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ISSUE 25 | SPRING 2019

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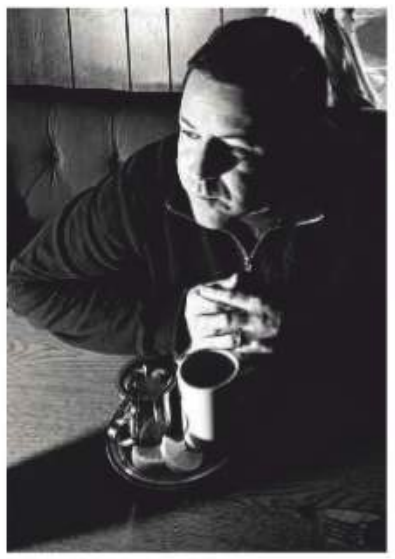
ASTON MARTIN

HERITAGE

Viewpoint

The Valkyrie Effect



IF THERE'S A QUINTESSENTIAL maker of big-hearted, front-engined GT cars, it is surely Aston Martin. My bond with the brand began as a young lad, when I first saw – and heard! – a late-70s V8 Vantage, but whether you're more emotionally connected to the DB-era machines, the later Virage and Vanquish or, indeed, this issue's spectacular Vantage V600, the strand of DNA is unbroken and undeniable.

So what to make of this year's Geneva show and the phalanx of mid-engined exotica that took centre stage? We knew it was CEO Andy Palmer's plan for Aston to 'do a Ferrari', but Geneva was evidence that his Second Century Plan is less reinvention, more revolution. Since time immemorial, Astons have been, er, somewhat 'big-boned' compared with their rivals. Again it's part of that DNA. Yet what we see in the mid-engined cars is the thinking and approach of a lightweight car company.

Speak to anyone within Aston's in-house design and engineering teams and they'll say – proudly, albeit with a few trauma-induced nervous ticks – that this is the immediate legacy of Valkyrie and working with its architect, Adrian Newey. So where does this leave the aforementioned GTs?

It's a question cleverer people than I are grappling with, for although weight is often cited as the enemy, engineers also acknowledge that a certain heft lends a car a particular kind of dynamic gravitas. A quality that is also mirrored in the styling – current DBS being a perfect case in point.

We have a long while to wait before seeing whether The Valkyrie Effect will jump species and radically alter Aston's approach to its front-engined cars. And before then we have a whole family of mid-engined Aston Martins to get to know. I have every faith they will live up to our high expectations. I just hope Aston's future GT cars can retain what it is that makes them so appealing.

Richard Meaden Editor

The next issue of *Vantage* will be on sale on May 30, 2019. To subscribe, go to dennismags.co.uk/vantage

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Lagonda's 'land yacht'

SUPER-LUXURY ELECTRIC SUV TO GO ON SALE BY 2022

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **IMAGES** ASTON MARTIN

THOSE OF US WITH moderately long memories might well recall the last time AML tried to revive the Lagonda name with a super-luxury SUV. The awkward-looking 2009 concept drew gasps of shock and a few snorts of laughter when it was revealed to the world's media, though with hindsight Aston's then CEO, Dr Ulrich Bez, should be praised for his prescience of the coming trend for ultra-high-end SUVs. However, even Bez couldn't have imagined the idea would be revisited ten years later with an all-electric concept of quite such audacity.

Last year, you'll remember, Lagonda was the surprise star of the Geneva show with the Vision Concept: an ultra-luxurious and fantastically futuristic four-seater that dropped the jaws of all who saw it. Of course it's easy to do that with a wild-looking show car that's free from the need to be rooted in reality, but what shocked about the relaunch of the historic Lagonda brand was that its brand values were based upon a total rejection of tradition.

One year on and the Lagonda proposition is beginning to crystallise – both stylistically and strategically – with the All-Terrain Concept boldly taking its space-age design cues from the Vision Concept while following the undeniable market trend towards SUVs. It's this trend that dictates that a productionised version of the All-Terrain, and not the Vision Concept, will be the first Lagonda offered for sale, sometime in 2022.

It's hard to know where to begin describing the styling. Pictures give you a sense of proportion, surfacing and detail, but as with the Vision Concept it's the sheer scale of the thing that blows you away. Where Concorde was credited as an inspiration for Vision Concept, the All-Terrain Concept's design language has been influenced by the super-yacht. You can see this in the rear-leaning mid-line, shard-like glasshouse and stern-like overhang, from which it would be tempting to hang a Cygnet for use as a metropolitan tender.

The notion of a land yacht effortlessly

‘You get the sense AML’s design team is having fun exploring what Lagonda can be’

gliding its occupants along is a concept beloved of luxury car makers for many decades, but Lagonda puts a twist on this by also adding something of the lunar rover about the All-Terrain’s stance. Prominent wheelarches and drawn-in flanks project an air of stability while lofty ground-clearance and generous approach and departure angles suggest a level of rugged, go-anywhere ability.

Of course, the truth is that a production Lagonda All-Terrain – or for that matter Rolls-Royce Cullinan – is unlikely to face anything more demanding than negotiating the ramp leading to parking reception at Gstaad’s Hotel Alpina, but when you’re selling ‘a pioneering spirit of adventure’ you need the promise of an impressive surfeit of capability.

You get the sense AML’s design team is having fun exploring what Lagonda can be and packing the show cars with surprises and some really special touches. Rear-hinged back doors, complete with roof sections that open upwards, look spectacular but also makes for effortless ingress and egress, while beautiful use of concealed LEDs in the rear clamshell hatch cleverly reflects the light, first beaming it downwards before reflecting it out to create a magical glow fed by an invisible light source.

Like the Vision Concept, the interior of the All-Terrain is just as spectacular as its

Top and above
All-Terrain Concept is the second outlandish-looking Lagonda concept we’ve seen in the last two years, but this is the one that’s heading for production, driven by still-growing worldwide demand for SUVs. It will be exclusively battery-powered, as will all future Lagondas

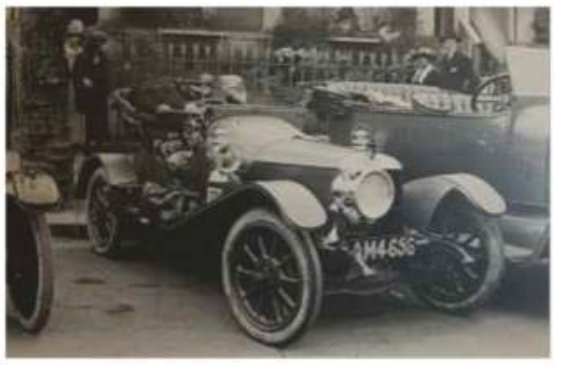
Top and above
Fully autonomous cars will still be years away in 2022, so All-Terrain will still be very much a driver's car

exterior. In a shift of emphasis from the rear-seat-biased limousine atmosphere of the Vision Concept, the All-Terrain Concept divides the interior space more evenly between all four seats. There's still the option to rotate the two front seats to face the rear (don't forget that in addition to being EV-only, Lagondas are designed for an autonomous world), but as the production All-Terrain will be on sale way before legislation approves the highest level of autonomous cars, it still looks and feels like a car in which you'd want to get behind the wheel and drive.

What we know less about is the EV drivetrain, but AML's commitment to a battery-powered future is clear, in the shape of St Athan, the company's 'Home of Electrification'. With a rapidly expanding workforce, growing from the 170-strong team currently in place to more than 700 by the first quarter of next year, St Athan is key to delivering AML's ambitious expansion plans.

You may not like the notion of a Lagonda SUV. You might fear the rise of autonomous technology and you might resist the switch from internal combustion to battery power. But. Ten years on from that uncomfortable and ultimately aborted attempt to relaunch the marque, the fact Lagonda is generating conversation and challenging perceptions with such avant-garde ideas feels wildly exciting and entirely appropriate.

IN BRIEF



100 YEARS OF MOTORSPORT

On June 6, 1919, the first road-registered Aston-Martin, known as Coal Scuttle, set out on the inaugural London to Edinburgh Trial, an event demanding reliability and strict time-keeping. The Aston won a Gold Medal, and so the marque's motorsport history began. This summer, the AMOC is re-enacting the run with Astons of all ages, and organiser David Wright would love to hear from owners of early Bamford & Martin cars. Email david@73harleystreet.co.uk

DRIVERS' CLUB

Aston Martin has launched a new trackday programme, offering the chance to drive some of the world's greatest circuits. The AMR Drivers' Club offers various packages and levels of tuition. Customers also have the opportunity to drive a selection of the latest Astons and – if they have racing ambitions – get coaching in a GT4 Vantage. More info at astonmartintrackdays.com and for a taste of what's on offer, see page 104.

ONE-OF-A-KIND DB4

A uniquely powerful DB4 Convertible is being restored by Aston Martin Works at Newport Pagnell. Chassis no. 1173 was the only one of the circa 70 DB4 dropheads to have the more potent DB4 GT engine as original fitment. The car was specially built in 1963 for a UK customer and personal friend of then company owner David Brown. It's now undergoing a bare metal restoration at Newport Pagnell, where, of course, it was originally built, and the Works team is currently looking for a buyer.

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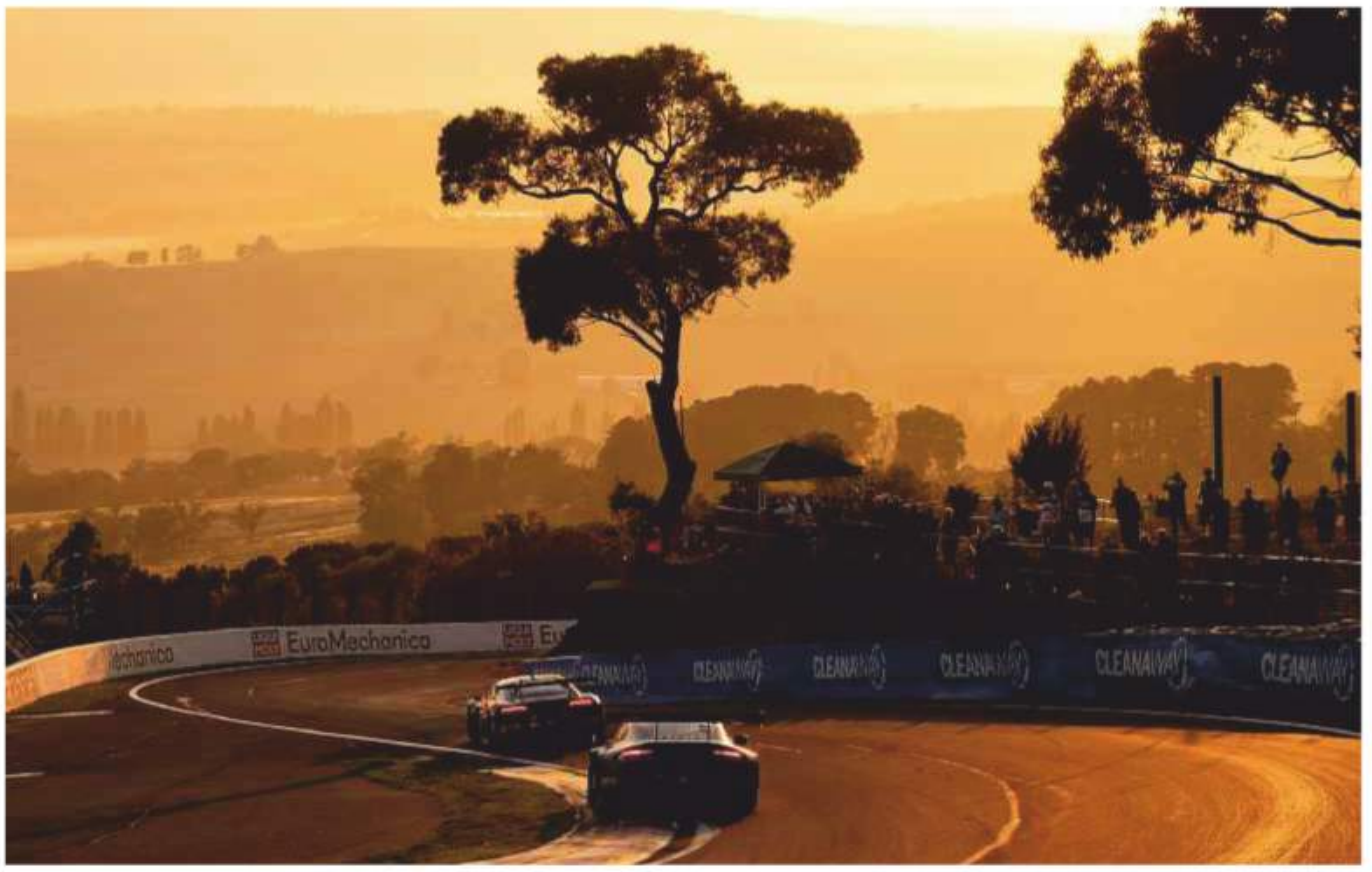

Changing of the guard

VANTAGES NEW AND OLD IN THICK OF THE ACTION

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICK DUNGAN

WITH THE WORLD ENDURANCE Championship (WEC) 2018/19 Super Season taking a breather until the 1000 Miles of Sebring in mid-March, many of the world's best endurance racers spent their winter travelling to warmer climes. Naturally, Aston Martin Racing customer teams have been in the thick of the action.

Rounding out the 2018 season was the Gulf 12 Hours, held at the Yas Marina circuit in Abu Dhabi in December. The event saw three all-new Vantage GT3s entered by three of Aston Martin Racing's most valued partner teams: Oman Racing by TF Sport and R-Motorsport in the GT3 Pro category, plus Andrew Howard's Beechdean Motorsport in GT3 Pro-Am, along with a solitary all-new Vantage GT4 entered by the factory AMR team in the GT4 class.

Left and above
R-Motorsport's old-school V12 Vantage GT3 enjoyed a memorable farewell race in the Bathurst 12 Hours, the team celebrating a hard-fought second place. Oman Racing's new-shape Vantage GT3 (below) was first Aston home in the Gulf 12 Hours

Issues at the first pit stop of Race 1 delayed the Oman Racing and R-Motorsport GT3s, while the class pole-sitting Vantage GT4 was hit by a rival on the first lap, requiring lengthy repairs. In the final reckoning, the Oman Racing GT3 Vantage of Al Harthy, Adam and Turner came home first of the Astons in 4th overall and just 32 seconds shy of 3rd, with Beechdean in overall 7th and 3rd in the Pro-Am class – the new GT3 car's first podium result. R-Motorsport were 18th overall and 6th in Pro and the Vantage GT4 24th overall and 4th in class.

The Swiss-based R-Motorsport squad were back in action in early February, this time in Australia, where they fielded their V12 Vantage GT3 in the mighty Bathurst 12 Hours. It might have been the last hurrah for the old warhorse in top-line GT3 racing, but it was still very much a force to be reckoned with. Indeed it secured a spectacular pole position, but was later handed a two-place grid penalty for a technical infringement.

This only seemed to add to the team's determination, with the crack driver line-up of Marvin Kirchhöfer, Matthieu Vaxiviere and pole-setter Jake Dennis driving the wheels off the handsome grey machine. Remarkably, with just 30 minutes of the race remaining, they were in the lead, but then a late safety-car period bunched the field.

Dennis held the lead, but was relentlessly hunted down by the Earl Bamber Motorsport Porsche 911 GT3, which jumped to 2nd and then eventually fought its way through in a forceful but inspired move to squeeze by with just 11 minutes of the race remaining. Despite the obvious disappointment for the Aston crew, it was a fitting finale for one of the most successful and best-loved GT3 cars in its last blue riband endurance race.

Heritage racing expansion

NEW SERIES LAUNCHED FOR MODERN-ERA COMPETITION ASTONS

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **PHOTOGRAPHY** NICK DUNGAN

ASTON MARTIN HAS ANNOUNCED a serious increase in its commitment to the burgeoning historic racing scene with the creation of Aston Martin Heritage Racing (AMHR), a new over-arching brand that unites the marque's assorted historic motorsport activities.

Fans of Aston Martin's modern competition heritage will be thrilled at the news that the triennial Aston Martin Racing Le Mans Festival events held as support races for the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2012, 2015 and 2018 have been developed into an annual AMHR Festival Series.

This new 'home' for owners of eligible modern-era competition and special series Astons encompasses the majority of Aston Martin Racing's back catalogue. All GT1, GT2, GT3, GT4 and GTE cars are eligible, with the exception of the Lola-Aston LMP1 prototypes and the latest-generation Vantage GTE, GT3 and GT4 cars. There is also an invitation class for special series cars such as the Vulcan, and for other unusual Aston Martin race cars, such as the special pair of V12 Vantage Zagatos and the Vantage GT8 that took part in the Nürburgring 'N24'.

Above
Aston Martin Festival race, held every three years as a support event for the Le Mans 24 Hours, will now become an annual series for modern racing Astons. Invitation class will admit special series cars like Vulcan

For 2019, the AMHR Festival Series comprises a single race at the Silverstone Classic meeting (July 26-28) and a double-header during the Spa Six Hours historic meeting at the end of September. The series will return to Silverstone and Spa in 2020, with a third iconic venue to be announced later this year, and in 2021 competitors can look forward to three more race weekends, with the series fulfilling its objective to provide drivers with a 'Road to Le Mans'.

In addition to the Festival Series, AMHR has partnered with Masters Historic Racing, one of the world's leading historic race event organisers and promoters, to become its official automotive partner. This will see examples of the new Vantage and the Rapide AMR performing official safety car and pace car duties respectively at Masters Historic Racing events.

Aston Martin is also title partner of the Aston Martin Masters Endurance Legends Series, the premier series for modern historic Le Mans and ALMS prototypes and GT cars from 1995-2012 – a period that covers Aston Martin Racing's famous victories in the GT1 class with the DBR9. The series also includes the marque's LMP1, GT2 and GTE contenders.

Completing 2019's initiatives is the AMHR Track Experience, which combines attendance of a live historic race weekend and full hospitality with an assortment of road and track sessions in new Aston Martin road cars. Weekend packages will be tailored for existing and prospective Aston Martin customers as well as fans of the brand, with the first of these events to be held on March 29-31 at Paul Ricard in France, during Masters Historic Racing's first race weekend of the season.

For further information on all AMHR activities, email AMHR@astonmartin.com

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Crazy like a fox

’WACKY’ ARNOLT’S BERTONE-BODIED DB2/4 COUPÉ OUTSHINES STANDARD ASTONS IN SCOTTSDALE

WORDS CHRIS BIETZK | **PHOTOGRAPHY** GOODING & CO

STANLEY ‘WACKY’ ARNOLT was generally untroubled by self-doubt, as he demonstrated on September 26, 1938, when he crossed a treacherous Lake Michigan in a tiny boat to prove the reliability of his Sea-Mite marine engine. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Wacky was a man of faith; he kept an electric organ in his office and would belt out hymns for visitors to the Arnolt Corporation, a business so bewilderingly multifarious that he referred to it simply as a ‘job shop’.

Too irrepressible, too Christian and too busy to have held a grudge, then, but Wacky would surely have allowed himself a chuckle at Aston’s expense had he been around to see this year’s Scottsdale auctions. Sixteen Astons were offered in the Arizona desert in January, but none attracted more attention than Wacky’s special-bodied 1954 DB2/4 Coupé, a car of which Aston did not exactly approve.

For a short time in the early 1950s, Wacky was on friendly terms with the folks at Feltham. Having established himself as a semi-successful importer of British sports cars, he committed to a grander project in 1952, commissioning Bertone to build at least 200 cars on the MG TD chassis. The resulting creation was not a flop but, problematically, production of the TD ended before the minimum number of Arnolt-MGs had been built.

In his efforts to keep Bertone busy, Wacky bought a handful of DB2/4 chassis and shipped them to Turin. Somehow the Feltham brass had not twigged that these would eventually be badged ‘Arnolt-Aston Martin’, and only three Franco Scaglione-penned roadsters were finished before much displeasure was voiced. Aston Martin could do nothing, though, to stop four more Aston-badged specials rolling out of the carrozzeria – including our unique coupé, chassis LML/765.

Looking at the car, it is hard to understand why Aston Martin did not bring Wacky and Bertone into the fold; a small production run would surely have been a hit. The proportions are superb, and the wraparound glass makes the cabin a delightful place to sit.

Bertone was rightly proud of the car and displayed it at the Turin motor show in 1957, when it still wore its original white paint. It was sold new to a Parisian, but by 1976 it had made its way to the States, and it has remained there ever since.

Gooding & Co had the privilege of auctioning it in Scottsdale, where it made $566,000 – three times as much as a nice, standard DB2/4 in the same sale.

Between all the houses represented in Scottsdale, 81 per cent of Astons were sold. The overall sell-through rate was exactly the same, and Astons appeared to be following the wider market in other ways, too. Cars valued at $250,000 and up seemed a tougher sell than in years past, as were those that came to the block with a reserve. The real big-ticket items, estimated at $1 million or more, struggled badly, with 52 per cent of them passed in.

A few weeks later, the auction circus rolled into Paris and the results followed a similar pattern. A DB4 Series 5 ‘Special Series’ (estimate: €750,000-900,000), a 1934 Mk2 Ulster-alike (€350,000-550,000) and, notably, a 2019 Vanquish Zagato Shooting Brake (€800,000-1 million) were among the pricey Astons that failed to launch. The only conclusion to draw: the big spenders are all holding out for one of Wacky’s cars…

Clockwise from top left
Under the skin is regular DB2/4’s straight-six; sleek body boasts neat fins in nod to American trends of the time; interior spacious and airy

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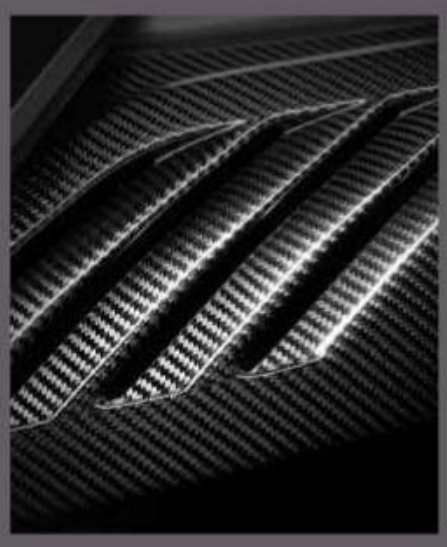


Official fuel consumption figures in litres/100km (mpg) for the 2019 MY Aston Martin Vantage V8: urban 14.2 (19.9); extra urban 8.0 (35.3); combined 10.3 (27.4). CO_2 emissions 236g/ km. The mpg/fuel economy figures quoted are sourced from official regulated test results obtained through laboatory testing. They are for comparability purposes only and may not reflect your real driving experience, which may vary depending on factors including road conditions, weather, vehicle load and driving style.

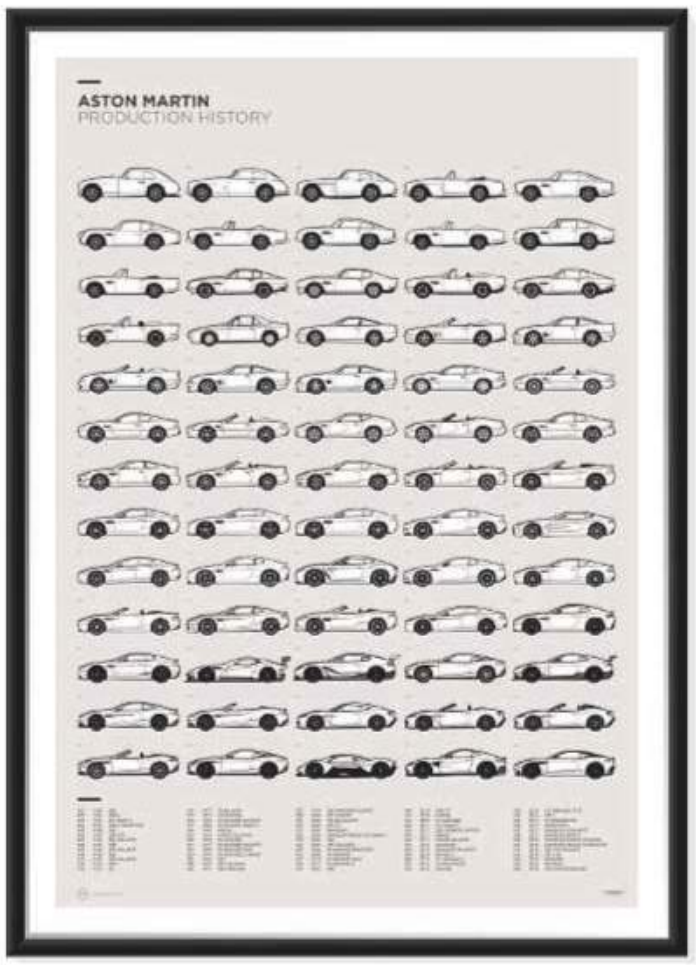
Desirables

Aston-related objects of desire, including a handy chart of every post-war model

Dassi Interceptor

From £5995 | dassi.com

Surely the perfect companion to your Aston Martin Valkyrie, this bicycle presents a challenge to our limited vocabulary. To describe it as merely 'high-tech' or 'innovative' would be an insult, made as it is with a material only isolated in 2004, and which won its discoverers the Nobel Prize in Physics. That wonder-stuff is graphene, a carbon allotrope 200 times stronger than steel yet lighter than paper, and it has allowed British manufacturer Dassi to build a super-tough frame that weighs just 750g. Insert your own expletive here.



Production History poster by Hive Posters

From $22.50 | hiveposters.storenvy.com

A neat summation of the many marvellous machines that Aston has built since 1950, beginning with the DB2 and ending with the DBS Superleggera. It works as a piece of art and as a visual reference guide – and perhaps, for those with serious spending power, as a shopping list.

Aston Martin by Hackett driving gloves

£130 | hackett.com

With any luck you'll not get much use out of these warm, closed-back driving gloves until 2020 heaves into view, but they'll see you through next winter and beyond. In fact, they'll probably outlast you and your Aston.

Aston Martin laptop backpack

£395 | shop.astonmartin.com

Anyone who has squeezed onto a rattly peak-time train in recent years will confirm that it is pretty much impossible to commute in comfort, but you can at least commute in style with this smart, water-resistant rucksack featuring a padded laptop pocket.

Desirables

More Aston-related goodies – and other objects of desire that caught our eye

Moquette Brighton armchair by London Transport Museum

£1149.99 | ltmuseumshop.co.uk

If you recognise that fabric you must be even more ancient than us, because it was last seen on the London Underground's B Stock, in the 1940s. The London Transport Museum has resurrected the B Stock pattern, along with several others, for a range of chairs inspired by the colourful seats on the Tube. All are delivered, we can confirm, without the traditional sprinkling of someone else's crumbs.

Vertex MP45

£3750 | vertex-watches.com

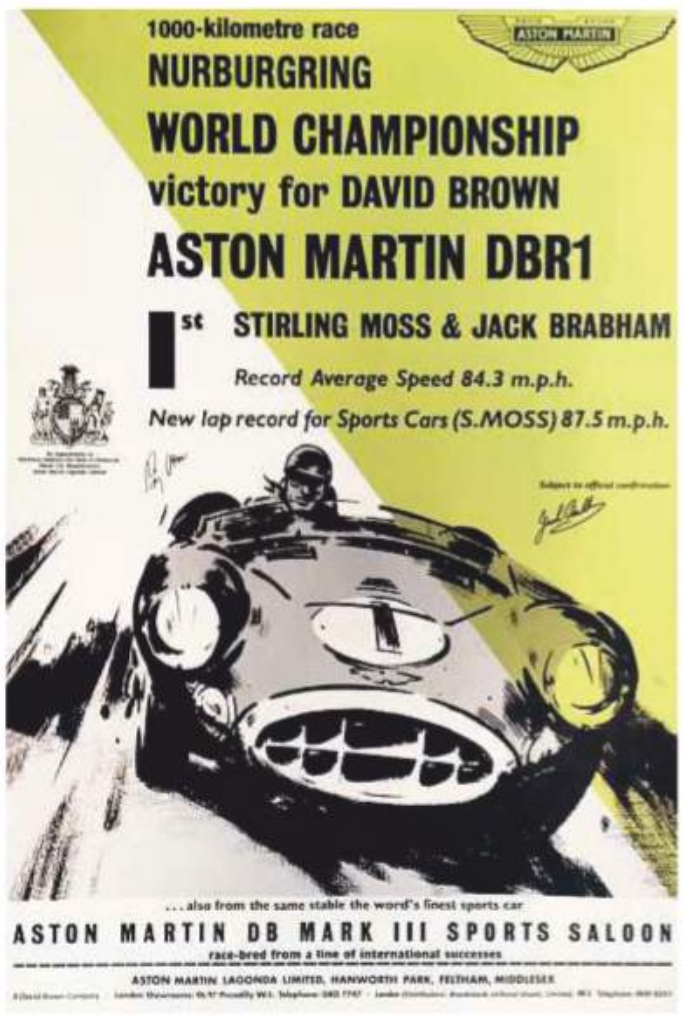
If you think it takes an agonisingly long time for a new car to get from concept to production, spare a thought for any watch enthusiast who has been waiting for the MP45. The mono-pusher chronograph was prototyped by Vertex in 1945 at the request of the Ministry of Defence, but the Second World War ended soon after and the project was abandoned. Finally, more than seven decades later, the handsome design is seeing the light of day.

Desirables is compiled by Chris Bietzk. If you'd like to have an item considered for inclusion, email eds@vantagemag.co.uk

Scalextric DB5

£40.99 | scalextric.com

The DB5 returns to the Scalextric range in black tie, and boasting some impressive (if not exactly period-correct) technology, including LED lights and Magnatraction to help more exuberant drivers keep the wheels on the road.



1958 1000km Nürburgring victory poster

CDN $995 | collectorstudio.com

It's a reprint, this triumphal poster, but more desirable than any original example, for it has been signed by Stirling Moss and the late Jack Brabham, the men who spent more than seven hours on the limit at the Nürburging to ensure Aston had something to crow about in 1958.

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Your view

email us eds@vantagemag.co.uk
write to us Vantage Magazine
Editorial, Dennis Publishing,
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Left and above Ex-works DB2 at the Revival and (above) with its sister in 1963. Below: Roger Martin's DB6, perfect tow-car for his pre-war International

Driving a bargain

Lovely to see VMF 65, the ex-works DB2, in your last issue (Winter 2018), being driven by Darren Turner at the Goodwood Revival race meeting. I owned this car back in the early 1960s, albeit very briefly...

The black-and-white photo was taken outside the officers' mess at RAF Catterick on the night in 1963 when I bought VMF from one Flight Lt Bloomfield for the princely sum of £250. (PUM 6 was the ex-Arnold Burton rally car, which I had bought a few months earlier, also for £250!)

I'd taken my boss's son along to drive my new purchase home – which made it tricky the next day when the boss asked me to sell him VMF. I replied that I hadn't yet decided which of the two cars to keep. I confess, I had no idea that VMF was one of the works team cars! Two days later he made it rather easier by offering me 200 quid more than I had paid for it...

The very next week, the boss set one of the lads to polishing the DB2 and placed an ad in *Exchange & Mart*. When the paper came out, I was the one who took the phone call from France from one Nigel Mann... who had been one of the works drivers of the car back in the '50s.

An arrangement was made for the boss to take the car to meet with Mann's engineer at York railway station that day – and when the boss rang to be picked up we knew the deal had been done. On his return he told me he'd sold it for fifteen hundred pounds – and that he knew all along it was one of the team cars. The incident taught me that first profit is not always the best!

David Starling, Waikanae Beach, New Zealand

Aston-Healey?

So pleased you included my letter on David Brown and Donald Healey in your Autumn 2018 issue (unfortunately, it was printed with one mistake, as the Austin-Healey 3000 did not use the DB gearbox). Your readers might also be interested to know that Donald Healey had some of his most beautiful saloons bodied at the Tickford coachworks, which led him to choose Tickford to build the prototype Healey 100 sports car at Newport Pagnell.

He planned to have the production car built there too, but, as history records, BMC boss Leonard Lord saw the prototype at Earls Court in 1952 and did a deal with Donald to have the cars built at Longbridge with Austin mechanical parts and hence the Austin-Healey was born.

I was fortunate to know Victor Gauntlett, who as you may be aware had a fine collection of motor cars including two 'works' Austin-Healey 3000s, which he told me were similar to drive to his DB3S, the two models also sharing very similar proportions and dimensions. It would have been interesting had the Austin-Healey been made at Tickford, in many ways a smaller sister to the Aston Martin.

Rob Harrison, Sydney, Australia.

Pulling power

I refer to your article 'Light Years Apart' (issue 24) which states 'the Superleggera badge would appear on all DB4, DB5 and DB6 variants'. My DB6 (chassis no. DB6/4054/R – one of the late ones) doesn't have Superleggera badges on the bonnet as, I believe, Carrozzeria Touring went out of business during the DB6 production run, which meant that Aston Martin Lagonda did not have to pay royalties to them any more, nor promote them with the badge on the cars.

Ref the article on Robert Cook's DB4, my DB6 still has the tow bar that I fitted back in 1987, supplied by Aston Service Dorset, to pull my caravan. I bought the car in 1987 as my second Aston and also to replace the Rover SD1 that previously towed the caravan – this just before the first rapid rise in Aston prices.

Since we gave up caravanning, the DB6 has pulled my International Aston to trackdays at Knockhill racing circuit – 8mpg on a day that included many circuit laps – and to a Curborough sprint, where I competed in both cars. It has also pulled my steam boat, on that occasion to an AMOC meet at the Windermere Motor Boat Racing Club.

It's been off the road for a while now, having a full mechanical rebuild. Once it is up and running, I have a barn-find 1973 AM Vantage to start on. In the meantime, I recently purchased a DB7 Vantage that gives me something to drive. One can never have too many Astons!

Roger M Martin, Glasgow

ART & ASTONS

Adam Gompertz is Aston Martin's artist-in-residence. We watch him at work and find out what the title means

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **PORTRAITS** JAMES ARBUCKLE

WE FIRST FEATURED THE WORK of the Rev Adam Gompertz back in the Autumn 2016 issue of *Vantage*. Since then the self-proclaimed 'scribbling vicar' has carved himself an enviable niche in the crowded world of automotive art. Much to his – and our – delight, in the spring of 2018 he was given the role of Aston Martin's artist-in-residence. Sensing the perfect excuse to feature more of his beautiful sketches, a little under a year after his appointment we caught up with him at Aston Martin's Gaydon HQ.

For those of you unfamiliar with Gompertz's story, a quick recap. A lifelong car enthusiast, he enrolled on the renowned Coventry University transport design course at the ripe old age of 27. After his graduation, he joined the design team at MG Rover in 2004 and, when the company was sold to a Chinese bidder in 2005, moved to Austria for a role at the Design Storz studio. Subsequent stints at Dubois Naval Architects and the Bespoke Design department at Rolls-Royce rounded out a diverse design career.

In 2010, his life took an unusual turn when he decided to become a Church of England minister and began training to be a vicar. Now a curate in the diocese of Litchfield in the Midlands, and with the blessing of the Church and his bishop, Gompertz has combined his calling with his love of cars and his gift for sketching them through his increasingly popular REVS Art and REVS Events projects.

Appropriately enough, we find him sitting cross-legged on the stone floor of Gaydon's imposing atrium. French Curves, pens, pads, pencils and other artists' paraphernalia are scattered around him as he sits sketching the nose of a V600 Vantage. Maintaining a respectful distance, it's fascinating to watch him, seemingly lost in his work, oblivious to the comings and goings around him.

Gompertz's distinctive style – in which he leaves his sketches deliberately unfinished – fuses the fluid spontaneity of a car designer's concept drawings with the precise form and

'THE RESULTS POSSESS A WONDERFUL COMBINATION OF WARMTH AND DETAIL'

ghostly construction lines of a draftsman's blueprint. Annotations tell the story of the car or describe certain technical details, with the combined effect lending itself equally well to classic or contemporary cars and possessing a wonderful combination of warmth and detail.

We might be a little biased, but we think these qualities seem especially appropriate when capturing the essence of Aston Martins, old and new. Clearly our belief is one shared within Gaydon's corridors of power. So how did the AiR appointment come about?

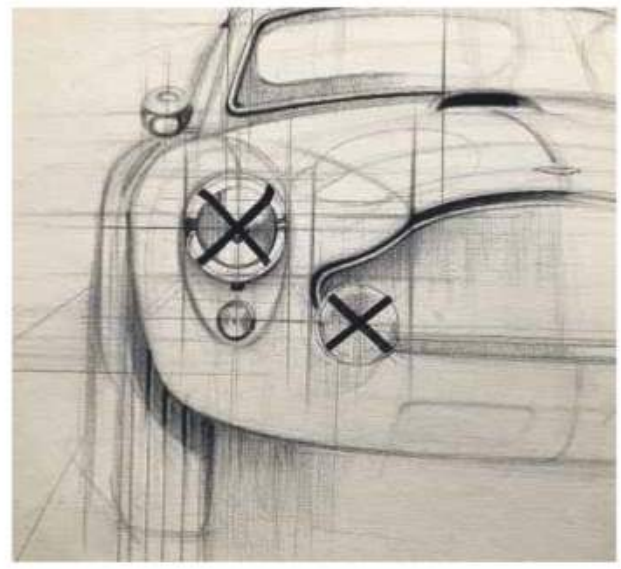
'I do a Daily Doodle on Twitter [Gompertz combines a sketch with a Thought For The Day-style message or spiritual reflection] and Andy Palmer joined the list of recipients,' explains Gompertz in a break from sketching. 'He seemed to like them and we exchanged a few messages, so after a little while I asked him if it would be possible for me to come to Gaydon for a day and do some sketching. Andy was kind enough to arrange it and we've stayed in touch ever since via Twitter.

'Then in February of last year Simon Sproule [Aston VP and chief marketing officer] called me saying he was wondering if I would consider being Aston's artist-in-residence. Once I picked myself up off the floor, of course I said yes!'

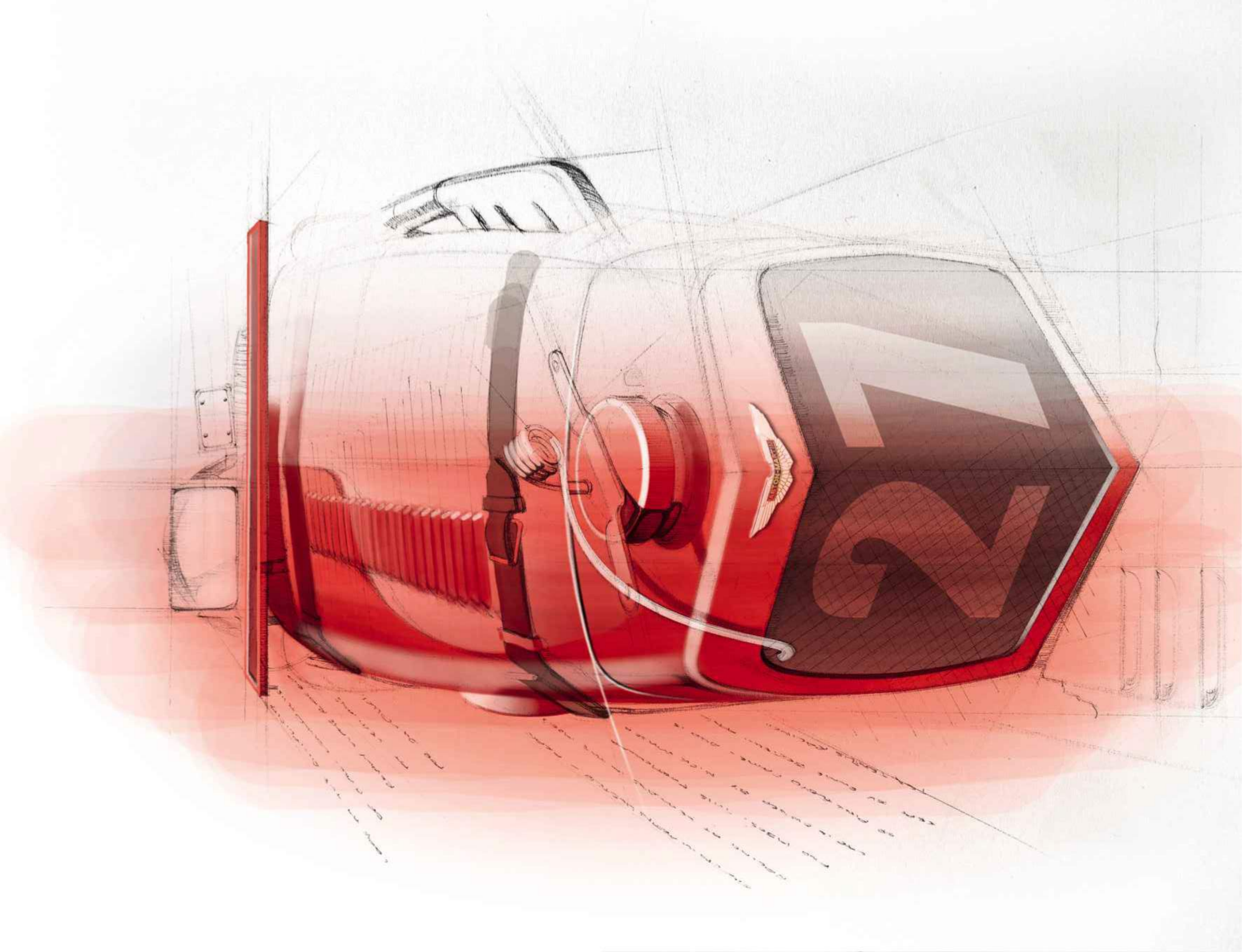
Aston has had AiRs in the past, but not in the same capacity as Gompertz, who enjoys a roving brief and a longer period of residence.

'It's a new role and we're still feeling our way through it,' he says. 'The working arrangement is nice and flexible, so we tend to draw up a list of things Aston would particularly like me to cover. My first official engagement was at the Goodwood Festival of Speed last year and I spent the weekend sketching. It was important for me to produce some work of the DBS Superleggera, but the brief is pretty open.

'Since then, I've also done a weekend with the AMR guys at the Silverstone round of the World Endurance Championship, sketched at the Goodwood Revival and regularly visited Gaydon. Of course it's wonderful to sit down and sketch such fabulous cars, but one thing I've



Clockwise from right
Captivating study of a pre-war Ulster has all the key elements of a Gompertz work – fine draftsmanship, annotations, subtle colouring with pastels; a study in concentration in the Gaydon atrium, and a section of a DB MkIII



Clockwise from above
An animated Rev Gompertz talking about his passion for Aston Martin; an artist's materials, and contrasting sketches of two V8 Vantages, recent and classic

'THE CARS ARE WONDERFUL, BUT IT'S THE PEOPLE BEHIND THEM THAT ARE WHAT'S REALLY SPECIAL'

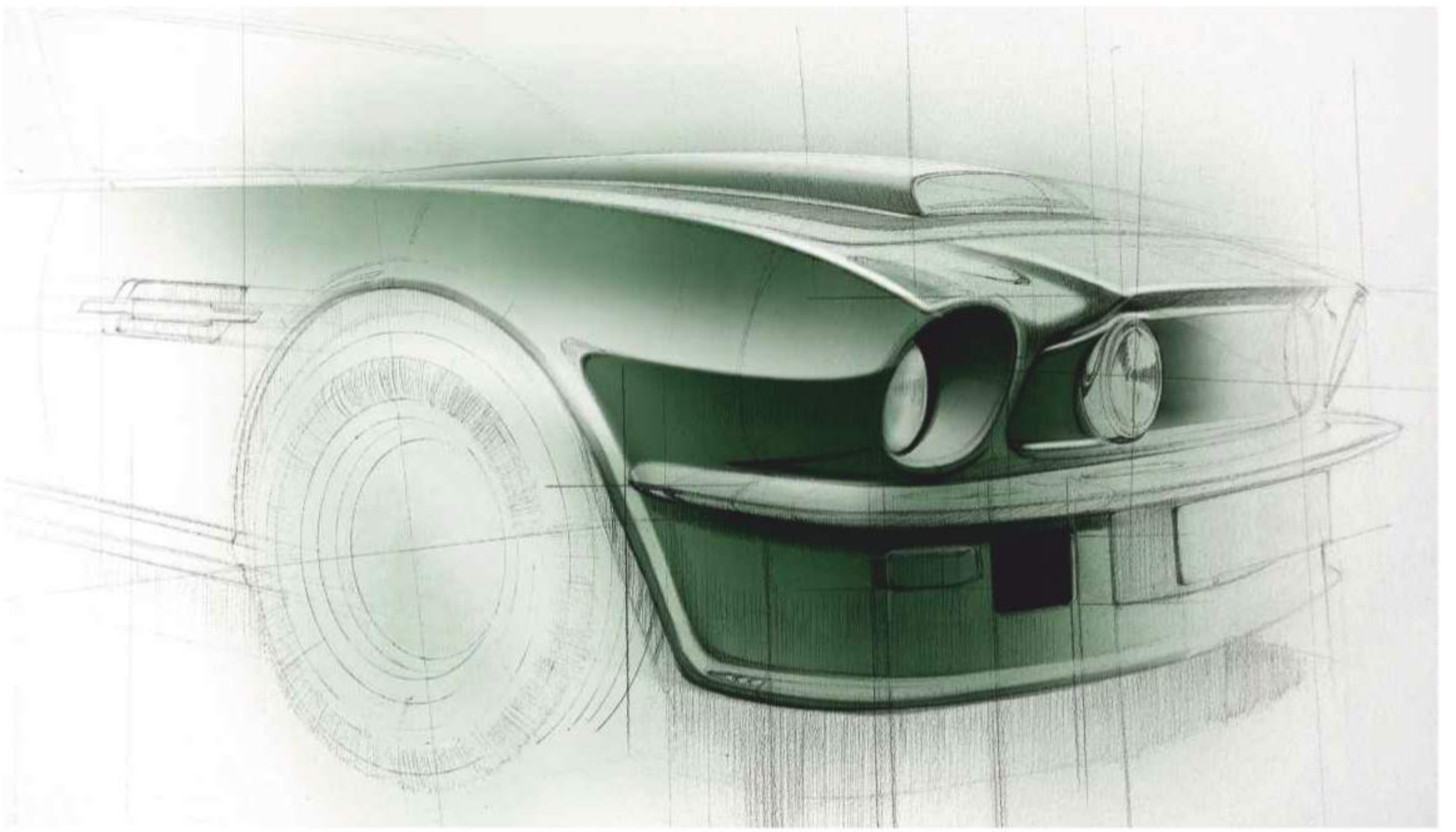
noticed with Aston Martin is the friendliness and goodwill of the people who are attracted to or associated with the brand. They chat to me, ask about my work and have so much enthusiasm for what I'm doing. I always suspected that was something unique to Aston, but every time I go out and sketch I have that feeling reaffirmed.

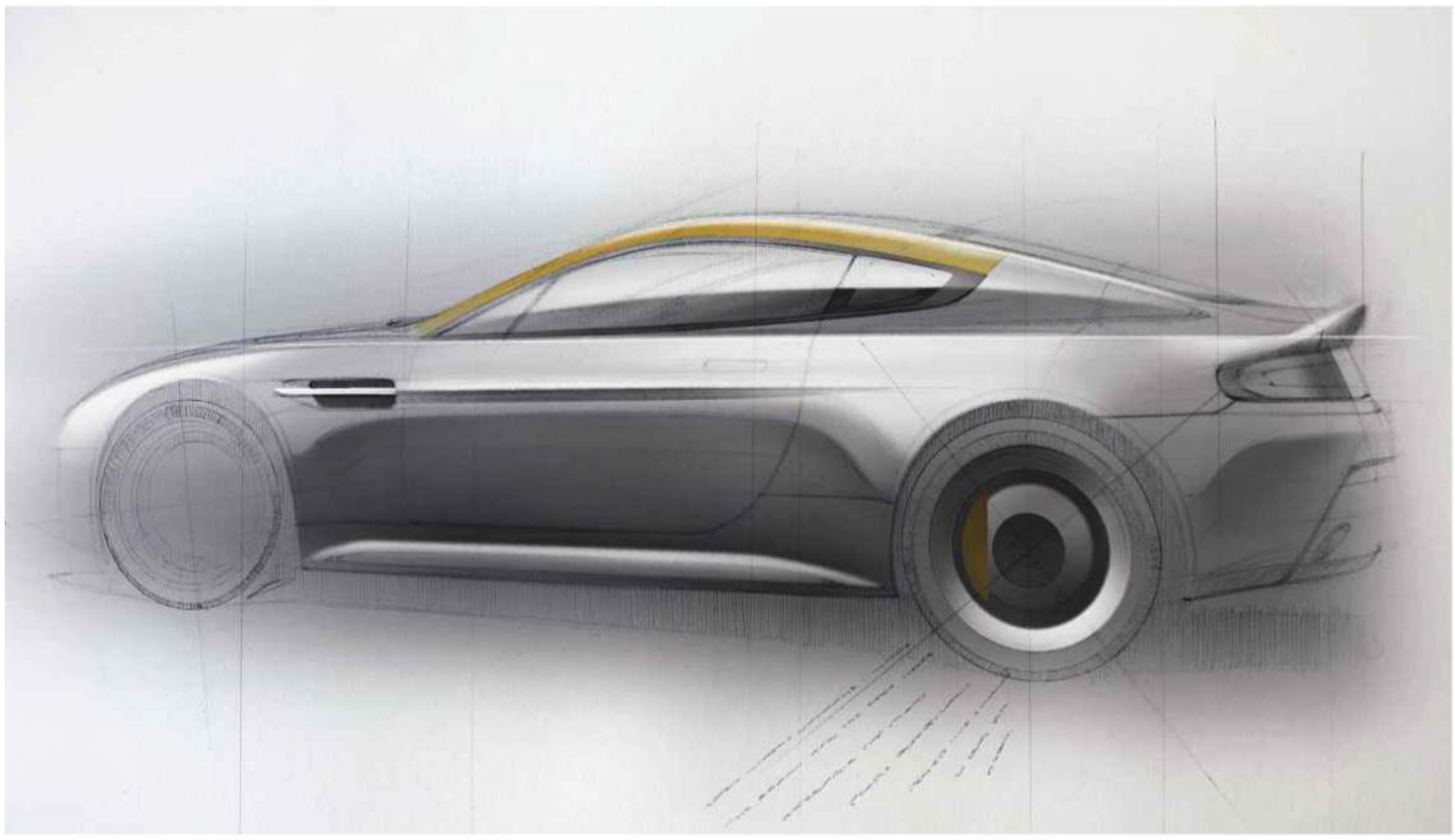
'That interaction with people is something very close to my heart,' he continues. 'The cars are wonderful, but it's the stories behind them and therefore the people behind them that are what's really special. The cars are the stars, but they don't build themselves. Walking around the production line here at Gaydon is inspiring because you see the skill and passion that goes into making them.

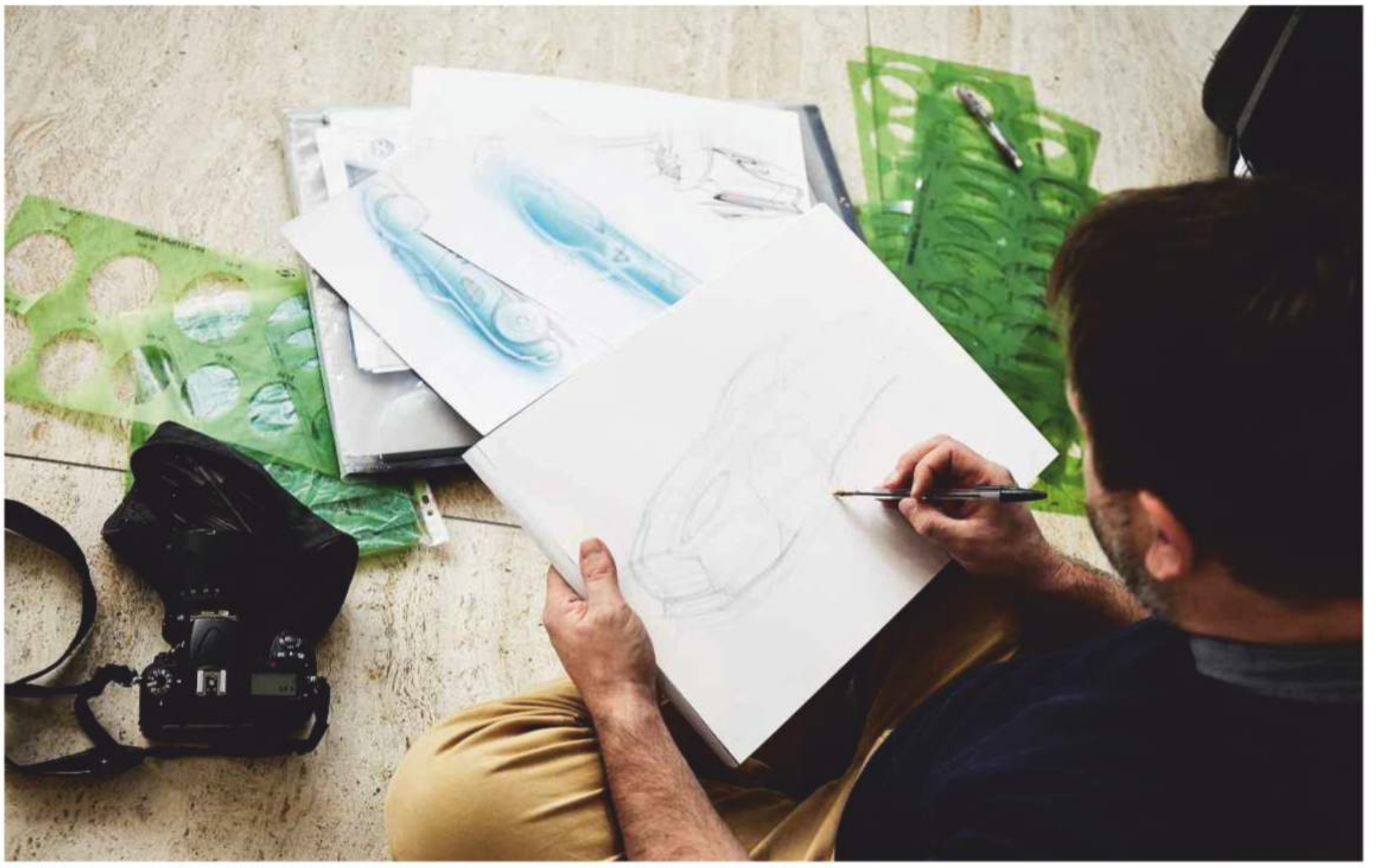
'Aston has such tremendous heritage, and that's something very clear to see in the early cars. For example, when I sketch an old engine with a brass plaque bearing the name of the engine builder it's quite moving, because the thing they created so many years ago is still here as testament to their skill. It's humbling to have such a direct connection to such people.'

So what does 2019 have in store for Gompertz? 'We've still got to iron out the details, but I would love to do Le Mans in such a significant year. It would be a challenge because the space you have to work in tends to be very confined, sketching as and when you get the opportunity. In these situations I do take photos, as these help me work once I'm back home.

'Doing stuff that's moving rather than standing still is another challenge I've been quietly working on and would love to do more of. However, what I'd really love to do is some single components. Things like a suspension wishbone, engine casing or lightweight castings. In that vein it would also be fun to zoom right in on a sliver of an exterior detail.' Simon Sproule, if you're reading this, we can think of a certain







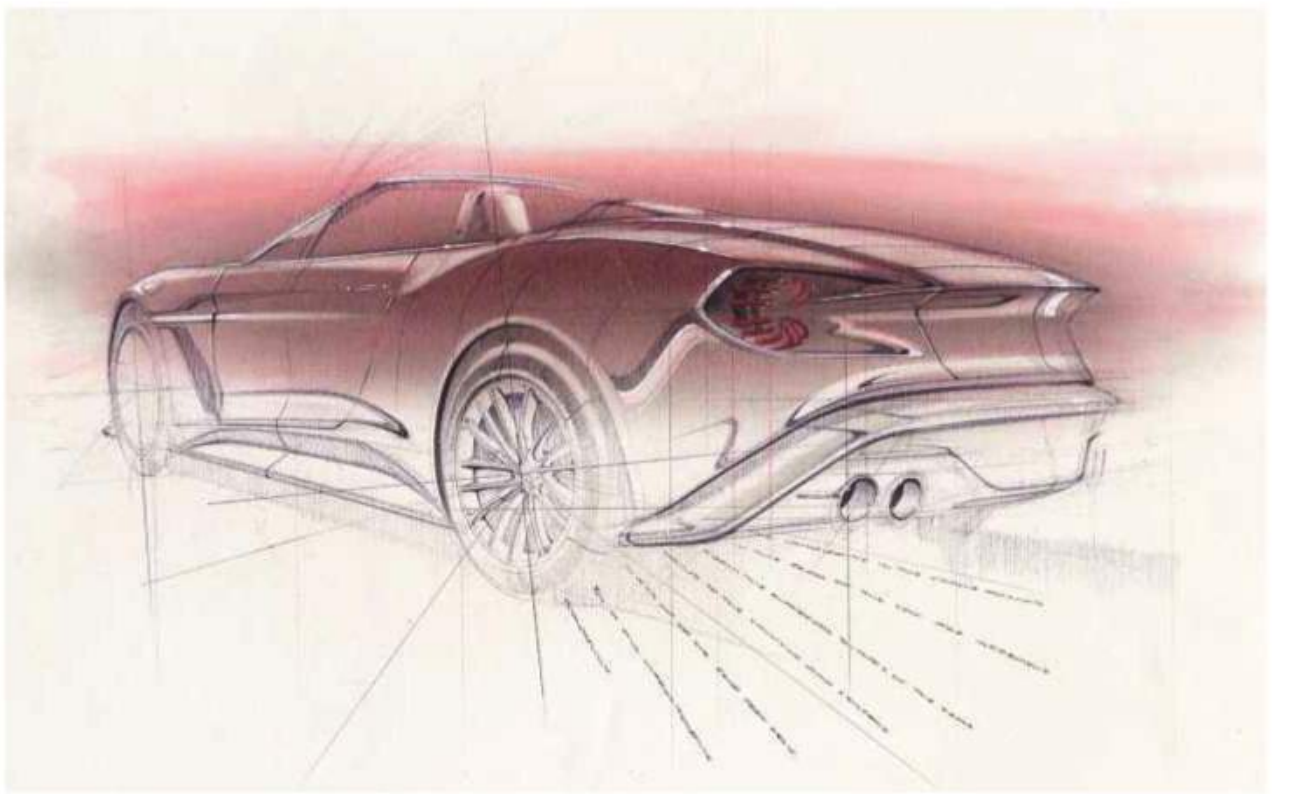
‘I’M CONSCIOUS THAT IT’S NOT NORMAL FOR SOMEONE TO BE SAT HERE, CLUTTERING THE PLACE UP’

Adrian Newey-designed hypercar that would lend itself perfectly to that kind of treatment...

And of the things beyond his pad and pens? ‘Well, there have been some unexpected benefits to being AiR. For instance, I had a ride up the Goodwood hill in a DB11 AMR with one of Aston’s test drivers. That was fabulous. Andy Palmer also very kindly loaned me a DB11 for a weekend shortly after my mum died. It was a tough time, but the car really lifted my spirits. It was especially poignant as mum was so proud of me working with Aston Martin.

‘I’m very conscious that it’s not normal for someone to be here sat on the floor cluttering the place up, but people have got used to me and often stop and chat. I’ll draw the sketches here, but tend to add the colour at home. It’s a messy and time-consuming process so I’m not sure people would be quite so friendly and understanding if I filled the entire atrium with paper, pastels and talcum powder!

‘In all seriousness, this place is somewhere I’ve long looked up to as something very special. I’m hugely indebted to them for taking this strange, bearded, scribbling vicar under their wing and inviting me in.’



From the top
Sketching the V600 Vantage, as featured in this issue, surrounded by French Curves, and (above) bold lines of a Vanquish Zagato Roadster

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1962 ASTON MARTIN DB4 GT ZAGATO RECREATION

A stunning example presented in black pearl with soft tan leather. An original matching numbers DB4 was used as a donor car for this recreation project which included fitting a twin plug head engine upgraded to 4.7 spec and took over four years to complete by marque experts Spray-tec, Bodylines and R.S. Williams. A comprehensive history file accompanies the car with extensive restoration details and photos.

1963 ASTON MARTIN DB4 GT RECREATION

An original matching numbers DB4 Series V Vantage was used as the donor car for this DB4GT recreation project. The work was carried out over a 4 year period by marque experts Spray-tec, Bodylines and R.S. Williams and included fitting the correct twin plug head engine upgraded to 4.7 spec. Presented in black pearl with soft tan leather this is a stunning example and a wonderful driver. A comprehensive history file accompanies the car with extensive restoration details and photos.

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LIGHT

Aston Martin is set to take on Ferrari, McLaren and Lamborghini with a brace of new, mid-engined, radically designed and lightweight supercars

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **IMAGES** ASTON MARTIN


SPEED

HARD to keep up, isn't it? With Aston Martin's ambition, that is. It was always part of the fabled Second Century Plan for Aston to become a true Ferrari rival with a mid-engined product portfolio to match, but the 2019 Geneva show was the first time we've actually been able to see quite what that Second Century vision looks like.

As we know, the patriarch of Aston's mid-engined family is the jaw-dropping Valkyrie, the first running prototype of which was also proudly on display in Geneva. Unsurprisingly, its influence could clearly be seen in seen in Project 003 and the Vanquish Vision Concept.

Project 003, or 'Son of Valkyrie' as many have nicknamed it, is another limited-run all-carbon hypercar – 500 will be built – but it is being sold through the dealership network rather than exclusively via Aston's direct-from-factory VIP Sales operation, as per Valkyrie.

There are few technical details, but it's understood 003 will use an all-new turbo V6 petrol engine, while there's speculation about hybrid power. There's more detail on construction and aerodynamics. As with Valkyrie, 003 has a pronounced front keel and large rear diffuser defining the underfloor aero package. Aerodynamic demands also result in a Valkyrie-like form to the upper surfaces, but new lamp shapes at the front and rear give 003 its own identity. In fact, while the lamp graphics are unique, the internals are taken directly from Valkyrie because they are incredibly light – all four units totalling less than the weight of one DB11 headlamp!

Active aerodynamic systems are combined with morphing aerodynamic surfaces – where the body surface can literally change shape – so the 003 doesn't have a large fixed rear wing. The active aero is one of three main areas of trickle-down technology from Valkyrie to 003, the others being active suspension and electrical systems that are heavily influenced – but not directly carried over – from the Valkyrie.

As with the bodywork, 003's chassis tub is made from carbonfibre. But compared with Valkyrie it features a larger cockpit to fulfil the brief for greater concessions to usability and comfort. Also, instead of the Valkyrie's petal-shaped portals, the 003 has LMP1-style doors that open forwards, taking a section of roof with them for easier access. To create more separation between driver and passenger, the centre console has been widened, while luggage space is provided via a deck behind the seats. There will also be stowage for oddments such as a wallet or mobile phone.

The cockpit is the first sight of Aston Martin's new 'apex ergonomics' design and materials philosophy, aimed at reducing visual clutter while at the same time creating a dynamic and stimulating driving environment. Focusing primarily on perfectly aligning the centre of the driver's back with the steering wheel and pedals, it also creates a 'widescreen' zone with a wraparound band featuring recessed vertical gills, through which are delivered audio, ventilation and ambient lighting, superseding the traditional placement of individual air vents and speakers.

Left and below
Project 003 is the so-called ‘son of Valkyrie’, a strictly limited-editon all-carbon hypercar, but more habitable than Adrian Newey’s no-compromise masterpiece; easier access to cabin, too

Project 003: the rivals

IF THE 003 HAD APPEARED a few years ago, its natural rivals would have been the so-called ‘Holy Trinity’ of McLaren P1, Porsche 918 Spyder and LaFerrari. Of the trio it’s the LaFerrari (above left) that Aston most desires to be compared with, though environmental pressures and technological progress dictate that the 003 will be powered by a turbocharged V6, and not a wailing V12. The big question hangs on whether it will be hybrid. The smart money suggests it will, as the P1, 918 and LaFerrari all featured hybrid powertrains, as will their successors. Unless, of course, McLaren or Porsche makes its next hypercar an EV…

McLaren is still a relative newcomer to the scene, but its prolific output has seen the Woking marque make a big impact across the mid-engined supercar and hypercar sectors. More recently, it has also shown a preparedness to go to extremes. First with the brutally functional, downforce-laden Senna and then with the Speedtail (above right); a remarkable 1036bhp petrol-electric hybrid that combines the F1’s famous three-seater cockpit with swooping, elongated lines for a projected top speed of 250mph.

Just 106 will be built – the same number of units as the revered F1 – and all have been sold in advance. Asking price? ‘At least’ £1.75m, plus taxes. Development is well underway, with production scheduled for late this year and first customer deliveries in early 2020. That price and rarity makes it a more natural rival to Valkyrie, but, as the Speedtail’s skillset promises to be very different, it’s the effect it has on the hypercar landscape and what it does for the McLaren brand that make it significant for Aston Martin and 003.

VANQUISH. It's good to hear that name again, isn't it? Especially since, of the two new mid-engined machines, it's actually the Vanquish Vision Concept that's the more significant, because it previews Aston Martin's entry into the series-production supercar market. One traditionally defined and dominated by Ferrari.

Vanquish is the car that will spearhead Aston Martin's assault on the historic Italian brand's heartland – territory the British company knows intimately thanks to the recruitment of senior ex-Ferrari personnel, including Max Szwaj, now AML's chief technical officer. Of all the projects to absolutely nail if you used to clock-in at Maranello, we'd wager Vanquish is the one with most pride at stake.

Styling-wise, although the Vanquish's 'Vision Concept' billing suggests some wild flight of fancy, word on the street says it's actually more representative of how the production car will look than you might imagine. That's good news in our book, for it shows that a mid-engined Aston can possess the curves and classic beauty for which the brand is known and loved, while moving the game on.

Chatting to Miles Nurnberger, Aston Martin's director of design, he concurs with, then elaborates on, that layman's assessment: 'It has a more

Right and below
New Vanquish will be Aston's series-production flagship, designed to take on Ferrari's 488 successor. Unlike 003 and Valkyrie, its main structure will be bonded aluminium rather than carbonfibre

'Vanquish is the car that will spearhead Aston's assault on Ferrari's heartland'

Vanquish: the rivals

IF YOU'RE SERIOUS about building mid-engined supercars you have to tackle Ferrari head-on. That's a truly formidable challenge, even for Ferrari's age-old adversary Lamborghini, which enjoys a half-century of mid-engined heritage, prodigious VW Group resources and a pre-eminent position as the maker of poster cars for successive generations of pubescent car fans.

That Aston Martin would position itself as a worthy rival to Ferrari was never in doubt. That it would do so with an aluminium-tubbed car is perhaps more of a surprise, given Valkyrie and 003 are both crafted from carbonfibre. Yet, as both the Ferrari 488 (above left) and Lamborghini Huracán (right) feature aluminium chassis, it remains the class norm. Indeed, of the main players only McLaren has committed to an all-carbon family of cars, a decision motivated by the need for economies of scale and streamlined manufacturing at start-up. The production Vanquish will emerge after Ferrari's 488 replacement – the 588 – which was also due to be shown at this year's Geneva show. Built on an all-new platform, the new Ferrari will still retain a V8, but there is also talk of a V6, which could see the revival of the Dino name.

Lamborghini's model cycle is longer than most. With the Huracán having just had a mid-life facelift, it will be around until at least 2021. After that, Lamborghini has hinted at hybridisation across its range, so expect a naturally aspirated V10 boosted by batteries. Meanwhile, McLaren's twin-turbo V8-powered 570S looks likely to be replaced by a twin-turbo V6 hybrid in 2020. Vanquish clearly has a fight on its hands.

From the top
New 'Track Performance Pack' announced for road-going editions of the Valkyrie. Below: mid-engined family will eventually comprise (from left) Valkyrie, track-only Valkyrie AMR Pro, 003 and Vanquish

seductive and less technical appearance than Valkyrie and 003, but I think it's still extreme in some of its visual gestures, such as the clamshell front fender, which has openings so you can see through onto the tyre. There's less of the "negative space" that defines the look of the Valkyrie and 003, so it's a prettier car. Purposely so, as it's designed to thrive primarily on the road rather than chasing lap-times on a race track. This has allowed us to make it less provocative and more classical in its look. Its beauty comes from a shift in emphasis from the aggressive, function-driven surfaces of Valkyrie and 003 to more flowing and sensuous, yet still athletic forms.'

Unlike the Valkyrie and 003, the production Vanquish will be built around a bonded aluminium structure – a decision that highlights Aston's versatility and preparedness to apply the best and most appropriate technologies for any given project. Given the world-class knowledge of bonded aluminium that Aston has accrued in the 18 years since the mk1 Vanquish first entered production, there is logic and integrity in seeking to build the very best aluminium tub. Especially if the alternative would be committing to an all-carbon mid-engined strategy that would see the Vanquish built around a dumbed-down, built-to-a-price and designed-for-production-efficiency tub that would have nothing in common with either Valkyrie or 003.

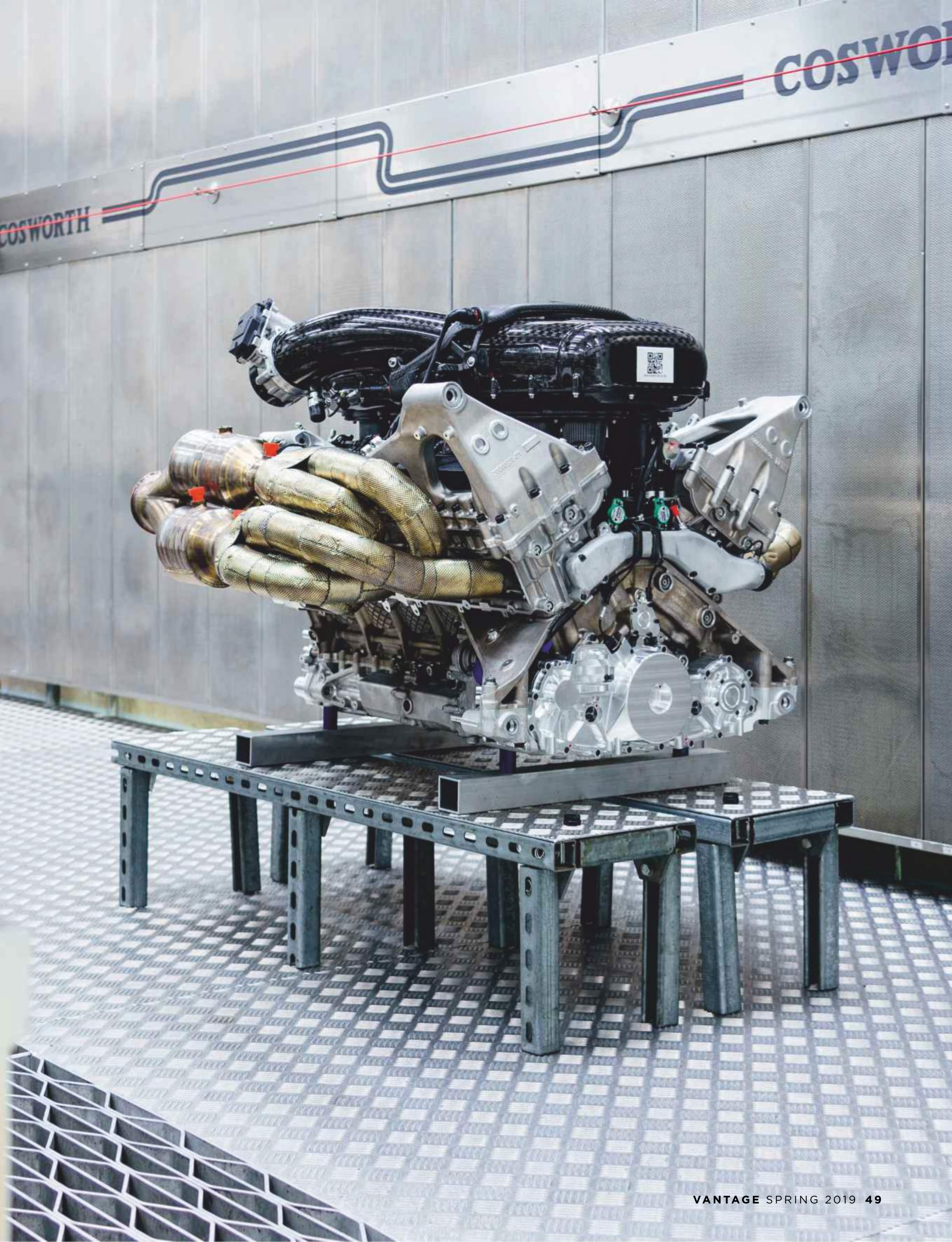
Tub aside, technical details are sparse, with Aston remaining tight-lipped on both 003 and Vanquish. However one piece of really big news is confirmation that both cars will feature different versions of the same all-new 'TM01' turbocharged V6 petrol engine, which takes its initials from Aston Martin's revered chief engineer, Tadek Marek. There's no official word on hybridisation, but it's widely acknowledged that the supercar's short-to-mid-term survival rests on the introduction of petrol-electric powertrain technology, as it's the only way to deliver the required performance while keeping emissions palatable.

What's easy to forget is that well before seeing the 003 and Vanquish enter production we have the immediate prospect of the first development prototype Valkyries taking to real roads and test tracks. Aston recently announced an AMR Track Performance Pack, which includes a suite of non-road-legal components that Aston says improves lap-times over a standard Valkyrie by up to eight per cent, depending on the circuit. The pack includes a new high-downforce front clamshell and an entire set of secondary external body panels. The suspension has an even more track-orientated set-up, while a track-only titanium brake package and new forged magnesium wheels with detachable carbonfibre aero covers are also included. Price? Circa £400k.

WILD AT HEART

The ultimate road-going hypercar deserves the ultimate engine – and for the Valkyrie that means a 1000bhp naturally aspirated V12. We take a closer look

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **PHOTOGRAPHY** ASTON MARTIN


COSWORTH

1-7-2-8-3-9-6-12-5-11-4-10. No, this isn't some kind of Enigma-like cypher. Nor is it next week's winning Lotto numbers. However, if you happen to have a drop or two of petrol in your veins you'll know it to be something far more exciting, for it represents the sinus rhythm of the Valkyrie's beating heart.

The firing order for what promises to be the greatest road-legal internal combustion engine ever made is one of the more arcane collections of numbers attached to this already legendary Cosworth-built V12. Dig into its vital stats and ever more extraordinary numbers tumble forth, each one more remarkable than the last.

Displacing 6.5 litres, the 65-degree V12 sets exceptional new standards for maximum rpm and specific output, with a certified peak power output of 1000bhp (or 153.8bhp per litre) at a mind-blowing 10,500rpm, with a rev limit set at 11,100rpm: numbers unprecedented for a naturally aspirated, emissions-compliant road car engine. Peak torque is 546lb ft. And don't forget that these outputs are just for the ICE (Internal Combustion Engine) and will be further boosted by the Valkyrie's battery-hybrid system, details of which will be revealed later in the development programme. Whatever it yields, the Valkyrie is sure to exceed the magic 1:1 power-to-weight ratio. That's to say 1bhp for every kilo of mass.

For road-car context, the McLaren F1's revered 'S70/2' 6.1-litre V12 developed 627bhp at 7400rpm and was rev-limited to 7500rpm, while the Ferrari 812 Superfast's rabid 6.5-litre V12 – currently the world's most powerful naturally aspirated road-legal production engine – gives 789bhp at 8500rpm. Each is as fine an example of the V12 petrol engine as there has ever been in a road car, yet the Valkyrie's motor appears poised to render them diesel-like in their outputs and appetite for revs.

Adrian Newey is rightly revered for his genius and feared for his exacting and utterly uncompromising work ethic. You don't achieve his unsurpassed track record in F1 by being anything other than a stickler, but his fearsome reputation belies a man with a genuine passion for the things that matter. So, while he's renowned for pursuing weight savings with unrelenting zeal, he has always been emphatic that the Valkyrie would have a large-capacity, naturally aspirated V12 engine, for only such a motor would deliver the sound quality, emotion and kudos that a car with such epoch-making aspirations demands.

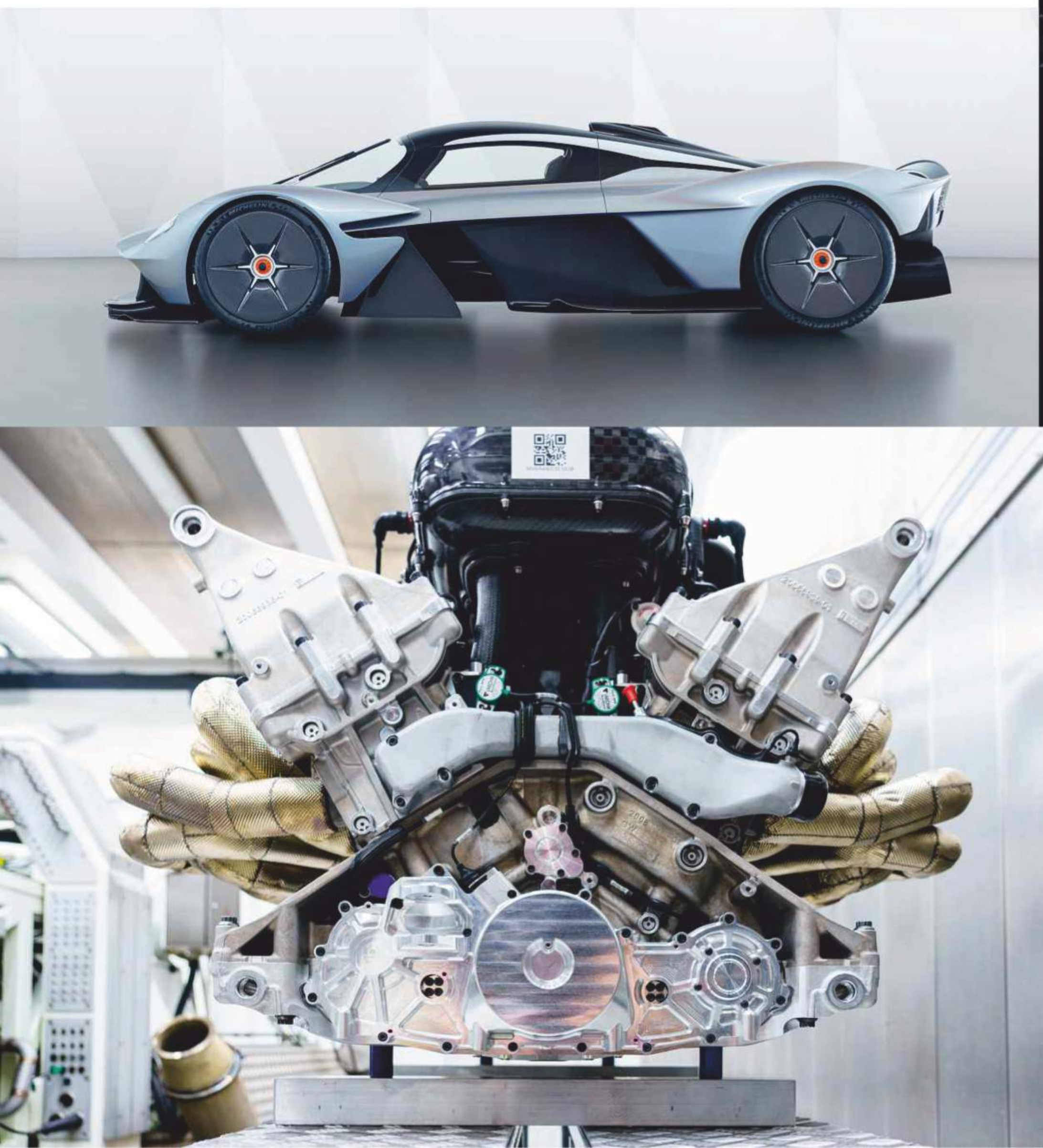
Of course, it wouldn't be any old V12. Indeed Newey's brief to Cosworth was brutally simple: build a naturally aspirated V12 engine fit for the greatest driver's car of the modern era. As with all 'simple' things, once the specifics of power, weight and packaging, together with the less sexy but equally onerous emissions compliance and durability were considered, delivering to this brief would require every last scrap of Cosworth's experience and resolve.

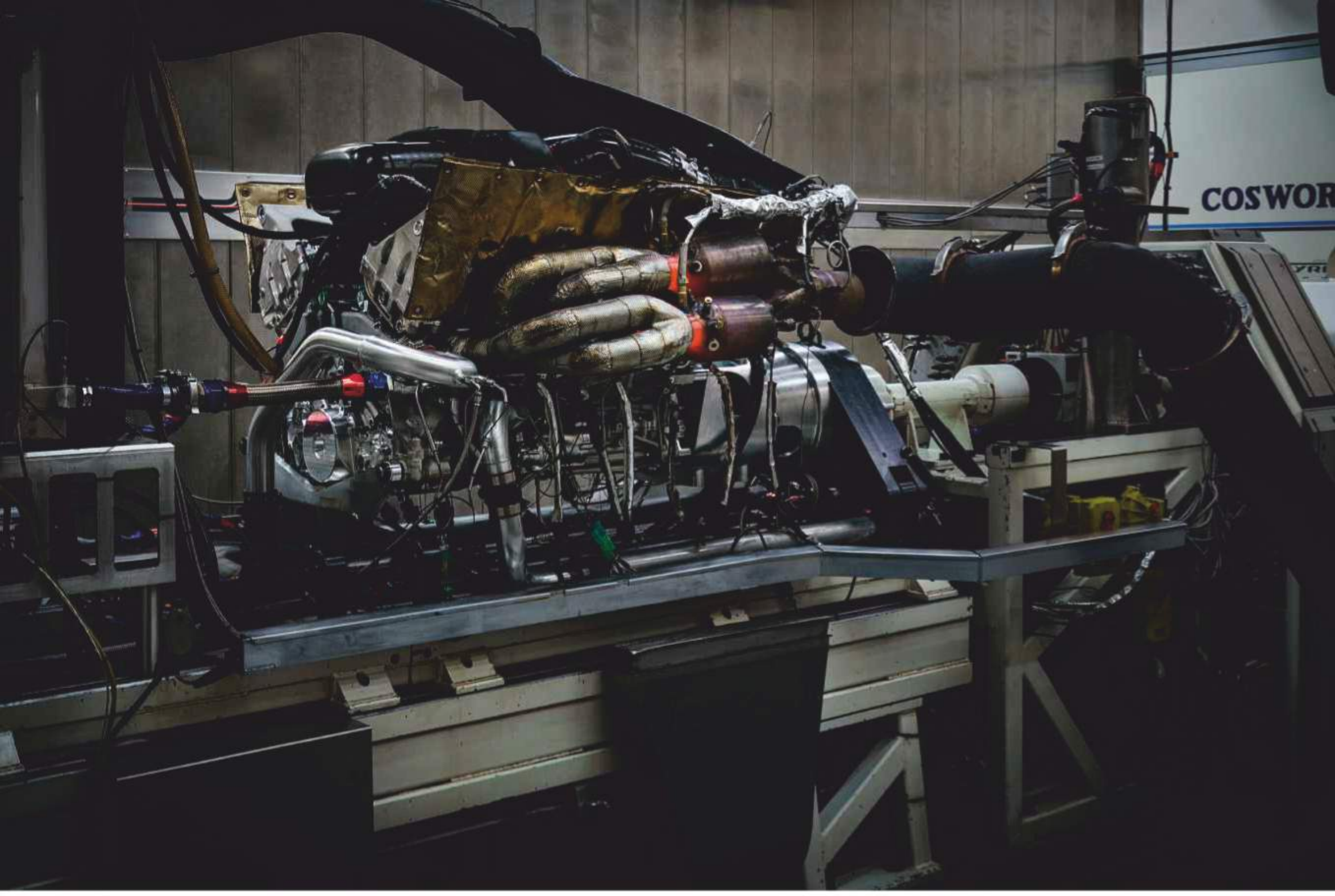
And that's saying something, for Cosworth has been designing and building exceptional race and road engines for six decades. Based in Northampton, England, the company is best known for its extraordinary record of success in Formula 1, with a tally of 176 Grand Prix wins as an engine supplier to countless F1 teams. Its DFV engine is a legend – the single most

'Delivering to Newey's brief would require every last scrap of Cosworth's experience and resolve'

Right and below
Aston Martin's name sits proudly on the carbonfibre plenum; this bespoke 6.5-litre V12 engine has been developed exclusively for the Valkyrie and built by Cosworth, using all its F1 know-how. No road-car engine comes close to its 1000bhp without the aid of forced induction

'The entirely bespoke engine weighs 206kg. That's around half the weight of a regular, series-production Aston V12'





Above
Exhausts glowing red on the engine dyno at Cosworth's Northamptonshire HQ, where the big V12 recorded 1000bhp at 10,500rpm

successful racing engine of all time, with 155 Grand Prix wins accrued over more than 20 years. More recently, Cosworth's 'CA' 2.4-litre V8, which made its F1 debut in 2006, revved to a remarkable 20,000rpm – the highest-revving engine ever to compete in F1.

For obvious reasons, saving weight was of utmost importance in the Valkyrie engine's design and development. It was particularly challenging because Newey wished to follow the well-established motorsport practice of making the V12 a stressed member of the chassis. Virtually unheard-of in a road car, it required the engine mounts to be integrated into the cam covers with the engine then attached directly to the carbonfibre tub by just four bolts.

According to Cosworth, achieving the necessary strength of these cam covers while not exceeding Newey's stringent weight targets was the single biggest challenge in the entire project, consuming a mind-boggling two man-years in analysis time alone.

Aside from the major castings – block, cylinder heads, sump and those structural cam covers – the majority of the engine's internal components are machined from solid material. Though weight was very much the enemy, the programme actively avoided use of extreme alloys that are so new that their material properties over time are unproven. It's okay to push the outer limits in an F1 application, but it would have been too great a risk in a project where the intended life of the engine is 100,000km, with oil changes every 5000-6000km.

Instead, Cosworth turned to ultra-high-grade aerospace alloys, with titanium used for the conrods and F1-spec pistons. Not only does this allow the use of material with ideal properties, but the ultra-fine machining process – all handled in-house at Cosworth's Northampton HQ – means greater consistency, with all components optimised for minimum mass, maximum strength and long-term durability.

Newey originally set an all-up weight of 200kg for the engine – a task that clearly still haunts those most closely involved with the project. Three years later the entirely bespoke engine weighs 206kg without exhausts. That's around half the weight of a regular, series-production Aston V12. More impressively, according to Cosworth, one of its last-generation F1 engines (those made prior to minimum weight limits being imposed by the FIA) weighed 97kg. If scaled-up to a swept volume equivalent to the Valkyrie's 6.5 litres, that pure race engine would weigh 210kg.

Despite the F1-style approach, there have been some concessions to the Valkyrie being a road car. For example the 11,100rpm red line has required the use of gear drive for the camshafts and oil pump, as chain drive is not used in any road car capable of revving beyond 9000rpm. Chains could be used, but to safely hit the high notes would require double chains and sprockets, which would mean unwanted weight. Gears provided a more efficient solution, but posed tremendous NVH (Noise Vibration Harshness) challenges, so the auxiliary drive gears were positioned away from the cockpit at the back of the engine.

Packaging is another term you hear all the time in F1 circles, and with good reason, for Grand Prix cars are shrink-wrapped like a sous vide steak. The Valkyrie has been designed with the same philosophy, but with its even more extreme underbody aerodynamics and a two-seat cockpit there's even less space to play with. As a consequence, literally every millimetre of clearance is hard won. Cosworth has played its part in this 4/3rds packaging challenge, lightly machining away areas on the back of the cam covers to provide vital clearance for the cooling radiators. Similarly, nothing could be attached anywhere near the bottom of the engine's V, as Newey regarded the two venturi tunnels as sacred space that could not be compromised in any way.

Right
The engine will be bolted directly onto the Valkyrie's carbon tub, so the cam covers had to be strong enough to incorporate the engine mounts

Specification

ENGINE Naturally aspirated V12, 6.5 litres (plus battery-hybrid system) **MAX POWER** 1000bhp @ 10,500rpm (plus c130bhp) **MAX TORQUE** 546lb ft @ 7000rpm **TRANSMISSION** Seven-speed automated gearbox, rear-wheel drive, traction control, stability system **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, inboard pushrod-operated spring/damper units **BRAKES** Vented carbon-ceramic discs **WHEELS** 9.5 x 20in front, 11.5 x 21in rear, magnesium alloy **TYRES** 265/35 R20 front, 325/30 R21 rear, Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 **WEIGHT** c1130kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** c1010bhp/ton **0-60MPH** c2.5sec (est) **TOP SPEED** c250mph (est)

Cosworth's dyno cells will wail to the cry of this remarkable engine for a while yet, as the development programme still has a way to run. A pair of engines has completed punishing, 220-hour durability tests – in which the motors are repeatedly subjected to a regimen designed to simulate certain race tracks and put the engine under every imaginable load – and further prototype engines are being tested for performance and calibration.

Once in production – probably towards the end of 2019 – each engine will be meticulously hand-assembled in Cosworth's pristine facility by its most experienced ex-F1 personnel. This painstaking process will take an estimated three man-weeks to complete. Then, once built, each engine will be fully run-in and performance-tested in Cosworth's test cells prior to being installed in the cars.

There's always something slightly harsh and unrealistic about the sound of an engine working to its limits in a test cell, but, even in these characterless confines, the scream of the Valkyrie's V12 is otherworldly. Its speed of response is synaptic, each downshift and throttle-blip executed with near-zero inertia and switch-like immediacy. But that's as nothing compared with the shriek as it works through one of the higher gears and builds to its piercing 11,100rpm crescendo.

True to Newey's wishes, it's the closest thing you'll hear to one of the much-loved and sorely missed V12 or V10 F1 engines of the 1990s and 2000s. A true symphony of suck-squeeze-bang-blow. If indeed it proves to be the apex of road-legal naturally aspirated internal combustion, what Cosworth has created for the Valkyrie will echo in eternity.

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POWER SURGE

Twenty years ago, the DB7 Vantage became the first production Aston Martin to be powered by a V12 engine. We drive an early example on some of the test routes that helped make it great

WORDS ANDREW FRANKEL | **PHOTOGRAPHY** TIM ANDREW

History has a strange and, at times, frustrating ability to gloss over the truth, especially when it gets in the way of a conveniently simple narrative. Marie Antoinette never suggested anyone ate cake, Einstein did not flunk maths at school and the evidence for Hitler being uni-testicular is mixed at best. Likewise, the DB7 is not the car that saved Aston Martin.

Hell of a thing to say, I know, but the truth is not so clear cut. Yes, the DB7's role was crucial to the company's survival because without it Ford would have shut the doors at once; but it was another car, the DB7 Vantage you see here, that did far more to convince Ford that Aston Martin was worthy of long term investment.

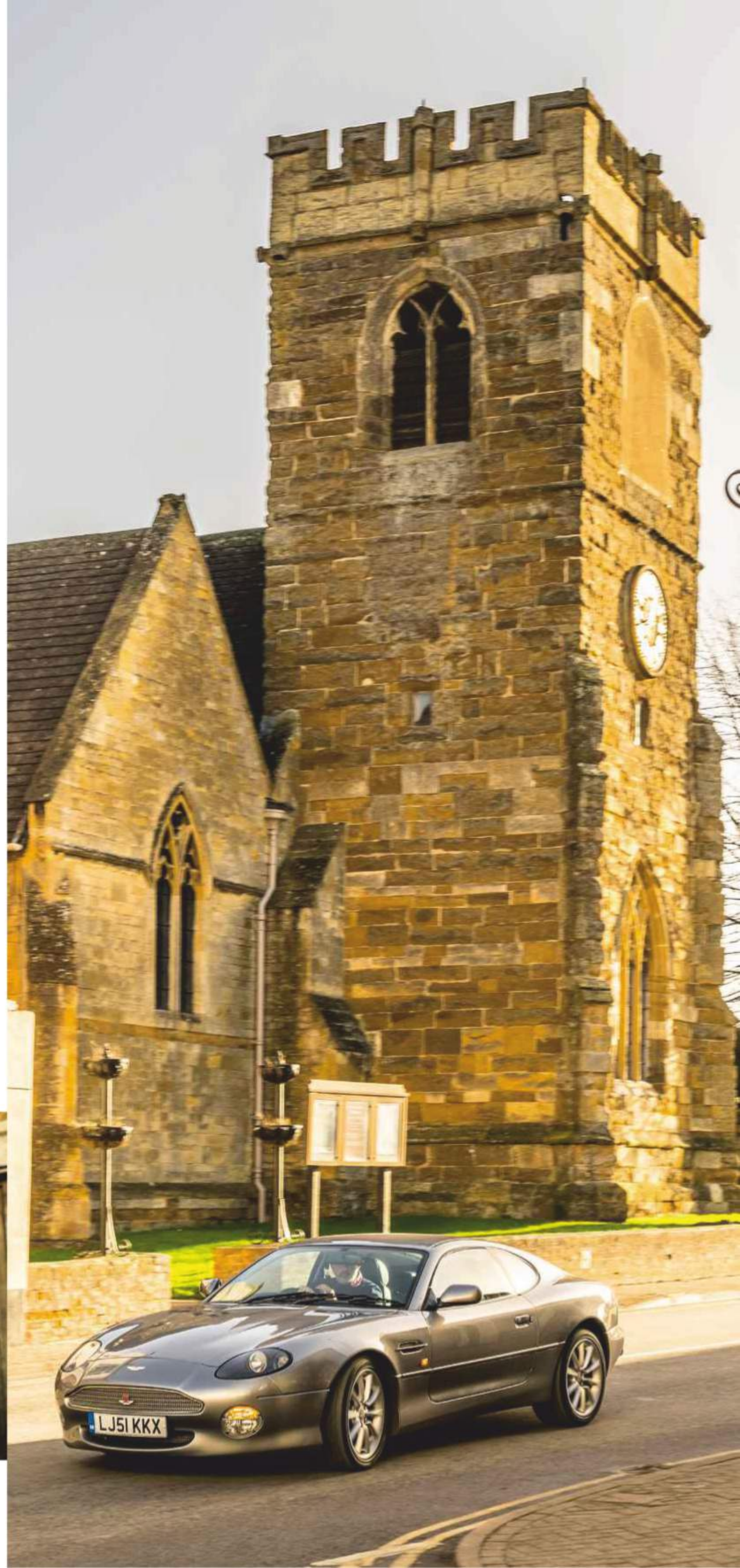
Semantics? Not at all. Another fact that's been lost to most over time is that the DB7 Vantage was anything but a DB7 with a V12 engine. And it wasn't just that the car was comprehensively re-engineered, the far more significant point was who was doing the engineering. Until recently I always presumed TWR – Tom Walkinshaw Racing – was responsible for the Vantage in the same way it had been responsible for the DB7 itself. Not so. Twenty years after its launch, it's time to take a drive.

But before we do, let's have a quick look at where the car actually came from with the help of the man who knows best. Today David King is in charge of Aston Martin's special projects – cars like the Valkyrie – but in the mid 1990s he was a Jaguar man who went to Aston Martin in 1995 on a career development secondment and never went back. His job was to see what step, if any, the DB7 should be making next.

'The DB7 was a good car, especially given where it had come from,' he says, referring to its veiled but well-known XJS origins, 'but TWR was spread too thin. When I went down there they used to move people from the Volvo office into the Aston office to make it look busy…'

And King confirms Aston Martin was by no means out of intensive care at the time, despite the critical acclaim and, by Aston's modest standards, sales success of the DB7. 'There were plenty at Ford who wanted to get rid of it because it was a distraction.' He cites Jim Padilla, who would go on to be Ford's COO, and Jac Nasser, then head of Ford's car division, as the men who kept the faith. 'The problem was Aston had lost all its engineering ability, which is why TWR did the DB7 in the first place. But Padilla saw that if Aston was to have any kind of future, those skills would need to be recaptured. And that's what we did with the DB7 Vantage. Although it was built in Bloxham, TWR had nothing to do with its engineering. It was entirely an Aston Martin project.'

King knew this car was far more important than the Vantage badge on its tail, and that there might not be another chance. So the team decided to go for broke. 'We wanted a car that moved Aston Martin towards supercar territory,



Left and above
Ambling through the Oxfordshire village of Bloxham, south west of Banbury, where the DB7 Vantage and its six-cylinder predecessor were built, and (above) heading out onto the local roads where the engineering team continually evaluated the new powertrain and the Vantage's uprated chassis

which meant more than adding power; it needed proper cooling, Brembo brakes, the whole package.'

But the engine came first. Obviously Jaguar's extant but ageing V12 would fit into an engine bay very little changed from that of an XJS, and Tom Walkinshaw had already put a highly tuned Jaguar V12 into a DB7 to show Aston Martin what could be done. But the decision to bring the project in-house had already been made. 'We looked at all sorts of engines – Jaguar's 4-litre six, Ford V8s and so on, but in the summer of '96 I was asked to do a package study to see if Ford's Duratec V12 could be made to fit.' It was not simply a question of planting one big V12 where another had been: the Jaguar engine had narrow, two-valve cylinder heads, while the Ford motor's four-valve head spilled over into the chassis rails.

It was a big job, especially as the V12 needed re-engineering to productionise what was still a concept engine, but with the impetus provided early in 1997 by the arrival at the Aston Martin helm of Bob Dover, King and his team got the mandate they needed to do the job the way they wanted. Two years later the car was on sale.

Visually, it was subtly but unmistakeably updated. A deeper nose, expertly crafted by Ian Callum, provided not just an additional sense of purpose but, crucially, sufficient additional airflow to allow the V12 to breathe and be cooled. The chassis was stiffened around the transmission tunnel and the suspension altered in both geometry and spring rate to improve the handling with as little penalty to ride quality as possible. A six-speed Getrag gearbox replaced the old five-speed unit while Brembo did indeed provide additional stopping power, increasing front disc diameter from 285mm to 355mm, important for a car whose top speed had just risen from 157mph to 185mph… Wider rear wheels with fatter tyres completed the picture.

This car, on sale from the Runnymede Motor Company in the Thames Valley at time of writing, must be one of the nicest examples of those you'd actually choose to use. The 52,000 miles on its clock is, to me, pretty ideal – not nearly enough to worry about durability issues, more than enough to reassure it's not spent most of the century on axle stands. Resplendent in Skye Silver, it looks fabulous: in retrospect Callum didn't like the Vantage's look as much as his original DB7, but I think it's every bit its equal.

The inside never did live up to that promise thanks to a fairly shambolic hotchpotch of undisguised Ford switchgear. Two decades ago it grated and it still does today. But the cabin in general and the seats, swathed in Connolly hide, in particular have stood up remarkably well to the passage of time. Despite their skeleton staff, it seems TWR built them to last.

I'd forgotten that the driving position is odd for someone over 6ft. No lack of legroom here, unlike in the DB9 that replaced it, but I'm sitting higher than I'd like with what little is left of my hair brushing the headlining. The seats are electric but clearly off-the-peg items, because the buttons that control them are so close to the sills I have to squash my fingers to use them.

It has a key you slot into an ignition barrel – imagine that! – then spoils it by still giving you a red button to press, but with no ECU to prevent accidental starter motor engagement at speed. I remember my then very young daughter giving one a prod all those years ago, eliciting some fairly hellish noises from the engine bay, but mercifully no apparent damage.

The V12 gives a woof of approval, pre-programmed as a sort of automotive amuse bouche for your ears, before settling down to an impeccably even idle. But what's exciting me more is the gear lever sprouting proud of the centre console. These manual cars are rare: I am told just 229 manual right-hand-drive Vantage coupés were built, compared with 4658 Vantages of all descriptions, of which who knows how many have survived.

Not sure why, but I'm surprised by the heaviness of the clutch. But first slots home easily, the pedal connects the gearbox to the engine smoothly and soon we are rolling. On King's recommendation, we're on the A4035 from Banbury to Shipston-on-Stour, not just because it passes within a few miles of the Bloxham factory where this car was built, but because it was one of the key roads on which he and his team honed the Vantage. It's a fabulous stretch – light on traffic, long on quick corners,

Above and right
Interior was, of necessity, largely an amalgam of parts from the Ford empire of the time, but it was well put-together – this example wears its two decades of use very lightly. The exterior – a subtle reworking of the original six-cylinder car by Ian Callum – looks as beautiful today as it ever did

Specification

ENGINE V12, 5935cc
MAX POWER 420bhp @ 6000rpm
MAX TORQUE 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
TRANSMISSION Six-speed manual (five-speed auto optional), rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential
SUSPENSION Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar
STEERING Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted
BRAKES Vented discs, 355mm front, 330mm rear, ABS
WHEELS 8Jx18in front, 9Jx18in rear, aluminium alloy
TYRES 245/40 ZR18 front, 265/35 ZR18 rear
WEIGHT 1770kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** 241bhp/ton
0-60MPH 4.9sec **TOP SPEED** 185mph (claimed)
PRICE NEW £92,500 in 1999 (£155,000 in today's money)
VALUES TODAY £30,000-£40,000

'This is one of the key roads on which the team honed the Vantage'

‘Don’t chuck it into corners, but let it flow instead. It’s an approach the Vantage never stops rewarding’

changeable surfaces, unpredictable cambers and tightening radii. A chassis developer's dream.

We go slowly for a while, because the car's already telling me things I need to remember. Like how involving is the sensibly geared hydraulic steering compared to the artificial 'feel' of modern electric systems. But I'm reminded, too, of how far cars have advanced structurally. Some of the bones beneath the Vantage's body date back to the XJS's formative years in the early '70s, and while David and his team did good and vital work providing additional rigidity, I'd be surprised if it had half the torsional stiffness of a DB11, so it shudders a little and is less precise than a modern car.

And, of course, the engine is of a kind that no longer exists. Almost all high performance engines are turbocharged today, and those few that are not squeeze well over 100bhp from each litre of capacity, necessitating power delivered in the upper reaches of the rev-range. The DB7's V12 is not like this. Given the engine displaces over 5.9 litres, its 420bhp is languid to the point of indolence and, indeed, has a lower specific output than had the Ford 3-litre V6 Duratec (in the Mondeo ST220 of the era), from which it was loosely derived. Funny to consider that in the V600 also tested in this issue, the engine makes almost 600bhp with no change of capacity.

Not that the engine's laid-back approach is in any way bad, just different. Indeed it rather suits the character of a car that, despite its supercar aspirations, remains very much a touring machine. It means that instead of concentrating all its firepower into a narrow little band near the red line, the Vantage hauls quite hard whatever it says on the clock. So you can slot third gear at literally walking pace, sit back and savour its sweet and cultured voice for as long as you dare, and because the engine runs to 7000rpm and over 100mph in that gear, you'll likely run out of nerves or road long before it runs out of revs. Indeed you could tackle the A4035 without changing gear with very little effect on your point-to-point pace.

But where would be the fun in that? Despite its age and diverse parentage, the Vantage doesn't feel like a car cobbled together. It feels coherent in its consistently heavy control weights, and composed up to what would today be considered quite modest limits. It's not difficult to ask questions the chassis is disinclined to answer but nor is there any hardship keeping within the bounds of what it's happy to do. So listen to that engine, use the slow but slick-shifting gearbox and don't chuck it into corners, but let it flow instead. It is an approach the Vantage never stops rewarding.

If it has a problem, it is simply one of time. It's too old to have a hope of matching modern standards, yet too young to earn automatic forgiveness for the things it can't do. It is not yet quaint. Which is probably why it is also not yet expensive. You can buy a DB7 Vantage for under £30,000 – though I'd look hard before you do – and even this beautiful car with its rare manual

Left and below
DB7 Vantage feels right at home on these roads around Banbury – as well it might. The big V12 engine has a laid-back demeanour that suits the car well. The old Bloxham factory building still exists (below) on the fittingly named Vantage Business Park

Left and below
Parked outside what used to be visitor reception at Bloxham, and below, snapshots taken on a factory visit when production was in full flow

gearbox can be yours for under £40,000. And that is a hell of a lot of great-looking, fine-driving, V12 Aston Martin for the money.

Back in 1999 it went on sale for £92,500, a mere £7500 more than the standard DB7, which rather predictably it killed stone dead. 'We created the illusion that you could still buy a six-cylinder DB7,' says King, 'but in reality it died pretty much immediately.'

And with good reason. The DB7 Vantage became the most successful Aston to date, effortlessly outstripping its parent. 'Suddenly we went from selling 600 cars a year to 1200, and that was critical, not just for the company's finances, but how we were perceived by Ford.' Instead of closing the company, Ford decided to invest in it. Massively. A brand new factory was built, the DB9 was commissioned and the rest is history. I'm not saying the DB7 Vantage was the only reason Ford took the plunge, but its role in convincing Ford's top brass that there was life left in the brand is not to be underestimated. Drive one and you'll see why.

With thanks to the Runnymede Motor Company, where this DB7 Vantage is currently for sale.

The way it was – DB7 Vantage production at Bloxham

MY WIFE AND I WERE visiting London from the US in 1999 and walking in Mayfair we spotted an Aston Martin DB7 parked on the street. Astons were much rarer in 1999 than they are now and this was the first DB7 we had ever seen. We thought it was the most beautiful car, and when we returned to California we went to an Aston dealer, test drove a DB7 and placed an order.

I was back in the UK on business in 2000, a few months before our car was due, and was able to arrange a visit to the factory in Bloxham. The cars were manually pushed from station to station. The engines were delivered fully assembled but the rest of the car was hand-assembled.

I remember there was something secret going on because we were told that they had to clear out some special parts before our visit. Much later I figured out they must have been working on the Vanquish, which had not been seen at that point. The Aston marketing person who was our guide was very friendly and I was allowed to take plenty of photos, some of them shown here. It was a great day.

Mike Gulett

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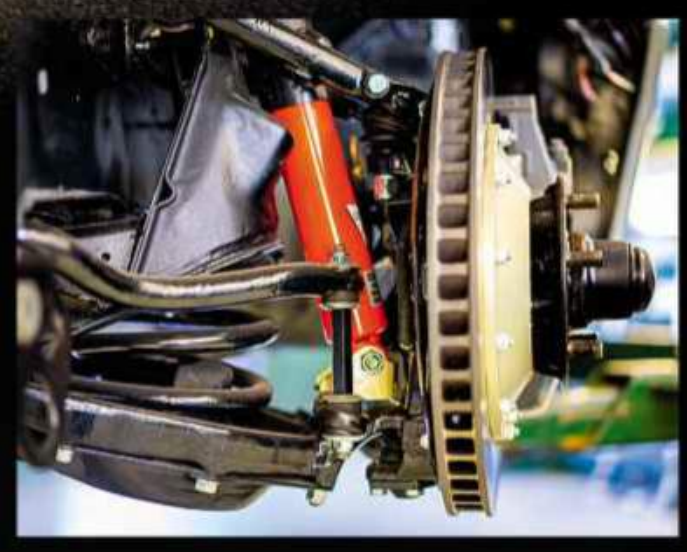

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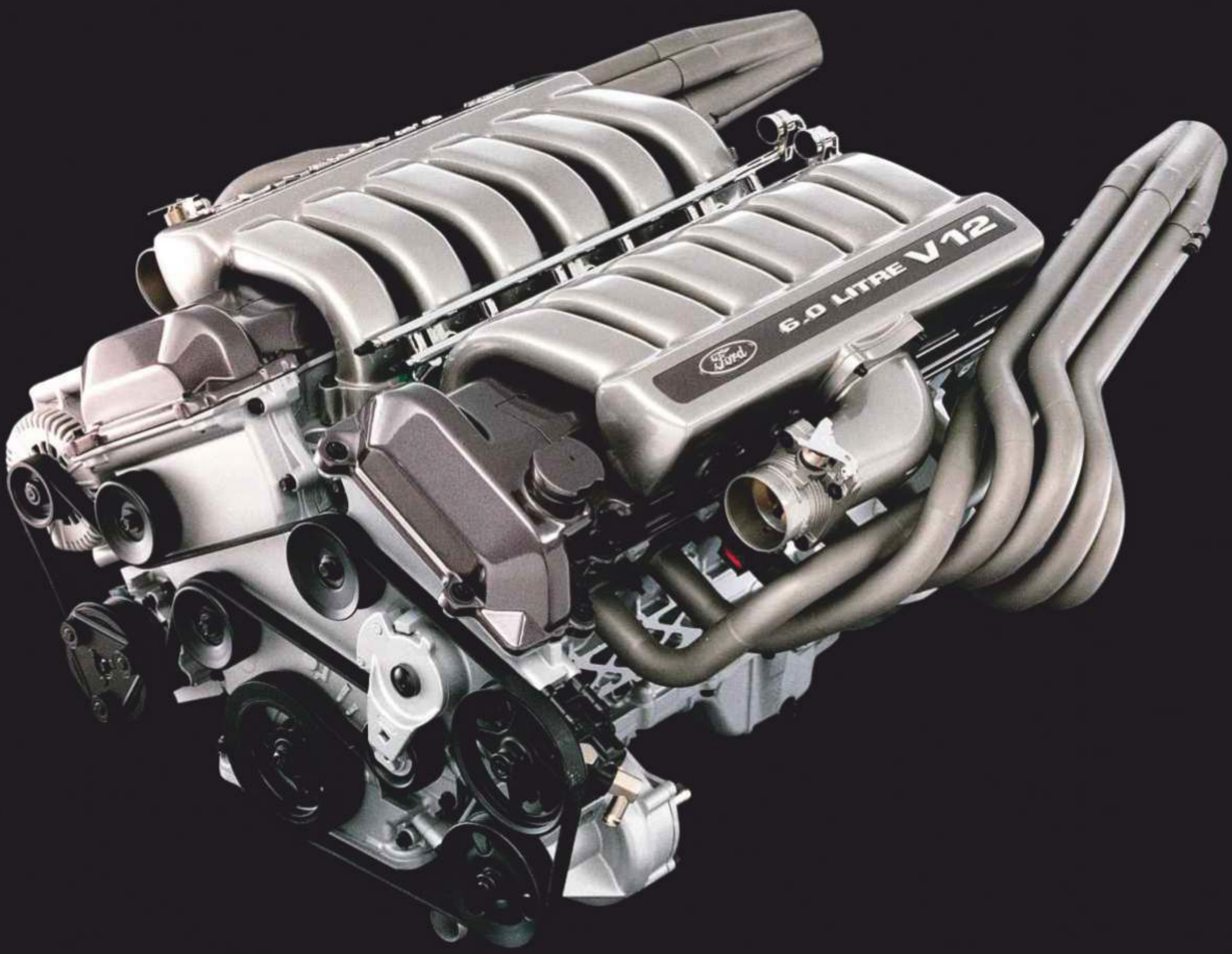


HEART DONATION

Aston's brilliant and long-lived V12 started life in a Ford concept car. We trace its origins and development

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | **PHOTOGRAPHY** FORD

It's over a quarter of a century since the idea of a V12 in a modern product of Aston Martin Lagonda was mooted, and 23 years since the first modern V12 was actually built. Yet that engine's architecture has stayed recognisable right up to the present day, although currently it powers only the Rapide S saloon, having been ousted, for the DB11 and the new DBS, by a new twin-turbo V12. And even the new forced-induction motor retains the old one's bore centres, and indeed the bore diameter itself.

Clearly, the 5.9-litre V12's days are numbered, but what a career the engine known as AE28 has had. It is popularly supposed to have started life in the prototype engineering department as two Ford Mondeo Duratec V6s welded together but, appealing as that story is, the truth is a little more sophisticated, as we shall see.

Speculation about an Aston V12 was first prompted by 1993's Lagonda Vignale concept car, for which such an engine was mooted. The original grey show car actually had an American Ford V8 under its bonnet, as did a second example in blue, but two years later Aston Martin Works created a proper, road-driveable version designated DP2138. It was smaller than the originals, and this third, Works-built Vignale (later sold to the Sultan of Brunei) did indeed have a V12 engine. But it came from Jaguar.

That then-partner in Ford's Premier Automotive Group also provided the engine for Aston Martin Lagonda's next V12-powered possibility, an enhanced version of 1994's DB7. This project was entirely a Tom Walkinshaw creation, making use of his TWR organisation's racing experience with Jaguar's V12 engine and created as a pitch to Ford for possible production. But Ford had other ideas because, in the background, what had been speculated upon in 1993 was now taking shape.

It emerged in 1996 as the Ford Indigo (a play on Indy, Go) concept car, a bare-bones two-seater reminiscent of a much-enlarged Ariel Atom but with (scissor) doors. And yes, its engine showed every sign of being a doubled-up Duratec, having the same bore and stroke dimensions as the 3-litre version of the V6 as used in various US Fords and, later, in Europe's Mondeo ST220.

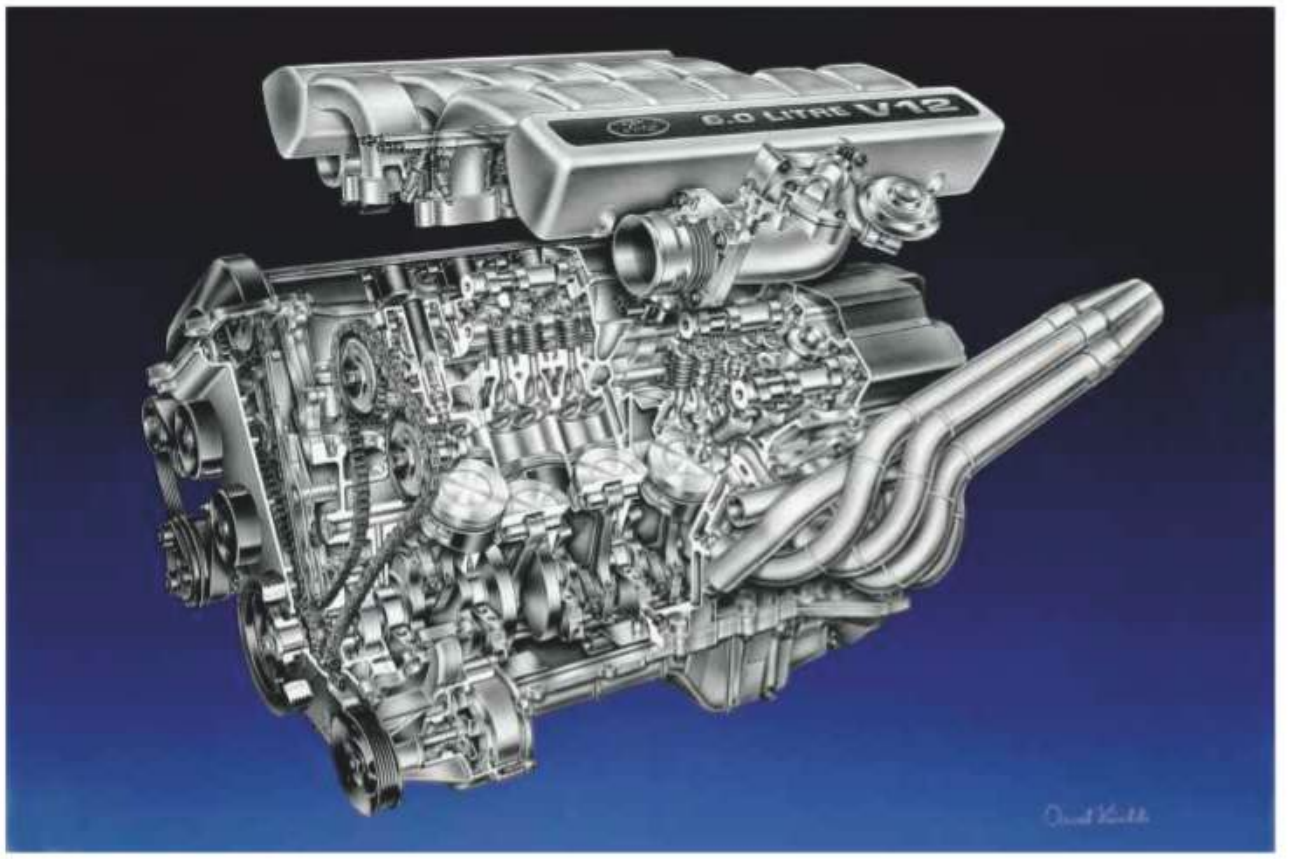
It was Ford's head of advanced engines at Dearborn, Jim Clarke, who came up with the idea and made it work. He kept the Duratec's pistons, piston rings and connecting rods, plus the valves, their springs and the finger followers that actuate them. He also kept the Duratec's camshaft profiles, combustion chamber shape and exhaust port design. There were some design changes, though, beyond the obvious doubling-up. The block, cast by Cosworth in the UK, as were the cylinder heads, was extended below the crankshaft centre line to put back the torsional stiffness lost to the lengthening, and the inlet ports were fed by double-spray injectors so each cylinder's pair of ports got its own squirts from a single injector. The ports themselves were modified to promote 'tumble' of the incoming mix of fuel and air, too, for more complete and therefore cleaner combustion.

But it still had those finger followers by which each head's pair of overhead camshafts actuated the four valves per cylinder, even while, elsewhere in the PAG empire, the Duratec itself was getting exoticised. That was Jaguar's doing, intended to distance its version of the V6 from Ford's and to make it technically, well, sexier. Its new heads gained direct-acting bucket tappets under the pair of camshafts, the sort of system you would expect to find in an Aston Martin, but this sophistication was denied to the V12 (with one exception, as we'll discover later). Did it matter? In practical terms, not much. It's more a matter of pedigree.

So Ford's V12 duly appeared in the back of the Indigo, revealed to the world at the Detroit Auto Show of January 1996. It made quite a statement, highlighting Ford's relationship with high-technology motorsport (Cosworth, and the aluminium-shelled carbonfibre tub by racing-car manufacturer Reynard) and promising a proper race-car-for-the-road experience. What looked like uncovered wheels actually wore tyre-hugging mudguards in black, and the high front spoiler incorporated legally required lighting apart from the headlights, which were built into the door mirrors. The style was the work of Claude Lobo, also responsible for, among others, the somewhat controversial restyle of the Ford Scorpio.

Two Indigos were made: the show car, later sold and reportedly destroyed, and a proper running prototype. And then the engine found itself with a new role, involving Aston Martin.

Given the robustness and ease of manufacture of its V6 progenitor, Clarke's V12 would make



an obvious and cost-effective production power unit for the next stage of Aston Martin's rebirth, albeit to TWR's dismay. Ford had always envisaged using the V12 in the DB7 at some point, and once Bob Dover had come on board as Aston Martin's chairman in 1997 he brought the plan up to full speed ready for the launch of the DB7 Vantage in 1999.

To set the scene for the V12's arrival in the showrooms, and more crucially to point the way to Aston's post-DB7 future, the company – still sub-contracting to TWR – created Project Vantage, Ian Callum's design for what became the Vanquish but initially a concept car to be revealed at the 1998 Detroit show. Under its sleek snout was the new V12, from the batch of experimental engines created as the Indigo idea took shape. Now its true purpose was clear.

'It was,' said Ian Minards in a *Vantage* interview back in 2013, 'a marriage made in heaven.' Minards was an Aston engineer at the time, becoming product development director before leaving to join Dyson's electric car project in 2016, and he quickly got to work on making the V12-engined DB7 Vantage a production reality. It retained the 3-litre Duratec's 89mm bore and 79.5mm stroke, giving the capacity of 5935cc from which the unit – with the one exception alluded to earlier – has never deviated.

As, at the time, ultimately a Ford product bound by Ford engineering rules, the V12 had to conform to durability criteria more appropriate to a regularly abused diesel Transit than to a precious supercar. And Aston Martin added some more of its own, just to be sure.

One test involved cycling between maximum torque and maximum power for three minutes, pausing, doing it again, and continuing for 150 hours all at full throttle. Another consisted of 440 hours of cold starts and light loads, yet another – the 'thermal shock test' – required a cold start with the coolant at minus 10degC and full engine speed 15sec later. There was also the 20,000km Nürburgring test. It's hard to imagine a 1960s Marek straight-six surviving that lot.

Above and opposite
Speculation about a V12-engined Aston had been gathering pace in the mid-90s – and then in 1996 parent company Ford unveiled its Indigo concept with its 5.9-litre mid-mounted V12 engine. Nothing became of the Indigo, but the engine, Ford top brass quickly realised, would be perfect for Aston

Left and above
The power behind AML's flagship cars for two decades, and (above) the first Aston it actually appeared in, 1998's Project Vantage concept car, which became the Vanquish

The durability comes partly from simplicity, as a look inside the V12 in its original, pre-2012 form reveals. The block, pressure sand-cast in aluminium by the Coscast process, has cast iron cylinder liners pressed into place and the seven main-bearing caps are also of iron. The angle between the banks is 60 degrees, the best angle for a V12 or V6 if optimum balance is the aim. (Ferrari, for example, sacrifices this a little with a wider 65-degree angle, which makes room for freer-flowing intake tracts.) Opposing cylinders share a common crankpin, unlike in a V6.

The camshafts are driven by a single, broad chain for each bank, and have their separate lobes pressed onto the shaft rather than being cast or forged as one entity. These lobes press a finger follower between the follower's pivot post at one end and the valve at the other, and oil pressure within the post ensures the follower is always in contact with the cam lobe – achieving the same quietness, efficiency and lack of need for adjustment as a conventional hydraulic tappet.

Engines for the DB7 and Vanquish were built by Cosworth in Northampton, but, with the arrival of the DB9, engine production moved in 2004 to Niehl, near Cologne, in a factory set up within the Ford complex. Naturally the engine evolved over the years, through the DB9, the DBS, later cars named Vanquish or Virage, plus the Rapide and the V12 Vantage. Throttle bodies grew larger, breathing freer, and electronic management cleverer to compensate for the increasing emissions-reduction burden, and power gradually climbed from the DB7 Vantage's 420bhp to the 510bhp of the DBS and V12 Vantage – with a 520bhp blip for the original Vanquish S along the way.

Then, in 2012, the engine got a makeover, with a new block casting above a shallower and wider sump, revised heads and variable timing for all four camshafts. Power rose to 565bhp for the new Vanquish and V12 Vantage S, before the final 592bhp hurrah in the Vanquish S and limited-run Vantage V600, which you can read all about on the following pages.

Now the engine is available only in the Rapide S and the end is imminent. In its time, though, it has been persuaded to deliver up to 625bhp for the DBR9 racing cars, finally breaching 100bhp per litre, and it also underwent a radical rethink for that exception alluded to earlier: the One-77.

For this extraordinary machine, a redesigned block had bores surfaced in plasma-sprayed iron and enlarged (by 5mm) to 94mm. The stroke was lengthened to 87.8mm to give a capacity of 7312cc, and other enhancements included dry-sump lubrication, new cylinder heads with diamond-like-carbon-coated bucket tappets, four throttle bodies instead of two, and 12 crankshaft counterweights instead of eight. The resulting 750bhp was a record at the time for a naturally aspirated road car's engine.

It still used indirect fuel injection, though, as does the new twin-turbo V12 introduced with the DB11. That's because direct injection produces more particulates, a newly significant downside to what until recently seemed a holy grail of increased efficiency. Known as AE31, the new unit has a shorter 67.9mm stroke to give a 5204cc capacity, but it shares its bore size with the AE28. It shares the Cologne-based production process, too, the factory run by Aston Martin itself since the separation from Ford – but still staffed by a Ford workforce.

The turbos are twin-scroll units to speed the spool-up time, and the engine management comes from Daimler-Benz. But the camshaft covers and the variable-timing actuators are carried over from the final AE28. So are those finger followers. After all, why change an idea that works so well?

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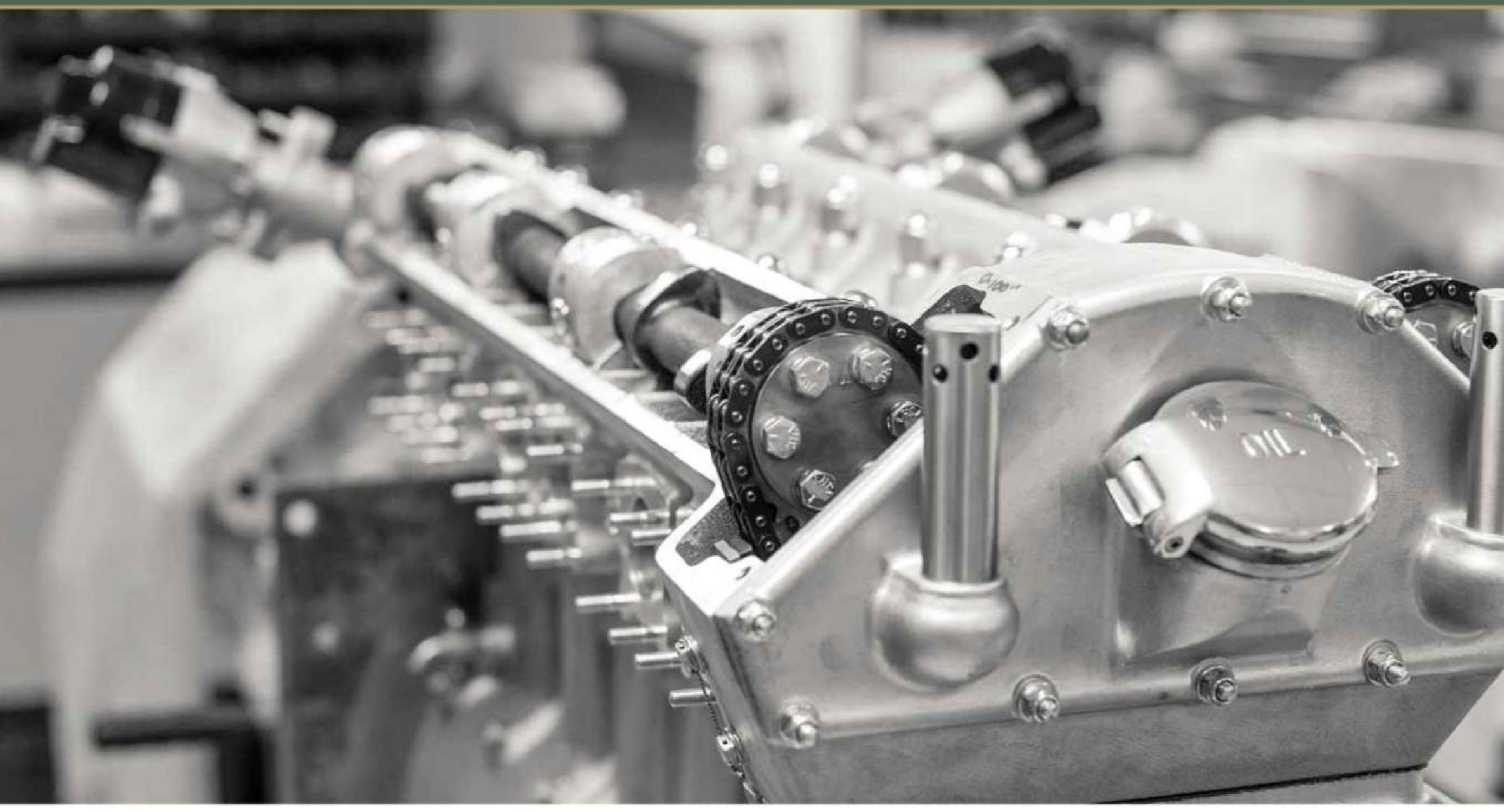

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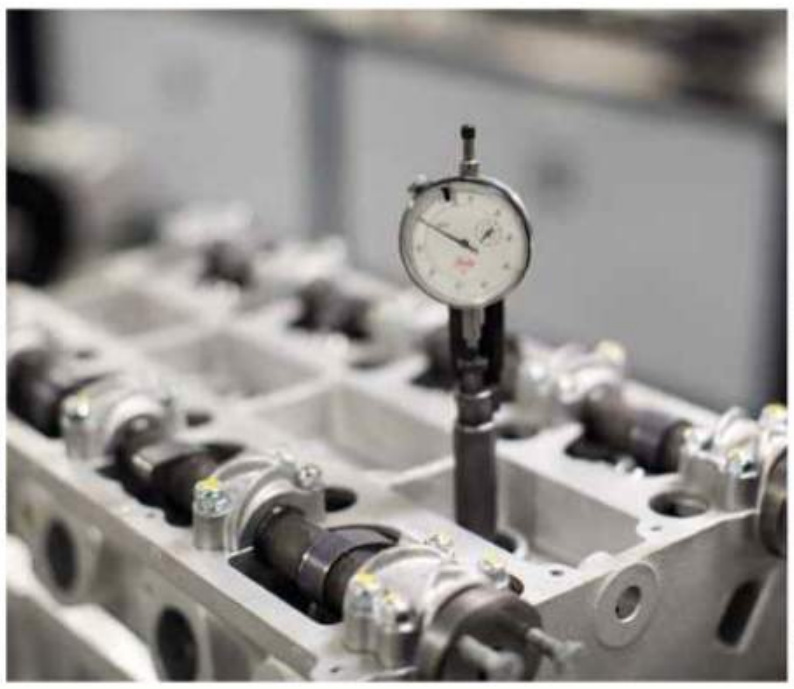

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PARTING SHOT

Codenamed Dreadnought, the V600 is a final salvo for the original Gaydon-era V12 Vantage. Talk about all guns blazing...

WORDS RICHARD MEADEN | **PHOTOGRAPHY** MATTHEW HOWELL

From the top
Unique carbonfibre bodywork includes prominent bonnet bulge; lightweight seats have unique perforations echoing those in the bonnet (right), which were in turn inspired by the DB10 created for James Bond. Whole car is full of bespoke touches, including carbon-faced instrument pack

Dreadnought. Quite the codename, isn't it? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, a dreadnought is 'a type of battleship introduced in the early 20th century, larger and faster than its predecessors and equipped entirely with large-calibre guns'. It also describes 'a fearless person'.

Both interpretations of this codename are entirely apt, for not only is the V12 Vantage V600 the biggest of big guns, harking back to Aston's greatest heavyweight of the late-20th century, it would never have come to be were it not for the singular vision of a brave and bold Aston Martin customer.

For privacy reasons he shall remain nameless, but we – and the thirteen other V600 customers – have a lot to thank him for. Why? Well, for starters it's highly unlikely that Aston Martin would have created this car of its own volition. Largely because the factory's attention was on launching the all-new turbocharged Vantage and not creating one last hurrah for the venerable model that was about to cease production.

Of course, that's the beauty of Q – the factory's bespoke commissions department – but it's also the wonder of Aston's most dedicated customers, for it is they who not only make these projects viable, but often conceive the idea in the first place. Dreadnought is just such a car.

Originally the dream of our aforementioned friend, when the full scope of his concept was revealed, Aston liked it so much they proposed making a limited run. The client agreed, even suggesting a Roadster version as well as the coupé he had commissioned. Total production? Seven of each.

The premise for the V600 is part-nostalgic and part-purist. Analogue is perhaps an adjective too far for a car with three-stage adaptive damping and stability control, but in an age when turbocharging and paddle-shift transmissions have almost entirely taken over, the prospect of a large-capacity naturally aspirated V12 engine mated to a manual transmission and shoehorned into a compact and devilishly handsome two-seater is more compelling than ever.

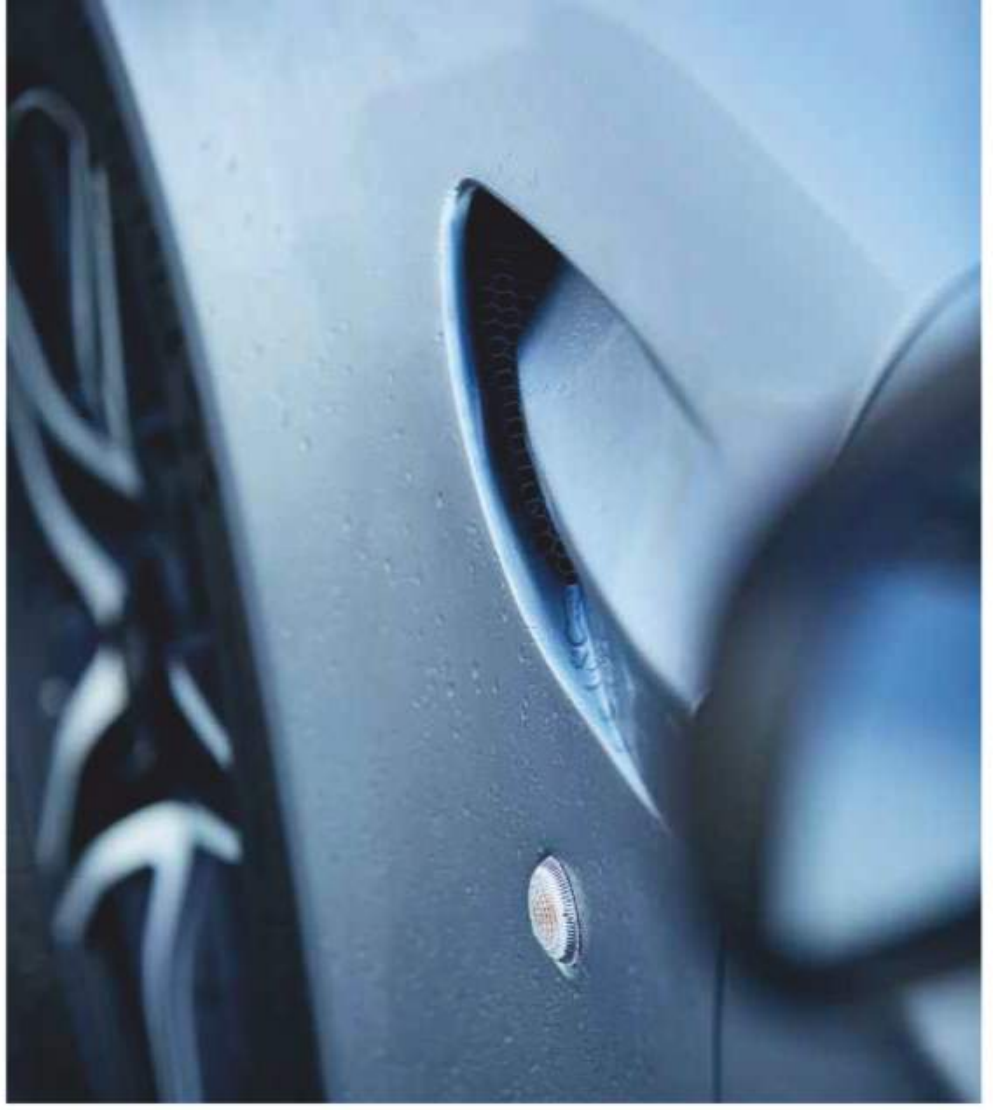
Perhaps the most concise way to describe the V600 is to say it's a manual and wingless Vantage GT12. That car was very much designed to ape the V12 Vantage GT3 racer – something it does very successfully in looks, but a little less so in deeds. The V600 may share much of its hardware, but its mission was not to be some track-inspired wannabe. Rather its aim was to work brilliantly as a road car, focus less on chasing lap times or outright point-to-point pace and instead offer an experience that immerses the driver completely in the process of operating the machine.

It's a formula inspired by Porsche's 991-generation 911 R – a car the V600's commissioning customer used as his blueprint – and an idea that resonates strongly with those who have become disillusioned by or disengaged from the relentless pursuit of performance, especially when it comes at the expense of road relevance. It also explains why many enthusiasts look to classic cars for their kicks.

This story should have happened last autumn, when the commissioning customer offered us the chance to drive with him at the Nürburgring during a pre-sign-off test. Diary clashes meant that didn't happen, then Christmas got in the way. We'd hoped to reconvene with him for this test, but we were thwarted yet again. Thankfully, while V600 owners are an elite bunch, they are far from elitist. So, thanks to the combined efforts of

Specification

ENGINE V12, 5935cc **MAX POWER** 592bhp @ 7000rpm **MAX TORQUE** 461lb ft @ 5500rpm **TRANSMISSION** Seven-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip diff, TC, DSC **SUSPENSION** Front and rear: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar **STEERING** Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted **BRAKES** Vented carbon-ceramic discs, 398mm front, 360mm rear, ABS, EBD **WHEELS** 9.5 x 19in front, 11.5 x 19in rear **TYRES** 265/35 ZR19 front, 325/30 ZR19 rear, Michelin Pilot Super Sport **WEIGHT** c1600kg **POWER/WEIGHT** c375bhp/ton **0-60MPH** c3.5sec **TOP SPEED** c205mph **PRICE** £1.2 million



AML and supplying dealer HWM, we instead managed to secure this beautiful silver-blue V600, which just so happens to be chassis #01.

We're heading for Helmsley in North Yorkshire. It's an old haunt for *Vantage* and the quintessential English market town, positioned on the edge of the North York Moors and blessed with breathtaking scenery and a network of fabulous roads that drape themselves across the sprawling landscape and could have been tailor-made for the V600.

Delivered in a covered trailer by the ever-helpful Hugh Hadland, by the time photographer Matt Howell and I arrive for our morning rendezvous the mighty machine has been unloaded and stands waiting us. It's a moment I've been waiting a long time for, and it doesn't disappoint.

Astons always have that knack of drawing in strangers like magnets, but I'm pretty certain the passing locals don't fully appreciate what they're looking at. Namely the absolute last hurrah for the original Gaydon-era Vantage, one of the rarest Aston Martin road cars ever made and, priced at £1.2 million, also one of the most expensive.

Yes, you read that correctly. £1.2 million. Closer to £1.4m if you wanted the Roadster. It's an extraordinary amount of money for a car that looks – at least to the casual observer – much like any other Vantage. That the GT12 sold for a starting price of £250,000 (probably closer to £300k with all the lightweight options) and was built in a strictly limited run of 100 cars only serves to further highlight the premium.

Objectively, then, the V600 is a very hard car to justify. Impossible, actually, if judged on price alone. It really is a money-no-object choice, but it's also a car that has a very particular appeal. And far from shouting about the owner's wealth, it is the epitome of Roosevelt's famous advice to 'speak softly and carry a big stick'. That also describes most of Aston's big bruisers and instinctively sits very well with us.

Standing very much in the subjective realm of Helmsley's market square, the V600 looks knee-knockingly fabulous. It's as familiar as an old friend, but in this guise it's perhaps that mate you haven't seen for a while who clearly discovered the gymnasium in your absence. The stance is broad and low, the absence of protruding wings and jutting splitters somehow accentuating the muscularity of the bodywork. Some 50mm wider than a regular Vantage, those GT12-derived panels are perfectly pumped, while the cinched sills and crisp crease along the flanks add further definition.

Get beyond the V600's physique and it's the details that draw you in. One of the nicest being the vent in the front wings, which nods to both the classic Aston side-strake and the scalloped vent that replaced it on the all-new Vantage. The bonnet perforations are another unique flourish and were taken from the DB10 Bond car, while the grille formed from hexagonal mesh that ripples like a sine-wave has a wonderfully mesmeric quality.

Left and above right
Tricky to explore the V600's full potential in these conditions – its Michelin Pilot Sports would prefer warmer, drier tarmac – but there's much to savour in its communicative chassis and wonderfully expressive V12 engine. Wing vent (above) makes visual connection to new-gen Vantage

‘THERE’S NO QUESTION THE V600 REQUIRES A

SERIOUS LEVEL OF DRIVING ABILITY TO MASTER’

From the top
Further bespoke touches include saddle-stitched leather satchels behind the seats; stability control can be deactivated if you're feeling brave; Unleashed on the North York Moors, the V600 proves a spectacular last hurrah for the Bez-era Vantage and very much to the liking of editor Meaden (right)

The rear-end is a little busier, but the functional stack of diffuser, quad exhausts and exposed carbon tailgate all add drama and give subtle clues to the V600's broader haunches. The centre-lock wheels are of a design unique to the V600, with the set fitted to this particular example further personalised with diamond-turned rims and spokes.

They are shod with Michelin Pilot Super Sports. A fine, fine tyre for high-powered sports cars, but not ideally suited to the wintry ambient temperatures and wet roads that Yorkshire is serving up today. All of which is food for thought as I depress the clutch, push the starter and wait for the lightly silenced 592bhp V12 to clear its throat. What's that saying about great power coming with great responsibility'?

The drive from Helmsley towards Hutton-le-Hole is tentative, but still wonderful. The compactness of the Vantage never fails to make an impression. Likewise the interior, which is simple and unfussy but coolly stylish. The large expanses of satin carbonfibre and additional leather trim embellished with decorative broguing to match the bonnet perforations create a perfect ambience.

The seven-speed manual transmission famously has a dog-leg first gear. This appeals to the old nostalgic in me, but I'm not a great fan of the shift pattern, as the double-H gate is ever-so-slightly skewed. Coupled with first not being where you expect it to be means you have to think your way around the 'box and be a little more deliberate than you'd wish. The shift quality itself is slick and nicely weighted, and with so much torque (461lb ft) you don't actually need all those gears. In fact, unless executing a hill-start, I find I can avoid 1st and pull away in 2nd, effectively turning the 'box into a conventional six-speed. Adapt and overcome.

Once up onto the moors, the V600 and I form a closer bond. There's a sense of latent energy that's intoxicating from the moment you squeeze the throttle, and it's this sense of what lies in reserve that comes to define the V600 experience. There's plenty to savour in everything it does – the satisfying weight to the controls, pliant-yet-controlled damping and potent but beautifully progressive brakes to name but three. It all gels brilliantly well.

For me, what's most compelling is the nuanced manner in which you can deploy the performance. Open the taps and it possesses a level of through-the-gears performance that genuinely widens your eyes and dries your mouth, but simply staying in a tall gear and stretching the elastic performance of this fabulously expressive engine delivers a different but no less enjoyable experience.

Unlike the car from which it takes its name, the 21st century V600 shines when you extend it. You need your wits about you – that's the point of this car after all – but it doesn't have the runaway-train sensation of the old twin-supercharged monster. It works with you and the road, upping its game as you dig deeper, but it comes with a deliciously giddy feeling of knowing there's a bit more performance than the car can use at any given moment. You squeeze the speed from it, rather than hammer it.

By investing in the driving experience, it somehow transcends the wild pace, pinpoint accuracy and unerring consistency of cars controlled by technology. There's no question the V600 requires a serious level of driving ability to master, but it doesn't rely on being driven to its – or your own – limit to deliver something truly special.

The Bez-era Vantage has been a pivotal player in Aston Martin's modern transformation. Not to mention one of the most consistently enjoyable, enduringly handsome and truly engaging drivers' cars we've seen so far this century. It deserved a proper farewell. In the shape of the V600, it received a veritable 21-gun salute. V

Above and below
From the original 380bhp 4.3-litre V8 Vantage to final 592bhp 5.9-litre V12-engined V600 is quite a journey, but for *Vantage* editor Meaden it brought him back to the same North Yorkshire roads on which he first tested Aston's then-new baby – for sister magazine *evo* – back in the summer of 2005

Where it all began

The same moorland roads also saw an early test of the original V8 Vantage, as the editor recalls

I CAME TO NORTH YORKSHIRE the very first time I drove the then-all-new V8 Vantage. It was an assignment for *Vantage*'s sister magazine, *evo*, and I can still recall the fizz of anticipation and excitement.

Its tight, chiselled shape was so good. And then there was the novelty of a new 'affordable' Aston. With a starting price of £79,995, not only was it the hottest thing Aston had offered in a generation but it brought the brand within reach of those who previously could but dream.

Naturally the *evo* test team wasted no time in putting the new baby Aston through its paces, with a 1000-mile, 36-hour, three-driver relay. Jethro Bovingdon collected the Vantage from Gaydon and drove it to Black Rock Sands in North Wales; then John Barker drove it through the night and over the Snake Pass to Helmsley, where I picked up the story with a 911 to provide a benchmark.

It still ranks as one of the best tests of an all-new car I've ever been a part of. And, as with the car, the verdict stands the test of time: 'What they're after [911 customers] is prestige and quality, big league performance and everyday usability: something the Porsche combines in one finely honed, competitively priced package. The reason 23,000 people end up buying a 911 every year is because, frankly, there's never been a viable alternative.

'It's these customers that Aston Martin has had in its crosshairs for the past four years, and it's these customers who will love the V8 Vantage. Love it for its exclusivity. Love it for its beautiful, sculptural shape. Love it for its potency, spirited voice and egalitarian handling. And, with some relief, love it for simply being the car we all hoped it would be.'

It tells you all you need to know about the relative might of Porsche and Aston Martin that after those heady days of reinvention and revival at Gaydon, while the former surged on to become one of the world's most admired, diversified and well-resourced sporting marques, Aston suffered badly during the recession. Thankfully a gradual upturn in the economy kept the lights on long enough for new CEO Andy Palmer to attract much-needed funding, which meant that the process of reinventing the product range was able to begin all over again.

Remarkably, throughout this time, the Vantage stood firm. Not just surviving but defiantly maturing into a car that ultimately turned ageing into an art form. As rivals (including the 911) became bigger and more reliant upon technology, the old-school purity of the Vantage saw it attain modern-classic status long before it went out of production.

The succession of late-life special series cars such as the GT8, GT12, AMR Pro and, yes, the V600 has seen Aston's 'affordable' baby become by far the most expensive car in the range, but this should not distract from the model's achievements. That by far the most successful model in the company's history should also be one of the very best is testament to what was happening at Gaydon during that brilliantly creative period, and the evergreen appeal of a car that was oh-so-right straight out of the box. V

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DESIGNS FOR LIFE

The original Vantage V600 was one of the Astons co-designed by John Heffernan – and it's ageing rather well. We meet him

WORDS ANDREW ENGLISH | **PHOTOGRAPHY** AMY SHORE

BRUSQUE MIGHT SOUND like a piece of toast floating in your soup, but it's a fair description of John Heffernan, car designer's car designer and the man who penned Aston Martin's 1988 Virage and 1990s Vantage models.

'I don't like "penned",' he growls softly. 'Journalists are always writing "this or that car was penned", as if it was just a few drawings and it just happened. In fact the design process is all about following the project through, working with the engineers; it's very involved.'

So not penned, then…

Not that Heffernan is a rude man. Not a bit of it, he's kind and welcoming, just slightly prickly, like a Jack Russell fished out of a tub of hair gel. His clipped diction is as precise as his trimmed beard and his steely eyes are level and expectant; possibly for a question a bit better than the one I've just asked. Me? I'm concentrating on not saying 'penned', or using a nickname we used to give Heffernan and his erstwhile design partner, Ken Greenley: Hefferlump and Greenlump.

Now in his early 70s, what a presence Heffernan must have been at the Royal College of Art's Automotive Design Unit, where in the mid-80s along with Peter Stevens he was a part-time tutor – Greenley taught there full-time. Founded in 1967, the RCA course was, and is, hugely influential. Graduates include: Martin Smith, ex of Audi and Ford; Ian Callum, Jaguar's design supremo and former head of design at Aston Martin; Gerry McGovern, head of design at Land Rover; Mark Adams, design chief at Opel; the list is long and glittery.

And then the Aston Martin job came along. As Heffernan recounts: 'Victor Gauntlett phoned up and said, "well, you've done a Bentley and you've done a Panther [Solo] and now I think it's time you did an Aston".'

This wasn't just an open-ended contract from Aston's mercurial boss, however, it was a competition and there was serious rivalry. 'Peter Horbury was one and Bill Towns,' he says. 'Then there was John Evans, an artist who

Left, below and far right
Heffernan talks our man English through his Aston days. One proposal for Virage featured Porsche lamps (below left), while clay was for an Escort Cosworth-based 'small Aston', pre-DB7. Black-and-white pic (far right) is of a young Heffernan in his GM days

used to work for us, and Richard Oakes.'

By this time Heffernan was an establishment car designer even though he came from a time when automotive design courses didn't exist.

'I went to the art school at Manchester,' he recalls. 'I was just 16 and a half, and did general courses for the first year, then you had to choose. I didn't even know industrial design existed as a subject, but this tutor said: "I think you'd be suited to this new course we're starting. It's called industrial design." I said: "Well the only trouble is I haven't got maths." And he replied: "Ah don't worry about it. We get by without it."

'Turned out there were just two of us on the course,' says Heffernan. 'The other guy was Allen Boothroyd, who became the designer of Meridian Hi-Fi. He's a great designer. I learned more off him than I did from the tutors.'

After a post-graduate course at Leicester College, Heffernan found a job with Vauxhall, which along with parent General Motors was a pioneer in car-design training. Heffernan spent six years with them. He shows us a very stylish black-and-white of his Final Show in the Detroit Arts Centre. He's in a very sharp suit…

'You know in those days we had to wear suits even to do airbrushing. And it wasn't just a suit; it was a dark suit and a light shirt. And I mean, those American designers; it was like that TV series *Mad Men*. The guys all wore amazing suits and ties, and the girls were called "Kelly Girls", tripping up and down the corridors in their stilettos. There's one story that one of the execs there was having an affair with one of the women and he two-timed her, so she came in and snipped his tie off with scissors in front of his whole office…'

It was at Vauxhall that Heffernan met his future collaborator, Greenley, but after six years it became clear to Heffernan that Vauxhall was losing out to Opel in design work, so he accepted an offer from Audi to join its design studio with Peter Birtwhistle, who ended up as head of Mazda design.

'I couldn't believe how the Audi engineers worked so closely [with design],' he says. 'And that showed right through the work and the ethic of the whole company. It was very much Bauhaus influence in terms of the way work was done and the attention to detail. You could see why the product was so good…'

After a period doing furniture design, airport vehicles and the short-lived but well-regarded Panther Solo, the Bentley job came up. Heffernan was torn in several directions. Jane Priestman (she was awarded an OBE in 1991), his design contact at British Airports Authority, had moved from there to become director of British Rail's architecture and design and invited him to submit designs for the new Eurostar trains. Heffernan, mindful of the time that car design would take, declined, but it's clear it still hurts to have had to turn the job down. Similarly, after the Bentley job, Rolls-Royce engineers recommended him to a head-hunting agency searching for a new head of design at BMW. 'It was a make-or-break moment, and I bottled out, basically, because we had a new child. Nowadays I wouldn't even think. I'd say: "I'm good."'

So Heffernan and Greenley designed what became known as Project 90, or the Black Rat; a small Bentley that appeared as a glassfibre mock-up at the 1984 Geneva show. It was a great idea even if Bentley owner Vickers didn't really want to fund it, but it did lead to a commission for the 1991 Bentley Continental R and its Azure drophead, both still track-stopping.

'Aesthetically, it worked quite well,' he says. 'We were lucky. They did the Continental R on temporary tooling; good for 500 vehicles. They had to renew it four times.'

At the same time Heffernan and Greenley had won the Aston competition (he shows us a red sketch with a very low bonnet line), so how did that work? 'They had a customer meeting,' says Heffernan, 'did a ballot thing, and the way Victor put it to me was: "We did it very democratically, but I decided it was going to be you."

'Obviously it was really exciting, but it wasn't an easy process,' he says, and goes on to list the issues: Virage was the first new Aston Martin design for many years; there was resentment at Newport Pagnell against outsiders; there were conflicts between the ergonomics, aerodynamics and design departments; there was unregulated access to the Computer Aided Design (CAD) files; oh, and budgets were tiny.


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GENERAL SPECIFICATION

'We were fighting to get things through,' he says, 'and they were under pressure to get a car out within two years. There was a lot of tension.'

Heffernan says there were always going to be three models: Virage, Vantage and Convertible. 'I wanted the Virage to be the smooth, stealth one, and the Vantage to be a brutal kind of thing.

'Then we ran into trouble with the wind tunnel. We got a fairly good coefficient of drag, but we only had one day in the tunnel at Southampton – it wasn't like Audi, which had 6000 wind tunnel hours on their cars. And I found it difficult to give way on aesthetic points for that low-lift coefficient of drag.

'Anyway, we all compromised, but they didn't want to do the automatic lift-up headlights and in the end we used the Audi 200 lamp. It always annoys me when journalists pick at small volume cars and say "name that part". Unless you've got millions behind you, you can't afford [not to use those parts]. The car business just runs away with money, it's impossible to have too much.'

Gauntlett ruled out a full-sized clay as too expensive and instead Aston took the quarter-sized model off to a block-making company to have patterns made. Heffernan was shocked when he saw it next.

'It was three months later, in solid hard wood and totally wrong; wrong roof height, wrong everything; I didn't even recognise it.'

Partial salvation came in the form of a former GM packaging expert Heffernan and Greenley brought in, who spotted that the front downward vision wouldn't pass Type Approval legislation so it had to be done again, this time with specialists Anglo Swedish, but even then the process wasn't easy.

I asked Ian Callum, who designed the next generation of Astons after Heffernan and Greenley (DB7 and Vanquish), what he thought of the Virage. 'Aye, well, it's a good design,' he said. 'I like it, but I've said to John, that tail seems rather high.'

Heffernan shoulders the criticism and explains that Aston Martin was new to CAD systems and 'there was a bit of indiscipline in how it was used. People could go into the system and change things around without reference to us. So aerodynamics just pushed the tail up by six inches. On a car body, even 10mm is a lot of material and makes a lot of difference.

'I'm a great details person,' he says, 'probably because of my industrial-design background, and I wasn't asked to do the Virage's details. In some areas, like the tail and around the

'With the Virage, they were under pressure to get a car out in two years. There was a lot of tension'

Above and right
Vantage mock-ups (above) and the final result in V600 form (right). Apparently the twin tail lamps were chairman Victor Gauntlett's idea, as was wood in the cabin; Heffernan and Greenley had wanted all-black

headlamps, stuff really wasn't done very well. I think we could have gone another ten per cent and made it into something really wonderful.'

The launch at the NEC motor show in 1988 was another possible pitfall. Heffernan laughs as he tells it. 'On the day of the show, my friend Geoff Lawson had done the Jaguar XJ220. That was a bit of a shock; you think you're gonna be the big star of the show, and…' Actually it did neither car any harm; most magazines gave the two equal billing. And Gauntlett liked it.

'I think they've done a super job,' he told Peter Dron of *Fast Lane* magazine. 'They've done what we asked them to – it's properly modern yet still clearly an Aston.'

'But it didn't really perform,' says Heffernan. 'Gauntlett said to me: "You've done your job well, John, but I'm afraid we should've got more performance out of it."'

It was the more powerful and purposeful Vantage model that Heffernan thinks most closely represents his and Greenley's vision for the Aston. Ian Callum agrees. 'It's a *tough* car,' he says, 'with a sort of bulldog toughness and I think the interior was very purposeful, too. That toughness certainly had a huge influence on me when Bob Dover asked me to do the Vanquish.'

RIGHT ON CUE, Rob Smith's V600 Vantage burbles into the courtyard outside Heffernan's Farnham apartment and we break to say hello and admire one of the 232 Vantage models, most of which are still extant. The supercharged car really was a complete reworking of the Virage; in fact only roof and doors were unchanged.

Heffernan walks round it, giving a running commentary: the way the lower skirt on the front air dam should have been made of flexible material, but costs precluded it. Inside, the Lincoln Town Car steering wheel (Smith's car has a replacement) was one of the few contributions from Aston's new owners, Ford. Heffernan says the interior was originally all black, but Gauntlett rejected that saying: 'My customers will not have a car without wood.'

The twin tail lamps were also apparently a Gauntlett suggestion and so was the grille. Heffernan explains that Greenley originally designed a more rounded grille, which was rejected by Gauntlett. 'When he saw this one, he said: "Now *that's* an Aston."'

'You know, in a way Virage worked for us,' Heffernan continues, 'because when they said "let's go ahead with the Vantage" they also said: "We've really gotta make this go."

Above
Vantage was the car of which Heffernan was most proud; AML 1 would have been the press demonstrator; note mock-up for end-of-line 'Le Mans' (centre)

'I was much happier with the Vantage than I was with the original Virage. It's a really great car and every time I see one on the road, which is very rarely, I really like seeing them.

'The design was more fully realised, partly because of that front end. Aston had acquired Zagato at the time so we had access to that six-headlamp system, which we covered in glass.'

Just as we're about to leave, there's a superb moment recalling a scene in *The Dam Busters*, when Michael Redgrave as Barnes Wallis is trying to get hold of a Wellington bomber. 'If you told them I designed it, do you think that might help,' asks Redgrave.

Two neighbours have turned up and are gently protesting that the woofling V600 is in the wrong car-park slot. 'Would it help if I told you I designed it,' says Heffernan. And just like in that old movie, it does… V

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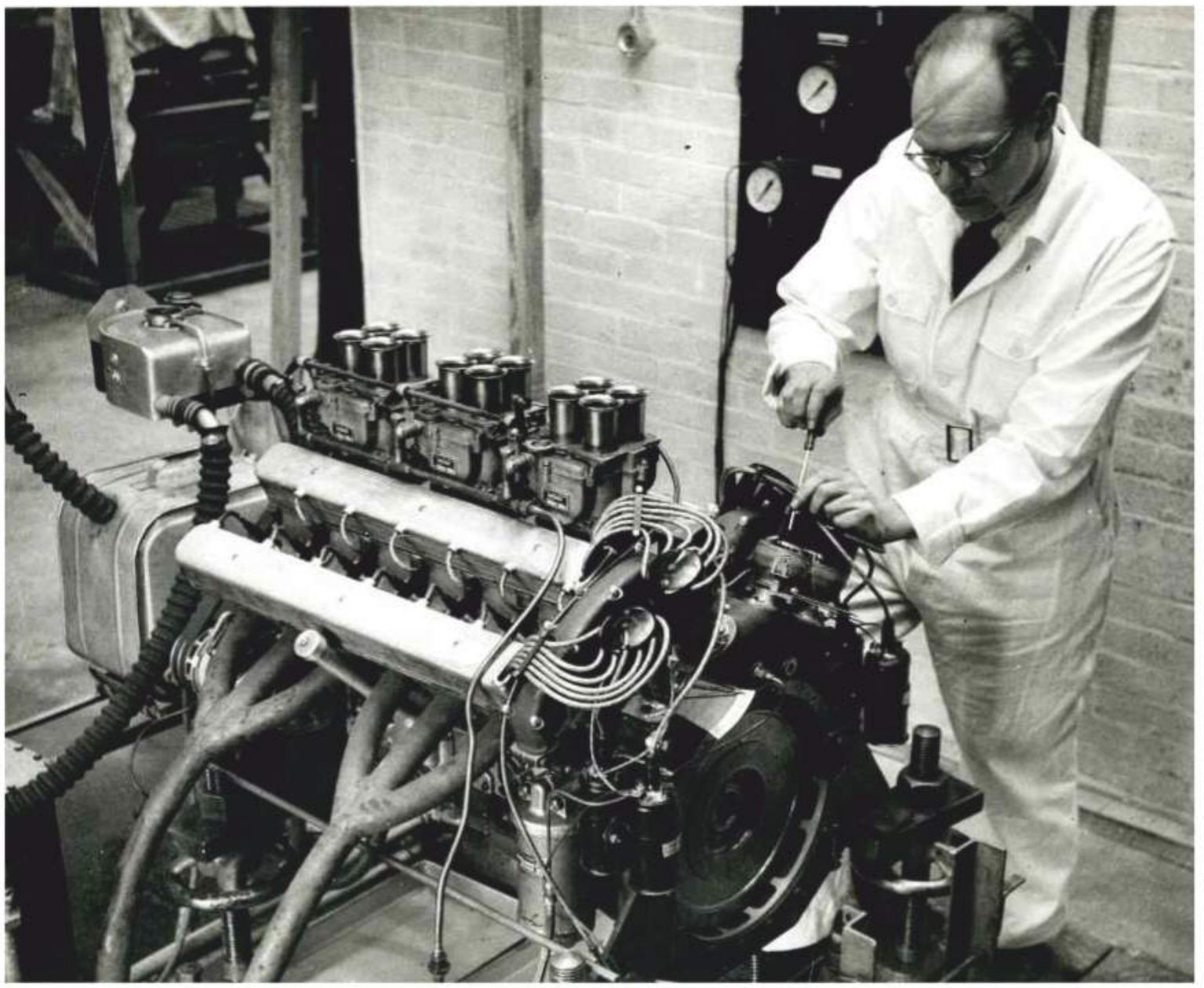
AMBITION AND AGONY

In the early 1950s, David Brown hatched plans for a V12-engined race car to beat Ferrari at Le Mans. This is the story of what might have been

WORDS STEPHEN ARCHER | **STUDIO PHOTOGRAPHY** ANTONY FRASER

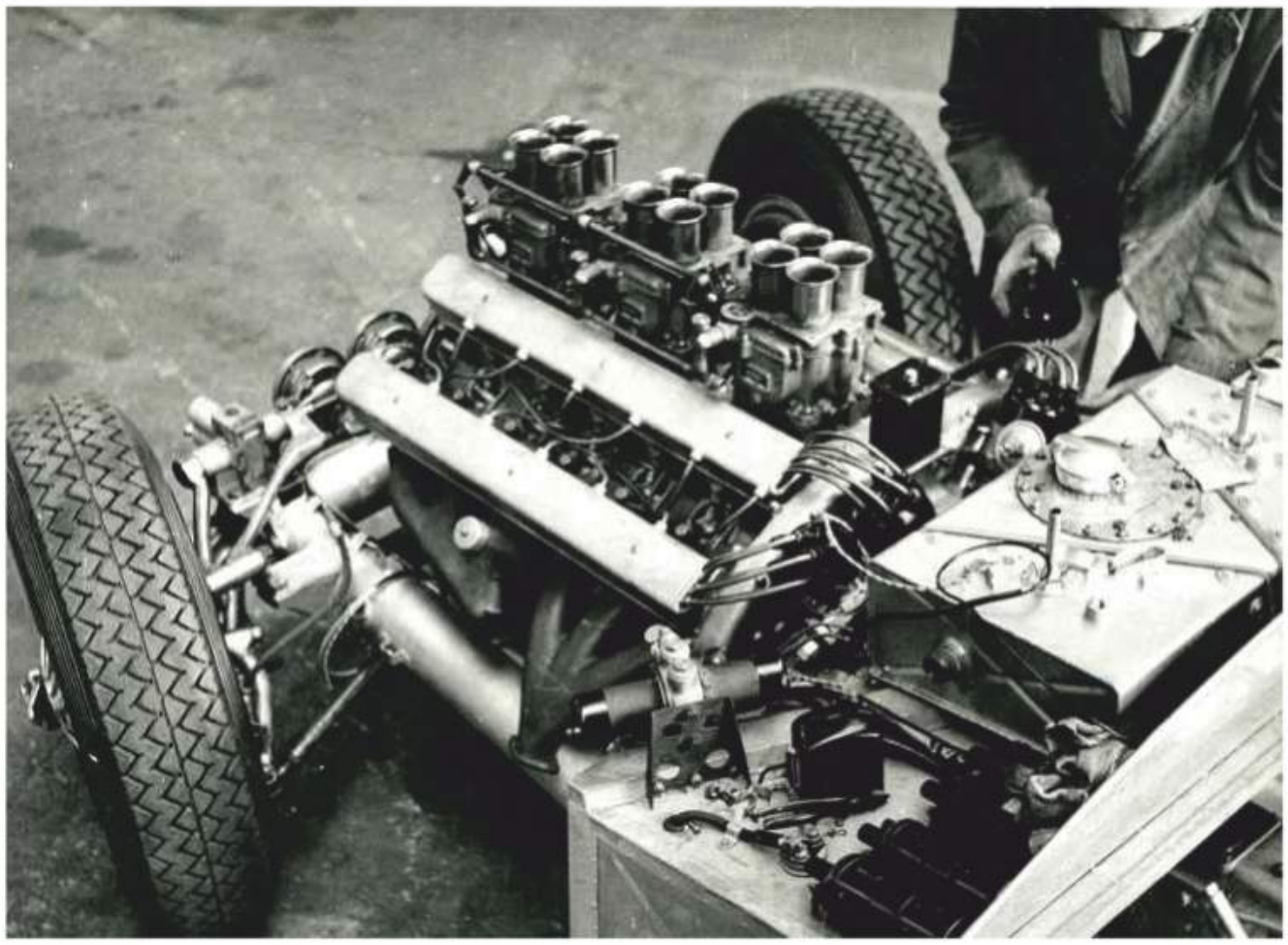


THE AIM COULDN'T HAVE BEEN CLEARER. 'I want us to build a racing car that can take on the big-engined Ferraris,' said David Brown. At the time, Aston Martin had no real basis for such a car so this was a huge ambition, but then ambition was never something Brown lacked. What follows is a salutary tale, but also evidence of the immense skills and capability that would lead Aston Martin to its many successes – with other cars. Success rarely comes without heartache along the way and the V12-engined Lagonda provided plenty of that.

Brown had bought Lagonda in 1947, chiefly to acquire the WO Bentley and Willie Watson-created LB6 (Lagonda Bentley) 6-cylinder engine that would later power the DB2. But there was more to the acquisition than the engine. Lagonda was once a marque spoken of in the same breath as Bentley for its grand style and pace. If Aston Martin was transport for the gentleman, then Lagonda was the carriage of the aristocracy.

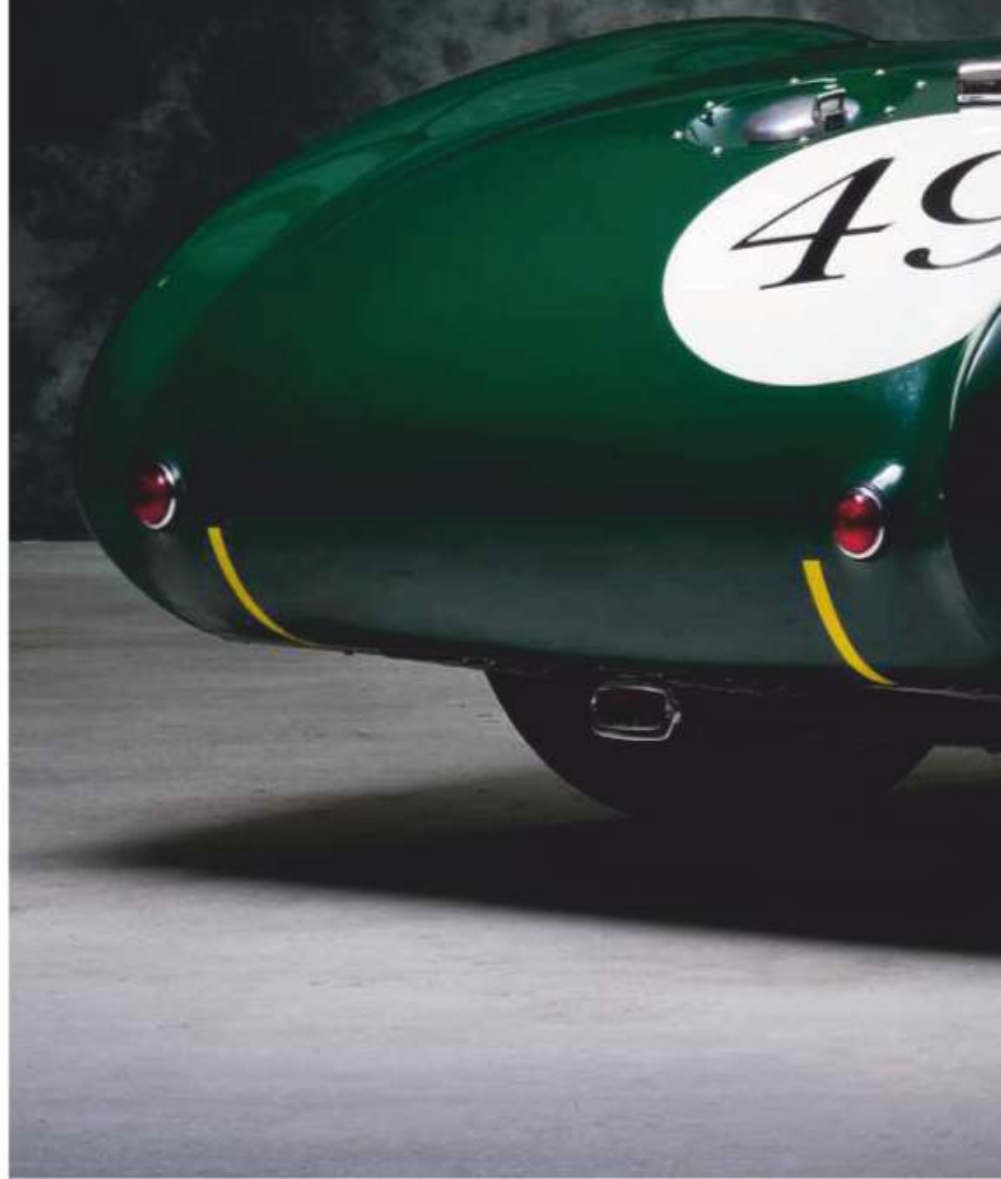
To David Brown it was a name worth building upon, and with the company also came some fine technicians plus the much under-appreciated body designer, Frank Feeley, who went on to design all Astons and Lagondas up to the DB4. (It's easy to forget that from 1950 to 1963 Lagonda models sold in good numbers and the marques were of more equal prominence than they are today.) What's more, Lagonda also had a good pre-war racing heritage, having won Le Mans, and so reviving the Lagonda name on a racing car made sense – especially if a new, large-capacity engine could be used in a road car as well.

Above and left
Lagonda 4.5-litre V12 engine on the test bed at Feltham. It would be installed in a chassis adapted from that of the Aston DB3S and given very similar – and very pretty – bodywork by Frank Feeley



‘THE V12 HAD TO HAVE 350BHP-PLUS – AND THE POTENTIAL TO BE A ROAD CAR ENGINE’

Left and below
The V12 nestles between the massive legs of the stretched DB3S chassis and, below, with the early bodywork in place (well, most of it). Three-grille front would become one larger grille to help cooling. Main image: this car created around one of the original engines and a body believed to be from the car that crashed at Le Mans in 1954



While David Brown was the patron, the architects of the car were Robert Eberan von Eberhorst for the chassis, Willie Watson for the engine (Watson having been hired for the project in 1952) and Frank Feeley the body. The brief was simple: to build a Ferrari-beater, a car that could run at the very front at Le Mans and the other major events, for which it would require a new engine of at least 4.5 litres capacity, power of over 350bhp and the potential to be a road engine. On paper, the power target should have been achievable because the engine was quite advanced. It was certainly an imposing looking thing.

The thinking was to derive the V12 design from that of the LB6, so essentially two LB6s arranged in a 'V'. But, unlike the LB6, there would be no use of iron in this new 'DP100' engine. The heads were alloy with two overhead cams per bank and twin plugs fired by Scintilla magnetos, with three 40mm four-choke downdraft Webers sitting in the 'V' of the engine. The crankcase was alloy, too, and this was the first post-war Aston design with dry sump lubrication. It had a modern short stroke of 69mm to allow it to achieve higher revs and therefore power.

It all sounds so good, but now to the 'but'. The engine carried over the LB6's lower crankcase design with its seven 'cheeses' sandwiching the crankshaft main bearings, this arrangement being inserted into the very strong block as a single assembly from one end. Whereas the iron block kept the aluminium cheeses in place when the latter expanded more with heat, the aluminium block could not do this. As a result, the bearings 'grew' away from the crankshaft with heat, which meant a consequent loss of oil pressure. This is undesirable in any car but in a racing car it is, as we shall see, a big problem.

It was anticipated that power would be 350-375bhp at 7500rpm. But from the outset the engine was handicapped by its oil pressure issues, forcing the revs to be capped at 6000, at which point peak power was only 312bhp. By the end of 1952 the engine had consumed 7400 man-hours and been tested to 7700rpm but the restriction had to stay.

The engine sat in a chassis based on that of the 1953 DB3S, the work of Eberan von Eberhorst, a German refugee who had designed much of the pre-war Auto Union GP cars. The DB2,

Opposite and this page
'Would you like the bad news, or the slightly less worse news?' Eric Thompson on the phone to the pits after crashing DP155/1 in the 1954 Le Mans 24 Hours. He would eventually get it back to the pits, but it was retired shortly after. Above: the V12 certainly looked the part with its triple four-choke Webers and four overhead camshafts. Below: modern harness and roll protection for this car, which has raced regularly in recent years

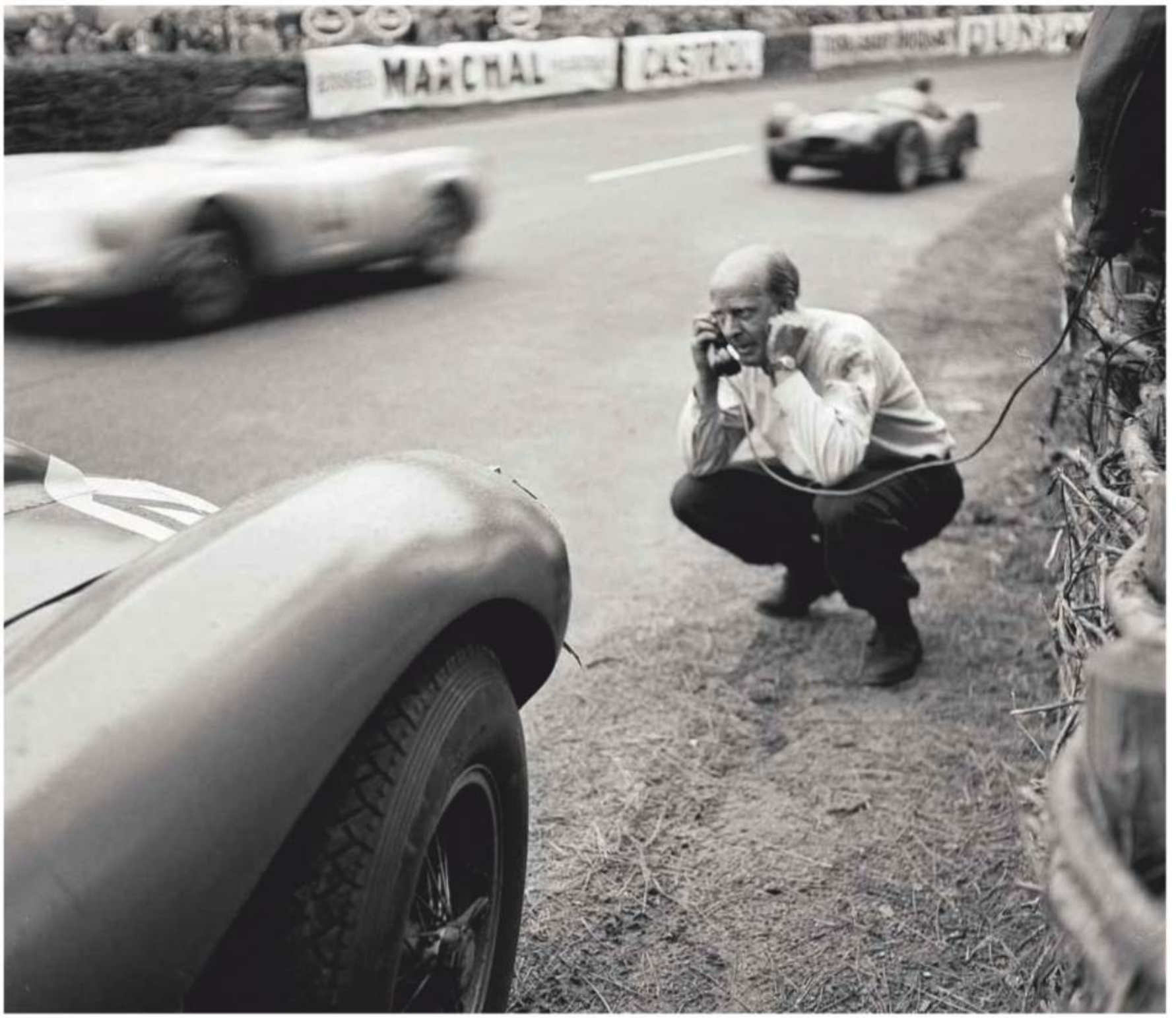
DB3 and DB3S inherited their trailing-arm front suspension with highly efficient and compact torsion bars, and the Lagonda had the same. The wheelbase was lengthened from 87in to 100in, which led to a loss of rigidity – unhelpful in such a heavy (1140kg) and powerful car. The all-round drum brakes were assisted by a Plessey servo that operated from the back of the gearbox and was mated to a Jaguar-type full-flow hydraulic system. This power assistance only operated on the front brakes but the rears were larger to compensate.

The gearbox was the David Brown S532 five-speed unit, which later gave very good service in the DBR2 and DP212. Built at the group's Park Works, it was in fact derived from a Mercedes-Benz design (just one example of how British industry enjoyed many technical advances thanks to the sharing of German technology after the war). The differential was a ZF unit with limited-slip and sat inside the de Dion suspension. Frank Feeley then clothed the car in a DB3S-style body, albeit rather larger and with a three-piece front grille, later enlarged to a one-piece item to allow more air in to try to cool the engine.

The V12 Lagonda, known as DP115, was first tested around March 1954 at Chalgrove airfield in Oxfordshire, with Brown himself the first to drive the car. At some point there was an engine fire. As team director John Wyer, who was never a fan of the Lagonda, later put it in typically caustic fashion: 'Nobody was hurt and the car, unhappily, also escaped serious injury.'

DP115/1's racing debut was at Silverstone in May 1954 where in Reg Parnell's hands it finished 5th. A decent result but the pace was modest and crucially the oil pressure was low; revs had to be cut to help the engine last even this short race. Next would be the rather more demanding Le Mans 24 Hours…

The plan was to build two cars for Le Mans but with two new DB3S Coupés also being built for the race plus a supercharged DB3S it was another act of great ambition and perhaps over-commitment. The supercharged DB3S ran rapidly but the engine failed; both Coupés were wrecked in accidents and the final DB3S entry had axle failure. The sole Lagonda had never really hit its stride when Eric Thompson backed it into the bank in the Esses. He got the mangled car back to the pits after two hours but it was



Getty Images

'DENNIS POORE CLOCKED 172MPH ON THE MULSANNE IN PRACTICE FOR LE MANS'

retired, officially due to a rear light being broken. One suspects that Wyer preferred to prevent any more embarrassment and called it a day rather than try to press on and fail again in a bent car. The one high point was Thompson's co-driver, Dennis Poore, clocking 172mph on the Mulsanne in practice. Wyer simply described 1954 as 'a complete disaster'.

In fact Le Mans was so distressing that Wyer had a breakdown on his return and was not intending to field an entry at the British GP support race a month later due to a lack of useable cars. But Brown's view was that 'this is the time when you get back into a race as quickly as you can'. So it was that at Silverstone the works DB3Ss came 1st, 2nd and 3rd with the second Lagonda, DP115/2, now featuring a strengthened chassis, a strong 4th. Morale was restored and the gloss put back on Aston's image.

For 1955, Wyer's plan was to do 'more with less', but Brown was keen to prove that the Lagonda could be a success and see a return on his substantial investment. An engine redesign was not possible in the time or with the budget, so the emphasis was placed on the outdated ladder-type chassis, which was replaced by a central-backbone spaceframe designed by Willie Watson and Ted Cutting. Disc brakes were fitted all-round and the body was evolved to incorporate a tilting front end for easier access to the substantial engine. The V12 itself had tighter bearings fitted to reduce the expansion issue but this necessitated the water and oil being pre-heated to enable the engine to turn. This is not unknown on racing cars but was hardly a solution for a road car, which had been Brown's dream, now rapidly-receding.

The new car, DP166/1, appeared only at Le Mans in 1955. It was retired after 93 laps with a fuel leak caused by a careless ACO 'plombeur' but its oil pressure had been plummeting and it's unlikely it would have lasted the distance anyway. With the DBR1 planned for 1956 and plenty of other projects in hand, the Lagonda was allowed to retire quietly. DP166/1 was dismantled and its chassis, along with two other DP166 chassis frames,

Getty Images

Above right
That's Eric Thompson, hammering away at the crumpled bodywork, as cars hurtle past just feet away. The V12 Lagonda was bigger and heavier and its chassis not as stiff as the DB3S's, which made it somewhat less wieldy.
Far right Viper's nest of plug leads from twin distributors

DP115 specification

ENGINE V12, 4486cc **MAX POWER** 312bhp @ 6000rpm (in period; this car now c360bhp) **MAX TORQUE** n/a
TRANSMISSION Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **SUSPENSION** Front: independent, trailing arms, torsion bars, lever arm dampers. Rear: live axle with de Dion tube, trailing links, torsion bars, telescopic dampers **STEERING** Worm-and-roller, unassisted
BRAKES Drums front and rear **WHEELS** 6 x 16in, wire-spoke **TYRES** 600 x 16 Dunlop Racing **WEIGHT** 1140kg
POWER TO WEIGHT 278bhp/ton **0-60MPH** n/a **TOP SPEED** c170mph

gathered dust until 1957 when they would form the basis of the rather more successful DBR2s (see *Vantage* issue 22).

The two 1954 Lagondas, DP115/1 with a new chassis fitted and DP115/2, were later pressed into service to star in the movie *Checkpoint*, which was filmed during the 1956 Mille Miglia. After filming, they were sold to George Abecassis, who in turn sold them to Noel Cunningham-Reid and 'Jumbo' Goddard, who raced them in minor UK events. Both cars and associated spares were acquired in the 1960s by Maurice Leo, who campaigned them in club events. Recently the two cars passed to a new owner and both are currently being restored in the UK.

In recent years a third Lagonda has been seen competing with great success in the hands of Darren McWhirter. This fine car – pictured on these pages – runs as DP155/R (R for recreation) and uses many original parts. The body is said to be the one that ran at Le Mans in 1954 and was traced to someone who had salvaged it from a scrapyard in London many moons ago; at one point it had been fitted to a Tojeiro chassis. An original engine was found in a Jensen 541(!) and the chassis was built to factory drawings. With the help of Ted Cutting, the engine underwent much reworking with more modern treatment of the top end and crucially the main bearings being mounted on conventional caps rather than the 'cheeses'. Now the engine delivers the originally hoped-for 360bhp and the car has many race victories to its name.

So, the V12 Lagonda is a tale of grand ambition, mixed fortune, and sadly too little to celebrate, though it did lead to the DBR2. David Brown was disappointed in the racing venture but perhaps even more so that the magnificent engine could not be used in a road-going Lagonda GT. But then John Wyer may well have cautioned that if a Lagonda were faster than an Aston, it might harm the latter's sales. Having heard the 1954 cars running unsilenced in the 1960s, I can attest that a road car with that engine would have been rather special. Another 'what if' to ponder in Aston Martin's extraordinary history.

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LEARNING YOUR LINES

The AMR Drivers' Club is a new programme of track-based experiences. We try the AMR Academy and find that expert coaching really can work wonders

WORDS KYLE FORTUNE | **PHOTOGRAPHY** LOU BOILEAU

In front of us is a laptop: there's a video on it, and telemetry, but for now racing driver Stuart Moseley and I are concentrating on a small whiteboard instead. It's about the size of a place-mat, and on it is printed the layout of Donington Park National Circuit. I'm 45, yet today I'm back to school.

The best kind of education, though, with Aston Martin's new AMR Academy – part of a range of track activities now being offered to customers under the AMR Drivers' Club banner. Over two days I'll be repeating lines, not as punishment, but to find the fastest way around the circuit. Moseley is drawing what should be the perfect one around Turn 1, Redgate, the corner that is so far proving my nemesis…

I've stood and watched plenty of races from the catch fencing on the outside of Redgate, and driven around Donington before, but in my first couple of sessions in one of the Academy's Vantages I'm turning in too early, starting a chain reaction that leads to an incorrect apex and finds me running out of track on the exit. That means I've not only lost speed but I've not lined myself up correctly for Hollywood, so I'm slow through there, too. It's a little bit damp on the first few laps, but unlike Ayrton Senna, whose wet first lap at Donington is considered one of the greatest in F1 history, my lines are dictated not by genius but ineptitude.

In theory it all looks relatively simple. During a couple of hours' classroom time on the first day, chief instructor Tim Mullen goes through the fundamentals of track driving – basic car control, weight transfer, vision, steering, track positioning, braking technique and throttle application. It doesn't matter how many times you've driven on track, or how much you think you know, these sessions are always worthwhile. Even F1 drivers have driving coaches, though most aren't too happy to admit it.

Mullen breaks Donington down into sections, looking at the ideal line though each corner, which, depending on the one following it, might not always be what you'd expect. It's here that Mullen and his team's experience really tells. Between them their trophy cabinets contain more silver than the Queen's cutlery drawers. Mullen himself is a multiple championship winner, among those British GTs, and has stood on the podium at Le Mans in the GT2 category. That this is the level of expertise on hand speaks volumes for the quality of coaching that's available through the Drivers' Club.

After our classroom session, we take to the track for a slow lap. On foot. Donington looks huge when you're walking around it, the track wide, the gradients sizeable. Walking the circuit allows you to really understand it, look for surface changes, better appreciate the cambers and judge the severity of the kerbs, and, just in case, spot any opportunities for run-off.

It should take under one and a half minutes to get around here in a Vantage; the 40 minutes spent walking the track are key to identifying braking and turn-in points and apexes before doing so at speed behind the wheel. The aim is simple: that the lessons learned on the walk will generate quicker lap-times from the very first of the six driving sessions on day two. I opt for an early night with some light reading, the *AMR Academy Track Guide* being tonight's revision before I attempt to apply everything I've learned at the wheel of a 503bhp Vantage.

BREAKFAST IS BY THE RACING TRUCK. Support staff, drivers and instructors mingle, coffee the order of the day, the full English avoided by the pros, the amateurs like me only too happy for the hearty sustenance. I'm introduced to Moseley, but we've previous: he's an ex-teammate of a friend of mine and still collecting trophies at the weekend, instructing keeping him busy in-between. I'll be with him all day, with one-to-one tuition both in and out of the car, each track session followed by a debrief, using video analysis and telemetry to chart my progress, and analyse any mistakes and how to rectify them.

The first session is, sensibly, sedate. Moseley drives a couple of sighting laps with me alongside, just to get an idea where the track goes again. Then I'm in the driver's seat. It's my first drive of the new Vantage, but it doesn't take long to feel comfortable with it, taking the first couple of laps at a brisk rather than a fast pace, feeling my way into the car before running it at greater speeds.

A few laps later and it's clear that the Vantage is in its element here. Even though it's well within its limits, it's still at a speed that would quickly get you into trouble on the public road. That, admitted Mullen the day before, is part of the Drivers' Club's appeal: it allows owners to enjoy the performance of the cars in a safe, controlled environment, introduces them to the

Opposite page
Aston Martin Racing takes over the Donington paddock to provide a first taste of its new track programme under the AMR Drivers' Club banner. Customers can enjoy their own cars on track or be coached in a new Vantage

'Even F1 drivers have coaches, though most don't like to admit it'


ASTON MARTIN
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ASTON MARTIN
AMR


WELCOME TO DONINGTON PARK
MSVT


32
31

From the top
Our man Fortune (left) gets some pointers from experienced racer Stuart Moseley; Club days open to all Astons, including Vulcans; simulator allows extra practice between sessions. Opposite: Vantage in the groove; mentors are introduced at first-day briefing

‘AMR provides a stairway of training, right up to racing in GT4 and beyond’

AMR brand, and, should they desire, gives them a stairway of training right up to racing in GT4 and beyond.

The first session has Moseley giving plenty of input, describing the lines, encouraging where I’m getting things right, explaining where elements could be improved. I’ve never had my driving analysed in so much detail. It’s not an uncomfortable experience, though, the repeatability of lapping the track immediately allowing me to implement his advice. The result is an appreciable increase in my speed.

It doesn’t always work; I’d be lying if I said everything Moseley suggested was immediately put into good effect by myself, occasional over-ambitious late braking or early turn-in not helping, but his input massively heightens my understanding of how to achieve the best from the car around this testing circuit.

With the rush of speed in the car, not to mention having to cope with the odd Vulcan sharing the track, the respite of the laptop, that whiteboard and video and telemetry playback of the session is welcome. I’ve only experienced telemetry once before, and before that I must admit I was fairly sceptical about its benefits for mere mortal drivers. I shouldn’t have been; the ability to properly understand and analyse those early laps is key in allowing me to improve on them. Moments that flashed by in the car are able to be broken down into their individual elements and understood. And with the video giving reference points to back up the data, it’s clear there’s some room for improvement. My first-session best time is a second or so shy of instructor Ross Wylie’s reference time of 1min 19.7sec.

The gap looks insurmountable, but then it’s always good to have a target. Redgate is my biggest issue; in the first session I’m braking too early, being too quick to turn in and running out of road on the exit as a result. Looking at it on a screen, with data to demonstrate it all, it’s fairly obvious what I need to put right. Applying that, when you’re arriving at the braking zone at an indicated 128mph, is different. This is what separates mere ordinary drivers like myself from the pros like Moseley.

The second session is appreciably quicker; from the first lap out of the pit lane there are


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TAG HEUER

Clockwise from right
Our man saw his lap times tumble; Jamie Chadwick one of the top racers giving expert guidance; Vantage felt right at home around Donington Park

some tangible results from all that post-session analysis. There's still work needed; improving in one area has a knock-on effect elsewhere. A greater exit speed leads to a faster arrival at the next corner, which correspondingly requires modification of when and how hard I brake, the carried speed and the next exit.

But gradually my lap times come down. Moseley's quieter as the sessions go on, allowing me to find a rhythm, giving a few pointers between the corners on the relatively relaxed straights – as relaxed as 100-130mph allows, that is. Here, too, Mullen's advice resonates from the day before, his suggestion being to use the straights to loosen your grip on the wheel, and breathe, saying he's seen plenty of drivers forgetting to do both, with obviously detrimental effects. The session over, it's time for more screen time, the 1.20.4 being my fastest lap yet, the telemetry saying that if I hooked up all my best sectors I'd be within 0.2 seconds of Wylie's 1.19.7 reference lap.

Lunch proves catastrophic. Delicious, but there's a reason why racers employ dieticians. My initial post-lunch session times soon reveal that my full stomach is diverting all the blood from my brain. We'll chalk those laps down to experience, no gains made, though Moseley is encouraging that we'll achieve more in the next session. We do, more sections seemingly clicking, that lap time of Wylie's looking possible, the Vantage taking all the abuse meted out to it, the brakes in particular remaining sensational for their consistent, repeatable stopping power.

The whole car moves about more as I find more speed around the entire track, revealing its fine balance and good feedback. Soon we're out for the penultimate session, Moseley now largely silent, just occasional encouragement, finessing my rougher edges. Redgate is still causing the odd hiccup, but when I get it right it's obvious from the speed carried through it.

Traffic is my biggest failing, even if it's rare with only one other Vantage running around and the odd Vulcan passing at speed. It's something I've been guilty of before, the temptation to follow a car in front causing me to lose concentration. Moseley advises me to ignore other cars – or back off to give me some space. With one session left, my 1.20.4 best and a theoretical 1.19.9 remain. I'm happy enough with both, but there's more to come, and Moseley eggs me on to string all my best corners together in the sixth and final session. The tenth of the 12 laps proves my best, the Vantage feeling perfect, the track clear and Redgate conquered to record a 1.19.4, taking a second out of my time and beating that reference lap.

Elation barely covers it. Looking back at the data reveals where I'd improved, yet throws out a new theoretical time of 1.18.7. Addictive stuff, and returning home from school with Moseley's glowing report card only has me wanting to come back for more… With further levels to work through, and the possibility of honing your skills in a race-prepared GT4 Vantage, there's real appeal to the AMR Drivers' Club. In fact it might just take you to the starting grid of something even more special.

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THE POLISH CONNECTION

Some of the key players in the Aston Martin story have been of Polish descent. We take a DB11 AMR on a tour of England to follow this fascinating thread

WORDS PIOTR R FRANKOWSKI **PHOTOGRAPHY** MAX EAREY/ PIOTR R FRANKOWSKI/PATRYCJA N FRANKOWSKA

THE CONTRIBUTION OF POLISH PILOTS to the defence of Britain during the Second World War is widely appreciated. But how many car enthusiasts know that without several gentlemen of Polish descent there would be no Aston Martin brand as we know it today? Surprising, but absolutely true.

As a Pole based in Britain, I've long been fascinated by their stories, which is why I'm setting out on a journey that will celebrate the part each of them has played in the Aston story. Our transport: a DB11 AMR, and our first stop Brooklands, the spiritual home of British motorsport. Among the ghosts that circle the vast banking, one Count Louis Zborowski, and a more colourful character you couldn't hope to meet…


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AMHT

Louis Vorow Zborowski, Count de Mountsaulvain, was a vastly wealthy landowner, playboy and racing driver, possibly best-known as the creator of the Chitty Bang Bang aviation-engined race cars that would later inspire Ian Fleming to write his popular children's stories. Louis had inherited the family fortune in 1911, at the age of just 16. In the years immediately after the First World War, at his country estate in Kent, the dashing young count organised Europe's craziest rock'n'roll parties of the era, with often-inebriated guests taking to the roads in his vast array of powerful racing cars. Just imagine a flurry of fire-belching monsters racing each other to Dover and back, jockeying for position, causing seizures in livestock and heart attacks in the indigenous population.

One regular guest at these gatherings was a certain Lionel Martin, joint instigator of the fledgling Aston-Martin marque. Pretty soon, Zborowski was persuaded to try one of the early Astons, a car much lighter and more agile than his aero-engined monsters, and instantly became an enthusiastic supporter. In the early 1920s, not only would he frequently race the cars, but his money would help keep the company afloat. And it was here at Brooklands, on the famous banked circuit, that he would raise its profile with a number of stirring drives.

It's a real privilege to follow in his wheeltracks in this DB11 AMR, the V12-engined flagship of the DB11 range with its striking yellow stripe making the visual connection with the current racing team, even if we're restricted to a gentle jog across the century-old concrete surface.

Lou, as he was known to his friends, would have loved the modern Astons. He not only mastered Brooklands, but also dabbled in power boats, built a private railway, made home movies, drove for Bugatti at Indianapolis and blew up marble statues at his estate with dynamite for the amusement of visitors. He'd inherited his title and also his love of fast living and fast machinery from his father, Eliot, a wealthy US landowner (he owned a significant tract of Manhattan) who fell in love with England and relocated here, initially to Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire because he wanted to ride with the local hunt. Eliot was also an early adopter of motorised horsepower, first a De Dion tricycle and in 1900 an early Daimler. He then took up competitive driving with some success but died in 1903 when his racing Mercedes crashed on the La Turbie hillclimb near Nice in France. Incidentally, the DB11's green coachwork is entirely fitting, since it was Eliot Zborowski who suggested that nations should have racing colours, leading British teams to adopt what became known as British Racing Green. His son, too, would habitually have his cars painted green.

It was no surprise that the young Louis would follow in his father's footsteps and become a racing driver, but he also wanted to invest some of his vast fortune in what he considered to be worthwhile ventures. He liked Lionel Martin and decided to support his company to the tune of £10,720 (well over £500,000 in today's money). Soon after, fellow racer and engineer Clive Gallop was dispatched to France with a bag of gold to obtain from Peugeot the design of a new four-cylinder engine. Reputedly, chief engineer Marcel Gremillon wasn't happy, but the cash persuaded him to tear off half of the blueprint for an in-line eight-cylinder motor and hand it over to Gallop. While the new twin-cam engine was being worked on back in Blighty, the count chalked up his first Brooklands record in an Aston-Martin, the tiny 1.5-litre car pounding the concrete at a speed of 66.82mph over a mile.

Clockwise from top left
Zborowski and his riding mechanic before the start of the 1922 French GP, and yes, they really did race in flat caps; kicking up dust in an early-20s Aston on the Shelsley Walsh hillclimb; very latest DB11 AMR at Brooklands, the scene of many of the count's motoring adventures, and tiptoeing around the remains of the banking


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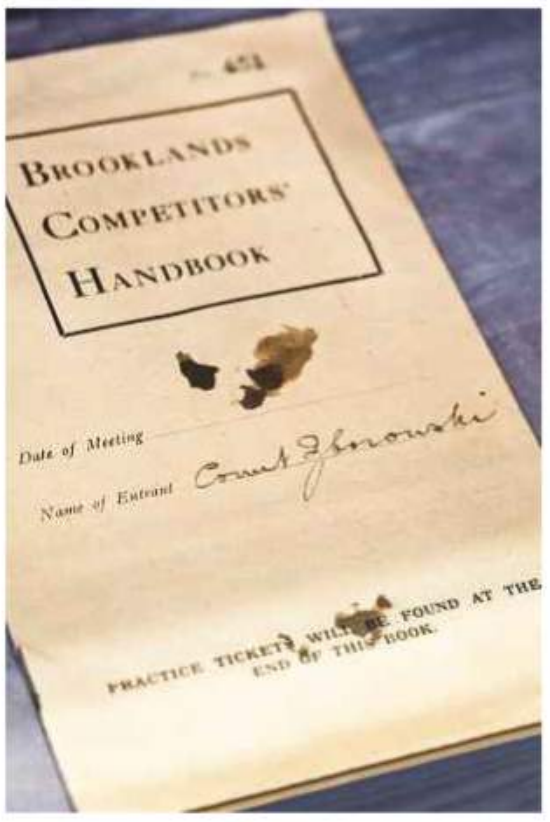


Left, from the top
Zborowski with one of his 1.5-litre Aston-Martins at Brooklands in 1921, Lionel Martin on the left; the count's competitor's handbook in the Brooklands museum, which also houses a contemporary Aston special, nicknamed 'Razor Blade', built around one of the twin-cam 16-valve engines that Zborowski helped finance and which ran in the 1922 Grand Prix cars

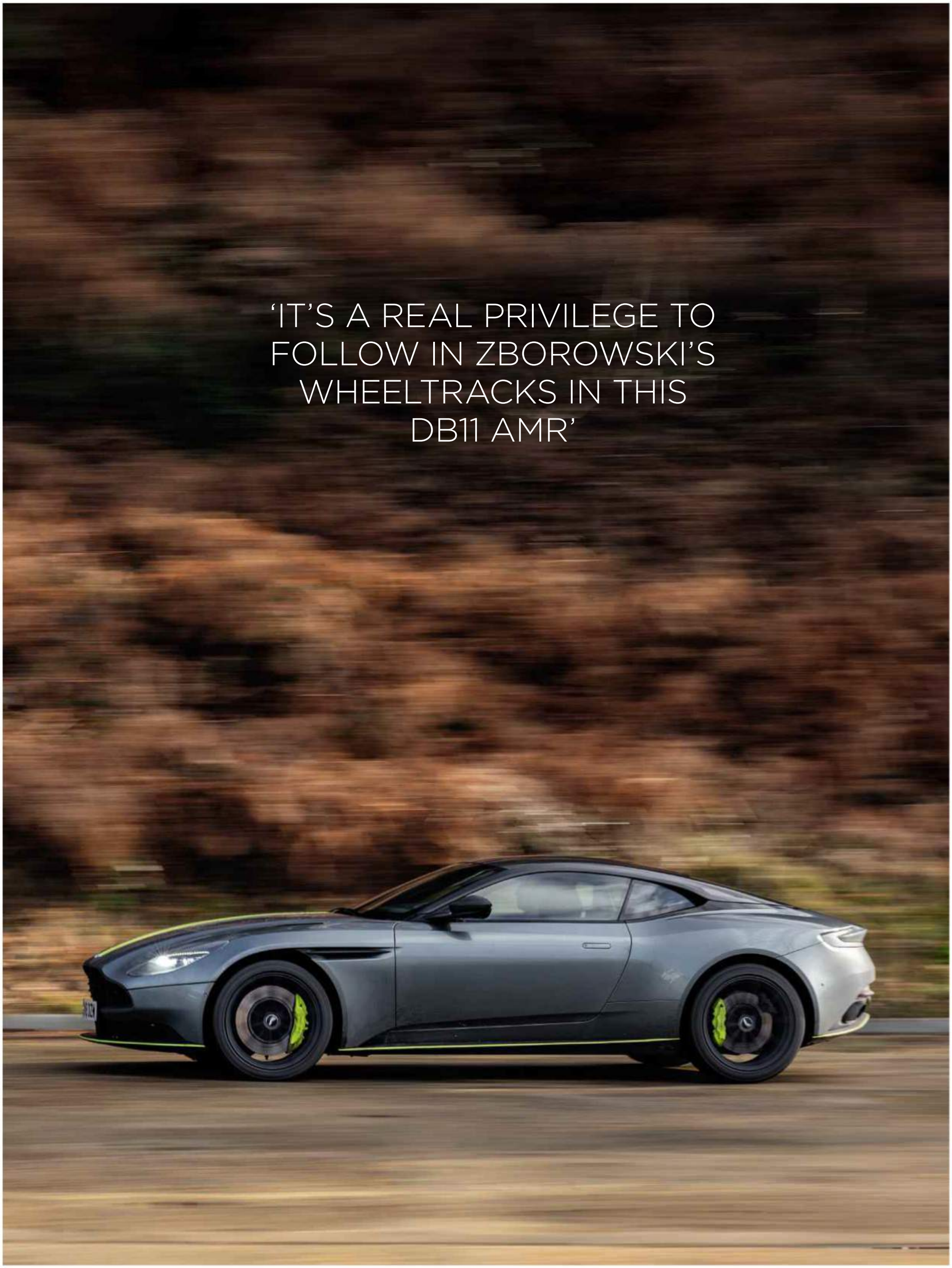
Louis proceeded to race Astons whenever he could, including in a number of Grands Prix in Spain, where he achieved several second places, and hillclimbing at Shelsley Walsh and Kop Hill. In 1922 he came first in the Aston in the Brooklands Short Handicap, and contested the 1922 French Grand Prix at Strasbourg, driving one of the pair of cars fitted with the new twin-cam engine. Ignition issues caused their retirement, but not before they'd put in a strong showing. 'There was no doubt,' reported *The Motor*, 'that Zborowski put up a very fine performance. Incidentally, for the majority of the time he drove without hat or goggles, in spite of the muddy state of the course, and his appearance defied description.'

Yet he wasn't crazy; Lionel Martin, interviewed years later, mentioned the lavish Zborowski parties and the count's addictive personality, but also the fact that, when required, he could drive with perfect skill, and his sharp brain remained calculating despite the outward appearance of recklessness.

Unfortunately, Martin never got a chance to pay back the money invested in his company by Zborowski: the dashing Polish count perished during the 1924 Italian Grand Prix at Monza, the Mercedes he was driving (in a tragic echo of his father's death) skidding off the track on an oil slick and hitting two posts and a tree. His riding mechanic, Len Martin, survived but Louis was killed. He was just 29.

LEAVING BROOKLANDS BEHIND, our next destination is Drayton St Leonard in Oxfordshire, and specifically The Barn, home of the Aston Martin Heritage Trust. On the journey there, the main roads are traffic-logged and the weather is decidedly wintry, but the DB11 takes it all in its mighty stride. The suspension in its softest setting is almost cosseting, though there's no doubting the exemplary body control when you head off the motorway and cut across country. Even on frozen tarmac with snow at the roadside, the Aston remains controlled and predictable, with the ESP hardly required: the winter tyres fitted to this car simply work, a fact obvious to my Eastern European self, but still alien to many Brits. And not only on snow and ice, but also in the dry when the ambient temperature drops below 6-7 degrees Celsius.

It's considerably colder than that when we arrive, and worse, the heating has broken down at The Barn, so I gratefully accept a mug of hot coffee. However, it's soon forgotten and left to go cold as I pore over some of the wonderful artefacts that are kept here. There's Lionel Martin's personal photo album and scrapbook, and, wait, what's this? Pre-war trophies, one of them immensely heavy, a private photo album and a set of precision drawing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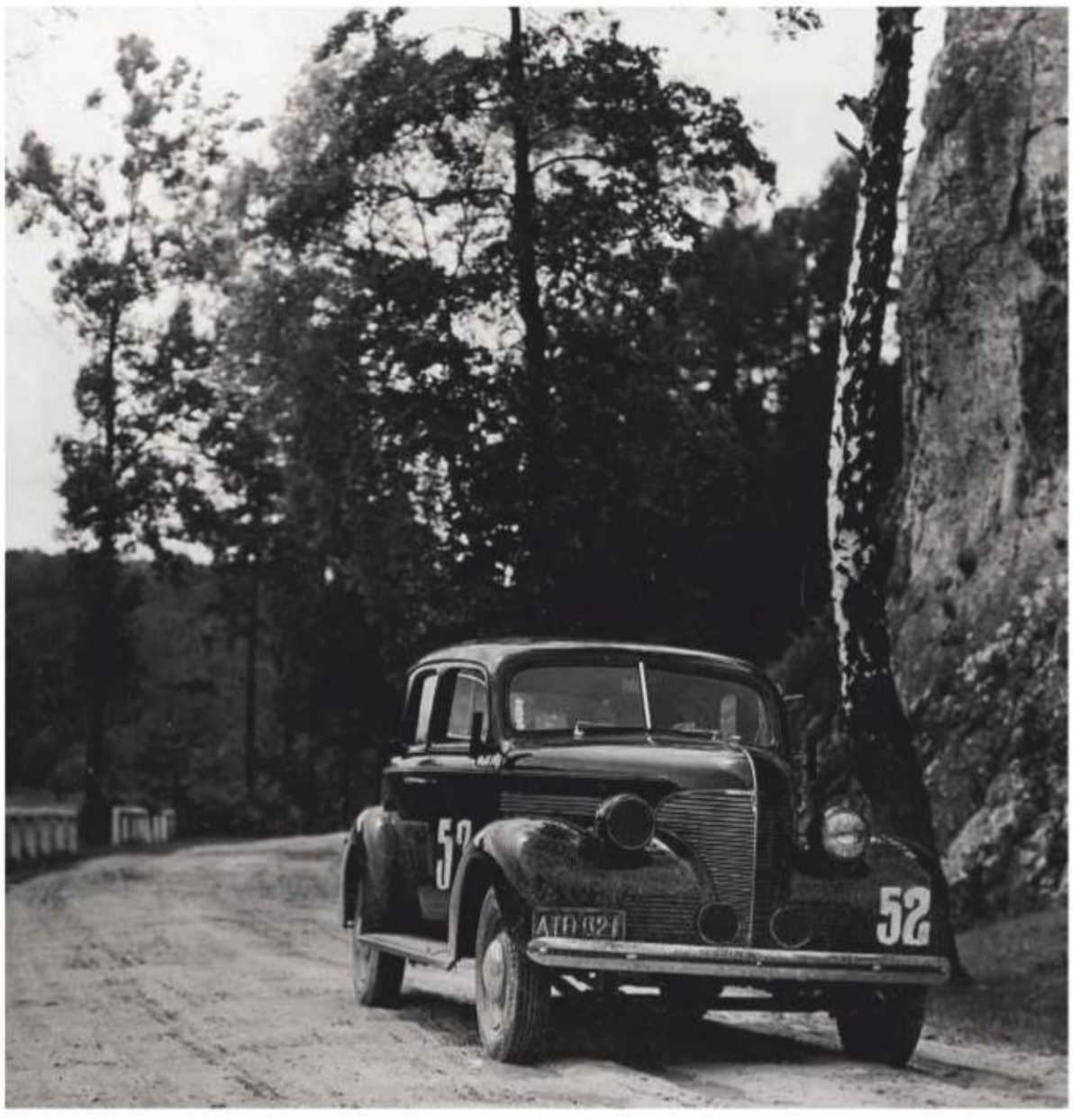
FOLLOW IN ZBOROWSKI’S
WHEELTRACKS IN THIS
DB11 AMR’

Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe



Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

Below, from far left Tadek Marek in his rallying days, and driving a Chevrolet in the 1939 Polski Rally before the outbreak of war led him eventually to Britain; DB11 outside The Barn, where the AMHT has many Marek artefacts including his retirement gift from workmates and his drawing set; and post-retirement, back at Newport Pagnell with his successor, Mike Loasby

instruments: all of them belonging to another Pole without whom it's hard to imagine the great success of Aston Martin Lagonda in the years after the Second World War.

Tadeusz 'Tadek' Marek was the Polish engineer who joined Aston in 1954 at the age of 46 and was responsible first for reworking the Lagonda straight-six, originally conceived by WO Bentley, then for creating Aston's own in-line six that would power DB4, 5, 6 and original DBS, and finally the V8 that would stay in production until the late 1990s. So for almost half-a-century his engines would be the driving force of Aston Martin. He was a pretty handy driver, too…

This shy and unassuming man came from Krakow, the old Polish capital, studied engineering and raced motorbikes as a young man until he had a serious shunt during a race. After that he preferred to concentrate on vehicles with four wheels, although his first significant job as an engineer was the famous Polish CWS M111 heavy motorcycle, also known as the Sokol 1000 and comparable to the Harleys and Indians of the day. Later he worked for the Fiat factory in Poland, and drove his first Monte Carlo Rally in 1937 at the wheel of a Fiat 1100.

For his Monte entries, Tadek always picked the most difficult starting point to accrue the greatest number of points. In 1938 he drove a Lancia Aprilia from Messina in Sicily, covering 300km of the distance without brakes! He also won the Rally of Poland several times, and it's some of these trophies that are on loan to the Trust, one of them the personal prize from the then President of Poland to Tadek for winning the large car class. Touching its cold metal is a very moving connection with the past.

When the war started in 1939, Marek followed a complicated evacuation route, via Romania and Casablanca of all places, and ended up, like so many Poles, in Britain, where he was eventually engaged in tank design. It was in Britain, too, that he met his future wife. After the war, he found a position at Austin, where he is said to have designed the C-series straight-six, which went on to power a wide range of British cars, including the Austin-Healey 3000 and the MGC, well into the 1970s.

And then came the opening for chief engineer at Aston Martin, and here hangs another tale. Tadek got the job, was given a starting date, and took his wife off to Italy, their favourite country, for a holiday. When they returned, he was dismayed to receive a note saying the position was no longer available! Marek did not give up. He drove to Aston Martin's offices and complained, vigorously. It transpired that someone had made a simple clerical error. But to think how close the company came to not employing its Polish engine wizard...

AMHT

Left, from the top
The 'Olympia' building at Aston Martin Works in Newport Pagnell, where Tadek Marek once had his drawing office; the Heritage workshops are as busy as ever, maintaining and servicing classic Astons, many of them powered by Marek engines, including DB6 and Lagonda (below)

TO IMMERSE MYSELF FULLY in the David Brown era of Aston Martin, I head next to Newport Pagnell, where Tadek Marek for many years had an office in what is known as the Olympia building, now part of the Works' Heritage operation. The first time I visited the site was in 1996, when the Marek-designed V8 was still being produced. Taken for a factory tour by the late lamented Roger Stowers, I marvelled at the traditional production techniques, and Roger surprised me by producing an unexpected Polish connection: the cylinder liners were being made at a small Polish factory in the town of Krotoszyn. I still remember the waxed paper and the beautiful machined finish of the parts.

Today those same skills are still very much in evidence and the place is full of fantastic cars, mostly powered by Marek-designed engines. I'm allowed to park the dirt-streaked DB11 among a gaggle of DB4s and 5s in the pristine workshop and I recall a shot in Tadek's photo album showing the first DB4 body delivered from Touring in Milan – and another of the same car with front-end damage from a crash in testing. It must have been quite an adventure to work at Aston at that time.

When the V8 engine was in development, an early prototype was installed in Tadek's own DB5 for testing. Again, his photo album is a source of treasures, including a row of pictures showing alternative intake tracts. The V8 notoriously suffered teething problems at the beginning, but the tenacious Pole ironed them out and retired in 1968, once he was sure that the engine was ready: it made its production debut in the DBS V8, 50 years ago this year.

Tadek retired with his wife to Italy, where he died in 1982, his work having underpinned Aston Martin since the mid-1950s. Incidentally, his V8 was updated late in its production career by the addition of four-valve cylinder heads, commissioned by the then head of Ford's Powertrain Division, one David Szczupak, whose name strongly suggests a Polish origin!

HOW TADEK WOULD HAVE relished the stupendous blend of power and refinement delivered by the DB11 AMR's twin-turbo V12. It is an eye-wideningly rapid machine, but equally impressive is its efficiency, with 20-25mpg easily possible if you're not enjoying that performance all the time. A grand tourer, indeed. The B&O sound system also helps pass the time in long traffic jams…

For the next leg of our odyssey we're heading to Gaydon. The flame of Polish influence at Aston Martin is carried today by Marek Reichman, the half-Polish chief creative officer with overall responsibility for Aston's current and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future design direction. His father was Polish, had a deep love of all things mechanical, and imbued his two sons with a passion for cars and driving. When they were small, Marek tells me, he would take them for rides, and the boys would stand behind the front seat, enjoying the tales their father told them about how he drove Polish generals from Scotland to London during the Second World War. Reichman Snr had a reputation as a man who would drive anything in the most inclement conditions possible.

Sheffield-born Marek, who still has distant relatives alive and well in Poland, knew from a very early age that he would do something connected with cars. After he became interested in industrial design, he would go to a silversmith's studio and watch him work. Reichman senior also worked as a blacksmith, which further fed Marek's fascination with watching things take physical shape. Now he creates the shape of the Astons of the future, and maintains a tradition of Polish blood improving the breed of this iconic family of British sports cars.

And now it's time to drive the final stage of my road trip. Count Louis Zborowski is buried alongside his father, mother and stillborn brother in the grounds of St James Church in Burton Lazars, near Melton Mowbray. I am probably the only Pole to visit this grave regularly, maybe even the only person to do so. Coming here always makes me sad for this doomed family, but it seems right to honour and remember them. As the Aston cools slowly outside the churchyard fence, I place a bunch of roses on Lou's grave. Neither Zborowski nor Marek should ever be forgotten. Without them Aston Martin would more than likely have disappeared long before Marek Reichman drew his first sketch of James Bond's DB10... V

Above and below
Marek Reichman, Aston Martin's chief creative officer, now carries the Polish flame within AML – that's him (below left) as a child growing up in Sheffield with his Polish father and British mother. Final leg of our journey is to the resting place of Louis Zborowski in Burton Lazars

Reichman family archive

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DB4GT Zagato Sanction 2 1961

At the London Motor Show in 1960, the DB4GT chassis was offered with very special lightweight, two-seater bodywork built by Zagato. Nineteen of these fabulous cars were produced and are now the most desirable road-legal Astons ever. In 1987, Aston Martin Lagonda Limited, with the agreement of Zagato, sanctioned the build of four works approved DB4GT Zagato coupes using unused chassis numbers from the earlier cars. RS Williams were commissioned to build the four Sanction 2 cars. Offered for sale, DB4GT/0192 is resplendent in its original RSW Green and black interior having covered 9,253 miles from new. In no way can the Sanction 2 cars be seen as mere copies. They are absolutely accurate examples only separated by a period of 30 years.

DB4 1961

This DB4 is one of only five Series IV saloons fitted with the twin-plug GT engine and overdrive and the only example in RHD. It retains its original registration number and remains in its correct Caribbean Pearl colour. RS Williams maintained since 1977. Engine rebuild and upgrade to 4.2 litres in April 2000, approx 10,000 miles ago.

DB5 1965

Silver Birch with red interior (as per build-sheet, 1 of only approx 124 or so DB5's to be 'true' Silver Birch cars). Full bare metal re-spray and re-trim carried out in 2003. 4.2ltr RSW engine upgrade completed in 2008. RS Williams maintained last 15yrs. Invoices showing expenditure in excess of £155,000. Limited mileage over the last 4 years. Used by Aston Martin in promotional video.

Short Chassis Volante 1966

In Black Pearl with grey interior. RS Williams history for over 40yrs. 4.7 litre upgrade plus substantial mechanical work in 2014 costing in excess of £98k. In 2017 a hardtop was fitted and installed costing in excess of £15k. 1 of only 37 examples produced.

DB6 1969

Complete ownership history from new - 5 in total. Manual. MOT certificates from past 32 years. Major chassis work in 2005. Bare-metal respray to original Aquamarine just completed. RSW prepared including front suspension rebuild and major service.

DB6 MkII 1970

Dubbonet Rosso with tan interior. Manual gearbox. RSW Ltd maintained for over 25yrs. Engine rebuilt and upgraded to 4.2 lead-free specification. One of only 248 cars produced and in superb condition throughout. Previous invoices from last 39 years with invoices showing expenditure in excess of £130,000.

V8 Volante 1979

Midnight Blue with magnolia hide piped blue. Blue mohair hood with grey 'West of England' headlining. Full mechanical rebuild by RS Williams to 7.0ltr automatic specification to include conversion to 4 speed automatic. Work completed in August 2016 and only 1152 miles covered since. Total rebuild in excess of £210,000.

V8 Vantage 1979

Charcoal Grey with fawn interior. 1 of only 44 V8 Vantage (Oscar India) cars built between October 1978 and March 1980. 6.3l conversion by Aston Martin Works in 1990. 7.0 litre conversion by RS Williams in 1998. Maintenance, service and history from new. Verified genuine mileage of 63,223.

V8 Zagato Vantage Volante 1990

Part of the famous 'Hunter Green' collection, this was a collection of nine V8 cars all built to the same specification Hunter Green with tan hide. This unique collection was eventually sold at the 2005 Bonhams Aston Martin auction held at Newport Pagnell. Displaying only 12,598 miles from new this is a fantastic opportunity to purchase one of the rarest Aston Martins ever produced.

DB7 Zagato 2004

Mercury Grey with Charcoal interior – 1 of only 4 RHD cars produced with this combination. One of only 99 cars produced in total. 14,300 miles from new. Full Aston Martin Heritage approved service history from new. 5.9 litre V12 delivering 435bhp capable of around 190 mph and 0-60 mph in comfortably under 5 seconds.

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BRITISH BEEF

The classic V8 Vantage was a very British supercar and its appeal remains undiminished. Here's our guide to a true Aston great

WORDS PETER TOMALIN | **PHOTOGRAPHY** MATTHEW HOWELL


RPM X 100
FUEL
FOOTWELL LH
FOOTWELL RH
VENT RECIRC DEFOG DEF
MPH
km/h

Above and right
For the first time, 'Vantage' signified a standalone model in the Aston range, not just a tuned engine. This 1987 example has the much-vaunted 'X-Pack' engine, which took peak power past 400bhp

Aston Martin first kicked around the idea of a Vantage version of its V8 as far back as 1969, just after the DBS V8 was introduced. A prototype was built with what was virtually a race-spec engine and reportedly hit 170mph in testing, but the financial climate wasn't propitious, and then David Brown sold the company and the idea was quietly shelved. Tricky times followed, culminating in the closure of the factory for the best part of a year. When it reopened in 1975, Aston badly needed something special to get itself noticed again. The management soon seized on William Towns's audacious Lagonda saloon; meanwhile a small team of engineers resurrected the idea of a go-faster Aston. And so the Vantage was born.

The name had been around since the '50s but usually to denote a tuned engine. Now, for the first time, Vantage would be a stand-alone model. Not only would the engine be given a power boost, but tyres, brakes, suspension, and even the aerodynamics would all receive attention. The small team, led by Mike Loasby, achieved a minor miracle with few resources but a lot of know-how.

The first step, of course, was wringing more power from the 5.3-litre V8 engine, which was back on Weber carburettors after mixed fortunes with Bosch mechanical fuel injection. For the Vantage, four twin-choke Webers with 48mm throats rather than the standard car's 42mm instruments were chosen. There would also be bigger inlet valves, revised camshafts and a re-routed, bigger-bore (and rather fruitier-sounding) exhaust. While the standard V8 was producing around 320bhp, the Vantage saw that climb to 375bhp at 6000rpm, with a seriously beefy 380lb ft of torque at 4000rpm.

Almost all were fitted with the ZF five-speed manual gearbox. (If the Vantage you're looking at has an automatic 'box, chances are it's not a Vantage at all but a regular V8 dressed up to look like one.) To cope with the extra muscle, the suspension was stiffened with new Koni dampers, there were bigger vented brake discs, and the tyres were switched to Pirelli CN12s, 255/60 VR15s front and rear.

In a rare event for Aston at the time, the team wangled a session in MIRA's wind tunnel, where they found that drag could be reduced by 10 per cent by faring-in the headlights and blanking off not just the grille but also the large air-scoop on the bonnet with no detriment to either engine cooling or getting air to the Webers, while a deep front air-dam and bootlid spoiler reduced lift. The extra driving lamps set into the grille were deemed essential for the sort of speeds of which the Vantage was capable.

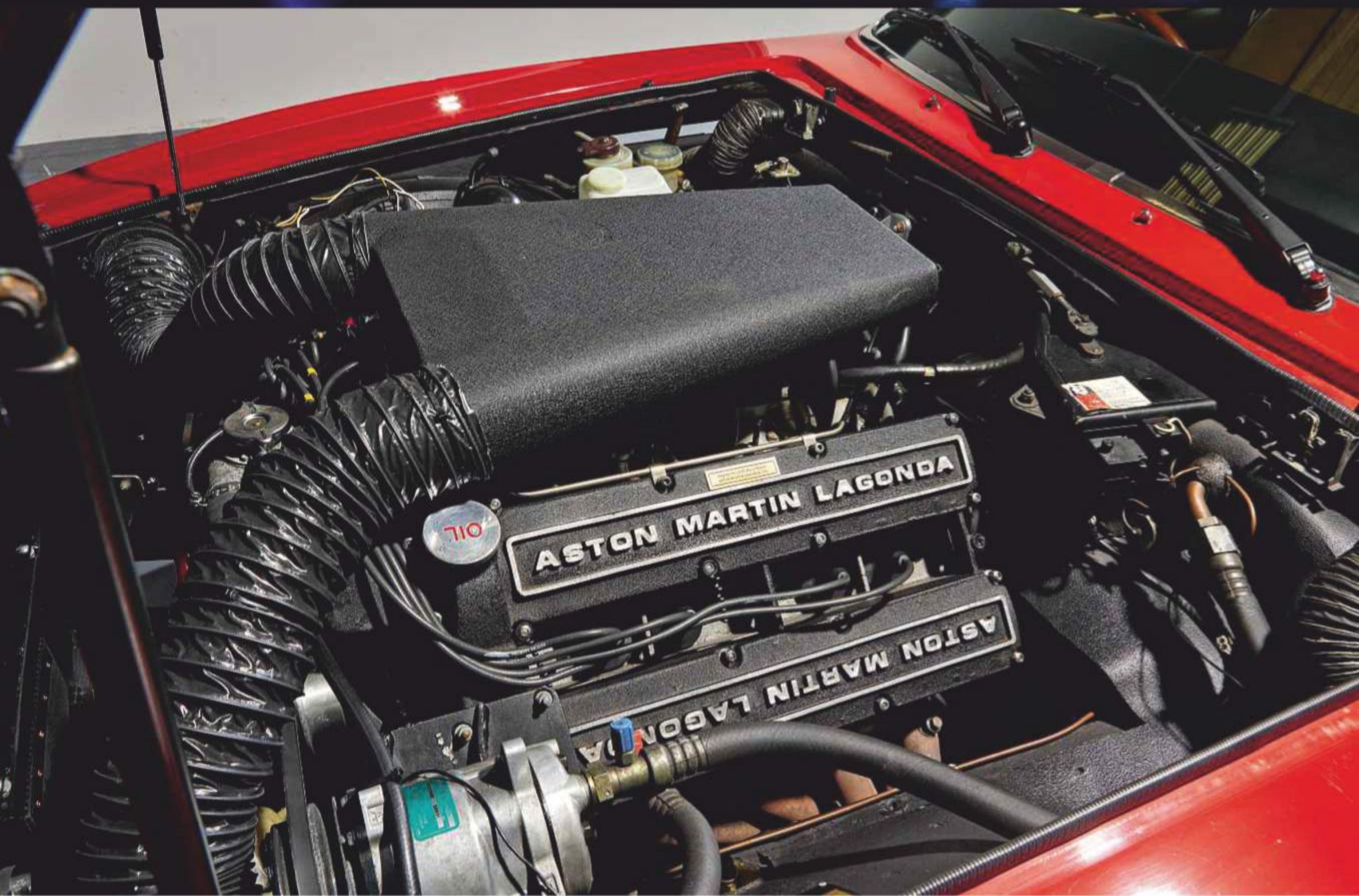
When it was launched in February 1977, independent tests put its top speed at just a smidge under 170mph with a 0-60mph time of 5.4sec. This was properly rapid for the late-70s, and while the Aston's immense weight (close to two tons fuelled) and prodigious thirst (low-teens on a spirited run) were acknowledged, road-testers of the day loved it. Here was a British car more than capable of taking on the Ferrari Berlinetta Boxer, Lamborghini Countach and Porsche 911 Turbo.

A revised model, codenamed 'Oscar India', appeared in October 1978, the bonnet bulge now smoothed-over, the rear spoiler incorporated into a neat, flicked-up tail, peak power rising to 390bhp, while a more sumptuous interior with lashings of walnut veneer became a popular option. By the end of the decade, Astons were rivalling Rolls-Royce for hedonistic luxury. A Volante version followed in October 1986 and production of both saloon and soft-top continued until December 1989.

There was another power increase in 1986 with the introduction of the 580X – or X-Pack – engine. This had higher-lift camshafts, larger ports to the cylinder heads and a higher compression ratio. Peak power was now 410bhp or as much as 437bhp with the optional 50 IDF Webers and a sports exhaust (the spec that went into the fearsome Vantage Zagato).

This is an X-Pack in the photos, a 1987 car in Suffolk Red, for sale at Aston Martin Works at the time of writing. It's an original right-hand-


691 AMX


710
ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA
ASTON MARTIN LAGONDA

drive car, 74,000 miles from new. A glance through the paperwork shows it had an engine overhaul in 2007, transmission rebuild in 2009, suspension overhaul and upgrade in 2005, brake upgrade in 2011, repaint in 2013 and retrim in 2016, plus a comprehensive service including new tyres at Works in 2017, all of which is reflected in the £495,000 price tag. That's very much top money, even for an X-Pack, but it's an indication of how far the stock of such cars has risen in recent times.

Ed Barton-Hilton, of specialists Nicholas Mee & Co, says prices really took off between 2014 and 2016. 'Back in 2012, we sold a really nice non-X-Pack Vantage for £85,000. Two years later the same car went for £140,000. Now it's for sale again at £275,000. It was probably worth more than that at one point, but the market has cooled a bit over the last year or so. That said, we're seeing signs that things are picking up again.'

Ed reckons that £225,000 is the starting point for sound cars with history, rising to £275,000 for really good cars, with X-Packs from around £350,000. In the Aston world, Volantes usually command a huge premium, but the Vantage Volante's very '80s bodywork isn't universally loved, so £325,000 gets you a good one. The exception is the subtler 'Prince of Wales' spec (as featured in *Vantage* issue 24), which can easily fetch £750,000-plus.

At £225,000-£275,000, a V8 Vantage actually looks pretty decent value, considering that an equivalent DB4 would be twice as much, a DB5 more again. For a slightly younger generation, Britain's first supercar is every bit as iconic as those classic 'DB' Astons – and it's rarer, too. Across all variants, the total produced was only 534, of which just 121 were X-Pack cars.

So if you're considering buying one, what do you need to know? We spoke to Neil Calvert, assistant manager at the Aston Workshop, and where better to start than with the bodywork and chassis. The Vantage uses the classic Aston method of hand-formed aluminium alloy outer panels over a steel superstructure, and both are prone to corrosion, though it's beneath the skin that the real problem areas lie.

'With the chassis, the worst areas are the sills, the boot floor, the outriggers and, in the engine bay, the inner wheelarches and the area between the wheelarch and the bulkhead. Rust-proofing was pretty basic – they were coated in red oxide primer and that was about it. And there's not much difference between the oldest cars and the youngest ones – even the newest are 30 years old now, and they all seem to suffer.

'A good way to check the sills is to remove the stainless steel covers,' Neil continues. 'If the sills need repairs, you've got to cut away the bottoms of the wings, so there's a lot of work and then you have to get into paintwork. It could cost up to £10,000 for the whole job.

'The problems with the outer panels tend to be where there are water traps, and where aluminium meets steel. There was a membrane between the two metals, but if it deteriorates

'FOR MANY, THE VANTAGE IS EVERY BIT AS ICONIC AS THE CLASSIC DB ASTONS'


91 AMX

then you get corrosion. Where the bottoms of the wings meet the sills is typical. You also get water trapped between the windscreen seal and the body, so you get corrosion bubbling up around the screen, but at least it isn't structural.

'Mechanically, they're really very strong, so the most important thing is evidence of regular servicing,' says Neil. When these cars were new, servicing intervals were every 5000 miles, with manual adjustment of the timing chains required every 10,000 miles. Most Vantages today do tiny mileages, but any specialist you speak to will advise an annual service and checkover, not least to nip any developing issues in the bud and prevent larger bills further down the road.

'Oil leaks can be expensive to rectify,' says Neil. 'Replacing the sump gasket requires engine removal, as would a leak from the rear main bearing. The V8 has steel liners in an aluminium block with O-rings on the bottom of the liners to seal them into the block – there are weep-holes on the outside of the block, and oil there could indicate a problem with the seals.

'The transmission is similarly robust. Don't expect them to be particularly refined – it's old technology and you do get some odd noises: the gearbox chatters away at idle, but they shouldn't be horrendously noisy and they're generally pretty reliable. The rear diff cradle can break, particularly with the X-Pack cars; when we rebuild them we add strengthening plates. All Vantages can be hard on suspension bushes, so we'd be looking for evidence of work there.

'Parts supply is generally very good. One thing to check is that the heater and air-con both work, as that's potentially a big expense to fix, particularly on early cars with the Coolaire system with slider controls. Generally it's a good, reliable car, but as with any Aston, they can be expensive to fix. We'd always recommend getting any car inspected – we charge about £400 and I really do think that's money well spent.'

Serial Aston owner David Wright has had his V8 Vantage – a non-X-Pack but otherwise very similar to the car here, in the same Suffolk Red – since 2012. 'I'd dreamed of owning one for as long as I could remember,' he says. 'As a teenager, I just thought they were the most fantastic looking car.

'A friend tipped me off about this car that was being sold by an insolvency agent after the previous owner had gone bankrupt, and in a wonderful coincidence it was being kept in a garage on the site of the old David Brown tractor factory at Meltham Mills. The car had no history but it was in great condition; I had some other people look at it and they all said I had to buy it. So I did. By another coincidence, I later found out it was the 1984 Motor Show car – which I had photographed as a 21-year-old! Oh, and it was road-registered on January 1, 1985, which was my father's 65th birthday and the day he officially retired. It was clearly meant to be.

'All it's needed has been an annual service – usually it costs about £1000. It doesn't do a lot of miles but it's been totally reliable. I love driving it – it's not as easy as my V550, you really have to take control of it, be assertive, then it's a lovely thing. I still think it's absolutely gorgeous, and other people just love seeing it on the road, which only adds to the pleasure.'

Specification (X-Pack)

ENGINE V8, 5340cc, 4 x 40 IDF Weber carburettors
MAX POWER 410bhp @ 6500rpm
MAX TORQUE 400lb ft @ 5000rpm
TRANSMISSION Five-speed manual, rear-wheel drive, limited-slip differential **SUSPENSION** Front: double wishbones, coil springs, telescopic dampers, anti-roll bar. Rear: de Dion tube, trailing arms and Watt's linkage, coil springs, telescopic dampers
STEERING Rack-and-pinion, power-assisted
BRAKES Vented discs, 292mm front, 264mm rear
WHEELS 16in front and rear, al alloy **TYRES** 255/50 R16
WEIGHT c1800kg **POWER TO WEIGHT** c245bhp/ton
0-60MPH 5.2sec **TOP SPEED** 170mph **PRICE NEW** £59,950 in 1987 (£170,000 in today's money)

What the road testers said at the time

'A NEW PERFORMANCE STANDARD has been set amongst so-called "super-cars". And it originates not in Modena or Stuttgart, but in urban Newport Pagnell...

A furious, throaty roar from the Webers and twin exhausts greets modest pressure of the right foot, rising to an ecstatic howl when the power starts to come in above 2000rpm. By no stretch of the imagination could this be called a quiet car, yet the nature of the noise and its level is not painful – to the enthusiasts who are likely to buy the Vantage, it will be joyous music, as it was to me.

Its performance is simply stupendous and relentless. While Boxers, Countachs and Porsche Turbos habitually eat their clutches if full-power standing starts are attempted, this Aston simply lays a trail of rubber as the big clutch bites progressively, and then takes off like a scalded tiger.

The continuing surge of power as the speedometer needle soars past 120mph in fifth is a rare experience in a road car. I had that needle as far as 150mph and even then there was no sign of the acceleration tailing off, which suggests that a Turbo would be hard-pushed to hang on to a Vantage. The Vantage also shows absolute stability at 150mph, making it a very reassuring and comfortable high-speed cruiser.

Not only in performance does this Aston prove the mid-engined exotics are not the be all and end all. It has leech-like roadholding (almost 0.9 *g* cornering power, says Mike Loasby), and when it does start to slide it does it gently, predictably, with none of the mid-engined viciousness. Excellent handling and positive steering that shows hardly a trace of assistance shrink this big car into a joyful plaything. It rolls somewhat if pushed very hard, but this doesn't seem to upset the equilibrium of its handling. The brakes need a hefty touch, but they reward with marvellous stopping power, capable of 1.2 *g*.

Here is a car with the performance and handling of a racing car and the luxurious appointments of a limousine, with none of the accommodation or visibility drawbacks of mid-engined super-cars.' – ***Motor Sport*, April, 1978**


ROAD TEST
The Aston Martin Vantage

1980 Aston Martin V8 Vantage 580X spec

Large history file with many upgrades carried out by works service including engine, side skirts, suspension etc.

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INTO THE BLUE

Jean Moss has enjoyed fresh-air motoring in her tuned DB MkIII for more than four decades. We go for a spin

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | **PHOTOGRAPHY** MATTHEW HOWELL

Jean Moss has had her 1959 Aston Martin DB MkIII drophead coupé since 1975. That's 44 years. It goes better now than it did when new, and a lot better than it did when she first saw it, neglected and immobile with a suspected head gasket failure, in Wiltshire.

'A customer had found it,' Jean relates, 'and my late husband Michael and he went to look at it. The customer then said he couldn't justify the cost of all the work it needed, so that was that. Not long afterwards, the seller called Michael. "The head gasket has gone," he said. "Would you buy it?" How much? "£1100?" No. "£850, then?" Still no.

'Michael called him back a few weeks later. Was the deal still on the table? It was, and we had a cylinder head here at Four Ashes from my father-in-law's car. So we loaded it in a Cortina estate with the kids and dogs and set off to Wiltshire. "Where's your trailer?" asked the seller when we arrived. "We're not going to trailer it – we're going to stick another head on it and drive it home." And we did.'

Jean, who has owned and run Four Ashes Garage since 2003 with Chris Adams, now her second husband, still calls herself Mrs Jean Moss. 'That's what everyone knows me as,' she says. She has been involved with Four Ashes since the 1960s, marrying Michael Moss, son of founder Jack Moss, in 1967 (you can read our 'Specialist' feature on Four Ashes starting on page 140). Jean and Michael got themselves a DB MkIII soon after they married, registered 6 KPB and once owned by Roy Salvadori, which Jean still has. 'So I've got two of them! The other one needs a rebuild, though.'

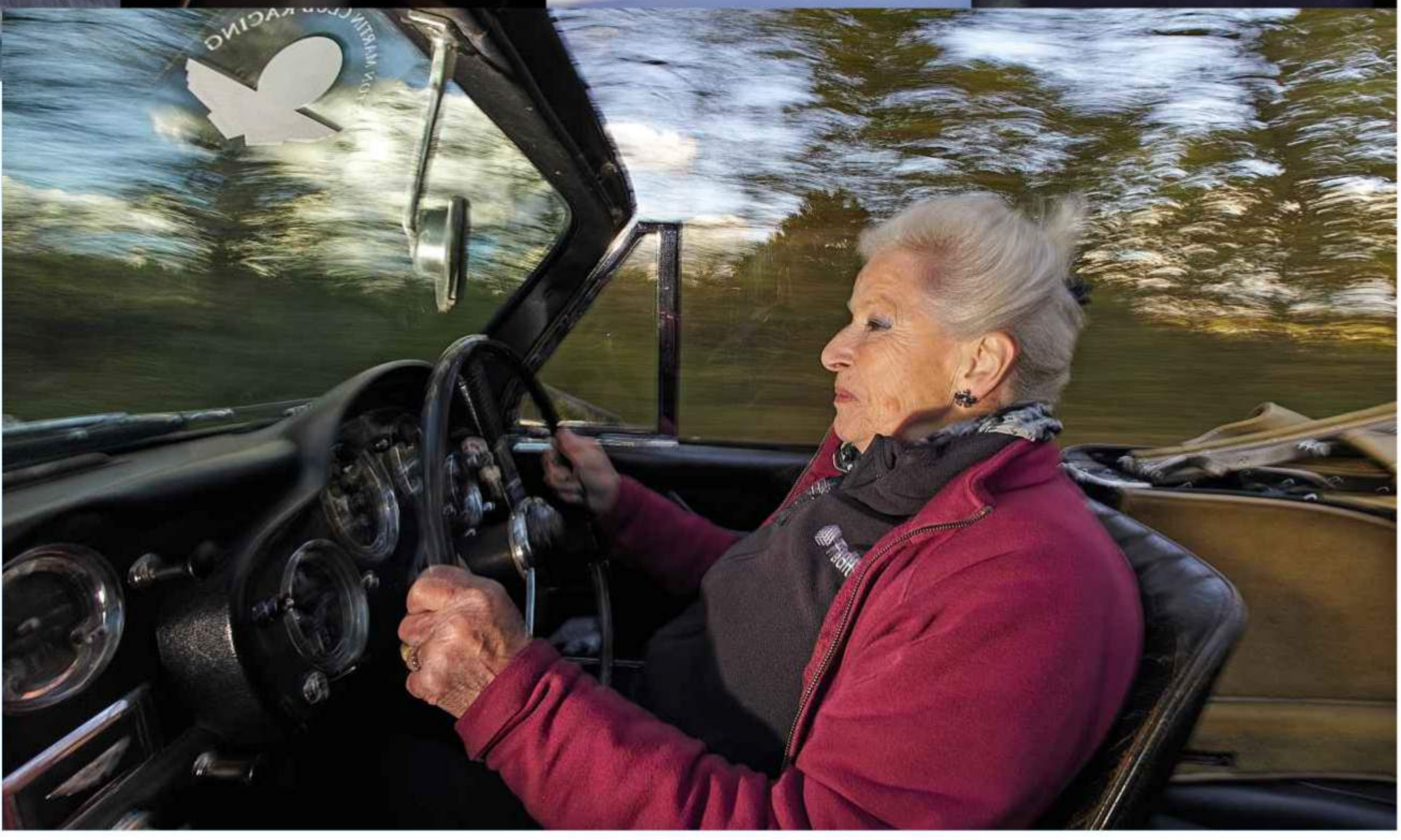
There was also a DB4 convertible between the two MkIIIs, but Jean couldn't get on with it. 'It was my size-four shoes,' she says, 'and the wall in the footwell by my heels. It was not comfortable. Then we had a daughter, worked out how we could keep both cars, then sold the DB4 and got this car.'

This car, WLY 98, is resplendent in BMW Orient Blue, a very fine metallic. It wasn't always so. '"You'll never guess what colour it is," Michael had said to me after he'd seen it for the first time. "It's purple."'

The respray was prompted by an unfortunate event. 'My father-in-law had a bit of an accident in it,' says Jean. 'He'd been doing an event at the

Above and right
Jean and WLY on the cover of the AMOC's News Sheet in October 1999, pictured at a hill climb, and right, still enjoying every moment at the wheel 20 years on

‘WLY is smart and shiny, but this is a car to be used; the joy is in the driving, the exploring’



‘The engine sounds great, deep and free-breathing, helped by being uprated with a trio of SU carburettors in place of the usual pair’

Millbrook test track, 80 minutes on the banked circuit at 80mph to celebrate being 80 years old. He did it with Tom May, who had taken the photograph of me with WLY for the cover of the AMOC’s News Sheet in 1999. Father-in-law had sold his Aston, so he borrowed this one for the event. I polished it up and all was fine. Then, at work the following morning, I got a phone call: “Sorry, I’ve hit an Escort.”

‘We couldn’t match the Roman Purple, so I stripped it off and we repainted it in this blue. The boys did some other bits and pieces while repairing the damage, such as the wheelarch edges which corrode.’

Well, it looks lovely now. The DB MkIII was the first Aston Martin with the definitive modern shape to its radiator grille, updating the look dramatically. It’s a smooth, understated, uncluttered look, the bridge between the sparing functionality of a DB2 and the Touring-styled elegance of the DB4, just coming on stream at Newport Pagnell even as this open MkIII emerged from Feltham. Its bodywork, of course, had already been at Newport Pagnell: it was made there, at the Tickford works, as badges remind us.

It sits on Pirelli Cinturatos, which were exotic and very racy in the 1950s, still excellent today as re-made in a modern rubber compound. WLY is smart and shiny, but obviously used and enjoyed. There’s ample patina here; the door handles are a bit pitted, the interior a touch rumpled. Especially the driver’s seat, on which is a very non-standard cushion. ‘I have to have it these days,’ confesses Jean, ‘because the seat is a bit sat-at.’

She positions herself on the cushion, I take up station in the passenger seat and we’re off on a drive, sun shining, wind blowing through the cabin. The engine sounds great, deep and free-breathing, helped by Chris’s uprating of it including a trio of SUs in place of the usual pair. That engine rebuild activity coincided with incorporating a gearbox with overdrive. ‘That’s the big thing we’ve done,’ Jean says. ‘It was a £25 option in 1958 but there were no motorways so few of the cars had it. It means the gear lever ends up further forward, which is why there’s an extra hole in the tunnel.’

We’re burbling along at a brisk lick, Jean stroking the Aston Martin through the gears and bends with the smooth confidence that comes from sharing many thousands of miles together. Some motorsport, too: ‘I did sprints and hillclimbs in the 1980s, mostly in MYT 265, the DB2 race car we had, but also one or two events in this. I won the AMOC ladies’ hillclimb championship.’

We pull in for a moment, not least so that lensman Howell can activate some more pixels. I ask about WLY’s history, but Jean hasn’t been able to piece much of it together pre-1975. As for that patina, it turns out that not all the interior trim is original. Jean is handy with an industrial sewing machine; she was doing trimming for Four Ashes back in the early 1980s, so she fired the skills up again and re-leathered the back seat. ‘We had a dog, a Labrador, and we used to go to Wales. The dog got wet and that ruined the leather. The carpet was shot, too, so I re-made that.’ Yes, this is a car to be used; the joy is in the driving, the exploring.

NOW, YOU PROBABLY want to know what the DB MkIII is like to drive. So do I, having up to now not driven an LB6-engined Aston with its block full of those intriguing ‘cheeses’, and Jean is happy for me to have a go. I can see, and feel, the tape around the steering wheel’s spokes where they join the rim, covering cracks beneath. Patina again. ‘We’ve had some new ones,’ Jean reports, ‘and they crack in no time. They’re just not quite strong enough.’

Ahead of the wheel is a proto-DB4 instrument panel, as shapely as that front grille and a leap forward from the DB2’s flat, symmetrical dashboard. And, of course, the overdrive switch. We move off; it’s a gutsy, torquey engine, apparently in DBD specification with those triple SUs and giving 235bhp with the help of its new aluminium cylinder head.

Specification

ENGINE In-line 6-cylinder, 2922cc **MAX POWER** 235bhp @ 5500rpm (uprated ‘DBD’ spec) **MAX TORQUE** 230lb ft @ 4500rpm **TRANSMISSION** Four-speed manual with overdrive, rear-wheel drive **SUSPENSION** Front: independent, trailing links, coil springs, lever arm dampers. Rear: live axle, parallel trailing arms, Panhard rod, coil springs, lever-arm dampers **STEERING** Worm-and-roller, unassisted **BRAKES** Discs front (305mm), drums rear **WHEELS** 6 x 16in, wire-spoke, front and rear **TYRES** 185 HR16 front and rear **WEIGHT** 1360kg (est) **POWER TO WEIGHT** c175bhp/ton **0-60MPH** c8.5sec **TOP SPEED** c120mph **PRICE NEW** £3451 (£83,000 in today’s money) **VALUE TODAY** c£350,000+

The steering, though heavy at low speeds, is accurate in a way I wasn’t expecting – today’s re-made steering box components are why – and the whole car feels unbreakably all-of-a-piece. Good firm brakes, too; this is how old cars should be, functioning as they were designed to do with no sign of age-related tiredness. You could easily drive big distances in this car. Jean and Chris do just that.

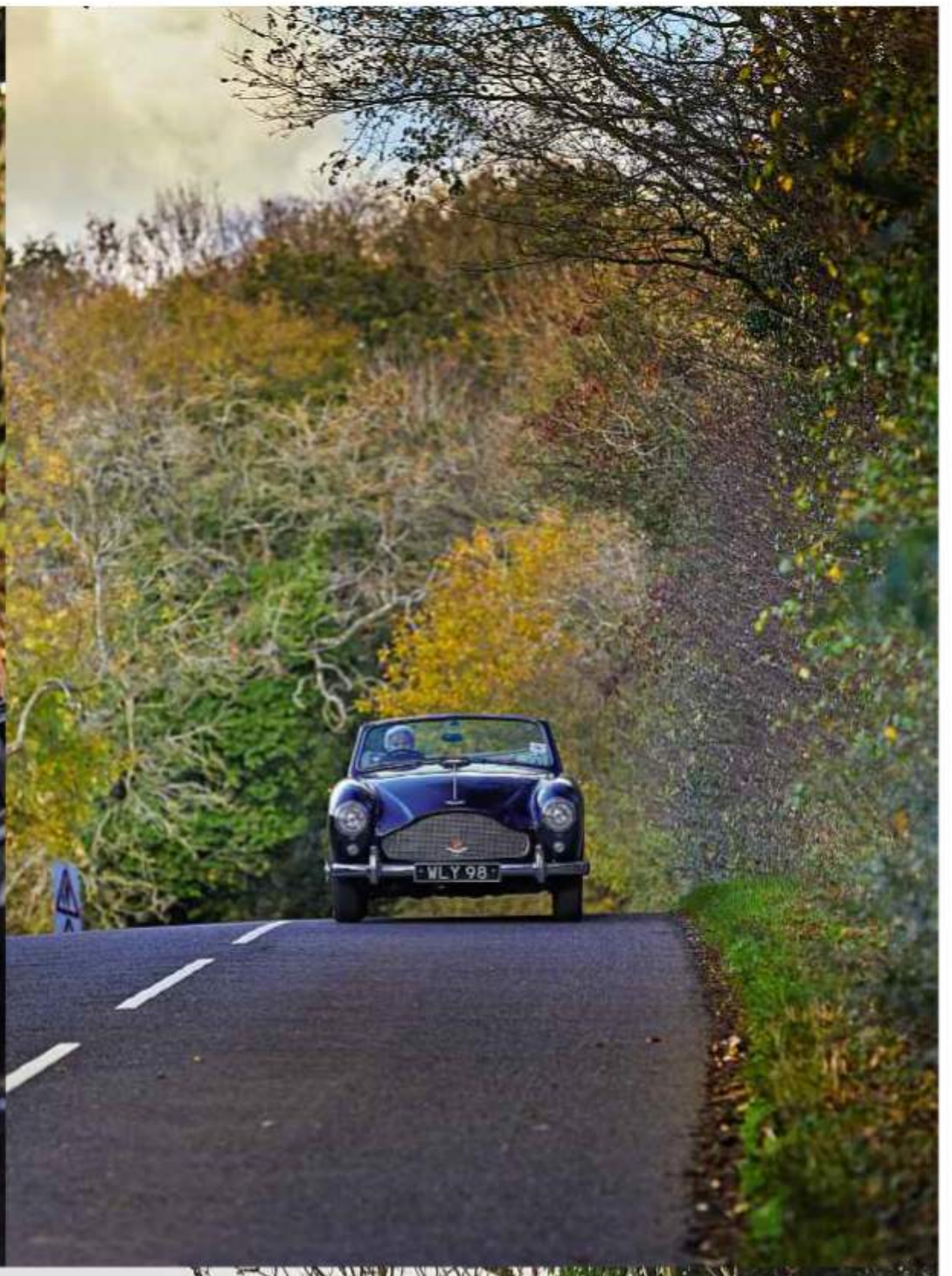
Back at Four Ashes, Chris talks me through the engine rebuild. Jean has already told me about how new MkIII blocks hadn’t been available for years, and how WLY’s original one was used as a pattern. That was while the car was laid up for what turned out to be 15 years, the head fitted to it back in 1975 for its drive from Wiltshire having cracked. ‘It didn’t have a thermostat,’ Chris explains, ‘and the head cracks without one because water doesn’t flow properly around two of the cylinders. It has a decent heater now.’

That Jean had taken the engine to 6500rpm in the esses at a Wiscombe sprint event didn’t help, either. It was getting through ‘gallons’ of water, and it was time to take it apart. ‘The main bearings were shot,’ recalls Chris, ‘down to the copper with no white metal left, and the block was cracked by the top of the liners.’

So a new block, a new crankshaft and a new head were all gathered together. ‘We used the best race parts,’ says Chris, ‘the rods, the crank, those super-versatile camshafts, the triple-carb inlet manifold with small ports to keep the torque high. In 2016 it was all built, and the plan was we were going to take it on holiday to Sicily. But it touched 8000rpm on the dyno for a few seconds when we were testing it, and the piston rings had shaken themselves and flattened out. So it needed new rings, and it didn’t go on holiday after all.’

Jean and Chris have taken it all round Ireland, though, and with a few ignition issues sorted out WLY is running very efficiently. ‘It did about 12mpg when we first had it,’ Chris chuckles, ‘but it does 20mpg now. Adrian [Chettle, friend and part-time Four Ashes engineer, owner of a DB MkIII coupé] gets 26 to 28 from his.

‘Jean’s car has never had a restoration as such, just ongoing use for goodness knows how long. It’s turned out to be a really good car.’ I turn to Jean, to see that she is looking very happy indeed.


WLY 98


WLY
98

LABOUR OF LOVE

Chris Adams and Jean Moss are partners in life as well as in business. We visit their Four Ashes Garage

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER | **PHOTOGRAPHY** MATTHEW HOWELL


SAFE WORKING LOAD
8 Tons

Some garages are too good to be true. Squeaky-clean, no sign of real renovation being done, lacking in metal-bashing, rust-banishing, oil-infused realism. They keep the dirty, really physical stuff hidden away while parading the clinical cleanliness that makes customers feel better about the cheques they'll be writing. Four Ashes Garage is not like that.

Four Ashes Garage, at Pathlow on the old A34 between Stratford-on-Avon and Birmingham, is a proper garage. It looks as if it should have a showroom, but the space is filled with boxes and parts in what looks to me like chaotic disarray. 'I know where everything is,' says co-proprietor Jean Moss. 'Now, come with me to the workshop and mind you don't trip over anything.'

Business partner and husband Chris Adams is aware that stock control could be slicker, but it works. 'We did have a new system. A Polish lad got it all written down. We got half-way through setting it up and then I lost the password. We'll do it again but it'll take longer this time.'

Parts. That's the main focus of Four Ashes nowadays, although mechanical rebuilds and a full restoration are inching along nicely in the workshop: mostly Feltham-era DBs, though there's a tired V8 in there too, and Newport Pagnell DBs are also catered for. Nothing modern, though.

'The DB2/4s and MkIIIs get a bit of a bad press,' Chris continues. 'People say they don't handle and have sloppy steering. Not when they leave here, they don't.' He has also managed to extract extra power from their LB6 engines over the years, as in Jean's DB MkIII drophead coupé featured on the preceding pages. 'That gives 235bhp, 40 per cent more than standard. The modified stuff we do is what the racing department would have done in period, not too outrageous.

'We've done only a couple of standard LB engines in the last 20 years. Most of what we build have 210bhp and lots of torque, which is the most you can have with twin SUs. We haven't had new blocks cast ourselves, but we've sold more than anyone. The original blocks are now very tired and they tend to crack at the base of the cylinder apertures. It's worse in the later ones, because the block pattern was worn out, which caused an undercut in the casting.'

At this point, some background history is in order. It's a history of how the motor trade used to be and how it has led to the delightful timewarp that is Four Ashes. The business began in 1954, when Jack Moss set up in a wooden pre-war garage in Four Ashes Road, Dorridge, Solihull with a business partner who soon left and a young mechanic called Tom Butler. They gained a reputation for repairing cars other garages turned away, including interesting machinery such as Bentleys and Bugattis.

In 1957, plans were approved for a modern brick-built garage, where Four Ashes stayed until 1976. It was a Rootes dealer during the 1960s but still worked on unusual cars, a Mercedes Gullwing and an Italian restaurateur's DB MkIII among them. Jack's son Michael joined the enterprise in 1959 and bought himself a DB2 in 1963, the car that set Four Ashes on its Aston Martin direction. He married Jean in 1967, and the two of them restored a Lotus Elan whose sale funded a DB MkIII drophead.

Feltham Astons appeared ever more often at Four Ashes, and the garage even sold new DB6s in the late 1960s. Chris Adams joined in 1974, two years before the site was sold to become a Datsun dealership and Four Ashes moved to its present location. Business thrived: at one point there were ten employees.

But then came a year of turmoil in 1982. Chris left to set up another business, and in November Michael Moss, Jean's husband, died in a car accident when his MGB's tyre burst. Chris returned the following year, and as time passed he and Jean became an 'item'. Jean, having been making carpets for customer cars for a while, was now working full time at Four Ashes.

It was becoming clear that new parts were needed to keep the Feltham Astons going. Pistons were one outcome: 'We were looking for more power,' Chris recalls, 'so we went to see Omega [a well-known maker of performance pistons]. They designed a piston with modern rings, and it's now on version five.'

Chris had a spell running his own repair, restoration and race-prep business, but he returned again to Four Ashes in 1999. Meanwhile Jack Moss's health was failing; he died in 2003 at the age of 86, secure in the knowledge that the business was in safe hands with Jean and Chris.

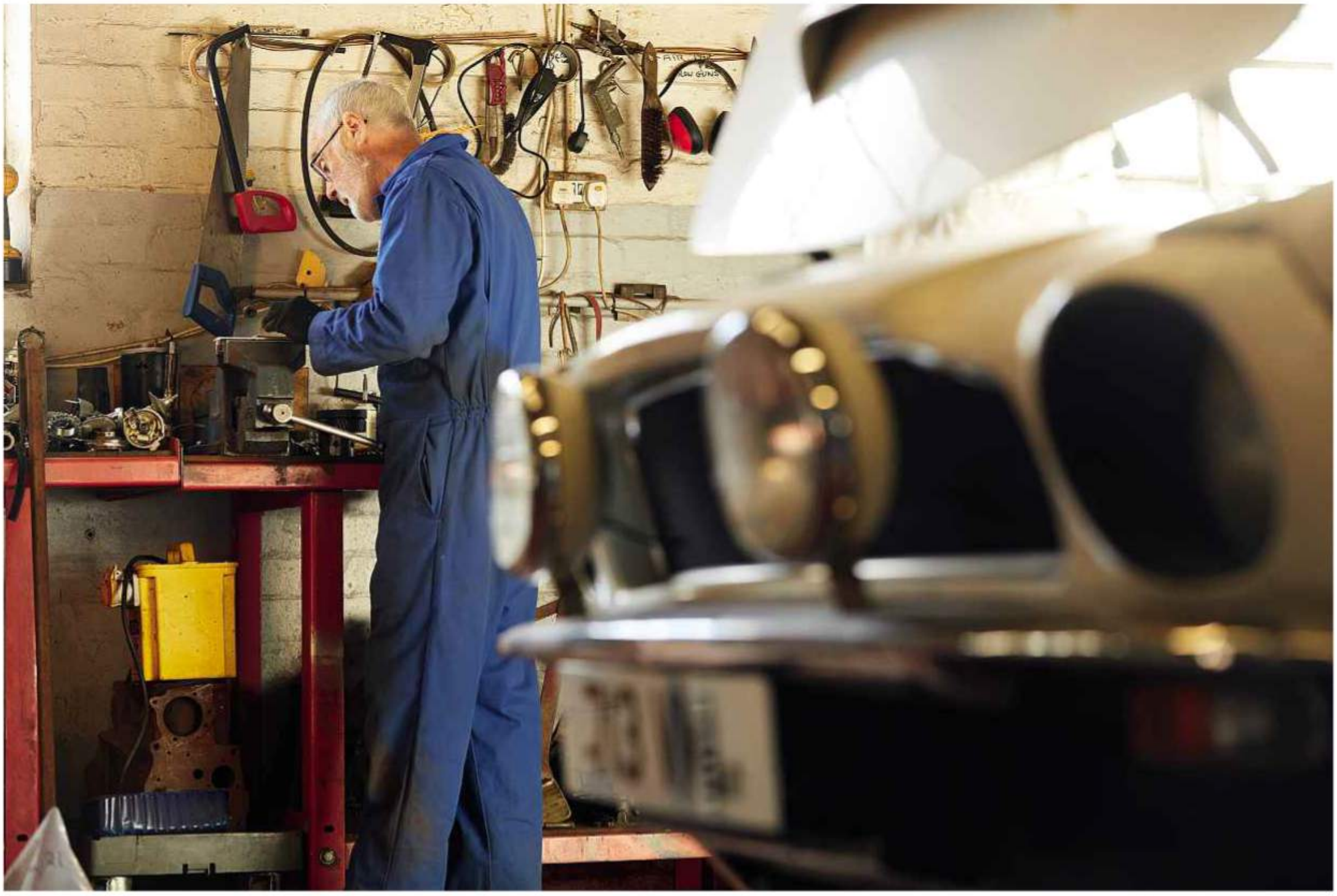
Four Ashes continued to restore Aston Martins, prepare racing cars and to develop and sell parts, albeit with gradually reduced staff. Times were changing from the days of 'keeping Astons running on a budget, standing in a pool of oil that it's pissed out of the back main'. One of the garage's most successful projects has been 8 EMU, much raced in historic events by owner Andy Sharp since 2005 and reckoned by some to be the fastest DB2 ever. And then, in April 2017, Chris and Jean finally got married.

'There were eight of us in 1985, but now it's just Jean and me and sometimes Adrian,' says Chris. 'We don't really do complete cars any more – it's not worth making £5 profit from a £220,000 job – so it's mainly parts. I reckon we've spent £1m in development costs over the last 44 years.'

But there are rebuilds happening in the workshop, and

'FELTHAM ASTONS APPEARED EVER MORE OFTEN AT FOUR ASHES'

Right and below
Adrian Chettle helps out part-time; Chris checks his work on a rebuilt DB2/4 gearbox, and Jean (bottom right) assembles interior light fittings for a Feltham DB Aston. Four Ashes keeps a vast range of parts in stock, many of them original but many more freshly manufactured



Clockwise from above
A small section of Four Ashes' 'gasket wall'; Arrow connecting roads with Four Ashes markings; V8 saloon in for engine work

servicing activity. A DB2 once owned by John Barnard, he of F1 design and engineering fame, who transplanted first a Chevrolet V8 then a Ford Zodiac straight-six into it, is nearing completion of a full restoration that includes reinstatement of the original engine type. And there's that V8. 'It's in for a load of engine problems,' says Chris. 'It had a broken head stud and has had several attempts to weld the castings. I don't know if it will be successful yet. Can you believe a new head is £6250 plus VAT?'

He shows me a DB2/4 gearbox with one of his new first-gear assemblies. Another 'box, being worked on by Adrian, is from one of the three original four-cylinder prototype DB2s. 'The parts are dated 1946 or 1947,' says Chris with reverence, 'so we've rebuilt it as sympathetically as possible, just new synchro rings and a few minor mods.'

Building a gearbox takes 20-24 hours, Chris reckons. And an engine? 'The fastest engine build I've done is 65 hours, but nowadays it's 110-120 hours minimum. You have to measure every single thing. That said, it took me 15 years to build the engine in Jean's MkIII…'

A typical Four Ashes engine will use Arrow connecting rods with Four Ashes markings ('same price, but you get the advice for free if you're doing it yourself') and Colsibro (copper/silicon/bronze) valve guides. It will be built to tighter clearances than originally. 'I spend a lot of time with the piston rings. Did you know that, on average, a piston ring rotates around its piston at 7rpm for every 1000 crankshaft rpm? As for oil consumption, a rebuilt engine should do 2500-3000 miles on a litre of oil.'

And as for the parts that Four Ashes has had made, it's a mighty list. Examples? An inlet manifold for Weber DCOE carburettors, more useful than the factory's manifold for now-unobtainable DCO3s of which only nine were sold out of the 60 that Aston made, and also more efficient. Or the petrol reserve valve. 'We're the only company in the world making that. Aston Martin needs another 20 for the Zagato and 30 for the DB5 project, so we'll have to make some more.'

Four Ashes uses five or six companies, mainly local, to make such parts, and some – such as kingpins – are also supplied to other specialists. 'We all get on really well,' says Chris. Re-designed rear hubs, halfshafts and hub nuts remedy past design shortcomings such as a tendency to develop cracks. A revised oil-cap seal cures leaks. New window seals for Series 1 and GT DB4s cure wind noise.

Tuning parts? 'There are two camshaft profiles I really like,' says Chris, 'one of them a very versatile fast-road cam. And for the 2.6-litre block, which is weaker than the 3-litre, there's a ladder between the block and the sump to use when you have decent horsepower.'

Then there are the perfectly reproduced bits of interior furniture, such as the DB MkIII dipswitch stalk, reverse-engineered and 3D-printed from a scanned original, and likewise the interior light, its lens now plastic and lit by a 'warm' LED but its frosted surface visually identical to the glass original. And a whole lot more besides.

We're climbing back down from the storage loft to a rendezvous with Jean, baked beans on toast, a Marmite-smeared crumpet and another cup of tea. I didn't think I liked Marmite, but that's about to change. 'That's the gasket wall,' Chris points out as we pass. 'We've modified the original designs, a coolant hole here, strengthened corners there. Everything we make is largely improved.'

Four Ashes is a refreshing vignette of an earlier era, yet Chris and Jean are up to speed with today's manufacturing methods. They draw the line at today's Astons, though. Two days after our first visit, I drop by again in the latest V8 Vantage, snarling and crackling and remarkably wide. They're impressed but wary. Might they one day cater for such machinery? 'Not a chance,' says Jean.

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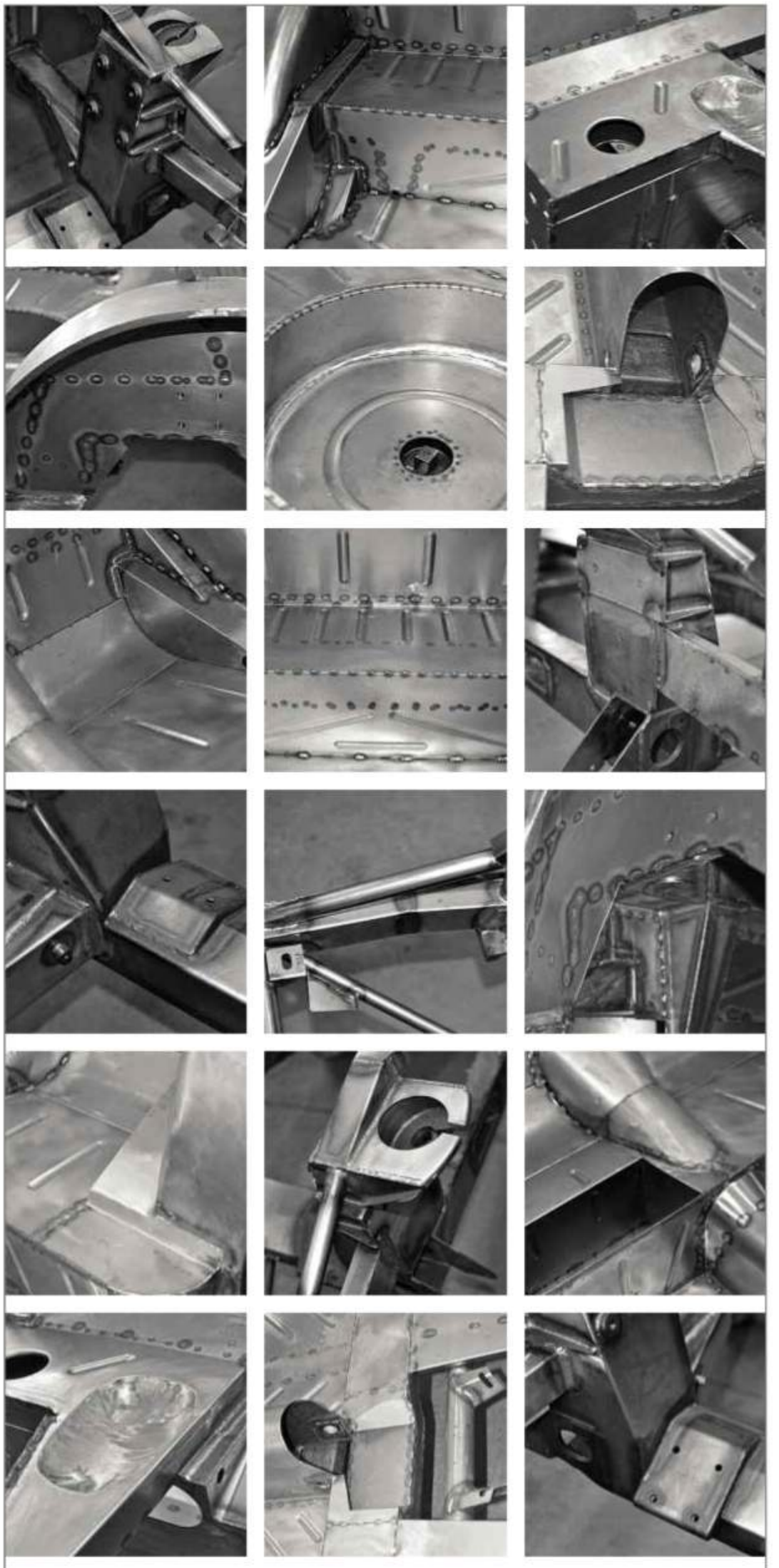

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1920s-1930s

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 (above) 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, while 1929 saw the introduction of the low-slung, dry-sumped International model (pictured), 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.

Timothy J. Stamper

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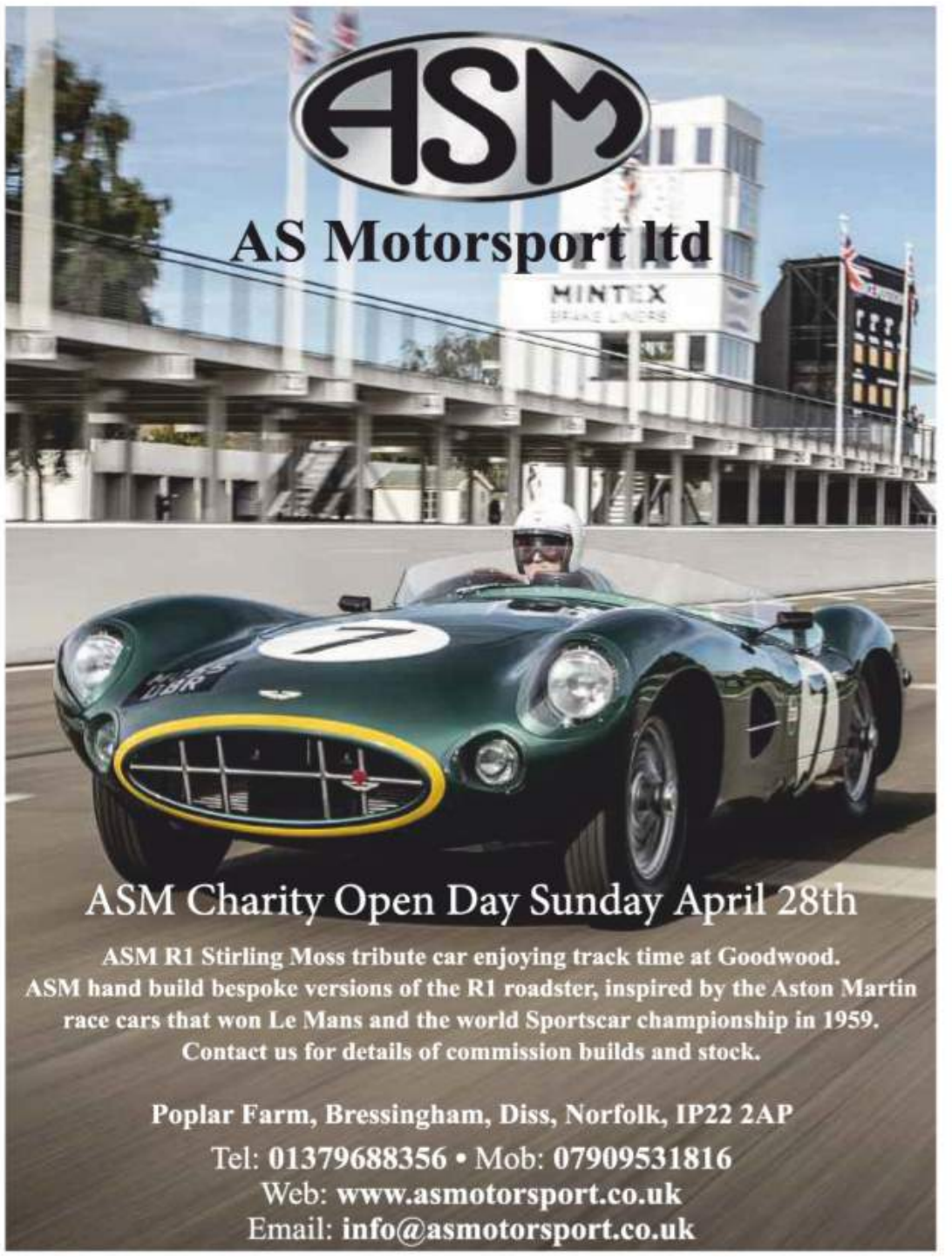

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1930s-1950s

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 could be 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' bit for its 1957-1959 range of coupés, 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 LB6 was now making well over 150bhp (up to 190bhp on triple Webers). The MkIII actually overlapped with the introduction of the DB4 by several months, and total production hit 551. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 15.

2-litre Sports (DB1) **1948-1950**

SPECIFICATION
Engine 1970cc, 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 production 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 14 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' too. 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. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 8.

DB4 **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, whose 'Superleggera' construction involved aluminium bodywork wrapped around a steel skeleton frame. 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 saw power rise to 266bhp. Total production: 1210. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 22.

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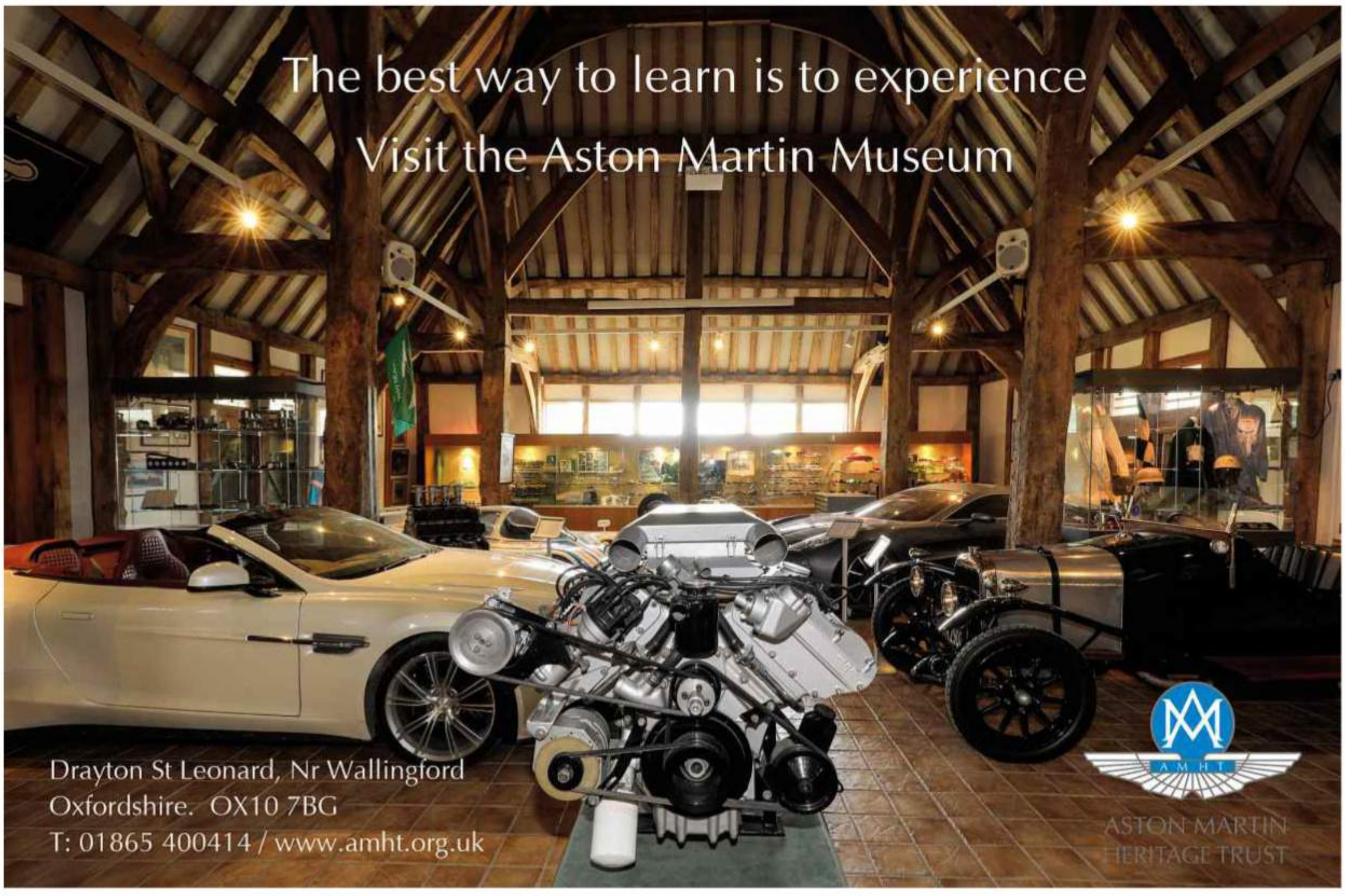

ALL THE ROAD CARS 1960s-1970s

DB4 GT/GT Zagato **1959-1963**

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

In 1959, Aston introduced the DB4 GT, a lighter, short-wheelbase competition version of the DB4 with a twin-plug 302bhp engine. A number of chassis were also sent to Zagato to be clothed in even lighter aluminium bodywork, while further tuning lifted peak power to 314bhp. These 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 **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 revered in its own right – and famous above all other Astons – wholly because of its role in the James Bond film franchise. New was the 4-litre engine and the option of a five-speed gearbox, which soon became standard. Regular DB5s had 282bhp, the Vantage 314bhp. The Convertible version was succeeded in 1965 by the ultra-rare 'Short Chassis Volante' model, the first use of the Volante name. Total production: 1023. Buying guide, issue 6.

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 1969, 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 **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 a 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. Volante came in 1966. The Mk2, which arrived in July 1969, had flared wheelarches over wider wheels. Total production: 1967. Buying guide, issue 6.

AM V8 **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 DBS V8 became the AM V8, while the mechanical 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. Volante arrived in 1978, electronic fuel injection in 1986. In its various guises, the V8 would soldier on for almost 20 years, in which time 4021 were built. Volante buying guide, *Vantage* issue 4.

ALL THE ROAD CARS 1970s-1990s

Lagonda (Series 1) **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 (Series 2-4) **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, 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. Buying guide, issue 10.

Virage **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 was 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. Buying guide, issue 24.

V8 Vantage **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 AM V8 but was now a model-line in its own right. With a 375bhp version of the 5.3-litre V8 (later 410bhp) and a top speed of 170mph, it was pitched head-to-head with the Ferrari BB and Lamborghini Countach for the title of world's fastest car. With its blanked-off grille and bonnet scoop, deep air dam and bootlid spoiler, it certainly looked the part. When production ended in 1989, 534 had been built, 192 of them Volantes. Buying guide, issue 25.

V8 Zagato **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 coupés were immediately snapped up at £87,000 a pop (37 Volante 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 to 60mph and was verified at 185.8mph, making it the fastest Aston yet.

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+

Works' 6.3-litre V8 had shown the appetite for a faster Virage, and in 1993 came the full-house Vantage, 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' editions brought total production to 279. Buying guide, issue 16.

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ALL THE ROAD CARS 1990s-2000s

V8 Coupé **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 terrribly 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.

DB7 V12 Vantage **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.

DB9 **2004-2016**

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

The DB9 was effectively the successor to the highly successful DB7 Vantage, with the latest version of the 5.9-litre V12, a Touchtronic auto 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. Volante arrived in 2005, and in 2008 power grew to 470bhp. For 2013 the car was given a major refresh, now with 510bhp. End-of-line GT version had 540bhp. Buying guide, issue 7.

DB7 **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 Ian Callum-penned Vanquish had a 460bhp version of the V12 engine and a bonded aluminium platform. The 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. Buying guide, issue 5.

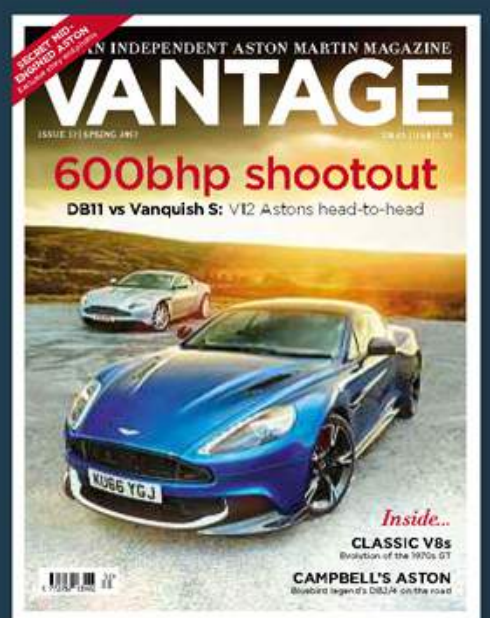
V8 Vantage **2005-2018**

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 finding homes. Its Jaguar-derived quad-cam V8, originally a 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, came in 2011. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 1.

BACK ISSUES

Just the thing to complete your Vantage collection



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ALL THE ROAD CARS 2000s-2010s

DBS **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 debuted as Bond in *Casino Royale*. With power ramped up to 510bhp, aggressive styling and harder-edged dynamics, the DBS was Mr Hyde to the DB9's Dr Jekyll. A Volante version appeared in 2009. At the end of 2012, the DBS was replaced by the new Vanquish. Buying guide, *Vantage* issue 18.

Rapide **2009-2012**

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

With Porsche enjoying 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 weren't as strong as Aston hoped, and production moved to Gaydon in late 2012. Relaunched as the Rapide S for 2013 with a deeper new front grille and 550bhp. Buying guide, issue 17.

Cygnet **2010–2013**

SPECIFICATION
Engine 1330cc, in-line 4-cyl
Power 97bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 92lb ft @ 4400rpm
0-60mph 11.6sec
Top speed 106mph

Based on the Toyota iQ, the Cygnet was designed to deliver Aston levels of style and opulence in a city car. Extensively rebodied to incorporate familiar Aston design cues and retrimmed in sumptuous leather, but mechanically unchanged, it wasn't without appeal as a city runabout but on the open road it was no performance car. At £30,995, it was also breathtakingly expensive. Ulrich Bez, whose baby it was, hoped it would sell by the thousand, but with just hundreds sold it was quietly dropped in 2013. Buying guide, issue 23.

V12 Vantage **2009-2018**

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 it produced one of its finest drivers' cars. Distinguished by its bonnet vents, the V12V built on the V8's agility and added another level of performance and desirability. Roadster arrived in 2012 and the 565bhp 'S' in 2013: with a top speed of 205mph, it was the fastest series-production Aston so far. The V12 also spawned a Zagato version, just 101 of which were built. Buying guide, issue 11.

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.

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 the Virage name was soon dropped, the car effectively becoming the updated DB9 for 2013.

ALL THE ROAD CARS 2010-present

Vanquish **2012-2018**

SPECIFICATION (2015MY)
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 565bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 201mph

The original Vanquish was a landmark car, and it was a brave move to resurrect the name for a new series-production flagship. If the new car wasn't quite the same game-changer, the combination of aggressively shaped carbonfibre bodywork, a 565bhp V12, adaptive damping and carbon brakes was 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. Uprated Vanquish S with 592bhp (and a similarly potent Zagato version) launched in late 2016.

Lagonda Taraf **2015-2017**

SPECIFICATION
Engine 5935cc, V12
Power 540bhp @ 6650rpm
Torque 465lb ft @ 5500rpm
0-60mph 4.4sec
Top speed 195mph

The Lagonda name hadn't been seen since production of the controversial wedge-shaped Series 2 ended in 1990, but in 2015 it was back, on a brand new luxury saloon – and one that made more than a few visual nods its famous forebear. Based on the Rapide S but with a longer wheelbase to make it a full four-seater, the Taraf combined sumptuous accommodation with almost supercar levels of performance, but at a price – with the addition of a few bespoke options, buyers saw little change from £800k.

Vantage **2018-present**

SPECIFICATION
Engine 3982cc, biturbo V8
Power 503bhp @ 6000rpm
Torque 505lb ft @ 2000rpm
0-60mph 3.6sec
Top speed 195mph

Replacing the best-selling Aston of all time is a tough gig, but the all-new Vantage has the hardware and the firepower to make the outgoing model feel almost tame. With a twin-turbocharged 4-litre 503bhp V8 supplied by Mercedes-AMG and a lightning-quick paddleshift gearbox (soon to be joined by a traditional manual), the new car is rabidly quick and super-alert in all its responses. This is an out-and-out sports car, and though the looks haven't met with universal acclaim, as a drivers' car it's among the world's very best.

Rapide S **2013–present**

SPECIFICATION (2015MY)
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.

DB11 **2016–present**

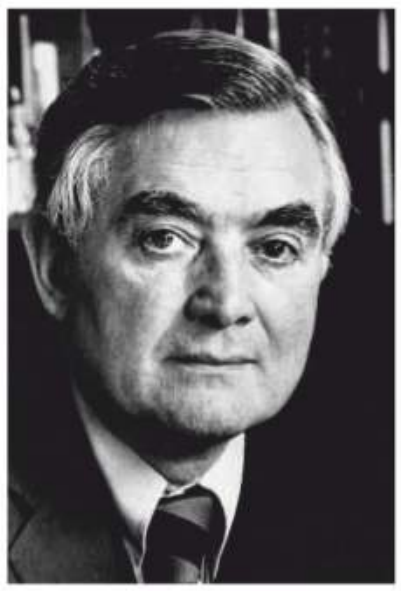
SPECIFICATION
Engine 5204cc, biturbo V12
Power 600bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 516lb ft @ 1500rpm
0-60mph 3.7sec
Top speed 200mph

The first all-new production car of the Andy Palmer era, the DB11 was the most important new Aston since the launch of the DB9 – the car it replaced – more than a decade earlier. With an all-new, twin-turbo 5.2-litre V12, a raft of new electronic systems courtesy of technology partner Daimler, and innovative aerodynamic features, it's the standard-bearer for Aston's so-called Second Century Plan. V8 version was launched late 2017 with Volante following in 2018 and a new, AMR-branded V12 flagship in summer 2018.

DBS Superleggera **2018-present**

SPECIFICATION
Engine 5204cc, biturbo V12
Power 715bhp @ 6500rpm
Torque 664lb ft @ 1800rpm
0-60mph 3.5sec
Top speed 211mph

The fastest and most powerful series-production Aston ever built, the DB11-based DBS Superleggera turns the wick on the twin-turbo V12 right up to 715bhp and adds a beefed-up eight-speed gearbox, carbon-ceramic brakes and a heap more visual drama to the mix. More 'super' than 'leggera' at around 1700kg, it nevertheless grips and handles like a proper sports-GT and is mind-bendingly rapid in a straight line. Replaces the Vanquish S as the series-production flagship and is one of the finest sporting GTs currently on sale.



HEROES: WALTER HAYES

HAYES WAS THE MASTERMIND BEHIND FORD'S MOTORSPORT SUCCESS WHO NURTURED THE RESCUE OF ASTON MARTIN

WORDS JOHN SIMISTER

Walter Hayes appears on this back page because he became Aston Martin's chairman when the company was rescued by Ford, and it was Hayes who made the idea of a 'small' or 'affordable' Aston, talked about for years, into DB7 reality and thus made the company viable again. Without Walter Hayes' vision, Aston Martin might not exist today.

The seed for this was sown in 1987 when publicity genius Hayes, back at Ford of Europe as vice-chairman after a stint at Dearborn, convinced dynasty head Henry Ford II to buy troubled Aston Martin. Ever the car enthusiast with a keen sense both of history and of opportunity, Hayes spotted potential in Aston's fading splendour. He happened to meet Aston Martin's then chairman Victor Gauntlett during the 1987 historic Mille Miglia, both of them serendipitously staying as guests of the Italian Contessa Maggi. As conversation naturally turned to Aston, Gauntlett's need for finance to keep the company going became clear.

Ford bought a chunk of the company in September 1987, then took full control as the DB7 project got under way. Gauntlett relinquished his role in 1991, upon which Hayes became chairman. He was perfect for the role, very British with his pipe, but always thinking of something new and innovative.

And, to the motor-sporting world, he was already a hero. This writer, a child in the 1960s whose father had a Zephyr and to whom Fords were therefore very cool, well remembers press shots of Walter Hayes looking over GT40s undergoing testing at Le Mans, in discussion with Cosworth's Keith Duckworth as the DFV Grand Prix engine was announced, always masterminding Ford's latest motorsport splash.

Ford of Britain chairman Sir Patrick Hennessy was the man who capitalised on the spark in Walter Hayes. The US parent company had launched its Total Performance tagline in 1963 to use motorsport to sell showroom cars and Britain wanted to embrace the new culture. Hayes – a Fleet Street journalist by original vocation – was the man for the job.

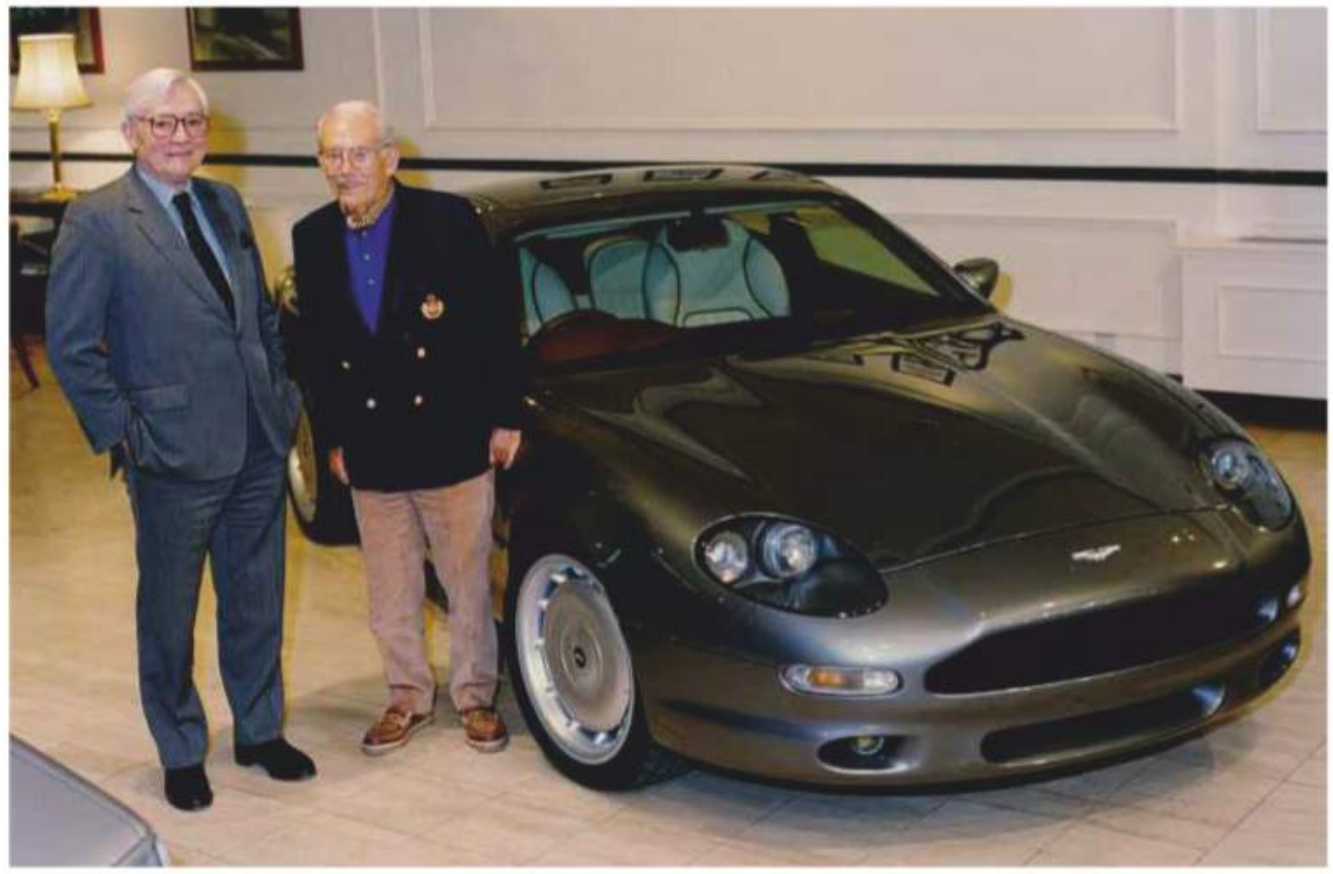
He had already got to know Lotus's Colin Chapman by getting him to write a motoring column for the *Sunday Dispatch*, and of course he also knew of Cosworth's activities with small Ford engines. Thus the first Hayes idea came into being: the Cortina GT. Next came the Lotus Cortina, using the Chapman connection and the Ford-based Lotus twin-cam engine.

The GT40 was the next big thing. In 1964 Hayes became a director of Ford Advanced Vehicles at Slough, run largely by ex-Aston Martin competition mastermind John Wyer, and after an uncertain start and through many twists and turns the GT40 and its derivatives scored four Le Mans victories. Meanwhile, F1 had changed to a larger 3-litre limit and Chapman and Hayes hatched a plan for a new engine, which Cosworth would design and build, Ford would pay for and Lotus would initially use exclusively. Hayes got Henry Ford II on board along with engineering vice-president Harley Copp, and the Cosworth DFV – with 'Ford' on its camshaft covers – won its first Grand Prix (the 1967 Dutch) in the back of Jim Clark's Lotus 49. A further 154 Formula 1 wins followed, along with sports-car and Indy glory. Thanks to Hayes, Ford and motorsport are wedded forever.

So, 1991. Hayes had technically 'retired' from Ford, but rather than donning the slippers to complement his pipe he became Aston's chairman. It was he who got the ageing Sir David Brown to agree to use of the DB in DB7 (and beyond), a typical stroke of Hayes marketing genius. Hayes also insisted the DB7 should have a straight-six engine to identify it with the original DB cars. He didn't get to drive the first DB7 off the line as he had hoped, though, because he reached 70 in April 1994 – Ford's absolute age limit – and the first car wasn't finished until June. By then, following Sir David's death in September 1993, Hayes had become AML's life president. He died on 26 December 2000, aged 76.

As the website, walterhayes.co.uk, records, his Aston tenure presented many challenges – some within Ford still doubted the wisdom of investing in tiny AML – but Hayes' belief and drive won the day. As Bill Ford wrote to him in 1992: 'It is refreshing and reassuring to see someone who not only values the heritage of a great motor car company but can turn that heritage into an exciting future.' Amen to that.

Above left and below
Hayes in his Ford days, and (below) as AML chairman with Sir David Brown, who he brought back into the Aston fold for the DB7 launch



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1969 Aston Martin DB6 Saloon

1969 Aston Martin DB6 Vantage finished in Dubonnet Rosso with pale beige hide interior. An original factory Vantage owned by lady member of AMOC and used at numerous club events. Fitted from new with the 5 speed ZF gearbox. At some point in the distant past, the wheel arches have been subtly flared in line with the DB6 MkII which adds to the beauty of this fine motor car which will be arriving shortly. **£ P.O.A**.

1974 Aston Martin V8

1974 Aston Martin V8 series III finished in Suffolk red with magnolia hide interior piped in red. In the same ownership for the past 14 years, diligently looked after and serviced. Excellent paintwork and exceptional interior. Specification includes automatic transmission, a Vantage deep front air dam and the rare factory fitted electric sun roof. Recently serviced by us and a pleasure to drive. Very sensibly priced for one in this condition. **£79,950**

1972 Aston Martin V8 Saloon Series II

1972 Aston Martin V8 Saloon Series II subject of a complete restoration and sensibly upgraded. Engine rebuilt by Oselli. Every mechanical component including the differential, gearbox, rear axle and brake callipers were repaired, replaced or upgraded. The heated front seats were re-trimmed using quality Boyriven hides and Wilton carpeting. A detailed history file recording the extensive restoration is present. Offered at considerably less than the rebuild cost. **£115,000**

1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 Coupe

1954 Aston Martin DB2/4 finished in Midnight Blue with contrasting grey hide interior. In the same ownership for the last 20 years, maintained and improved by specialists Four Ashes Garage with what would appear to be little regard to cost. The methodically kept car file contains invoices totalling £49,850 since 2003. Rather than being a fully restored car, it remains very original with an attractive patina. **£ P.O.A.**

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