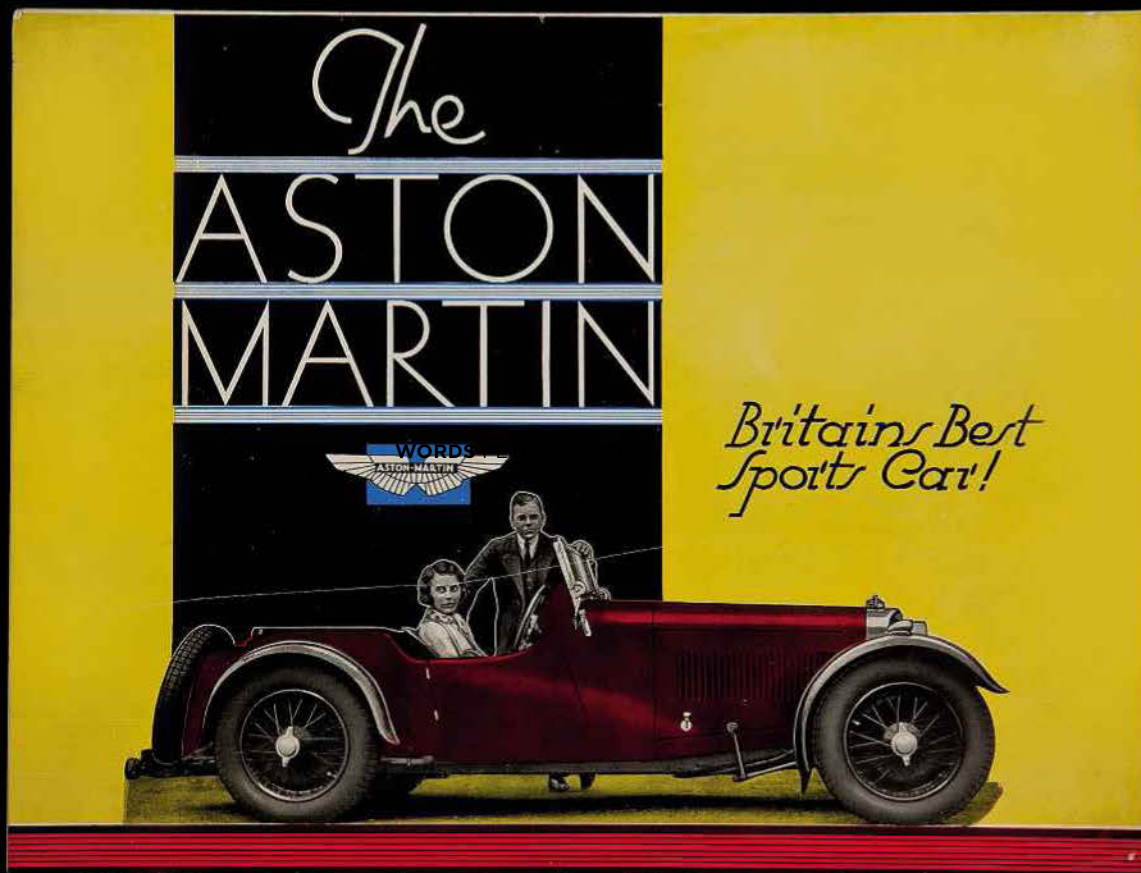
www.oselli.com

1930s MKII

'Britain's best sports car' ran the cover line on this otherwise beautifully understated 1934 brochure for the then-new MKII model. It was a bold claim, but inside was a list of motorsport successes, chiefly at Le Mans, to give it weight. One of the joys of poring over these brochures is discovering how the Aston Martin 'wings' have evolved over the decades. They've certainly never looked more feathery nor wing-like than in this gorgeously tactile, embossed rendition



*"Britain's Best Sports Car"
Mark II. Models*



1930s MKII

Another delightful brochure for the MkII model from the mid-1930s with more than a hint of Art Deco in the design and typography. Deco was particularly appropriate for an Aston Martin brochure, embracing as it did luxury, glamour, exuberance, and faith in technological progress. The inside pages were every bit as stylish, and once again the marketing played heavily on the marque's racing pedigree. 'Long distance road racing is our experimental department,' read the blurb

SELLING A DREAM

SALES BROCHURES ARE WONDERFULLY EVOCATIVE OF THEIR TIME. WE LOOK AT A SELECTION OF CLASSIC ASTON MARTIN BROCHURES SPANNING SIX DECADES

WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL

THE APPEAL OF THESE BROCHURES – a small part of the collection accrued by the Aston Martin Heritage Trust – is that they reflect not only the cars, but also the times in which they were produced. Not just in their design, use of illustration or photograph, choice of typeface and so forth, but in the way they reflect the prevailing mood of the company – and indeed the wider world – at the time. This was where Aston Martin could set out not just the particulars of its model range, but what we would now call a 'mission statement'. Such as the one found in the pages of the mid-1930s brochure for the MkII models, which reads:

'Our Objects: In continuing the production of these cars our object is to keep available to the public at least one car which has not been affected by the general cuts in prices and workmanship which have taken place in recent years. We believe that there are still discriminating motorists who can appreciate the finer points in the handling of a motor car. For these we have marketed our mkII model and are confident they will find in it a unique vehicle which will handle better and give them more confidence than any other in existence.'

The best brochures provide more than a handful of glossy photos and some performance claims. They tap into our fascination with the past. They are often very beautiful. And older ones are extremely collectable, too. Most of us have a few stashed away somewhere – as youngsters, motor show stands and dealerships were often the happiest hunting grounds. Collecting brochures isn't just for kids, though. Some completely grown-up collectors lose whole weekends scouring autojumbles, though these days all but the very rarest are just a few mouse-clicks away.

Many, particularly from the 1970s onwards, can still be had for just a few pounds, although, as always, anything from the David Brown era attracts a premium. Earlier this year, Bonhams sold a set of three DB2 brochures for £375 and a similar set of DB4, 5 and 6 for £690. It's the really early years where the true treasures are found, though: a super-rare 1924 brochure went for £2750. And so much more fun than collecting stamps.

Our thanks to the Aston Martin Heritage Trust for sharing the brochures on these pages. For more information about the Trust, visit www.amht.org.uk



1950s DB2

Eager to align Aston Martin with the coming age of jet travel, the cover of this brochure from 1950 superimposes a photograph of an early DB2 (note the three-piece grille and rectangular side vent) with an artist's impression of the de Havilland Comet, the world's first commercial jet airliner, which had been testing since 1949 but wouldn't in fact go into service until 1952. The beautiful, cutaway drawing inside was courtesy of *The Motor*, which would have saved David Brown a few quid in illustrators' fees – already, compared with the lavishly produced brochures of the pre-war years, there are signs of a tighter grip being held on the marketing budget!

Drawing by courtesy of "THE MOTOR"

ASTON MARTIN DB2 SPECIFICATION

INTRODUCTION
The car is in the new 24 inch (1975) model. It is the latest development of the 1950 model. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

CHASSIS
Built on a new chassis with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

ENGINE
A four-cylinder engine with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

TRANSMISSION
A four-speed gearbox with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

STEERING
A four-wheel steering system with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

BRAKES
A four-wheel braking system with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

EXHAUST
A four-pipe exhaust system with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

WHEELS AND TYRES
A four-wheel system with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT
A four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent. It is a four-door saloon with a three-piece grille and a rectangular side vent.

PERFORMANCE
Top speed 100 m.p.h. (160 k.m.p.h.) in 12.5 seconds. 0-100 m.p.h. in 12.5 seconds. 0-100 k.m.p.h. in 12.5 seconds. 0-100 m.p.h. in 12.5 seconds. 0-100 k.m.p.h. in 12.5 seconds.

CONSUMPTION
15 m.p.g. (12.5 k.m.p.g.) at 70 m.p.h. 15 m.p.g. (12.5 k.m.p.g.) at 70 m.p.h. 15 m.p.g. (12.5 k.m.p.g.) at 70 m.p.h. 15 m.p.g. (12.5 k.m.p.g.) at 70 m.p.h.

WEIGHT
2,400 lbs. (1,100 kg.) in running order. 2,400 lbs. (1,100 kg.) in running order. 2,400 lbs. (1,100 kg.) in running order. 2,400 lbs. (1,100 kg.) in running order.

WARRANTY
Three years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. Three years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. Three years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first. Three years or 50,000 miles, whichever comes first.

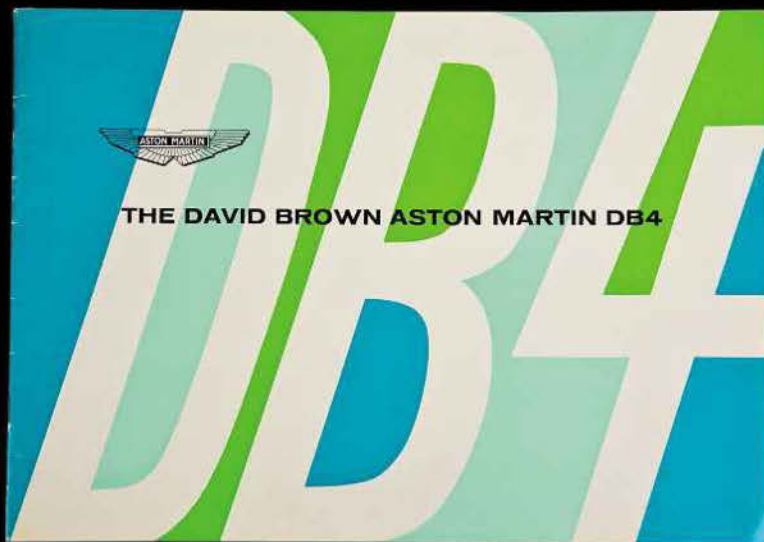
Design for Speed

Traditionally makers of fast and faster automobiles, Aston Martin now offer the DB2—a real Road Express!

Speed is built into every line of this car; creating effortlessly at 90 m.p.h., it tops the 100 mark with power in hand. At the same time, the Aston Martin is a production three-door saloon, which is luxuriously appointed, and immaculately finished.

Quality Fast is the keynote of the DB2, worthy successor to thirty years of Aston Martin winners at Spa, Ulster and Le Mans. In no detail has speed been sacrificed to quality, nor quality to speed.

74 WINTER 2014 VANTAGE



1960s DB4

A dramatically stylised cover for this brochure for the DB4 from 1963 – and note the much-increased prominence of the David Brown name. By this time the company had largely withdrawn from motorsport, so the emphasis inside had shifted subtly towards comfort and refinement. This was the retrospectively named Series 5 model, which saw an increase in overall length and a heightened roofline to provide a smidge more space for rear-seat passengers as well as a slightly larger boot. Both of these enhancements were naturally grist to the copywriters' mill, as was the addition of an electric cooling fan, which, it was claimed, 'saves up to 7 h.p. at maximum speeds'

1963 ASTON MARTIN DB4 No car is better suited to the individualist than the DB4, and this latest Saloon has new qualities that make it even more desirable.

A subtle change in styling gives a longer, sleeker line from end to end, and a much bigger bonnet. Comfort inside the car is increased by additional head-room at the back and infinitely adjustable front seats. The instrument layout has been re-arranged in detail and an oil thermometer added as standard equipment.

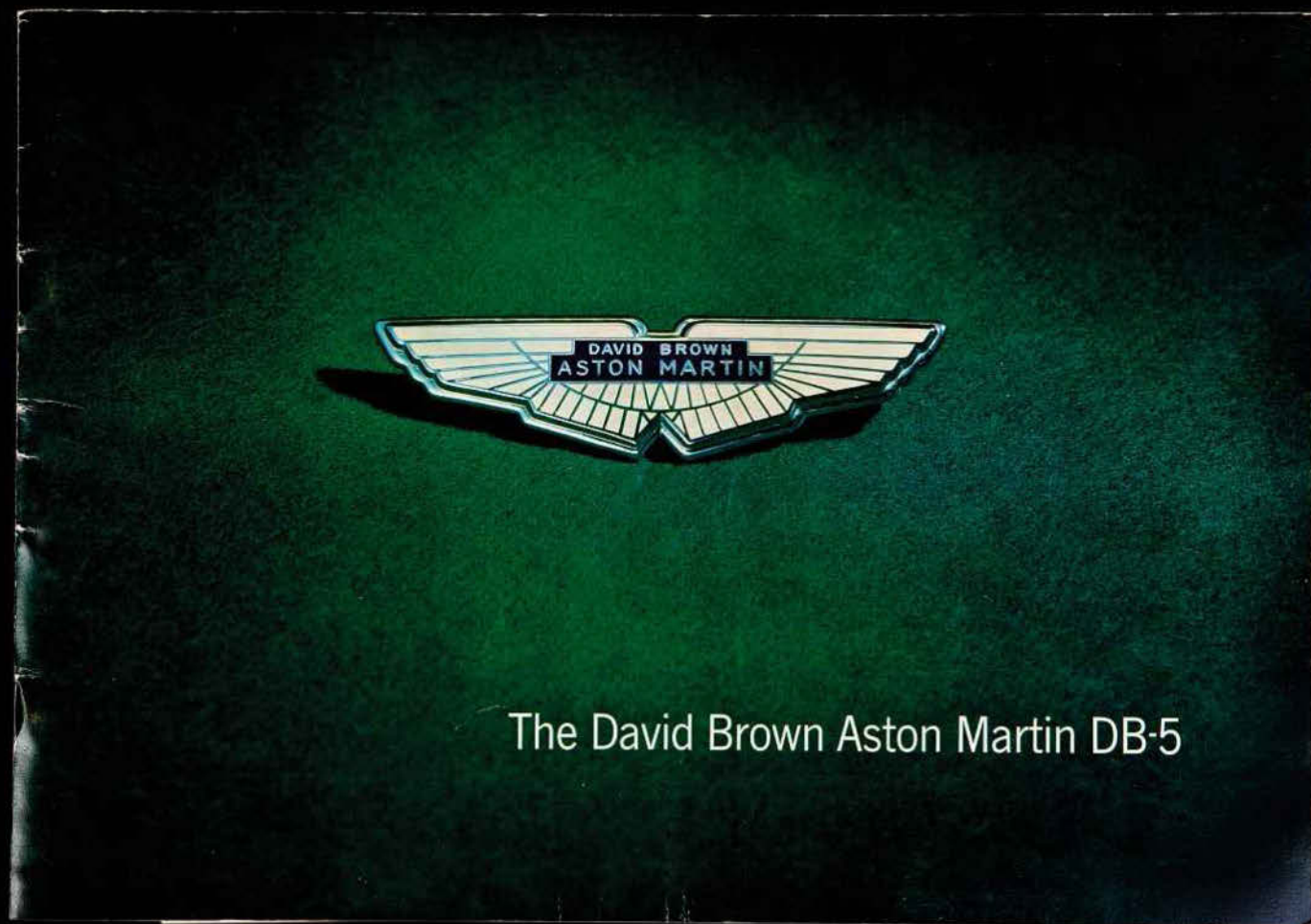
All these improvements add to the comfort and well-being of driver and passengers, and this extends to changes in the mechanical specification. The new plate clutch combines high torque capacity with light pedal action. The steering ratio has been increased 12½% and provides more effortless steering without loss of precision. An independent thermally-controlled fan reduces noise in the car to a remarkable degree and also saves up to 7 h.p. at maximum speeds – which are in excess of 140 m.p.h.



Finest quality English coach build upholstery and duck pile carpets throughout, sets the tone of the interior of the DB4. The aim is to provide the most complete comfort, luxury and elegance without distraction. In-crook head-rests at the back add to the comfort of rear seat passengers, and the front seats are now infinitely adjustable in 3 ways. Always an easy, untravelling car to drive, the Aston Martin DB4 brings a thoroughly satisfying sense of well-being to passengers and driver. Careful design and grouping of the instruments ensures that all readings are registered at a glance.

The generous boot carries a considerable amount of luggage. The walls are clear and the floor is long, flat and unobstructed to permit ease of stowing. Shown here in the DB4 Saloon, and the large capacity for luggage is equally impressive on the DB4 Convertible, ready a feature of this type of body. Please visitors made from the same finest quality English coach build, in and for the upholstery, are the specially made for your car if you wish.





1960s DB5

The clue here is in the number-plate. It's early 1964 and the DB5 has been in production only a matter of months. It is in reality just another evolution of the DB4 - in effect a Series 6 - the main difference being the enlarged, 4-litre engine. At this moment the DB5 is yet to achieve the special status that will follow its appearance in *Goldfinger*, which will open in cinemas that autumn. So the copy draws attention to the faired-in headlamps, even though they've already been seen on some DB4s, and talks at length about the car's new luxury features - electric windows, Sundym glass and the option of an automatic gearbox for the first time. The new exhaust system, it boasts, 'reduces all sound inside the car to an absolute minimum'. Whatever next...

Aston Martin has always been the car for the discriminating motorist: the new Aston Martin DB5 offers a standard of styling, comfort and power that will be hard to equal. Among a number of refinements, the introduction of shielded headlights adds to the sleek line of the coachwork. For greater safety, the car is fitted with day-night running indicators. The intensity of the rear turn signals is reduced at night. It's the first British car to adopt this feature. The leading edges of the doors carry red warning lights. Sundym T-plex safety glass at round cut-out glass whilst reducing heat inside the car. New exhaust system reduces all sound inside the car to an absolute minimum. Windows are electrically controlled from switches on the door. The performance of Aston Martin cars is legendary. The new DB5 has a 4-litre engine with 3.5.1.1 carburettors, developing 282 h.p. at 5,500 r.p.m. The all-synchromesh gearbox is fitted with a short central gear lever. Other Aston Martin 'firsts' are the new special diaphragm clutch, which controls high torque capacity with light pedal action, and a new electrical generating system which ensures that the battery is kept fully charged even at low engine speeds. Also, for the first time, as an alternative to an all-synchromesh gearbox, the Aston Martin DB5 is available with fully automatic transmission.



DB6 AND VOLANTE

Engineering skill and supreme craftsmanship; these are the qualities that have always marked the Aston Martin as a thoroughbred motor car of rare distinction. Superbly blended in the DB6 and Volante, they produce standards of performance, safety and comfort that are unsurpassed.

Either car makes the ideal travelling companion. An effortless long stride to cover the ground fast; a compact sure-footedness through the corners; a tractable docility in traffic—the DB6 and Volante have all the qualities that the discriminating motorist looks for.



1960s DB6

The DB6, which superseded the 5 in late 1965, saw Aston Martin move even further into luxury GT territory, the new car's longer wheelbase and extended roofline providing much-improved head and legroom for rear seat passengers, while power steering and air-conditioning joined the options list. The Volante version was added to the range in 1966. The cover of this late-'60s brochure, with its eye-catching gold trim, was clearly designed to appeal to a customer base that appreciated the finer things in life. You can tell it's the late '60s because of the preponderance of purple: this was Aston Martin entering the era of free love, flower power and the hippie - possibly why our DB6 driver is carrying a gun



DB6 and VOLANTE

The mystique and the aura of unbridled excitement associated with the name of Aston Martin become a little easier to understand when you begin to take a closer look at the Aston Martin Vantage.

No half-hearted sports car this, but a careful distillation of massive energy coupled with a standard of thoughtless engineering that has, in these days of mass production, all too disappeared.

And with its lifelike grille and deep spoiler, the Vantage looks hungry for the open road.

The uprated 5.3-litre V8 engine, for instance, race-tested at Le Mans and considered by many to be the epitome of automotive engineering skill. Specially-designed camshafts and enlarged twin-choke Weber carburetors that help achieve up to 20% more power than the standard V8.

V8 VANTAGE

And what power, 0-60 mph in just 5.2 seconds.

Then on to 100 mph in a scorching 11.9 seconds. At which speed you're cruising on just one quarter of the available power.

Even as you change up into fifth at 140 mph, the fact that maybe only two or three production cars in the world (and two-seaters at that) could out-accelerate you, will strike you as merely academic.

Because, between here and the top speed of 163 mph, you are more likely to be reveling in the unique sound of turbocharged Aston Martin thunder as the surge of power pushes the rev counter past 5500.

To put it bluntly, the Vantage is, as Motor noted in its enthusiastic review, "one of the fastest cars available at any price."

Whatever the speed, four massive PentaT7 tyres ensure that the Vantage firmly grips the road over which it gathers such unparalleled speed at such astonishing acceleration. Through corners the handling is superb. And at a level of centrifugal forces that only a few near-racing designs can match.

As for stopping, Gerling front and rear ventilated discs ensure that the exhilaration is backed by a very high degree of security. Power steering is, again in the words of Monor, 'the best in the world.'

And what other sports car of this stature could offer you such a luxuriously appointed and, indeed, spacious interior? Air-conditioned comfort of the kind normally associated with luxury saloons. And the splendid feel and aroma of the Connolly

But in the final analysis it isn't a dossier of facts – however telling – that draws you to this machine.

It is only in driving the Vantage that the mystique assumes real meaning.

1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 26



1980s ASTON LAGONDA RANGE

This was the early 1980s, and Aston Martin under Victor Gauntlett was enjoying a rare period of growth and success, celebrated in this extremely glossy brochure for its full range of cars – Saloon, Volante, Vantage and Lagonda. Never reticent when it came to putting his own stamp on the company's public image, Gauntlett penned the introduction himself, while the cover bore the Royal Warrant of Appointment recently granted by the Prince of Wales. Lit like an early-'80s pop video, the Vantage looked suitably mean and moody, while the Lagonda, by then enjoying strong sales in the Middle East, looked... well, like nothing else on earth. Its array of front lights – sidelights, indicators, twin fog lamps, twin spot lamps, and *four* pop-up headlamps – was described as 'comprehensive'.

For once there was no need for hyperbole! **(V)**





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ADVOCATES. WE COMPARE A TOTALLY ORIGINAL
DB4 WITH A CAR THAT'S HAD A NUMBER OF
UPGRADES, INCLUDING ELECTRIC POWER STEERING

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL

ORIGINALITY. Useability. Patina. Restoration. These are words seldom far from any conversation involving classic cars, and each can trigger near-evangelical passion (an over-used and mis-used word nowadays, but correctly meant here).

There is a view that for the fully authentic old-car experience, the car should be as built by the factory. Adventurous and physically fit owners will enjoy it for what it is, while others might find that they end up not using the car as much as they imagined they would – simply because it's just too much of an effort.

Another approach is to keep the car period-authentic but to enhance it with parts that were available at the time, making it faster/more agile/a better cruiser/etc. Such an enhanced car can still wear a period patina with pride, and still tell the story of its years.

And then there is the reversible-modification approach, in which you apply modern thinking to an old car to give it modern attributes without, ideally, spoiling what makes it enjoyable as a period piece. That might be the best of all worlds, and is an increasingly popular approach that has even led to the near-reinvention of cars such as Jaguar's E-type and air-cooled Porsche 911s.

It is happening with Aston Martins, too. Rebuilt engines of larger capacity, digital electronic ignition, bigger brakes, modern

telescopic dampers, five-speed gearboxes, better headlights... the list goes on. But perhaps the single biggest change is to power-assist the steering. It's not that people were stronger back in the 1960s, or had hairier chests. Instead it's a mixture of mental recalibration as to what is 'normal', with most modern cars having power assistance, and road conditions with more urban obstacles to negotiate and much more shuffling in and out of parking spaces.

But does power-steering your classic make it no longer a classic? Not necessarily; power steering was readily available back in the day, if rarely specified, and it tended to make steering uncannily light and almost entirely devoid of road feel. Possibly this was a ploy to make the customer feel good about the obvious tactile difference relative to the standard, biceps-building equipment. The sophistication of reducing assistance with increasing speed was still in its infancy.

The DB6 was the first Aston Martin with the option. So it's not unreasonable to imagine the benefit it could bring to the DB4 and DB5, especially if these DBs could have an assistance system to complement what most people regard as their more sportive nature. So, to assess this benefit, and any negative consequences, we have here a pair of DB4s brought together by EZ Power Steering of Leerdam in the Netherlands. We flew there by EasyJet, rather appropriately.







One, the car you see above, is a standard Series 5, or close to it (the engine is to Vantage specification). The other is a Series 2 with a triple-45DCOE Weber specification as per the DB4 GT except that the engine is bored to 4.2 litres. Four-piston front brake calipers rein in the extra power when required, 16in Turrino wire wheels enlarge the footprint, and a very long-legged rear axle ratio calms the cruising.

And, of course, it has the EZ power steering. Like all the company's many EZ applications, it uses a Japanese electric-motor system rather than the old-fashioned, and power-sapping, hydraulic pump of past arrangements. The motor and its electronics fit next to the steering column, under the dashboard where it is unseen by the outside world, and no changes are made to the original car's metalwork.

As well as the motor unit, the conversion requires EZ to machine a new, two-part inner column that is able to fit on either side of the motor unit's powered shaft and join up with the original rack and steering wheel. Finally, it

fabricates a new outer column with mountings for the motor unit. The original parts are kept untouched, so the conversion can be undone if desired.

THE SYSTEM OPERATES as follows, just as it does in a modern car with EPAS (electric power assisted steering). When the ignition is off and there is no power to the unit, you can feel a small amount of springy play at the steering wheel rim but the wheel still centres itself to the middle of the play zone. What you are feeling is the free rotational movement of the column between stops on the input side of the motor unit's powered shaft, plus the effects of turning a torsion spring running through the centre of the inner upper steering column, one end activated by the steering wheel hub, the other attached to that powered shaft.

The powered shaft has gear-teeth machined into it, which are turned by a worm gear powered by the electric motor. A magnetic Hall Effect sensor, similar to those used in electronic

ignition systems, senses the movement of the steering wheel relative to the powered shaft, through that small range of play, and the sensor's signal tells the motor to activate.

The idea is that you never get as far as taking up all the mechanical play because the motor instantly catches up with your movements as it applies torque to the lower column, powering the steering input to the front wheels and returning the torsion spring to its untwisted state with the steering wheel in the centre of the play zone.

This process is repeated for every tiny steering adjustment you make. Similarly, as the forces acting on the front wheels from, for example, the build-up of castor action under hard cornering, attempt to turn the lower steering column, this again applies a torque to the torsion spring against your hands and the motor applies its own torque to compensate for it.

Now, as your road speed rises you want less power assistance than for parking, because you want to feel more of what is happening under



Left and below

This is the unmodified car – a Series 5 with a Vantage-spec 3.7-litre engine – and an absolute gem it is, too. Marcel Sontrop has owned it for 30 years – this is the first time he's let anyone else drive it

the front wheels. The steering weighting should rise, but you also need to feel the weighting's variation as grip and loadings change. So the EZ system incorporates a speed sensor that fits into the speedometer drive and generates magnetic pulses, mimicking the signals from the wheel ABS sensors in a modern car. Using these pulses, plus the steering wheel movement information from the Hall sensor, EZ's engineers calibrate a suitable curve of reduced assistance with increased speed. It's not set in stone; the curve can be changed according to the buyer's tastes, with EZ advising on how to interpret the subjective sensations.

A non-power-steered car has heavy steering at low speeds, lighter at higher speeds. A power-steered car has light steering at low speeds, weighting-up as speed rises until, maybe, it should meet and match the curve on the non-powered car's steering-effort graph – if that's what you want. So is that happening with these Astons? Time to find out.

TO CALIBRATE MYSELF, I start off in the standard Series 5. Marcel Sontrop has owned this 1962 car, a right-hand-drive example originally sold in the UK but resident in Holland since 1967, for the last 30 years. It was built to order with the earlier exposed headlights rather than the faired-in, DB5-like units usual in a Series 5. Marcel paid just €8000 for it – 'I could have had a GT for €10,000, but it seemed too much money' – and restored the body himself apart from the delicious fine-metallic greeny-blue paintwork.

It oozes patina with its original, well-worn cabin and healthy mechanical evidence of regular and vigorous use. It has rare factory-fit electric windows and the original Motorola radio with red Aston Martin lettering, which illuminates when the radio is turned on, while the steering wheel's wooden rim has long lost its factory-fresh shine.

I am the first person other than Marcel to drive this DB4 in 30 years, which is quite a privilege. And it goes beautifully with its triple-SU, still-3670cc and nominally 266bhp engine burbling boisterously through its free-breathing exhaust system. The gearchange is a delight of mechanical, play-free precision, and this particular example has overdrive – a coveted option today – to address the cruising-serenity issue. The brakes need a firm prod but they do the job. What can there possibly be not to like? The steering, perhaps?

DB4s feel as though they have a lot of steering castor, because they self-centre strongly and





Left and above
This magnificent Series 2 DB4 from the Houtkamp Collection has a wide range of upgrades, including a GT-spec engine enlarged to 4.2 litres, longer gearing, better brakes, and electric power steering

‘The brakes have a bite and firmness not quite present in our Series 5. Manoeuvring is a matter of a casual forearm-flick’

demand a lot of steering effort as cornering loads rise. This gives a great feeling of straight-ahead stability, but the steering response either side of the centre is springy and lacks the precision you might expect of a pinion moving a rack. It needs a surprising amount of physical heft even at speed, and of course it's very heavy for tight manoeuvring. In summary, it feels rather more vintage than its design suggests it should.

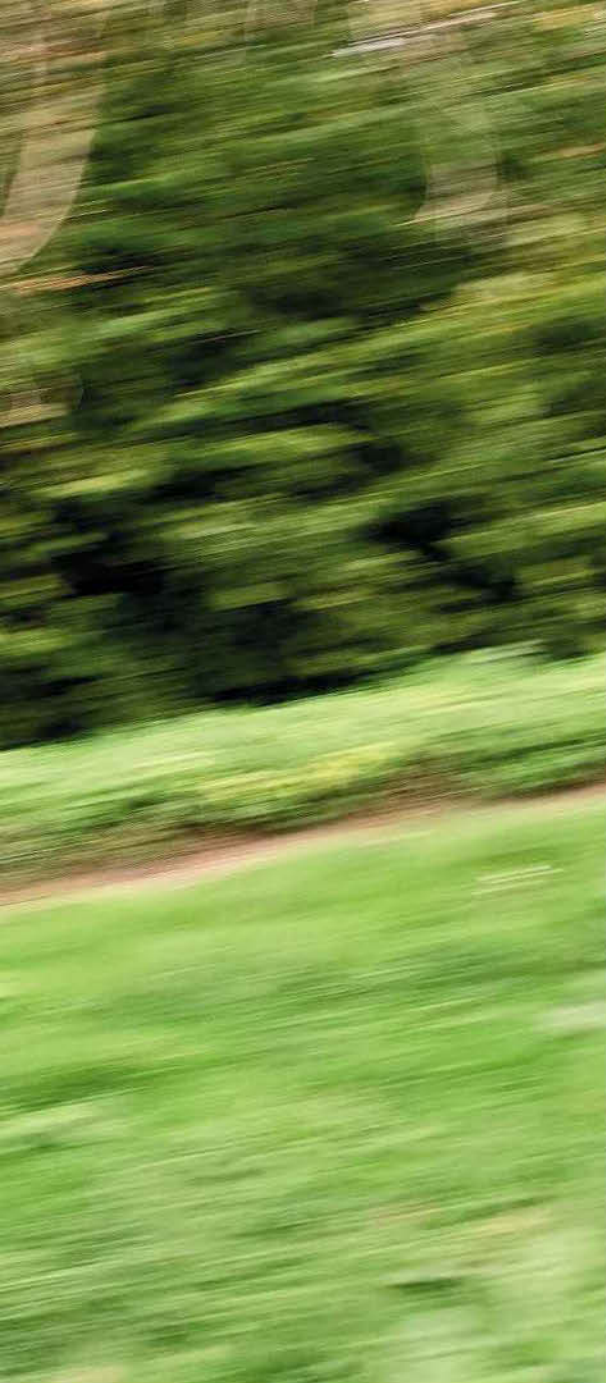
And so to the Series 2 DB4, a delicious-looking machine in the dark grey-green of the Sanction II DB4 GT Zagatos, and for sale with Dutch Aston Martin specialist Rutger Houtkamp, whose Houtkamp Collection will send any Aston enthusiast into a weak-kneed jelly. This car, originally sold to Lord Beaverbrook in 1960, has been restored twice, the first time by the Aston Workshop, the second time (not that there was anything obviously amiss with the first) some years later by Works Service.

It is very smart indeed, with an interior almost as new and sporting a desirable air-con system. Its engine should in theory make the claimed 302bhp of a GT plus whatever bonus the extra

capacity gives on top, although today's experts reckon the factory figures overstated the installed reality by around 40bhp. No matter; this Series 2 – recognise it by the one-piece rear lights, the mesh front grille, the larger bonnet air scoop, the two-in-one minor instruments and more, all carried over from the Series 1 – goes with muscular vigour despite its stratospheric, but overdrive-less, gearing. First gear will take you near 50mph if you let it, while the brakes have a bite and short-travel firmness not quite present in our Series 5.

Manoeuvring this one is a matter of a casual forearm-flick, an attribute that dramatically alters the way you feel about this Aston as you extract it from its lair. Instead of exhaling loudly, getting your breath back and rearranging your body and mind as you snarl off down the road, you're relaxed and ready for immediate action. Modern human composure in an antique environment: sounds ideal.

As your speed rises so does the steering heft, but not by as much as you might expect. Which means that when you're bowling along the open road, it feels a touch unreal relative to the



‘I like to use my old cars a lot, and this steering system would surely make me use my DB4 more’

physicality of the rest of the car. The feeling of springiness either side of centre remains, as does a hint of the weighting change during cornering, but the unwillingness of a worm gear to be driven rather than to drive masks the transient response. Broadly, then, the contours of the effort graphs beyond parking speeds are similar, just flattened and moved bodily down the torque scale.

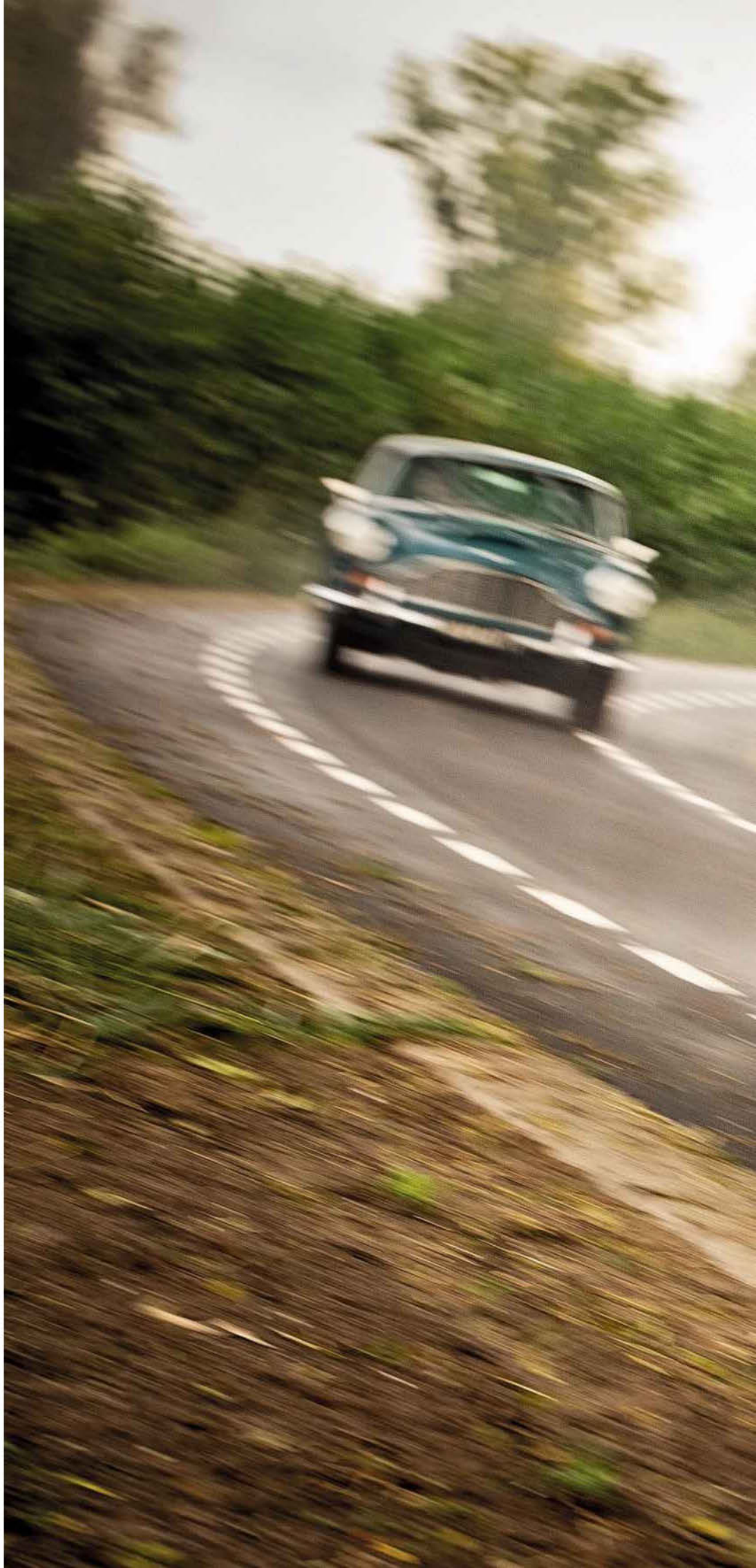
SO TO THE BIG QUESTION. Does the EZ steering make a better DB4? Given that a DB4's steering is not exactly its best point to begin with, then remedying its most obviously unwelcome characteristic – the exertion demanded at parking speeds – is surely a good thing to do because you're not spoiling something good.

At speed, the merits or otherwise are more subjective. It makes the DB4 feel more modern, but still without a modern car's precision or speed of response because neither the steering's ratio nor its geometry have changed. Instead you still get a flavour of the standard characteristics, but they're kept more at arm's length, appropriately.

Were I lucky enough to own a DB4 and used it but occasionally, I would leave it as standard. But I like to use my old cars a lot, and this steering system would surely make me use my putative DB4 more – though I might ask EZ to alter the calibration (as it offers to do) to further reduce the assistance on the open road.

In the end, it comes down to your own preference and I do urge you to sample the EZ system for yourself. What is undeniable, though, is that a well-used, thoroughly sorted, standard DB4 remains a machine of wondrous delight. Bursting biceps or not.

Thanks to Roger Reijngoud at EZ Power Steering (www.ezpowersteering.nl), or contact UK agent Mike Waters on 01626 770400, the Houtkamp Collection (www.houtkamp.nl) and Marcel Sontrop. The DB4 EZ conversion costs £2350 for the kit, or £2850 fitted.








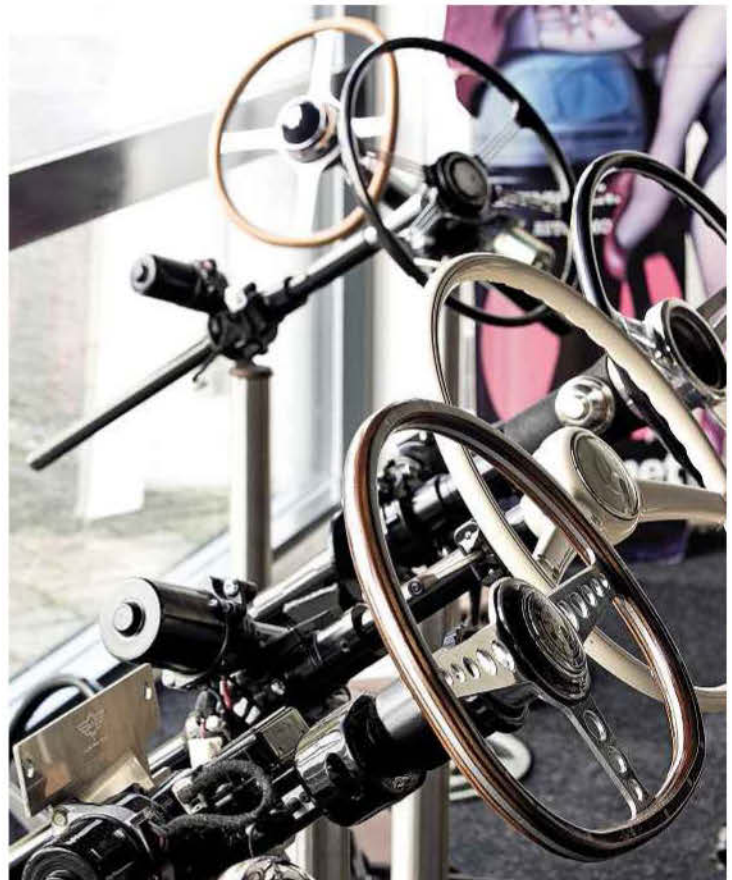
EZ does it

'WE CURRENTLY have more business than we can handle,' says the enthusiastic founder of EZ Power Steering, Roger Reijngoud. 'We have designed conversions for dozens of cars, some simple, some of them – the Maserati Ghibli, for example – needing complete new castings to hold the motor. And you'd think splines on shafts would be standard, but they certainly are not. We reproduce them all.'

'The motor units come from either Koyo or NSK, and the conversions have German TÜV approval. Our old workshop, out in the country, was lovely except in the winter, but there wasn't enough space. We used to have open days with a barbecue, and we invited the TÜV people to come to test cars here instead of having to spend a day for each car if we took it to Germany. They tested 25 cars in two days, and came back grinning after every test because they'd had such a good time with the old cars.'

Roger got the idea for the company after devising an EPAS conversion for his old Opel GT. 'My wife said we should sell it because the steering was so heavy, but I wanted to keep it. At first I exchanged one problem for another because the steering was too light, but I worked on it. The next one was a Volvo P1800. Then more people wanted power steering for their P1800s, which is when the business started.'

Roger still had his day job, which at one point involved working in Saudi Arabia for the Aramco oil company, but he continued developing the EZ idea until it became a full-time business. Today his company also produces a range of replacement steering wheels for high-end classics, to the original design but slightly smaller to take advantage of the lower EZ efforts, or with an eccentrically-positioned hub (pictured right) to give more thigh clearance. 



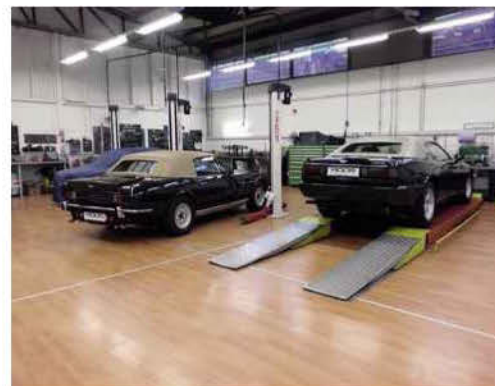


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DRIVE | THE LAST VANTAGE





LAST OF THE BREED

THIS WAS THE LAST V8 VANTAGE TO BE BUILT AT NEWPORT PAGNELL

- BUT THAT'S NOT THE ONLY THING THAT MAKES IT SPECIAL.

WE TELL ITS STORY - AND TAKE IT FOR A SPIN

WORDS ANDREW ENGLISH

PHOTOGRAPHY GUS GREGORY

I'm looking at the build sheet for this car. It's five pages long. Not options, you understand, but extras on top of the options. All of which, according to Nicholas Mee, who sold the car originally, would have added as much as 50 per cent to the already sizeable list price.

These instructions (commands more like), boom out across a quarter of a century from the owner's Kensington Palace Gardens house, and they range from the sublime to the downright contradictory. The comprehensively upgraded sound-deadening, for example, will have struggled to contain the noise from the big-bore exhaust and deleted rear silencers. There's a massively complex sound system, a rear roll-over bar with full harness seatbelts complete with fitting notes: 'DUAL MOUNTINGS EACH SIDE TO BE 5" APART', and a drawing showing exactly what's required. All that extra weight – but then plastic headlamp covers and aluminium seatbelt fittings, which would hardly compensate. The speedometer was specially marked with kph figures in red; there's a Marconi telephone, Recaro seats, dipping spot lights, fitted luggage, BBS wheels with Aston Martin centre motifs...

Oh, and the paint. 'ENSURE MAXIMUM DEPTH OF EXTERIOR PAINT – CAR WILL BE CONTINUALLY POLISHED TO KEEP 100% IMACULATE APPEARANCE FOR MANY YEARS,' blasts the build sheet. This owner even renamed his car: Vantage MkII.

It's all reminiscent of Aldo Cassidy, hero of John Le Carré's controversial 1977 novel, *The Naive And Sentimental Lover*. 'Le Carré's new novel is about twice as long as it should be,' dismissed Clive James in *The New York Review Of Books*. Cassidy is a pram manufacturing magnate waylaid by adventure and sex, but it is his Bentley that chimes in the noggin as you look at this extraordinary Aston Martin Vantage, its exhausts blustering the air outside Mee's London showroom on the Goldhawk Road. Cassidy's Bentley is just as extraordinary: bespoke built, or 'groomed with loving elegance' until it hardly resembles the car from which it was derived. Le Carré's description runs into two pages: 'Cassidy's was a car that conveyed rather than transported,' he summarises.

And in some ways, Wensley Haydon-Baillie, the original owner of this Vantage, is like a character from a novel, most likely penned by John Buchan. A City of London financier, Haydon-Baillie invested in Porton International, a business that claimed to have discovered a cure for herpes. The fact that it hadn't didn't prevent him from selling his shareholding a decade later for a huge profit. In the 1994 Rich List he was ranked 303rd with a personal fortune of £40 million (which he later lost). He owned Wentworth Woodhouse in Yorkshire, one of the biggest private homes in Europe with 360 rooms. He had a collection of Spitfires in his own private aviation museum and he owned the Vosper-built Brave Challenger, a gas-turbine-powered, 13,620hp, 31.4-metre motor yacht, which, with a top speed of 60 knots, was one of the world's fastest craft. He had a collection of Rolls-Royces and a couple of commercial hovercraft. He also mixed in

'Original owner
Wensley Haydon-Baillie
also owned a 13,620hp
motor yacht, which,
with a top speed of 60
knots, was one of the
world's fastest craft'

Right, going clockwise

Among the many extras on this Vantage were the Velvet Green paint and big-bore exhaust; X-Pack engine reckoned to be good for 400bhp-plus; electric Recaros and Willans harnesses were other bespoke features

high circles; Prince Michael of Kent was best man at his wedding. In his pomp, Haydon-Baillie bought several new and extensively modified Astons and this is one of them, the last of the 'classic' Vantages, indeed the last AM V8 of any type to have been built at Newport Pagnell.

By 1989, Aston Martin was reaching the end of the 'Gauntlett Years', a decade of relative (if underfunded) stability. Victor Gauntlett had hugely increased the profile of the company and the V8 model in particular. The company had achieved the Royal Warrant, and Prince of Wales specification (POW) became a regularly requested trim level. The Tickford offshoot and a small share in the Italian styling house of Zagato yielded returns in the form of special models, and the X-Pack derivatives were some of the fastest ever Astons. The association with James Bond had been rekindled with Timothy Dalton in 1987's *The Living Daylights*, using Gauntlett's personal pre-production Vantage. And a chance meeting with Walter Hayes in the same year resulted in Ford taking a shareholding in the company that would ultimately lead to full control.

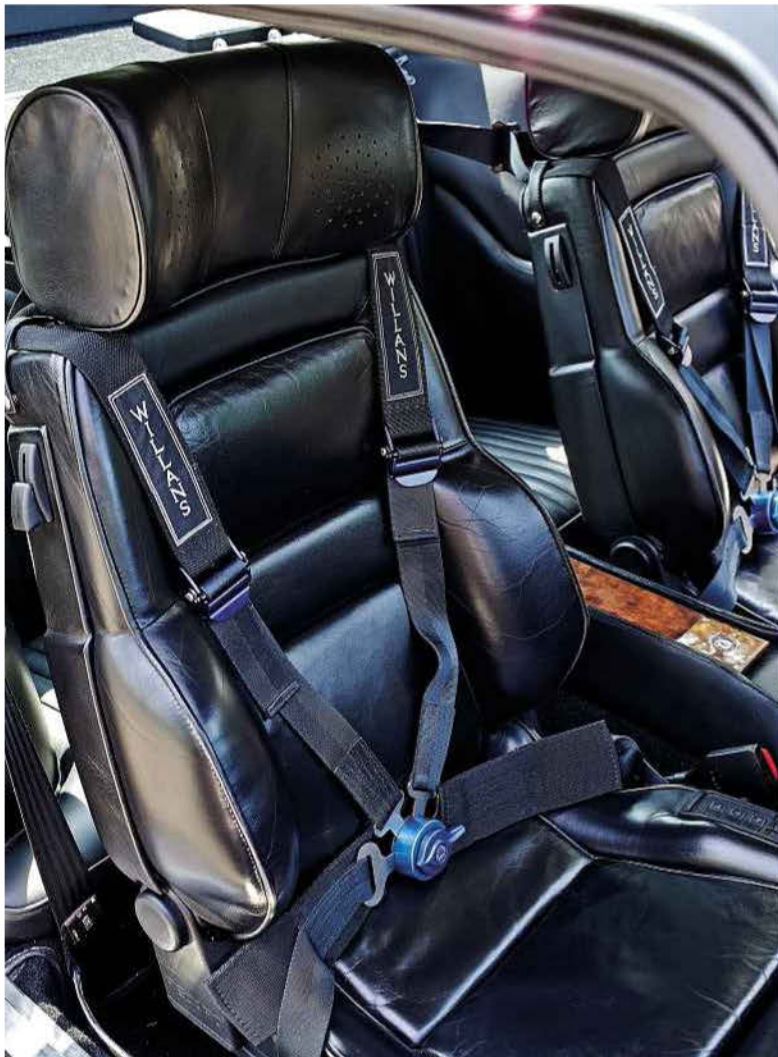
The Vantage was originally launched in 1977 as a derivative of the V8 Series 3. Vantage had traditionally denoted a tuned version of an existing model and the first Vantage V8s benefited from better inlet breathing and bigger Weber carburettors, and initially gave about 380bhp. They looked tougher, too, with blanked-off grilles and extended spoilers. With a top speed of 170mph and 0-60mph in about 5.2sec, the Vantage was briefly the fastest accelerating production car in the world. In the dry all you'd see was the back of the car as it accelerated into the middle distance. In the wet all you'd see was the back of the car as it disappeared into a hedge.

The X-Pack was offered from 1986 to the end of production in 1989 and offered further power increases along with sensible engine protection such as Cosworth forged pistons and cylinder head modifications similar to those used on the Nimrod racing cars. In almost final 580X trim there were new cam profiles and a full-flow oil cooling system. Peak power was about 408bhp at 6250rpm and torque was 390lb ft at 5000rpm. There were 534 Vantage models built – 342 saloons and 192 Volante dropheads – and of this total just 131 had X-Pack mods; these are rare cars indeed.

I was deputy editor of *Fast Lane* magazine in the late-'80s and the V8 Vantage was a regular favourite of the road test team. A dinosaur in terms of its weight and size, it acquitted itself with remarkable agility round tracks such as Castle Combe. Invariably photographed by Simon Childs or Mike Johnson, Mark Hales would monster the big Aston sideways through Tower Corner travelling almost as fast sideways as forwards.

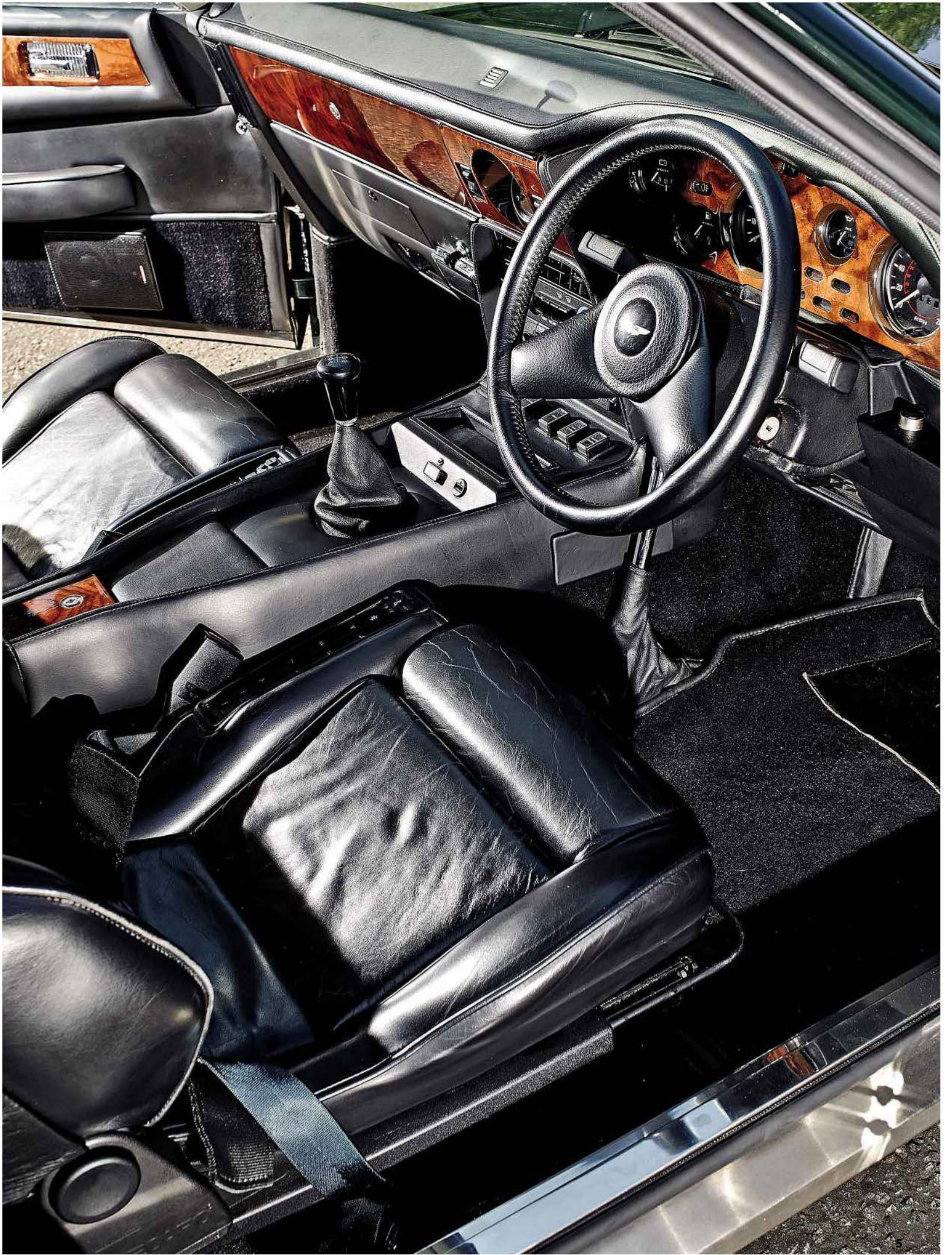
The years have been kind to the William Towns Aston shape and the Vantage looks compact and muscular at the kerbside; or perhaps we've grown so used to gargantuan SUVs that Aston's old warrior now seems small in comparison. Chassis 12701's special-order Velvet Green paintwork looks deep and lustrous, its overall condition immaculate, as befits a car that has covered just 24,000 miles in its life.

It doesn't take long before you start noticing some of the differences that distinguish this car from most other end-of-production Vantages. Look for the ashtray at the front of the centre console and it's not there, because that's where Haydon-Baillie wanted the telephone. The loudspeakers in the lower fascia are AWOL because he didn't want the trim panels punched out. Instead they're mounted on the doors, with another set of speakers in the head restraints of the Recaros. Very stylish and uncomfortable these seats are, too, with their complicated wiring and wide control panels, which eat into your thighs. Ironic since Towns was initially taken on by



DRIVE | THE LAST VANTAGE







V8 Vantage X-Pack

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Aston Martin as a seat designer and, as it happens, a good one, too. Those Willans harness belts with their separate shoulder straps mounted on the rear parcel shelf are timepieces in their own right, and while the half rear roll-over cage would be unlikely to pass even the most cursory glance from a race scrutineer, it's beautifully trimmed in leather.

Start her up and that big-bore exhaust fizzles through the frame and booms over most of south-west London. Over the sleeping policemen of the side roads it's a bit of a pain and catches on the most unassuming lumps. The engine has a lumpy idle, which Mee thinks might be a split plastic vacuum pipe and will be sorted out by the time of sale. The clutch has servo-assistance, which helps in London traffic, and the gearchange is nicely worked-in with a positive but easy shift quality.

Where the automatic V8 sister car (driven in *Vantage* issue 7) was pretty happy to do whatever you wanted, this Vantage model is much more single-minded: it likes to go fast, preferably with lots of revs on the clock.

'Start her up and that big-bore exhaust fizzles through the frame and booms over most of south-west London'

The driving position is comfortable but laid-back, and the steering wheel merely tilts up and down, which prompted Peter Dron to observe in a road test of Victor Gauntlett's own Vantage X-Pack in *Fast Lane* in June 1988 that 'the Aston is one of the few cars, at any price, that is actually better suited to taller drivers, with its bulging bonnet, high fascia top and the arrangement of the major controls'.

I wasn't about to learn much about the outer limits of the handling today, but it was immediately clear that some suspension work (including a special set of dampers) carried out in Mee's workshop has given it a 21st century sharpness and body control without extracting a price in the ride quality. And no, this isn't a car for the inner city, but it held its temperatures in traffic and revved freely once the road cleared.

Mee can still recall Haydon-Baillie's piercing gaze. 'It was quite terrifying,' he says. 'And you could never argue with his logic.' And even if you take in the massive extra cost of all those extras, at least he got exactly what he wanted.

This is not a cheap car, then or now. At the time of our drive, it was marked up at £265,000, and it's since been sold. 'If you want the best V8 Vantage, then this is probably the one to own,' says Nick.

I'm not entirely convinced. It's one man's dream car and you know what they say about one man's meat. While there's lots to covet here, I found the seats uncomfortable, while the electrics will be baffling and the exhaust a liability in town. For all that, it's a mighty last blast for this long-lived body style, the last non-Ford Aston and an awesome piece of kit. **V**

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NORTHERN SOUL

BRINGING GREAT ASTON MARTINS BACK TO LIFE - THAT'S
WHAT THE ASTON WORKSHOP, BASED IN THE NORTH OF
ENGLAND, IS ALL ABOUT. WE PAID THEM A VISIT

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN

PHOTOGRAPHY GUS GREGORY



As locations go, County Durham and the historic village of Beamish in the far north of England is one of the less likely places to find one of the world's largest and most successful Aston Martin sales and restoration businesses. But as you arrive outside the sprawling, 26,000ft premises you quickly appreciate that the Aston Workshop is not your typical marque specialist.

Founded in 1988 by Bob Fountain, the Aston Workshop's story is the very definition of that popular business term 'organic growth', though the phrase doesn't really do justice to the quarter of a century of hard graft, sleepless nights and brave, entrepreneurial rolls of the dice that Fountain must have made to develop his one-man band into the powerhouse that the business has become. Fountain – still the company's sole owner – remains actively involved, but spends a significant period of the year abroad, content to leave the operational duties to his trusted lieutenant, managing director Clive Dickinson, and the 40-strong team of highly skilled technicians, mechanics, fabricators and machinists in their employ.

It's Clive who greets us upon arrival. Sporting fashionably cropped grey hair, black leather jacket and designer denim, he's as atypical of the Aston Martin scene as the Aston Workshop's unorthodox origins and location, yet his style and manner set the perfect tone for what is clearly a dynamic, energetic and convention-challenging business.

'We try to offer a complete service,' explains Clive. 'We've got the parts supply side, which we do over the internet to people doing self-restorations around the world. We've got the paint and body centre where we can do

everything from freshening-up a car with a few stone-chips to full crash repair of any car, including all the modern models. However, I'd say that the real core of the business is the sales, restoration and bespoke modernisation of the classic Astons. That's what we're about.'

Walk into the huge showroom and the sheer quantity, variety and quality of the cars for sale quite takes you back. From a selection of immaculate DB4s, 5s and 6s to bruising V8s, a completely original and wonderfully patinated DBS, chiselled original Vanquish and numerous Gaydon-era models (plus a few exotic Italian interlopers taken as trade-ins), the Aston Workshop literally has something for everyone. According to Clive it's a deliberate strategy, and one that has seen an example of almost every model that Aston Martin has ever made pass through the showroom, restoration shop, paint booths or service bays.

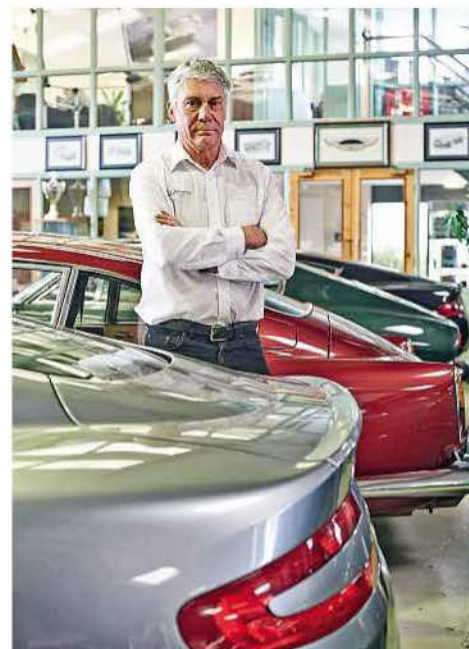
Sitting front of house, the showroom's size and dazzling array of inventory creates an enviable first impression, but it's when you walk through to the adjoining service bays (fully authorised by Aston Martin), parts stores and restoration workshops that the scale of the operation truly hits you. There's a separate parking area for service customers, together with a dedicated service reception and waiting area, which makes a clear distinction between sales, service and restoration without suggesting customers are treated with anything less than equal care and attention.

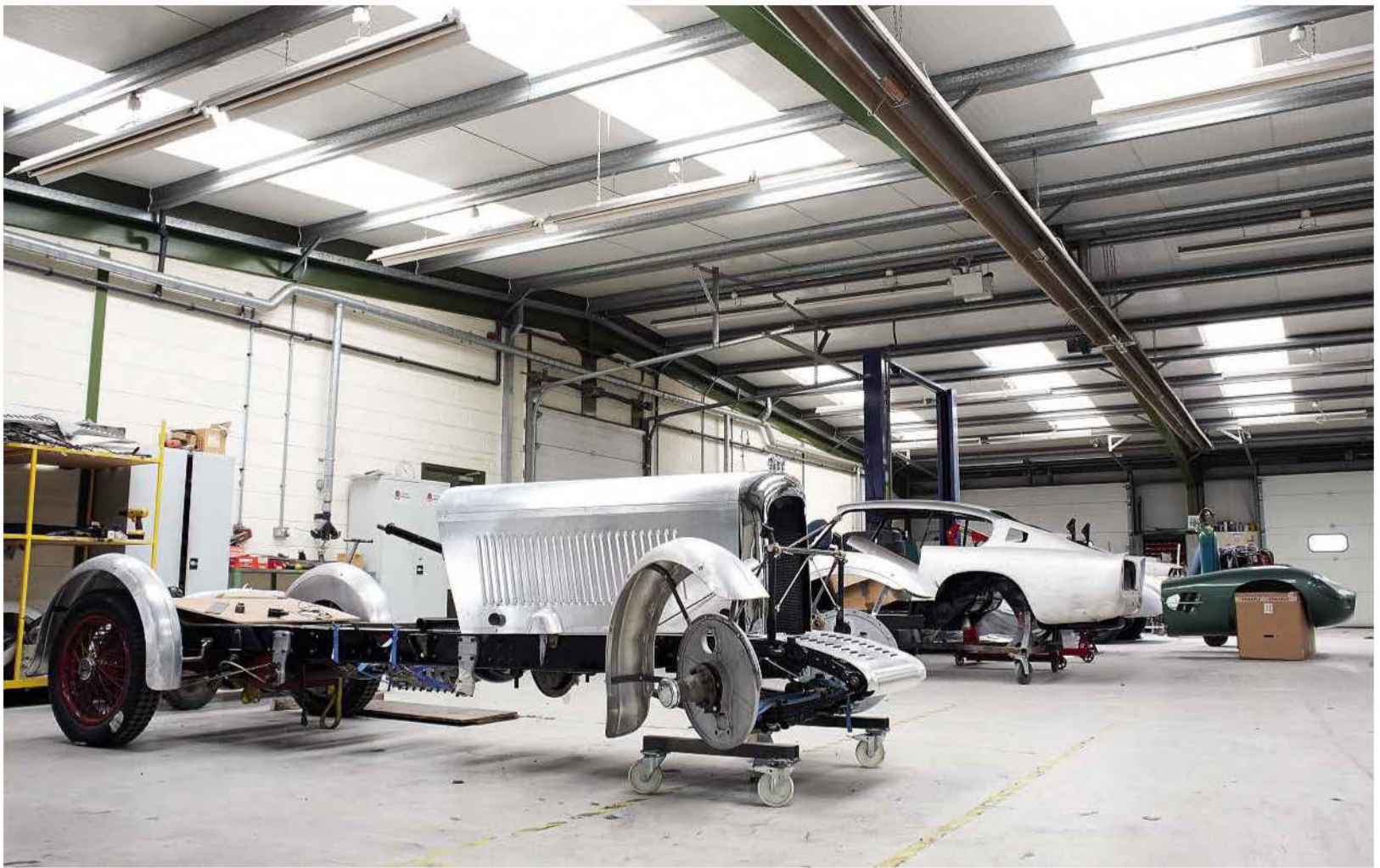
'We buy cars speculatively to partly restore, fully restore or, if it's something unique like the DBS barn find we had recently, then we just want to celebrate it for what it is and attempt to find a buyer who loves its patina, but also wants to make it drive perfectly. By contrast we've got a DB6 for complete restoration that's so decrepit

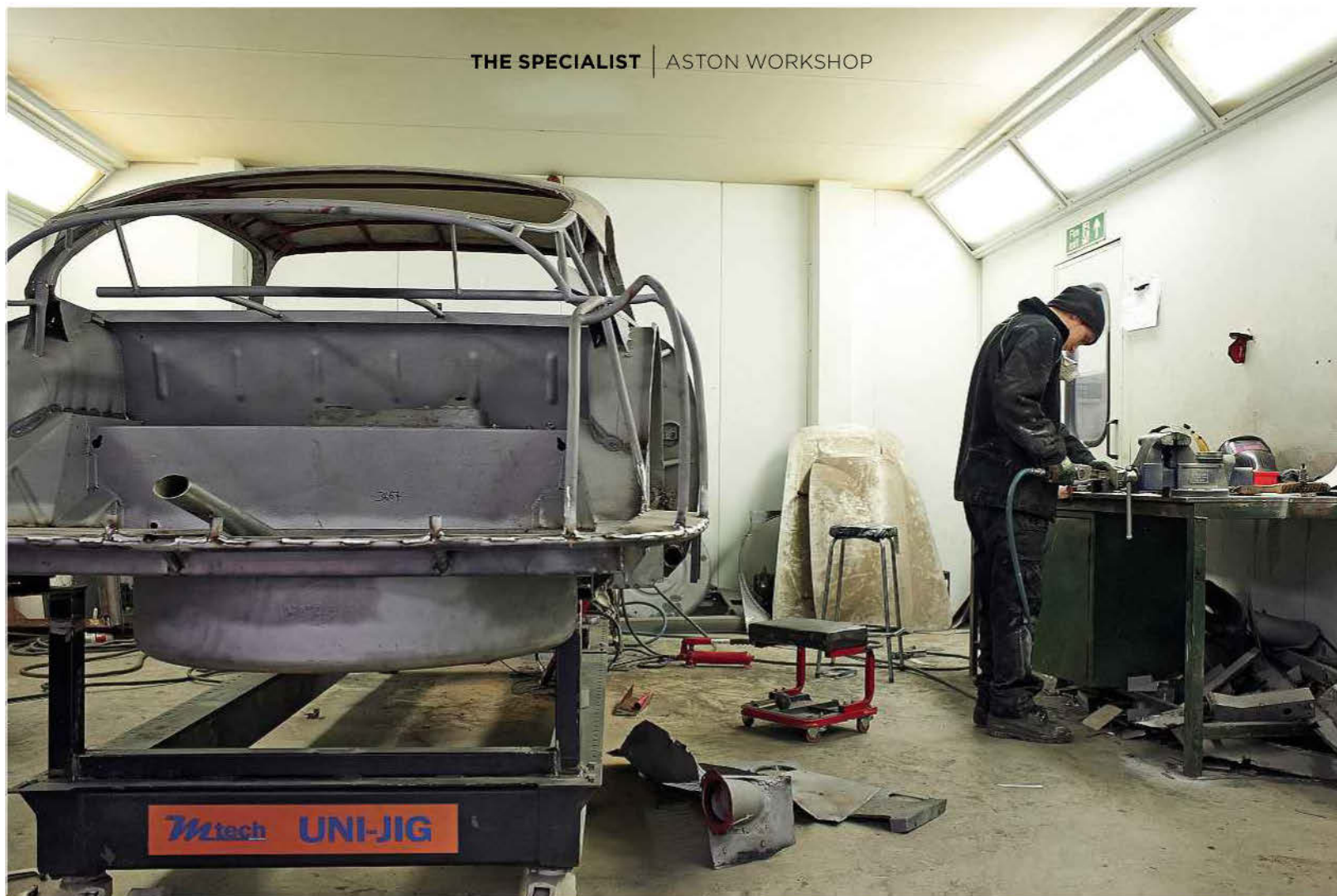
'IT TOOK A QUARTER OF A CENTURY OF HARD GRAFT TO TURN A ONE-MAN BAND INTO THE POWERHOUSE THE BUSINESS HAS BECOME'

Clockwise from top right

Pre-war Lagonda M45 undergoing full restoration is owner Bob Fountain's 'campaign car' for historic rallying; DB1 (centre) is another full restoration job; air-con specialist Rob Kenmir at work on a DBS convertible; managing director Clive Dickinson, and a DBS and AM V8 being prepped for sale







**‘ONE DB6 IN FOR
RESTORATION
IS SO DECREPIT,
YOU ONLY NEED
TO TOUCH IT AND
ANOTHER BIT
DISINTEGRATES’**

you only need to touch it and another bit disintegrates! No matter how many times I’ve seen it, when one of these wrecks comes in and goes through the process of a total restoration, then leaves us as a better-than-new car, I have such a sense of pride and satisfaction.

‘We also offer a store and sell service, whereby we sell on behalf of a customer. It takes the hassle out of the process for the vendor, and more often than not returns them a better price than were they to try and sell privately. As its our reputation on the line, we’re always transparent about any issues the car might have, and can advise buyers of what they are and the likely cost of rectification. At the end of the day a business like ours is built upon trust and quality, so our aim is always to ensure vendors get the best price and buyers get the best car.’

So what about the far-flung location? Given Aston Martin has never put down roots further north than Gaydon, it’s perhaps natural that so many of the marque specialists are based in the southern half of the country. With so much wealth centred upon London and the South East, there’s also the perception that you need to be where the money is, but according to Clive that’s no longer the case.

‘As a result of new markets opening up, and thanks to the internet, the business has become much more international in my time here. In fact I’d say it’s now truly global. Our marketplace is the world. It’s certainly not Beamish! I know

that this is perhaps against expectations, but our location actually works very well for our mainland European clientbase, as once they get their heads around it they realise we’re easy to get to, with great travel links via Newcastle Airport. Even if they’re travelling from further afield – as they often do – then one long-haul flight and airport transfer is much the same as any other. Getting to us is certainly much easier than going through the pain of getting into Greater or central London. And once they’re here there are some stunning roads to enjoy.’

The more you explore the premises, the more you appreciate their scale and the high standard of presentation. Clive’s previous life as a professional photographer has helped in developing the Workshop’s brand identity, and while that might sound pretentious, in the highly competitive world of Aston Martin sales and restoration it’s increasingly important. For Clive, the key is a blend of old and new methods. ‘We market our cars quite aggressively in order to achieve high visibility, and in a style that distinguishes us from other Aston specialists. We also use the internet to spread the word, not just through our own website –which we are continually developing – but by subscribing to other sites who promote our cars.

‘Bob [Fountain] has made some great contacts over the years, often by taking part in international rallies. There’s no better way to promote yourself than getting out there and



Clockwise from far left
Stripped and shot-blasted chassis in the bodyshop's dedicated 'steel bay'; DB2 drophead and DB6 in the main workshop; trim specialist Colin Brown strips a transmission tunnel; and workshop manager John Gray outside the bodyshop's aluminium bay



meeting people, building relationships and, ultimately, friendships too. Websites and advertising are essential, but word of mouth will always be an invaluable marketing tool.

'We also produce a huge amount of literature to promote our services and different aspects of the business. It's also nice to create something artistic, and to give something back to our suppliers and customers. There's a high-quality calendar, lavishly produced coffee-table books, plus the parts catalogue, brochures covering our bespoke restoration services and the more regular maintenance and crash repair info we leave with our customers as polite pointers to the extent of what we can do. For customers who have commissioned a restoration, we produce a detailed build book that documents the entire process. It's a fabulous record of what they've created and a great thing to be able to show friends and family.'

When we finally enter the main restoration area, we're joined by workshop manager John Gray. Softly spoken, with a calmness and quiet confidence that comes from overseeing countless meticulous restorations, John takes us on a tour of the machine shops, bodywork bays, spray booths and build areas that form the heart of the Aston Workshop. What typifies every section – and therefore every part of the restoration process – is an industrious, focused energy. There are dozens of cars, from early pre-war models, through the typical array of handsome

DB4s, 5s and 6s to the increasingly popular (and valuable) DBSs and V8s. They're all in various states of disassembly and resurrection, some clearly at the start of a long journey, others poised to begin a new life with their doubtless chuffed owners.

'The majority of our classic restorations go into northern Europe,' says John. 'The Dutch, the Germans, the Belgians and the Swiss are really into their classic cars. Not so much the Italians, at least not when it comes to British classics! They're born car enthusiasts, but they seem much more patriotic and stick with Ferrari, Lancia, Maserati and the like.'

'We do have many clients in the rest of the world,' Clive adds. 'We've nearly always got a car in-build for the US. We've done a number of cars for Argentina. We've got a fair few customers in Hong Kong, often ex-pats who love the idea of driving a quintessentially British car in an unlikely country. It's an extension of who they are, I suppose.'

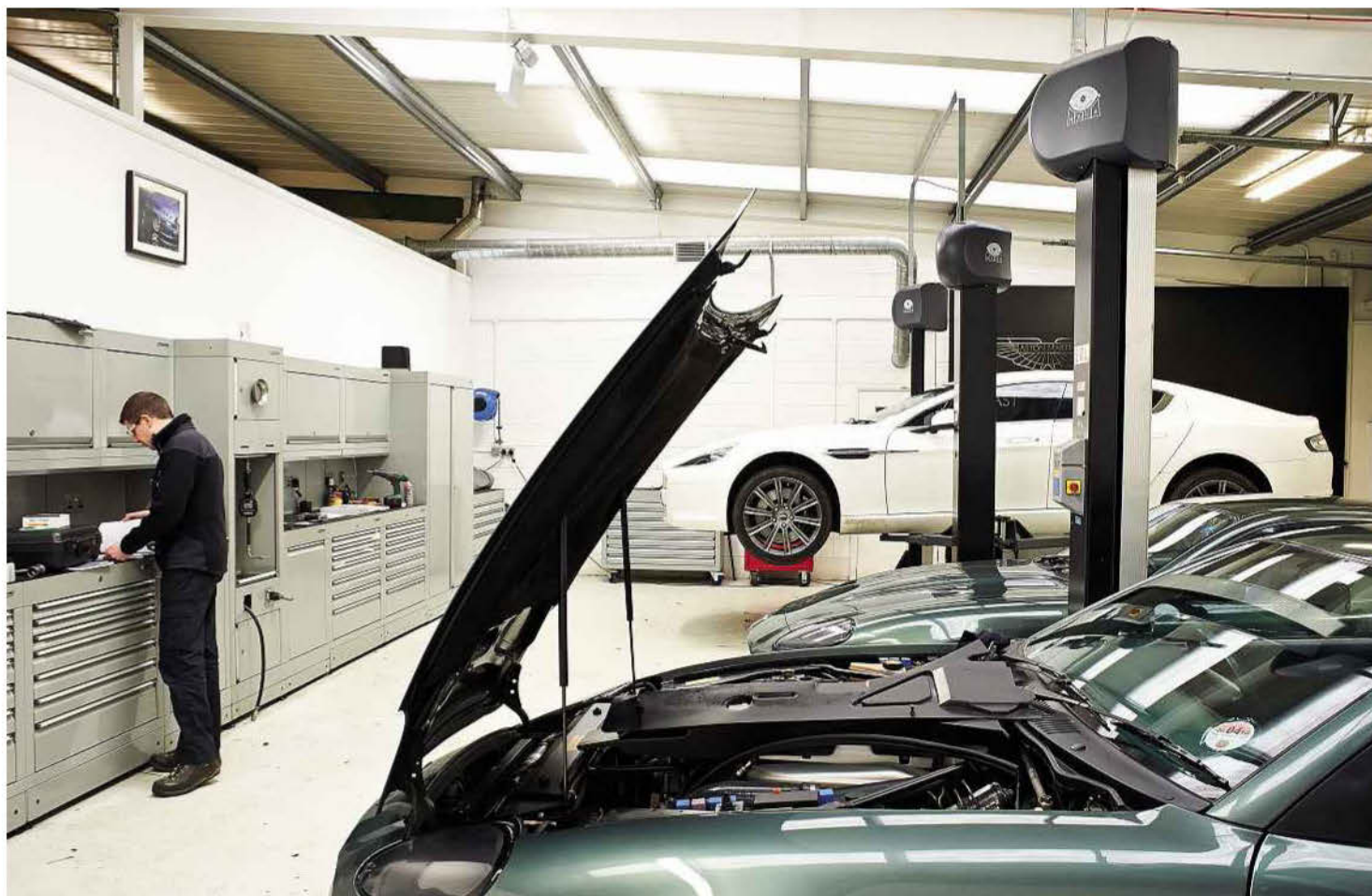
In one of the machine shops we see the hugely impressive CNC line boring machine and the crank balancing rig. It's state-of-the-art precision equipment that's used at the highest levels of motorsport. The tolerances to which they can work make the human hair look like a piece of spaghetti, so it's no wonder today's rebuilt engines (which in some cases are built from freshly cast blocks) are smoother and more reliable, yet also more powerful. The Aston

Workshop certainly isn't alone in working to such high standards, but the level of investment in such high-tech machinery is impressive.

Like Clive, John sees advantages in the County Durham location. 'The North East has a tradition of engineering, so we always have people who are steeped in the trade. We've got a great team of specialists with literally hundreds of years of experience between them. Mostly local lads, a number of them are ex-Aston Martin employees who moved away from the region, then came back, so we've got real depth of authentic knowledge that dates back to when today's classics were new cars. As some of those guys approach retirement they've been able to pass on their expertise to the younger guys here – some of them apprentices taken from a nearby automotive college in Gateshead – so the secrets and know-how aren't lost.'

Walk through the different work areas and whether you observe a time-served veteran or fresh-faced youngster there's a shared sense of purpose that only comes when people are totally engaged in what they're doing. The pace is steady and methodical: better to do something right once than rush it and waste time on rectification. The skills are wonderful to behold.

Leaving John to patrol the thrumming, bustling restoration area, we walk back towards the showroom with Clive. On the way we pass a DB5 that's being prepped before being sent to its overseas owner. Though it takes a trained eye



From the top
Aston Workshop is an official service centre for modern Astons, here neatly book-ended by a DB7 Vantage and Rapide; a DB4 straight-six and V8 in the engine shop having been rebuilt and dyno'd in-house

to spot, this car features numerous modifications to make it more useable and more suited to foreign climes: air-conditioning, power steering, uprated brakes, improved engine cooling. There's even a special fold-down rear bench so the customer's dog is more comfortable! It's a beautiful car for all the obvious reasons, but also because the car is so clearly one that's driven regularly and treated more like a modern car than a museum piece.

So-called 'resto-modding' is an increasingly popular – and controversial – area of the classic car scene (and one we examine elsewhere in this issue – see pages 80-88). Those who commission (and conduct) the work swear by the results, saying they enjoy their cars more and cover many more miles in them as a result.

For the Aston Workshop it's a significant part of the business. 'The enhancement side of the business is good for us, especially with mainland European customers as they're very keen on our left-hand-drive conversions. The work is done just as it would have been at the factory, so there's no compromise in the end result. The market for classic Astons is far larger in left-hand-drive markets, but Aston Martin built very few left-hand-drive cars, so there's terrific demand. That's reflected in resale values. We're finding a converted left-hand-drive car won't be worth as much as a genuine factory left-hooker, but they tend to command higher prices than

right-hand drive in Europe, the US and emerging regions like China.

'We also get customers who are new to the classic scene. They've owned plenty of modern sports cars, maybe sold their business, have always wanted a DB2 or a DB6 or whatever, and come to us for a good original specification car. When they drive it they are often quite shocked or disappointed by how they feel to drive. By offering enhancements to the brakes, engine, chassis and comfort-orientated upgrades such as power steering and air-con we're simply bringing the best out of the car. That way we can give customers the beautiful car they've fallen in love with, but also one that compares with a modern driving experience.

'The thing to remember with our performance and comfort enhancements is that they're invisible and reversible. We're not irrevocably changing the cars, as they can be put back to original spec if that's what a future owner desires. Customers who have cars restored to original specification tend to be collectors who rarely, if ever, drive their cars. I understand the desire to have a car that's absolutely as it was, but I think it's great that so many of our cars incorporate enhancements, because it means they're going to be driven. There's nothing better than bringing these great old cars back to life and seeing how much their owners enjoy them. It's what Aston Workshop is all about.' **V**

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Aston Martin DB4 Series IV

Photography Tim Wallace

This Bespoke LHD DB4 Series IV represents the ultimate in Aston Workshop restoration, resulting in not only one of the finest examples on the road today, but also one of the most powerful thanks to a significant engine upgrade!

Aston workshop's Enginology department has increased the standard engine capacity from 3.8 Litres to an astonishing 4.7 Litres, resulting in a much smoother performance.

With power comes responsibility...

Every aspect of this DB4's handling set-up had to be addressed in order to ensure the car would not only be exceptionally quick but also safe and a pleasure to drive.

Therefore, a series of discreet upgrades were undertaken to complement the engine upgrade; chassis, brakes, transmission, cooling etc. were all enhanced to improve safety, comfort and handling.

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ART OF THE ESTATE

ZAGATO'S VIRAGE-BASED SHOOTING BRAKE IS THE FINAL PART OF THE DESIGN
HOUSE'S TRILOGY TO MARK ASTON MARTIN'S CENTENARY. WE DRIVE IT

WORDS DAVID VIVIAN

PHOTOGRAPHY DEAN SMITH



F

irst you need a reason. Cars as beautiful and singular as the Aston Martin Virage Shooting Brake Zagato don't just happen. Fortunately for the Italian *atelier*, there was a good one: 2013, Aston Martin's 100th birthday. Zagato would present a gift to its old friend in the form of three special cars

starting, in Aston's Centennial year, with the DB9 Spyder Zagato and the DBS Coupé Zagato. The third – and arguably Zagato saved the best to last – is this year's Virage-based Shooting Brake. And on a chilly October Friday morning, some miles from the chaos-fringed clog of Milan's rush hour, I count myself fortunate to be taking advantage of the gently billowing warm air issuing from its heater. Better still, company boss Andrea Zagato is behind the wheel – for the first few miles at any rate. He takes up the story.

'The point is, what is a gift? Not something you buy because you like it. The person you're giving the gift to should like it. So, in this scenario, we decided not to do a really typical Zagato car – because that is a gift to us – but to make a trilogy of cars that should be well received by Aston Martin for their birthday. We were inspired by Aston Martins of the '70s and the '80s with the grille and the lights that are integrated in the front. It is not necessarily a typical Zagato feature. A gift also has to keep you guessing until it is opened, so we involved Aston Martin a little but not too much in order to make a complete surprise.

'That was the easy part. The difficult part was a crazy idea, typically Italian. I wanted three clients from three different continents. Someone from Japan for the DBS Coupé, from America for the DB9 Spyder and Europe for the Shooting Brake. This was difficult.'

But the rationale behind the trilogy idea was sound. Andrea explains that Zagato – about to make a significant investment in upgrading its rather glum mid-'50s factory and installing state-of-the-art production facilities – has changed the way it sells cars in recent times. 'We pre-sell the car now,' he explains. 'We pre-select the clients, the clients sign the contract, only having seen the sketches. They're collectors. Each car in the trilogy is a collectible, not a consumable.

'Basically, we're exploring the numbers. Three is a kind of minimum run. A one-off is a waste of everything. This Shooting Brake is one of three – there is a lot of design and engineering in common between the three cars. With the trilogy we were able to divide maybe 50 per cent of the investment of the development among the three clients. And this allows the three clients to get a "one-off" at a reasonable cost.' The Virage Shooting Brake's unnamed new owner lives in Holland, but the car made its debut at the Chantilly Arts & Elegance Concours D'Elegance in September.

Zagato's reimagining seems a particularly apt denouement for a model that enjoyed but a fleeting life in Aston's line-up. Maybe it should have been called DB10 rather than evoking memories of its rather cumbersome and unrewarding 1980s namesake. What made the modern Virage appealing was its very absence of excess. With its bonded aluminium construction it was designed as a thing of svelte beauty from the beginning.

'The roof even has a hint of Zagato's trademark double-bubble. Every work of art should have a signature, after all'

In some ways, it nailed the sweet spot between the fine, suave DB9 and the excellent but slightly overwrought DBS. The pared-back, de-frilled look intensified the basic beauty of Aston's admittedly over-familiar 'generic' coupé shape.

At 4830mm, Zagato's Shooting Brake is 130mm longer than the Virage, 6mm wider and the same height (1287mm). It has an altogether more expansive presence, though, accentuated particularly by overhangs eased out by 74mm front and rear. The traditional 'coupé-meets-estate' shooting brake concept is realised by a long, gently sloping roofline to create a more practical body style with +2 rear seating and a surprisingly spacious boot beneath the elegant, dramatically raked tailgate. The roof even has a hint of 'double bubble'. Every work of art should have a signature, after all.

The official overview from Zagato chief designers Norihiko Harada and Stephane Schwarz is that the look offers a 'modern interpretation with design cues of the Aston Martin V8 Vantage and Volante of the mid 80s' that creates 'surprise and fascination with a new shape while maintaining Zagato and Aston Martin's core design values'. Certainly, as Andrea alluded to, the overall look is unmistakably Aston but the Zagato elements can be appreciated in the sharper angles featured in the grille and the

shoulder lines running down the flanks. Equally distinctive touches include the front and rear lights, refashioned sills and bumpers and round-edged exhaust pipes.

What resides beneath, however, is all standard Virage, untweaked and covered by the Aston Martin Service programme (with warranty). If the Shooting Brake weighs a little more than the original coupé, it shouldn't unduly burden the 490bhp 5.9-litre V12 that powered the Virage coupé from rest to 60mph in around 4.5sec and on to almost 190mph, stadium-filling soundtrack all the way.

For the moment it's enough that we're burbling along the leafy side-roads of an out-of-town park while photographer Dean Smith snaps away from the undergrowth. I ask

Andrea how Zagato has managed to stay successful for so long.

'We survived the vanishing of the assembly line,' he says. 'The tradition of the coachbuilder was to make a body on an existing mechanical chassis. When Vincenzo Lancia introduced the monocoque, nearly all of the coachbuilders disappeared. There were 70 coachbuilders in Milan and 70 in Turin at the beginning of the last century. Only a few of them survived. In Italy it was Pininfarina, Bertone and Zagato.

'We had assembly lines up to the '90s. Then the Japanese introduced flexible production. With robots, they could build different versions of the same car on the same line. It was a revolution. Added to that, the unions were becoming aggressive. They didn't want any job to be contracted out. So we became a bit like the enemy of the unions and redundant in the new age of flexible lines. We had to begin again from scratch. We closed the assembly line, refurbished the facility and transformed it into a total design centre, a little bit like Giugiaro. But we could do more than a company like Italdesign because we have a brand, and that's when I started thinking about doing the *atelier* and collectors' cars such as this.'

It's time to swap seats. In fact, Andrea gets out to leave for a meeting, which is probably just as well as we're heading for more open roads in the opposite direction to where he needs to be. Behind the wheel, the

Previous pages, and right
While front styling is shared with last year's Coupé and Spyder, rear is unique. The long, gently sloping roofline creates slightly more rear headroom (though it remains a +2) and a surprisingly spacious boot









Virage Shooting Brake Zagato

ENGINE V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 490bhp @ 6500rpm **MAX TORQUE** 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
TRANSMISSION Six-speed automatic with paddleshift, rear-wheel drive **SUSPENSION** Double wishbones, coil springs, adaptive dampers and anti-roll bar front and rear **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted **BRAKES** Vented, cross-drilled ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD
WHEELS Aluminium alloy, 8.5 x 20in front, 11 x 20in rear **TYRES** 255/35 ZR20 front, 335/30 ZR20 rear, Pirelli P Zero Corsa **WEIGHT** c1800kg
POWER TO WEIGHT c285bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 4.6sec (estimated) **TOP SPEED** 180mph+ **PRICE** n/a



Right
Shooting Brake on temporary display at Zagato's Milan HQ before it goes to its new owner

Shooting Brake feels exactly as you would expect: a true thoroughbred with the classic GT 'bones', powered by a mildly dialled-back but vocally undiminished DBS engine that takes its orchestration from an excellent Sportshift six-speed paddleshift gearbox. And all sitting on a chassis adapted from that of the dynamically gifted four-door Rapide. It's an inspired fusion.

Apart from red-and-cream trim and numerous 'Z' motifs, the interior up front is mostly standard Virage. Which is a good thing. The elegance of the dials alone deserves an award. Then there's the spare but sensual architecture, the tasteful aluminum accents, the hand-stitched hide – much of the cabin looks as if it's been sculpted from a solid chunk of the stuff. The slim seats offer man-sized lateral and under-thigh support and a huge span of adjustability, while the driving position is laid-back perfection. It's comfortable, too, and it's easy to get lulled into a false sense of cosiness, an impression massaged by the outstandingly good secondary ride, which filters small bumps and road surface scars with surprising facility.

With closer inspection of the horizon in mind, though, life changes dramatically. To realise the potential pace of the Virage Shooting Brake requires a mental as well as physical change of gear. Tug the left-hand paddle back for a shorter gear and this car really can generate g – and you'd better get it right because everyone in earshot will be watching. With the exception of the DBS, V12 Vantage and a few Ferraris, the V12 in the Virage howls like few others. It's a sophisticated, multi-layered sound, raw and loud and violent and very, very V12.

The chassis is equally rewarding, supplementing huge grip with fast responses and acutely executed changes of direction. The steering is well-weighted with fine precision about the straight-ahead and reassuring feel on lock, while body control is exemplary, finessed by damping that's taut yet supple. The Virage Shooting Brake makes no attempt to steam-roller the rutted and rutted road surface into submission but, rather, it tracks the undulations with no wasted body movement and uses its damping to minimise their impact. It would be a great car in which to attack a big distance – comfortable, easy on the nerves and constantly engaging.

As its new owner will come to appreciate, despite its arresting appearance, the Virage Shooting Brake doesn't do shock and awe. It's better than that. A great driver's car. A great GT. A unique fusion of Old School and contemporary cool. He's a lucky guy. **V**



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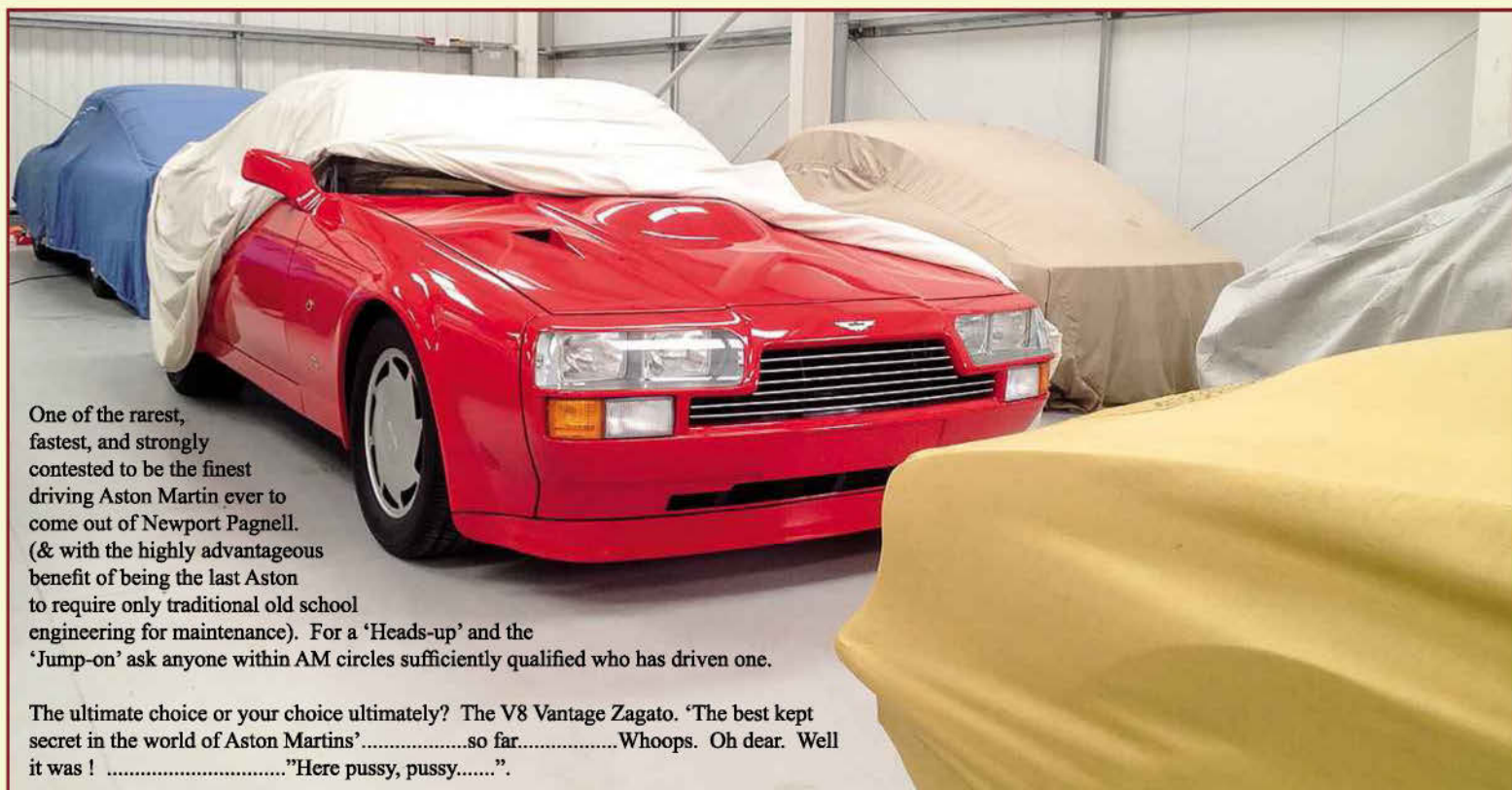
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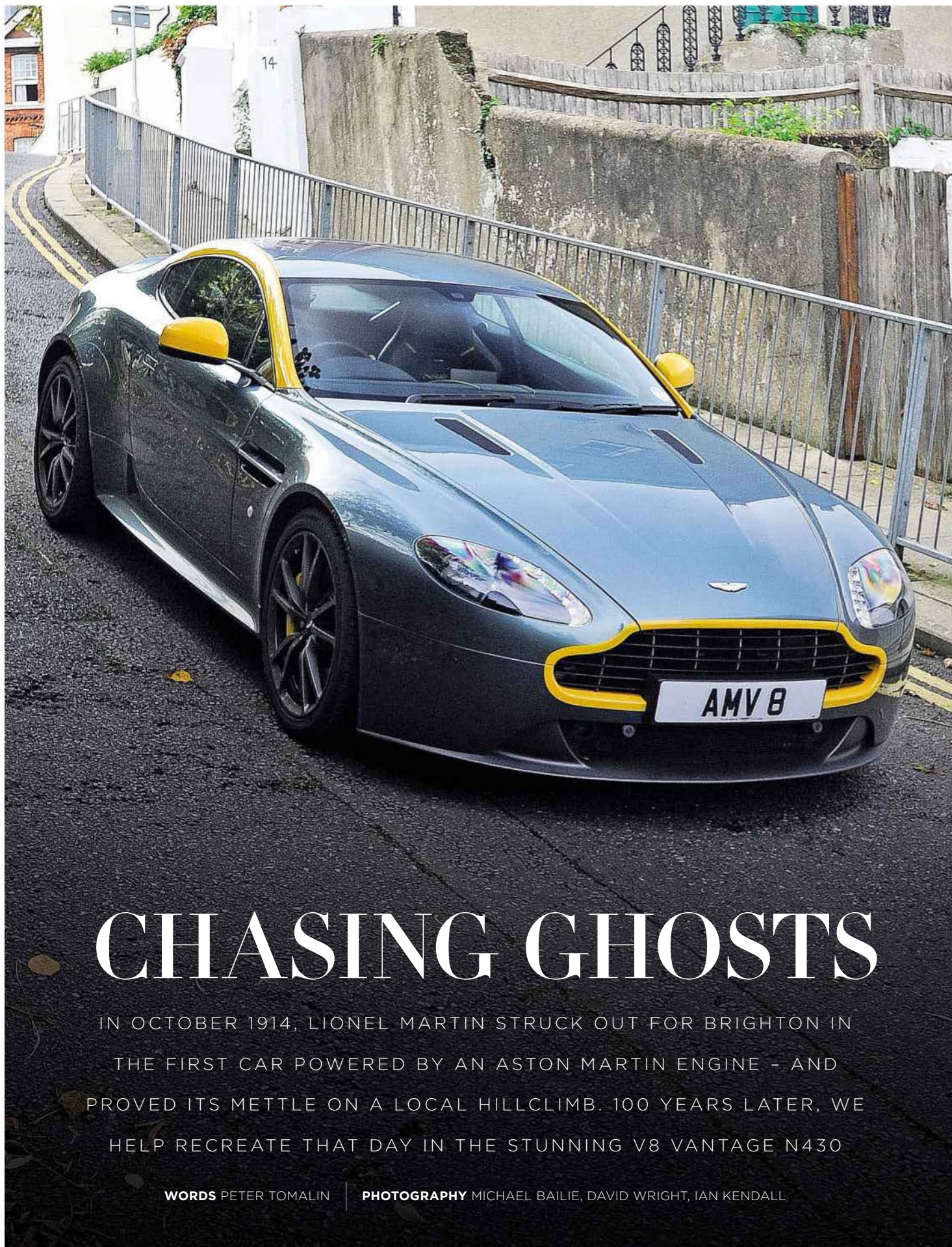
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WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL BAILIE, DAVID WRIGHT, IAN KENDALL



Aston Martin enthusiasts love a good anniversary. Last year, I'm sure I hardly need remind you, saw the centenary of the birth of the marque – specifically, the moment Lionel Martin and Robert Bamford formed their eponymous company with a plan to build their own sports car. And what a party that was.

The incorporation of Bamford & Martin in January 1913 was, of course, just a business formality – the really interesting stuff was about to start. By the following year they had a prototype running with their own engine, and the name they'd coined for their car – 'Aston Martin' – was starting to appear in the motoring press.

Martin, the keener driver of the two and a regular competitor in races and hillclimbs, was regularly out testing the prototype – known as 'the hybrid' because while the engine was new, the chassis came from an old Italian racing car. And so it was that on Sunday October 25 he joined a small group of other pioneering motorists and set out from London for the south coast of England.

There had been many other such 'run outs', so why was this one significant? Well, happily for us, the small convoy that drove down to Brighton on that Sunday morning was accompanied by a journalist and a photographer from *The Light Car and Cyclecar* magazine. What the photographer captured on that day were the first known images of a car powered by Bamford & Martin's own engine – arguably the first photos of an Aston Martin – as it took on the local Cindertrack Hill. In fact the hybrid made several successful ascents of the 1-in-3 climb that day, each time Martin inviting another of his pioneering chums to climb on board. The point had been made.

A century later, the story caught the imagination of David Wright, a leading light in the Aston Martin Owners Club, who decided this was a landmark worth celebrating and put together a plan for a Lionel Martin tribute run to Brighton. What started small grew and grew until around 50 Astons of all ages would be taking part.

It was decided to have a couple of 'official' starting points – locations that had strong associations with Martin. And so, on a slightly chilly but fine Saturday morning, 100 years to the very day since the momentous run, cars began assembling at the Royal Automobile Club in London's Pall Mall, where Martin had been a member. Meanwhile, 25 miles to the west, more Astons were lining up at Eton College, where Martin went to school.

And approximately 80 miles to the north, in a small Cambridgeshire village with no association with Martin whatsoever, we were shaking half the neighborhood from their slumbers as we fired a Vantage N430 into raucous life.

I RECKON LIONEL MARTIN WOULD have approved of the N430. It has more than a whiff of motorsport about it, being directly inspired by the race cars that compete in the Nürburgring 24hrs. What's more, the guys who drive those race cars are the 'gentlemen drivers' from the factory team (as opposed to the hard-nosed full-time pro racers in the Aston Martin Racing equipe). As a keen amateur himself, Martin would have liked that.

The livery of the race cars is echoed in the N430's yellow noseband and matching cant-rails, wing mirrors and rear diffuser: other colour schemes are available, but this one



'Lionel Martin would have approved of the N430. There's a whiff of motorsport about it, the colour scheme redolent of classic racers'



Clockwise from below
Rendezvous point for the final push to Brighton is the Victory Inn; Astons of all ages fill the car park and spill out onto the village green; they include gorgeous DB4 GT Zagato recreation, 1920s Cloverleaf, brand new N430 and just about everything in-between



seems nicely redolent of the classic Aston racing cars of the 1950s. To give it a slight performance edge over the regular V8 Vantage, the engineers have squeezed an extra 10bhp from the 4.7-litre engine to take it up to 430, and this example has the traditional six-speed manual gearbox (there's also a paddleshift option). If you're prepared to be brutal with clutch and driveshafts, 0-60mph can be dispatched in 4.6sec, and just in case you ever chance upon a deserted autobahn, the top speed is 189mph.

Inside there are lightweight carbon-Kevlar wraparound bucket seats and predominantly black trim – a purposeful-looking combination of leather, Alcantara and carbonfibre. It looks, feels and smells fantastic – as you'd hope it would with a list price of £89,995.

Try as we might, we haven't been able to find a Lionel Martin link with Cambridge so we decide to hit the road early to clear London while most of its inhabitants are still abed. The N430 feels every inch the sports car as it muscled its way towards the motorway, the ride firm, the major controls – steering, clutch, gearchange – all heftily weighted. The race-style seats push your shoulders forward while providing little in the way of lumbar support – not a style that suits the Tomalin frame, but perhaps you have to be built for speed to appreciate them.

Mid-morning we arrive in the West Sussex village of Staplefield, where the plan is that most of the cars will converge before the final leg of the journey down to Brighton. We park outside the Victory Inn, which overlooks an achingly English village green, grab a coffee and watch as the other Astons pour in from every direction.

It's a stirring sight. A majority are modern-era cars, DB7s through to current Vanquish. But there's a good sprinkling of earlier DBs, from a really pretty DB2/4 to a wonderfully original DBS driven over from La Chartre-sur-le-Loire by Martin Overington, new owner of the Hotel de France.

Right and below

Lionel Martin (hidden) proves the power of the first Aston Martin engine. 100 years later, 'Cloverleaf' recreates the scene, driver Tom Westley joined by co-owner Mark Donoghue and Tom Jr. Bottom: beside the sea

There is also some properly esoteric machinery, including the superb DB4 GT Zagato replica of AMOC chairman John Goldsmith. And here's Jet 2+2, the stunning Rapide-based shooting brake by Bertone. Owner Barry Weir reports that he and his wife Roma have been using the car extensively, recently returning from a tour of the Scottish highlands. The Jet attracts masses of attention, Barry fielding the questions he must have been asked a hundred times before with unfailing enthusiasm.

Organiser David Wright arrives in his V8 Vantage. He is a walking repository of Aston Martin trivia. Apparently while researching the Lionel Martin story, he discovered that Martin was a contemporary at Eton of Charles Rolls, one half of Rolls-Royce. 'It's entirely possible the two were acquainted,' he adds, 'since both were keen cyclists.'

David shows me a page from *The Light Car and Cyclecar* dated 19th October 1913, with the headline 'Mr Lionel Martin to Produce a Light Car' and the subhead 'First Trial of the New Aston-Martin Motor' (note the hyphen). 'His idea,' runs the copy, 'is to produce something which is a really high-class vehicle of a semi-sporting character. With his great experience of trials, such qualities as speed, stability, reliability and hill-climbing should predominate.'

'The component factors of the car, which is to be known as the Aston-Martin, are being made by the best works in the country... Mr Martin is at present testing out the engine, which has been specially made for him by the Coventry-Simplex people, and he hopes to do 15,000 miles on the machine before putting it before the public.'

'We were recently privileged to accompany him on one of his 100-mile high-speed test runs. The engine, which is about 1400cc, is at present fitted in a comparatively heavy and old type of Italian racing car, which pulls along the road in a really extremely vivacious manner.' Six days later, the paper's reporter and photographer would accompany Martin to Brighton and the Cindertrack Hill.

VIVACIOUS, EH? A QUICK BLAST down some leafy backroads is a brief chance to give the N430 its head and explore the vivacity of its own performance. It feels nicely punchy – if not take-your-breath-away fast – especially with the Sport button depressed to sharpen the throttle response. It really is one of those cars that gets better the faster you go. The gearshift, slightly awkward and long-winded when you're just ambling, slots home with pleasing precision when you really gun the changes through; the damping, plain stiff around town, suddenly feels just beautifully taut and controlled when you're really pressing on. The steering, which judders occasionally at parking speeds, now just feels super-keen and connected. Compact, agile, sloop-free – it's a proper sports car.

And then we hit the outskirts of Brighton and join the long slog to the seafront. The N430 is, to be perfectly honest, not a lot of fun in traffic. The transmission clunks impatiently, the whole car straining. But that sounds incredibly churlish – some of the owners sharing the queue have driven from much further afield, and in much earlier machinery. There are cars here from Ireland, Belgium and Germany, their owners bursting with pride and enthusiasm.





The real heroes of this run, though, are Mark Donoghue and Tom Westley, who have driven from Pall Mall to Brighton in 'Cloverleaf', one of fewer than 50 surviving Bamford & Martin Astons. Dating from 1923, it's believed to be the second oldest proper 'production' Aston Martin in existence, as all the earliest cars were one-offs and prototypes. Recently restored, it is absolutely gorgeous.

We assemble again on the seafront before being taken in small groups across town to The Drove – the suburban street whose steepest, narrowest section made up the Cindertrack Hill. Properly steep it is too, and these days a one-way street – though unfortunately you have to drive *down*, not up it. Most of us content ourselves with doing just that, holding the car for the photographers just yards from where Martin and chums were snapped all those years ago. There is one exception though.

I park up just in time to see Cloverleaf arrive. Apparently its first owner, one NT Beardsell, was a man after Martin's heart – indeed in 1924 he entered this car in a hillclimb at Aston Clinton, the venue that gave part of its name to the marque. No wonder it looks so at home on the Cindertrack.

Just for Cloverleaf, the traffic is stopped temporarily at the top of the hill, and Tom Westley guns this game little car with its side-valve engine up the steep incline. And then Mark Donoghue jumps in alongside and Tom's son (Tom Jr) clambers into the small seat in the 'boat tail'. And off they go again. Well, it just had to be done.



‘The N430’s one of those cars that gets better the faster you go. Compact, agile, slop-free – it’s a proper sports car’



It's great to see such a beautiful and no doubt valuable car being so richly enjoyed by its owners. Both Mark and Tom drive it exactly as its makers intended – later, after darkness falls, the sight of it zipping through the Brighton traffic, klaxon blaring, is a highlight of the weekend.

Cloverleaf, Jet 2+2 and the N430 have one more role to play – forming up outside the Royal Pavilion as club members arrive for a private tour followed by dinner. Not the 70 courses that the Prince Regent used to put on, but still, dinner in the grand banqueting room is a real treat.

Of course, rather less benign events were also unfolding 100 years ago, and progress of the fledgling Bamford & Martin would be put on hold until after the war. The workshops closed; the machinery went to the Sopwith Aviation Company. Early in 1915, Martin joined the Admiralty, Bamford the Royal Army Service Corps. Bamford had two younger brothers who also served: Edward, the middle brother would be awarded the Victoria Cross. Arthur, the youngest, died in action on the Western Front at Loos. Brighton's Royal Pavilion itself was transformed into a military hospital for the duration.

There was time to reflect on the debt we owe to those who fought, as well as celebrating the life of one of the founders of a great marque that remains so well-loved. The Aston Martin Owners Club did Lionel Martin proud – and he would have been thrilled to bits to see his legacy. 🇻

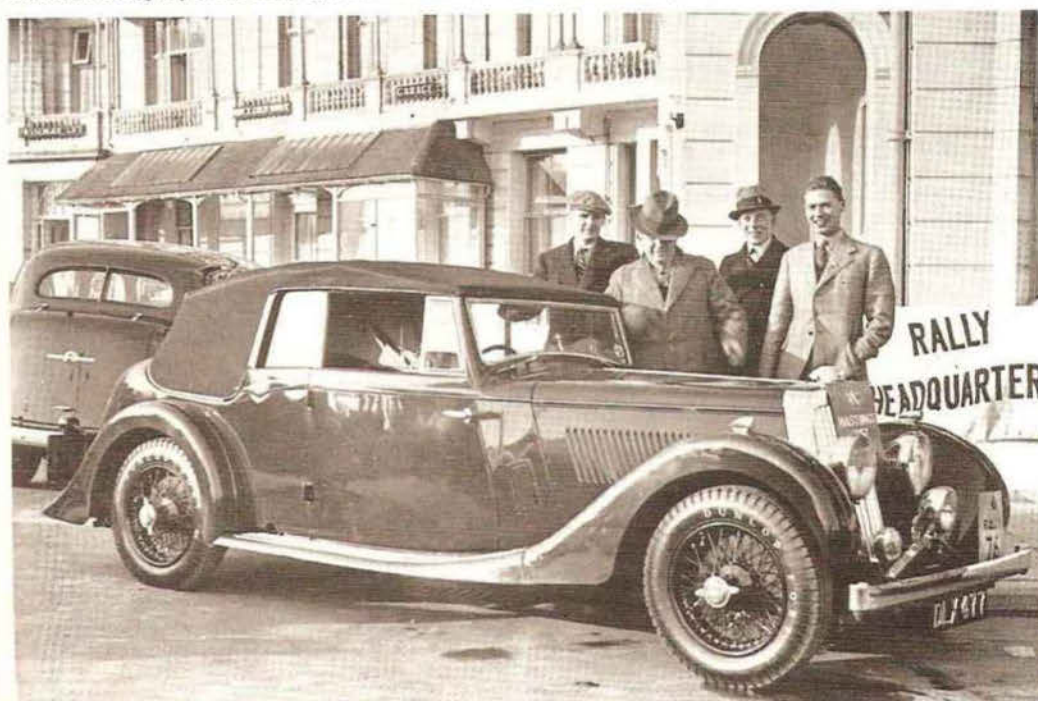
With many thanks to the AMOC for their hospitality, and in particular to David Wright, Marc Aylott and Anne Wright for organising such a fine and fitting tribute to Lionel Martin.



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sound-absorbing material. It was too late to turn back. Only by his own dogged determination was Sutherland able to avert a major disaster. Fortunately Claude Hill, torn between affection for his old boss and loyalty to the firm, opted to remain at

'Harry' Bertelli's drophead coupé body built for Lance Prideaux-Brune on a long-chassis 2 litre, on the RAC Hastings Rally in 1937. (Kenneth Prideaux-Brune)



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Richard Meaden
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BROWN SOURCE

THE DB2 AND ITS FOUR-SEATER SIBLING, THE DB2/4, SET THE TEMPLATE FOR EVERY ROADGOING ASTON THAT FOLLOWED. THESE EARLY DAVID BROWN CARS ARE ALSO HANDSOME AND ENJOYABLE ASTONS IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

WORDS PETER TOMALIN

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW HOWELL



WHY DIDN'T WE ALL buy DB2s ten years ago? Even seven or eight years ago, you could pick up a very presentable DB2 or 2/4 saloon for around £20,000. Today you could easily add another 0 to that figure. And yes, hindsight is a wonderful thing, but surely it was blindingly obvious even then that the values of early DBs couldn't stay that low forever. As these cars continue to close the gap on their ostensibly more glamorous DB4, 5 and 6 progeny, one can only reflect that it's not before time.

The Frank Feeley-styled DB2, launched in April 1950, wasn't quite the first Aston of the David Brown era – that was the short-lived and slow-selling 2-litre Sports, only retrospectively

named DB1 – but it was the first to carry David Brown's initials. It also created the mould for practically every Aston that has followed: a powerful, large-capacity engine under a rakishly long bonnet; sleek fastback bodywork with the option of a drophead version; a well-appointed cabin, and of course excellent road manners.

What's sometimes forgotten is that the DB2 had a pretty handy competition record, too. When three cars were entered for the 1950 Le Mans, two of them finished 1st and 2nd in the 3-litre class and 5th and 6th overall. The following year, another three-car entry went even better, claiming 3rd, 5th and 7th overall, and taking the first three places in class.

The DB2, then, was every inch a sporting car, even if its performance figures – 0-60 in 12.4sec and a top speed of 116mph – don't sound fast today. A competition-spec 'Vantage' version, which lifted the output of the 2.6-litre straight-six from 105 to 125bhp, chiefly courtesy of larger SU carburettors, was usefully quicker off the line (0-60 in 10.7sec, 117mph all-out).

Road testers of the day were in raptures about the new Aston Martin. The staff of *The Autocar* racked up an astonishing 1900 miles in ten days, describing the engine as 'one of the finest in existence' and lavishing praise on the DB2's high-speed stability (see 'What the road testers said at the time', page 128).

'WHILE YOU MIGHT FIND A SCRUFFY DB2 FOR £100K, YOU COULD EASILY SPEND DOUBLE THAT RESTORING IT'

The DB2/4 arrived in 1953, adding two occasional rear seats (hence the '4'), the backs of which could be folded forward to create a very useful load area, one which could be accessed via the 2/4's handy top-hinged tailgate – an innovation that gave the Aston reasonable claim to being the world's first 'hatchback'.

Engine capacity grew to 2.9 litres in 1954, peak power climbing to 140bhp, dropping the 0-60 time to 10.5sec and lifting the maximum to a nice round 120mph. For those in want of even more, Aston offered a Special Series engine with larger valves, higher-lift camshafts and a quoted 165bhp. Just 18 cars are believed to have been built to that particular spec – that's one of them in the photographs on these pages, currently for sale at Aston Martin Works in Newport Pagnell for £210,000. Wonder what that would have been ten years ago...

For 1955 came the MkII version with numerous detail changes, extra chrome trim and revised rear styling incorporating vestigial tail-fins. The same year the range was expanded to include a hard-top coupé version of the drophead, though just 34 of these 'notchback' models were built.

The final evolution of the DB2 line was marketed simply as the MkIII (Aston dropped the 2/4 name at this stage). It was the MkIII that introduced what we now know as the 'classic' Aston grille, as first seen on the DB3S, to the road cars. The range still included fastback,

drophead and fixed-head variants, powered by a further-evolved version of the 2.9-litre engine, now making around 150bhp on SUs and up to 190bhp on triple Weber carbs.

So the MkIII, of which 551 were built, is the quickest and has the prettiest face, while the DB2 is the original, arguably the purest with just two seats and the sleeker roofline, and also the rarest (just 411 built). And the DB2/4 is the version you're most likely to find in the classifieds (around 750 were built in the various body styles). That's reflected to a certain extent in values, the rarer models tending to command a premium and the dropheads even more (currently c£300k for the best), but as always condition is everything.

When we visited Works recently, the Heritage Workshop had just finished a nut-and-bolt restoration on a DB2/4. It was looking simply stunning in its period colour of Snow Shadow Grey, and it also provided a valuable insight into the level of work required to restore an early DB. While you might pick up a scruffy DB2 for £100k, you could easily spend double that restoring it.

'The owner bought the car in 2011 as a restoration project, and we started in earnest

about two and a bit years ago,' Nigel Woodward, manager of Heritage Operations at Works, tells us. 'It had been previously restored in the '90s, but, as with a lot of '90s restorations, it was perhaps not what we'd do today. So although it looked OK superficially, it needed a total body-off restoration.

'So it's had most of the chassis replaced, from the firewall backwards, and extensive coachwork, including a new front end. We managed to save some of the rear body but it's probably had about 50 per cent new bodywork.'

This sort of restoration doesn't come cheap: for a full bare-chassis resto, most of the top specialists (and there aren't as many for the 'Feltham' Astons as for the DB4, 5 and 6) now charge £200,000 or more. Aston Martin Works charges a fixed price of £330,000 whatever the model, although, as Woodward says, there is often more work in an earlier DB car.

'The DB2 and 2/4 take slightly longer to restore than DB4s, 5s and 6s,' he tells us, 'largely because the construction of each car tends to be slightly different from one example to the next. For example, you come across many different methods of construction even in something like the sills. Some are steel, some are aluminium, some have a cast aluminium member running through them. It's almost as if each one you see was built as a prototype.

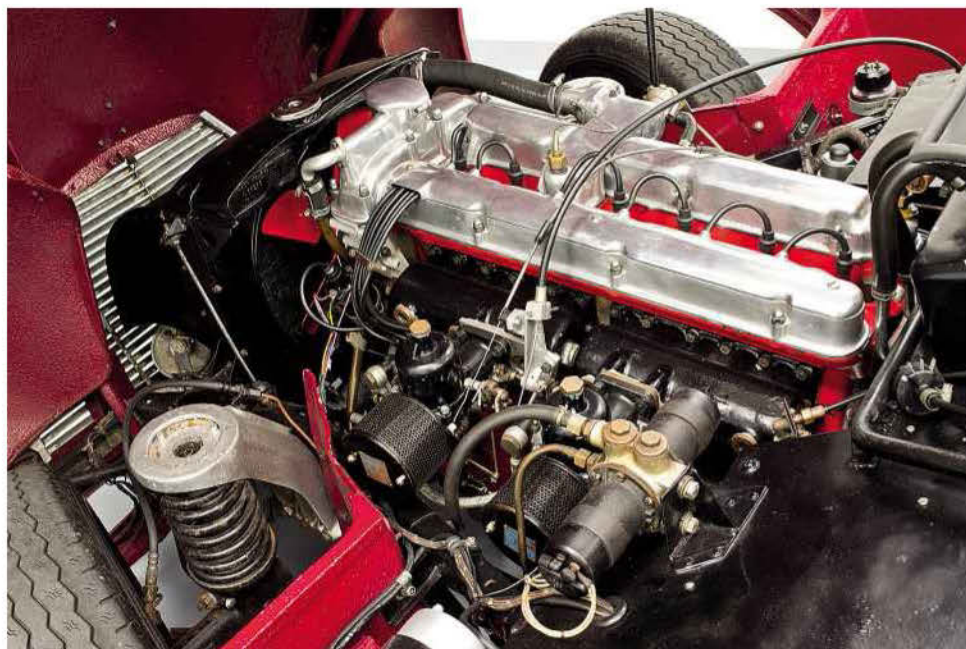
'You've also got a sort of monocoque rear body section bolted onto a conventional chassis. And then there's that huge one-piece clamshell bonnet. That's a very complex assembly and the way it meets the sills and the doors when it closes means it takes a great deal of care and time to get it all to fit properly with nice, clean, uniform gaps. It's quite a challenge.'

Interestingly, the chassis itself – a hefty box-section frame – tends to be less corrosion-prone than the underpinnings of the later cars with their platform chassis and superleggera tubing. The DB2's underpinnings look fairly basic to modern eyes, but it was relatively advanced for its time: as well as the engine's twin overhead camshafts, the independent front suspension features coil springs and a torsion bar/anti-roll bar assembly working in oil in a substantial casting that bolts onto the chassis.

Mechanically, though, DB2s are reasonably straightforward. The twin-overhead-cam 'LB6' straight-six, originally designed for Lagonda by WO Bentley (hence LB), is generally pretty robust. Cylinder head gasket sealing can be problematic – it's a wet-liner engine and over time the liner seals tend to deteriorate.

Opposite page and below

This DB2/4, on sale at Aston Martin Works, is a 1956 car with the rare 'big valve' version of the 2.9-litre LB6 engine that increased peak power from 140 to 165bhp. Forward-hinged clamshell bonnet gives superb access







Left and below

This is a MkII DB2/4 – distinguishing features include resculpted rear with vestigial tail-fins. Rear seats are best for kids; folded flat they create a useful cargo deck, accessed via tailgate



The engine's main weakness, though, lies in what are known as the 'cheeses' – the four large circular pieces of cast aluminium (with holes in them, hence cheeses) that carry the crankshaft main bearings in the block. The arrangement looked good on paper, but the aluminium soon showed a tendency to distort with heat, and the oil tubes that located the 'cheeses' in the block, which were too small to begin with, would leak, causing a loss of oil pressure. Over the years, specialists like Aston Engineering, Rex J Woodgate and Four Ashes Garage have developed reliable fixes for these and other issues, to such an extent that today the LB6 engine and the David Brown four-speed gearbox are reliable – and enjoyable – companions. For the latter, overdrive conversion kits are available where overdrive wasn't fitted at the factory.

Disc brakes didn't arrive until the MkIII, though some owners of earlier cars choose to have discs fitted at the front – a sensible upgrade, says Nigel Woodward, particularly if you're planning any fast touring or trackdays. The DB2/4 we viewed had been treated to a number of other very sensible and sympathetic modern enhancements to make it more useable, as Woodward explains: 'The owner asked us to keep the car as standard as possible, but it has got electric power steering and a modern "dynamator" – an alternator built inside the dynamo body. We generally try to build a bit of extra reliability into the electrical system. We also fit a high-capacity radiator in all the restorations we do, to help prevent any cooling issues. All to make them more driveable.'

So that's the early DB Astons – rare, good looking, practical, eminently useable, and fast enough to be fun. Though sadly no longer the bargain they once were. **V**

DB2/4 MKII

ENGINE In-line 6-cylinder, 2922cc **MAX POWER** c140bhp @ 5000rpm **MAX TORQUE** n/a

TRANSMISSION Four-speed manual, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION Front: independent, trailing links, coil springs, lever-arm dampers, anti-roll bar.

Rear: live axle, parallel radius arms, Panhard rod, coil springs, lever-arm dampers

STEERING Worm-and-roller, unassisted **BRAKES** Drum brakes front and rear

WHEELS 6 x 16in front and rear, wire spokes **TYRES** 185HR16 front and rear

WEIGHT 1300kg (est) **POWER TO WEIGHT** c110bhp/ton **0-60MPH** 10.5sec **TOP SPEED** 120mph

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What the road testers said at the time

'PERFORMANCES OF HIGH

merit and consistency in sports car races this year, notably the Le Mans 24-hour event and the Tourist Trophy in Ulster, brought to general notice the fact that the Aston Martin firm, newly constituted since the war under the control of Mr David Brown, have produced an outstanding car in the DB2 sports saloon.

From the experience gained during the regular testing procedure by *The Autocar*, in which 1900 miles were covered in some ten days, it is difficult to give too much praise to the handling and performance of the DB2. Though presented in saloon (and now additionally in drop-head coupé) form, this is every bit as much a sports car in the fullest meaning of that term, as built up through the years, as anything yet produced.

The engine is smooth to the limit of its freely given revs, quiet mechanically, flexible down to low speeds... This engine is unquestionably one of the finest units in existence today, judged

on its obvious ruggedness as revealed by racing and by a great deal of hard driving in the present test, and for the tremendous surge of acceleration it makes available at just the right stages in the speed scale. Even on top gear from lower speeds the pick-up is strong. The close-ratio third is amazingly effective. The maximum recorded on it, 96mph at approximately 5750rpm, where the engine still did not cry for mercy, must be the highest figure *The Autocar* has ever recorded on an indirect gear of a production car.

The natural urge is to make not less than a 400-mile run in the day, in which kind of motoring the super car can show its real advantages in putting almost unprecedented miles into the hour. Fifty miles in an hour can be achieved on main roads "without trying". Averages far above the ordinary can be obtained without exceeding 70. This rate is held with supreme ease on part throttle up the

slopes, and on all but the more severe bends 50-60mph can be the minimum. Stability is of the very highest order; no current production car surpasses the impression given by the DB2 in this respect.'

– *The Autocar*, November 1950



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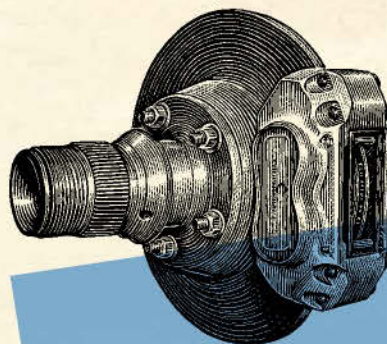
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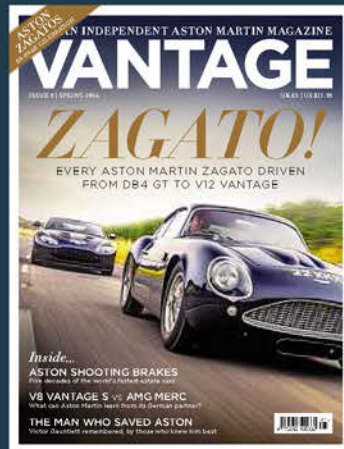
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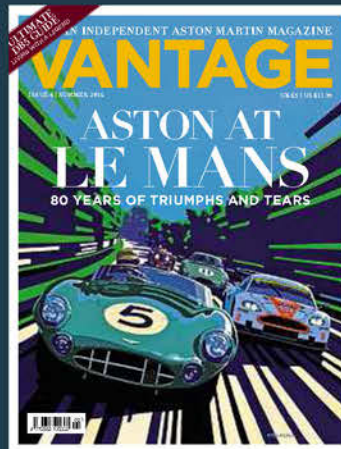
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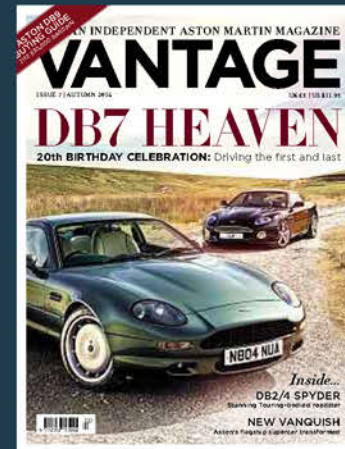
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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1920s-1930s

Sports/Super Sports 1920-1925



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1.5-litre in-line 4
Power 55bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 90mph

Although the first 'Aston Martin' had been created in 1915, the Great War meant production didn't actually start until 1920. And because the early years were all about motorsport, it wasn't until 1923 that cars went on sale to the general public. The Sports was advanced for its time, with four-wheel brakes and a fully floating rear axle, and in Super Sports form it got a twin-cam, 16-valve four with a lusty 55bhp. Business was tough, though, and after around 60 cars had been sold, the company went into receivership in 1925.

Second Series/New International/Le Mans 1932-1934



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 70bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

Price reductions, made possible by out-sourcing more components, and continuing motorsport success at Le Mans and elsewhere helped lift sales of what are now known as the Second Series cars. Particularly well received was the Le Mans model introduced in 1932. Its high-compression engine pushed power up from 60 to 70bhp. Tourers and saloons were still built but were overshadowed by the sports cars - more than 100 examples were sold of the Le Mans alone. There was also a (much rarer) four-seater version.

Ulster 1934-1936

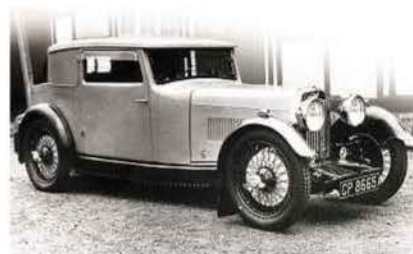


SPECIFICATION

Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 85bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 100mph

Most revered of all the early Astons, the Ulster was named in celebration of the Works racers' success in the 1934 Tourist Trophy and was effectively a replica of those factory cars. With power now up to 85bhp from the latest version of the 1.5-litre ohc four, it was enough for Aston to guarantee a 100mph top speed. These cars are distinguished by their sleek body and boat-shaped tail, which houses a horizontally mounted spare wheel. Twenty-one Ulsters were built, all of which are believed to have survived.

First Series/International 1927-1932



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 56bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 80mph

With new financial backers, a new factory in Feltham and a new ohc 1.5-litre engine, the era of 'Bertelli' Astons began in 1927. There were sports and competition models, and also a tourer and a saloon (pictured), while 1929 saw the introduction of the low-slung, dry-sumped International model, based on the company's widely successful racing cars of the day. The International was fast and refined but the price was high and sales remained slow. In all, 129 'First Series' cars were produced.

Third Series (MkII) 1934-1936



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1495cc, in-line 4
Power 73bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

The MkII was a development of the Second Series, intended to be a more useable yet faster version. A new balanced crankshaft assembly and a few other minor mods to the 1.5-litre engine saw peak power rise to 73bhp, though the top speed for the two-seater remained at 85mph. Short- and long-chassis versions were available with a number of different bodies, including tourer, two-door saloon and drophead coupe. A short chassis with lightweight body was adopted as the Works car and ultimately became the Ulster.

2-litre Speed/Type C 1936-1940



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1949cc, in-line 4
Power 110bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 95mph

To broaden the appeal of its range, in 1936 Aston introduced a 2-litre engine, based on the 1.5 but with increased bore and stroke and domed pistons. The Speed model was created for the 1936 Le Mans, though in the event the race was cancelled. Some 25 were eventually sold. In 1938 it was decided that eight leftover Speed chassis should be used to create a more 'modern-looking' Aston. The resulting Type C, with rather bulbous bodywork, didn't go down well with enthusiasts and the last one sold at Christmas 1940.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1930s-1950s

15/98 1937-1939



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1949cc, in-line 4
Power 98bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 85mph

Using the new 2-litre engine in wet-sump form, the 15/98 range (15 from the RAC rating, 98 the peak bhp) included saloons and tourers, but they were heavy and hence slow (slow-selling, too: a planned run of 100 cars was slashed to 50). Better was an attractive short-chassis roadster (pictured). There was also a unique 'monoposto' streamlined single-seater designed to go for the 2-litre outer circuit record at Brooklands. The outbreak of war meant it was put into extended storage before its potential was realised.

DB2 1950-1953



SPECIFICATION

Engine 2580cc, in-line 6
Power 105bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph 12.4sec
Top speed 116mph

The DB2 was the first officially to wear the initials of Aston's new owner, David Brown. It also featured the marque's first six-cylinder engine – in fact a Lagonda unit designed under WO Bentley and picked up when Brown acquired Lagonda shortly after bagging Aston. This 2.6-litre twin-cam was initially temperamental, but once sorted it endowed the sleek Frank Feeley-designed DB2 with impressive performance, especially in 125bhp Vantage form from 1951. A total of 411 DB2s were built, including 102 dropheads.

DB MkIII 1957-1959



SPECIFICATION

Engine 2922cc, in-line 6
Power 162bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque n/a
0-60mph 9.3sec
Top speed 120mph

The MkIII (note: not DB3) was effectively the third series of the DB2/4, but Aston dropped the 2/4 nomenclature for its 1957-1959 range of coupes, dropheads and fixed-heads. The lines were smoother and more purposeful, the grille previewing decades of Astons to come, and even in its lowliest tune the Claude Hill six was now making well over 150bhp (up to 190bhp with triple Webers). The MkIII actually overlapped with the introduction of the DB4 by several months, and total production of all three variants hit 551.

2-litre Sports (DB1) 1948-1950



SPECIFICATION

Engine 1949cc, in-line 4
Power 90bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph n/a
Top speed 93mph

Retrospectively known as the DB1, the 2-litre Sports was the first Aston Martin to appear after the Second World War and the first under the ownership of wealthy industrialist David Brown. It was based largely on a pre-war prototype known as the Atom, and it featured refinements such as all-round coil spring suspension as well as a new 2-litre pushrod four-cylinder engine designed by Claude Hill. Lacklustre performance, largely a result of the heavy bodywork, and a high price meant only 16 examples were sold.

DB2/4 1953-1957



SPECIFICATION

Engine 2922cc, in-line 6
Power 140bhp
Torque n/a
0-60mph 10.5sec
Top speed 120mph

The '4' tacked onto the end of the DB2's title denotes the addition of two extra seats. The 2+2 seating was made more habitable by a higher rear roofline, and there was a handy 'hatchback' opening rear window. The extra weight slightly took the edge off the performance, so Aston boosted capacity to 2.9 litres in 1954, taking power to 140bhp. The mkII of 1955 incorporated a rear-end restyle, and there was also a rare 'notchback' hardtop version of the drophead. Around 750 DB2/4s were produced in total.

DB4/DB4 GT 1958-1963



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3670cc, in-line 6
Power 240bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 240lb ft @ 4250rpm
0-60mph 9.0sec
Top speed 140mph

The definitive Aston shape was born with the DB4, the work of Italian design house Touring, its 'superleggera' aluminium bodywork being wrapped around a steel platform. The DB4 also introduced a new, Tadek Marek-designed all-alloy twin-cam straight-six, originally in 240bhp 3.7-litre form. In all there were five series of DB4s, each adding subtle refinements to the original formula. Vantage versions had 266bhp, and the short-wheelbase track-biased GT a formidable 302bhp. Total production: 1210.



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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1960s-1970s

DB4 GT Zagato 1960-1963



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3670cc, in-line 6
Power 314bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 278lb ft @ 5400rpm
0-60mph 6.1sec
Top speed 154mph

The rarest, most beautiful and most desirable of all post-war Astons. With the shortened chassis and highly tuned engine of the DB4 GT (but with an even higher compression ratio), and clothed in even lighter aluminium bodywork of quite exquisite proportions (the work of a young Ercole Spada), Zagatos today command vast sums at auction. Incredible to tell, then, that the original planned run of 25 was reduced to 20 because of lack of take-up. The unused chassis numbers were eventually recycled in the '90s as the 'Sanction' cars.

DB5/DB5 Volante 1963-1966



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.0sec
Top speed 145mph

Really another evolution of the DB4 (it would have been Series 6), the DB5 is now revered in its own right – and famous above all other Astons – wholly because of its role in the James Bond film franchise. In looks it was virtually identical to the DB4 Series 5 Vantage; the main change was the 4-litre engine and the option of a five-speed gearbox, which soon became standard. Regular DB5s had 282bhp, Vantage versions 314bhp, and there were now disc brakes on all four wheels. Total production reached 1023.

DBS/DBS V8 1967-1972



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.4sec
Top speed 140mph

The DBS ushered in a whole new look for Aston, its modern lines the work of Englishman William Towns. It was also supposed to introduce Tadek Marek's all-new 5.3-litre V8 engine, but that wasn't ready in time, so the DBS was launched with the familiar straight-six from the DB6 (the two models ran concurrently for three years). The 310bhp V8 was finally available from 1970, but the six-cylinder continued until 1972 as the entry-level Aston. Some 787 six-cylinder DBSs were produced, and 402 V8s. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 2.

Lagonda Rapide 1961-1964



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 236bhp @ 5000rpm
Torque 265lb ft @ 4000rpm
0-60mph 9.0sec
Top speed 130mph

David Brown had bought Lagonda in 1947, shortly after buying Aston Martin. He wanted it chiefly for its Bentley-designed straight-six engine, but production of the pre-DB Lagonda models continued until 1958. The Lagonda name then vanished for several years, but in 1961 it reappeared on a new four-door saloon based on the DB4 but with the 4-litre engine that would soon power the new DB5. The Rapide (an old Lagonda model name) was fast and capable but the front styling was awkward and only 55 were sold in four years.

DB6/DB6 Volante 1965-1971



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3995cc, in-line 6
Power 282bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 288lb ft @ 3850rpm
0-60mph 8.4sec
Top speed 150mph

A longer wheelbase and extended roofline – ending in the distinctive cut-off 'Kamm' tail – made the DB6 a decent four-seater, while its slightly heavier build, softer ride and the options of an automatic gearbox and air-conditioning showed that the DB line was moving into GT territory. The base engine was carried over from the DB5, though the Vantage now produced a claimed 325bhp. The Mark II, which arrived in July 1969, had flared wheelarches over its wider wheels. Total DB6 production: 1967.

AM V8/V8 Volante 1972-1990



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 310bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 360lb ft @ 3500rpm
0-60mph 5.7sec
Top speed 155mph

If the '60s were Aston's golden era, the '70s saw the glow fade with frequent financial crises. David Brown had sold up, so the big coupe became the AM V8, its convertible sibling the V8 Volante and the troublesome fuel injection system was dropped in favour of four Weber carburettors. Early cars had around 310bhp, but emissions regs saw that figure diminish through the decade. The company's lack of cash meant the V8 would soldier on for almost 20 years, in which time 4021 were built. Volante buying guide, *Vantage* issue 4.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1970s-1990s

Lagonda saloon 1974-1976



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 280bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 301lb ft @ 3500rpm
0-60mph 6.2sec
Top speed 149mph

Based on the AM V8 but with a stretched wheelbase, the 1974 Lagonda saloon was the first car since the 1961 Rapide to wear the Lagonda badge, and it was not a success. Most of the blame can be attached to the 1974 oil crisis, which seriously limited the appeal of any V8-powered supersaloon, let alone one that would rarely see mpg in double figures. In fact the Lagonda was an impressive and capable machine, but during the two years of production just seven were sold (though another was later assembled from parts).

Lagonda 1978-1990



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 280bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque 301lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph 8.8sec
Top speed 143mph

One of the most extraordinary cars ever to reach production, the William Towns-designed Lagonda caused a sensation when it was unveiled in 1976. Its advanced but troublesome electronics delayed production for almost two years, and the price was stratospherically high (£50,000 in 1980), but it eventually found a market in the Middle East and stayed in production for more than a decade, during which 645 were sold. Under the bonnet was the familiar V8, its performance somewhat blunted by the two-ton kerbweight.

Virage/Virage Volante 1989-1996



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 330bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 350lb ft @ 3700rpm
0-60mph 6.0sec
Top speed 155mph

By the mid-'80s the AM V8 and its Vantage big brother were living on borrowed time, and, under the direction of Victor Gauntlett, Aston began work on a replacement. The Virage was largely still based on the V8, but its new body (by John Heffernan and Ken Greenley), an updated 32-valve fuel-injected V8 and other refinements were enough to give Aston new impetus. In 1992 came the Volante version, and also a Works-developed 500bhp 6.3 monster with widened bodywork. Sales of all variants reached 1050.

V8 Vantage/Vantage Volante 1977-1989



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 375bhp @ 5500rpm
Torque n/a
0-60mph 5.3sec
Top speed 170mph

Often described as 'Britain's first supercar', the Vantage of 1977 was based on the AMV8 but was now a model-line in its own right. With a 375bhp version of the 5.3-litre V8 (later 405bhp) and a top speed of 170mph, it was pitched head-to-head with the Ferrari Boxer and Lamborghini Countach for the title of world's fastest car. Distinguished by its blanked-off grille and bonnet scoop, deep air dam and bootlid spoiler, it certainly looked the part. By the time production ended in 1989, 534 had been built, 192 of them Volantes.

V8 Zagato/Zagato Volante 1986-1989



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 432bhp @ 6250rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 186mph

Resurrecting the partnership with Italian design house Zagato in the mid-'80s was a masterstroke by Aston's then-boss Victor Gauntlett, especially when all 50 coupes were immediately snapped up at £87,000 a pop (37 convertibles were also built). The '80s Zagato couldn't match the beauty of the '60s original, but its performance was sensational. Based on the V8 Vantage but with even more power and considerably lighter, it broke 5sec from 0-60mph and was verified at 185.8mph, making it the fastest Aston yet.

V8 Coupé/V8 Volante 1996-1999



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5340cc, V8
Power 349bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 369lb ft @ 3700rpm
0-60mph 5.9sec
Top speed 155mph+

With the Virage running out of steam in the mid-1990s, Aston Martin relaunched the model as the V8 Coupé – basically a Virage with revised bodywork inspired by the new twin-supercharged Vantage model, including its faired-in headlamps and four round tail-lights. Power was slightly up, the acceleration slightly sharper and the top speed was quoted, not terribly helpfully, as 'over 155mph'. An improvement in almost every way over the Virage, sales were, however, glacially slow. Just 101 Coupés and 63 Volantes were sold.

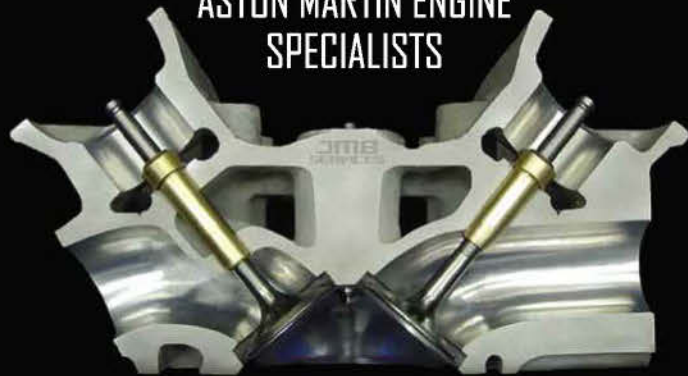
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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1990s-2000s

Vantage (supercharged) 1993-2000



SPECIFICATION (V600)

Engine 5340cc, V8, twin s/c
Power 600bhp @ 6200rpm
Torque 600lb ft @ 4400rpm
0-60mph 4.6sec
Top speed 190mph+

The wide-bodied 6.3-litre V8 had shown the appetite for a faster Virage, and in 1993 came the full-house Vantage version, extensively restyled (only roof and doors were carried over) with a twin-supercharged version of the 5.3-litre engine providing 550bhp and 550lb ft – at the time the most powerful production engine in the world. In 1998 came the V600, with an additional 50bhp – enough to propel this near-two-ton monster to a reported 200mph. A final run of 40 'Le Mans' special editions brought total production to 279.

DB7 V12 Vantage/Vantage Volante 1999-2003



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 420bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.9sec
Top speed 185mph

The DB7 was given a major fillip in 1999 with the launch of the Vantage model, its styling beefed up by Ian Callum and with the first appearance of a brand-new 5.9-litre V12 engine that would go on to power the next generation of flagship Aston Martins. With reworked suspension too, the Vantage was a significant step on from the six-cylinder DB7 but cost just a few thousand pounds more – it was no surprise that sales of the standard car dried up and it was quickly phased out. The desirable run-out Vantage GT had 435bhp.

DB7 Zagato/DB-AR1 2003-2004



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 435bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 410lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 185mph

Like previous Aston/Zagato collaborations, the DB7 Zagato used a shortened chassis, lighter bodywork and familiar Zagato design cues (like the 'double-bubble' roof). It also had an uprated engine, in this case the Vantage's V12 tuned to 435bhp. The production run was limited to 99 cars, all of which were snapped up. The DB-AR1 was a Zagato-designed, somewhat impractical 'speedster' version of the DB7 (it didn't even have a hood) aimed specifically at the west coast of America, where most of the 99 examples still reside.

DB7/DB7 Volante 1994-1999



SPECIFICATION

Engine 3228cc, in-line 6, s/c
Power 335bhp @ 5750rpm
Torque 361lb ft @ 3000rpm
0-60mph 5.8sec
Top speed 157mph

Aston couldn't survive building handfuls of handbuilt supercars; a more affordable model was needed. Ford, who had bought a majority share in AML in 1987, knew this and in 1994 launched the Ian Callum-styled DB7 – evoking memories of the 1960s DB cars – with a supercharged 3.2-litre straight-six and a steel monocoque that had its origins at Jaguar (Ford-owned at the time). A Volante followed in 1996. DB7 sales eventually topped 7000, making it then by far the most numerous Aston. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 3.

Vanquish/Vanquish S 2001-2007



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 460bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec
Top speed 190mph

While DB7s were rolling out of a new factory at Bloxham, back at Newport Pagnell an all-new flagship model was in development. Launched in summer 2001, the Callum-penned Vanquish had a 460bhp version of the V12 and a bonded aluminium platform that would be developed for all subsequent Astons. Its automated paddleshift manual gearbox was criticised initially for its slow responses. This was improved, as was the handling, for the 520bhp Vanquish S launched in 2004. A total of 2578 Vanquishes were sold.

DB9/DB9 Volante 2004-2012



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 470bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 443lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.6sec
Top speed 190mph

The DB9 was effectively a successor to the highly successful DB7 Vantage, with the latest version of the now-familiar 5.9-litre V12, a Touchtronic auto transmission option, and the first appearance of the largely aluminium 'VH' platform, all clothed in another gorgeous Ian Callum body, refined by his successor, Henrik Fisker. It was also the first Aston to be built at Gaydon. A Volante version arrived in 2005, and in 2008 power grew to 470bhp. For 2013MY the car was given a major visual and mechanical refresh, now with 510bhp.



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ALL THE ROAD CARS 2005-present

V8 Vantage/V8 Vantage Roadster 2005-present



SPECIFICATION (4.3)

Engine 4281cc, V8
Power 380bhp @ 7000rpm
Torque 302lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 175mph

Aston's answer to Porsche's 911 and originally conceived as a mid-engined car. Compact and more overtly sporting than the DB9, the Callum/Fisker-styled V8 Vantage has overtaken the DB9 to become the biggest seller yet, with more than 16,000 so far finding homes. Its Jaguar-derived quad-cam V8, originally 4.3 (4.7 litres and 420bhp from 2008) gives brisk performance and an extrovert soundtrack – best enjoyed in the Roadster, which arrived in 2007. The 'S', with 430bhp, arrived in 2011. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 1.

V12 Vantage/V12 Vantage Roadster 2009-present



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.1sec
Top speed 190mph

The notion of shoehorning Aston's 5.9-litre V12 into the compact V8 Vantage was always amusing, and when Aston turned the concept into reality in 2009 it produced one of the finest drivers' cars in its history. Distinguished by its rows of (functional) bonnet vents, the V12V builds on the V8 Vantage's agility and adds another dimension of performance and desirability. The Roadster arrived in late 2012. Best of all, though, is the 565bhp 'S' launched in 2013. With a top speed of 205mph, it's the fastest series-production Aston ever.

DBS/DBS Volante 2007-2012



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.2sec
Top speed 191mph

Resurrecting a name last seen in the late '60s, the DB9-derived DBS replaced the early-noughties Vanquish as the flagship production car in 2007 and gained huge cachet when it was adopted as 007's company car when Daniel Craig assumed the tuxedo for *Casino Royale*. With power ramped up to 510bhp, aggressive styling, harder-edged dynamics and a manual gearbox, the DBS was Mr Hyde to the DB9's Dr Jekyll. A Volante appeared in 2009. At the end of 2012, the DBS was replaced by the new Vanquish.

Rapide 2009-2012



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 470bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 443lb ft @ 5000rpm
0-60mph 5.0sec
Top speed 184mph

With Porsche enjoying considerable success with its Panamera saloon and new markets opening up for luxury cars, it was only a matter of time before Aston spun-off a four-seater saloon from its VH platform. The Rapide went into production in late 2009, initially at Magna Steyr in Austria. Despite (or perhaps because of) its sports car-like dynamics, sales haven't been as strong as Aston would have hoped, and production moved to Gaydon in late 2012. Relaunched as the Rapide S for 2013 with a deeper new front grille and 550bhp.

POCKET BUYING GUIDE V8 Vantage



IN A NUTSHELL

The biggest-selling Aston ever. Well over 15,000 produced since 2005, and available as two-seater coupé or soft-top Roadster (from '07). Early cars had 380bhp 4.3-litre V8, 420bhp 4.7 from mid-2008. 'S' version with 430bhp arrived in 2011.

WHAT TO PAY

While early 4.3-litre coupés can be found for £30,000, £35k is a realistic budget for a car that's been well cared for, while the very best low-mileage late 4.3s are £40k-£45k. Roadsters start at around £45k, also the entry point for 4.7 coupés, though most are still £50k+. Add at least another £20k for an 'S'.

NEED TO KNOW

The V8s are generally robust, but a water-tight service history is essential. A common fault is failure of the gasket on the timing cover – expensive to replace because of the several

hours of labour involved – so look for signs of leaks at the front of the engine.

A new clutch is also pricey – Works quotes over £2500 fitted; independents c£2k. A particularly heavy pedal is a clue that it's on the way out; also a rattle that disappears when the pedal is depressed, or any judder or slip when pulling away. Some early manuals are obstructive, particularly going into first and second, but they should get better as they warm up. If you're considering a Sportshift, have an extended drive in various traffic situations: the

automated manual – very different to a torque-converter auto – isn't for everyone. The Sport Pack makes body control tighter but the ride very firm; again, it's not for everyone.

Serious corrosion shouldn't be an issue, but some cars show light bubbling around the base of the A-pillars and the door handles. Unless it has VentureShield or similar fitted, the nose is prone to chips, so it's quite likely the front end will have had a respray. Check for quality and colour-matching.

Battery age and condition is important, as a poor battery can lead to electrical gremlins.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 2010-present

One-77 2010-2012



SPECIFICATION

Engine 7312cc, V12
Power 750bhp @ 7600rpm
Torque 553lb ft @ 6000rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 220mph+

Aston's answer to the Bugatti Veyron and Pagani Zonda hypercars was the One-77, a no-expense-spared, handbuilt, all-carbonfibre rocketship with the world's most powerful naturally aspirated engine (some have recorded an astonishing 772bhp) and an equally gobsmacking £1.15m price-tag. Strictly limited to 77 examples, the last was delivered in August 2012, though Aston retains one for PR work. The few who have been lucky enough to experience the One-77 describe it as challenging, rewarding and utterly thrilling.

V12 Zagato 2012-2013



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.1sec
Top speed 190mph

The V12 Zagato is the most recent Aston to feature the badge of the famous Italian styling house – though in fact this particular Zagato was styled by Aston's own Marek Reichman. It was another strictly limited edition: in this case just 101 were made. Based on the V12 Vantage, the Zagato was rebodied in carbonfibre and aluminium, though the mechanical package was virtually unchanged. Still, since the V12 Vantage was already one of the finest drivers' Austons of all time, that was hardly a concern – even at £396,000 a pop.

DB9 2013-present



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 510bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec
Top speed 183mph

The current DB9, launched at the beginning of 2013, is substantially different to the original launched in 2004. The styling takes up where the short-lived Virage left off, with a sharper chin, more dramatically shaped sills and a flicked-up tail spoiler. Underneath there's a more powerful 510bhp V12 with a torquier delivery, a stiffer aluminium structure, revised suspension and carbon-ceramic brakes as standard. The result is a quicker, better-handling and more refined car, its only real flaw its ageing six-speed gearbox.

Virage 2011-2012



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 490bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 420lb ft @ 5750rpm
0-60mph 4.5sec
Top speed 186mph

Bringing back a name from the 1990s, the 2011 Virage slotted into the range between the DB9 and the DBS – and even avid Aston fans wondered if it wasn't a variant too far. The idea was to sell a more aggressive car than the DB9 (but one that wasn't as extreme as the DBS). All the panels except the roof were subtly restyled, while the V12 gained an extra 20bhp, though the overall feel was still very much GT. Sales were slow, and when the thoroughly revised DB9 was launched for 2013MY, the Virage was quietly dropped.

Vanquish/Vanquish Volante 2012-present



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 565bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.0sec
Top speed 183mph

The original Vanquish was a landmark car – in many ways the first of the modern Austons with its largely aluminium underpinnings – and it was a brave move to resurrect the name for the current flagship. If the new car isn't quite the same game-changer, the combination of aggressively shaped carbonfibre bodywork, 565bhp from a reworked V12, adaptive damping and carbon-ceramic brakes is still an intoxicating one. A Volante arrived in late 2013, and in late 2014 both versions got a refresh that included an eight-speed gearbox.

Rapide S 2013-present



SPECIFICATION

Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 550bhp @ 6750rpm
Torque 457lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.8sec
Top speed 190mph

The Rapide S, launched in January 2013, represented a significant evolution of Aston Martin's four-door sports car. A more aggressive grille and headlight treatment gave it considerably more road presence, while, under the bonnet, variable valve timing and a new management system lifted the power of the V12 from 470 to 550bhp, dropping the 0-60mph time to just 4.8sec. In late 2014, the S was given an extensive refresh, which included the introduction of an eight-speed gearbox and a host of detail refinements.

FRANK FEELEY

THE MAN WHO SHAPED OUR COVER CAR, THE DB3S... AND THE DB2... AND THE MKIII WITH ITS DEFINITIVE ASTON GRILLE. TIME TO SALUTE AN UNSUNG HERO

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER PHOTOGRAPHY ASTON MARTIN HERITAGE TRUST

The forgotten man of Feltham. That's how Frank Feeley was described in the introduction to that rare thing, a Frank Feeley interview, in the Summer 1984 issue of the Aston Martin Owners Club magazine. He should not be forgotten, though, because he was as much a leading player in Aston Martin's post-war Feltham years as Claude Hill, Harold Beach, Ted Cutting, Tadek Marek, John Wyer, even David Brown himself. His was the aesthetic talent that shaped all post-war roadgoing Aston Martins up to, but not including, the DB4, as well as the DB3 and ultra-shapely DB3S sports-racers.

Yet Feeley was, by past experience, a Lagonda man who arrived at Aston Martin through convenient and fortunate circumstance. It was a good thing he did, because having bought both Lagonda and Aston Martin but not, initially, Feeley's services, David Brown was not entirely sure what to do with them.

Frank Feeley had been cast adrift from Lagonda after the war, when Briggs Motor Bodies wriggled out of an agreement to build the company's bodies so it could concentrate on larger, more lucrative contracts with Ford and Jowett. Lagonda, having lost its own pre-war bodyshop, couldn't continue and had to let Feeley, who had joined Lagonda way back in 1926 when he was just 14 years old and had become 'Body Designer' at 25, go. He was in good company; the same fate befell Lagonda's engineering chief, WO Bentley. Lagonda's two chief creatives, gone. And with them, any hope of the company continuing as an independent entity.

David Brown, meanwhile, had bought Aston Martin and was about to buy Lagonda. He needed a bodywork expert and approached Feeley, who duly joined to discover a dispiriting pile of Lagonda detritus stored in hangars near Aston's Feltham factory. For a while Feeley, and some other newly employed Lagonda refugees, tried to make sense of the mess and continue the work he'd started on a new V12 Lagonda, while nothing much else happened in a motor industry scuppered by steel shortages. 'You couldn't get steel unless you were exporting cars,' Feeley observed in Chris Nixon's *Racing With The David Brown Aston Martins*, 'but you couldn't export cars unless you had the steel to build them with.'



Above
Feeley (right) explains his latest proposals for the DB3S to David Brown, who had persuaded him to join Aston Martin Lagonda in 1948

Feeley thought about giving up altogether with Aston Martin Lagonda, but Brown persuaded him to stay with the promise of exciting new cars to come. And so it proved, beginning with the splitting of the Atom.

Claude Hill had designed the Atom as an advanced saloon car for Aston Martin's brave new post-war world. David Brown didn't like its looks but identified its chassis as the basis for a new, open Aston Martin to be styled by Feeley. Unfortunately, the framework under the Atom's roof contributed much to the car's strength, which vanished when the frame was cut off. 'The moment you stood in it, the thing bent,' Feeley observed.

This roofless, re-bodied Atom gained a strengthened chassis and Feeley's first Aston Martin body, a sweeping open tourer derived from his pre-war ideas to modernise the Lagonda V12 and featuring a new design of radiator grille. This had a vertically-slatted centre section based on the original Aston radiator shape, and a pair of low side grilles flanking it. Just 15 examples of this car, retrospectively referred to as DB1, were made while work started on the new DB2, much more modern-looking with its full-width, straight-waistlined, fastback coupé body.

There are shades of Cisitalia and early Ferrari in the DB2's shape. Feeley was quite open about influences gleaned at motor shows, especially when they helped confirm ideas he'd

already had, or made him realise they wouldn't have worked. But for a British grand tourer to have such a taut, confident simplicity of line was altogether a novelty for 1949.

Its chassis was a shortened version of the DB1's Hill-designed frame, and the whole car was created in a rush because it was to run in the 1949 Le Mans 24 Hours. So, contrary to previous practice, the body was initially drawn not to scale but to full size. 'We drew the chassis in,' Feeley recalled, 'and I immediately drew up the thing around it, the whole shape. There was no time to change my mind once I had done it.' To this purity of focus Feeley attributed the design's success. The DB2 continued the DB1's three-piece grille form initially, but to save money this was changed for a simpler one-piece design with horizontal slats. Feeley preferred the original, but also designed the 'face' for the final DB2 derivative, the DB MkIII. It set the template for the Aston grille shape that continues to this day.

One of his most celebrated designs is the DB3S, as curvaceous as its DB3 predecessor was slab-sided. Cutaway front wheelarches were its innovation, designed to draw heat out of the engine bay. Feeley had got fed up with the chassis engineers never knowing where they were going to put the exhaust pipes, so he decided it for them by running the pipes through the cutaways.

Meanwhile, as well as doing the designs, Feeley liaised with and managed the body-builders – initially Mulliners of Birmingham, then from 1953 Tickford in Newport Pagnell, which David Brown had bought. He'd taken charge of the whole bodybuilding side in 1948 simply because there was no-one else at Aston Martin Lagonda who knew as much as he did, and David Brown always liked his ideas.

General manager John Wyer wasn't always so keen, and it was Wyer who was instrumental in the rejection of Feeley's proposal for the DB4 in favour of a design from Touring in Italy. This, and the increasing concentration of activity at Newport Pagnell (where the DB4 was to be made) rather than Feltham, close to where he lived, told Frank Feeley that his Aston days were over. In 1956 he took his talents elsewhere, eventually to live out his retirement until he died in 1985. Nevertheless, Frank Feeley's designs set Aston Martin on the big-engined grand-tourer road it has travelled ever since. That's quite a legacy. **V**

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